

Ongoing Corporate Sponsorship: Concerning Traditional Okinawan Arts

FY2019 Mécénat Associate

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1. Summary

Although long-term involvement in culture and arts promotion is deemed necessary, in reality, results are often borne in the short term. However, within corporate patronage, there are several examples of ongoing long-term involvement. In order to elucidate the long-term ongoing factors of the project, this report cites examples of the “Okinawa Times Traditional Arts Qualifying Competition and Arts Selection Festival”, which is sponsored by the Okinawa Times, and the “Classical Ryūkyū Arts Competition and Arts Festival”, which is sponsored by the Ryūkyū Shimpō respectively, regarding the traditional Okinawa arts as per the two Okinawan regional newspapers. The factors in project continuation that were made visible by the involvement of both companies were (1) Project objectives to obtain empathy, (2) The configuration of a partnership with stakeholders, and (3) The existence of specialists and supervisors involved long-term.

As a new topic, that of falling numbers of participants, has become visible in recent years, upon surveying the case of the Yokohama Noh Theater, which produces and mounts Ryūkyū project performances, it became evident that the reasons for popularity were creating performances that put oneself in the shoes of the spectators, and the rarity of recreating traditional arts that are found nowhere else.

Traditional Okinawan arts have hitherto developed around the performer’s art, but it is thought that in future presentations will make the attractiveness easy to understand, that new developments can be expected in parts involved with legacy restructuring.

2. Research Objectives and Background

Cultural promotion is an old story in which it is said that “it is important to focus on cultural creation that has set its sights on 50 to 100 years from now”.¹ However, in a public sector where continuity in and of itself has come to play a role, this is still difficult to find. Meanwhile, corporate sponsorship, where it is thought that long-term involvement is difficult as it is easily swayed by the economy, has already had an ongoing involvement for more than fifty years. Even just sampling cases from among those involvements that have received the “MECENAT Award”², which commends excellent corporate sponsorship activities implemented by the

¹ Association of Corporate Support for the Arts 10 Proposals regarding the Japanese Arts Council”, June 2007

² <https://www.mecenat.or.jp/ja/award/>

Association of Corporate Support for the Arts, this has been ongoing for twenty years or more, as shown in Table 1.

There are many choices other than culture for social contributions with corporate involvement, such as the environment and welfare, and no matter which, culture is a field in which it is easy to point to a bias in values. Presumably, this means appropriate reasons and their enabling methods in order to continue such involvement while embracing the risks.

This report cites previous examples of cultural promotion policies that take the long view with regard to ongoing sponsorship activities based on just such an awareness.

Table 1. Ongoing Involvement in Receipt of Corporate Sponsorship Awards for 50 Years or More

	Sponsorship Award Receipt Year	Organization Name	Involvement	Start Year	No. of Ongoing Years (as of 2020)
1	2017	Okinawa Times	Okinawa Times Traditional Arts Qualifiers and Selection Arts Festival	1967	53
2	2016	Showa Shell Sekiyu	Shell fine arts award	1956	64
3	2016	CBC Television	CBC Club culture award (Kuchinashi award)	1960	60
4	2016	Takenaka Corporation	Publishing Approach seasonal magazine	1964	56
5	2016	Tonen General Group	Tonen General youth culture award	1966	54
6	2014	Shiseido	Hosting "Tsubaki-kai", and Shiseido Gallery and Shiseido art house activities	1919	101
7	2013	Iwanami Real Estate	Equipe de Cinema: Discovery and playing of lost famous movies	1966	52
8	2012	Chiba Bank	Chiba Bank film library	1963	67
9	2011	Rokkatei Pharmaceuticals	Publishing monthly youth magazine "Silo" for 50 years	1960	60
10	2010	Yamatane Arts Foundation	Operating Yamatane Museum of Art	1966	54
11	2008	Suntory	Operation and activities at Suntory Museum of Art	1961	59
12	2007	Shiseido	Operating Shiseido Gallery	1919	101
13	2007	Kitano Construction Corp.	Art culture activities such as Kitano Museum of Art and Kitano Theater with roots in Shinshu	1968	52
14	2006	Suntory Music	Spread and promotion of classical and contemporary music	1969	51
15	2005	Mitsukoshi	Art and cultural events centering on Mitsukoshi main store in Nihombashi	1914	106
16	1996	Mainichi Shimbun	"The 64th Japan Music Competition" (sponsored by The Mainichi Shimbun and Japan Broadcasting Corporation) and the longtime management of the competition.	1932	88
17	1994	Nikko	Operating the world children's haiku contest	1964	56
18	1994	Asaba Ryokan	Holding the Shuzenji arts travelogue	1965	55

19	1993	Nihon Seimei	Operating Nissay Theatre with the cooperation of Nissay Meisaku Theatre for 30 years	1963	57
20	1993	Minaminihon Broadcasting	MBC youth orchestra operations	1964	56
21	1993	Kinokuniya	Kinokuniya Hall operations	1964	56

Created by the authors based on the website of the Japan Corporate Mecenat Association <https://www.mecenat.or.jp/ja/>

3. Research Methods and Interview Implementation Outline

In order to search for factors in ongoing corporate sponsorship activities, we decided to survey cases of actual observable continuity of 50 years or more. Further, in order to make it easy to sample commonalities from among the comparisons, we selected the following two projects that involve corporate sponsorship by targeting the same region, project type, and fields.

■Okinawa Times “Okinawa Times Traditional Arts Qualifying Competition and Arts Selection Festival” (Recipient of the Mécénat Award in 2017)

■Ryūkyū Shimpō “Classical Ryūkyū Arts Competition and Arts Festival” (Approved by This is MECENAT in 2019)

Further, in order to grasp and study these corporate sponsorship activities across a wide field of view, we thought to try covering traditional Okinawa arts projects that involve public cultural facilities outside of Okinawa Prefecture, and so decided to take up projects by the following facilities, which cite the “legacy and recreation of classic arts”.

■Yokohama Noh Theater Ryūkyū arts projects involving the Yokohama Noh Theater (2015 recipient of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA) National Arts Festival Grand Prize: For the planning and creation of “Ryūkyū Dance: Seven Classical Women’s Dances”)

From a survey of the aforementioned three cases and interviews with the supervisors, we want to show the factors governing continuity of cultural promotion projects that take a long-term view, and solutions to freshly-discovered issues. A summary of the interviews is as described below.

■Okinawa Times “Okinawa Times Traditional Arts Qualifying Competition and Arts

Selection Festival”

March 5, 2020

Okinawa Times Readers Bureau Cultural Projects Head Office, Deputy Chief
Tatsuhiko Toyoshima

Okinawa Times Readers Bureau Cultural Projects Head Office, Tadanori Murai
(from April 1, 2020)

■Ryūkyū Shimpō “Classical Ryūkyū Arts Competition and Arts Festival”

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

Ryūkyū Shimpō Readers Projects Bureau Cultural Projects Promotion Department
Chief Muneo Nakahara

Ryūkyū Shimpō Readers Projects Bureau Cultural Projects Promotion Department
Aki Uchima

■Yokohama Noh Theater Ryūkyū arts projects involving the Yokohama Noh Theater

Wednesday, December 18, 2019

Yokohama Noh Theater Artistic Director Masayuki Nakamura

4. Survey

4-1. Traditional Okinawan Arts

-Beloved traditional Okinawan arts

The arts are deeply rooted in Okinawan life, and it is said that there is a strong sense that they are something you do yourself rather than merely appreciate. All over town there are signboard for classes on which “Ryūkyū dance studio” is written, and on ceremonial occasions, many people play the sanshin and perform dance exhibitions.³ Children travel to the studio for lessons after school, and adults travel to the studio as they would to a culture school after work and at weekends.

According to the “Report into the 2016 survey of Okinawan people’s awareness”⁴, in response to the question “Are you proud of Okinawan culture and arts?”, 95.6% of people replied “Very proud” or “Somewhat proud”. In the 2001 survey, the response was 91.7%, in 2006 it was 94.3%, and in 2011 it was 94.1%, so that in all of the previous four surveys, over 90% of respondents said that they were proud of Okinawa culture and arts.

³ Nakamura (2009) p.142

⁴ Ryūkyū Shimpō (ed.) (2017) p.28

Traditional Okinawan arts are arranged as described below.⁵

- (1) As “performing arts” by style at the research institute or studio
- (2) As “village play” based on public halls and activities rooted in the local area such as youth organizations, etc.
- (3) As a link in school educational activities (classes, events, club activities)
- (4) As part of specialist university education (i.e., majoring in “Ryūkyū arts” at Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts)
- (5) As a project to train the next generation at the “National Theatre Okinawa”
- (6) As “classes” at learning “classrooms” and culture centers
- (7) Other (e.g., practice at professional arts groups, etc.)

Qualifiers and competitions cited in this report were developed mainly at the level of (1) “Performing arts”.

-Ryūkyū dance and music

Among the traditional Okinawan arts, the fields targeted by the current survey using qualifiers and competitions cited as cases in this report are Ryūkyū dance and music.

Ryūkyū dance can be broadly classified into theatrical “Kumiodori” (group dance)⁶ and “Haodori” (women’s dance).

- (1) The songs performed by warriors as “ceremonial music” (i.e., music specifically for ceremonies” during the Ryūkyū dynasty was “classical dance”
- (2) After the Ryūkyū dynasty was destroyed during the Meiji Restoration, as a results of joint projects between artistes and warriors called “Gakudoshi” (the training of child musicians), popular “Zo-odori” (mixed dancing) was born in the pop-up theaters of the streets of Naha
- (3) “Creative dance” was born amidst a rise in an awareness of the arts following the start of the Showa era

Music further developed by adding the Japanese zither, flutes, Chinese fiddle, and drums around the sanshin, which was created by improving on the three-stringed instruments introduced from China during the 14th and 15th centuries. As sanshin players sing as they play, this is also called “Song sanshin”. For Ryūkyū warriors, who did not wear swords, the sanshin was equivalent to a sword, and was even used

⁵ Author revisions based on Watanabe (2008) p.68

⁶ Kabuki is configured according to dialog, music, movement, and dance. It was created by Tamagusuku Chōkun (1684 to 1734), and was first performed at the vassal ceremony of King Shō Kei in 1719.

to decorate alcoves. The zither is the same as the Japanese version, and the flute has the same configuration as the Chinese “minteki” with six finger holes, and while the fiddle had three strings when it was introduced from China, it was improved to have four strings. The drum is the same stretched drum used in Noh, and may also be combined with Japanese drums.⁷

-The history of traditional arts around Shuri and Naha

In Okinawa, many and diverse traditional arts have grown up around the regions, including the various islands, and their history and relationships are multifarious. Consequently, this section touches on the history of the traditional arts of Shuri, which was the capital during the Ryūkyū dynasty, and the area around Naha, which flourished as a trade center, and which are deeply connected to the qualifiers and competitions that have become our case histories.

Okinawa was permitted to trade with China because during the Ryūkyū dynasty era, whenever the king changed, the Chinese emperor issued a “vassal” order that appointed the Ryūkyū king. While the envoy was present, numerous hospitality feasts were held centered on Shuri Castle. Therein, while deeming folk dances that were passed down during village festivals as the basis, vibrant dances thought suitable for the court arose, and the role of “Odori bugyo” (dance magistrate), who managed these dances, was set up.⁸

In this way, the Ryūkyū kingdom came to create its own unique culture, but this was eradicated by the “Ryūkyū disposition” (forced assimilation) in 1872 during the Meiji Restoration, and the site of traditional Okinawan arts moved to pop-up theaters, which were commercial performances. Here, while new theater and dances were created, the courtly arts of classical dance and ensemble dancing were also inherited.⁹

Subsequently, what is said to have been one turning point that caused traditional Okinawan arts to flourish was the “Okinawa dialect controversy” of 1940. The movement to promote the enforcement of standard Japanese in Okinawan prefectural education, and the dispute that opposed this, lasted for about a year, mainly in newspapers and magazines, and caused a clash between Okinawan modernization and traditional culture. At this time, Yanagi Sōetsu, who was a

⁷ Nakamura (2009) p.142, p.150, from an interview with Nakamura at the Yokohama Noh Theater

⁸ Nakamura (2009) p.144

⁹ Watanabe (2008) p.65, p.66

leading light of the folk arts movement, and others advocated for traditional cultural values such as Okinawan arts, folk implements, dyeing methods, and ceramics, and attention came to be paid to the traditional Okinawan arts, causing them to flourish. During this dispute, the Ryūkyū Shimpō published that “the arts are important, but we have to discard the dialect”,¹⁰ thereby revealing the newspaper’s beliefs regarding local culture.

However, even this flourishing stalled because of the loss of theaters and stages, not to mention numerous dancers, performers, instruments, and costumes, in the Okinawan land battles of the Pacific War between 1941 and 1945. During the 27 years of the postwar period from 1945 to 1972, Okinawa was under American control. Immediately after the war, the handful of surviving artistes gathered together, and the formation of a government-run touring service organization was the first post-war recovery of the arts, but they disbanded within a few years. Recovery in earnest was with the Shuri Cultural Federation (headed by Ryoken Toyohira, who was one of the founders of the Okinawa Times) in 1947, but the world of traditional arts had no sense of unity and was mired in confusion.¹¹

In 1954, the Okinawa Times established its first “Okinawa Times new faces arts festival” and started promoting the arts, and in 1966, the Ryūkyū Shimpō established a concert hall in their own building at the same time as launching the “Ryūkyū classical arts competition”.

When Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972, ensemble dancing was designated an important national cultural intangible asset, and in 2004, not only did the National Theatre Okinawa, with its training system, open, but also the major in Japanese music in the music department at the Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts changed its name to a major in Ryūkyū arts, the musical arts research stage arts major in Japanese music changed to a major in classical Ryūkyū music, and the musical theater major changed to a major in Ryūkyū ensemble dance respectively. In 2010, ensemble dance was registered as a UNESCO intangible cultural asset, and in 2019 various commemorative events were held as the 300th anniversary of ensemble dance performances.

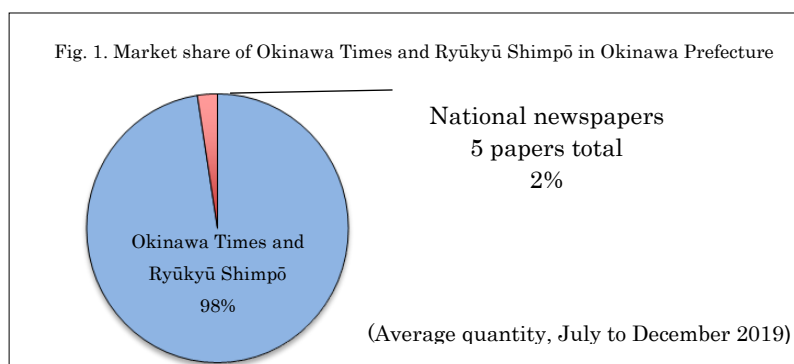
-Involvement of the Okinawa Times and Ryūkyū Shimpō

In Okinawa, there are very few subscriptions to national newspapers, and the

¹⁰ Ryūkyū Shimpō projects bureau (ed.), (1996), p.69

¹¹ Okinawa Times (ed.) (2018), p.277

market share of the Okinawa Times and Ryūkyū Shimpō are almost equal. From the very start, both companies played a role as heavy lifters regarding the promotion of traditional Okinawan arts. ¹²Nationally, there are no other newspapers as involved in traditional arts, and having the lengthy private involvement of the two companies is important from the aspect of support.¹³ Before the war, the arts were even said to be full of dilettantes and hooligans, but nowadays they are symbols of local pride and self-confidence, and the fact that they have become a marker for local identity is from people placing their mindset in traditional local arts since the postwar era of American occupation, and can only be found in the successes of the Okinawa Times and Ryūkyū Shimpō, which have stood at the forefront of this flourishing.



The 5 national papers were compiled by the Japan Audit Bureau of Circulations (2020), and the Okinawa Times and Ryūkyū Shimpō by coverage from individual authors

4-2. Work of Two Newspaper Companies

The two newspapers started amidst one flow, so they have many commonalities, as shown in Table 2. The purpose of hosting these events is to broaden the base in order to develop a correct legacy for the traditional arts and to grow the next generation, and they play a role as a gateway to success for new artistes.

However, there are also points of difference, and therein is expressed the difference in the ideas of the companies towards these events. For example, on the issue of awards, the Okinawa Times as its “grand prix”, whereas the Ryūkyū Shimpō does not. This is derived from a difference in ideas whereby the Okinawa Times started from a desire to improve quality through creating opportunities to award prizes for improved skills, whereas the Ryūkyū Shimpō positioned competitions as a gateway to success for the arts, and clearing the “highest categories” was the dating point for artistes. Calls for ever-higher competition prizes to be set up are on the rise, but

¹² Interview with Nakamura, manager of the Yokohama Noh Theater

¹³ Watanabe (2008) p.68

currently, three divisions are being maintained.

Further, the Okinawa Times requires a minimum of two years to pass after winning a prize as a qualification for entry, whereas the Ryūkyū Shimpō requires three years. The difference was that for the Okinawa Times, this was to encourage a concentrated leveling up and early independence as artistes, whereas for the Ryūkyū Shimpō, it was an essential period for polishing artistic skills.

To find factors for continuing the enterprise from amidst these commonalities and differences, let us look at the factors and history of each project.

Table 2. Comparison of Factors between the Two Companies

Name	Okinawa Times Traditional arts qualifiers	Classic Ryūkyū arts Contest		
Sponsor	Okinawa Times	Ryūkyū Shimpō		
Start year	1954	1966		
Field	(6 categories)			
Prizes	“Newcomer”, “Excellent”, “Best” “Grand prix”	“Newcomer”, “Excellent”, “Best”		
Application and test fees (Project income)	Newcomer	10,000 yen	Newcomer	10,000 yen
	Excellent	12,000 yen	Excellent	13,000 yen
	Best	15,000 yen	Best	15,000 yen
	Grand prix	30,000 yen		
Test qualifications	“Newcomer” is open to 2nd-year junior high schoolers and above After winning each prize step-by- step, and after 2 or more years have elapsed		“Newcomer” is open to 14 years old and higher, with 3 or more years history of the arts After 3 or more years have elapsed in winning each prize step-by-step	
	People recommended by masters who are members of the Okinawa Arts Association (in-house office), and people recognized as suitable by the sponsors.		Recommendation from a master and registered member of the Okigeiren (in-house office) People recognized as sponsors.	
Selection committee Judges	Experts commissioned by the sponsors			
FY2019 Application and test numbers (at peak)	547 (FY1994: 1,094)		720 (FY1997: 2,010)	
Venue (Each company’s own building)	Times Hall		Ryūkyū Shimpō Hall	
Performance after winning	Okinawa Times selective arts festival		Classical Ryūkyū arts festival	
Related projects	Children’s arts festival		Children’s dance festival Youth arts festival	

Created by authors based on coverage of the “FY2020 Okinawa Times traditional arts qualifiers recruitment factors” and the “55th classical Ryūkyū arts competition FY2020 implementation factors”

4-3. Okinawa Times “Okinawa Times Traditional Arts Qualifying Competition and Arts Selection Festival”

The “Okinawa Times Traditional Arts Qualifying Competition and Arts Selection Festival” (hereinafter called the “qualifiers”) is a cultural event sponsored by the Okinawa Times (hereinafter called the “Times”).

The Times is a local newspaper founded as the first privately-owned newspaper in the prefecture postwar, in 1948. “Culture and arts” is written in the paper’s borders, and every day they carry articles about traditional Okinawan arts.

4-3-1. Project Operations and History

The Times got involved with traditional Okinawan arts as soon as possible based on the conviction of Ryoken Toyohira, who was one of the founders, that “postwar reconstruction starts with culture”. When pursuing the company’s involvement in traditional arts projects, various changes are apparent, as expected of being ahead of the pack.

The “Okinawa Times newcomers arts festival”, which was the precursor to the qualifiers, started in 1954. Subsequently, in 1960, the name changed to the “Okinawa Times arts festival”, and in 1967 to the Okinawa Times arts prize newcomers section”, while the qualifiers came to be implemented as one part of that. The current name was adopted in 2008.

Project name: “Okinawa Times Traditional Arts Qualifying Competition and Arts Selection Festival”

Sponsor: Okinawa Times

Cooperation: Okinawa Arts Association¹⁴/New Okinawa Entertainers Association¹⁵

Address: 2-2-2 Kumoji, Naha, Okinawa Prefecture 900-8678

Start year: 1954 (The current name was adopted in 2008)

Number of qualifier applicants: 547 (FY2019)

Summary: Implemented every year with the aim of the correct legacy of the traditional arts, and training a new generation to inherit them. Started immediately after the war as a gateway for new artistes, and is a cultural restoration movement started by the Okinawa Times, established to promote and develop local arts culture.

¹⁴ An organization established in 1967 to systematically develop the traditional performing arts of Okinawa. Currently, about 40 musical groups and schools belong to the organization.

¹⁵ An organization whose members are the winners of the Selection Committee founded in 1966.

The first “Okinawa Times newcomers arts festival”, which was held in 1954, began centered around Ryūkyū dance, and was deemed to “pursue the ideal of classical local legacy in parallel with fine arts and crafts movements”.¹⁶ At the time, masters who were leading dance research centers recommended newcomer dancers, and the best ten Ryūkyū dances were selected by the judges.¹⁷ The second time was hosted in conjunction with the Okinawa fine arts exhibition, and the third was held by research groups into the “form”, “songs”, and “costumes”, etc., of the “application regulations” and the “judging criteria”, such that the format for selecting the “best ten dances” hitherto was revised as the “newcomers dance prize”, and the “newcomers most excellent dance award” and the “music best ten” were newly established. The fifth time added “creative dance”, and the sixth time widened the field to include “performance”, “folk dance”, “creative music”, “creative dance”, and “ensemble dance”. In this way, it initially started centered on Ryūkyū dance, but included as a project all arts that create performance, music, and dance, and now exists as a comprehensive regional arts project in which careful thought and changes can be seen in various aspects.

Actions by the relevant groups include the arts festival participant Okinawan arts group, sponsored by the Okinawan cultural association chaired by Toyohira, participating in the 10th Ministry of Education arts festival in 1955, where they received the “Arts festival education minister’s encouragement award”, and the association then joined forces with the Times’ newcomer arts festival and began to get involved with researching dance forms as well.

In 1960, they changed the name to the “Okinawa Times arts festival”, and launched with the aim of improving comprehensive arts culture. The chosen and prizewinning performances were revealed to the public at Times Hall. Subsequently, the Ryūkyū dance



Most excellent award winners dancing “Nuhwa bushi”
at the selection arts festival
October 6, 2019, at Okinawa Times Hall
Supplied by Okinawa Times

¹⁶ Okinawa Times (ed.) (2018), p.277

¹⁷ Arts festival operating committee (1963) p.205

research association was founded to unify the forms while, on the other hand, a folk arts trial performance group was established to support arts that lay buried in the regions. Moreover, there was a lively new movement in which there were performances of fusions with Japanese dance and famous ensemble dances.

These stopped in 1965, partly due to differences from the direction taken by artistes, but they restarted in 1966 as the “Okinawa Times arts selection award”. These arts selection prizes are a mechanism whereby the selection committee chooses the works and artistic cultural activities from that year and awards the prizes, and their targets are diverse, including classical dance, classical music, ensemble dance, fine arts and crafts, performances, music (both Western and Japanese), creative dance, folk dance, literature, and art and culture-related publications, etc. Further, the following year, 1967, the “Arts selection award newcomers section” started as a precursor to the modern selection committee. In 1983, the “Arts selection award grand prix” was established, and until FY2017 there were 477 grand prix winners, and in recent years there have also been student grand prix winners.

Since the middle of the 1990s, there have been various changes such as a reduction in the load placed on applications and quality improvements, and a transition from the format of preparing live local folk performances in advance to judging using tape recordings in order to invigorate the judges and to reduce the load on applicants.

In 2012, there were public performances of past arts selection award winners combined with a public performance to celebrate the 65th anniversary of the opening of Times Hall, as well as public performances of the “timbre of the Bridge of Nations: sanshin, three strings, and the shamisen” and the traditional Okinawan ensemble dance “Children’s meeting”, and a special performance was held on Miyakojima in 2014, which developed from a technical legacy into regional interactions.

When the history is followed in this way, you feel the necessity of recovering traditional Okinawan arts centering on the man of letters Toyohira, who was one of the initial publishers of the Times, and can see his involvement through trial and error while taking the lead. At the start in particular, he did not stop at the legacy of tradition, and actively encouraged “creation”, and his attempts at combining diverse arts and dance techniques were lively, such that his attempts at legacy through the creation of new arts can also be seen.

4-3-2. Business Operations

The event costs are almost entirely funded by income from membership fees of the

selection committee, and the section arts festival is run with income from tickets. Links have been forged with the “Children’s arts festival” (2019 was the 39th time), which is targeted at kindergarten through to junior high school first years who are members of dance troupes that belong to the Okinawa arts association, which is also a partner of the selection committee, as a related activity to assure the numbers of participants needed to support these events, and this is tied to assuring future selection committee participants by creating opportunities to have contact with traditional arts while still a child. In addition, subsequent activities by selection committee award recipients are boosted daily by advertising and active coverage in the newspapers of award receipts and performances such as solo performances, and in-house evaluations are linked to consistent training from newcomer awards to grand prix as well as broadening the number of contenders through a conjoining of the correct legacy of the traditional arts with the training of new generations.

The “Okinawa arts committee” promotes the preservation, inheritance, and creation activities of traditional Okinawan arts, and is an organization with approximately 30 member bodies that transcend various factions with the aim of developing arts activities in an organized manner. There are also groups that sponsor the selection committee, which has an office at the Times. The judges in the six categories that include sanshin, drums, and Ryūkyū dance, are performers that belong to the association. These include performers who have been involved with the selection committee for close to 30 years, and the gravity, significance, and knowledge of the selection committee is also built into the association. The relationship between the Times and the association with its selection committee is that of the “wheels on a car”, which are tied by a strong cooperative relationship.¹⁸

4-4. Ryūkyū Shimpō “Classical Ryūkyū Arts Competition and Arts Festival”

The “classical Ryūkyū arts competition and arts festival” (hereinafter called the “competition”) is a cultural event sponsored by the Ryūkyū Shimpō (hereinafter called the “Shimpō”).

The Ryūkyū Shimpō was the first Okinawan prefectural newspaper, founded in 1893, and was published every other day. Subsequently, after passing through periods when it was called the “Uruma Shimpō” (with different spellings), it once again began publishing under the name “Ryūkyū Shimpō” in 1951. The paper has “Arts” written on its cover, and publishes on the arts daily.

¹⁸ Okinawa Times, interview with Toyoshima

Sponsor: Ryūkyū Shimpō Co., Ltd.

Address: 1-10-3 Izumizaki, Naha, Okinawa Prefecture 900-8525

Start year: 1966

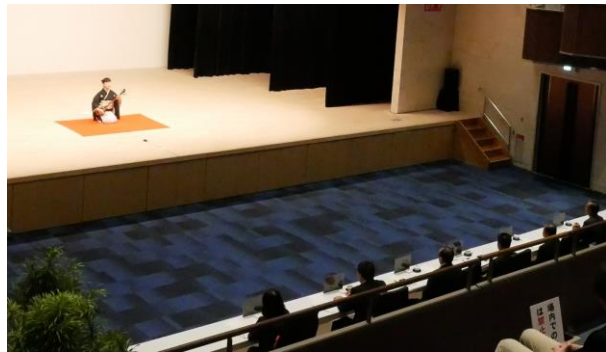
Number of qualifier applicants: 720 (FY2019)

Summary: The aim is to find superlative new artistes through a rigorous judging process, to encourage admission to the world of classical Ryūkyū arts, and to contribute to the development of art and culture, and the correct legacy of the classical Ryūkyū arts.

4-4-1. Project Operations and History

The competition started in 1966 when Shimpō Hall in the Ryūkyū Shimpō's own building was completed. During the period when the Times' arts festival was paused, the sense of impending doom surfaced that "if things stay as they are, valuable Okinawan arts and culture bequeathed to us by our ancestors will surely die out", and there were powerful calls from people of letters and those connected with the arts that they "wanted the active involvement and support of the Shimpō to further develop classical Ryūkyū arts", which started to be accepted in this form.¹⁹

The competition has been consistent from its initial start to its current form with the categories setup, etc., and the categories are classical dance and classical music (sanshin and zither music, drums, flutes, and Chinese fiddle). The purpose of these events is to spread classical Ryūkyū arts and to establish forms and, in particular, the pursuit in uniformity of forms that transcend the styles. As for the differences in styles, while unearthing the richness of



Format of the 54th Classical Ryūkyū Arts Competition
Provided by the Ryūkyū Shimpō

individuality, the establishment of forms that are the linchpin of the "classical Ryūkyū arts" and to stick to the rules are repeatedly cited as issues.

The first time was held with the sponsorship of the Ryūkyū culture association, Okinawa Television, the Ryūkyū classical music association, and the Ryūkyū arts

¹⁹ Ryūkyū Shimpō (1996) p.23

research center federation, and was held over five days. The aim was said to be to “seek the participation of newcomers from all over the Ryūkyūs and overseas, and to encourage the spread and new legacy of classical Ryūkyū arts, while on the other hand to discover transcendent new artistes through fair judging, and to encourage their appearance in the world of classical Ryūkyū arts and contribute to the increase in local artistic culture”.

The second time was hosted with the support of Okinawa Television, Radio Okinawa, and the Ryūkyū culture association, and the sponsorship of the Okinawa arts association, and the winners received certificates as well as a gold award (best category), silver (excellent category), and bronze (newcomer category), and an arts festival at which the winners performed was held at a later date. The “Okinawa arts association”, which has become a sponsor, was formed in 1967 with the aim of friendship and mutual support of artistes, and is an operations partner in the competition with its offices in the Shimpō building.

Already at this time, following the first occasion, over 100 new artistes had entered the world of the arts, and this acted as a gateway to the world of traditional arts in Okinawa. The ages of the participants ranged from their teens to their seventies, with a broad range of occupations including civil servants, teachers, students, doctors, beauticians, farmers, artisans, commerce workers, and housewives, thereby showing the extent of the base of these performers of the traditional arts. The 15th occasion was held over approximately 40 days due to the sheer number of participants. It has been 15 years since the competition started, and many results can be cited with the spread of the legacy of the classical Ryūkyū arts, but at the same time the quality aspect must also be pointed out.

Around the 30th occasion, the creation of a framework in the pursuit of form and the work of the world of traditional Okinawan arts were pointed out as centering on the competition. On the 32nd occasion, participant numbers peaked at 2,010, and as they could not all be housed under one roof, they were split between two venues and judging took place from dawn till dusk.²⁰

In the 54 years from the 1st to the 54th occasion, a total of 63,048 people were tested, with a total of 32,631 passing, and the competition has become known for its tough testing of actual skills, and for being rooted in the world of traditional Okinawan arts.²¹ Many artistes who gained experience from the competition are active both in

²⁰ Interviews with Nakahara and Uchima, Ryūkyū Shimpō

²¹ Ryūkyū Shimpō “54th classical Ryūkyū arts festival” pamphlet, p. 123

Okinawa and other prefectures, as well as abroad, and many new artistes have arisen who are responsible for the next generation from their activities as the guardians of the important intangible cultural assets of ensemble dance, classical Ryūkyū music and Ryūkyū dance, and as human national treasures, so the competition has become a “base” for their production.

There are approximately 120 judges assigned by the Ryūkyū Shimpō who have actual track records and experience as performers and instructors from among the masters of Ryūkyū dance and classical music from both within and outside classical music. From the 40th occasion (in 2005), a maximum age of 75 was introduced, and linked to the appointment of young judges who contribute to training up standard bearers. By changing several tens of people every other year, the significance of the competition, which contributes to linking the legacy and development of tradition to the next generation, and also to the creation of an environment that fosters and supports young performers.²²

In recent years, the “Yaeyama classical arts competition and arts festival”, which was held for the 9th time in 2019, has been hosted as a related event, and is also involved in promoting regional arts.

4-4-2. Project Operations

The competition is almost entirely financed by participation fees, and the arts festival by income from ticket sales. There has been ongoing PR in the company’s newspapers over many years to assure participant numbers. Further, the company also hosts traditional arts events in addition to the competition, such as a “Children’s dance contest” where elementary school children can display Ryūkyū dance (the 55th such event was in 2019), and a “Youth arts festival” that trains up the next generation (sponsored by the Ryūkyū Shimpō and Okinawan arts association. The 4th such event was in February These events, which can be participated in from the time they are children, are tied to assuring participant numbers in future competitions.

With regard to in-house evaluation of the events, the focus is on the size of the social contribution, and fairness and the seriousness of the judging is safeguarded by being run by the newspaper, which is a third party, rather than any of the factional associations, and the contributions to maintaining traditional culture is highly regarded.

²² Interview with Nakahara, Ryūkyū Shimpō

As more specialist knowledge is required for event policy and operations, events are progressing while liaising with the Okinawa arts association, which has an office within the company. Even if the Shimpō's event supervisor is transferred, advice can be obtained from office staff (special employees of the Shimpō), which include performers who have been involved with the association for over thirty years.²³

5. Study

The following three points became clear as factors in event continuation as a result of surveying the Times' qualifiers and the Shimpō's competition as described above.

5-1. Ongoing Factors

(1) Sympathetic event objectives

The involvement of the two companies specifically pours their energy into mainly improving the techniques of performers with the emphasis on traditional Okinawan arts. However, at root is the aim of events that improve local people's pride through regional culture.

In the background are special circumstances that directly face up to the crisis of the loss of "Okinawanness", and in particular, when both companies first started these events, Okinawa was under American control, so focusing on encouraging a uniquely Okinawan culture therein was directly tied to advocating for Okinawan autonomy. The position of the two companies struck a chord with the people of Okinawa at the time, and is thought to have been linked to the ongoing excitement. Amidst numerous cultures and techniques, on the subject of why choose this target, and what do they hope to achieve, obtaining an accord is thought to have been linked to the ongoing centripetal force of the events.

(2) Configuration of the partnership with stakeholders

The two companies run the qualifiers and competitions through a strong partnership with stakeholders. The major stakeholders in the qualifiers and competition are the arts cooperatives and associations of which the various factions are members and to whom the participants and judges belong.

For the participants, this creates an environment in which training in the "way of

²³ Interview with Uchima, Ryūkyū Shimpō

the arts” can continue throughout their lives by establishing and operating in tandem related events such as displays of the traditional arts in which they can perform from the time they are children. Further, for the winners, it creates a relationship in which they do not win just once by posting their subsequent wins and their solo performances in newspaper articles. In this way, it creates a mechanism in which the participants are involved in events for a long time by supplying a type of involvement suited to each stage, from child to adult and beginner to award winner. Moreover, it places the offices for the arts cooperatives and associations within the two companies, thereby creating a strong cooperative relationship for the running of the events. If event policy is determined in-house and by the decisions of a few people, it is easy for the content to be controlled from the top down, but operating the events with partners who share the same objectives makes it easy to preserve policy. By creating contact points with a broad range of levels in this way leads to regional events and also improves the value of the events as those that promote culture, which contributes to local society.

(3) Existence of experts and supervisors with long-term involvement

Among the partner arts cooperatives and associations there are experts and supervisors who have been involved with judging and operations for long periods of time such as around thirty years, and who have detailed expertise in the events. When a new in-house events supervisor transfers in, they can offer that supervisor advice in addition to there being sufficient in-house continuity. Mutual involvement while forging trust between multiple people is tied to event continuity.

5-2. Topics

The events by both companies has supported and developed traditional Okinawan arts from the start, but in recent years the number of participants has been in decline. The causes include the graying of society and diversification in extramural studies and hobbies, but regardless of the events sponsored by the two companies, young people have been moving away from Ryūkyū dance and classical music.²⁴

Here, we decided to survey the involvement of the Yokohama Noh Theater, which is involve in traditional Okinawan arts events outside of Okinawa Prefecture, is highly regarded, and has a reputation for pulling in the crowds.

²⁴ In a survey by the Ryūkyū Shimpō (ed.) (2017) p. 29 in 2001, support among people in their twenties was 47.9% for dance and 13.2% for classical music, but in a 2016 survey, this had fallen to 18.5% for dance and 8.1% for classical music.

6. Survey for Resolving Topics

6-1. Yokohama Noh Theater “Ryūkyū Arts Project”

The Yokohama Noh Theater is a public facility owned by the city of Yokohama in a location less than one hour away from Tokyo. Their catchphrase is “Noh theater with a low threshold”, and they are characterized by having great planning capabilities, creativity, and the ability to pull in the crowds.

In 2004, Hosei University, which has the only Noh research center in Japan, received the Flower Award, which is said to be the most prestigious award in the Noh world, for “showing the nature of Noh theater to a new generation”. Further, in 2006 they received the “JAFRA Award” (Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications award), which is given to outstanding public cultural facilities, and in 2009 they received the Arts Festival Excellence Award from the Agency for Cultural Affairs for the planning and execution of “Samurai face and townspeople's farce”. In addition, in 2015, it was deemed that the “significance of the production is extremely great from the viewpoint of ‘recreating tradition’” for their planning and execution of “Ryūkyū Dance: Seven Classical Women’s Dances”, for which they were awarded the grand award from the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Generally, in Noh the performers decide the songs, as well as their co-performers and musicians, and it has come to be thought only natural for performances at the aforementioned Noh Theater, but they have developed events using the notion of “traditional arts productions”, which had not existed hitherto, centered around their arts director Masayuki Nakamura.



View of the Yokohama Noh Theater
<https://yokohama-nohgakudou.org/>



Stage at the Yokohama Noh Theater
<https://yokohama-nohgakudou.org/about/seat/>

Address: 27-2 Momijigaoka, Nishi-ku, Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture 220-0044

Facilities: Noh stage (486 seats), second stage (approx. 60 people capacity), training room (4), dressing rooms (4)

The main stage was built in Negishi, Tokyo, in 1875, and subsequently move to Somei, Tokyo, where it was in use until 1965. It is the oldest extant stage in the Kanto region, and is the oldest nationwide that is used for performances.

Operator: Yokohama Arts Foundation (Designated manager by singular appointment)

Opened: 1996

Number of visitors: 50,028 (FY2019)

Producers: 2; planning and execution supervisors: 2

Characteristics: Classical Japanese arts theater known for its high level of planning and execution. Not content with merely mounting classical Japanese arts starting with Noh, they also create new works through collaboration with overseas partners, and cite the following four concepts: “Re-questioning Noh and farce from multiple diverse viewpoints”, “wide-ranging international exchange centering on tradition”, “Lowering the threshold’ in response to diverse needs”, and “Creating new traditions based on classical arts”.

Ryūkyū arts events: Creating classical Okinawan arts performances every year since 1988. Advertising based on the two pillars of Noh theater and Ryūkyū arts on the 15th anniversary of their opening in 2012, and creating and performing every year.

Homepage: <http://ynt.yafjp.org/>

The role played within the basic policies of the Yokohama Noh Theater is as described below.

Role played by the Yokohama Noh Theater

They are responsible in part for “creating attractiveness and vigor through culture and the arts” as a specialist classical arts facility, and they play a role as a “base for the comprehensive sending and receiving of classical arts”.

In addition to promoting Noh and appealing to a class that has no interest in Noh through holding high-quality public performances, classes, and workshops, and implementing highly transmissible international exchange events and planned performances based on highly skilled arts and scholastics as a specialist facility, they also widen the base of lovers of the classical arts by reinforcing events aimed at children, who comprise the next generation.²⁵

²⁵ Business Plan and Income and Expenditure Budget for FY 2008

6-1-1. Project History and Summary

What started traditional Okinawan arts events at the Yokohama Noh Theater was a focus on the numerous Okinawan-born people living in Yokohama, and in spreading traditional Japanese arts, positioning Ryūkyū arts as one of those pillars. They have mounted classical Okinawan arts performances every year since 1998, and on the 15th anniversary of their opening in 2012 they announced their future two pillars of “Noh theater (Noh and farce) and the Ryūkyū arts” in order to create a Yokohaman style not seen in other Noh theaters. During the anniversary events that year, they recreated Noh performances that were mounted at Edo and Shuri castles. In addition, as understood from the event names shown below, there are themes such as dance comparisons for each performance and their relationship to Noh, a focus on costumes, and epochal performances, which attract the interest of the spectators.



■Yokohama Noh Theater Ryūkyū Arts Events

April 30, 2012 “Ryūkyū arts: Flowers that bloom on the mainland”

November 9, 2013: “Ryūkyū dance: Inherited traditions-creating miscellaneous classical dances”

November 1, 2014: “Ryūkyū dance: Seven classical women’s dances”

January 17, 2015: “5 Noh scripts: 5 scripts by Chōkun” ensemble dance “Women’s Madness”

October 31, 2015: “Ryūkyū beauty: techniques and techniques-”Dancing ‘Human National Treasure’ in ‘Human National Treasure’ dress”

January 16, 2016: “5 Noh scripts: 5 scripts by Chōkun” ensemble dance “Mekarushi”

February 4, 2017: “5 Noh scripts: 5 scripts by Chōkun” ensemble dance “Filial Piety”

February 4, 2018: “5 Noh scripts: 5 scripts by Chōkun” ensemble dance “Two Children’s Revenge”

February 9, 2019: “5 Noh scripts: 5 scripts by Chōkun” ensemble dance “Shushin Kaneiri”

June 2, 2019: “Grand ceremonial and celebratory arts” Day 1

6-1-2. Project Operations

Production of these Ryūkyū arts projects is mainly supervised by Nakamura, with one or two other creative supervisors. The engage with the idea that “Although there is a strong class of performers in Okinawa, the issue in future is how to make use of them. We want to help in that regard.”²⁶ Further, they also have the idea that “events are philosophy”, and if that philosophy is not passed on, it will become a mere shell and not continue. Their analysis of the reasons for the popularity of the events is a lineup that can hold its own against performances in Okinawa and the contents of their plans being so new that they cannot even be seen in Okinawa. In addition, the producer cites as important “objective viewpoints and sociability”, and thinks that they have an attitude of accomplishing the work, not of an extended hobby. Nakamura himself was not born in Okinawa, so he can view the attractiveness of Okinawan arts objectively and, further, although he has written explanations, shows, and scripts, he has no experience as a performer or musician, and that is one reason he finds it easy to maintain objectivity.²⁷

6-2. Study, Evaluation, and Reasons for Popularity

While the Yokohama Noh Theater’s productions are highly regarded, when the reasons for their popularity are collated as described above, they are as described below.

Firstly, they do not mount performances that the performers want to do, but make the attractiveness of traditional arts easy to understand by the producers focusing on objectivity. Further, by adding new trials, the recreate the traditional arts and offer performances that cannot be seen elsewhere.

In order to achieve this, producers are required to play a role as explainers who communicate in easily understood terms the traditional arts, which have much tacit knowledge, and have imagination with a new focus, personal connections with the excellent performers, and the ability to negotiate.

7. Conclusions Obtained from this Survey

In this report, we adopted the idea that a long-term focus is necessary for encouragement of culture and the arts, cited the projects by two companies that encourage traditional Okinawan arts from within their corporate sponsorship, and

²⁶ Ryukyu Shimpō, December 26, 2014 <https://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/preentry-236483.html>

²⁷ Interview with Nakamura, Yokohama Noh Theater

sought out factors that enable their involvement to continue. As a result, it is clear that involvement is rooted in an empathy for local society from seeking out objectives and the recipients of sponsorship from among local social issues, partnering with specialist organizations and, from the operations perspective, appointing long-term specialists and supervisors.

Further, when seeking solutions to productions at the Yokohama Noh Theater on the subject of falling numbers of participants in the qualifiers and competitions in recent years, it was evident that the reasons for their high regard and popularity lie in the focus on the spectators and the recreation of traditional arts that cannot be seen elsewhere.

Hitherto, traditional Okinawan arts have developed around improving the techniques of the performers, but in future, new developments can be expected through methods that express the attractiveness in easily understood terms, and involvement in undeveloped parts such as a fusion of legacy and recreation, so that the number of people may increase concomitantly with the aim on performers.

At the center of this encouragement of traditional Okinawan arts are the Times and Shimpō newspapers, and precisely because both companies are ahead of the pack in their involvement as corporate sponsors has led to an awareness as part of local identity. On the issue of traditional Okinawan arts, which are part of the local identity, future involvement will need to take a long and wide perspective as an issue for the region overall, including the public sector.

During the writing of this report, novel coronavirus infections became widespread, and a state of emergency was declared in Japan. All economic activity stagnated, and the cultural and arts fields have no prospect of recovery in sight. It was decided to cancel the Times' qualifiers for this fiscal year, and the Shimpō announced a delay. Precisely because, in this day and age, the significance of culture and the arts is being re-questioned due to the pandemic, a long-term cultural and artistic recovery is called for with a broad field of view.

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