

A century on stage

c1-2014-unit8-タカラズカ 100 周年



←A chorus line of 100 dancers performs at the Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka, Hyogo Prefecture.

1) OSAKA -- The all-woman Takarazuka Revue marked 100 years of leg-kicking, cross-dressing, singing, dancing and thrilling audiences on April 1.

2) A special performance by the all-woman company is now playing a run at the Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka, Hyogo Prefecture.

3) During the show, which started March 21, 100 dancers in costumes evoking pink roses form a flamboyant chorus line in front of a gigantic

birthday cake. It's vaudeville meets Moulin Rouge, with a little Japaneseness in the mix.

4) Among the dancers are 39 women from the 100th class of the Takarazuka Music School, who graduated March 1.

Revolutionary revue

5) The three-part Moon Troupe 100th anniversary program runs until April 28 at the Takarazuka Grand Theater and from May 16 to June 15 at the Tokyo Takarazuka Theater.

6) Takarazuka was founded in 1913 by Ichizo Kobayashi, the founder of Hankyu, a major railway operator based in Osaka. He brought the women together hoping to attract people to his hot-spring resorts. The company was the first in Japan to present a revue, a show combining music, dance and drama. It grew steadily, opening a theater in Tokyo and performing overseas.

7) The Rose of Versailles," a tragic love story set during the French Revolution, is one of its most popular performances. The musical was a sensation when it premiered in 1974, and is now regarded as a "Takarazienne" classic.

8) Playwright and director Shinji Ueda's long efforts to keep the play fresh have helped it endure. When new actresses take on major parts, he revises the plot to play to their strengths.

9) The play tells the story of a romance between Oscar, a female aristocrat raised as a man, and Andre, her less wealthy foster brother. It also explores an ill-fated relationship between Marie Antoinette, the queen of France, and Swedish Count Hans Axel von Fersen.

10) The musical was adapted from Riyoko Ikeda's manga comic book of the same name. Ueda rewrote it for the stage because of the popularity of the manga among women. Versions of the play that focus on von Fersten and also on Oscar and Andre have been performed.

Popular tradition

11) Performance style is passed from generation to generation for the most famous scenes. "The Rose of Versailles" has brought 4.77 million people to theaters in total.

12) Takarazuka consists of five troupes, which take turns performing the plays. In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of its foundation, the company is spending extra time and money on special effects for the performance.

13) Takarazuka's success is based on its regimented and seniority-based system of training and recruitment. "Senior students teach juniors about how to behave," said Kazuo Sumi, chairman of Hankyu. "This helps pass down the Takarazuka traditions and deepen ties among classmates. More than 1,300 graduates attended a ceremony last year for the school's centennial. Takarazuka is as much a family as a company."

14) Takarazuka's first independent staging abroad took place last year in Taiwan. The run made a slight profit from box office revenues and income from sponsors, Sumi said.

15) "We will strive to preserve Takarazuka and to evolve," he said. "It is beloved by many people." 【April 10, 2014/Nikkei】

cross-dressing: 男性の衣装を身につけること thrill:わくわくさせる run:公演 company:一座、劇団 evoke:(賞賛等を)引き起こす flamboyant:華やかな、大胆な gigantic:巨大な vaudeville 寄席演芸 : Moon Troupe:月組 found:創立する sensation: 大評判 premiere:初演する playwright:脚本家、劇作家 endure:耐える、持ちこたえる take on:引き受ける revise:改訂する、修正する aristocrat:貴族 explore:探査する ill-fated:不運な adapt:(作品を)改作する consist of:~から成る take turns:交替する commemoration:記念 special effects:特殊効果 regimented:厳しく統制された seniority-based:年功序列の centennial:100周年祭 box office:大人気の strive:努力する beloved:愛される

★Ice breaker for active discussion★

1. Have you ever seen any of the shows of the Takarazuka Revue? What was your impression of the troupe?
2. What was the reason for founding the troupe?
3. What system of instruction is being practiced traditionally at Takarazuka school? What do you think about it?
4. What do you think are the challenges for a woman playing male role?
5. If your daughter shows interest in entering the Takaruzza school, how would you react?
6. Make sentences using the following words: evoke, flamboyant, gigantic, endure, take on
ill-fated, take turns regimented, seniority-based, strive and beloved.