



The Potential of Citizens' Musical to Foster Community Strength Effects of "Sakigake; Dreams Drawn with True Friends"

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Abstract. This study examined the community formed for the musical "Sakigake¹; Dreams Drawn with True Friends" in the Kurashiki Citizens' Creative Development Project. It focused on the life of Magosaburo Ohara (1880-1943), who contributed to the cultural and economic development of Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture in Japan. The collaboration of residents who came together to perform in the musical was found to have aspects such as ESD and STEAM education. In addition, it clarified the potential of the musical to help foster community power by bridging the gap between social education and school education.

Keywords: Musical Theatre · ESD · STEAM · Community · Education

1. Background

"Citizens' Musical" is a type of public theatre in which residents gather on a volunteer basis to perform musicals. According to theatre critic Isao Ohyama (1904–1993), "public theatre" refers to theatrical performances in general that "provide entertainment, education, and other spiritual sustenance for the general public at low or no cost, without the aim of pursuing profit" in contrast to commercial theatre. Secondly, he states that although "the artistic level tends to be low," it has "a higher and wider range of social functions and cultural significance than commercial theatre and modern drama [1]." Shoyo Tsubouchi (1859-1935), a playwright and the first Japanese translator of all of Shakespeare's plays was one of the first to apply the community theatre philosophy that had been popular in the United States since the 1910s to Japan. He advocated the importance of theatre activities conducted by ordinary citizens in their leisure time [2]. The theatre has historically been a functional tool for connecting people and has had an educational aspect for the past 400 years. The Jesuits, founded in 1540, are said to have performed 100,000 plays in over 500 schools and theatres until they were banned in 1773 and used theatre to propagate their faith [3]. Tsubouchi also stated, "Theatre is an institution of inspiration and instruction, an institution that inspires and teaches the people of the world [4]." The good use of theatre is meaningful for mutual understanding across countries and can be used to foster regional strength in each other's countries.

Today, urban areas in Japan are experiencing an influx of population from rural areas. In addition to the possible diminishment of a sense of attachment and belonging to the local community due to the frequent influx and outflow of residents, as well as an increase in the number of single-person households and one-room apartments, an increasing number of households do not wish to engage in community-based activities. In rural areas, there is a noticeable outflow of population, especially among the younger generation, to urban areas. Moreover, depopulation and aging are progressing, making intergenerational exchange within the community more difficult and causing a decrease in the number of community leaders [5]. Maintaining local communities is an important issue in the current situation of diversifying lifestyles associated with a declining population. In response, a report of the Central Council for Education in 1996 proposed a "fourth sphere" of education in local communities, which differs from the traditional school, home, and local communities. It brings together adults with the same goals and interests and nurtures children in such activities since community-based ties have become weak [6]. This study examines the possibility of fostering community strength through the collaboration of residents who gathered for musical performances.

¹ "Sakigake" means pioneer, to be ahead of others. Also, the person or thing itself.

2. Phase 1

The Kurashiki Citizens' Creative Stage Development Project in Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture was launched in 2006, to pass on local culture, traditions, and significant people in history. Original musicals are created and performed with citizen participation on a yearly rotating basis in areas of Kurashiki, Kojima, Tamashima, and Mabi as a part of the Kurashiki Music Festival. "Sakigake; Dreams Drawn with True Friends" was written and directed by the author of this study and performed without an audience in March 2022 due to the coronavirus. However, it was broadcast live by Kurashiki Cable TV and has been streaming on YouTube "KCT Komi-chan."

2.1. Synopsis

This is the life story of Magosaburo Ohara (1880–1943), the second president of Kurashiki Industries, the spinning company. Magosaburo, who felt stuck by the fact that he was the son of a wealthy man, moved to Tokyo to pursue his education. However, he was brought back to Kurashiki because of the debts he had incurred as a result of the debauchery of his bad friends. After returning home, he learned the spirit of service through his encounter with Juji Ishii (1865–1914), who devoted himself to helping orphans at a time when the word "welfare" did not even exist. Magosaburo was extremely moved by Juji confronting numerous social problems amid the wave of modernization so started supporting him. Magosaburo also supported Torajiro Kojima, a painter from Nariwa Town, in studying in Europe, and collected numerous Western paintings, including Monet's "Water Lilies" and El Greco's "Annunciation." Furthermore, he contributed to the advancement of culture by establishing the Ohara Museum of Art in 1930, the first museum in Japan to exhibit Western paintings. The stage also makes use of local culture and art, such as the projection of Western paintings on display at the Ohara Museum of Art and footage of the Okayama Orphanage, said to be the oldest documentary film in Japan, shot by RSK Sanyo Broadcasting in 1905, and live music by Kurashiki Tenryo Drums, the group which has been active both in Japan and abroad.



The Stage with masterpieces from the Ohara Museum of Art in the background



Using an actual photo of orphans in the background



Performance by Kurashiki Tenryo Drums

Table 1. Participants

	Age	Sex	Ex ※	Remarks
1	10s	F	N	Elementary school student, not good at expressing herself in public.
2	10s	F	N	Elementary school student, good at sign language and English.
3	10s	F	N	Elementary school student, experienced dance, participating with elder sister in Junior High.
4	10s	M	1	Elementary school student, experienced Tamashima citizens' musical, participating with his mother.
5	10s	F	N	Elementary school student, active singer, experienced dance.
6	10s	F	N	Elementary school student, dreaming of becoming an idol singer, experienced dance.
7	10s	F	N	Elementary school student, active singer.
8	10s	F	N	Junior high school student, experienced dance, participating with her younger brother.
9	10s	M	N	Junior high school student, experienced sword fighting and dance, dreaming of becoming an actor.
10	10s	F	2	High school student, experienced dance, acting and singing, playing the guitar, willing to perform locally.
11	10s	F	N	High school student, attending the school with music course to study musicals.
12	10s	M	1	High school student, belonging to dance club, experienced chorus, good at playing volleyball.
13	10s	F	N	High school student, experienced singing, gymnastics, dreaming of becoming an actor in musical theatre.
14	10s	F	N	College student, experienced chorus and dance, fan of Takarazuka Revue Company, having communication disorder.
15	10s	F	N	College student, active singer, experienced ballet, good at English and Korean.
16	20s	F	2	Vocational school student, attended the high school with music course, has professional career as an actress in Tokyo.
17	20s	F	4	Company employee, experienced Tamashima citizens' musical since childhood, attended to the high school with music course.
18	40s	M	N	Self-employed, experienced chorus, former professional road racer.
19	40s	F	N	Nurse, her children have experienced in Tamashima citizens' musical.
20	40s	F	N	Tarot card reader, the Finalist of Mrs. Earth (Beauty pageant) 2020 in Okayama and Hiroshima.
21	40s	F	2	Public employee, good at singing and playing the vertical flute.
22	50s	M	3	Company Employee, experienced acting and citizens' musical.
23	50s	F	N	Physical therapist, experienced a music band member.
24	50s	M	N	Company employee, experienced chorus and storytelling for children.
25	50s	M	N	Experienced acting on TV and movies.
26	50s	F	N	Experienced straight play in community theatre in Yokohama, moved to Kurashiki recently.
27	50s	F	2	Experienced chorus and citizens' musical in Kojima.
28	50s	F	N	Employee at Ohara museum of art, experienced chorus.
29	50s	M	1	Company Employee, experienced citizens' musical, recitation and improvisation.
30	60s	F	N	Owens music class at home, attending an acting school.
31	60s	F	6	Housewife, experienced citizens' musical since this project was established and others, helped coordinating costumes in the production.
32	60s	M	4	Owens ancestry Japanese pastry shop, experienced citizens' musical in Tamashima and others.
33	60s	M	1	Company employee, running and writing as hobbies.
34	60s	F	N	Former national language teacher, belonged to dance club in high school and college, experienced dance club advisor in school.
35	60s	M	N	Part-time public employee, previous president at an elementary school, experienced chorus especially Buch.
36	70s	M	N	Volunteer city guide, the reason why he participated in the project is willing to challenge a new thing before turning to 80 years old.
37	40s	M	3	Guest performer, writer, director, stage general production manager, executive committee member, author of the study.
38	40s	F	2	Guest performer, singer, actor, and a teacher of singing in the production.
39	40s	M	N	Guest performer, company employee. Member of a theater company.
40	60s	M	7	Guest performer, company owner, singer, vice-chairman of the executive committee, experienced citizens' musical since this project was established.

※Experience, how many times he or she has participated citizens' musical. (N = None)



Figure 1 A special part by experienced dancers in 10s and 20s

Table 2. Schedule

Jun.	13 th (Sun) Audition 27 th (Sun) Uniting ceremony	Jan.	5 th (Wed) Singing 8 th (Sat) Run through 15 th (Sat) Singing and dancing 21 st (Fri) Singing 22 nd (Sat), 23 rd (Sun) Run through 27 th (Thu), 28 th (Fri) Acting 29 th (Sat) Run through 30 th (Sun) Dancing, singing, and acting
Jul.	3 rd (Sat) Singing, workshop based on role selection 10 th (Sat) Singing, workshop based on role selection 17 th (Sat) Singing 24 th (Sat) Singing, workshop based on role selection	Feb.	2 nd (Wed) Decision to cancel the 36th Kurashiki Music Festival due to the spread of coronavirus infection 5 th (Sat) Canceled because of measures taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus 10 th (Wed) It is decided that only musical performances will be held without an audience. 12 th (Sat), 13 th (Sun) Singing and acting rehearsal by zoom because of measures taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus 19 th (Sat), 20 th (Sun) Singing by zoom because of measures taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus 23 rd (Wed) Stage rehearsal at Geibunkan hall 25 th (Fri) Acting 26 th (Sat), 27 th (Sun) Acting, singing, run through
Aug.	7 th (Sat) Singing 21 st (Sat), 22 nd (Sun) Canceled because of measures taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus 27 th (Fri) Passing scripts	Mar.	4 th (Fri) Acting 5 th (Sat), 6 th (Sun) Run through, singing, make-up rehearsal 11 th (Fri) Run through 12 th (Sat), 13 th (Sun) Dancing, run-through 17 th (Thu) Stage preparation and rehearsal at Geibunkan hall 18 th (Fri), 19 th (Sat) Rehearsal on stage 20 th (Sun) Stage production
Sep.	1 st (Wed) Cast announcement 11 th (Sat) Reading script by Zoom because of the declaration of a state of emergency due to coronavirus 18 th (Sat) Reading script by Zoom because of measures taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus, Only six featured dancers had rehearsal. 25 th (Sat) Dancing and singing		
Oct.	2 nd (Sat) Singing and dancing 9 th (Sat), 10 th (Sun), 16 th (Sat), 23 rd (Sat) Singing and dancing 24 th (Sat) Acting and singing 30 th (Sat) Singing		
Nov.	6 th (Sat) Dancing and Acting 13 th (Sat), 20 th (Sat) Acting 21 st (Sun) Singing 27 th (Sat) Singing 28 th (Sun) Singing		
Dec.	4 th (Sat), 11 th (Sat) Dancing and acting 18 th (Sat) Singing and acting 25 th (Sat) Run through		

Table 1 shows the number of participants by age group: 15 in their 10s (7 elementary school students, 2 junior high school students, 4 high school students, and 2 university students), 2 in their 20s, 0 in their 30s, 7 in their 40s, 8 in their 50s, 7 in their 60s, and 1 in his 70s. It can be said that the event functioned as a community where people of different generations could interact with a wide variety of people whom they would not have been able to meet in an organization such as a school or a company, not as family or friends.

Intergenerational exchange is defined as "people of different generations working together to nurture and help each other [7]." With the aging population combined with a declining birth rate and the increasing number of nuclear families, opportunities for involvement between the elderly and children at home are decreasing. Intergenerational exchange activities are aimed at deepening intergenerational ties and mutual understanding in the community. A report of the Central Council for Education in 1996 also states, "For children to develop the 'zest for life,' they need to learn at school systematically and in a carefully planned manner while interacting with adults and friends of various ages in the community and accumulating a rich variety of life, social, and nature experiences."

Educationalist Takaaki Nakai states that children today often play games at home after school or play in small groups around their homes or in parks and that there are not a few children who come home late at night from cram school or lessons, so there are very few opportunities to develop a well-rounded character and social skills in the community. Nakai's definition of character formation in the community is to have a variety of experiences through nature, social, and daily life that children can accumulate through interactions with adults and children of different generations in the local community [8]. As shown in Table 2, it can be said that the participants in this project have nurtured their human skills through the exchange with each other over approximately 9 months of rehearsals.

2.2. Transformation of the performers during the rehearsal process and their structure as a community

(a) Singing

The unison pieces were completed relatively quickly, but the chorus consisting of four voices (soprano, mezzo, alto, and male) took time to perfect because it was necessary to sing at the correct pitch without being influenced by the other parts. The participants were instructed not only to practice singing by part but also to sing one by one until they were able to sing at the correct pitch. Some of the participants were nervous and resistant to singing alone, but they gradually became accustomed to it and were able to sing at the correct pitch. They were also grateful for the enthusiastic guidance they received. In addition, participants who had previous choral experience formed small groups to practice in between rehearsals.

(b) Dancing

The dance part was assigned according to experience and role, but there was no one without choreography at all. The participants practiced under the guidance of the choreographer and the director, but in between rehearsals, the participants spontaneously formed small groups and practiced with the learners under the guidance of the experienced dancers. The learners shown here were mainly experienced dancers in their 10s and 20s, and they faithfully conveyed what they had learned from the choreography and direction, such as counting and palm direction, to the participants, especially those in their 40s and older. The general image of intergenerational exchange is that the older generation teaches the younger generation, but here, the roles are reversed. In other words, in dance, the young people with more experience were recognized as proficient, and those with less experience in dance, especially those in their 40s and older, were recognized as learners with legitimate peripheral participation [9]. This is because participants in their 40s and older often danced at the back of the stage, which did not require advanced skills as a group dance and where mistakes were relatively inconspicuous, while those in their 10s and 20s with dance experience danced solos and special parts at the front of the stage as Figure 1 and further supported the learners to dance correctly.

(c) Acting

As for acting, there was no need for mathematical correctness in terms of definite counts and pitches as in singing and dancing, and it was an interactive process in which the director listened to suggestions from the actors. However, if the appropriate tone and tempo are not created in the dialogue, awkward discrepancies would occur. In other words, it is essential not only to memorize the dialogue but also to communicate with other performers. Although most of the participants created their scenes constructively under the guidance of the director, there were a few who showed behaviors and actions that were contrary to the director's instructions. As one of the reasons for this, it was noted in the post-program questionnaire that the participant felt frustrated by the difference from the acting he had experienced and was dissatisfied with the way the rehearsal process was conducted.

(d) Structure as a community

As Figure 2, the director, choreographer, and instructor who directs the entire group teach the community all at once first. Individual participants would ask questions to the person in the position of each instructor if they did not understand

a part. If there is no legitimate instructor, the participants practice individually or form small groups under the direction of an expert leader who helps the learners to dance and sing correctly. These small groups are not limited, but are flexible, allowing those who need assistance to come and go as they please. In other words, the results of individual and group learning are integrated into the overall practice and performance.

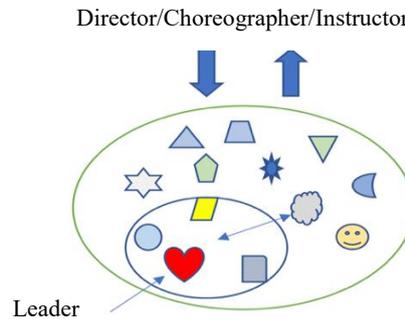


Figure 2. Structure as a community

2.3. Results

Seven questions were asked of the performers in an open-ended questionnaire. Of the 40 performers, there were 37 valid responses and 3 non-responses (2 were from the executive committee and 1 was not submitted). This section focuses on the First Question related to their impression, "Please give us a brief description of your impressions of the event."

Table 3. Answers from the First Question

I enjoyed it.	13
I am grateful to have been able to perform.	10
It was a good experience.	9
I was moved and had a sense of accomplishment.	9
I was able to learn about history and expression.	7
I made friends.	4
Discord in human relations.	3
It was difficult.	2

(Multiple responses only, single responses are not shown)

As Table 3, the answers "I enjoyed it," "I am grateful to have been able to perform," "It was a good experience," "I was moved and had a sense of accomplishment," "I was able to learn about history and expression," and "I made friends," suggest that many were satisfied overall.

However, as indicated by the responses of "discord in human relations" and "it was hard work," there were those who participated at a low rate despite being assigned to a role, those who felt dissatisfied with that person, and those who quit midway through the program due to physical or other reasons. When people from diverse backgrounds gather, they have different measures of common sense. Friction also occurs in human relations. Even when there is conflict, there are things that can be learned through communication, and the significance of a citizens' musical lies in the fact that anyone, young or old, male, or female, regardless of experience, who wishes to participate can do so. There is something special about overcoming difficulties and successfully putting on a stage production in cooperation with friends you cannot meet at work or school that you cannot get in your everyday life. All the performers said they were glad to have done it, and many had smiles and tears on their faces.

Moreover, the participants understood the importance of "passing on culture, tradition and significant people in history," which is also the basis of this project. On reflection, the questionnaire should have included questions for improvement, such as whether the amount of practice was appropriate and whether more consideration could have been given to friction in human relations.

3. Phase 2

Unfortunately, this performance was held without an audience, but it was uploaded to YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fErtG11-lpE&t=2329s>), where it has been viewed more than 10,300 times as of mid-September 2023. There are also comments made by viewers in Tokyo, proof that people can enjoy the story regardless of where they live.

3.1. The potential of citizens' musicals as educational materials

Currently, the Kurashiki City Board of Education is considering using the video of this performance as educational materials for learning about local history and culture at elementary, junior high, and high schools. In particular, the third- and fourth-grade elementary school students have social studies classes to learn about the region, and former Superintendent of Education Masayoshi Inoue said he would love to show this to the children. The musical, which is a comprehensive performing art form, also incorporates elements of music, physical education, Japanese language, history, and moral education, and can be said to play a role in STEAM education as a cross-curricular teaching tool.

Keith Mason (1960–2020), who applied musicals to education, is an eight-time recipient of the Paper Mill Playhouse Rising Star Award for Educational Impact for integrating musicals, a signature element of arts and popular culture, into the high school curriculum and supporting New Jersey's curriculum standards. Whereas it is possible to integrate a curriculum with a musical and its themes through its story, concept, characters, setting, period, and songs, making the whole work for students [10]. Following Mason's method, participants were able to learn through "Sakigake; Dreams Drawn with True Friends" in each of the STEAM areas below.

Science: About spinning amid modernization, manufacturing.

Technology: Recording rehearsals, video distribution, photography, and information sharing.

Engineering: Making props and simple sets for rehearsals.

Arts: Costumes, makeup, hairstyles, singing, dancing, acting.

Mathematics: Converting monetary values in the story to modern values, timing to synchronize music, and dimensions for sewing costumes.

3.2. Empowerment of the community

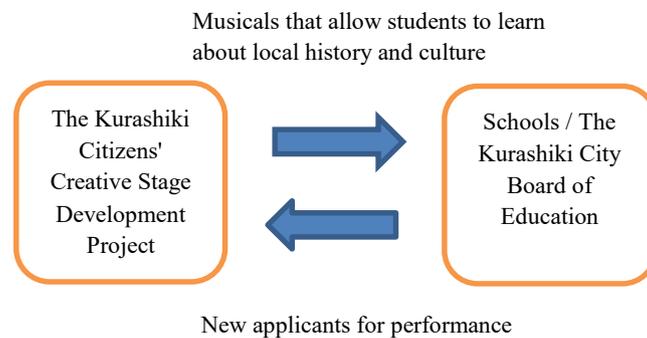


Figure 3. Interaction between the Kurashiki Citizens' Creative Stage Development Project and the Kurashiki City Board of Education

It is also conceivable that viewing the stage video in the classroom will attract new participants. The interaction shown in Figure 3 will increase the number of participants year after year and provide an opportunity to expand the local community. The project can be said to stand as ESD, as it can be expected to find a point of contact between "social education" and "school education" and to foster a community composed of multiple generations in a sustainable manner. Residents can create stage productions based on local history and culture, utilize them in local schools, and disseminate them to people in and outside the prefecture through ICT. Based on the above considerations, citizens' musicals can be a way to cultivate a love of one's hometown and to empower the local community with abundant community power.

3.3. Educational effects of watching theatre

In the early 20th century, Tsubouchi began focusing on the educational function of theatre in social education, saying, "You can learn history and biographies, and learn about various customs and human feelings in various places. Since seeing is believing, and because it immediately appeals to the ears and eyes, it is much faster and more effective than the detailed, laborious, oral analysis of books that school pedagogues rely on" [11].

While history in the school classroom is taught by the teacher to students based on historical facts, or authentic history, history in theatre is learned through empathy with the drama depicting the situations and feelings of the characters, although fiction is also sometimes incorporated into the drama. In other words, the former is a passive learning that is taught in a primary sense from teacher to student, while the latter is an active learning in which the viewer is interested in the story and accompanies it.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study has demonstrated through "Sakigake; Dreams Drawn with True Friends" that citizens' musicals have an educational function and help foster community strength.

Historically, the theatre has been used as an educational tool for indoctrination, and some countries have incorporated theatre into school education to foster the ability to express oneself. Unfortunately, drama classes are not provided in Japanese school education, but participation in citizens' musicals as part of social education can foster not only the ability to express oneself but also the ability to build character formation through collaboration with others. From an educator's standpoint, in the community of citizens' musical, we should know that when people help each other across generations toward a goal, they can nurture "the ability to think, judge, and act to solve problems spontaneously," which cannot be learned in school.

By showing the musical performance to students at school, they can learn about the local community and some of them would be new participants in the citizens' musical, which will lead to the fostering of community power. Community power is nurtured by connecting local people to solve social problems and create culture. Although this study is based on a case of a local city in Japan, it would be expected to foster regional power internationally by creating and sharing a work that transcends ethnic boundaries.

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