

# Interview

★★☆

## ‘A love for musicals motivated my studies’

学生時代に米国横断の貧乏旅行をし、最後の目的地ニューヨークで見たブロードウェイのミュージカルに魅せられた太田健さん。ニューヨークの音楽大学を経て、現在は宝塚歌劇団の作曲家として活躍中だ。音楽家の耳は必ずしも英語耳ではなく、リスニングには苦労したと語る。

The first genuinely “real” musical that Takeshi Ota ever experienced was *Grand Hotel*, playing on Broadway. At the time, Ota was a **senior** at his university in Kyoto, but he had a real **hankering** to travel in the U.S.

“I backpacked my way across America for two months and my final destination was New York City,” said Ota. “The city was amazing to me, like nothing I had ever experienced. I walked around and ended up in Times Square. A guy in the streets saw me, handed me a flyer and told me with a smile that it was ‘crazy good.’ I had no idea what he was talking about, but then I saw the words *Grand Hotel*.”

Ota **promptly** went to see the show and what he saw was “completely different from the musicals I was seeing in Japan.”

He decided then and there that he must become a **composer** of musicals and that someday he would return to Broadway.

Ota kept that promise. In 1996, he got a **scholarship** to the Mannes School of Music, where he studied under music **greats** like Carl Schachter and David Loeb.

Now in his 40s, Ota is a composer of musicals **in his own right**, mainly for Takarazuka — Japan’s unique, all-women **theater troupe**. A native of Osaka, Ota is based in

Kobe, which allows easy access to Takarazuka **headquarters**. He often travels to Tokyo for meetings and stage work too.

“I get to do a job that I love,” laughed Ota, who added he had always loved music and musicals. “I feel so **blessed** but I wouldn’t have gotten here unless I studied English.”

During his **undergrad** years Ota went to an English conversation school. He knew he was “really bad at listening skills.”

“People think that because I’m a musician, I can **pick up** a foreign language easily, but **it didn’t work like that**. Music is a language unto itself, completely different from learning English. There really were no shortcuts.”

Ota watched Broadway musicals on DVD and listened to songs, **straining to** make sense of the lyrics while analyzing the music as well.

“English is a muscle, and you have to train it the way dancers and singers train for a musical,” said Ota. “The other thing is to have confidence. Don’t be afraid to say what you think and never mind the grammar. Don’t get **stage fright**. Overseas, people will always **commend** you for speaking up, rather than keeping quiet because you were afraid to say the wrong thing.”

(Kaori Shoji)

太田健(おおた たけし)

1970年大阪府出身。京都教育大学教育学部音楽科に入学。卒業後、作曲家を志望し、京都市立芸術大学大学院音楽研究科作曲専攻で修士号を取得。1996年、奨学金を受け、米ニューヨークのマネス音楽大学大学院専攻科に入学し修士号を取得。2002年宝塚歌劇団に入団。宝塚内外で各種作品の音楽を手掛ける。



THE JAPAN TIMES

### Words to remember

Nice work if you can get it, and you can get it if you try.

米作曲家ジョージ・ガーシュウインの曲の歌詞。初めてブロードウェイでこの曲が使われているミュージカル *Crazy for You* を見て感動しました。米国のサクセスストーリーは今も好きですし、希望を与えてくれます。

\*本欄インタビューのロングバージョンはウェブでお読みいただけます。

senior 最高学年。hankering 憧れ。promptly すぐに。composer 作曲家。scholarship 奨学金。greats 偉大な人々。in ... right 自分自身の能力で。theater troupe 劇団。headquarters 本拠地。blessed 恵まれた。undergrad 大学生。pick up ~ ~を習得する。it ... that そういうものではなかった。straining to ~ 懸命に~する。stage fright 人前であること。commend ~をほめる。

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お問い合わせ:

販売: Tel. 03-3453-4350 Fax. 03-3452-1298

Email: jtsales@japantimes.co.jp

広告: Tel. 03-3453-5242

Email: jtad@japantimes.co.jp

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