



Amon Miyamoto

Believing in People's Potential in Order to Fully Unleash Their Appeal

Amon Miyamoto is a director/artistic director whose activities transcend both national borders and theatrical genres, directing musicals, straight plays, operas, kabuki, and other forms of drama in many different countries. SCOPE's editorial team asked him his secret for managing cast members and staff when they all exhibit strong individuality and when each production has a unique set of cast members and staff.

Enjoy Chemical Reactions Between People

In 1987, at age 29, Miyamoto made his debut as a director with an original musical "I Got Merman" (a portrayal of Broadway star Ethel Merman's life), for which he received the following year the Grand Prize of the National Arts Festival hosted by the Japan Agency for Cultural Affairs. In 2004, he became the first Asian to direct a Broadway musical, "Pacific Overtures," which garnered four Tony Award nominations, one of the most prestigious awards in theater.

Miyamoto, now 61, has directed more than 120 productions with his unique take on traditional arts. When the number of cast and crew in a single production can reach nearly 100, how does he lead such a big team whose skill levels and professional experiences are so different? We asked Miyamoto this question, and he responded with clear words that beat a comfortable rhythm.

"My style is to fully unleash the appeal unique to that person and assign to him or her the most suitable role, rather than building a team. As we get older, many of us are inclined to impose boundaries on our capabilities, but life experiences gained from striving to achieve great results are applicable in many different fields. I dare to cast in a manner

which results in a production resembling a mixed martial arts competition. I could say that, objectively speaking, we then enjoy watching the new "chemical" reactions born of people's encounters with each other as well as with the works themselves."

Miyamoto doesn't maintain a designated theatrical company; he renews the cast for each production because it keeps him energized. Commenting on this, Miyamoto says, "If I get to a point of feeling secure, then that's where my future ends. Such complacency would show explicitly in my work. Even if we have been working together for a long time, we should not be overly dependent on each other. Each of us grows by gaining experience through work, and we should provide each other a platform where we, as friendly rivals, work together in pursuit of 'something yet more interesting.'"

Prior to any overseas performance, Miyamoto conducts extensive research on the location, as traits of local people vary, and favorite works and responses differ country to country. He believes that thorough research makes for well-received productions. Another factor that he takes into account is the difference in ways people communicate. For example, Japanese people may be able to drive a project forward with unspoken agreements, but such an approach doesn't work elsewhere.



Amon Miyamoto

Director/artistic director. Born in Ginza, Tokyo, in 1958. He made his debut as a director with the original musical, "I Got Merman," for which he received the Grand Prize of the National Arts Festival hosted by the Japan Agency for Cultural Affairs. In 2004, he became the first Asian to direct a Broadway musical, "Pacific Overtures," which earned four Tony nominations. His productions of straight plays, operas, Noh dramas, etc., span the world and a broad spectrum of genres.

Amon Miyamoto Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/AmonMiyamotoOfficial/>

Miyamoto explains, "Because we all live in different cultures and environments, we must respect each others' identities, choose our words carefully, and communicate mindfully even if it is time-consuming. Working together requires the building of relationships through close interaction."

We Only Live Once. Enjoy It – Make the Most of It.

The smile never seems to leave Miyamoto's face. He says he values the inspiration he gets from conversations with others. This is because what sounds "off the wall" may reveal a speaker's unique thoughts, and gems can be found in nonstandard opinions. From his clever words and gentle demeanor, it is hard to imagine that, in the past, Miyamoto struggled with human relationships, and experienced truancy and social withdrawal during his high school years. We asked him for some words of advice for people having difficulty communicating with others.

"I fully understand how people feel when they are struggling with relationships. I still am not confident about how I relate to people. But when I observe people's faces carefully, I find that many of them are also lacking in confidence. Since we both are struggling with confidence issues, we should start by greeting each other casually, like saying 'Good morning,' or showing appreciation verbally, such as 'Thanks for everything today,' rather than thinking too hard about how to build a good relationship. Such casual interactions may reveal an unexpected side to the person and bring about surprising changes in the relationship. I try to talk in the gentlest way possible to the people I feel are the hardest to deal with."

For the last few years, Miyamoto has been focusing on fusing all types of Japanese traditional arts and culture to achieve cutting-edge entertainment. He devotes himself to generating novel theatrical expressions and to thrilling audiences. His passionate words and twinkling eyes are brimming with curiosity and creativity.

Miyamoto summarizes, "You only live once. It's a waste if thinking about the past and worrying about the future is pulling you down and keeping you from enjoying 'now.' Just be yourself and enjoy life. Whatever happens, hope is around the next corner. Life is short. I'm determined to live life to the fullest, and to enjoy it."