

## **Junior High School and High School**

### **Grand Prize**

#### **“The attractiveness of Plus $\alpha$ ”**

12<sup>th</sup> Grade, Urasoe High School by Makoto Matayoshi

Every year, many tourists visit Okinawa attracted by the blue sea and white sandy beaches. From the plane that is going to land at Naha Airport, people cheer when they look down on the cobalt blue sea that stretches below. Nowadays, tourism is a major industry in Okinawa. Businessmen involved in it also put efforts into doing studies, and tourism has evolved.

On the other hand, however, under the name of tourism, development of land has progressed, while nature has changed in its appearance rapidly. Putting too much emphasis on blue sea, and white beach, the sea is reclaimed and mountains are carved. I am worried and think, "If this goes on, what will happen?" The current appearance already has enough attractiveness as a tourist destination. So, can we stop any further overexploitation?

I think what we need for the future of Okinawa is to formulate new strategies. If only the "scenic island", visitors would be satisfied even they come once only. They may not think, "I want to come again". I think in order to get them to come to Okinawa more than once, especially those regularly from abroad, attractiveness of Plus  $\alpha$  is needed.

There are happenings that inspired me about the charm plus  $\alpha$ . I have been learning classical ballet since I was small. Currently, the ballet group that I belong shows the work that combines the folk dance of Eastern and Western ballet. In particular, dancing with the music of Ryukyu lets one feel familiar to the body and nostalgia. Once, we carried out small theater performances in Kokusai Street. The audience and

the stage were so close that the reaction of the audience is conveyed to us directly. As the program continues, I felt my heart beating faster as if the stage and the audience had become one. The audience aligned at the exit trying to give us a farewell, and I was asked for a handshake from a woman past middle age that looked like a tourist.

“I just walked into the theatre unintentionally. It was awesome! I want to see it again. Is it performed every year in this period?”

The women looked really happy while telling me her impression about the performance. Then,

“It wasn’t just the blue sea here, right? You’d better do more ads.”

She said.

“Not just the local people, even tourists find my performance good.” I was so happy as if I had a pair of white wings and flew in the sky.

For me it is ballet and in Okinawa, there are many talents in performing arts such as karate, Ryukyu dance, and Eisa dance. I would like to propose that people could make use of their skills for tourism as a new tourist attraction.

Okinawa was once an independent country called the Ryukyus. Small as the country was, it was prosperous by trading with many countries such as China and Southeast Asia using ships freely. For this reason, it has its own culture that can be found nowhere else. I think Ryukyu dance, karate and eisa dance are some of the cultures that we should be proud of in the world.

In fact, organizations of large and small go abroad for the performances, and were highly appreciated. However, I think the current situation is that even though in Okinawa competitions of karate and dance performance are held actively, only persons concerned would come. Very limited people can enjoy the performances. We should have been able to expand the customer base with just a little more efforts.

In August this year at the same place, we will start our performance. Will the woman come again? We only met once, but I do not know why I look forward to seeing her again.

In Europe, there are dance troupe and orchestra performances at a scheduled time every year on a regular basis. When it comes to that time, people gather from local and abroad, queue in front of the theater. People who visit from other countries may have a meal or do some sightseeing after the show. Many people say "I would like to view directly the background of this work where it was produced". There are interests of living and streets and history. It is a good example of linking arts and tourism together. I think it is inspiring as a new direction of tourism in Okinawa.

As the attractiveness of Plus  $\alpha$  for Okinawan tourism, it is to incorporate arts. Each organization performs Ryukyu dance karate and eisa dance once or twice a year for tourism. Sometimes they may collaborate to create a piece of work together, in the long run this time. Gathering the information, the administration then creates a calendar of performing arts and sends it out locally and abroad. It is called the "scenic island of arts". People must come if the performances are held on a regular basis. When it comes closer to the time, they will think," I have to go to Okinawa", tingling with excitement. In this way, there will be a possibility for a new style of tourism in Okinawa that tourists come regularly.

I have a dream. It is the history of Okinawa so far. It is the original culture brought up there. It is to create the Ryukyu suite wove by them. Everyone that performing Ryukyu dance, karate and Eisa dance, let us chase the dream together! Performances such as "Swan Lake" and "Nutcracker" were also challenging when they were played for the first time. After being played timelessly and countlessly, they are now the world's famous works. I want to show our works that we have created from now on to become famous. We are going to invite the audience from local and abroad. Outside the National Theatre and the Convention Theater, I want to have people line up there from various countries. I will make Okinawa into the island of fragrant culture just like Vienna and Prague.

Everyone from all over the world, why not come to the scenic island of arts? You will be enslaved by the dazzling arts feast.