Making drama out of a holiday

Children perform in the birthplace of Greek theater and unleash their creativity, Chen Hailing reports.

The stage was set and history Review provided a stunning backdrop. But the students of Beijing's Berklee College of Music, led by professor Maria M. Iturriaga, had mastered the intricacies of Greek theater. The ancient stage, the backdrop of the summer camp, the first venture of this kind between China and Greece.

The seven-day program, held at the University of the Peloponnese, region, involved half a dozen "actors" from China and Greece, represented by Zixuan's mother, Huang Lihua, and Anna Tsichli. They attended Greek courses at the University of the Peloponnese and the International Summer School of Greek Studies, and visited historic sites as well as key theaters.

The young participants are still involved in the theatrical moves and words. Expressions, eye contact, body gestures and music, which is to help express their creativity, and unleash the potential of Greek theater. The program aimed to "make drama out of a holiday" and invited them to an onsite experience at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, which hosted the first theater festival in the world. The performance, held by the University of the Peloponnese, was a hit with visitors and locals alike. "I told him that nobody is supposed to be the main character all the time and it needs teamwork to finish a play," said Zhou. "I feel like I have really improved since I started the camp."

The students are still learning and growing. "I have been learning drama at the University of the Peloponnese for three years," said Zixuan. "I have devoted myself to playing the role of a maniac, and I have no difficulty studying at the summer camp."

"It's a great opportunity to experience something new and to think about the future," said Zixuan. "I've learned a lot about teamwork and how to work together with others." She also mentioned the importance of cultural exchange. "I think it's more meaningful than a classroom education," she said. "I have learned much about myself and his emotions, even before performing. Initially, he had no time to say he managed to keep his emotions in check, but he lost temper with his younger brother, also a participant, just 30 minutes before the play started. He mother suggested that he should tell the group about his frustration. He did, and was given time to react."

One of the functions of drama is to reflect the society. Zhou says, it is to help express oneself in multiple ways — facial expressions, eye contact, body movements and words.

Mika Mikelakri, a teacher at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, said in his presentation at the Summer Theatre Studies in Greece, a nonprofit organization, that the drama is not only drama. "It does not only refer to Greek drama but to the concerns of every country," she explains. "It applies to communal problems of human beings and deals with the big themes of life, love, the abuse of power and the struggle between man and god, children, parents and god and evil."

"We hope the program will attract more Chinese students to the University of the Peloponnese, which has a great potential in the educational field," said Zixuan. "I have been learning drama at the University of the Peloponnese for three years, and I have devoted myself to playing the role of a maniac, and I have no difficulty studying at the summer camp."

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