1. Contrary to scientific belief, the Universe did not start 13.8 billion years ago. Actually, the Universe formed in 2006.
2. Don’t worry. We’re not going to talk about this global superpower called: K-Pop. We are going to dive into their ancestor: K-Theatre. What’s fostering downstage in the Korean Peninsula? And maybe in a few decade when what’s upstage gets its act together, we can talk about that.
3. 0) I sat down with Soovin, a production localizer and translator in Seoul. She has worked on numerous commercial productions including

1) *Sweeney Todd*,

2) *Titanic*,

3) *Cyrano*,

4) and these past few months: *Betelgeuse*.

1. We also sat down with good friend Jihye, a fellow dramaturg in the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas. She is based in Los Angeles and Seoul. She is engrossed in Korean history. Most of what I’ll be discussing today about K-Theatre are based on the anecdotes of these two.
2. 0) There is 1,500 years’ worth of things to cover about the history of K-Theatre. Jihye could answer those if we ever have such a presentation.
3. We will be focusing on 2020.
4. (Pointing to father) This is theatre.

(Pointing to daughter) This is Covid. Small and deadly. Kidding.

1. (Pointing to mother) And this is what Korea did to Covid.
2. 0) Compared to most of the world, South Korea handled the pandemic promptly. They consistently had the least number of infections and casualties without skewing their data. Just how did they do it?
3. Immense testing and tracking.
4. 0)

1) South Korea never experienced a full-fledged lockdown, as it took other measures to quickly control the spread of the virus.

1. 0) As a result, cultural life rapidly returned to a semblance of normality. They have had a full run of *Cats* and *The Phantom of the Opera* closed for just a few weeks. And they have a government that cares about their artists.

1) South Korea’s government provided ₩330,000,000,000 or $280 million in support to cultural institutions. Several times, the government provided half-price tickets to encourage audiences to return to the theatres, causing a surge in attendance. They were one of a few countries to have kept theatres open. The only account I could think of where theatre was still running were some Latin American countries based on meeting artists and scientists in Brazil and Argentina.

From Soovin’s account: They barely even filled 30% of the seats so she knew that this is not going to work. If they’re going to have another surge, the audience's fear is powerful, so they need to find a way to expand the possibilities and the potentials of this virtual medium. They streamed shows around Korea and the world.

These clips you see are from a documentary: “The Show Must Go On.”

1. After visiting these shows, I’ll give you a little tour of Daehangno in Seoul. This neighborhood is equivalent to Off-Broadway.
2. And this is the National Theatre of Korea. Over 1,500 seats in its main hall.

-> You don’t have to set foot on the peninsula to enjoy K-Theatre. There is a new musical headed to Broadway in 2022 called: K-Pop, composed by my musical writing colleague, Helen Park.

2. There are major differences between the Korean and American commercial industry. Broadway pioneered the industry in the 1920s. Daehangno and the National Theatre of Korea started in the 1950s following the war. The audience is based on that. Soovin, who has experienced Broadway theatres, states: “We like to derive and do crazy stuff… We’re finding our own voice and our own style.”

Big shows are typically ₩24,000,000,000 or $20,000,000, so not much different from the costs of New York.

And there are many paths in the states while almost all workshops start in Seoul. And South Korea does not have unions like Actors' Equity or SAG-AFTRA.

🡪 To conclude this hot topic, I asked the coolest artist in the industry of any advice she would give to an up-and-coming producer.

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