

Daughters and Mothers in the Polytechnic University: We Study Russian Together!



Mother and daughter can do a lot of things together: wash, clean, cook, make jokes

and exchange confidences. Our today's interviewee is Maiko MIZUTANI, who plans to enroll in the N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov Saint Petersburg State Conservatory and now, together with her mother is studying Russian in the Institute of International Educational Programs (IIEP), SPbPU.

According to Maiko, she has already made good friends in the Polytechnic University and got acquainted with excellent teachers. The mentors, in their turn, point out that Maiko, as all students from Japan, is intelligent, highly motivated and strives to get high quality education in order to get a good profession and do good to her country. The girl was glad to tell us about her creative work and studies in the Polytechnic University, shared both her nostalgia and plans for the future.

- Maiko, tell us about yourself and where you come from.

- The essence of my life is music. I've been playing violin and piano since childhood and, as experts say (Smiling), I've made some progress in this field. All over the world they know about the traditions of the Russian culture and names of the famous composers, conductors, vocalists and pianists. So, it is in order to obtain Russian music education, I came to St. Petersburg. I plan to enter the N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov Saint Petersburg State Conservatory, which today revives and develops classical music traditions. But first I need to learn Russian, so I joined in the pre-tertiary course in the Institute of International Educational Programs.



My native city is Nagoya. It is an administrative center of the province of Aichi and one of the largest ports in Japan with the population over two million people. In my history classes they taught us that ancient rulers – the dynasty of Tokugawa – were very reverent towards creative search and believed that every achievement would live. Today government officials and art patrons also try to help develop art and creativity – money is invested in building music schools and talented young people are supported.

- How did you get to know about the Polytechnic University and why did you choose it exactly?

- My mother knows your city quite well. She used to work in the International Department of Nagoya University and visited St. Petersburg several times. It was she who told me about the Polytechnic University, about the pre-tertiary program, about the teachers and unique practice of your university in the field of education for foreigners. Now, my mother is also learning Russian in the IIEP, because she believes that the teachers of the department “Russian as a foreign language” are one of the best in St. Petersburg.



- And you? Do you like to study in the IIEP?

- But of course! There are all the conditions for foreign students to study and live.

The teachers pay a lot of attention to us and always explain if something is unclear. In addition, interesting guided tours are organized for us, including field trips to the countryside, cultural events. For example, last fall I took part in the international festival of the youth creativity "Golden Autumn" and was awarded the first prize in the nomination "Instrumental Art". Just recently, there was "Miss IIEP" contest and again I walked out on the stage to tell the audience about Japanese culture and traditions. I was not the winner, but I was really pleased to see that the audience and the jury liked the sushi I had cooked and how I played the violin.



- In your opinion, what is the most difficult in studying Russian?

- You have very similar sounds, like “r” and “l”, “b” and “v”. It is hard for the Japanese to catch them and distinguish. In our classes the teachers often give us composition assignments. Even though I’m learning Russian grammar quickly, it is difficult for me to speak Russian without mistakes. But I try hard. I can already understand what people around are saying and I can even go to the theatre without an interpreter (Laughing)! I would like to thank my teacher – Iren Robertovna Kuraleva – for that. She never gets tired of repeating what I don’t understand and I do my best not to let her down. At the end of the spring I’ll have to do a test in Russian, I hope everything will be fine.

- What unites the students of our countries from your standpoint?

- In Japan the society and state make serious demands to school and university students and graduates. In Russia, young people seem to have more freedom in defining their objectives and choosing a university. But one thing, I believe, we have in common: desire to learn and get to know the world. One more thing: young Japanese, the same as students of St. Petersburg universities like to wear stylish and democratic clothes.

- You said that you have already made friends in the Polytechnic University. Do they help you in anything? What have you learned from them so far?

- There are students from Iran, China, Syria, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Venezuela, Austria and Spain in my group. What can I say about them? Only good things! They are cheerful, kind and sincere people. We often meet each other at cultural evening events, which take place in our institute. At one of them I learned that in Iran, for instance, carrot is considered to be a ... fruit, whereas in China they celebrate New Year in the early February. I study from my course mates to feel free and keep my composure in any real life situation. My roommates are Carla from Kazakhstan and Julia from Uzbekistan. We cook together, have fun and go for a walk around the city. I’m sure we’ll remain friend after we finish the course.

- Which places have you already visited in St. Petersburg? Which of them did you like especially?

- My mother and I went to the Mariinsky and Alexandriisky Theatres. I walk a lot around the city, enjoy the good weather and sunshine, which please not only Petersburgers but also the guests of the Northern Capital. In summer we are going to visit St. Petersburg’s suburbs. I’m looking forward to seeing the legendary palaces and parks.



- Now you are 7.5 thousand kilometers away from home. What reminds you of Japan and what helps you in the foreign country?

- First of all I'd like to say that I really love St. Petersburg and I'm grateful to my Russian friends for their support. But, of course, I'm homesick. It is the sakura in blossom which reminds me of the motherland. In Japan the sakura symbolizes renovation of life and spring, beautified by its gentle pink colors, reminds of a magic bird singing for all citizens of Japanese cities. Wonderful flowers of the sakura unite the Japanese and give them calmness and hope. We adore this time and we always want it to linger...

In St. Petersburg you can see a sakura in blossom in May in the Botanic Garden. There is a real Japanese nook in there! I've already visited it so that the sakura would make my dearest wish come true – to continue my studies in Russia.

- Maiko, what would you like to wish to the students and teachers of the Polytechnic University?

- When I feel sad I always think about an old Japanese saying: Fortune will come in to a house with laughter. This is really true! Our good mood and positive thoughts attract good people and happenings to us. I wish all the best to the people – happiness and joy, successes in all their affairs. Believe in yourself and everything

will work out well!

Brought to you by the Media Center, SPbPU according to the information presented by the International Cooperation Office

Дата публикации: 2016.05.24

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