

Temam Baru

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JAPAN FOUNDATION KUALA LUMPUR
BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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JAPAN FOUNDATION
国際交流基金

JFKL's Upcoming Programmes

d'MOTION International Dance Festival
Community-Based Arts: Meetings & Roundtables
ONE ASIA Joint Concert 2015
The Weekend Japanese Film Show



Co. Yamada Un Double Presentation
one◆piece & The Rite of Spring



Co. Yamada Un Double Presentation

one◆piece & The Rite of Spring

Celebrated dancer Un Yamada is no stranger to Malaysia, having come here for performances and a residency since 2012. Impressed by the number and ability of local male dancers, she conducted auditions with the hopes of casting the next staging of one◆piece. Five candidates made the cut and will travel to Japan for rehearsals, before performing the famous work in a double bill with the full Co. Yamada Un troupe at klpac this January 2016.

one◆piece

Since its debut in 2004, Un Yamada's seminal creation—featuring a single-gender cast—has toured internationally and been performed by Japan's leading women in dance. Following ten years of success, it was revised for the opposite sex in 2014, with new sets, costumes and musical accompaniment introduced to reflect this change.

Now coming to Malaysia for the first time ever, the 2016 show will boast an ensemble entirely composed of homegrown talent. Raziman Sarbini, Fauzi Amirudin, Pengiran Khairul Qayyum, Lu Wit Chin and James Kan are set to bring to life the vivid athleticism and military precision that garnered the work much critical acclaim.



© Naoshi Hatori



© Naoshi Hatori

The Rite of Spring

The premiere of Igor Stravinsky's radical production in 1913 nearly resulted in a riot as the audience displayed their displeasure at the 'avant-garde' nature of the content. Today, it is considered one of the most influential ballet and orchestral compositions of the 20th century.

Yamada's interpretation draws on the same primitive forces that inspired the Russian conductor more than a century ago. Performed by the full extent of her company, dancers throw themselves into the complex rhythms of the frenetic score with intense movement, harnessing their collective dynamic energy to explosive effect.

Date & Time : 8.30 p.m., 30 January 2016
5.00 p.m., 31 January 2016
Venue : Pentas 1, The Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre
Admission : TBC

Further details will be released soon. Visit jflk.org.my and klpac.org for updates.



© Naoshi Hatori

Un Yamada

Founder, Co. Yamada Un

Trained in gymnastics, ballet and Butoh, Yamada draws ideas for her pieces from a variety of sources. Described as sensitive, energetic and dynamic, her style has influences in music, visual art, literature, academia, fashion and diverse body movements.

In addition to her dance and choreography career, she has organised workshops for a wide range of participants, as well as worked to cultivate new dancers across Asia Pacific and the Middle East. In 2000, she won the prestigious French Embassy Prize for Young Choreographers at the Yokohama Dance Collection Solo x Duo Competition. Two years later, she added company founder to her resume with the establishment of Co. Yamada Un, which has gone on to perform in 31 cities throughout Japan and 23 cities worldwide.

In 2013, she received the 8th Japan Dance Forum Award, following it up the next year by receiving the New Face Award at the Minister of Education Awards for Fine Arts and an official designation as the Japan Cultural Envoy for East Asia.

d'MOTION International Dance Festival 2015

Now in its third year, DPAC's annual season-closing event sees artistes from six countries gathered together for an exciting range of performances, workshops and other fringe programmes. This includes the Asian Festivals Exchange, a series of collaborative residency works by dancers and choreographers from Japan, South Korea, China, Singapore and Malaysia.

One of these is a new piece co-created by Kwang Tung Dance Company artistic director Amy Len and the award-winning Naoto Katori, and that will be performed by DPAC Dance Company, which won the Best Group Performance prize at the 12th BOH Cameronian Arts Awards.

Katori also makes an appearance at the International Platform alongside Ikumi Kurosu for a reprise of RE:DIVISION, which took home a Sibiu International Theatre Festival Prize and the Touchpoint Art Foundation Prize at the Yokohama Dance Collection EX 2015.

Event duration: 14–20 December, 2015

Programme A – International Platform

8.30 p.m., 16 & 17 December, 2015

Theatre, Damansara Performing Arts Centre (DPAC)

RM58 for Adults

RM48 for DCARD members, Students, Senior Citizens and the Disabled

Programme B – Asian Festivals Exchange

8.30 p.m., 18 December, 2015

3.00 p.m., 19 December, 2015

Black Box, Damansara Performing Arts Centre (DPAC)

RM58 for Adults

RM48 for DCARD members, Students, Senior Citizens and the Disabled

For online purchase and more information on other festival activities, visit dpac.com.my



Naoto Katori and Ikumi Kurosu
© Yoichi Tsukada

© Asia Contemporary Dance Now 2006



COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS: REGIONAL EXCHANGE MEETING & ROUNDTABLES

18-20 December 2015
GEORGE TOWN, PENANG

Bringing together presenters from Japan, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, the inaugural programme seeks to shed light on recent developments that have led to a regional boom in community-engaged arts activities as well as best practice approaches to networking and capacity-building.

Over the course of three days, the expected participant makeup of arts administrators and practitioners will engage in discussions that serve to further posit creativity as a tool for urban rejuvenation, stakeholder involvement and community conviviality.

UPCOMING EVENTS / CONFERENCE



Sadayuki Higuchi



Prof. Sumiko Kumakura

Day 1 – Regional Meeting : 18 December, 2015
9.00 a.m.–7.00 p.m.

Day 2 – Roundtables : 19 December, 2015
9.00 a.m.–5.30 p.m.

Day 3 – Field Trip : 20 December, 2015
9.00 a.m.–3.30 p.m.

Registration : Call 604 2663 471 or
email cea.network@arts-ed.my

For more info, visit communityarts.my or arts-ed.my

Held in partnership with:

arts~ED

thinkCITY

After successful shows in seven Southeast Asian countries, AUN J Orchestra – considered the most representative traditional Japanese music group – makes its way here for a combined performance with their gamelan-playing counterparts. Watch the magic unfold as instruments from two different cultures collide to produce a refreshingly original concoction of rhythm and sound.



ONE ASIA Joint Concert 2015



8.30 malam pada Khamis 3hb Disember, 2015
— Dewan Filharmonik PETRONAS —

8:30pm on Thursday 3rd December, 2015 Dewan Filharmonik PETRONAS

Tickets Adults:RM50 Students:RM25

For more information, visit www.dfp.com.my

THE WEEKEND JAPANESE FILM SHOW

DECEMBER 2015

Date : 5 December, 2015

Time : 3.00 p.m.

Venue: Auditorium, Content Malaysia Pitching Centre,
 Unit G09 & G10, Platinum Sentral
 Jalan Stesen Sentral 50470, Kuala Lumpur

Tamako Love Story

たまこラブストーリー

(山田尚子 YAMADA Naoko/2014/83 min)



© Kyoto Animation/UsagiYama Shopping Street

Tamako is the eldest daughter of a family that runs Tama-ya mochi chop in the UsagiYama Shopping District. Mochizo is Tamako's childhood friend whose family owns the mochi shop across from Tama-ya.

Love Story picks up where the anime left off, with Dera the talking bird bringing us back into the story – Mochizo is attempting to build his courage and confess his feelings to Tamako before leaving for university in Tokyo. When he eventually does, this delves Tamako into a state of shock as she grapples to deal with this revelation and her own feelings.

The 13th Japanese Speech Contest for Secondary Schools

Theme: Malaysian Proverbs

We grew up with many proverbs and some can be very memorable. Proverbs are phrases used to convey messages or lessons in a symbolic manner without directly addressing them. Talk about your own experiences based on a proverb that has amused or motivated you.

Contest Date: 17 April, 2016 (Sunday)



Eligibility:

Open to all Malaysian students who meet the following criteria:

1. Neither one parent is Japanese;
2. Aged between 15 and 18 years old (as of 1 April, 2016)
3. Not planning to visit Japan between April 2016 and March 2017, nor have been to Japan for more than 7 days (between July 2011 and the contest date) and/or more than 6 months prior to July 2011.

More details, application form as well as rules and regulations will be available on jfkf.org.my in mid-January 2016.

UPCOMING EVENTS / SMALL GRANTS

www.penangjazz.com



A multi-day celebration of all things jazz, the event provides both musical and non-musical offerings. In addition to main stage performances, visitors can expect workshops, forums, a Malaysian-focused concert, a sunrise show, poster and photography exhibitions, as well as a closing jam session that goes into the wee hours of the morning.

Event duration

3-6 December, 2015

"Jazz by the Beach" – Main Stage

5 & 6 December, 2015

Bayview Beach Resort

RM85 per day (free standing)

Island Music Forum

5 & 6 December, 2015

Bayview Beach Resort Ballroom

Free

For online purchase and ticketing outlets, visit ticketpro.com.my

For more information on other festival activities, visit penangjazz.com



Dos Orientales



Atsuko Yashima

UPCOMING EVENTS / SMALL GRANTS

The 5th International Conference on Tropical Environmental Design

Some 100 policymakers, researchers and practitioners from various disciplines are set to converge for a meeting of the minds on advancing the field of built environment. The programme – comprising keynote speeches and paper presentations – will be of interest to anyone who has contemplated sustainable innovation with regards to architecture in warm and humid climates.



Fumiaki Takano



Professor D.Eng Makoto Watanabe

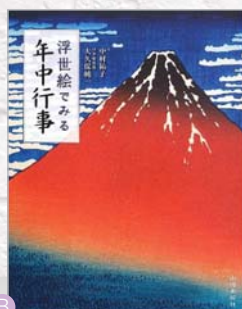
Date : 2-3 December, 2015

Admission : RM648

Venue : Palm Garden Hotel
IOI Resort City
Putrajaya

For more info, visit susted.upm.edu.my

JAPANESE BOOKS



Japanese Language for Learners

- A** 「まねて上達! にほんご音読トレーニング / CD 付」松浦真理子ほか【著】アスク出版 2014年Library Call No.811.1T
 「NIHONGO ACTIVE TALK – The first Japanese Textbook for Beginners / CD 付」
 上原由美子、菊池民子【著】アスク出版 2014年Library Call No.817.8T
 「KANJI IN CONTEXT Revised Edition / WORKBOOK Vol.1, 2」
 アメリカ・カナダ大学連合日本研究センター【著】ジャパン・タイムズ 2013年Library Call No.811.2T

Japanese Language for Teachers

- 「日本語のオノマトペ 音象徴と構造」浜野祥子【著】くろしお出版 2014年Library Call No.814.35
 「日本思想におけるユートピアー日本語学習者のための日本研究シリーズ1」高橋武智【著】くろしお出版 2014年Library Call No.302.1 E
 「Good Writing へのパスポート」田中真理、阿部 新【著】くろしお出版 2014年Library Call No.816.5

Linguistics

- 「外国語コミュニケーション力に情動が及ぼす影響」荒木史子【著】渓水社 2014年Library Call No.807

Fiction

- 「神去なあなあ日常」三浦しをん【著】徳間文庫 2012年Library Call No.913.6MIU
 「さよならオレンジ」<第8回大江健三郎賞>岩城けい【著】筑摩書房 2013年Library Call No.913.6IWA
 「約束の海」山崎豊子【著】新潮社 2014年Library Call No.913.6YAM

Arts and Culture

- 「この世は落語」中村翠【著】筑摩書房 2013年Library Call No.779.13
 「現代美術史日本編1945-2014改訂版 JAP/ENG」中ザワヒデキ【著】アートダイバー 2014年Library Call No.702.16

Custom and Folklore

- B** 「浮世絵でみる年中行事」中村祐子【文】大久保純一【浮世絵監修】山川出版社 2013年Library Call No. 386.1

Guide Books

- C** 「外国人が選んだ日本百景」ステファン・シャウエッカー【著】講談社 2014年Library Call No. 291.09
D 「鮨:JIRO GASTRONOMY JAP/ENG」小野二郎、小野禎一【著】山本益博【監修】小学館 2014年Library Call No.596.21

Picture Books

- 「おしくら・まんじゅう」かがくいひろし【さく】ブロンズ新社 2009年Library Call No.726.6

< Recommended Books >

「まねて上達! にほんご音読トレーニング / CD 付」

口を動かす運動(音読・シャドーイング)により、聴解力・会話力など総合的な力を向上させようと考えてつくられた音読教材です。全部で30Unitあり、人に向かって話している場面のものと、日本文化などについて書かれたエッセイの2種類があります。音声は、「基本」「ゆっくり」「1行ずつ」と3種類あり、自分のレベルに合わせて選択できます。英語訳つき。

「浮世絵でみる年中行事」

江戸時代の季節の行事を、それぞれの行事に関連のある浮世絵で紹介しています。四季とともに生きづく「年中行事」には、意味があるのだということを改めて感じさせてくれます。

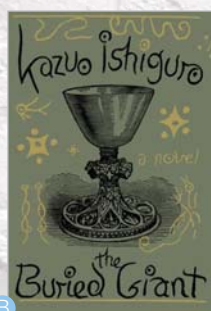
「外国人が選んだ日本百景」

日本人が考える有名な観光地と外国人が行ってよかったと思う場所とは、必ずしも一致していません。インターネットで日本の観光情報を海外向けに発信している「ジャパン・ガイド」を運営する著者が、サイトでの外国人観光客の満足度と人気度から観光地をランクづけし紹介しています。

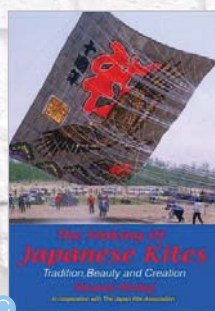
ENGLISH BOOKS



A



B



C



D

General Reading

- A [Razak Sensei: Pemangkin Jalanan Malaysia- Jepun]** by Kalthom Husain, Aida Nasirah Abdullah and Hanipah Hussin. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2015. Library Call No.923.7595 KAL
- B [The Buried Giant]** by Kazuo Ishiguro. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015. Library Call No. 823.914 ISH
- D [If There Were No Japan: A Cultural Memoir]** by Roger Pulvers. Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture, 2015. Library Call No. 952 PUL
- [Tree-Ring Management: Take the Long View and Grow Your Business Slowly]** by Hiroshi Tsukakoshi. Tokyo: JPIC, 2015. Library Call No. 650.1089 TSU
- [Japan Journeys: Famous Woodblock Prints of Cultural Sights in Japan]** by Andreas Marks. Hong Kong: Tuttle Publishing, an imprint of Periplus Editions (UK) Ltd, 2015. 769.952 MAR
- [Samurai Tales: Courage, Fidelity and Revenge in the Final Years of the Shogun]** by Romulus Hillborough. Rutland, VT: Tuttle Pub., 2010. Library Call No. 923.03 HIL
- [The Final Betrayal: Mountbatten, MacArthur and the Tragedy of Japanese POWs]** by Mark Felton. Barnsley, South Yorkshire [England]: Pen & Sword Military, 2010. Library Call No 940.54050952 FEL

Arts and Culture

- C [The Making of Japanese Kites: Tradition, Beauty and Creation]** by Masaaki Modegi in cooperation with Japan Kite Association. Tokyo: Japan Publications Trading Co., 2007. Library Call No. 796.15 MOD

<Recommended reading>

[If There Were No Japan: A Cultural Memoir]

Originally published in Japanese, *If There Were No Japan: A Cultural Memoir* was acclaimed for its insights into Japanese life, bringing together aspects of history, culture and everyday life to paint an original and revealing portrait of the Japanese people and the pressing issues facing them today. During his decades of passionate engagement with Japan, Pulvers became close friends with many of the most gifted writers, filmmakers, actors and journalists in the country. Whether delving into ancient traditions or providing vivid accounts of contemporary customs, analysing characters in Japanese fiction or recounting personal encounters with individuals, the author illuminates those inventive elements that have made Japanese culture and design the envy of the world—and that signal a way forward into the twenty-first century.

Library

Please kindly be informed that the library will be closed on:
7–28 Dec 2015 | Stock take
29 Dec 2015–4 Jan 2016 | Year-End Holidays



(from left to right) Takuji Harada (Japan Club of KL), Kenji Ohta (Mitsubishi Corporation), Yoshinori Kodama (Embassy of Japan), Masato Harada, Koh Mei Lee (GSC), Shoichi Toyoda (The Japan Foundation, KL), June Khoo (Cinema Online), Ho Hock Doong (Astro), Kung Suan Ai (Pavilion KL), Koay Chee Keong (Maxis).

Japanese Film Festival 2015

by Tristan Toh | 10 September–4 October, 2015

Japanese movies have long captured the imaginations of viewers globally for their rich storytelling, vivid visuals, and inexhaustible entertainment value. This cannot be more evident than at the Japanese Film Festival (JFF), which celebrated its 13th anniversary in Malaysia against a background of euphoria.

Held in September and October at selected Golden Screen Cinemas nationwide, the annual event showcased a bumper programme bursting with diversity and creativity. Award-winners and critical darlings shared equal billing with commercial blockbusters and crowd-pleasers in the 13-strong lineup; encompassing drama, action, comedy, arthouse, fantasy and animation.

The festival kicked off on 8 September with a red carpet unfurled in front of GSC Pavilion KL, where *Kakekomi* was presented to a packed house of key players in the film, diplomatic and academic fields. The samurai tale about feudal era divorce was an overwhelming hit in Japan, attracting crowds to theatres nearly four months after release.

The director, Masato Harada, made a special appearance at the ceremony, much to the delight of invitees who were regaled with stories of his professional life and inspiration behind the title. The next day, 28 homegrown filmmaking and acting talents further received the chance to learn the tricks of the trade from Harada himself at an exclusive workshop co-organised with Astro A-List. In spite of the limited time available, the participants—a mix of industry veterans and novices—walked away with a newfound grasp of skills in front and behind the camera.

Kakekomi was also the curtain-raiser at the Kuching opening on 1 October at GSC CityONE Megamall, graced by the attendance of Sarawak state secretary Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi bin Abdul Ghani, Sarawak State Planning Unit director Datu Haji Ismawi Haji Ismuni, and Mitsubishi Corporation Malaysia chief executive and Kuala Lumpur general manager Kenji Ohta.

The public certainly reaffirmed the feature's place in the spotlight, as it scored one of the highest hall occupancy rates among the selection of films. *Only Our Little Sister*, the latest effort by audience favourite Hirokazu Kore-eda, edged it in the standings. The graceful portrait of four siblings regularly filled seats at every venue, echoing the success of Koreeda's previous work *Like Father, Like Son*.

Devotees of Japanese pop culture were out in full force as well. The opportunity to watch former AKB48 member Atsuko Maeda take on the role of a lazy bum in *Tamako in Moratorium* and visual kei rocker Gackt portray a prince in *My Little Nightmare* proved too good to resist to their respective fans, as are big screen treatments of anime franchises *Initial D the Movie Legend 2: Racer* and *Mobile Suit Gundam: The Origin I – Blue-Eyed Casval*.

Visitors gave the same warm reception to the rest of the festival offerings, representing refreshing alternatives to the usual staples of big-budget Hollywood productions. The continued large turnout of regulars and varied demographic makeup demonstrated that there is a strong hunger for world cinema, making JFF a quintessential fixture on the local cultural calendar.



Mix FM DJ Linora Low poses for a selfie with a fan.



Golden Screen Cinemas CEO Koh Mei Lee welcomes the audience to the KL opening ceremony.



Masato Harada enhances appreciation for his film with interesting nuggets of behind-the-scenes information.



Japanese minister and deputy chief of mission Yoshinori Kodama delivers the opening speech.



(from left to right) Shoichi Toyoda, Koh Mei Lee, Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi bin Abdul Ghani (Sarawak State Secretary) and Kenji Ohta at the Kuching opening ceremony.



(from left to right) Dato Jamil bin Hambali (Chairman, UiTM Kota Samarahan), Shoichi Toyoda, Kazuhiro Watanabe (Chief Financial Officer, Mitsubishi Motors Malaysia), Datin Hajah Ayu Kartina Abdullah, Koh Mei Lee, and Dato Haji Ismawi Haji Ismuni (Director, Sarawak State Planning Unit) at the Kuching opening ceremony.



Tsunan in summertime



The reading in session



Tomoko and the writer in the communal kitchen



Welcoming the audience to the reading



Rehearsal of Family with (from left) Hiroko, Keiko and Mikuni

Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale

by Leow Puay Tin | 3 –9 August, 2015 @ Tsunan

In early August, I went to the mountainous Snow Country of Japan, famous for its winter and summer sceneries. For over a week, I stayed in Tsunan, a township in Niigata Prefecture, north-central Honshu. The sunlight was glorious if a bit too intense, and it was hot indoors too with air conditioners humming at 26 degrees. I was there for possibly the world's largest art festival, spanning 750 sq km and 200 villages: the sixth Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (ETAT) which, for the first time since its inception in 2000, has included the performing arts. One of my plays, *Family*, would be 'performed' in a workshop setting.

A highlight of my stay was reading a book borrowed from a participant of another project involving foreign wives who moved to Tsunan from elsewhere. Published in 1837, the title was translated as *Snow Country Tales: Life in the Other Japan*. It helped me to appreciate the hardships of wresting a living in this picturesque land where snow falls in such quantities in winter as to bury houses and freeze rice fields solid.

Snow Country may be beautiful and tranquil but it is suffering from the socio-economic effects of an aging and dwindling population. This is why the region has become the site of the mega art festival. The idea, or radical vision, was to stimulate economic growth through art. Held over the summer, reports claimed that ETAT drew up to a million visitors over its 50-day duration. I began to get a sense of its scale and attraction from visiting some of the art installations, made by a mixture of farmers as well as local and international artists. These works were scattered all over a variety of venues, from the typical (museums and art centres) to the unconventional (open fields and abandoned schools).

I was invited to the festival through theatre director Shirokama Hitsujiya (of Yubiwa Hotel), who wanted to revive the Women in Asian Theatre project as initiated by the late dramatist Koharu Kisaragi in the early 1990s. To this end, Shirokama formed a new Asia, Women and Performing Arts Collective with a group of female academics and practitioners. I have a 'historical' connection to this having participated in the first conference organised by Koharu. Shirokama invited two women directors, Mikuni Yanaihara (of Nibroll) and Hiroko Takai (of Tokyo Tanbarin), to work with 12 actors (11 women and 1 man) on a rehearsed reading of *Family*, which was translated by Keiko Tsuneda. We all stayed together dormitory-style at the Kamigo Clove Theatre-cum-art residence. This building used to be a school, one of several in the region that were closed due to a lack of young people.

The directors had chosen portions of text from the working-class part of *Family*. The gender and individuality of the characters were

erased and merged through ensemble-playing and only the protagonist, Mrs Yang, was played as a distinct role. This was the first time I had the chance to see Japanese directors and actors in action, with Keiko as my translator and informant. It was hard work for the actors who were always on their feet, always in performance readiness, open to a continuous stream of suggestions and invitations from the directors to try things out on the rehearsal floor. Much was tested, discarded and altered, over and over. I think this pace and demand would have tired most people, but these indefatigable actors consistently responded with a cheerful enthusiastic 'hai!' (yes!) no matter what was asked of them.

The 'performed' reading was held in the storeroom. 'Found' objects – such as tables, stools, chairs, wall clocks, window blinds, pieces of carpet and cloth, a bed, a globe, a telephone, etc. – were incorporated into the performance. The rest were stacked away at the sides and a strip of space was cleared for the audience to sit for the two readings. I saw a highly-charged, tightly-structured performance – the actors literally became 'working class' from the sheer physical labour that Mikuni's choreography had put them through. They had no time to rest, they could not linger, they could not take their time – but they were not robotic or mechanical, just not-at-peace, always restless, driven to move, to move on. I have never seen such an interpretation of my play before – I am curious as to how the directors would have treated the other parts of the text which was not done at the reading, where the working-class *Family* had become middle class and later very wealthy, and hope that Mikuni's intention to stage the whole play will become a reality in the near future.

The communal kitchen was a wonderful meeting place. There I met Tomoko Ando (of Areca Theatre) who had volunteered to cook for our little community. Hearing that she was in the original cast of the late director Ota Shogo's *The Water Station*, I confessed that I didn't understand the non-verbal play from watching a production in Singapore some time back. Hearing this, she offered to give me a demonstration. On the morning of our departure from Tsunan, she showed us some of the theatre techniques from her work with Ota. All Tomoko did was walk but in such a way that through her walking, her pauses, the turning of her head, the focus of her eyes, the concentration of her mind, she created a world outside and inside of her. Momentary and timeless. And somehow the simple things she did had an effect on the watcher. Shirokama said she was moved to tears watching Tomoko. I found Tomoko's demonstration strangely beautiful and significant, an encounter with the Other Japan in the storeroom of an arts centre on a bright morning.

A theatre veteran of over 20 years, Puay Tin currently heads the Department of Performance & Media at Sunway University.



Installation of my work before the presentation



Maiko from the Philippines and her daughter at the Tsunan Municipal Hall



Jindawan from Thailand photographed at the Tsunan Municipal Hall



Shirotama during the presentation



Group photo after the presentation



Black Beauty in the Snow Country

Imagining Winter

by Minstrel Kuik | 3 -9 August, 2015 @ Tsunan

Summer greeted me in its exuberance of light and green when the car started to deviate from the main route. "We are close," said Kyoshi.

Coming from a tropical country like Malaysia, I tried to imagine how four metres of snow would change this jovial scenery when winter finally settles in. Tsunan's remote geography and tough climate have undoubtedly forged the character of its people, but I would not be there long enough to see. Indeed, the hardship of life in Tsunan was unimaginable for summer visitors under the transplanted festive setting, but the amount of abandoned houses and schools, which were gradually being turned into exhibition venues, were there to remind the incongruous visitors of the other side – the real life of the region with winter's hardships and an alarming ageing population.

Foreign wives in Tsunan were something that intrigued Shirotama, who originally came from Hokkaido, and now lives in Tokyo. She managed to meet a few of them through her contacts, and learned that certain decided to work at local bars after their marriage. The good nature of Shirotama pushed her to look at the bright side of the story – a sort of immanent commitment that people have towards the land. And yet, my take of the issue was less imaginative due to my own experience of emigration in Malaysia, and later, having spent years living abroad in various countries.

The objective of my trip to Tsunan was to help Shirotama conduct research through field trips that would later serve as materials for a presentation at the Kamigo Junior High School, which closed in 2012, and later transformed into a residence, workshop space and theatre for performing arts in 2015. Our three-day research included meeting up with the foreign wives that Shirotama had managed to put into contact, who relocated from developing countries like the Philippines and Thailand. I was also introduced to some locals who were the indicators of the rural and agricultural reality in Japan. Cultural sites such as a kimono gallery, spring, municipal hall, and archaeological museums were also in the programme.

What are the ultimate reasons that push people to leave their homeland? What is the definition of the homeland if one lives in more than a place in his lifetime? Tsunan's landscape reminds me of other places with four seasons that I have known and eventually left behind. Imagining winter is to remember the cycle of seasons, its ups and downs. All we want, humans or nature, is to break through the long winter, as a proof of perseverance that ultimately gives our being some true value of dignity, regardless of where we live.

Finally, I sincerely like to thank all the talented and devoted members of Ajokai for their kind patience and guidance during my trip in Tsunan, the Japan Foundation for its support, and especially the people of Tsunan for their warm hospitality.

Minstrel is an artist and photographer whose works have been exhibited both locally and abroad.



Calligraphy I did for the title of the presentation

Japanese Culture Session – Animation Workshop

by Naito Sakiko | 19 September, 2015 @ The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur

In a bid to promote further understanding and appreciation of Japanese culture, the Japanese Language Department put together a workshop for its language learners and interested members of the public on the subject of flipbook animation, otherwise colloquially known as “para para manga”.

Yasuhiro Kagetoshi, a lecturer with much experience in animated imagery and computer graphics, was specially flown in from Tokyo to present a talk about anime production. He began by showing one of his students’ works in order to illustrate the process of making animations from scratch. The participants were then given the chance to craft their own hand-drawn animated clips. Everybody felt a rush of excitement when they witnessed their creations come to life on-screen.

Lucky draws were also held towards the end of each session. Winners received the opportunity to travel to Japan for a one-week Japanese language course and a one-week homestay programme, courtesy of Intercultural Institute of Japan and Nextage Co. Ltd. respectively.



The 12th International Conference on Japanese Language Education in Malaysia and Urawa Teacher Training Reports

3–4 October, 2015 @ Ambang Asuhan Jepun, University of Malaya

Co-organised by The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur and University of Malaya, the annual conference aims to provide support for the research and development of Japanese language education in Malaysia.

This year’s conference was attended by more than 220 participants from within and outside the country. The keynote speaker was Dr. Shingo Imai of University of Tsukuba, whose presentation was

entitled “New Silent Way: How to Teach without Teaching”.

A total of 14 papers were presented: four oral and 10 poster. 14 poster presentations were made during the Urawa Teaching Training Reports. The core Malaysian teachers from the Japanese Speakers’ Forum made their debut here, with three papers based on their action research proposals.



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24 Dec 2015 | Prophet Muhammad’s birthday

25 Dec 2015 | Christmas

29-31 Dec 2015 | Year-End Holidays

1 Jan 2016 | New Year’s Day

MERRY CHRISTMAS
& HAPPY NEW YEAR 2016



Kado-matsu, a Japanese New Year decoration



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