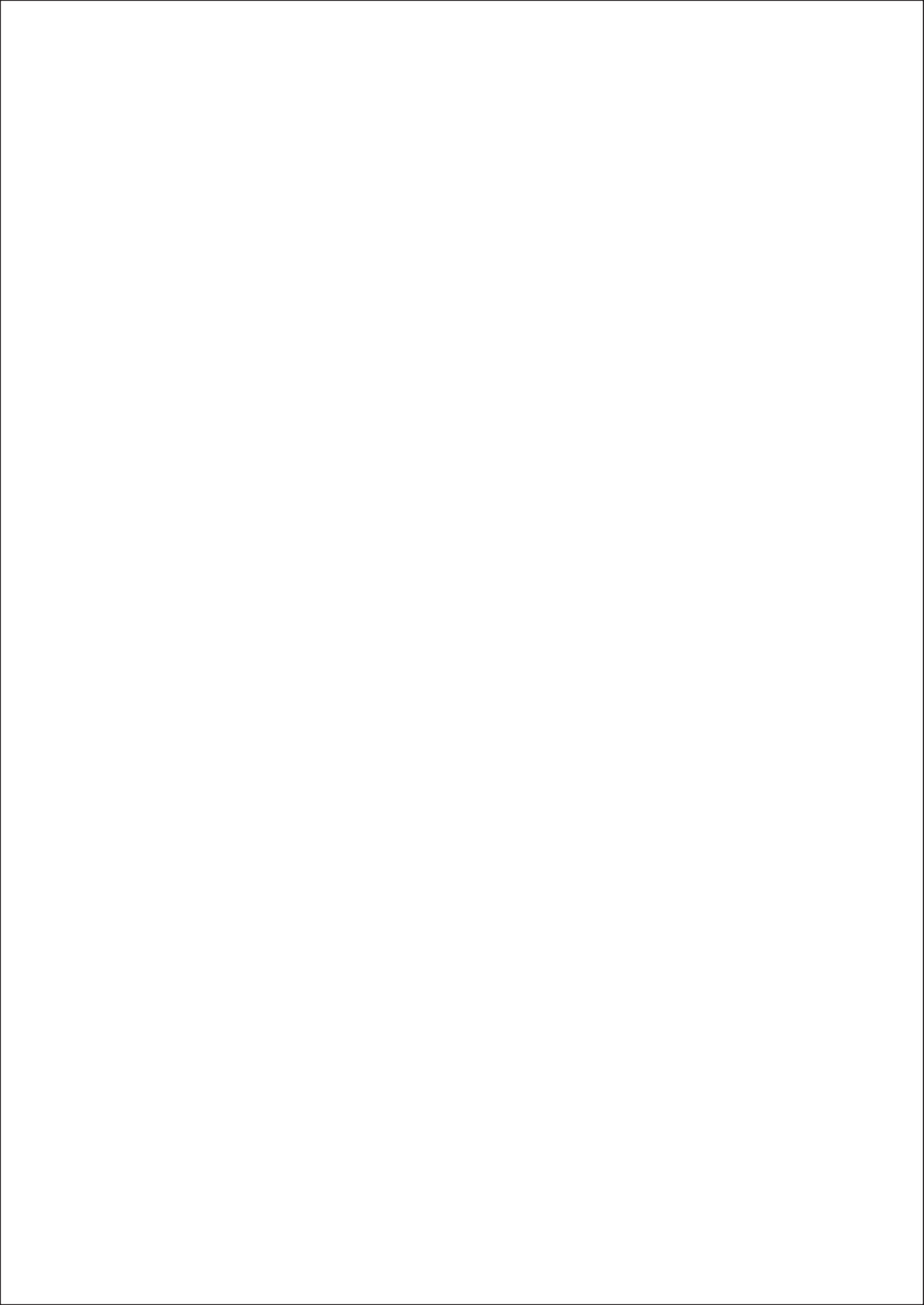


# Past, Present and Future:

The 30th Anniversary of the Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur



## Greetings from the Director

The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 with the main goal of cultivating friendship and ties between Japan and the world through culture, language, and dialogue. The Kuala Lumpur office known as The Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur Liaison Office was established at Wisma Nusantara, off Jalan P. Ramlee on 3 October 1989 as the third liaison office in SEA countries, following Jakarta and Bangkok.

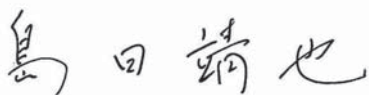
The liaison office was upgraded to Japan Cultural Centre Kuala Lumpur with Prince Takamado attending the opening ceremony on 14 February 1992. Japanese Language Centre Kuala Lumpur was then opened at Wisma Nusantara on 20 April 1995. In July 1998, the office moved to Menara Citibank, Jalan Ampang and then once more to our current office in Northpoint, Mid-Valley in September 2008.

Since the establishment, the Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) has been working on various projects such as introducing Japanese arts and culture to Malaysia and vice versa. JFKL has also closely worked with the Ministry of Education to form a solid foundation of Japanese Language Education especially in Malaysian secondary schools and conducted various seminars and trainings for local Japanese teachers. We have also been supporting Japanese studies and promoting dialogues on common international issues. The past 30 years have definitely been a long yet memorable journey in bringing the cultures of the two countries together. The cultural exchange with Malaysia has become more significant and crucial as Japan heads towards a multi-cultural society and there is a lot to learn from Malaysia.

I would like express my gratitude to all the people and institutions that have worked with us, who have come and supported our events together with the former and current JFKL staff. We would not have made it here today without them.

As a celebration of our 30th anniversary, we published this booklet with essays contributed by individuals and organisations that have worked closely with us along the way, together with voices from the public to look back on our fond memories as well as to share the exciting future plans that lie ahead.

We hope the past has made a better present, and we will keep striving for a brighter future, together.



**SHIMADA Seiya**

Director

The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur

## Foreword

In one of my earliest trips to Japan as an official guest (about 40 years ago!) I told my host (a Government official) what I really, really wanted to do.

I had a packed itinerary. Yes. Meetings and more meetings. "What do you want to do Lat-san?" asked the officer.

I replied to him, "I want to see an old Japanese movie." He looked lost.

"You want to see one of the classics?"

"I would like to watch any old Japanese movie that the ordinary Japanese like- with English or Malay subtitles please..."

Actually I had never been exposed to Japanese films then. I had known quite a number of old black and white motion picture that I collected from other countries I traveled thru.

I liked the movies made in Europe, India, and USA in the late 1940's and 1950's when people were trying to rebuild their lives, and their countries after World War II... the stories were so sincere. But Japanese movies were not available in Malaysia in my young days.

Well, the next thing I know I was in an empty office in Chiyoda-ku, watching a slow-moving 1958 emotional drama... the kind I asked for. There was just me and an information staff who operated the film projector. The movie was "Equinox Flower" by Ozu Yasujiro a story about the time Japan's younger generation no longer saw marriage as their parents' business (gasp!).

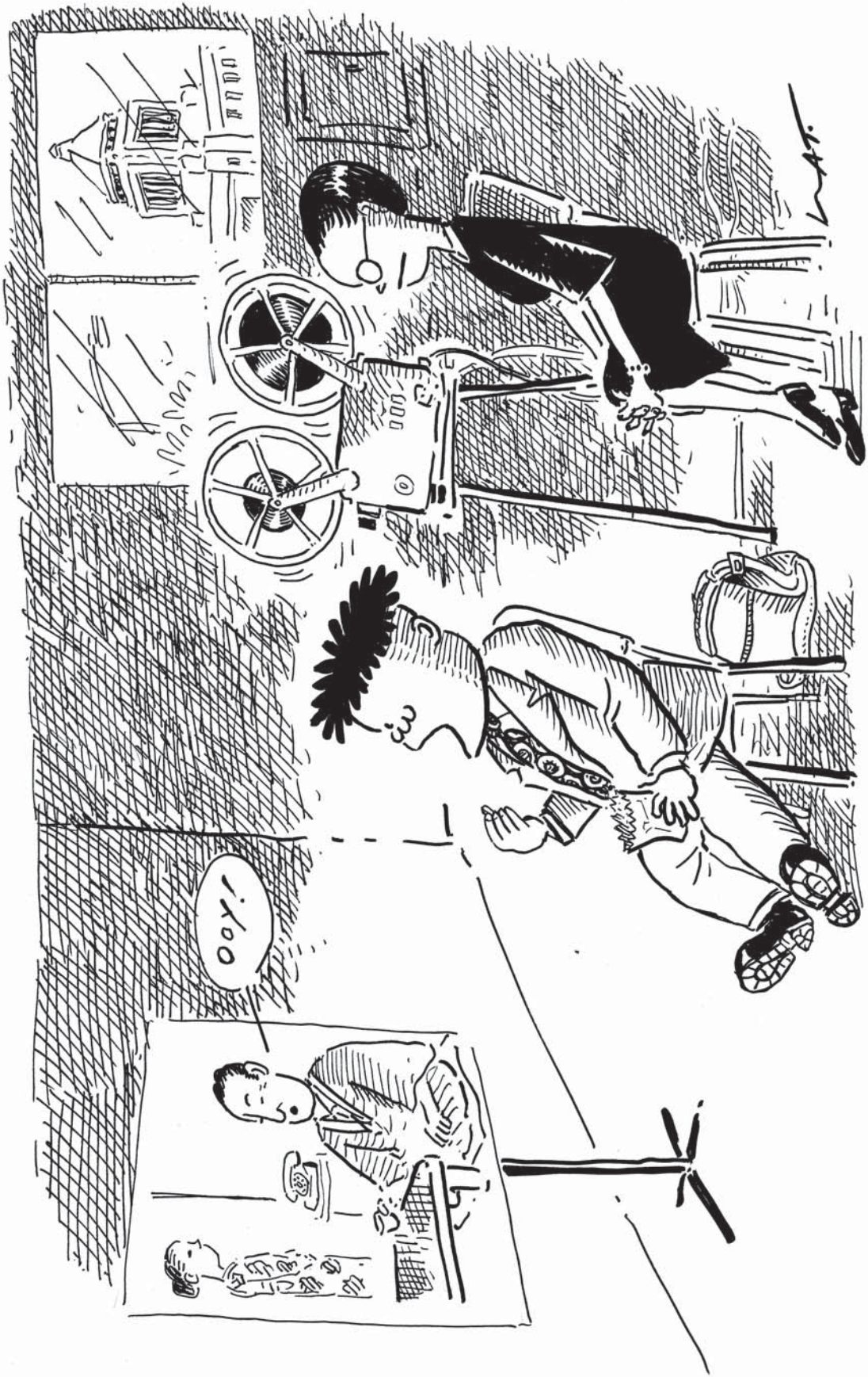
I always say "Yes!" to cultural exchange programs between countries. In my case it paved the way for my 50-year career in editorial cartoons and comic illustrations. I even had the chance to get to know and meet big names like the late Tezuka Osamu, Baba Noboru, Sato Sampei and many others in those days. I followed their foot-steps to be a free-lancer.

The Japan Foundation today connects our two countries together with a continuous range of interaction and cultural exchange activities. We are also connected with ASEAN through the Foundation's Asia Center that carries out mutual exchange programs and cooperative work between countries to foster deeper mutual understanding among fellow Asian neighbours. We Malaysians shall continue to give support!

To  
The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur...  
Happy 30th Anniversary!



**Datuk Lat**  
Advisory Committee Member  
The Japan Foundation Asia Center



# 30 Extraordinary Years with JFKL

**Dato' Dr. Faridah Merican and Joe Hasham OAM**

The value of JFKL's contribution to the Performing Arts scenario of Malaysia is boundless. This value should not only be measured by the quantity of collaborations over the years, but more importantly, the quality and variety.

We have been fortunate to have visiting our shores many wonderful productions from highly regarded Japanese performing arts practitioners. The general consensus among Malaysian performing arts practitioners is, if it's from Japan ... don't miss it! The reputation that JFKL has garnered is enviable. Many other foreign missions do collaborate, quite successfully, with theatre companies in Malaysia, but none have been able to impact our performing arts scene to the standard of JFKL. Malaysia has, over the years, been mesmerised by the discipline and creative output of visiting Japanese performing arts companies, and we have benefitted from the sheer professionalism and passion displayed by these visitors to our shores.

JFKL has supported numerous theatre companies in Malaysia and has delved into all genres of the performing arts: dance, traditional, contemporary, music, theatre, drama, workshops ad infinitum.

The Actors Studio and klpac's relationship with JFKL goes back many years.

In 2000, Pappa Tarahumara performed *Spring Day* at Istana Budaya. Such was the success of this venture that the following year JFKL approached Five Arts Centre and The Actors Studio to hold a series of workshops in 2001. As a result of this, *Spring* in Kuala Lumpur was devised and performed at The Actors Studio @ BSC in 2003 by Japanese and Malaysian performers. The same year The Actors Studio also played host to *RAKUGO* in English also at The Actors Studio @ BSC. This production later travelled to Penang and was presented at The Actors Studio @ GreenHall.

2005 was a very busy year for JFKL's collaborations with The Actors Studio and The Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (klpac). That year saw a total of four presentations. We had *FINKS* (Contemporary Dance Performance) by Leni-Basso Dance Company at The Actors Studio @ BSC. Also at BSC was *A STORY A BIRD GAVE ME TO HEAR*, presented and performed by the renowned Puppet Theatre Hitomi-za, which was founded in 1948.

Then came the opening of klpac, and the very first performance at this iconic venue was *SHOKU*, performed by Ms Kuroda Ikuyo's Dance Company, *BATIK*. The company was formed in 2002 and took the dance world of Malaysia by storm. Such was its impact, that it is still talked about today!

From dance to technical, 2005 also saw the Japan- Malaysia Technical Design Workshops held at klpac. The two design areas that were addressed were *SET DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION* conducted by Mr Hisashi Mitsu and *SOUND DESIGN* conducted by Ms Yamada Kyoko.

2006 was a very exciting year for us. We were absolutely delighted to host *MY MOTHER* by Performance Troupe *TAIHEN*, which was formed in 1983 as the first performance company directed and performed only by the disabled and led by Ms Kim Manri. This initiative was brought about by an invitation accorded Faridah and me to take a cultural tour of Japan. During this sojourn, one of the many theatre companies that JFKL introduced to us was *TAIHEN*. We were so taken by Ms Kim Manri's work with the disabled that we requested an opportunity to work with her. JFKL were keen on the idea and supported the project over a three-year period. It was a most rewarding experience.

The cultural tour of Japan was such a joy and an eye opener. It would take a report of encyclopaedic proportions to give it due credit. In short, it was truly magnificent!

2006 also witnessed the multi-award-winning production of *TOKYO NOTES*, written and directed by Hirata Oriza and performed by Seinendan Theatre Company at klpac. The same year gave us *Yaji and Kita* by *KUDAN* Project and *Hibiki* by *SANKAI JUKU*.

2007 saw a wonderfully eclectic variety of performances.

*THREE SISTERS* by Pappa Tarahumara stunned KL audiences with sold out performances.

*HUTAN KENANGAN*, the final phase of Taihen's three-year collaboration, which featured ten disabled performers and eighteen Kurokos (non-disabled assistants)

THE FLUTE FESTIVAL IN MALAYSIA made up of 60 flute players from Japan, Malaysia, and other countries.

NOT QUITE RIGHT: a highly acclaimed collaborative dance piece performed by Japan's STRANGE KINOKO DANCE COMPANY and Australian designer Justin Caleo.

In 2009 we were rocked out of our seats and treated to a standing room only performance of CONQUEST of the GALAXY: MARS by Condors. The all-male dance troupe from Japan brought the house down at klpac.

2011 witnessed another sold out performance at The Actors Studio @ Lot 10 by the YOSHIDA BROTHERS LIVE in KL.

In the same year we were treated to the wonderful creative talents of Tokihiro Shingo. His DREAM of TIME exhibition and workshop was highly appreciated by the theatre and fashion enthusiasts of KL. klpac was abuzz with Shingo's creations. There was also a devised performance by Malaysian actors and dancers, all robed in his creations.

Shingo, thanks to assistance from JFKL, was also instrumental in designing the costumes for several of our productions.

The Actors Studio @ Lot 10 played host to TAIKUJ JIKANG in 2012. The performance utilised a variety of instruments including, gamelan, Sudanese barrel drums, violin, bass, Javanese vocals and a mixture of Japanese elements in a presentation that involved music, dance and shadow play.

2013 saw the sold-out performance of BUNRAKU at klpac. This 400-year-old traditional Japanese puppet theatre was performed for the first time in Asia and was led by Kiritake Kanjuro III.

There is so much we need to be grateful for regarding JFKL. They have, at every opportunity, contributed to the Performing Arts scene of Malaysia. They have enabled, on numerous occasions, projects that would not have been possible without their assistance. One overriding factor is that all JFKL projects that we have been involved in have always been affordable for the theatre-going public.

Thank you, JFKL.  
Thank you for supporting theatre in Malaysia.

***Dato' Dr. Faridah Merican and Joe Hasham OAM*** co-founded The Actors Studio in 1989 and established seven performing arts spaces. Besides running The Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (klpac) and the Performing Arts Centre of Penang (penangpac), they are also Adjunct Professors at TUTAS, which TAS co-founded with Taylor's University.

# Inspiration for a Malaysian Aesthetic in Butoh

—  
Lee SweeKeong

With the submission of my article came news of Ohno Yoshito's passing. It brought back many memories of our conversations. I visited his father, Ohno Kazuo's studio three times and had opportunities to watch him up close. Afterwards, he encouraged us to visit again. In his words, "to impart skills of mine and Hijikata Tatsumi's skills to you leaves us with no regrets in this world". Mr Kazuo encompassed the spirit of Butoh, and we were saddened to hear of his passing. A loss of such a wonderful Butoh teacher leaves a void in the world of Japanese Butoh, not to mention future possibilities.

As the most experienced Butoh artist in Malaysia, the news has re-ignited a mission in me to promote Butoh in this country. It is beyond one person's ability to do so but in my own way, with every JFKL's support each time, I have organised 12 KL Butoh festivals in Kuala Lumpur. Although Butoh is not a part of mainstream performances here, I can confidently say that some performances have been inspired by Butoh. In my years of training in the art form, I have grown physically and spiritually. A testament of such progress could be seen in my recent work with KL Shakespeare Players, where drama actors and dancers worked and received new trainings.

I derive motivation with the work I do. JFKL's support to KL Butoh Fest allows us to learn from the best in Japanese Butoh. Malaysia has been given a chance to catch a glimpse of it. For us, as years go by, it allows us to develop a Malaysian aesthetics in Butoh. At each one of our festivals, these artists learned and took the best out of every performance from Malaysian artists to create new possibilities and aesthetics. Most of these new forms do not bear names, but each and every one of them is viscerally strong and powerful.

Thank you, Ima Tenko (former member of Biakosha), Asai Nobuyoshi (Former member of Sankai Juku, "The Plots of a Tyrant" in 2016) and Matsuoka Dai (senior member of Sankai Juku, "Earth Womb" in 2018 and "Old Lear" in 2019).

I fondly remember working with the late Murobushi Ko, a Butoh master I had a chance to work with 20 years ago before he passed away. It was his first trip to the Kuala Lumpur. Being the first professional collaboration for him and I, we had a rich experience. I respected him profoundly. We worked on a production titled Pheonix Rises.

Lastly, I miss the late Waguri Yokio ("The Last Testimony of Rashomon" in 2010 and "Water Moon" in 2011).

He came to KL Butoh Fest three times. He told me that he was getting on age. He was more than happy to teach us everything. He taught us valuable lessons and skills he received from the late Butoh pioneer Hijikata Tatsumi. I strongly believe that there is a "Malaysian Butoh". Malaysian Butoh is anchored upon the rich cultural resources that the peninsula has to offer. This piece of land is home to many cultures that span from the traditional to the contemporary. Traditional art and performance forms inform our histories and understanding of artistic strategies and creations, while the contemporary informs us the new directions and strategies contemporary artists have chosen to adopt to represent and re-interpret art and performance forms from the past.

To a certain extent, Malaysia and Japan share common struggles. Notably, the post-war struggle, though vastly different, has put the peoples of Malaysia and Japan in a reflexive mode. Collectively, they explore what it means to be a citizen of their countries (nationalistically) as well as their role in societies that constantly battle troubling bodies. Troubling bodies refer to groups that find themselves locked and trapped within the structures of cities. Systemic oppression suffocate them. In Malaysia, racially trapped bodies are constantly struggling with cultural practices. What I have done in developing a "Malaysian Butoh" is to put the different cultural elements of Malaysia into a fragile body. Using the knowledge I have learnt from the Japanese masters, my journey has been to open up possibilities for artists from different genres and practices to come together to cross-pollinate and collaborate.

I could see them in our rehearsal rooms. Every Butoh master who has graced our studios has witnessed how other performance art forms, such as drama, contemporary dance and traditional arts, to name a few, have blended with Butoh, or used Butoh principles to discover new performance language and vocabularies. As a neutral ground, Malaysia has become a platform for such new artistic experimentations to take place. As the only performance collective that predicated on Butoh training as its basis to discover a Malaysian body language, Nyoba Kan is committed to discovering new performances based on existing established methods. Simply, we would like to stand on the shoulders of giants to make new breakthroughs in artistic innovation.



Lastly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the Butoh artists who graced the many KL Butoh Fest allowing my team and I to learn continuously. They helped Malaysians to learn and for us to develop a Malaysian way of performing Butoh.

*Lee SweeKeong is the artistic director of Malaysian dance company Nyoba Kan as well as the KL Butoh Fest. He is a multidisciplinary artist trained in Butoh. Internationally, he has been part of the "Hiroshi Koike Bridge Project" (Physical theatre) from 2013 to 2020; HeddyMaleemCompany, France (Dance) from 2011 to 2020. His most recent theatrical collaboration is "RASHOMON 2020" by Joe Hasham OAM, The Actor's Studio (Theatre).*

# Running and Learning with JFKL

## RogueArt (Rachel Ng and Beverly Yong)

When we asked each other what stood out among our early memories of the Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur (JFKL)'s activities, we realised that for both of us it was "Super Fiction", a solo exhibition by the late Roslisham Ismail@Ise at the JFKL Gallery at Menara Citibank in Jalan Ampang held from March to May 2008. It marked our first visit to the gallery. Here was this series of whacky images of Tokyo being menaced by one of Ise's alter-ego comic characters as locals take photos and pose for the camera, made following a trip to the city on the Japan Foundation's Short Term Visitors Program in early 2007. Ise had just had his first solo show at Gallery 4A in Sydney, and was fast getting international recognition for his personable, interactive approach to making art. The next year, JFKL presented, together with Valentine Willie Fine Art (VWFA), "The 2nd Seven Years: Quilt of the Dead, Flora and Fauna IV, Narratives" at the Annexe Gallery, bringing together paintings, objects and a performance-based project by Chang Yoong Chia, a number of which had been developed during his residency at S-AIR in Sapporo, Hokkaido as part of the Foundation's JENESYS-Creators' Invitation program, and in 2010, "ALL TOGETHER NOW: Conversations Without End" by Sharon chin, resulting from a community project completed during her time on the same residency in 2009. These exhibitions highlighted artists whose work had begun to reach beyond the cosy confines of the local art scene, and who had benefited from the opportunity to develop work and ideas in different contexts, and grow their network and exposure. And they were quite different from the private gallery exhibitions or institutional shows that were the regular fare of the KL art scene a decade ago. Around this time, we ourselves, with Adeline Ooi, had just left VWFA to establish RogueArt and were starting to explore ideas for how we could expand our work beyond the gallery system.

During our years at both VWFA and RogueArt, we have been witness to the many ways in which JFKL have supported local artists, from introducing them to visiting curators and researchers from Japan to creating opportunities for visits and residencies there to presenting and supporting exhibitions. We recall numerous portfolio reviews, chats and interviews with museum directors, curators and other representatives from Mori Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Museum of Modern Art Tokyo and National Art Center, Tokyo, scouting out artists for major shows. Although, of course, specific curatorial agendas and perspectives of Malaysian art arose during these meetings, generally the attitude was one of openness, curiosity and sympathy, and a deep interest in understanding individual practices. And while the practice of "parachute curators" coming in for brief research trips has been criticised, these "fleeting" encounters have led to much longer-term engagements between certain curators and artists, apart from affording opportunities for artists to get on the regional and international stage.

Residency opportunities have been particularly important for many artists in expanding their knowledge and practice, and the challenge of new audiences, as well as bringing them closer into a regional network. The JENESYS Invitation Programme for Creators from 2008 to 2012 invited young artists, designers and other creative professionals from the Asia Pacific region to stay in different residency programmes and institutions across Japan, with the Japan Foundation pledging to "support their process of producing works and/or developing networks with their peers in Japan, in order to seek new forms of exchange and foster mutual understanding." Apart from Yoong Chia and Sharon, other Malaysian invitees included artists Yap Sau Bin and Fairuz Sulaiman, curator and art historian Simon Soon, theatre performer and writer Fahmi Fadzil, and lighting designer Sandee Chew. From all accounts, the Japan Foundation kept in close touch, providing assistance through the artists' stay in Japan.

This hands-on approach has been key to the impact and success of JFKL's art-related programmes, making them very much part of the art community both through their work and on a personal level. Kugai Kyoko, Senior Programme Officer at JFKL since 2002 has been very much part of the Malaysian art scene, guide, intermediary, facilitator and indeed friend to so many artists and art workers over the years. Shimada Seiya, now welcome back as Director of JFKL, injected his own enthusiasm and energy into the scene when he was Head of the Cultural Affairs Department, again making many personal friendships.

JFKL has played a key role in encouraging art practices in Malaysia, particularly emerging, more critical, experimental and perhaps less market-driven kinds of practices, and bringing them out. While its programmes for language and film and traditional performance have been about introducing Japanese culture in Malaysia, the focus in art has been clearly to support local practice and nurture exchange and relationships both with Japan and among regional peers, an approach perhaps linked with the vision of the Japan Foundation Asia Center.

In more recent years, JFKL has implemented curatorial programmes mentoring local curators and bringing them into a regional network as part of the Japan Foundation's initiatives to nurture curatorial practice and exchange in and with Southeast Asia where, in countries like Malaysia, there is no formal training in this area.

In her own capacity, Adeline Ooi worked with Suzy Sulaiman on Media/Art Kitchen, a project involving curators and media artists from around Southeast Asia and Japan which culminated in a touring exhibition. The show in KL spread across different art spaces at Publika, and was an eye-opener in 2013, both in terms of the range of media practices, uses of technology and ideas it covered and also in proving that, with blood, sweat, tears and some compromises, an international exhibition involving such a level of technical complexity and conceptual breadth was possible to mount in KL! It also seemed to capture the imagination of newer generations of audiences, with workshops and interactive works proving popular with practitioners and the public.

As RogueArt, we helped JFKL with the Malaysian publication for the next programme, Run & Learn, by the newly reestablished JFAC, spearheaded by the indomitable Yasuko Furuichi. This project involved a regional young curators' workshop that began in 2014, resulting in multiple exhibitions in Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia by each of the workshop curators. As editors of the Malaysia "guidebook", we got to know the concerns, experiences and processes of participating curators Harold "Egn" Eswar, Lee Cheah Ni and Ong Jo-lene as well as a bit more about the local scene in Kota Kinabalu and George Town where Egn and Cheah Ni were based. It is key that the Japan Foundation recognised the importance of nurturing curatorial practices beyond the KL centre. We only managed to catch Jo-Lene's immersive and intimate exhibition where she took over Sekeping Sin Chew Kee with works in conversation with the site and the old KL neighbourhood (remembering in particular one work involving the harvesting of human pee), but enjoyed learning about Cheah Ni's "residency" project at The People's Court housing area in George Town and Egn's show "Being MAPHILINDO", a groundbreaking regional effort at Sabah Art Gallery and a turning point for the Ranau collective Pangrok Sulap.

The following curators' programme by JFAC, Condition Report, included workshops and regional-scale exhibitions headed by senior curators from Japan and Southeast Asia with a younger cohort of co-curators. In Malaysia, JFKL in collaboration with the National Art Gallery and Art Printing Works presented "Escape from the SEA" in 2017, curated by Hiroyuki Hattori and Yap Sau Bin with co-curators Alice Sarmiento, Kurnia Yunita Rahayu, Souliya Phoumivong, and Goh Sze Ying, "a group exhibition that considers issues of identity, belongingness, and history through the politics of borders in this region and beyond". The richly layered and thought-provocative exhibition of works was marred somewhat by the removal of Pangrok Sulap's epic woodblock print *Sabah Tanah Air-ku* from the exhibition following an anonymous complaint. The incident highlighted the prevailing challenges inherent in presenting critical artistic practices in Malaysia as in many other parts of the world, and the diplomatic concerns that underscore the agendas of even the most supportive and well-meaning of institutions.

The Japan Foundation provides a model for cultural agencies and institutions in participating in contemporary art scenes in a meaningful way, with a focus on local knowledge and the exchange of ideas, remaining sensitive to cultural geopolitics and the neoliberal impulses that encroach on all aspects of life, including contemporary art and culture. As the small and very unofficial outfit that is RogueArt, it has been a privilege and an education both working with and in the same field as JFKL as part of a larger effort to encourage discourse and local art ecosystems, and making connections on a regional level.

2020 marks our twelfth year. Having finally published fourth and final volume of *Narratives in Malaysian Art* (in September 2019, ten years since the project launched), we have been taking the series on the road, working with art institutions, spaces and groups to set up discussions in KL, Ipoh, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Penang on issues of practice, history, infrastructure and agency. In the process, we're also learning how and where else we can participate and collaborate in growing and expanding knowledge in the ecosystem. Smaller communities are looking to build up their own art scenes and an enthusiastic younger generation is curious to get involved in art, both through practice as well as research, writing and exhibition-making. Over the next two years, we look forward to working on more exhibitions, workshops and conversations, as we keep pondering and negotiating the connections and faultlines between art practices, communities, state institutions and the art market. A major challenge will be finding funding models for our own initiatives, and ways to promote the value not just of art objects but also practice, discourse and the work that goes on around art-making. We thank JFKL for leading the way!

**RogueArt** are contemporary Southeast Asian art specialists based in Kuala Lumpur, focusing on the creative, strategic and organisational management of art and cultural projects, exhibitions, collections and publications. RogueArt was founded in 2008 by Beverly Yong, Rachel Ng and Adeline Ooi.

# Winter Sonata

—  
**Fairuz Sulaiman**

*[incoming Skype call]*

*[Fairuz answers]*

**Johnny-san:** Hi hello Fairuz, can you hear me?

**Fairuz:** Yes, yup I hear you. Hi there Johnny.

**Johnny-san:** Okay great! Nice to see you again... how have you been? It's been a while, hasn't it?

**Fairuz:** Yes it has been, I'm doing... good, *danke*. Apart from this constant battle with the cold weather *lah*.

**Johnny-san:** Ah yes, it's winter where you are now isn't it?

**Fairuz:** Haha yeah. My first winter here in Germany and I can't say it's been easy.

**Johnny-san:** And what exactly are you doing there in Germany?

**Fairuz:** I'm here doing my master's degree in integrated design...

**Johnny-san:** Ah I see, integrated design? I figured you would be doing something in media arts.

**Fairuz:** Yeah I thought so too since I did a lot of media art projects in the past. But actually that was just one of the many things that I did. I was also doing stuff like theatre and education... and this integrated design master's that I'm doing is an extension of that; weaving different fields and disciplines together.

**Johnny-san:** I see, and what made you shift from media art projects to going back to school? Did you just want a shift in your environment?

**Fairuz:** To be honest, I'm approaching this master's as a kind of project too. And why the shift? Well, prior to this, I've been working on lots of projects back-to-back, sometimes overlapping, for a good... 15 years now. There were some really great projects that my team and I managed to pull off that I'm proud of, but sometime throughout all that I started becoming more and more frustrated...

**Johnny-san:** Frustrated? Because of the lack of funding?

**Fairuz:** Oh no, funding was actually quite abundant; there were festivals, events, grants that were available. This excess of opportunities allowed me to work so much, that in the end I felt I didn't spend enough time preparing for them... most of these festivals and events had their own briefs, target audiences, short deadlines. So you ended up only doing 50, 60 percent of what you really wanted to do. And that became frustrating for me. It was fantastic to have my ideas materialise before me, but looking back, I felt that there were so many things I could've done better.

**Johnny-san:** Ah... but that's the dilemma of every artist, no? That never-ending dissatisfaction and self-critique of their work?

**Fairuz:** Yes of course, in a way. I mean, I can never be satisfied with a project for sure, but there should at least be a bare minimum threshold. I felt I was only scraping that bare minimum all the time and that was frustrating, and annoying. So after many years of being annoyed, I said okay, enough, I want to focus on one thing and really spend my time delving into the subject. And I was lucky enough to have had a small taste of that several years ago, thanks to a Japan Foundation Fellowship...

**Johnny-san:** *[cough]* Can you elaborate more on that Fellowship?

**Fairuz:** *[confused look, then pupils dilating]* Oh yes, of course! This was late 2015 when I received the Japan Foundation Asia Center's Fellowship research grant, and I went around shadowing a few Japanese performing arts and theatre productions. I was looking at how they used media in their productions and spent most of the time observing and collecting data, conducting interviews, reading available materials. I haven't felt that invigorated for a long time and it was such a delight to have had the freedom doing... just research basically! Well okay, apart from the Japanese winter that I had to endure, everything else was a delight *lah*...

**Johnny-san:** You didn't drink any hot sake to keep you warm during that winter?

**Fairuz:** *[scathing look]* Eh, where can drink sake! *Haram lah!*

**Johnny-san:** Oh yes you're right...

**Fairuz:** Ish anyway... I must add, apart from triggering that part of me that wanted to go back to school, that

research trip also triggered something else...

**Johnny-san:** *[raises eyebrows]*

**Fairuz:** It shed a light on, well, the dark side of this whole media art technology field... something that I used to put on a pedestal during the early period of my artistic path, eyes glittering every time the latest tech comes out, trying to dissect and hack it, and getting lost in the technicality and spectacle of it all. That research trip made me see the need for a more humanistic approach when it comes to our relationship with media art technology. I quickly got tired of all the flashing lights while I was in Tokyo, which isn't hard when you're bombarded by it 24/7 everywhere you go. But I also felt first-hand what happens to a person when they are overly consumed by media technology, how it rewires their behaviour as human beings.

**Johnny-san:** So would you say you had a life-altering experience?

**Fairuz:** Uff, I wouldn't go so far as to say that, but to my mind it did strengthen the importance of a few other projects that I've been working on within education and the performing arts, which, not strangely enough, is the very topic of my master's thesis!

**Johnny-san:** Aha! Would you mind sharing a bit about that, Fairuz?

**Fairuz:** HA HA well Johnny, of course I wouldn't mind, since we have another... 300 words to go.

**Johnny-san:** *[confused look]* Excuse me?

**Fairuz:** Never mind. As I was saying earlier about my thesis... what I've started working on is how to design a performing arts pedagogy that promotes empathy and compassion amongst youths in Malaysia. And as you can see, there's no mention of media art nor technology. *[laughs]*

**Johnny-san:** So you did have a life-altering experience...

**Fairuz:** *[laughs]* No, not entirely *lah*. This pedagogy that I'm working on is based on a multimedia theatre workshop that I created with two good friends and collaborators of mine, Ayam Fared and Sudarshan Kumar. We designed this workshop called *Sekolah Main Wayang*, which involved quite a heavy use of media and technology like webcams, laptops with VJ software and electronic music instruments, but at the same time we also used low-tech elements like cardboard puppets, masks, body movement and devised theatre. We can't run away from technology as it permeates every part of our lives so the concern now becomes, how should our relationship with it be like? Can it even be possible that it makes us treat other human beings with more empathy and compassion? There are a lot of other elements at play here other than technology of course; stuff like inquiry-based learning, co-creation, interdisciplinary collaborations. Everything is part of the process in helping shape a kinder human being.

**Johnny-san:** 'Kinder human being'... that sounds like something we need more of, especially in this current social climate.

**Fairuz:** Exactly... *[pause]* with all the things happening around the world, heck, even the things going on in Malaysia alone; sexual abuse, child brides, plastic waste dumping, forest clearing... it makes you question a lot about the path you want to dedicate your time and efforts to. Do I *need* to have another art installation for this art festival? Who would benefit from this? Can this create a long-term positive impact?

**Johnny-san:** And you think your *Sekolah Main Wayang* project can achieve that?

**Fairuz:** That's the plan! Our first version of *Sekolah Main Wayang* which was around 2015 was really just our first prototype. Being our first attempt, we learned about what worked and what didn't. And most of it, if not all, was done on an intuitive level. Hopefully, this master's research that I'm doing will provide a more scientific and theoretical view of the project, which will definitely lead to another iteration of our workshop.

**Johnny-san:** Well, all the best then to you and your team Fairuz. And stay warm there in Germany.

**Fairuz:** Yes, thank you. I have my glühwein to keep me company here.

**Johnny-san:** Ehhh...??

*[Skype call ended]*

**Fairuz Sulaiman** is an interdisciplinary artist from Malaysia, currently pursuing a master's in integrated design at Köln International School of Design, Germany. His current interests lie in the embodiment of media and education. His works can be viewed at [www.fairuzsulaiman.com](http://www.fairuzsulaiman.com).

# Japan Mon Amour

Dato' Kamil Othman

It is true that even before anyone visits any country for the very first time, the very image of that country could always have come first through their many facets of creativity which it has given to the world. Japan is no exception, and I can testify that between the time Japan became conscious in my mind as a kid and the time I actually set foot there when I was already in my fifties, it would be the films that have shaped my impressions of Japan.

Growing up in Malaysia in the early 1960s, and before TV came along, the only thing Japanese were the Made-in-Japan toys, Kikkoman sauce, hearing Sakamoto Kyu's Sukiyaki all over the local radio, and watching films like *Godzilla* (1954) and *Mothra* (1961) in the local cinema. Simple pleasures that did not demand anything more than a sense of adventure when the mind starts to paint images of Japan as a mixed bag of a country through the diverse stories, characters, scenery and (of course) monsters we found in the movies.

When TV came to Malaysia, I never missed *Astro Boy* but an even greater attraction was the live action Samurai series. As pre-teenagers we got to know *Shintaro* and *Dato Tamba* in the quintessential "Samurai" series on RTM. There was also *Ultraman*. Dubbed in Bahasa Malaysia, and shown weekly on RTM in B&W, we got our weekly dose of the two sides of Japan. The history side through the samurais and the fantasy side through superheroes like Ultraman.

More significant was the fact *Shintaro* was not even a particularly handsome guy, and a bit on the flabby side which makes him real and likeable. This is the complete opposite of Hollywood with their leading men, a situation that surfaced again years later when another favourite manga *Lone Wolf & Cub* became a series of movies. So it seemed in Japan, the heroes are ordinary looking and that was something. *Ultraman* on the other hand upped the ante on the monsters business, and while we were already familiar with Spiderman and Superman, the Japanese hero who could transform himself into Ultraman brought a different dimension to what a superhero (or the man who would save the world from disasters) could be. These are important impressions for someone still growing up and trying to understand the world.

So initially that was how we painted Japan in our minds in those early growing up days in the 1960s - instant noodles (which we knew was invented in Japan) and Japanese cars notwithstanding.

The opportunity to study in the United Kingdom during the 1970s brought many other perspectives of Japan to what was already quite familiar – yet again the perspectives were shaped by what I saw in the cinema. I was already a budding film buff by then, and one of the early revelations was to find out that the film *The Magnificent Seven* with Yul Brynner, and which we greatly enjoyed back home, was based on a Japanese film *The Seven Samurai* (1954) directed by a guy whose name was Kurosawa Akira. Another was discovering Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961) was the template for the Clint Eastwood's *Man with No Name* spaghetti westerns. The ease with which Japanese samurai genre could be transposed to the Western setting was nothing short of fascinating.

In the mid-1970s, another Japanese director came into the limelight when his film *Ai No Corrida* was screened amidst controversy at the London Film Festival. He was Oshima Nagisa. I began to see a common thread running through his films and others like *Tokyo Monogatari* and *Ugetsu*. Strong reflections of the modern clashing with the traditional. These were only the tips of the iceberg as just around the corner, I was about to discover even more seminal works by the likes of Suzuki Seijun, Fukasaku Kinji and Imamura Shohei.

Back in Malaysia in the early 1980s, and armed with a better awareness, the fascination continued. As a member of the Malaysian Film Club in Kuala Lumpur, and thanks to the Japan Foundation, we were able to get hold of films such as Imamura's *The Ballad of Narayama* (1983) and *Vengeance Is Mine* (1979), and the horror classics *Onibaba* (1964) and *Kuroneko* (1968). In many ways these films were pointing the way for what was to come in later years in Japanese cinema. Little by little the collective impact of all these films is to create a unique picture of a changing Japan, and its place in a changing world.

In the 1980s, technology was such that films can now be watched on both the big screens in cinemas and the small screens at home. We are now spoilt for choice. I stumbled across more gems of the Japanese Cinema through the big and small screens. Amongst others, there were the two greatest anti-war films of all time, *The Human Condition trilogy* (1959-1961) directed by Kobayashi and Miyazaki's animated *The Graveyard of the Fireflies* that was screened in Kuala Lumpur by the Japan Foundation together with other classics of the Japanese cinema. There was Kitano "Beat" Takeshi and his gangster films, most notably *Hanabi* (1997) and *Blood and Bones* (2004) and the cyberpunk films of Tsukamoto in the Tetsuo series *Iron Man* (1989) and *Body Hammer* (1992), and the equally brazen *A Snake of June* (2002). Other worthy mentions should include the

bizarre *Audition* (1999) which introduced Malaysians to both Miike Takashi who later pushed the boundary of the Japanese “punk” cinema with *Ichii The Killer* and *Visitor Q*. The directing style of the new wave of Japanese directors reminds me how the dynamics of *manga* can be faithfully duplicated on the screen in the hands of the right film-makers. The old guard was still making good films too, most notably Fukasaku whose final film *Battle Royale* (2000) is something which even the world was not ready for.

That said, although there are western overtones in many of the movies, they remain quintessentially Japanese. And the surprises keep on coming, like 2017’s runaway hit *One Cut of the Dead*.

Throughout the years after 2004 and today, the Japanese Film Festival organized annually by the Japan Foundation is wonderfully continuing on with the journey of discovery, showcasing year after year the best of Japanese cinema. For a film buff this is what we have been waiting for. At a time when there is already an overload of content at our disposal, the wonderfully curated programmes for the Japanese Film Festival are always full of surprises, showcasing films like *Midnight Diner 2* (2016), and *After The Storm* (2016) that introduced me to a wonderful director named Kore-eda Hirokazu. In 2018, when *Shoplifters* grabbed the Palme D’Or, we knew it was not a fluke.

Cinema, in all its diversity, is about stretching one’s imagination to its limits and if in the process it gives someone else the opportunity to understand another land, another people and another culture it would have met its purpose.

***Dato’ Kamil Othman*** was with Shell Malaysia before joining the Multimedia Development Corporation as Vice President for the Creative Multimedia Division in 1999. In 2014 he became the Director General for the National Film Development Corporation (FINAS). Kamil was also the Vice President for the Asian Film Commissioners Network (AFCNET) until 2019. He is a member of the Tokyo-based Asian Business Content Summit (ACBS)

# Landscapes & Mindscapes: The Mind of Yamada Yoji

Hassan Muthalib

If there's one thing that Malaysians can applaud the Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur for doing is in presenting some very fine films from Japan that, in their storytelling and aesthetics, differ markedly from films of other countries. Through the exquisitely-made films of Kurosawa, Mizoguchi, Kobayashi, Ozu and Yamada, to name a few, we became familiar with the textured minds of characters, their stories as well as the beautiful landscapes of Japan.

For me, director Yamada Yoji stands tall among all the film storytellers. The cinema of Yamada, one of the masters of Japanese cinema, is about people living with and accepting their unfulfilled yearnings. These themes recur again and again in all Yamada's films. To give some examples: in *Final Take* (1986), the cleaning man at a film studio becomes a silent observer who sees the heartbreaks of the film personnel. We recognise their silent suffering, and how they are ultimately able to carry on with their lives, accepting what fate has decreed for them.

In *Hope and Pain* (1988), a European tragedy staged by young people, diverges from the original by offering salvation at the end. Yamada expands on this positive aspect in another film, *The Rainbow Seeker* (1996). A cinema owner on an island has dedicated himself to screen classics with happy endings. His philosophy (as well as Yamada's) is: 'movies should make people happy'. *Hope and Pain* ends with the words: "Only those who know yearning understand what I suffer." In the Tora-san film series, this aspect becomes a standard feature. The character, Tora (played by Atsumi Kiyoshi), never ever gets the girl, and so he suffers alone while smiling to the world. He is like the clownish character played by Chaplin. The echoes can be seen in the depictions by Atsumi.

I am told that Tora-san is beloved throughout Japan, and especially by those who have seen all 48 of the movies in which he has appeared. This irreverent character, an irresponsible but lovable loser, is brash and confident but at the same time, naïve. Such a character, however, does not exist in Japanese society. It is, perhaps, a character that Japanese people would like to identify themselves with. Tora represents a kind of free spirit, one who does not really do work, has no responsibilities, is able to come and go as he pleases, and travels everywhere without any set destination, plan or schedule.

The Tora-san series began in 1969, ending only in 1996 when Atsumi passed away. I fell in love with director Yamada's narrative and directorial treatment of the stories, characters and locations. I introduced the late film director, Yasmin Ahmad to his films. After watching all the films on DVD, she thanked me for having introduced her to "the best scriptwriting course ever".

I saw the first Tora-san film at the Japan Cultural Center in Kuala Lumpur called *It's Tough being a Man* (made in 1969). I was very taken with the character of Sakura, Tora-san's sister who cared so much for him. So do her husband, aunt and auntie and a neighbor who owns a printing shop. This is in spite of the fact that every time Tora returns home, there will be chaos, and he will leave in a huff. Their concern is a part of their deep-seated compassion, one that Dr. Yashiro Yukio, a scholar, spoke of as a special characteristic of Japanese art: "The time of the snows, of the moon, of the blossoms - then more than ever we think of our comrades." It is a primordial instinct, one that includes the beauty of the landscape as manifestations of nature. Yamada continues that tradition by showing remote towns, their cultural pageants and the lives of the ordinary people.

To me, Japanese stories carry a deep philosophy, one that deals with the inner state of the characters that reflects their own civilisation. In very short stories, Kawabata Yasunari, Japan's first Nobel Prize winner for Literature, is able to tell minimal stories with deep subtexts. The prize was awarded to him for his "narrative mastery, which with great sensibility expresses the essence of the Japanese mind". Incidentally, a Malaysian, Edmund Yeo, has adapted three of his stories into short films: *Kingyo* (2009), *Love Suicides* (2009) and *White Flower* (2010).

My first viewing of the usual Yamada film was *Distant Cry from Spring* (1980). The character played by Takakura Ken was that of the 'strong, silent hero', the kind associated with an archetypal hero. Takakura, who had usually played world-weary yakuza gangster roles, had a significant career change after acting in this film and in the earlier one, *The Yellow Handkerchief* (Yamada, 1977). He, thereafter, began to successfully play the roles of lonely, aging working-class types who are full of regret about their past.

I was mistaken in thinking that the Tora-san character was totally the opposite of that played by Takakura. But the same elements were there, hiding in the inner depths of Tora. And this is seen through the technique of dramatic irony where no one, except the audience, knows how sensitive Tora really is. Like a samurai, he holds



it all within himself, not letting anyone enter his private world to reveal the principles he lives by. But unlike Takakura's serious demeanour, Tora presents a happy-go-lucky face which, like a mask, hides the pain he faces in his love life. Temples are frequently shown but Tora is never seen in them. He is not the religious kind but is very spiritual. While others pray for salvation, Tora goes around to provide salvation to others, like a candle that burns itself out while providing light to people in need.

Perhaps Tora-san himself does not know what he is searching for. Perhaps he is in the process of being and becoming. He does not want to be tied down. In his travels around Japan, he is, in a sense, taking the hero's journey, undergoing trials and tribulations, to discover his 'pot of gold', whatever that may be. He belongs to no family, woman or society. But Yamada gives us a visual clue as to what he really is. In the final scene of *Tora-san Loves an Artist* (1973), Tora has once again left his sister and friends at home in a huff. He is seen with the survivors of the Kobe earthquake that he has helped previously. They enthusiastically surround him, and he is extremely happy to be with them. The camera pulls away to show Tora finally being lost amongst the crowd. The camera keeps pulling back, now losing the crowd. Finally, we see an extreme long shot of the neighbourhood. Tora has become a part of the people, the people have become part of the city, the city becomes a part of the landscape that represents the landscape of Japan. It is a signifier that Tora cannot belong to anybody. He belongs to Japan. Because he loves Japan. Just as Yamada Yoji does...

Thank you, the Japan Foundation, for Tora-san, the films and activities you have brought to Malaysia. My visit to Japan in 2015 under your aegis was the most momentous event in my life, and especially with Yamada Yoji. What I first experienced through the films, I experienced at first-hand in Japan. Truly, films can reflect a nation and help to promote better bilateral understanding between countries.

May you go on for many more years and to even better things!

***HASSAN MUTHALIB** is an artist, animator, writer and film director. Currently a film critic and Malaysian film historian, he has written three books on Malaysian cinema and animation and is completing his fourth book on the history of the government documentary film studio. He has lectured at major universities locally and internationally, and is frequently invited to be on international film festival juries.*

# 36 Views of a Bridge

—  
Edmund Yeo

## **A lifelong connection**

I'm now sifting through my memories, as if I'm playing a movie of my life. I'm trying to pinpoint an exact moment when I began my lifelong connection with the Japanese culture. Like many children of my generation who grew up in the 1980s to 1990s, I was exposed to a lot of Japanese anime and manga.

As a child I would turn on the television every morning to wait for the latest episode of Malay-dubbed Doraemon or Robotech. My daydreams were filled with images of time machines, robotic cats and world-saving giant robots piloted by dashing heroes. In primary school, before classes, my classmates and I would launch into energetic discussions about the latest volumes of Dragon Ball or Slam Dunk that just came out. It was the mid 90s and everyone played basketball because of Slam Dunk.

I was 8. I watched Miyazaki Hayao's Laputa for the very first time. I loved it so much that I rewatched it again and again for 3 straight nights. First, by myself, then, with my late grandmother, and finally, with cousins. With anime and manga, I think of these communal experiences I had. And through the lens of recollection, these moments are so precious.

I reached my teens. The CD player in my room was always playing the latest Japanese hits by Speed, Glay, or Utada Hikaru. It was the end of the 20th century. Japanese pop culture has swept through Asia. I began watching Japanese films and TV dramas. After Iwai Shunji's 'Love Letter', I wondered why my high school life was so colourless compared to the lives of Japanese high school students. I started playing the piano again because Kimura Takuya made it look cool in Long Vacation.

I began my university life in Perth, Australia. Living alone in a foreign country, a few things remained constant: 1) My childhood dream of becoming a film director, 2) The connection with Japan.

My flatmate Duane was a tall muscular Australian guy who loved anime and kendo. My new best friend Justin was an American I met at literature classes. Through him, I discovered great Japanese literary works of Kawabata Yasunari, Murakami Haruki, Tanizaki Junichiro and Mishima Yukio. We took turns hosting movie-watching sessions in our apartments. Our hearts swooned at the sight of Aoi Yu dancing at the end of Iwai Shunji's 'Hana and Alice', our eyes were wet during Yukisada Isao's 'Crying Out Love in the Center of the World', we gasped at the manly machismo of the protagonists in Kitano Takeshi films.

Reaching the culmination of this longtime connection with Japan, I moved to Tokyo in 2008 to do my Masters in film at Waseda University. I was staying in the dormitory that Murakami Haruki used to stay during his university days. Will I be inspired too? It was my first day in Tokyo and I looked outside the window of my dorm room. It was spring. Cherry blossoms were blooming.

Five years in Tokyo flew by in a blur, but also leaving a lifetime of impressions. I directed and produced films. I went to many film festivals around the world. I met many film people who were once my cinematic heroes. I met my most trusted collaborators in my filmmaking adventures. I went from doing my Masters to also doing my PhD, but I grimace when people call me a 'doctor'. I finally came back to Malaysia in 2013. I felt as if I had gone through a dream. But by then, Japan had become an actual place and not a fantasy. A second home I cherished. Japan remained as near and real to me as ever.

2013. The year I returned to Malaysia would also be the year I visit the Japanese Film Festival (JFF) for the very first time. To reconnect with something I thought I've lost. And I did.

## **Japanese Film Festival and Kiki Kirin**

2019 marked the 16th year of the Japan Film Festival's existence. I've attended the festival every year, admiring the festival's sustained excellence, from its programming to its organizing. JFF became the event that people would go to when they want to discover Japanese films.

Film festival is a window to other cultures, they introduce us to films that we can never catch anywhere else. JFF never lost sight of this mission. Each year, for one magical week, they would bring in a dozen noteworthy films from Japan. So that audiences can watch, discuss and remember. Like we used to do during our childhood. A collective memory to be shared. A collective experience to be cherished.

My most memorable festival experience happened in JFF 2016. That year, the festival invited Japanese screen legend Kiki Kirin over to Malaysia. I had the pleasure of having lunch with Kirin-san. A few other Malaysian filmmakers were there too, but we were all very quiet (too awed and starstruck by her presence!). With a film career that spanned 50 years, Kirin-san had a treasure trove of stories to share with us. Stories of the legendary actor Takakura Ken, stories of regular collaborators like directors Kore-eda Hirokazu and Kawase Naomi. We listened attentively.

It was a memory that lingered. When Kirin-san passed away 2 years after, I thought a lot about the lunch we had. I thought about it again when I was at the screening of Koreeda's 'Shoplifters' at a film festival in Canada. It was one of her last screen roles. During a particular scene when Kirin-san silently mouthed the words 'Arigato' (Thank you). I found myself crying.

## **Pigeon**

In 2015, the Tokyo International Film Festival and the Japan Foundation Asian Center launched the 'Asian Three-Fold Mirror' omnibus film project. For each film, three Asian directors were brought together to each make a short film with a common theme. Each short film was to be shot in an Asian country of the director's choice.

The famed Japanese director Yukisada Isao was invited to join the 2016 project. He chose Malaysia to make his short film 'Pigeon'. Just like my connection to Japan, director Yukisada had a connection to Malaysia too. A family one - his grandfather's brothers died here during the Japanese occupation - and a cinematic one - his impression of our country was shaped by the films of the late Yasmin Ahmad, whose works he truly admired.

'Pigeon' was a co-production with a Malaysian and Japanese cast and crew. Co-productions can be very challenging because you have people from different countries and different beliefs, cultures and styles, working together. Made even more complicated by the language barrier. The carefree, spontaneous style of Malaysians. The meticulous and perfectionist style of the Japanese. How can these go smoothly together?

I have witnessed many film sets of co-productions where the atmosphere was filled with ugly tension. Miscommunication led to misunderstandings, misunderstandings led to conflicts. Crew members became paranoid and distrustful, getting into screaming matches. With low morale, everyone stopped putting their hearts into the film they were making. The quality of the film suffered. When you can't put your ego aside, when you have no empathy and understanding towards a fellow cast or crew member whose working style is different from your own. These things happen. As a producer of the film, I'm glad the 'Pigeon' shoot ended up being the opposite of what I described!

The first 1-2 days of the shoot was tricky because everyone was trying to understand each other's working styles. It was more like a feeling out process. We tested out each other's habits, learnt each other's strengths and weaknesses. So that we could maximise what we were good at, and avoid unnecessary pain.

Despite having a reputation for being a demanding perfectionist, Director Yukisada was a leader who inspired confidence among the film team. He cared for the project just as much as he cared for the well-being of the crew members. With that, everyone gave their all for the sake of the project. No one wanted to get left behind.

I remember stepping onto the film set when we were shooting in an old mansion at Penang. I saw the Malaysian actress Sharifah Amani practicing her lines with Japanese superstars Tsugawa Masahiko and Nagase Masatoshi. I saw the Malaysian and Japanese crew working together in unison, in harmony, understanding each other without words. It was a beautiful sight.

The shoot lasted a little more than a week. It became an experience we cherished. Our lead actor Tsugawa-san passed away at the age of 78 in 2018, two years after the PIGEON shoot. He was a stoic and imposing figure throughout the film shoot. But I remember the happy smile on his face once everything ended. The way he embraced the cast and crew members, the way he laughed when we took our group photo with him.

Those were lessons and memories I carry with me when I make my own films.

I tried to pinpoint an exact moment when I began my lifelong connection with the Japanese culture. But what seems clearer now, is how this connection has influenced my whole life.

**Edmund Yeo** (b.1984) makes films in Malaysia and Japan. His short films *KINGYO* (premiered at Venice Film Fest 2009) and *INHALATION* (won the Sonje Award at Busan Film Fest 2010) secured his reputation as a filmmaker to watch. In 2017, he won the Best Director award at the Tokyo Film Festival for his film *AQERAT (WE, THE DEAD)*. He is currently finishing his latest film, *MALU*.



©Criteria



Tuan Haji Abd. Razak Ab  
A.M.N. O.R  
November 199



and to welcome  
Mr Hirota's successor Mr Sugihara Masamichi  
Monday, 22 May 2000





# JFKL and I: Making Memories along the Way

Associate Professor Dr. Md Nasrudin Md Akhir

One of the biggest challenges for any new academic program is not only to ensure a standard quality of service but to develop rapidly in various aspects. Faculty credentials, academic features, and administrative supports were among the dimensions needed to be addressed immediately upon being appointed as the Coordinator of Japan Studies Program (JSP) during the 1993/1994 academic session. Reflecting on the teaching experiences over the past 25 years as well as administrating the JSP at the University of Malaya, our fond experiences with the Japan Foundation leaves a lasting impression. The Japan Foundation's generosity comes with great support of a visiting professor program; book donations; sponsoring international conferences, national workshop and public lectures; providing research grants and travelling expenses for academic staff as well as providing ways in enhancing regional and international networking relating to Japanese Studies, first between Malaysia, Japan, Southeast Asia and later, with the United States. With contributions by the Japan Foundation, most of the administrative work that was stressful in the early years as a coordinator became much easier. For example, the constraints of having only one full-time lecturer at the JSP was overcome by assistance from visiting professors sponsored by the Foundation that allowed for the introduction of new courses as well as the expansion of a more inclusive curriculum. As many as 16 courses on Japanese economics, management, international relations, politics, society and culture were sponsored by the Japan Foundation involving 10 visiting professors mostly from Japan between 1994 and 2015. In the early days of the establishment of the JSP, the lack of textbooks for Japanese Studies was another major challenge to deal with. However, the Japan Foundation once again came to the rescue by contributing books in large volumes as well as reference materials.

The Japan Foundation's significant contributions to the JSP was inspired by at least three factors. Firstly, the University's commitment to being the first institution in Malaysia to develop JSP was in line with the understanding that area studies programs were emerging as an important discipline in higher education. Secondly, the birth of JSP was closely related to the Look East Policy introduced by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in 1982. As such, the support of the Japan Foundation complimented the policies of the then Malaysian government. Thirdly, the commitment of JFKL and the role played by Directors of the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) continues to ensure the survivability of the expansion of the JSP at the University of Malaya. In fact, the Foundation wanted to ensure Malaysia was not left behind as several of the other Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines and Singapore had established their JSP much earlier. It has to be noted that the friendship, role and contributions of the past and present nine directors of JFKL has been invaluable and crucial to the development of JSP since its establishment in 1993. I would like to record my sincere appreciation to Mr. ANDO Kazuo (1990-1993), Mr. HORIUCHI Fumitomo (1993-1997), Mr. HIROTA Takao (1997-2001), Mr. SUGIHARA Masamichi (2001-2005), Mr. SHIMOYAMA Masaya (2005-2009), Mr. MURATA Akihiko (2009-2010), Mr. TOYODA Shoichi (2010-2016), Mr. HORIKAWA Koichi (2016-2019) and Mr. SHIMADA Seiya (2019-present).

The valuable assistance from the Japan Foundation is a manifestation of Japan and Malaysia's broader friendship in the foreign policy dimension. However, there are certain regrets and bittersweet memories when developing any academic program. Three years after its establishment, I was a little disappointed that the JSP failed to be upgraded into a Department of Japanese Studies. My greatest regret was that my promise to Mr. Horiuchi, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Director of JFKL to develop the JSP into a full-fledged department remains unfulfilled. Instead, what took place was the establishment of the Department of East Asian Studies in 1996 following political recommendations at the time. However, the establishment of the Department did not disappoint me either as the JSP continues to remain as an academic program within the Department. As long as the Japanese Studies status is maintained, I am placated. In fact, the Japan Foundation not only continues to provide all the assistance that the JSP needs, but the quality and quantity of the grant has expanded greatly. The Foundation's commitment can be regarded as an ongoing readiness to see JSP develop not only as the only Japanese Studies program in Malaysia but as an equal entity to other Japanese Studies programs in ASEAN.

I am immensely proud to be the first lecturer to be appointed to the JSP since its inception. In the beginning, I offered four courses on international relations of Japan and East Asia. From the onset, I saw a great deal of complementarity when combining area studies and international relations in comprehending the complex nature of power diffusion and the varying forms of political-security, economic and social changes that constitutes and shapes Japan and Southeast Asia. The exclusiveness of the JSP in the early years of its establishment although was challenged by the emergence of two new academic programs - China and Korea Studies programs, encouraged further debates about East Asia which was becoming a dynamic region with Japan as one of its key players due to its economic powerhouse.

The question remains to what extent the Japan Studies program's status in the academic radar at the University of Malaya will evolve. Is it going to be significant and relevant for the future? In its 26 years of existence, the

program has produced 461 graduates. However, the JSP cannot be satisfied as the quality of the curriculum must be improved especially in inculcating Japanese language and values. In addition, more in-depth topics of postgraduate research on Japan need to be nurtured among younger scholars. The alumni from the Japan Studies are employed in a variety of industries and the government sector. Some hold senior management positions at Japanese companies, other are government officials, teachers, business consultants, entrepreneurs and professors locally and internationally. It is my intention to establish a Japan Studies alumni association in order to create a network of professionals and experts on Japan in Malaysia. 2023 will mark the JSP's 30th anniversary at the University of Malaya. It is my hope that we can publish profiles of our alumni in a book during an international conference commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In addition, we hope to expand overseas exchange opportunities for our students in Japan so as to enable them to learn Japanese and interact with native speakers.

All in all, networking built with the help of the Japan Foundation not only has reinforced the regionalization and internationalization of Japanese Studies, but consciously has created a family of Japanese Studies experts in Southeast Asia. These contributions have enabled the JSP to remain relevant despite facing many newer challenges. Hence, it would not be too much to say that the Japan Foundation has always been a close partner of the JSP's development. I consider the relationship as "kokoro to kokoro no kankei". I would like to conclude my fond experiences with the Japan Foundation for the last 26 years with a "pantun" as follows:

Pengajian Jepun di Universiti Malaya  
Gedung ilmu kepada nusa dan bangsa  
Melayu, Cina dan India para mahasiswanya  
Demi untuk Pengajian Jepun tercinta

Pengajian Jepun di Universiti Malaya  
Pensyarahnya terdiri berbilang negara  
Malaysia, Indonesia, Jepun, Amerika pun ada  
Seekins, Darsimah, dan Kato antara namanya

Pengajian Jepun di Universiti Malaya  
26 tahun usianya, sudah dewasa  
Sembilan orang pengarah JFKL, lelaki semuanya  
Shimoyama, Toyoda, Horikawa dan Shimada antaranya

Pengajian Jepun di Universiti Malaya  
Harum namanya ke seluruh negara  
MAJAS lahir kerana sokongannya  
Beliau adalah Takao Hirota-sama

Pengajian Jepun di Universiti Malaya  
Harapannya kekal selama-lamanya  
30 tahun JFKL menyumbang jasa  
Eratkan hubungan Jepun dan Malaysia

Pengajian Jepun di Universiti Malaya  
Satu-satunya program di seluruh Malaysia  
Japan Foundation dikenang sentiasa  
Di atas sumbangan yang tidak terhingga

**Associate Professor Dr. Md Nasrudin Md Akhir** is currently head of the Malaysia-Japan Research Center at the University of Malaya. He is the co-founder of the Malaysian Association of Japanese Studies and served as Secretary General from 1998-2012. His main research interests include Malaysia-Japan relations, Japan's foreign policy and East Asian security issues. He has headed numerous research projects on Japan and East Asia. He is the author and editor of 15 books and numerous academic articles published locally and internationally.

# Memory with the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur – A Journey That Will Never End

–  
**Professor Dr. Sivamurugan Pandian**

My experience with the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) began a fateful day in 2015 when my application for the Japan Foundation Fellowship programme was accepted for me to commence my research in Aoyama Gakuin University. The Japan Foundation was formed in 1972 to foster mutual cultural exchange between Japan and other countries. 17 years later, the Kuala Lumpur Office was established and began its operation as a Cultural Centre, where the Language Centre was later founded under its umbrella.

The establishment of both the Cultural Centre and the Language Centre is a testament of the Japan Foundation's dedication to explore the understanding of culture and language through JFKL. The support by JFKL for Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities has given me the opportunity to be selected into the programme and in turn, organised various programmes together with JFKL. Guided by Malaysia's 'Look East Policy' vision, JFKL provided me with the platform to conduct field works and eventually complete my report.

I was also granted 'The Japan Foundation Travel Grant for Attendees' to participate in the Association of Asian Studies (AAS) Conference 2016 in Seattle, United States and AAS-in-Asia Conference 2017 in Seoul, South Korea. Both conferences covered a wide range of topics that allowed me to apply some of the approaches that I gathered in lectures and tutorials while at the same time enabled me to infuse some of my own teaching materials. Through the networking session organised by the Japan Foundation, I had the chance to meet with the other participants from various countries, each with their own diverse background. More importantly, the conferences afforded me with the opportunity gain first-hand experience in multiple areas that are focused in Asian Studies.

As a School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) academician who graduated from Japan, the opportunity given by the Japan Foundation had enabled me to revisit and extend my research work on this area. More importantly, it sparked a new motivation for me to strategize with the best way forward in developing Japanese Studies at USM.

One of my initial approaches was to explore the option of forming a Japanese Studies Action Group to gather Japan based scholars in USM; giving them an avenue to participate in research collaborations and other activities and programmes. The rest was history as we managed to organise two important events at USM - The Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur – USM Japanese Studies Summer Institute Programme in November 2016 and Universiti Sains Malaysia-The Japan Foundation Japanese Areas Experts Workshop in August 2018. The relentless support by JFKL has allowed us to draw various opinions, provoke passionate discussions, and give unique exposure to the students on their education hub in the East (Japan).

The intensive course under The Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur – USM Japanese Studies Summer Institute Programme themed "Japanese Studies: The Road Ahead", charted the way forward for Japanese Studies that have and will influence policy making process and international relations including Malaysia. Bilateral ties between Japan and Malaysia with regards to the formation of the state and nation building was also addressed in this program. This included the role of political and social actors in developing political and society structures in societies with the intention to move forward with values and best practices adopted from Japan.

In this workshop, the relationship between Malaysia and Japan was closely examined, taking into account the complexity of political, societal and historical backgrounds in both countries. Participants were also briefed on the overview and background of Japanese Studies. The lectures and discussions were conducted by lecturers from both USM and the Japan Foundation sponsored guest lecturers.

As a follow-up to the above Summer Institute Program, we decided to organise the Universiti Sains Malaysia-The Japan Foundation Japanese Areas Experts Workshop in August 2018. With the increasing demands for learning Japanese among our university students, we were seriously looking into establishing a Bachelor's program in Japanese Studies for our future students particularly in the Northern Region. This inspired us to organise the workshop in our pursuit to ensure that the programme has a strong syllabus and could accommodate the demand and interest of the students.

This workshop was the first step in engaging with the Japanese Areas Experts who provided us with 'primary information' on the Japanese Studies programme. They shared their view and enlightened us on the scope of Japanese Studies while presenting their knowledge in this area. The workshop also benefited from a multitude of inputs and comments from the other participants. Indeed, their insights has helped the School of Social



Sciences, USM to come out with a good and reputable program.

Today, we at USM are on the edge of bringing the Japanese Education System to Northern Region of Malaysia by proposing to establish the Japanese Liberal Studies Bachelor's degree; a combination of Japan oriented pure sciences and the applied sciences including Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Natural Science, Japanese Language and Culture. The program will allow the students to pursue their studies in Japan for two years upon the completion of two years stay at USM. The initial plan is to leverage on our good relations with Japanese universities that have already collaborated with USM; such as the Consortium of Universities in Kyoto; and Association of Private Universities of Japan. I am confident that this collaboration is workable with the support of KUFS-USM Japanese Cultural Centre Director's office.

This proposal was drafted following the conclusions of the two workshop organized with JFKL, namely The Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur – USM Japanese Studies Summer Institute Programme (8-10 November 2016) and Japanese Area Experts Workshop (2 August 2018). Our delegate (including the KUFS-USM Japanese Cultural Centre Director) then visited the Embassy of Japan in September 2018 to brief the First Secretary on the project. The project was also brought up in a discussion between the KUFS-USM Japanese Cultural Center Director and the Consulate-General of Japan in Penang. Furthermore, the project was also presented to the former JFKL Director in 2018. At the moment, we are very much looking into the best possible directions to embark on this project within USM parameter.

We are also channeling our efforts towards strengthening the relationship with Japan's universities in order to expose our students into exploring Japan as an education hub for Asian Studies. JFKL has been very supportive in this mission to establish the Japanese Liberal Studies Bachelor degree programme. Although the journey has been bumpy at times, we are certain that the programme will emerge as our main focus in near future. There are obstacles and challenges to be faced, yet I am confident that the School of Social Sciences, USM will be able to overcome these challenges and fulfill its mission towards developing a whole new area for the students. The JFKL's role from the beginning, whether tangible or intangible, has played a pivotal role in bringing us to where we are today. We have progressed a long way from merely focusing on Japanese Language, to developing an interest in Japanese Studies into a major in years to come.

As the new decade dawn upon us, it is time to ask ourselves "What lies ahead for us"? Continuous engagements and support for one another in various activities, programs and discussions will bring us a step closer every day. Without the JFKL's support, determination and motivation; we will still be struggling to start up the initial move towards establishing the Japanese Liberal Studies Bachelor's degree. "Bushido – The Soul of Japanese" is emerging now in USM's atmosphere and we would like to thank JFKL for this new momentum. Let us hope that it will materialize sooner and we must never stop strengthening the ties between USM and JFKL.

***Professor Dr. Sivamurugan Pandian*** is a lecturer at the School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. His MA in International Politics is from Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo, Japan. He was a US Government International Visitor Leadership Program participant; Visiting fellow at University of Tokyo and The Japan Foundation fellowship recipient.

# 2004-2005 Support Grants



Intellectual Exchange in Asia Grant Program  
Cultural Cooperation in Asia Grant Program

Web site: <http://www.ijf.go.jp/en/about/programs/>

The Japan Foundation

# Medea



THE NAGAIWA COMPANY

Medea

Directed by: 尾形十三郎 (Shuzo Yabuta)

Cast: 尾形十三郎 (Shuzo Yabuta), 尾形十三郎 (Shuzo Yabuta)

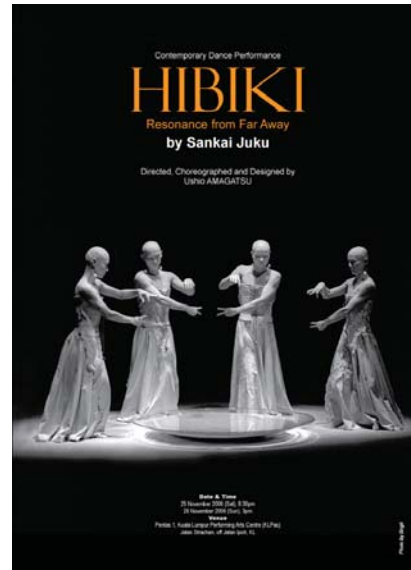
Date: 23-27, June '05 at 8:30pm Place: Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur

# HIBIKI

Contemporary Dance Performance

Resonance from Far Away  
by Sankai Juku

Directed, Choreographed and Designed by Ushio AMAGATSU



Date & Time: 25 November 2004 (Sat), 8:00pm  
26 November 2004 (Sun), 8:00pm

Venue: The National Library, Kuala Lumpur

Presented by: The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur

# MALAYSIAN FILM WEEK

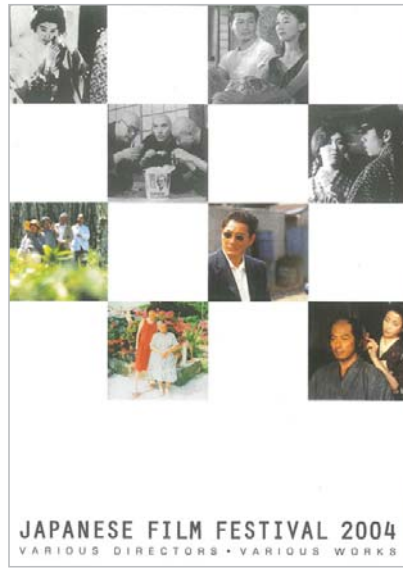
from P. Rastogi to the present



Various film titles listed in Japanese and English.

# JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL 2004

VARIOUS DIRECTORS • VARIOUS WORKS



# THE DOLLS OF JAPAN EXHIBITION



Kuala Lumpur: 2 to 25 July, The National Library, Jalan Tun Razak

Kota Kinabalu: 1 to 8 August, Wisma Budaya, Kampong Air, Kota Kinabalu

Penang: 13 to 21 August, Museum and Art Gallery, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)

Presented by: The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur

# AKIRA KUROSAWA FILM FESTIVAL

CENTENNIAL RETROSPECTIVE

THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF AKIRA KUROSAWA'S BIRTH

Duration: 18th - 20th March 2011

Venue: Dewan Kebudayaan ANWARA (Akanadi Seni Budaya Dan Warisan Kebudayaan)

Address: 104 Jalan Tun Razak, 50480 Kuala Lumpur

Admission: Free



# 美少女 美少女

Original: YOTSUKI Yasuhiko  
Script & Direction: AMANO Tempai

Cast: OGUMA Yūjirō and YTSUNAWASHI Satomi

27 [Thu] & 28 [Fri] November 2008 @ 8:30pm  
29 [Sat] November 2008 @ 3pm

at Black Box Theatre, Akademi Seni Budaya dan Warisan Kebangsaan (ASWARA)

RM 12 (RM15 for adults, Junior Citizen), Directed by: YOTSUKI Yasuhiko

Support by: (M)PH: 011-334 6228 (Mon-Fri, 9:00am - 5:00pm) Telok Ayer Staiton



# THE 14th JAPANESE SPEECH CONTEST For Secondary Schools (2017)

第14回 高校生日本語論大会

もしも、物が話せたら...

Theme: If Things Could Talk...

For Public School Learners: 16 April 2017, 12:00

For Private Learners: 16 April 2017, 1:00pm

Organized by: The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur



**JFF**  
**JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL 2018**

**PROGRAMME**

- HARVEST CELEBRATION DANCE**
- AN EXCERPT OF THE CLASSIC "FOX IN THE INNER GARDEN"**
- BEHIND-THE-SCENES DEMONSTRATION**

**BOOKING INFORMATION**  
Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)  
Box Office Tel: +603 4047 9000  
Online Booking: [www.kjac.com](http://www.kjac.com)  
For more detail: [www.jff.com](http://www.jff.com)

**DATE**  
28th JUNE 2018  
**VENUE**  
KJAC, Kuala Lumpur  
Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)

**DATE**  
29th JUNE 2018  
**VENUE**  
KJAC, Kuala Lumpur  
Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)

**GENERAL**  
KJAC, Kuala Lumpur  
Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)  
Box Office Tel: +603 4047 9000

**PREMIUM**  
KJAC, Kuala Lumpur  
Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)  
Box Office Tel: +603 4047 9000

**SPONSORS**  
KJAC, Kuala Lumpur  
Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)  
Box Office Tel: +603 4047 9000

**BUNRAKU**  
**TRADITIONAL JAPANESE PUPPET THEATRE**

**PROGRAMME**  
— HARVEST CELEBRATION DANCE —  
AN EXCERPT OF THE CLASSIC "FOX IN THE INNER GARDEN"  
BEHIND-THE-SCENES DEMONSTRATION

**BOOKING INFORMATION**  
Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)  
Box Office Tel: +603 4047 9000  
Online Booking: [www.kjac.com](http://www.kjac.com)  
For more detail: [www.jff.com](http://www.jff.com)

**DATE**  
28th JUNE 2018  
**VENUE**  
KJAC, Kuala Lumpur  
Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)

**DATE**  
29th JUNE 2018  
**VENUE**  
KJAC, Kuala Lumpur  
Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)

**GENERAL**  
KJAC, Kuala Lumpur  
Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)  
Box Office Tel: +603 4047 9000

**PREMIUM**  
KJAC, Kuala Lumpur  
Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)  
Box Office Tel: +603 4047 9000

**MEMORANDUM**  
a multi-media dance performance

**DATE**  
28 & 29 JUNE 2002

**VENUE**  
Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KJAC)  
Box Office Tel: +603 4047 9000  
Online Booking: [www.kjac.com](http://www.kjac.com)  
For more detail: [www.jff.com](http://www.jff.com)

**The Japan Foundation Language Centre**

**Japan Cultural Centre, Kuala Lumpur**

美術に見るマレーシアの今  
**マレーシア現代美術展**

Today's Malaysia Seen Through Art  
Contemporary Malaysian Art

1992年3月18日 - 4月5日

国際交流基金アセアン文化センター・ギャラリー

**JAL 40TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL**

**RAKUGO**  
IN ENGLISH  
A Japanese Traditional 'Sit-Down' Comedy

**THE ACTORS STUDIO@BSC**

LEVEL 3, WEST WING, BANGSAE SHOPPING CENTRE

performance in Japanese  
18 Aug 2007 (Sat), 3pm

performance in English  
18 Aug 2007 (Sat), 8:30pm  
19 Aug 2007 (Sun), 3pm

RM30 & RM15

Embassy of Japan, JAL

**RUN & LEARN Projects & Art Guide**

**Malaysia**

**MAYUMI ITSUWA**  
**GOODWILL CONCERT**

Guest Artist: **MUDA MUDA**

THE GREAT HALL

**The Island in BETWEEN**  
9 - 19 AUG 2001

puau antara

presented by  
The Instant Cafe Theatre Company  
The Stargara Public Theatre

私は、1999年からJFKLによって、普通の日本語教師から日本語カリキュラム開発者に育てられました。どうもありがとうございます。これからもよろしく願います。

*Dayang Nor Ashikin Harun, 51, Putrajaya*

Edward-san, my sensei way back in 1995, when I was a kid. Thank you! And now is my turn to teach my kids Japanese.

*Linda, 40, Kuala Lumpur*

Attended the 1st Japan Film Festival & then never missed JFF till this year because of my eye operation. Will be back again next year!

*Ezli Qamari, 42, Selangor*

JFKL allowed me to learn a new language and expose me to a different culture besides letting me meet new friends! Keep up the good work!

*Ashley, 23, Kuching*

I took part in the Japanese language speech contest in 1997. It was well organized in Hotel Nikko, Japanese hospitality at its best.

*Foo Sze-Shir, 39, Ipoh*

Media/Art Kitchen was a truly exceptional experience showcasing some of the best contemporary artists from Japan and Southeast Asia.

*Jo-Lene, 38, Ipoh*

Grateful for JFKL's continuous support in Japanese language education. They lend us Yukatas, traditional Japanese toys, and even display food samples!

*Anonymous*

Thank you for bringing us a part of Japan through the movie festivals and free screenings that have bridged the gap between our cultures.

*SS Wong, 51, Kuala Lumpur*

Congratulation, JCC you light up my life. 平成四年八月二十二日、私にとって特別な日です。あの日はマレーシア全国日本語弁論大会に参加して賞を貰った。私がまたおぼえているのは、あの日わたし「宮澤賢治何を学ぶか」をテーマとして弁論大会に登場しました。初めて大勢の人々の前に日本語でスピーチをして、とても緊張しました。でもJCCの先生たちのお陰で、わたしやっとなりました。これ私にとっていつまでもわすれることができないことです。どうもありがとう、JCCのみなさん。

*Goh Hoe Hoe, 60, Kuala Lumpur*

My fondest memory will always be my first JFF 2017 when I was part time NEET. Watching ReLIFE movie change my life forever. Thank you!

*Darul Shafiq Adi Putera, 27, Ipoh*

Thank you for bringing Japanese Film Festival every year! It was unforgettable to meet Saitoh Takumi when he was in KL for the festival ☺

*Erin, 36, Kuala Lumpur*

Watching films at the Akira Kurosawa Retrospective and hearing 35mm film projector running from the back of your head was priceless.

*Nurul Aizam, 35, Kuala Lumpur*

I look forward to JFF each year. The selection is great! Thank you for bringing in movies that we could've never enjoyed otherwise.

*Anonymous*

The best thing ever was to meet Ms. Kiki Kilin, and took a photo with her.

*Victor, 60, Subang Jaya*

In 30 years the JFKL have been important protagonists in the cultural life of Malaysia. In that, it has not only forged the deepest cultural relationships in Malaysia but in doing so, have also afforded Malaysians an invaluable cultural bequest- the experience of Malaysia to (re)discover itself.

*Eddin Khoo, Kuala Lumpur*

There have been several memorable events I can recollect with pleasure, the theatre workshop I have participated in especially!

*Rama Devi, 72, Melaka*

Spending the weekend at JFKL library, immersed in Japanese culture and language, has been the perfect hideaway from the hectic city life

*Anonymous*

教科書の「です・ます」体しか知らなかった私にとって「あきあぎしたよ」「おやまあ」「あ〜あいやになっちゃう」、などの言葉は新鮮で、日本語と日本の本当のおもしろさに目覚めさせてくれました。それは、JFKLの図書館で巡り合えた絵本や雑誌、漫画のお陰です。正に運命の出会いだと思っています。

*Rashmi, 39, Selangor*

Beyond opening new doors of understanding Japanese culture, JFKL has widened my appreciation for the arts and its profound impact. Thanks!

*Anonymous*

Fun and interactive Japanese classes have truly inspired me to continue learning Japanese in JFKL!

*Michelle, 31, Kuala Lumpur*

Very welcoming and peaceful reception staff at JFKL library. Such a calm and relaxing place. Thanks JFKL library team.

*Tamer Seleem, 39, Egypt*

# My Journey with JFKL

—  
Zubaidah binti Ali

We come into contact with people all the time be it at home, work or on the streets. Some just pass by but some remain in our memories for a long time. It is our experiences with them that determine how much an impact they have on our lives. Such is my memory with JFKL. An affair of almost two decades which I would describe it as exciting and enriching.

My journey with JFKL can be divided into three different phases of my career as a Japanese Language trained teacher. My humble beginning in a residential school (RS), an officer in charge of International Languages at the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) and finally a lecturer at the International Languages Teacher Training Institute (IPBA).

My first encounter with JFKL was way back in the late 90's shortly after my return to Malaysia following my completion of studies in Japan. There were only 9 schools offering Japanese Language at that time. It was a completely new world teaching Japanese language as compared to my previous position as a Mathematics and English teacher. We had a Japanese native dispatched under the Japanese Oversea Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) programme at that time but I was the only local Japanese language teacher in the school. The existence of the native teacher was a blessing as there was no one else to turn to for consultation or discussion when it came to teaching and learning Japanese language. However as more newly graduated Japanese language teachers filled up the schools, there was a need to create a platform for us to meet, share and resolve issues at hand. We needed further trainings, workshops to upkeep our mastery of Japanese language as well as to improve on our teaching skills. Whatsapp, telegram or facebook was not even born yet. Emailing was still new and not widely used. I always looked forward to the coordination meeting organized by the school division but the meeting was somehow inadequate. The division was able to assist in management matters but they had no expertise in Japanese language. Thus teacher development remained an unfinished agenda. That was how JFKL came into the picture.

The seminars by JFKL provided the solution. Surveys were conducted prior to the seminars to obtain information on the teachers' needs. The Japanese Language Regional Seminar for Secondary School (RECESS) was a customized seminar organized solely for secondary school teachers. JFKL's commitment towards JLE in Malaysia was evident. The input given in the seminars were always refreshing and interesting not to mention the thrill of receiving teaching materials to bring home after the sessions were over. Besides those seminars, orientation for newly graduated teachers were also conducted to familiarize them with the curriculum before being posted to schools.

Japanese language has always been the most popular foreign language in schools. The overwhelming interest among the students lead to a surging increase in students. As such, there was a need to develop a standard curriculum that was in accordance with the requirement and aspirations of the National Philosophy of Education. Consequently in May 2002, JLE in Malaysian schools witnessed another turning point. A new unit (international Language Unit) was set up in CDC. The major task of the unit was to oversee all matters related to JLE including assessment and teacher development.

When we embarked on this new mission, JFKL was there to provide all the assistance needed. An expert was brought in from Japan to give an input on the principles of curriculum development to the syllabus panels. Eventually the Japanese language syllabus was completed in 2004. The panel subsequently moved into syllabus specifications which elaborates the content of the syllabus. Through hard work and dedication, the panels succeeded in producing our very own Japanese language curriculum. It was a remarkable achievement but the most valuable achievement lies in the self-development of the panels while going through the process of developing the curriculum.

As we all know, no curriculum is complete without an assessment. When international languages was finally gazetted as one of the examination papers under the Malaysian Examination Board (LPM), another panel was formed. As expected, we had an expert on assessment brought to us from Japan. In addition to that, JFKL assigned a specific lecturer who attended all the meetings under LPM. The presence of an experienced native as an advisor and source of reference in the meeting was significant. Eventually, the first Japanese language achievement test under LPM was implemented in 2014. Another milestone for JLE in Malaysia.

In early 2003, due to the rising demand from stakeholders, the MOE announced that JLE in secondary schools would be expanded to premier and day schools. However, the last cohort of trained Japanese language teacher was due to return to Malaysia in April 2003. There would be no more supply of teachers thereafter. With demand exceeding supply, a paper was presented to the Public Service Department (JPA) to propose for a

second cycle of the training, and that same year, the first cohort of second cycle left for Japan. However, there was a vacuum for the following five years as this batch would only complete their studies in 2008. The situation required intervention if the expansion were to take place immediately. In order to fill the vacuum, the Teacher Education Division (BPG) collaborated with JFKL to create another milestone which was a local training programme. Thus in 2004 the Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language course was introduced at IPBA. JFKL played a more active role in this programme as the organization possessed expertise and experience in the training of Japanese language teachers. A lecturer was assigned to assist IPBA in the development of the curriculum as well as the implementation of teaching and learning in the classroom. The programme succeeded in producing 6 cohorts of 67 locally trained teachers of Japanese language. The expansion to premier and day school took place earlier than expected due to the short term measure taken by BPG.

IPBA was fortunate as JFKL was fully committed to the programme. The structure of the programme included a short-term training at the Urawa center after one year of internship at school. On top of that, a special budget allocation was put aside every year, solely for the professional development of the teachers. JFKL went the extra mile to bring in native speakers to the classroom in order to create an environment for the teachers to interact in an authentic situation. Despite the limited training period, I am proud to say that together with JFKL, we managed to produce teachers who were resourceful and committed to their profession as a Japanese language teacher.

Today, looking back at my almost two-decades long journey with JFKL, no word could express how blessed and fortunate I have been for the opportunity to work closely with JFKL until my retirement in 2016. With the support of JFKL, JLE in Malaysia has made numerous breakthroughs. Some of the tangible achievements may have been obsolete now, but the impact left on the system will remain forever, especially the self-development among the teachers.

At present, everyone is talking about 21st century education. Today's tech-savvy students have a world of resources and information at their fingertips. They are experiencing the world through technology in a way that their parents and teachers never did. Naturally how they learn is also changing. Consequently, how we teach and assess learning has to change. If in the past, students' project was done with a pen and paper, and later presented using cardboard, today the same thing is done entirely using technology. Demonstration of work is done through videos, blogs, and podcast just to name a few. The challenges of teaching language to the digital natives are indeed immense. For a start, the digital immigrant teachers need to find a means to narrow down the gap between them and the digital native students. Regardless of all the challenges, I hope with JFKL's continued support, JLE in Malaysia will reach greater heights in the years to come.

Lastly, my heartiest congratulations to JFKL on your 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Thank you again for your support then, now and in the future.

***Zubaidah binti Ali** graduated from Meikai University, Chiba in 1996, and completed the Japanese Language Teacher Training Program (Master's course) under Japan Foundation in 2002. Taught Japanese language at RS and Ambang Asuhan Jepun in University Malaya. Assistant director in CDC until 2005 and lecturer in IPGKBA till 2016.*

# JAPANESE LANGUAGE – A Possible ‘3rd Place’ for Japanese Speakers to Hangout?

—  
Edward Lee

As the new kid on the block, we started off treading carefully by softly knocking on doors, introducing ourselves and having ourselves introduced, building relationships and trust as we went. The Japanese Language Education Network in Malaysia (JLEnet) provided us with the much-needed guidance, support and collaboration. This informal grouping, headed by the late YB Datuk Abdul Razak bin Abdul Hamid sensei, comprised of key Japanese language teachers from leading local educational institutions in Malaysia. Its members met a couple of times in a year to exchange viewpoint and information as well as to conduct the biannual Japanese Language Teacher Workshop. JFKL served as its secretariat. I was also a member since its inception, representing both the Japanese Language Society of Malaysia and the National Institution of Public Administration (INTAN) Malaysia, prior to my association with JFKL. It was later disbanded to make way for a suggestion to set up a Japanese language teacher association. However, it was easier said than done. It took more than 20 years to set up the Japanese Language Teacher Association (JALTAM) but unfortunately it was deregistered several years later due to its inactive status. Its successor, the Malaysian Japanese Language Instructors Society (MAJLIS) was finally formed a couple of years back. Setting up a new society is indeed hard but maintaining it is even harder. It would need a concerted effort by all to survive and stay relevant.

Lack of experienced local teachers and teaching resources were the key common issues faced by all. Hence, our first task at JFKL was to align our policies and support programs toward meeting these needs and tweaked them to ensure these programs gave added values to both teachers and their organizations.

Among the many programs we developed at JFKL, there were two which were very challenging but meaningful to me. The first was the overhaul of our JLC's Newsletter "BUNGARAYA". And the second was the JSF MYForum Workshop which was also my last project before my retirement.

## Overhaul of JLC's Newsletter "BUNGARAYA"

We didn't have Facebook, social media and the local free-give-away periodicals for the Japanese communities back then. Most teachers relied on our newsletter 'BUNGARAYA' for information in Japanese. Back then printed resources in Japanese were difficult to get and expensive. Having advocated for a stronger printed Japanese media in Malaysia to encourage teachers and the 'learner-self' in them to read, I proposed a makeover for the newsletter to meet the needs of Malaysian teachers.

Based on the analysis made on our target readers and our anticipation on what would entice them to read, I mapped out its content structure. We had the Educator Page as the front page to highlight current issues or concerns setting the theme for the Teacher Page that follows. Eight papers were allocated for practitioners from various educational sectors to write about their experiences and ideas related to a given theme in their workplace. Teaching tools were also incorporated in the later issues for teachers to use in class without worrying about copyrights. Four pages were dedicated to improving language knowledge and reading skills in the Learner Paper. Beside articles on grammar explanation and vocabulary usage, we had interesting articles on folklores from countries other than Japan and Malaysia as well as the lesser known information on Japan and its culture. Interactive reading such as cooking recipes and word puzzles were also incorporated. The last page was allocated to disseminate information on not only JFKL activities, but also up coming events related to JLE organized by others.

The new responsibility was very challenging. Instead of one person, we had a team of four. However, it was very challenging to identify and solicit writers for content as well as ensuring that the writers understood our needs and conformed to our specifications. In addition, I needed to work on a new skill – the Adobe Illustrator to design the layout of each page. But we managed to overcome every obstacle and each successful publication became our trophy. We also received very good feedback from our readers and were delighted to find out that some teachers were using them as teaching resources in class as well as reading materials for their students.

However, after 3 years, I was alarmed that we started to miss deadlines. I realised that I was no longer able to continue due to the decreasing resources and increasing workload at the office. The management was very understanding of this decision, but I personally felt that I had let our readers down.

## JSF MYForum Workshops

The workshops were an off-shoot local program from our head office's Japanese Speakers' Forum (JSF) Program – a 9-year collaboration over 3 phases with the KAMENORI Foundation. This was the first Japanese language program that local staff of its overseas offices were involved in its preparation and development. JSF



gathers secondary school teachers teaching Japanese from ASEAN countries to explore new approaches in Foreign Language Education to meet the future needs of young generations as well as their students to interact with each other (including Japanese students) while working on a project together.

We took the opportunity to tailor the workshop to meet the aspiration of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 by introducing Project-Based Learning (PBL) to Malaysian teachers as a means to incorporate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in their Japanese lessons. But more importantly the program was intended to train a core of 6 teachers over a period of 9 years to become master teachers in their own field of expertise to support teachers in schools as envisioned by the blueprint.

The workshop had two components, namely the Student Program and Teacher Program. In the first half of the workshop, both students and teachers were introduced to PBL and given inputs based on a given theme. In the second half, the students work on their project, while teachers developed their lesson plan or mini projects based on what they had learned and experienced in the workshop. The teachers also developed assessment tools to evaluate student presentation at the end of the workshop. The workshops were also used to select and prepare students to represent Malaysia at the Forum. Each year we rotate the venue of the workshop among the 5 zones.

In Phase One, core teachers learned by observing how PBL-based workshops were conducted by JFKL. They also carried out action research on PBL in their school and presented their findings at the JFKL conference. In Phase Two, they developed and conducted the student program for the workshop with guidance from JFKL and continued with their action research of their own choice. In last phase, which was not implemented, core teachers were supposed to develop the content and conduct both the student and teacher program for the JSF MYForum Workshop while continuing with their research works.

It was very rewarding to see the core teachers grow year by year. Resources were spent and sacrifices were made to ensure that they got the right support. While this program's intention to train teachers was commended by many, it began to take a toll on the core teachers. Due to budget constraint, regular face-to-face meetings could no longer be held. Thus, core teachers had to depend on social media to hold discussion and build contents for the workshops, which were time consuming. Increasing workload in school also hindered the progress of their action research. Coupled with other reasons, this program (including the core teachers) was unfortunately discontinued after running for 5 years. Had it continued for its original scheduled 9 years, I have no doubt that Malaysian teachers would be more confident in implementing PBL in schools and that core teachers would have acquired the knowledge, skills and experience to be a master teacher. Hence, It is my earnest wish that JFKL would consider exploring the idea of reviving this program with the Ministry of Education Malaysia as well as the core teachers and past participants of the Forum, be it wholly or in parts or even a different approach to achieve the said objectives.

### The Third Places for JLE

Over the years, I was as puzzled as others around me who have been asking me why am I so passionate about Japanese Language Education (JLE). Japanese was not even my first choice when I first started to learn a foreign language. German was. In fact, I joined JFKL at a time when I was doubting the future of JLE in Malaysia. I intended to stay for 5 years but ended with 25 until my retirement.

Looking back, I have come to realize that my passion in JLE stemmed from my unconscious effort of making Japanese language as my "third place". Ray Oldenburg (author of *The Great Good Place*) defined third places as a physical space such as pubs and cafes where people can gather, put aside concerns of work and home, and hang out simply for the pleasures of good company and lively conversation, I believe that such places should be extended to include environment. Hence, I have been actively organizing the annual Japanese Language Festival (JLfest) as possible 'third places' for Japanese language speakers to hang out. To sustain the future growth of JLE in Malaysia, perhaps we could start by building 'third places' for it.

**Edward Lee** is a certified Nihonshinbuyo instructor, he has been teaching Japanese since the 80s. He is currently the Vice-President of JLSM and the Hon. Auditor of MAJLIS. He served JFKL from 1994 to 2019 and INTAN from 1989 to 1994.

He was awarded the 2019 Japan Foreign Minister Commendation for his contributions.

# JFKL and Me

—  
**Dr. Zoraida Mustafa**

First and foremost I would like to congratulate the Japan Foundation on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Kuala Lumpur office, and to express my deepest gratitude for its enormous contribution and support toward Japanese language and culture in Malaysia.

Looking back on the years of support and assistance offered by the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur (JFKL), it is undeniable that JFKL has been a great contributor in shaping the Japanese language education scenario in Malaysia.

Japan and Malaysia has had a relationship since the occupation during the World War II. It is still a painful memory for some elders in this country to talk about this period. Nevertheless, diplomatic relations continued after Malaysia gained her independence from the British in 1957 with the establishment of the Japanese embassy in 1960. Although Japanese language studies first started at the Faculty of Language and Linguistics, University of Malaya, but it was not until 1982 that it gained significance.

Launched in 1982, a few programs under the Look East Policy announced by the then 4<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed were supported by JFKL. This included facilitating and supporting personnel and experts as well as developing a pool of local expertise in Japanese language teaching and developing teaching materials suited for local needs.

I personally had gone through a 2-year preparatory program before enrolling in a Japanese university which was my first encounter with the Japan Foundation personnel and experts. I fell in love with the language and culture almost immediately, and was very fortunate to get a chance to attend a long-term teacher's training program for non-Japanese speakers at The Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, with the Foundation's sponsorship. Hence, my relationship with the organization extends beyond the silver anniversary and spans from the time I was a trainee lecturer to collaborating partner.

During my early career as a Japanese language lecturer at University of Malaya, I had the opportunity to learn from experts dispatched by JFKL to help improve the standard of education in the preparatory course. The experience gained from working as a team member with them taught me how to design a course and to have a holistic view of global education needs. When I started a new journey at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), it enabled me to estimate the general workload and processes needed to design a course. When I decided to start the course with a new approach using the Japan Foundation Standard align textbook i.e. MARUGOTO, I had very few references and almost none from Malaysia. Although there is still much room for improvement, with the assistance of JFKL experts I managed to design language courses named *Japanese I*, *Japanese II* and *Japanese III* as a guided elective subject for the Faculty of Major Language Studies, USIM. These courses were designed to meet standard A1 to A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which has also been adopted by the JF Standard. With JFKL's cooperation I also managed to get a local publisher to publish the textbook in Malaysia and distribute them at a reasonable price to benefit more students. I hope it will attract more people and consequently increase the number Japanese language learners in Malaysia which has not seen much increase according to the statistics (JF, 2015 Annual report).

Another journey that I took with JFKL was organizing an international academic conference on Japanese language education in 2010. Since then, the conference has been co-organised by JFKL and University of Malaya until 2017, when Malaysia Japanese Language Instructors Society (MAJLIS) also became a co-organizer subsequent to its establishment. The main objective of this collaborative conference is to encourage research work on Japanese language and culture related studies and to provide opportunities to present research findings and teaching practice to local Japanese Language practitioners. In the recent years the conference has also had participants from neighbour countries as well as Japan. Although the number of local participants especially for oral presentation is still not high, I hope to see the conference gain more participation in the future.

As for cultural activities, in I also had the opportunities to co-organise few events with JFKL. October 2017 the Japanese Language and Culture Centre (JLCC), USIM co-hosted a calligraphy demonstration featuring the famous Japanese calligrapher Ms Sisyu, together with Embassy of Japan in Malaysia and JFKL. JLCC also co-hosted a kimono demonstration by Nakakoma Orimono in March 2018. In conjunction with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Malaysia-Japan diplomatic relations, JLCC was very fortunate to receive offers to co-host the events. These activities exposed USIM students to Japanese culture and impacted them in a different way from their usual language classes. It made me realize that these cultural events could impress positive social values to the participants.

Finally, I would like to share my personal view on the future of Japanese language and culture education in Malaysia. It is my hope to see the Japanese language and culture education firmly established in Malaysia academia world. Currently there are more than 20 public institutions and many more private institutions offering Japanese language and culture courses all over Malaysia. Each one of them has different objectives and goals resulting in diverse courses and programs. Some aim to highlight the positive values of Japan, while others are preparatory courses for studying in Japanese universities or working in Japanese companies. Although I see an increased demand and interest in Japanese language and culture today the number of qualified instructors and teachers are decreasing. This is a critical issue as Malaysia is still behind her neighbouring countries when it comes to teacher's development and a Japanese language and culture education program at public universities. Although the Japan Foundation succeeded in developing a pool of local expertise in the field of Japanese language training, there is still a strong dependency on JFKL and it remains to be seen if the current experts fail to enhance or at least sustain Japanese language and culture education in Malaysia. Thus, it is my current and future dream to see a Japanese language and culture education program is set in a public university in Malaysia, and for this reason I believe now is the time for JFKL to shift its support and assistance to another paradigm.

*"If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning."* – Mahatma Gandhi

**Dr. Zoraida Mustafa** is currently a Senior Lecturer at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Nilai, Negeri Sembilan. She was with the Special Preparatory Program (AAJ) for Japanese University, Universiti Malaya for nearly 20 years before moving to USIM. In 2019, she was awarded the Japan Foreign Minister's Commendation Award for her contribution in Japanese language education.

# I didn't realise until I started writing... JFKL has always been around

—  
**Sugandaran Kaivaliam**

The first time I heard of 'The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur' (JFKL) was in 1998 after graduating from Japan and coming back to Malaysia. At that time, I never expected that JFKL would have such a big role in influencing my career as a Japanese language teacher.

Through JFKL firstly, Japanese language teachers got the chance to attend workshops and forums organized annually mainly in Kuala Lumpur, sometimes with the cooperation from Ministry of Education (MOE). The teachers benefited a lot from these programs. There was the Japanese Language Regional Seminar for Secondary School Teachers (RESESS) organized according to zones with smaller number of participants which I personally think was more effective. But sadly this ended a few years ago. Although there are still other regional workshops through collaboration with other institutions for Japanese language teachers, unfortunately the distance and school work prevent regular participation.

Teachers were encouraged to do research even though we were busy with school work. Japanese language teachers in secondary schools can be considered lucky as they are given the opportunity to do action research and a platform to present it. Doing action research and presenting was something that I learnt with guidance from the JFKL Japanese Language Lecturers ('senmonka'). I was given the chance to present my research a few times at the International Conference on Japanese Language Education in Malaysia held annually at Universiti Malaya. My first experience was a poster presentation about my research which I undertook during my training at the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute in Urawa, Saitama prefecture. And later as my capacity as one of the Japan Forum Malaysia core teachers, I made poster and oral presentations in 2015 and 2016 respectively at the same conference. The oral presentation was especially challenging and I would like to thank all the 'senmonka' who guided me over the years from drafting the proposal paper to its presentation, giving suggestions, rephrasing, editing and amending whatever I had written over and over again until it reached a satisfactory stage. It was a learning process that I will never forget.

Japanese Speakers Forum (JS Forum) is one of the best programs that I have participated in my career as a Japanese language teacher, especially because I have been involved since the beginning in 2012. The participants are teachers and students from South East Asia and Japan and it is organized by Kamenori Foundation and the Japan Foundation. JFKL is involved in recruiting participants and preparing them for the forum as well as providing after-care guidance or assistance in ensuring that they are able to implement what they have learned from the forum in schools and share their new knowledge with their peers. The objective of this forum is to look at new approaches in teaching foreign languages to meet the needs of the future generation including 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. In Malaysia, JFKL came up with My Forum Workshop Series with the objective of choosing the students and teachers to represent Malaysia at JS Forum every year as well as a platform to train core teachers to conduct workshops for students and teachers on Project-based Learning (PBL) which is in line with the aspirations of the new syllabus implemented by MOE. From my observation, the majority of the students who participated in both the JS Forum and My Forum displayed a change in attitude and became a better person as a whole.

Japanese Language Festival (JLFest) is organized by Japanese Language Society Malaysia and Embassy of Japan in cooperation with MOE and in collaboration with JFKL which also provide grants for this program. I started bringing my students to JLFest in 2016, and since then JLFest has become one of the main annual events for my students. As they became friends with other Japanese language students from all over Malaysia my students learned a lot from this festival and had the chance to use the Japanese language that they had learned both inside and outside classroom to good use. The multiple success my school has had at the festival in winning some of the competitions has not only made Japanese language a popular subject in my school but also attracted keen interest from the parents.

Nihongo Partner (NP) is a program by the Japan Foundation Asia Center and implemented by JFKL in Malaysia. Ms. ISHIBASHI Aya came to our school in 2017 for 8 months. I learned a lot from her especially when it comes to matters that must be referred to native speakers and my students had a wonderful 8 months communicating and learning from her too. She still communicates with us and helps our school in many ways. During the same period there was another NP attached to a different school in Selangor; Ms. FUJIYA Yuri who was a Yosakoi dancer. It was great that JFKL gave NPs the flexibility to visit other schools to help and share their expertise. She came all the way to my school a few times to help develop our Yosakoi team and after going back to Japan she started bringing her team members to train my students all the way from Hakodate, Hokkaido.

In the northern zone, we have an annual camp for Form Three Japanese Language Students in October called 'Gambarou Nihongo' organized together by Fully Residential Schools in Perlis, Kedah and Penang since 2007. My school also organizes a national level annual camp for Form One Japanese Language Students since 2015 called 'Kem Muhibah Chibikko' which is based on PBL. Since the beginning JFKL was there for both camps to lend a helping hand by sending in 'senmonka' as guest lecturer every year to organize activities, assist the teachers and give inputs. As the teachers are now able to carry out these activities more independently, guest lecturers from JFKL function more as advisors.

Northern zone is also quite popular for Soran Bushi and Yosakoi dance. It all started in 2005 when JFKL agreed to send Edward sensei to teach Soran Bushi with the objective of motivating the students to appreciate Japanese language through dance. This one day workshop was attended by 3 schools which further led to all the 3 schools performing Soran Bushi at the Penang Bon Odori every year since 2008. In 2010, JFKL again sent Edward sensei to 'Gambarou Nihongo' which was held for 2 days and the first day of this camp was used exclusively as a Yosakoi workshop. Without Edward Sensei and JFKL, most probably there would not have been any Japanese dance groups from up north.

Honestly speaking, I don't have any specific plan for the future. But I would love to continue influencing and moulding kids who will love Japanese language and culture and become 'kakehashi' between Malaysia and Japan as well as inculcating them with good manners and values such as working hard, being persistent and never to give up.

Lastly there are a few things that I miss from JFKL. Firstly, the annual back number magazines from JFKL library that used to be distributed to schools and institutions around Malaysia. Secondly, the BUNGARAYA newsletter that contained a lot of useful information and resources which I realise took a lot of effort, hard work and creativity to publish. And lastly Edward Sensei, the ex- Assistant Head of Japanese Language Department in JFKL who retired in October 2019. I would love to convey my gratitude to all the staffs both at the language and culture department in JFKL since the time I started my career as a Japanese language teacher in 1998, who have either directly or indirectly made my career a wonderful experience. Arigatou Gozaimasu for all the wonderful memories.

***Sugandaran Kaivaliam** LOVES everything Japanese....tea, ikebana, antique, porcelain, ceramic, traditional craft, onsen, food, animation, literature etc. Japanese language and culture is my hobby and teaching is my passion and I love kids too. I am happy when I am inside the classroom teaching or sipping 'sencha' with them during break every day or watching them practicing yosakoi in the evening.*

## About **The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur (JFKL)**

The Japan Foundation, established in 1972, is Japan's only institution dedicated to carrying out comprehensive international cultural exchange programs throughout the world. The Kuala Lumpur office was established in October 1989 and its status upgraded to Cultural Centre in February 1992. Three years later in April 1995, the Language Centre was formed under the umbrella of the Cultural Centre.

The primary objective of JFKL is to develop mutual understanding between people through culture and language within the region. The office also facilitates and supports the exchange of personnel and experts who work in the field of Arts, Culture, Humanities and Social Sciences. Other objectives include developing a pool of local expertise in the field of Japanese language teaching and providing a better learning environment through our original language courses, development of new resources including e-learning materials, and events such as speech contest.

This book was published by JFKL in celebration of its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.  
We would like to thank all the contributors for making this publication possible.

Editors  
**KUGAI Kyoko, Muhammad Nazreen, UMEEDA Masako**

Proof-reader  
**KUME Akiko**

Design  
**Mocom Solutions Sdn Bhd**

Printing  
**UNICO SERVICES**

Published by  
**The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur**  
18<sup>th</sup> Floor, Northpoint Block B, Mid-Valley City  
No.1, Medan Syed Putra  
59200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
[www.jfkl.org.my](http://www.jfkl.org.my)

All opinions expressed within this publication are those of the authors and quoted sources and not necessarily of the publisher.

©2019 The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur  
All rights reserved.

