

Perspectives

THE JAPAN FOUNDATION LONDON NEWSLETTER

New Faces in Japanese Contemporary Dance

Janet Archer, Chief Executive and Artistic Director at Dance City, Newcastle, was recently asked to be on the jury for the Toyota Choreography Award in Tokyo, the biggest single opportunity for emerging Japanese choreographers to develop their work. Here, she writes her impressions of the current Japanese contemporary dance scene.

I was delighted to serve on the jury for the Toyota Choreography Award this year and we were pleased to give the award to the breathtakingly talented Tsuyoshi Shirai.

I knew of Tsuyoshi's work "Living Room – the room of sand", which won the Prix d'Auteur at the Choregraphiques Internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis in 2000, but for the Toyota Competition he presented "mass, slide, &." a solo work on himself. The decision to give him this award was unanimous. He spoke a truth through his movement which touched us all. His painful but powerful opening was almost understated, but through a slow collection of exquisite movement sections he drew us close to him. His was a very simple idea interpreted with profound sophistication, putting him in a world-class arena. Dance City plans to present his work in 2008.

Makoto Enda was also well liked by judges and audience alike, managing to express theatrical witticism, rarely seen in contemporary dance, with subtlety and humour. Masako Yasumoto should also be credited for her performance ability. She is one of the most talented performers I have seen this year and is definitely someone to watch out for.



Photo: Toyota Choreography Award (TCA)

Tsuyoshi Shirai
Winner of the Choreographer of the Next Generation
Prize of the Toyota Choreography Award 2006

One company which I really enjoyed was shown to us at a post competition platform by some of the runners up to the main event. Anjuta, led by Takashi Inose, showed us a section from "Bermont Friday Night Fever" – a highly entertaining pastiche on Japanese life. More commercially orientated than many of the works in the main competition, but nevertheless, extremely well performed by a very young and energetic cast.

Like the UK, Japan's modern dance is divided between work which is founded on pure movement and work which deals with modern day issues through theatricality. Humour featured more often than we generally see in this country in dance which fascinated me. Overall I was profoundly impressed by the breadth and range of the work I saw and have returned to the UK with a real sense that Japanese contemporary dance is moving forward at a fast pace, ignited by a passion within the dance community that was both energising and exciting. I look forward to my next visit!

Janet Archer

Japanese Contemporary Dance in London!

In January 2007, the Japan Foundation will bring **Condors**, an all-male Japanese dance group, to the Sadler's Wells stage. Condors has taken the world by storm with their electric and outrageous performance. This is contemporary dance as you have never seen it and should not be missed. Co-presented with Sadler's Wells.

Date: 12-14 January 2007 (tbc)

Lilian Baylis Theatre, Sadler's Wells

Details will shortly appear on our website and on www.sadlerswells.com

Selenographica Dance Company performs in the Dance Umbrella Festival, Brief Encounters programme in October. Choreographed by Maho Sumiji, ***What Follows the Act*** won the Toyota Choreography Award 2005. Supported by the Japan Foundation.

Date: 23 & 24 October 2006, 7pm

Robin Howard Dance Theatre

For more details see

www.danceumbrella.co.uk/briefencounters06

The Japan Foundation is sad to see Val Bourne step down as the Artistic Director of Dance Umbrella. Val has made a great contribution towards getting Japanese

dancers exposure in the UK and we wish her all the best in the future.



Condors

Japan's World Heritage – *In Pictures*



Nachi Taisha Shrine and Nachi no Otaki Falls, Wakayama

The Japan Foundation has teamed up with renowned photographer, Kazuyoshi Miyoshi, to produce a stunning series of photographs showing the diversity and beauty of Japan's World Heritage sites. The World Heritage sites in Japan include both cultural heritage properties and natural heritage sites.

The World Heritage Convention, which links the need for nature conservation together with the preservation of cultural properties, was signed in 1972 by a general session of UNESCO. As of April 28 2006, 182 States Parties have ratified the convention, including Japan. One of the benefits of signing the convention is that States Parties have access

to World Heritage Funds, which can be used to identify, promote, preserve and also repair sites.

Japan's World Heritage sites are diverse: *The Shrines and Temples of Nikko* were a sacred spot for the Tokugawa shogunate, *Shiretoko Peninsula* contains an ecological system with few equals and the recently designated *Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome)* tells of the tragic mistakes humanity has made. With 13 inscribed World Heritage sites, most of which contain multiple properties, like the *Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto (Kyoto City, Uji City and Otsu City)* and the *Gusuku site and related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryuku*, it is not surprising that Japan's sites are visited by large numbers of tourists every year. In fact, *Yakushima Island* was also the inspiration for Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke*.

Japan is currently one of the member states serving on the World Heritage Committee, the body responsible for the implementation of the convention, and will continue to serve as a member until 2007. Using this timely opportunity to focus on Japan's World Heritage, the Japan Foundation London is very pleased to offer the loan of these panels to any interested organisations.

The panels celebrate the variety in Japan's natural and cultural heritage, whilst reminding the viewer of the continuing importance of protecting our universal heritage.

Japan Foundation Picture Panels – On Offer!!

For further information about borrowing the panels, contact Esther Williams.

Tel: 020 7436 6695

e-mail: esther.williams@jpf.org.uk

Note: *The panels are loaned free of charge but the host venue is responsible for transportation costs.*

There are 61 panels in total, but the applicant is free to display as many, or as few, as they choose.

JPF Recommends: OKI Dub Ainu - Ancient music for the modern age

The Ainu are the indigenous people of Japan, mostly located in Hokkaido. At various times throughout history, the Ainu culture has nearly died out. Almost single-handedly, OKI has been responsible for bringing Ainu culture into the new millennium, by singing and playing ancient Ainu tunes on the stringed instrument, the *tonkori*. The *tonkori* is the only stringed instrument of the Ainu musical tradition. Long and flat, it produces mysterious overtones and hypnotic

bass lines. On *Dub Ainu*, OKI has turned his own previous recordings and productions of the late and great elder Ainu singer Umeko Ando into dub remixes with echoes of African, reggae and electronica.

(CD available via www.farsidemusic.com and distributed in the UK by *New Note*)

Paul Fisher - Farside Music

OKI Dub Ainu Band was one of the projects supported under the PAJ in 2005

Director's Note



Japan's global cultural influence has spread recently, having been

dubbed as

having 'Japan cool', covering everything from Manga to pop music, cuisine to fashion. This phenomenon leads me to think about the period of 'Japonism' in the latter half of the 19th century, when all things Japanese inspired the people and artists in various fields in Europe.

This is also the period when William Morris and his contemporaries were actively involved in the 'Arts and Crafts Movement' in the UK. The Exhibition *International Arts and Crafts* organised last year by the Victoria & Albert Museum illustrated how the ideals of this movement inspired Japan's Mingei (Folk Crafts) Movement in the early 20th century, led by Soetsu Yanagi (1889-1961), one of the most important art theorists in Japan.

Bernard Leach, master potter and a close friend of Soetsu Yanagi, returned to England in 1920 after over 10 years of work in Japan. He opened a kiln, the first Japanese style *nobori-gama* kiln in the western world, in St. Ives where he played an important, influential role in the field of arts and crafts until his death in 1979.

How free is the human spirit; creativity easily crosses borders and cultural exchange nourishes new values which will enrich the world.

A significant project is now going on to restore and preserve Leach's pottery as a focal point for future generations and talented young craftsmen. I do hope it will become a trigger for further cultural and artistic exchange.

Fumio Matsunaga, Director General

Autumn Programme at The Japan Foundation

Don't miss this line up of events at Russell Square House!

Whether you want to learn more about Japanese contemporary art and its place in the global market, whether you enjoy Japanese anime and want to expand your knowledge of one of Japan's great animators, or whether you have always wanted to try your hand at Japanese paper craft, the Japan Foundation has something to offer you this autumn:

We kick off the season with a seminar entitled ***Will Japanese Contemporary Art Sweep Across the World? Galleries, Artists and the Market.***

To coincide with the Frieze Art Fair, **Tomio Koyama**, of the Tomio Koyama Gallery in Tokyo, will discuss the domestic and international markets for contemporary Japanese art with **Georgina Adam**, of *The Art Newspaper*. Koyama was one of the masterminds behind the success of Takashi Murakami, not long ago named one of the 10 most influential people in the global art world. Also with **Hiraki Sawa** and **Tomoaki Suzuki**, both Japanese artists gaining international acclaim, and **David Risley**, David Risley Gallery in London.

Next, in a move worthy of the strange world created by **Koji Yamamura**, where trees grow out of heads and birds dream of fruit, Koji Yamamura himself will be coming to the Japan Foundation! In the seminar ***Bringing Pictures to Life – Japanese Animation and the World of Koji Yamamura***, Yamamura will talk with **Jayne Pilling**, founder and Director of the British Animation Awards, about the world he creates in his work and his position in the Japanese animation industry. Also including a short and illustrated talk by **Helen McCarthy**, co-author of *The Anime Encyclopedia*, this seminar promises to be an exciting insight into the works of Koji Yamamura, one of Japan's most successful and distinctive animators.

The Japan Foundation has also organised two workshops to introduce the ***World of Japanese Paper Craft***. Paper doll master **Emiko Tanno**, based in Iwate in northern

Japan, will introduce the making of dolls from the traditional *washi* paper that has been so long treasured in Japan. Participants in the workshops will be able to make a small ornament using *washi* paper. From 6 November to 1 December ***World of Washi: Japanese Paper Dolls***, an exhibition of exquisite *washi* paper dolls, will be taking place at the Embassy of Japan.

Finally, concluding the line up of events this autumn, is a seminar looking at the issues surrounding Japanese art collections and their reinterpretation in museums. Guest speakers will include **Yoshinori Miki**, Senior Curator of Art and Education at the newly opened Kyushu National Museum, and **David Anderson**, Director of Learning and Visitor Services at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and it should prove to be an insightful look at the issues. Details will be up on our website soon.

Will Japanese Contemporary Art Sweep Across the World? Galleries, Artists and the Market

Tuesday 10 October from 6.30 pm

Bringing Pictures to Life Japanese Animation and the World of Koji Yamamura

Monday 16 October from 6.30 pm

World of Japanese Paper Craft (Workshop)

Wednesday 8 November from 2.00pm and 6.15pm

Japanese Art Collections and Reinterpretation (working title)

Wednesday 22 November from 6:30pm

For more details about these events go to www.jpf.org.uk/whatson.html
For other enquiries and to reserve a ticket e-mail event@jpf.org.uk

Japanese Language Refresher Course 2006

In its role supporting both teachers and learners of Japanese, the Japan Foundation London Language Centre held the ninth Japanese Language Refresher Course from 17 to 21 July. For the first time this year, colleagues from the primary sector took part in the course, which is aimed at non-native teachers of Japanese working in UK schools. Participants are immersed in Japanese for the 5-day course, which is intended to brush up their language skills through small-group, supportive sessions run by Japan Foundation Language Advisors and guest teachers from SOAS. Anna Jones, who teaches at Ysgol y Preseli in Pembrokeshire praised the 'excellent quality of teaching', which involved preparing for a speech to be given to guests from Japanese-related fields on the final day of the course. In addition to refreshing their language skills participants also had the opportunity to trial and give feedback on new resources which have been produced by the Japan Foundation and Japan 21. Mick Green, from All Saints RC School in York, said 'I'm really looking forward to using the Ready Steady Nihongo materials - I will definitely want to use them with my Japanese club in years 7-9'.

Sophie Lane



Masumi Tanaka, JFLLC Language Advisor, with two refresher course participants



Courtesy of Tomio Koyama Gallery



Courtesy of Koji Yamamura



Diorama created by Emiko Tanno

2007-2008 Grant Programmes

Guidelines and application forms are now available for our 2007-2008 Programme of Grants.

The deadline (unless otherwise stated) is 1 December 2006. For a programme summary please visit our website:

www.jpff.org.uk/ourfunding.html.

For full details of individual programmes go to

our Tokyo website:

www.jpff.go.jp/e/about/program/index.html.

Any applicants are advised to discuss their project with the relevant staff at the London Office before submitting an application.

For further information contact

info@jpff.org.uk or info.language@jpff.org.uk

(language programmes only).

e-bulletin subscription

The Japan Foundation is creating an e-bulletin. To be kept up to date with all Japan Foundation news and events send an email to info@jpff.org.uk with the heading "subscribe e-bulletin".

Performing Arts Japan Programme for Europe (PAJ) Call for Applications

This grant is available to those UK organisers who are planning Japan related performing arts projects in the UK and other European countries.

The grant can be used to cover the following:

- Airfares for Japanese individuals/company members engaged in a production in the UK and the rest of Europe
- Their accommodation costs in the UK and the rest of Europe
- Transport costs for the equipment they need to bring in and out of the UK and the rest of Europe
- Costs towards translation/interpreting assistance

The deadline for applications is 27 October 2006 for projects that will take place between 1 January 2007 and 30 June 2008.

For further information and application forms, please contact Junko Takekawa. email: junko.takekawa@jpff.org.uk



The Bee at Soho Theatre, one of the projects supported under the PAJ in 2005

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Events organised by, or with support from, the Japan Foundation

- 16 Sept – 26 Nov** **Liverpool Biennial's International 06** – Japanese artist Shimabuku has been invited to create a new work for this international exhibition of contemporary visual art. For details visit www.biennial.com
- 27 Sept – 8 Oct** **14th Rainedance Film Festival** – Screens films of the independent filmmaking community, films by first-time directors and featuring recent Japanese films. For details visit www.rainedancefilmfestival.org/festival
- 10 October** **Will Japanese Contemporary Art Sweep Across the World? Galleries, Artists and the Market** – Seminar at the Japan Foundation in which Tomio Koyama talks about the rise in popularity of Japanese Contemporary Art. Details from www.jpff.org.uk/whatson.html or email event@jpff.org.uk
- 16 October** **Bringing Pictures to Life – Japanese Animation and the World of Koji Yamamura** – Koji Yamamura will introduce his work as one of Japan's most successful animators at the Japan Foundation. Details from www.jpff.org.uk/whatson.html or email event@jpff.org.uk
- 18-21 October** **Norwich Animation Festival** – Koji Yamamura acts as a member of the international jury. Details from <http://www.niaf.org.uk/>
- 23-24 October** **Selenographica Dance Company, What Follows the Act** – Performance of this Japanese dance company in Brief Encounters, part of the Dance Umbrella Festival. See cover page announcement for details.
- 8 November** **World of Japanese Paper Craft** – Workshop in which paper doll master, Emiko Tanno, will introduce the skill of making traditional washi paper dolls. Details from www.jpff.org.uk/whatson.html or email event@jpff.org.uk
- 22 November** **Japanese Art Collections and Reinterpretation (working title)** – See article on page 3 for details.
- 3 December** **Japanese Language Proficiency Test at SOAS** – Further details and requests for application forms from jlpt@soas.ac.uk or see <http://www.soas.ac.uk/languagecentre/japanese/jlpt/home.html> Deadline for applications: 6 October 2006
- 12-14 January 07 (tbc)** **Condors** – The Japan Foundation brings Condors to Sadler's Wells. Co-presented with Sadler's Wells. See cover page announcement for details.



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Published by: The Japan Foundation London Office, Russell Square House, 10-12 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EH

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Editor: Esther Williams Design: SPY Design & Publishing Ltd (www.spydesign.co.uk)