

**Letter From
NEW YORKERS**

**Sparking Joy
in the New Year**
Susan Hamaker

I hope everyone rang in the New Year with loved ones. The end of each year is a time of reflection, and the beginning of the year is when we put our resolutions into action.



If you promised yourself to be more organized in 2019, it's the perfect time to follow the advice of Marie Kondo, the tidiest woman in Japan. Her KonMari Method has made her a global sensation, and her Netflix show, *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, debuted on New Year's Day. She instructs people to organize by category, rather than by room, by going through your clothing, books, papers and "komono," or miscellaneous – and many times sentimental – items. She famously instructs us to ask, "Does this spark joy?" If the answer is yes, then we fold or file it properly, and if the answer is no, we thank it for being a part of our lives before we donate, recycle or throw it away.

If you missed Kondo's talk on January 8, you have an opportunity to learn from Patty Morrissey, a certified KonMari Consultant, who will impart the guru's method at 92nd Street Y on January 17. Visit 92y.org to register for the \$35 class.

Have a tidy start to the New Year!
(Susan Hamaker is the writer/editor of *JapanCultureNYC*, an English-language website for all things Japanese in New York.)

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints

Great Applause for Bunraku Puppeteers Performance Led by Master Puppeteer Yoshida Kanya

The Bunraku puppet lecture and performance held at the Theater at St. Jean on the evening of December 1 ended with enthusiastic applause filling the hall.

The performance was sponsored by the Noh Society (Setsuko Bouteillé, President), an organization promoting Japanese classical arts in New York. The program opened with the auspicious dance, "Sanbaso", and was followed by a talk on the history of Bunraku by Hunter College Professor of Theatre, Claudia Orenstein.

Using three puppeteers to manipulate a single puppet is becoming known as the "Bunraku style" and is starting to spread in the world of puppetry. Master Puppeteer Yoshida Kanya, together with Kiritake Montomi and Kiritake Kanjiru, gave an inside look into Bunraku puppetry by demonstrating how this manipula-



tion is done, using the heads and the unadorned bodies of the puppets for utmost clarity. They also explained how movements are coordinated among the puppeteers.

After intermission, the famous "fire watch tower scene" from the play "Datemusume Koi-no-higanoko" was performed. The dramatic fire watch tower set was created by New York artist Masaki Takizawa. When Yoshida

explained that both the fire watch tower and the tie-dyed kimono worn by the puppet had been specially made for this New York performance, the audience erupted in applause.

Bunraku is an art that brings together puppets, narration, and music (shamisen). Although this performance focused only on the puppets, it provided a rich experience. In the opening "Sanbaso", the footwork of the three puppeteers was shown - something that is hidden behind a partition in Japan. During the demonstrations, a camera projected close-ups of the movements on a screen. Subtitles were provided in English for the performance. All these elements showed a thoughtfulness towards making the art readily accessible to New Yorkers.

Setsuko Bouteillé said "This



Bunraku event was so popular among New Yorkers that it sold out quickly, and we even had a waiting list. I hope this event will lead to a deeper appreciation of the art."

Audience members commented "I've seen Bunraku at Lincoln Center, but this was the first time I was able to learn about how the puppets are manipulated." "The puppeteer moving the feet must have a hard job because he has to stay crouched."

In addition to the above-mentioned performance, the Bunraku puppeteers also held lectures and performances at Hunter College, Pennsylvania University, the Lyceum Kennedy Japanese School and a workshop for professional puppeteers at the La MaMa Studio. (Photo & Text by Kaoru Komil/Translated by Janet Abraham)



Kaoru Ishiguro

"Princess Knight" dream came true in real NY life

Kaoru Ishiguro loved the TV animation "Princess Knight" when she was a child, and started fencing when she was over 40 years old. Now, she is entering a world veterans fencing championship as a representative of Japan.

She was inspired when she read a USA Today newspaper article about Dara Torres, who competed in and represented the USA as a swimmer at the age of 41 at the Beijing Olympics, and two ladies who competed in the Olympics as fencers. Wanting to do something similar to them, Ishiguro decided to join a fencing club the same day she read the article.

Ishiguro then started joining competitions in New York and New Jersey with her American friend. Her Japanese friend asked her to join the world veterans fencing championships as a representative of Japan. She was not sure if she could be a representative, but the number of fencing players at her age was low so she decided to enter. As a result, she competed in Limoges, France in 2015, Stralsund, Germany in 2016 and Maribor, Republic of Slovenia in 2017.

The world veterans fencing championships also has an over-70 competition. Ms. Ishiguro said "If I'm healthy enough, I want to continue fencing until that age."

(Written by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Chikako Iwasaki)

Migiwa Miyajima Talks at 47th NY Japanese MBA Club Meeting

On December 12, the NY Japanese MBA Club held a monthly meeting of 30 attendees (including three MBA holders) entitled "Year End Special Project: The secret of sound structure and management. A story of how big band jazz has made," where they invited composer and pianist Miguiwa Miyajima.

"Comfortable sound frequencies and melodies can be made by combining each note", Ms. Miyajima said. Using this theory, she composes songs clearly defying a composition from beginning to end, keeping her clients' intentions in mind and adding her artistic value to create what to express in each song.

Ms. Miyajima also explained jazz history, its difference with other music genres and the Grammy Awards system, for which she was nominated in 2011 and 2014.



She and the music-loving attendees chatted lively about jazz and music business. The meeting was filled with an atmosphere celebrating the end of 2018. (Photo and article by Shintaro Ueyama/Translated by Etsuko Noda)

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Anything

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through upcurls of morning mist
The cry of a loon

- O. Mabson Southard

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