

VOICES From THE NEW YORKERS

Finding Comfort When Friends Move Away

By Ashley Matarama

Since college I had sought language partners to keep up the Japanese I studied in high school. Many of the language partners I met were Japanese students or employees who were traveling, living, studying and/or working in New York. Sometimes friendship blossomed and we would meet regularly at cafes, events or restaurants while sharing each other's languages and enjoying each other's company.

However, there always comes that inevitable realization that these Japanese nationals are temporary visitors to the States. Parting with these friends as they head back to Japan can be bittersweet and they are dearly missed. Akin to the fleeting beauty of falling cherry blossoms, the weeks, months or years they stayed in New York go by in a flash. Thankfully there are many ways to keep in touch, but it doesn't feel the same as hanging out in



person. On some occasions, you visit them on your next trip to Japan or they visit you again sometime after settling back home. On the other hand, as the city life takes its toll, distance and other factors may cause you to lose touch.

Regardless of whether or not you stay in touch, there is one Japanese idiom that carries a profound message: *Ichigo ichi e* (meaning "one time, one meeting"). Many moments in our lives such as meeting new people only happen once, and it is precisely because they happen once that we should cherish and enjoy the moment. Even if you meet the same person or go to the same cafe 100 times, every one of those moments is unique.

We can find solace in having been given the wonderful opportunity

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints

Sayonara, Keene Sensei

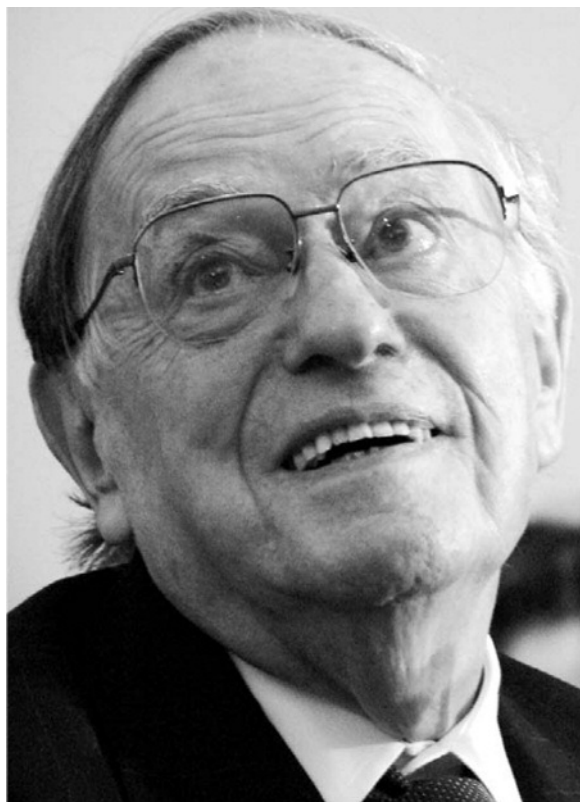
Professor Who Introduced Japanese Literature to the Western World

Donald Keene, renowned scholar of Japanese literature, died of heart failure in Tokyo on February 24, 2019. He was 96. He is survived by his adopted son Seiki Keene, a shamisen player and bunraku puppet theater narrator.

Keene was born on June 18, 1922 in Brooklyn, New York. He entered Columbia College at the age of sixteen in 1938. In 1940, he happened upon a discounted copy of Arthur Waley's translation of *The Tale of Genji* in a Midtown bookstore and found refuge from constant news of warfare overseas in the world of Murasaki Shikibu's 11th century classic. He served as a translator and interpreter in Hawaii during World War II. After the war Keene returned to Columbia to continue his studies and he produced a prolific stream of translations and scholarly studies of Japanese literature and culture, publishing hundreds of books in English, Japanese and several European languages.

Awarded for cultural merit in 1953, Keene received a Ford Foundation fellowship to study at Kyoto University. During the two years that followed, he

to have met someone and befriended them over time. The first time you met them in a sense is the last, because you can't repeat a first meeting, and neither can you repeat the second, nor the third and so on. Treating each moment as if it were the last might sound morbid, but actually if we treat it as the last, we may find ourselves putting more effort into making it a beautiful moment and a wonderful memory. To all the Japanese visitors who crossed paths with me in New York, I wish you all the best in your lives back home!



Donald Keene at his final lecture at Columbia University on April 26, 2011. (Photo: Ryoichi Miura) (1922-2019)

began friendships with prominent Japanese authors, including Jun'ichiro Tanizaki and Yukio Mishima.

For many years Keene divided his time between Manhattan and Tokyo. After the Tohoku earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in March 2011, he moved to Tokyo full time, becoming a Japanese citizen in March of the following year. On April 26, 2011, he gave his last lecture at Columbia University. In the lecture he said, "I want to spend the rest of my life in Japan to express my gratitude to this country, and we need to know the truth of this disaster."

At Columbia, the Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture and the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures will host a memorial service in the fall of 2019. The Keene Center has also established a scholarship fund in his honor; donations can be sent to Columbia University, 507 Kent Hall MC 3920, 1140 Amsterdam Avenue, New York NY 10027 or by donating online: <https://web.giving.columbia.edu/giveonline/index.jsp?schoolstyle=32402>

For more information, please visit www.keenecenter.org. (Kaoru Komi/Translated by Chikako Iwasaki)



Sadao Watanabe Quartet's Concert at Blue Note

The Sadao Watanabe Quartet will hold concerts on Thursday, March 21, Saturday, March 23 and Sunday, March 24 at Blue Note (131 West 3rd Street). Performances will feature Sadao Watanabe (saxophone), Russell Ferrante (piano), Ben Williams (drums) and Ittetsu Takemura (drums). There will be two performances on each day at 8:00 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.

Watanabe was born in 1933 in Utsunomiya City. After graduating high school and moving to Tokyo, he joined many bands including Toshiko Akiyoshi's Cozy Quartet. Studying abroad at the Berklee College of Music and acquiring a unique personal jazz style, he is active as a top Japanese musician around the world. He also participated as a Japanese representative for International Jazz Day, hosted by former United States President Barack Obama and his wife at the White House in April 2016. The vigorous performance by this internationally recognized lifetime player is a must-see.

Entrance fees are \$30 for bar seating or \$45 for table seats. Reservations can be made at 212-475-8592. For more information, visit www.bluenotejazz.com/ (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Ai Omae)



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Apply for HAIKU Contest!

Haiku is a poem following the syllabic pattern of 5-7-5.

● Haiku in English may consider the following as a model:

Across the still lake
through upcurls of morning mist
The cry of a loon

- O. Mabson Southard

■ HOW to APPLY
Website: <http://www.artofhaiku.org>
E-mail: HaikuGrandPrix@gmail.com
7 Japanese, 7 English and 7 "Under 18 Div." haiku will be selected each month.
For more detail, go to <http://www.artofhaiku.org>

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