

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints

'Reiwa' American Media Reacts to the Name of Japan's Next Era

令和

On April 1, as Japan's government announced that the name of its new era would be "Reiwa," American media outlets immediately began spreading the news. Various media sources all reported on the Japanese government's announcement, but each source had different interpretations of the meaning of the name "Reiwa." In addition, most media outlets touched on the fact that this was the first time a word from classical Japanese literature instead of classical Chinese literature was used as an era name.

The Wall Street Journal reported, "Rei means 'auspicious,' and wa means 'peace.'" Bloomberg News stated that the name comes from *rei*, the Japanese character for "order," and *wa*, the character for "peace" or "harmony." The Washington Post posted an article that stated, "The name 'Reiwa' is comprised of two characters that symbolize good luck and harmony." The article commented that the character *rei* usually means an order or command, although in this case it has a meaning of auspiciousness, while *wa* signifies serenity and peace.

On the other hand, The New York Times published an article entitled, "Japan's New Era Gets a Name, but No One Can Agree What It Means." The article outlined Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's statement that the name "Reiwa" was taken from the Manyo-Shu, Japan's oldest anthology. However, it also

presented the opinion of several critics who asserted that Mr. Abe's cabinet "is right-leaning and has advocated an expanded military role for Japan," which could be why the government "chose a name containing a character that can mean 'order' or 'law.'" According to the same article, Tomoaki Ishigaki, a spokesman for the prime minister, responded that interpreting the name as "order and

peace" is "not the intended meaning." He emphasized that its true meaning was expressed by Mr. Abe: "the culture that is born and nurtured from the beauty of people bringing their hearts together." Additionally, the article mentioned that the name was chosen by a panel of nine experts, not the Emperor or his heir.

Speaking to CNN, Jeff Kingston, director of Asian Studies at Temple University in Tokyo, commented, "Japan's scholars are twisting themselves into knots into what exactly 'Reiwa' means, and whether Prime Minister Abe's explanation holds water." He also declared, "I believe this name reflects the current right-leaning political landscape of Japan," and posited that, "The *wa* in 'Reiwa' may have come from 'Showa,' the name of the period that lasted from 1926 to 1989, in order to present a more positive outlook on Japan's wartime era." Finally, he concluded that the choice to select the name using a Japanese text instead of a Chinese text could be "a dog whistle to the government's conservative constituency." (Yukishige Takesue/Translated by Yudai Kaneda)



Neo-Dada Artist Ushio Shinohara Exhibition

New York based avant-garde artist Ushio Shinohara will have an exhibition at the Onetwentyeight Gallery (128 Rivington Street; Phone: 347-456-3424) from April 11 to 28. His standard work, such as his motorcycle sculpture, mid-sized acrylic paintings and masterpiece Ichiyou Higuchi will be shown. The gallery will be open Wednesdays to Saturdays from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and on Sundays from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The opening reception will be held on April 11 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Shinohara was born in 1932 in Tokyo. He went on to study painting at Tokyo Art University. He sent his work to Yomiuri Independent while he was a student and built a new generation of avant-garde art in Japan.

He delivered works entitled "Neo Dadaism Organizers," "Imitation Art" and "Oiran Series" in 1960. He later became famous for his "boxing paintings."

Shinohara and his wife, Noriko, were featured in a documentary film in 2013 called "Cutie and the Boxer," which was nominated for the 86th Academy Award in 2014. The curator for this exhibition is Mieko Mitachi. (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Chikako Iwasaki)



The Spirit of Tea

Acquiring Knowledge of the Japanese Tea Ceremony; ITO EN of North America Teaches High Schoolers

At noon on March 21, 15 students of Manhattan's prestigious Stuyvesant High School received instruction on brewing tea at ITO EN of North America's tea packaging facility in

Industry City, Brooklyn.

The instructors were Executive Vice President Rona Tison and Product Manager Asaki Sakuragawa. They gave a lecture on the history of

tea and introduced different types of tea; the students were interested and engaged in learning about *Wakeiseijaku* (harmony, respect, purity and tranquility), the principles needed to master the tea ceremony.

After the lecture, the students experienced tea brewing themselves with the help of the instructors and



enjoyed a taste of Japanese culture.

Lastly, they were introduced to haiku and learned to appreciate the poems that they wrote themselves. For the past few years, the company has been holding these events for students of New York as part of the activities of teaching Japanese tea ceremony. (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Ai Omae)

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Anything

Passing on the Ballet She Learned in the United States to Children Aspiring to Become Ballerinas

Hariyama Ballet Instructor
Yui Hasegawa

Yui Hasegawa started her classical ballet lessons in her hometown of Nagoya, Japan at the age of eight under the instruction of Yukari Kanbara. She still remembers dancing principal roles for "Sleeping Beauty" and "Coppelia" in front of more than two thousand audience members at the Aichi Prefectural Art Theater as if it was yesterday. After graduating from college and passing many auditions, Hasegawa starred on many stages as a professional dancer. She was a leading dancer in pieces such as "Carmina Burana" and "Fascinated by Schumann" by famous choreographers Tatsue Sata and Hideo Fukagawa, respectively.

One day, her dance partner told anxiety-stricken Hasegawa, "You'll be just fine as long as you feel the floor while dancing" before she took the stage. She keeps these words close to her heart even today before taking the stage.

While in Japan, Hasegawa had an opportunity to participate in a piece by Vladimir Issaev, the director of the Arts Ballet Theater of Florida, which expanded her interest in ballet abroad, and so she decided to come to America. Although her intention when coming to the United States was "to learn ballet while studying English" for nine months as a language school student, Hasegawa started her internship at Hariyama Ballet Studio invited by founder and director Mami Hariyama. Graduating from the Ballet Arts Center for Dance after completing



Yui Hasegawa

language school, Hasegawa obtained her artist visa and became an instructor at Hariyama Ballet in New York.

In charge of directing and choreography, she feels her large task highly rewarding. Currently, she is in preparation for their spring performance coming in June. As a dancer, she performs regularly as a company member of Benjamin Briones Ballet.

(Written and Photographed by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Hiroko Makabe)