

**DECEMBER
2013**

JAPAN
CREATIVE
CENTRE

EMBASSY OF JAPAN

CULTURAL E-MAGAZINE



UPCOMING EVENTS

December 2013

JCC'S DECEMBER EVENTS

15 Nov - 12 Dec 2013 [JAPAN: Kingdom of Characters Exhibition](#)

3 Dec - 7 Dec 2013 [A Chain of Changes of Japanese in Calligraphy & Ancient Letters](#)

SUPPORTED EVENTS

8 Dec 2013 [Rendezvous With Nihonbuyo in Singapore](#)

RELATED EVENTS

23 Oct - 8 Dec 2013 ["HOTEL NEW OSOREZAN" @ Ota Fine Arts](#)

23 Oct - 21 Dec 2013 [Masters of Modern & Contemporary Photography @ Ikkan Art](#)

11 Jan 2014 [Child Aid Asia Tokyo 2014](#)

NOTICE

[40th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation](#)

1 Nov 2013 - 10 Jan 2014 [The Japan Foundation Program Guidelines for Fiscal 2014-2015](#)

1 Nov 2013 - 10 Jan 2014 [Application Procedures for the 10th International Ceramics Competition MINO, Japan](#)



**40th YEAR OF ASEAN-JAPAN
FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION**

Further information and updates about JCC events can be found on the [JCC Website](#) and [Facebook](#)

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW OF JCC'S PAST EVENTS IN NOVEMBER 2013

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 2.1 | JAPAN : KINGDOM OF CHARACTERS | P3 |
| 2.2 | JCC CINEMA 24 : IGPX | P4 |
| 2.3 | MAU : J-ASEAN DANCE COLLABORATION | P5 |
| 2.4 | NOMARIN LECTURE & DEMONSTRATION | P7 |

JAPANESE CULTURAL FACT OF THE MONTH

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|----|
| 3.1 | USHERING IN THE NEW YEAR | P8 |
|-----|--------------------------|----|



2 OVERVIEW

In November, JCC presented a pop-culture exhibition entitled “JAPAN : Kingdom of Characters” focusing on the anime and manga culture in Japan. A special lecture was also held by Director Mitsuru Hongo on Japanese animation. The amiable director also gave a talk at JCC after the screening of his animation micro-series ‘IGPX’.

At the end of the month, Nomarin, back in Singapore to tell his picture stories, conducted a humorous and enjoyable Kamishibai lecture and demonstration at JCC .

2.1 JAPAN : KINGDOM OF CHARACTERS OPENING CEREMONY & EXHIBITION



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“JAPAN : Kingdom of Characters” is a pop-culture Exhibition aimed to promote and showcase Japan’s rich subculture in Anime and Manga through its characters. Displaying iconic characters from the 1950s till modern times, this exhibition evoked much feelings of nostalgia for visitors, back to their childhood days with their favourite Japanese Anime and Manga characters like Gundam, Ultraman and Hello Kitty. Visitors had the privilege of taking photographs with their favourite characters right in

Singapore without having to travel to Japan!

For fans of Hello Kitty, besides a life-size figure in display, a room decorated in Hello Kitty merchandise was also open for viewing.

The Exhibition was scheduled to be open from 15 November to 12 December at Lim Hak Tai Gallery of Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) , Campus 1.



*Opening remarks by
Ambassador Takeuchi*

The Opening Ceremony was held on 14 November. Ambassador of Japan to Singapore, His Excellency Haruhisa Takeuchi presented the opening remarks during this program. Gallery Director of the NAFA Lim Hak Tai Gallery, Ms Bridget Tracy Tan also made a brief address.

In conjunction with "JAPAN : Kingdom of Characters" Exhibition, a popular Japanese Animation Director Mitsuru Hongo, was dispatched by Japan Foundation to present a lecture in



Students raising questions and listening intently during the Lecture session with Mr Hongo

promotion of Japanese Pop-Culture at NAFA. This lecture was held on 15 November for students of the Animation faculty of NAFA. During the lecture, three episodes of his popular micro-series, IGFX, directed by Mr Hongo himself, was screened. He shared his experiences in working as an Animation Director, such as the hardships he faced, the processes it takes to become an animator, how he started out as well as the departments animators have to work with. He shared much insight into the animation world that provided enrichment to aspiring animators.

The students were given the opportunity to speak to Mr Hongo directly and raise questions about their interests in entering the animation industry.

2.2 JCC CINEMA 25 : IGFX

On 16 November, "IGFX" (Immortal Grand Prix), directed by well-known Japanese Director Mitsuru Hongo, was screened at JCC for the monthly JCC Cinema. This was done in conjunction with the JAPAN: Kingdom of Characters Exhibition.



"IGFX" is an original animated series created by Japanese anime studio, Production I.G and the world's leading animation channel, Cartoon Network. It is a micro-series which tells the story of a futuristic fighting race set in the year 2048 which is faster and more exciting than any other existing motor racing sports of the time. In the story, the race is centered between IG Machines, high-tech humanoid mechs driven by humans, at speeds greater than 400km/h. In particular the micro-series focuses on

Team Satomi which is fiercely challenged by a rival whilst having trouble with funding its participation in the race. In IGPX, we see how Team Satomi faces all their challenges and brave the race.

After the screening of the three episodes of IGPX, an interesting sharing session with Director Hongo was held. During this talk, he spoke about his past works as well as IGPX. He also explained that each anime episode production takes a few weeks and that more than 100 people are usually involved in preparing for just a single episode.

The session was an eye-opening event to animation and film enthusiasts.



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2.3 MAU : J-ASEAN DANCE COLLABORATION

Commissioned by Japan Foundation to mark the 40th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, this dance collaboration featured a colourful spectrum of Asian dance traditions, dancers and musicians from Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Japan.

Held at Lee Foundation Theatre of Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) on a two night only performance, on 27 and 28 November, MAU showcased a brilliant array of colourful dance performance.

MAU which means ‘to dance’ in Japanese, lasted two hours consisting of three acts. The First Act was initiated by a traditional dance team from Indonesia, then from Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines and finally Japan. Act Two had all the dancers present



*Act Two of MAU
© Chrispy*



*Act Three of MAU
© Chrispy*

on stage in a frozen statue-like stance and taking turns to perform a second set of choreography reflecting each country's rich culture.

Lastly in Act Three, the well known "Tsuchigumo" of the Japanese Kabuki World was introduced as an adversary against the dancers from the various ASEAN nations and Japan.

The performance was directed and supervised by Mr. Kanjuro Fujima, the head of Soke-Fujima-Ryu Nihon Buyo dance school, as MAU's artistic

staging director. It reflects the combination of the unique and characteristic artistry of Kabuki with the traditional arts from the participating ASEAN countries - Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines.

In a portrayal of a battle where the nations work hand in hand to fend of the antagonist, the relationship of friendship and cooperation between the countries were depicted.

All in all, the event and collaboration proved to be a successful one and was enjoyable to all who attended it.



*The whole cast of MAU
© Chrispy*

2.4 NOMARIN KAMISHIBAI



Nomarin performing a Kamishibai

On 29 November, Mr Shigeyuki Noma or known as Nomarin, was back in JCC to share stories through Kamishibai due to a very positive response from last year. Kamishibai, which literally means "Paper Drama", is a traditional form of Japanese storytelling used to entertain and teach children.

Kamishibai is used to entertain children with illustrated, colourful pictures. Unlike a picture book, Kamishibai is done using a stage similar to that used in puppet shows. In Kamishibai, the storyteller pulls out each paper to reveal the next page of the story.

Nomarin encouraged and shared with guests on how Kamishibai can be used by Singaporeans as well. He explained that very young children especially infants tend to have short attention spans and so only 8 images or cards would keep them attentive at a time. He also added that storytelling involves a lot of dramatization to keep children entertained. In Kamishibai, rather than words, the storyteller uses vocal modulations to entertain children and encourage laughter. Kamishibai can be used with children as young as 11 months of age to adults.

It was an interesting and interactive experience for JCC guests and children who participated were also seen laughing. Instead of using words, the Kamishibai tells stories to children mostly with colourful pictures and as little words as possible to teach and help children use visual images to connect and put together a whole story.

Nomarin has done around 1,500 Kamishibai and believes that reading through listening is vital to a child's linguistic development. Listening is also very important to assist in imaginations. This also enriches experiences of the child especially in the olden times when there was no television. By enacting the stories through Kamishibai, the storyteller enables characters to come alive.

He described his inspiration to have come from a time when he was telling stories to a class of children, and a boy who was known to be hyperactive and unable to sit still, listened intently to his Kamishibai story. Previously a Primary School Teacher, Nomarin is now retired but continues telling stories through Kamishibai. Nomarin also conducted demonstration at Ang Mo Kio and Bishan public libraries in Singapore. Both sites were full of children.



Nomarin demonstration at Bishan library

3 JAPANESE CULTURAL FACT OF THE MONTH

3.1 USHERING IN THE NEW YEAR

The final day of the year, December 31, is called *omisoka* in Japan. In order to usher in the new year feeling fresh, families have to finish up cleaning their house and making preparations for the New Year holidays by *omisoka*. Kids are in the middle of winter break, and they usually help out with the chores.

A lot of college students and working people who moved to big cities to attend school or take on a job return to their hometowns to spend New Year's with their families, friends, and relatives. On New Year's Eve, many families gather around the TV set to watch special *omisoka* programs and eat *toshi-koshi* ("year-crossing") buckwheat noodles in the hope that one's life will be stretched out as long as these noodles. New Year's Eve is the one day of the year when kids don't get scolded for staying up late.



Ringing in the new year

As midnight approaches, Buddhist temples around the country begin ringing out the old year, sounding the temple bell 108 times. This practice is based on a belief that humans have 108 earthly passions they have to overcome in order to attain enlightenment, and each ring is thought to drive away one such passion. People wait until the reverberations have completely died down from each bell toll before making the next strike, and so it takes about an hour to complete the 108 strokes.

The tolling of the bell at some of the nation's most famous temples is broadcast live on television and radio. Many people welcome the new year by listening to the calming sounds of these bells.

The breaking of dawn the next morning is much more than just the beginning of a new day. *Oshogatsu* (the first three days of the year) is Japan's biggest holiday, and people flock to temples and shrines to pray for a healthy and prosperous year - regardless of their religious affiliation. This visit is called *hatsu-mode*, which used to mean going to a Shinto shrine before dawn and paying respects to one's guardian deities as dawn broke. Today, though, a visit made by January 7 is considered part of *hatsu-mode*.

Trains and buses that normally stop running late at night operate on a 24-hour basis between *omisoka* and New Year's Day.

**Any comments for JCC
e-magazine?
We would love to hear them!**

**So please do send in your suggestions and thoughts to
jcc@sn.mofa.go.jp.**