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*The sick goose flies down
in the cold night, taking sleep
along the journey*

病む雁の
夜寒に落ちて
旅寝かな

Matsuo Basho
(1644-1694)

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The Editor
The Japan Foundation Newsletter
Information and Resource Center
The Japan Foundation
ARK Mori Bldg.21F
1-12-32 Akasaka, Minato-ku
Tokyo 107-6021, Japan
Tel: +81 (03)5562-3538
Fax: +81 (03)5562-3534
E-mail: jfnl@jpf.go.jp
http://www.jpf.go.jp/

If you are already a subscriber, we would appreciate being informed of any changes in your address.

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Interview with Iraqi Troupe *Al-Murwass*

"The Real Image of the Iraqis is a Peaceful People who Love Music and Plays"

In October, The *Al-Murwass Group Folklore And Modern Arts* came to Japan from Baghdad on invitation from the Japanese little theater, Tiny Alice, and The Japan Foundation. From October 3rd to October 25th, they performed their original play, *Message Carried by Ship from Iraq*, to rapt Japanese audiences. The *Japan Foundation Newsletter* interviewed the director, Mr. Mohammed Shakir Saliman, and Mr. Anes Ageel, a mime. They talked about the reality of the current situation in Iraq and had a message to send to the world.

JF: The name of your group, *Al-Murwass*, originated from the name of an Iraqi drum. Why did you choose that name?

Saliman: I chose the name because I really like that instrument. The drum is our traditional musical instrument and I learned to play it when I was a child. This drum is an important and necessary part of all traditional Iraqi performances.



Mr. Mohammed S. Saliman (Right) and Mr. Anes Ageel (Left)

JF: Can you talk about the history of your group?

Saliman: The group was established in 1996 under the direction of Daud Kausy, a famous theater director in Iraq. At that time, the group's name was *The Artist Federation General Center*. We performed in Iraq and were also invited to take part in performing art festivals in countries like Algeria and Tunisia, but the government forbade us to travel abroad. As a result, a conflict arose between the members of our troupe and the government, and the Iraqi Cultural Division ordered us to disband. But we continued to perform under the Artist's Union even after we were given that order. After the Iraq War, we re-established the group under the direction of Jabar Al-Saadi, the famous actor, and we changed the name to "*Al-Murwass*."

JF: What was the situation of theater arts in Iraq before the war? And how did it change after the war?

Saliman: In Iraq, theater groups continued to perform powerful plays, even under the government of Saddam Hussein. However, we didn't have much freedom. After Hussein's government fell, we gained the freedom to continue our theatrical activities, despite many logistical difficulties. Now, there are three big drama festivals in Iraq. There is also a union of drama

There are nineteen members of the Al-Murwass Group. The group is not partial to any religious or political sect and the group's players include followers of both the Shiite and Sunni religions. Women and men appear on stage together.

critics who review plays, focusing on how the groups contribute to society and humanity.

Ageel: There are many theater groups now active in Iraq. Just as we were invited to Japan, some groups were invited to countries like Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan. But there are only two groups who specialize in traditional performing arts.

One is a group connected to the government and the other is our group, which is independent.

JF: In Japan, you blended traditional Iraqi theater and music with modern pantomime. Is that a style unique to Iraq?

Saliman: In Iraq, theater people have always paid attention to what's going on in the theatrical world abroad. They've taken the performance styles of foreign countries and incorporated these new styles into their own native arts. That's why some groups blend traditional performance with modern style. However, I'm proud to say that our play *Message Carried by Ship from Iraq* is quite unique. The concept of this play came about when I received emails from Japan asking if there were pantomime performances in Iraq, and what Iraqi traditional performance was. I got the impression from these many emails that the Japanese didn't know there was a modern performance style in Iraq. I had also heard that the Japanese like the story of Sinbad the Sailor. So, we combined these three elements: the story of Sinbad, traditional arts, and modern performance.

JF: In this play, Sinbad is imprisoned in a dark place, recalling a more pleasant past. Does he represent the current struggles of the Iraqi people?

Ageel: Yes. In *The 1001 Arabian Nights*, Sinbad the sailor traveled around the world to solve problems. But in our play, we gave him a new task, which was to carry messages from the Iraqi people to the people of Japan. Our idea was to have Sinbad bring a large box on stage and hand out messages from the box. The ocean he had to cross is a symbol of difficulty and danger. But the sailors asked Sinbad to cross the ocean despite the dangers so he could carry these messages to the Japanese people.

JF: Before coming to Japan, tragically, a member of your troupe was killed in an unintentional attack by the Occupation Forces. What is the current situation in Iraq and how has it impacted your troupe?

Saliman: There are still many difficulties in Iraq. In our case, it was very hard to find a place to get together and rehearse before coming here. The Occupation Forces had closed the roads for a week, so we couldn't get together to rehearse

Message from All Iraqis, with Love

We are fine. We are not tired. You don't have to worry about us. We have come to Japan to see our friends. It is true that we have had much suffering and hardship for a long time in our land, but we are not defeated. We have never been defeated by those who have come to destroy us, as we know our suffering and hardship will be over some day. The Japanese people support us. We never forget those who help us. Thank you. May the Japanese people be happy. As for us, we will continue on our path.

before the tour. Ordinary people have the same problems—that is, it is difficult to go out, to reach their destinations.

Ageel: We had to rehearse in a place destroyed by air raids. The government gave us permission to use it, but we had to fix it up by ourselves. Even though

the Iraqi people are facing very hard times, artists can't just stop making art. Just like workers have to go to their companies. Even in a difficult situation, all of our people are doing their best to survive.

JF: How did ordinary Iraqi people feel when the war "ended," and how do they feel now?

Saliman: To tell you the truth, I was happy when Saddam's government fell. But personally, I did not expect Saddam's government to be destroyed by the hands of foreign armies. I wanted to destroy it by our own hands. Also, the American media has had such great power and influence. I feel it is difficult for people in the world to understand our true feelings. But the Iraqi people have a history of resistance against foreign powers that have occupied our lands. We can't accept the American occupation and we will continue to protest against it.

Ageel: When the statue of Saddam fell, I actually had ambivalent feelings about it. Of course, I was happy to see the collapse of the old government, but when the American government said they had occupied Iraq to free the Iraqi people, I felt it was a lie. Now, it has become clear that indeed, this was not the truth.

JF: What can the people of the world do for the Iraqi people now?

Saliman: I want the people of the world to know that the Iraqi people have suffered a long time and are still suffering. We don't need military or financial support; what we need is moral support. The arts and entertainment are important in terms of helping the Iraqi people remain happy. Not only *Al-Murwass*, but all theater groups in Iraq face great difficulties in being able to perform. We need support to reform the situation so that all theater groups will be able to perform safely and freely.

Ageel: Originally, the Iraqi people were peaceful people who loved the arts, music, and plays. They are not warriors. In the international news, journalists have focused on the war or on terrorism, and the real image of the Iraqi people has gotten lost. I want the people of the world to understand that the true face of the Iraqi people is that of a peaceful nation that loves music, dance, and play.

The Japan Foundation Award and Special Prizes

The presentation ceremony for The Japan Foundation Award and Special Prizes 2004 was held at the ANA Hotel in Tokyo on Thursday, October 7th. Ms. Toshiko Akiyoshi, the jazz pianist, composer and bandleader, was the recipient of The Japan Foundation Award. The winners of the Special Prizes were Mr. James Quandt, film curator and Senior Programmer of Cinematheque Ontario (Canada), for Arts and Culture; Yi Dok Bong, Ph.D., professor of Japanese language

at the Dongduk Women's University (Korea), for Japanese-Language Education; and Kurayoshi Takara, Ph.D., professor of Okinawan history at the University of the Ryukyus (Okinawa), for Japanese Studies.

We are pleased to reprint Ms. Akiyoshi's acceptance speech along with the selection committees' remarks on the recipients of this year's award and prizes.



Ms. Toshiko Akiyoshi, a jazz pianist, composer, and bandleader, has contributed incomparably to the world of jazz and music. She has also made a lifelong effort to work toward the alleviation of problems facing humanity from the twentieth century onward, and has cease-

lessly promoted peace and co-existence in the world through her music.

Acceptance Speech of Toshiko Akiyoshi

Ladies and Gentlemen, and staff members of the Japan Foundation, I am honored, and totally surprised, to receive the prestigious Japan Foundation Award.

As some of you may know, my music was recorded by a major American jazz record label in 1953. I was the first Japanese jazz musician to debut in the United States. And when I moved to the United States in 1956, it was as the first Japanese jazz musician to set foot on American soil. It took me nearly twenty years to realize that my work lies in blending my heritage—Japanese culture—with the jazz tradition.

I feel that my endeavor to infuse jazz with Japanese culture has succeeded, resulting in a greater awareness of Japanese music and sensibilities among Western audiences. Needless to say, this could not have been accomplished without my

husband Lew Tabackin's musical knowledge, and his outstanding ability to execute my music. Also, for the first time in jazz history, I added a woodwind section to a jazz big band. No other big band has attempted this to date, to the best of my knowledge. There are a fair number of universities in the United States where my music is used as textbook examples.

As you all are aware, jazz was born in the United States as a fusion of African and European culture; obviously no elements of Japanese culture were present. By bringing some elements of Japanese culture to jazz, I thought that perhaps I could return something of worth to the jazz world—not just receive benefits from it. And, at the same time, I would also be able to show gratitude to my country, by making Japanese culture more universal.

I have been greatly concerned about human rights issues and about the escalation of conflicts between nations in recent years. As a musician, I know I cannot change the world directly. Yet, I believe it is important to express my feelings of concern, and I have continued to do so through jazz.

Fortunately, with the support and encouragement of many people, I have continued playing and composing jazz. And in the future, with all of your support, I hope to be able to continue to grow as a musician from whom audiences can feel a sense of Japanese history.

Thank you.

(10.7,2004)

Winners of the Special Prizes

Mr. James Quandt has made a significant contribution to introducing Japanese films and filmmakers to the North American public, through presenting directorial retrospectives and thematic film series. He has published widely on cinema as a critic and scholar, including articles on the history of the Japanese film and monographs on directors Shohei Imamura and Kon Ichikawa.

Professor Yi Dok Bong has been at the forefront of Japanese-language studies for years, mentoring many outstanding stu-

dents in the field. He has been actively involved in developing national policy for language studies, and his efforts have contributed largely to advancing mutual understanding between the Korean and Japanese people.

Professor Kurayoshi Takara has made significant contributions in researching the history of Okinawa through the wider perspective of its relationship to Asia. At the same time, he has pioneered the creation of a network of foreign researchers in the field. His research influences go far beyond academia and include a wealth of insights into the future of Japan.

The Japan Foundation's Activities

Multimedia Theater Piece *Memories of a Legend* by Five South Asian Directors

Opens the *National Theatre
Festival of India*

M*emories of a Legend*, a multimedia theater collaboration among five South Asian theater directors, will be the opening play of the 7th *National Theatre Festival* in Delhi on January 6th and 7th. The piece was conceived and produced by the Japan Foundation.

Memories of a Legend is inspired by *The Baburnama* (Memoirs of Babur—the founder and first emperor of the sixteenth century Mughal Dynasty). Abhilash Pillai (India), Azad Abul Kalam (Bangladesh), Anup Baral (Nepal), Ibrahim Quraishi (Pakistan), and Ruwanthie de Chickera (Sri Lanka) are collaborating to create this multimedia piece.

South Asia has a rich background in the theater arts, as the oldest extant play—Kudiyattam—was created in ancient India, but politics has often prevented South Asian theater talents from working together despite their common cultural and historical background. Now, through the collaborative effort of creating this single play, they have taken on the challenge of presenting a clear view of what theatrical expression in South Asia is, while seeking solutions to the region's contemporary racial, political and religious issues from a universal point of view.

In addition to the five directors, the globally renowned video artist Ein Lall (Sri Lanka), the musical composer Chandran Veyattummal (India), the sound installation artist Jean-Louis Norscq (France), and the costume designer Koji Hamai (Japan), are also working together to help create the multimedia play. The play ran in Tokyo and Kyoto from November 25th to December 2nd. From there, it will go on to the *National Theatre Festival* organized by National School of Drama in India, the biggest theater festival in India.

The Japan Foundation has sponsored other collaborative theater projects among Asian countries. In the 1990s, talents



from Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, China, and Malaysia collaborated on *Lear*, inspired by the Shakespearean classic *King Lear*. This piece fostered exchange among these different Asian countries' theaters and inspired hot debate on the nature of collaboration and what constitutes "Asian theater."

Ukiyo-e: Images of the Floating World

Exhibition Tours Paris
Through January 3rd

U*kiyo-e: Images of the Floating World, 17th-18th Century*, organized by the Union of French National Museums and the Guimet National Museum of Asian Art, is now being held in Paris at the Grand Palais National Gallery until January 3rd. The Japan Foundation co-organized this exhibition.

This exhibition features Japanese woodblock prints from the collection of the Guimet National Museum of Asian Art, curated around the concept of the "floating world" written about by *Asai Ryoi*, a seventeenth century priest and writer. Works from Japanese museums and individual collectors show the development of *ukiyo-e*, while pieces from other museum collections are also exhibited, including *byobu* (painted screens) and

kakejiku (hanging scrolls) from the early seventeenth century.

The works are categorized in different stages: the period before *ukiyo-e* when *byōbu* were popular, the period in which portraits became the mainstream, and the period in which *ukiyo-e* developed its now-established style of erotic and poetic imagery. A total of 50 paintings and 150 woodblock prints give visitors a wide range of exceptional images that capture the stylistic and iconographic grace of the floating world.



Portrait of Standing Harlot by Kaigetsudo Anchi. The Collection of The Tokyo National Museum

Archive of Modern Japanese Drama Synopses Completed

100 Most Important Dramas from the 30s to the Present

Creation of the archive, *Modern Japanese Drama Briefs 100*, which contains synopses of modern Japanese dramas in English and Japanese, has been completed.

Produced by the Japan Playwrights Association and The Japan Foundation, creation of the archive was supported by the Japanese governmental Agency for Cultural Affairs to introduce the 100 most important modern Japanese dramas to overseas countries. The dramas were selected from works written from the 1930s to the present. Dramas from the golden age of Japanese experimental theater in the 1960s and 70s, such as the work of Shuji Terayama, Juro Kara, Makoto Sato, Minoru Betsuyaku, and Shogo Ota, were selected. Also, contempo-



The Web Site of Modern Drama Briefs 100

rary dramas by young writers in the forefront of the arts are included.

The plays were selected by Minoru Betsuyaku, Yoshio Ozasa, and Ren Saito. Professor Mari Boyd of Sophia University oversaw the English edition.

The archive contains data such as author profiles, synopses, and outlines of the acts/scenes of each play. The website is: <http://www.jpan.org/100/e/index.html>

TV Commercials for Japanese Classrooms, 2005 Released in March, 2005

For Japanese-Language Education Overseas

In March, The Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, will release the second version of its *TV Commercials for Japanese Classrooms*. The first version *TV Commercials for Japanese Classrooms, 2002*, was released that year. The new version will be available for rental from April 2005 to March 2008 at local overseas Japan Foundation offices. (In countries where there is no local Japan Foundation office, the video will be available at the Japanese Embassy.)



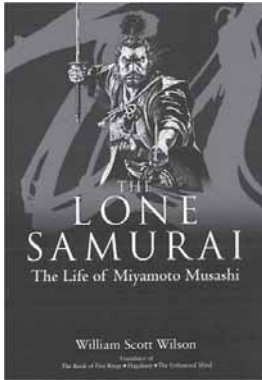
Video Teaching Material, TV Commercials for Japanese Classrooms

In the 2005 version, 51 commercials (each 15 to 180 seconds) were selected from the winners of the *2002 ACC CM Festival*. Each commercial comes with supporting teaching materials that contain an explanation of the commercial's content. The Japan Foundation hopes that through these actual TV commercials for food, clothing, electronic goods, cars, and video games, teachers will enhance their students' interest in learning Japanese and deepen their understanding of contemporary Japanese culture and language.

The supervisor of this project is Professor Katsuhiko Sakuma of University of the Sacred Heart Tokyo. Ms. Shigemi Yamada, a lecturer at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, wrote the teacher's guidelines.

Books in Other Languages

The Real Life and Times of Miyamoto Musashi



THE LONE SAMURAI
The Life of Miyamoto Musashi

by William Scott Wilson
Kodansha International, 2004.
ISBN: 477002942X
Hardcover. 287 pp.
\$24.00

Swordsman, painter, poet, and author of *The Book of Five Rings*, Miyamoto Musashi has become to the Japanese what King Arthur and Robin Hood are to the British and the world—a national hero whose true history has been obscured over the centuries by stories, poems, and plays and, since the silent era, movies more fictional than factual.

The translator of *The Book of Five Rings* and another key text of samurai philosophy, *Hagakure*, William Scott Wilson has written exactly the biography of Musashi that we need: not only a lively, sympathetic, painstakingly researched retelling of his life and deeds, but a thorough examination of his influence and afterlife in various media, including a detailed filmography.

One object is to locate the real man within the legend; an impossible task, since contemporary accounts are often patchy or contradictory. Instead of trying to guess or invent, Wilson stays close to the written record, noting any discrepancies along the way. This approach may not satisfy those who want their samurai biographies to read like novels (they should try Charles Terry's 1981 translation of Eiji Yoshikawa's *Musashi, roman fleuve*), but will reassure those who like their history straight.

At the same time, Wilson is not a dry recorder of fact. His accounts of Musashi's duels, including his most famous, with Sasaki Kojiro on Ganryu Island in 1612, often read like good, unadorned genre fiction:

Kojiro fell where he stood. The tip of his sword had cut through the knot of Musashi's *hachimaki*, and the hand towel had fluttered to the ground, but Musashi's wooden sword had made a direct hit. Musashi lowered his sword and stood motionless for a moment, then quickly raised it to strike again. Kojiro was lying flat on the ground, but at

that moment he wielded his sword to the side in a mowing motion, aiming for Musashi's thigh. Musashi lept back, and received a three-inch cut in the lining of his *hakama*, probably less than an inch away from his femoral artery.

While providing these and other un-academic thrills, Wilson delves deeply into Musashi's importance as a cultural figure, referring frequently to his own translation of *The Book of Five Rings*. He does not quite answer the question of why this man, who bowed to no god, belonged to no school (save his own), and rejected both marriage and steady employment to the end, has never lost his appeal to the Japanese, including the famously conforming corporate warriors.

Perhaps no one can with any precision, since Musashi is such a protean figure. To prewar militarists he was a pure-spirited exemplar of traditional values, while to present-day fans of Inoue Takehiko's comic series *Vagabond*, which has sold more than twenty-two million copies in paperback, he is the closest the Edo era ever came to a rock star: wild, rebellious and the epitome of pony-tailed cool.

Wilson does not argue for the truth of any one Musashi interpretation, though his own interest lies principally in Musashi the philosopher and sage, whose teachings in *The Book of Five Rings* go beyond the proper way to swing a sword to how to live a proper life—and are now inspiring readers everywhere, from college dorms to corporate boardrooms. For those actually learning Japanese swordsmanship, however, Musashi's precepts in *The Book of Five Rings* can be maddeningly vague:

When your opponent has grasped his sword and set up a broad rhythm, you should use a short rhythm. If your opponent has a short rhythm you should use a broad one.

In other words, hit 'em where they ain't. But unlike inspirational business books filled with feel-good platitudes, there is a hard core of wisdom in Musashi that shines though even the most enigmatic precept or dullest translation. With affection and dedication, Wilson brings it to us bright and clear.

The Lone Samurai: The Life of Miyamoto Musashi is reviewed by Mark Schilling, a film critic and writer who has been reviewing Japanese films for The Japan Times since 1989. His publications include The Encyclopedia of Japanese Pop Culture (Weatherhill, 1997), Contemporary Japanese Film (Weatherhill, 1999) and The Yakuza Movie Book—A Guide to Japanese Gang Films (Stone Bridge Press, 2003). His email address is schill@gol.com.

Building With *Miso* Bricks

Eric Gower

The celebrity chef Nobu Matsuhisa likes to tell the story of a French chef who bragged that his sauces took a week to make, and scoffed at the notion that a Japanese *dashi* (broth) could be prepared in ten minutes. What the French chef didn't realize was that it takes months and even years to properly sun-dry and prepare the *konbu* (sea kelp) and *katsuo bushi* (dried bonito) that make traditional Japanese *dashi* so alluring. Traditional Japanese chefs have long been masters at the art of packing intense flavors into preserved ingredients with long shelf lives. *Dashi*, *miso*, smoked fish, *umeboshi* (pickled plums), pickles of all stripes, *kamaboko* (fish cakes). . . the list is long.

As a chef and food lover, I like to keep my refrigerator well stocked with these kinds of ingredients. These "flavor bricks"—any intensely flavored ingredient in readily usable form—often play a key role in creating delicious dinners quickly and easily. I also keep things like tamarind paste, various chutneys, pestos and other pastes, dried tomatoes, and lots of others. But to me, the king of the flavor brick is *miso*.

Miso has been popular in Japan for at least 14 centuries—Buddhist monks first brought it into Japan from China sometime in the seventh century—and its virtues are many. It's incredibly nutritious, is full of protein, has no fat, lends deep savory intensity to everything it touches, is easily digested, and lasts for months or even years if properly stored.

The making of *miso* is, in essence, a simple process: Large quantities of soybeans are first steamed, then laden with salt. Cooked grains (rice and barley are the most common) are then added, followed by a special mold known as *koji*. It then ferments for a while (ranging from weeks to years, depending on the desired result) in a wooden or stainless steel tub, until it's declared ready to use. It comes in many different types and colors, ranging from light yellow (the lightest and sweetest variety, used extensively in Kyoto cuisine, known for its refined elegance), dark yellow/brown (the most typical *miso*, medium body, common in the Shinshu area) and reddish brown (most savory, most salty, most intense—a little goes a long way. The people of Aichi Prefecture really love it). For soups, I like to use a mixture of white and red, which seems to offer the best of both worlds.

Miso soup—consumed by tens of millions of Japanese several times daily—is almost always made with *dashi* as a base, but it's also excellent with other stocks. Though *miso dashi* is traditionally made with *konbu* or *katsuo bushi*, I find the combination of chicken stock and fennel (see recipe) particularly delicious. To my mind, it really brings out the best in *miso*.

And my guests can't seem to get enough of it. This is my recipe for making this delicious winter broth, which updates the classic traditional *miso* soup:

Miso Soup with Fennel and Ginger

An intensely flavored chicken stock replaces the traditional Japanese *dashi* in this delightfully satisfying dish. This addictive soup can be savored as is, but it also lends itself to additions like chopped winter greens or high-quality soft tofu.

2 tablespoons butter / 1 tablespoon fruity extra virgin olive oil / 2 fennel bulbs, chopped / 1 red onion, minced / 3 heaping tablespoons ginger, minced / 2 quarts chicken stock / 2 heaping tablespoons white *miso* / 1 heaping tablespoon red *miso* / a few tablespoons of cubed soft tofu (optional) / 1 tablespoon of chives, minced (optional)

Heat the butter and olive oil in a nonstick pan over a medium-low flame, add fennel, onion, and ginger, and sauté until soft, about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the stock in a small soup pot (high flame) till simmering. Add the onion mixture to the stock, simmer for about 20 minutes, strain and discard all solids (or save them: you can marinate a fish fillet in them before grilling).

Add the *miso* and shut off the heat. Stir until fully dissolved, and serve very hot. Add the optional soft tofu and perhaps some chopped chives. Serves 6.

The "internationalization" of *miso* and other traditional Japanese ingredients seems like an inevitable trend, as more and more chefs from other culinary traditions discover their versatility and health benefits. And the quicker that happens, the better.

Eric Gower is the author of Eric's Kitchen (in Japanese, Kadokawa-shoten) and The Breakaway Japanese Kitchen (Kodansha International). After fifteen years in Tokyo, he now writes and cooks in San Francisco. He welcomes your comments—write him at eric@ericskitchen.com.

Each issue will feature a contribution from a reader and/or Japan Foundation Fellow. We welcome your submissions and particularly want to hear from readers and Fellows in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and South America. Please send English articles of no longer than 800 words and a brief bio to: jfnl@jpf.go.jp.

Cultural Highlights

(September-October, 2004)

VISUAL ARTS

Miyazaki's New Film Wins Award

at Venice Film Festival

Studio Ghibli has received the Osella d'oro award at the 61st Venice Film Festival for outstanding technical achievement for the animated film *Hauru no Ugoku Shiro* (Howl's Moving Castle), directed by Hayao Miyazaki. Miyazaki's new animated film is based on the eponymous British fantasy novel by Diana Wynne Jones.

MUSIC

Shokichi Kina Receives

The World Peace Music Award

Shokichi Kina, the singer/songwriter from Okinawa, received the 2004 World Peace Music Award. The World Peace Music Awards were founded in 2002 as a positive, peaceful response to recent tragedies around the world, honoring artists who inspire peace and harmony. Kina has been writing and performing songs of peace for over 40 years. His song *Hana* (Blooming flowers in the hearts of all), released in 1980, is particularly popular and has been recorded by artists from Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Thailand. In 2004, he became the first Japanese rock & roll musician to be elected senator in the upper house of the Diet. His publicly stated agenda is to turn all weapons into musical instruments.

OBITUARIES

Tsutomu Mizukami, 85, novelist, September 8. Born to a poor carpenter's family in Fukui prefecture, he was sent to a Zen temple at the age of 9 to become a priest, but he couldn't stand the monastic life and ran away. After World War II, while he wrote, he worked at more than thirty jobs, winning the 1961 Naoki Prize for *Kari no Tera* (The Temple of Wild Geese) based on his childhood experiences at the temple. In 1963, his mystery novel *Kigakaikyo* (The Starvation Strait) became a best-seller. His 1963 novel, *Echizen Take Ningyo* (Echizen Bamboo Doll), was highly praised by Jun'ichiro Tanizaki. In 1975, he won the Tanizaki Jun'ichiro Prize for *Ikkyu*. In 1977, he won the Kawabata Yasunari Prize for *Teradomari*, and in 1984 he received the Mainichi Art Prize for *Ryokan*. He was respected for the unsentimental but humanistic way in which he depicted the lives of lower-class people and the severity of the natural world.

Kyohei Fujita, 83, glass artist, September 18. Created a new style of glass artwork by using gold leaf to color glass. His piece, *Dream Box*, received global recognition. In 1998, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Glass Art Society of America.

Life in Japan:

The Year of The Rooster

In the Chinese zodiac, 2005 will be *Toridoshi* (酉) or the year of the Rooster. If you put the symbol of water (*sanzui*) to the left, it becomes *sake* (酒), or liquor. Originally, this ideogram of *tori* symbolized a liquor pot. It meant the tenth month, or August in the lunar calendar (currently the month of October). This time of year symbolizes the period when maturity is reached; when things come to fruition. In other words, the year of the Rooster is when the grains in the liquor pot are completely fermented and become rich, full-bodied liquor.

Those born in the year of the Rooster (1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993), are typically smart people who can speak their minds and have no trouble making quick and accurate decisions. They plan their business affairs carefully and often achieve recognition for their accomplishments, even in youth. However, their superior intelligence can sometimes lead them to think too highly of themselves.

Famous people born in the year of the Rooster are Yoko Ono, Eric Clapton, and Rod Stewart.

2004 is *Sarudoshi* (申) or the year of the Monkey. This *kanji* means September, and symbolizes the time when fruit and grains start to ripen. This ideogram originally represented a thunderbolt, which symbolizes rapid and dramatic change. Some people believe that things start to move toward maturity in the year of the Monkey, and drastic changes thus occur. Such changes are often necessary to move things forward. The unstable world situation of 2004 reflects this tendency.

As the year comes to an end and people make preparations for the new year by decorating their homes with *kadomatsu* (bamboo and pine sprigs), hanging *shimekazari* (Shinto rope decorations) and setting out *mochi* (rice cakes), *mikan* (tangerines), and *sake* for the Gods, we pray that the seeds of peace will ripen in the year of the Rooster.



Ancient Chinese Ideogram symbolizing "The Year of the Rooster."