

# Promoting Understanding of and Participation in International Cultural Exchange

## The Japan Foundation Awards

Since 1973, the annual Japan Foundation Awards has recognized individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to promoting international understanding and friendship between Japan and other countries through cultural activities. In fiscal 2012, the award's 40th year, the following individuals and one institution were honored at the presentation ceremony presided by Crown Prince Naruhito in Tokyo in October (photo on p. 9). The Commemorative Lectures were given by a representative from the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO) in Tokyo and Kyoto and by Irene Hirano Inouye in Tokyo.

### Recipients



#### [France]

#### **Department of Japanese Language and Civilization, National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO)**

The National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations, where Japanese-language education began in France, has produced many Japan studies scholars, Japanese-language teachers, diplomats, and interpreters. They work in diverse academic fields: history, geography, politics, economics, classical and contemporary literature, art history, history of philosophy, and linguistics. INALCO plays a critical role in promoting Japan-France relations and mutual understanding between the two countries through periodic hosting of international symposiums.



2012 by Elena Seibert

#### [Japan]

#### **Haruki Murakami** (Writer/translator)

With a series of literary successes such as *Norwegian Wood*, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, *Kafka on the Shore* and *1Q84*, Haruki Murakami has gained enthusiastic support and popularity among young people across the globe. His works, noted for intriguing plot lines, presentations of a new world view and other characteristics, have been translated into over 40 languages and become a catalyst to inspire interest in Japan among overseas readers. He has also translated a long list of Western novels, mostly works of American writers, into Japanese.



#### [U.S.A.]

#### **Irene Hirano Inouye** (President, U.S.-Japan Council)

Irene Hirano Inouye is the former president of the Japanese American National Museum, which promotes the history and experiences of Japanese Americans as part of the American heritage. After 20 years of service, she established the U.S.-Japan Council, a nonprofit organization that brings together leaders from both sides of the Pacific. Her role was instrumental in launching the "TOMODACHI Initiative" with the U.S. and Japanese governments to deepen friendship and foster the young generation to interact, thereby continuously support Japan's recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake.

## The Japan Foundation Prizes for Global Citizenship

The global citizenship prize is presented to Japan-based nonprofit organizations that promote international cultural exchanges between the people of Japan and the rest of the world or provide outstanding programs directed at finding solutions to global problems. Since its inception in 1985, the prize has recognized the efforts of 85 individuals and organizations, including the three given in the 28th presentation in fiscal 2012.

### Recipients



#### **NPO Japan Association for Refugees**

Promoting the integration of diverse populations into society and building an intercultural environment has become an important concern in Japan. The prize appreciates the organization's efforts to connect refugees and Japanese communities, a significant endeavor in shaping the future of Japanese society.



#### **NPO Terra Renaissance**

Although many in Japan tend to view Africa as a distant location, it is an important region in many ways. The prize recognizes the efforts of the organization's young Japanese leaders in supporting youths who face adversity in Africa.



#### **Pedal Sewing Machine Volunteer Club, Oita National College of Technology**

The volunteer club collects second-hand pedal sewing machines, repairs and donates them to people in need in Southeast Asian countries, helping them secure work and gain financial independence. Through the activity the students learn about the culture and history of Southeast Asia.

## Information Services

### Cultural Exchange Info Available in All Forms

The Japan Foundation provides information on international cultural exchange through a variety of sources and channels in order to encourage greater awareness and involvement in cultural exchange in and outside Japan. It operates websites, blogs, Twitter and other social media and undertakes a range of public and media relations activities. The Japan Foundation also creates numerous opportunities for exchange.

One such effort is the bilingual web magazine *Wochi Kochi*, which features a monthly cover story on various topics on international cultural exchange. Some of the stories in fiscal 2012 included "Feeling the Middle East Closer," "People in Japan-China Exchange," "Japanese Society through the Lens of Art," and "Open a Window through the Japanese Language." The magazine also features articles written by specialists who took part in our programs as well as our staff members.

The Japan Foundation Information Center (JFIC), an anchor of our information services, consists of a library and event space and is located inside the head office building in Yotsuya, Tokyo.

The JFIC Library holds materials of past Japan Foundation activities, publications on international cultural exchange and cultural policies, and foreign language books and DVDs on Japan. Besides providing circulation and reference services, the library puts on occasional displays to introduce its collection. From September to December 2012, the library featured "Special Exhibition 2012: 40-Year History of the Japan Foundation through Publications" in celebration of the Japan Foundation's 40th anniversary.

The event space provides a venue for a number of symposiums and other events organized in partnership with

various institutions. Some of the fiscal 2012 programs included the forum "The Power of Music: Connecting with Communities," in which orchestra directors and music professionals from Japan and the United Kingdom discussed the powerful potential of music during times of emergencies like natural disasters. The open forum titled "The Role of the Arts Council in Japan" drew on the experience of the Arts Council England to exchange opinions and information regarding the role and function of the arts council recently established in Tokyo.



JFIC Library

## Kyoto Office

### Working with Kansai Region Cultural Organizations

The Kyoto Office works in association with a network of cultural exchange organizations in the Kansai region to provide opportunities for international students and researchers living in Japan to experience Japanese culture. We held hands-on activities like 'Wagashi'(Japanese confectionery)-making and 'Shodo' (calligraphy), and also saw Noh and Kyogen on stage and Japanese films with bilingual commentary. "An Evening of Noh and Kyogen," an annual autumn program first started in 1974, was staged in fiscal 2012 as part of the commemorative projects of the Japan Foundation's 40th anniversary.

We also encourage grassroots international exchange by organizing public lectures and "Fellow's Seminars" conducted by scholars invited to Japan under the Japanese Studies Fellowship Program.



A session of the "Fellow's Seminar"



Japanese culture experience program ('Shodo' (calligraphy))



"An evening of Noh and Kyogen" (Photo: Akio Takahashi)