



The Asiatic Society of Japan

Honorary Patron: H.I.H. Princess Takamado

Cooperative Science and Research Body of the Science Council of Japan

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Bulletin No. 4

May 2017

June Meeting: Monday, June 19th, at 6:30 p.m. (**Reservation required**)
Speaker: H.E. Dr. Hans Carl von Werthern, German Ambassador to Japan
Subject: "Why Ambassadors? The Role of Diplomacy in a Globalizing World"
Place: The Residence of the German Ambassador

Please note application period is: Tuesday, May 16th at 9:00 a.m. to Thursday, May 25th, 2017.

Registration for the June Meeting

The German Ambassador, H.E. Dr. Hans Carl von Werthern, has very generously offered to host the lecture-meeting at the German Embassy. The seating capacity will unfortunately be limited to 80, so it may be necessary to turn down some applications; in that case those turned down this time will be given priority at a future meeting for which application is required. This meeting will be for ASJ full members only. The period for application will be strictly from 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, May 16th (and not before) to Thursday, May 25th, by e-mail (info@asjapan.org) or by fax (03-3795-2371) to the ASJ office; please send your full name, professional title, zip code and mailing address. Applications are taken on a first-come, first-served basis. The ASJ office will send you confirmation of your application in due course.

Dr Hans Carl von Werthern, who holds a Diploma in Political Economy and an M. A. in International Relations, entered the German Foreign Service in 1984. After postings to Vietnam, Belgium, Paraguay, Great Britain and China and after working in several functions in the Ministry, among others Director for East Asia, Head of Personnel, and Director General for Central Services, he was appointed as Ambassador to Japan in early 2014.

In his lecture and the ensuing discussion Ambassador von Werthern will shed an insider's light on the role of the diplomatic service in a rapidly changing world. Drawing on his personal experience of having served for 33 years in different parts of the world, he will explore how diplomacy has evolved and what changes lie ahead. He will, of course, also give vivid examples of the daily work of the German Embassy in Tokyo.

Coming Meeting

July Meeting: Monday 24th July at 6:30 p.m.

Speaker: Mr. Matt Burney, Director of Japan British Council

Subject: To be confirmed; Venue: Shibuya Kyoiku Gakuen.

April Meeting

Title: "Rakugo a Broadway Hit? Why not?!"

Speaker: Katsura Sunshine

Our April meeting was graced by our Patron, H. I. H. Princess Takamado, in the spacious Tokiwamatsu Hall at Kokugakuin University. Prof. Nobutaka Inoue, of the Faculty of Shinto Studies and Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics at that university, declared that he felt especially honoured by her presence there, and expressed his gratitude to those who had organised the event, especially Prof. Masahira Anesaki, Prof. Charles De Wolf and Ms. Annabel James.

As rain fell on the bedraggled cherry trees, our President, Dr. Charles De Wolf, remarked that at least we had sunshine indoors. This was rapidly verified when our speaker for the evening, Katsura Sunshine, the first-ever Western Rakugo storyteller in the history of the "Kamigata" Rakugo tradition, based in Osaka, and only the second ever in the history of Japan, fulfilled his promise to bring his audience with him on the special journey that was his career (Bulletin No. 3), in the process illuminating this traditional Japanese art that he has so clearly mastered.

Sunshine illustrated the difficulty of transposing cultural norms by reminding his audience that, to display politeness in Japan, there were three options available: (1) to raise the status of the other; (2) to lower one's own; (3) both. However, this was not always understood elsewhere: when at a performance in his native Toronto, he expressed regret for taking up the attention of his hearers "at a busy time in your lives" – which in Japan would have been understood as a conventional courtesy, requiring no response – he was answered by a voice from the audience agreeing: "Very busy!"

On the other hand, while wondering how best to present Rakugo to audiences unfamiliar with it, when he appeared on TV in connection with his performance at the Leicester Square Theatre in London, the interviewer described him as the "King of Kimono Comedy"; and he had found this so apt that he adopted it. He showed on the screen a series of photographs where his face appeared on the side of a London taxi, and commented that while in the past it would have been necessary for this to have involved one or two hundred taxis, these days, thanks to the Internet, it was possible to propagate the image from a single example [See <https://ja-jp.facebook.com/KatsuraSunshine/>. – Ed.].

He then went into some detail about how he had got to that point. In his, Osaka-based, Rakugo tradition, the apprenticeship took three years (in the Tokyo tradition, four), in the course of which there is no day off, and one is constantly engaged in menial chores. The master never repeats himself; the apprentice is expected to "read the air". It is said that the master gets angry every day; but one accepts this because one receives so much, and feels one has to repay him. His master had worked in the medium for 50 years; he could trace his lineage back 200 years. The master gives the apprentice his stage name very early on [For the significance of Katsura's, see Bulletin No. 3 – Ed.], perhaps after one month; the apprentice then feels he has to earn it.

In the course of his own apprenticeship, he had received only a single commendation: "Sunshine, you have very nice English pronunciation". In accordance with the norms of Japanese etiquette, one is expected to respond to any compliment with polite disagreement; so when his master asked Sunshine to act as his interpreter for a visit to New York, he ought to have said something like: "Could the master not find someone better qualified for such an honourable task, which I have little hope of being able to discharge to the master's satisfaction?" Instead he had replied: "Yeah. Sure. Okay". Nothing good could come of this attitude. Arrived in New York, the master expressed a wish to see

the Statue of Liberty; but, as so many taxi drivers are recent immigrants, Sunshine could not make himself understood. But when a Japanese apprentice junior to himself spoke to the driver, they were taken to their destination. What the Japanese apprentice had said was: "Pretty lady, book, fire". The master commented: "Sunshine, I thought you told me you could speak English".

When the speaker began to perform abroad, he experimented with changes which he thought might make his stories more acceptable to English-speaking audiences, but found that these did not bring the response he had hoped for. But when he translated them straight, audiences exploded with laughter. And this he attributed to the stories' universality: they deal with everyday situations. And, in contrast to its closest parallel outside Japan, stand-up comedy, Rakugo does not involve itself in such matters as politics, religion or race: one is taught not to divide one's audience. It is even inclusive of children: parents who have brought their children to his performances have been pleasantly surprised that there was not a single sentence they would not have wanted them to hear. In this it differed from, for example, a Disney production, which might have one layer of meaning for children and another for adults. Rakugo was all of a piece.

Sunshine concluded by saying what a wonderful experience it had been for him to introduce Japanese culture abroad: in London, for example, where he had lived for 1½ years, he had worn his kimono in the street, and people would stop him to admire it.

The audience applauded loud and long, after which the speaker took questions.

Q1: Your programme for NHK on *ukiyoe* was brilliant. What was your source for this?

A1: The Spaulding Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Each woodblock print is a story, and the idea was to explore it through Rakugo [<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/tv/ukiyoe/>].

Q2: Why did you choose the Osaka rather than the Edo tradition of Rakugo? What are the differences between them?

A2: In a sense, you fall in love with the master, and mine happened to be in the Osaka tradition. Many of the stories are the same, though told in the dialect of the city in question. Edo Rakugo began indoors, Osaka outdoors. In the Osaka tradition you have a table in front you can knock on for sound effects; not in Edo. In Edo, the emphasis is on the story, in Osaka on the teller. In Osaka they made fun of the samurai, but not in Edo.

Q3: To persuade a master to take you on, what do you have to do? And what kind of "menial chore" is expected?

A3: I waited outside the theatre in kimono week after week, imploring him to take me on as an apprentice; it took eight months. The next applicant got in touch by e-mail; he was taken right away. But you should understand that making me wait was a form of kindness: so that I'd be sure I knew what was involved. Three-quarters of an apprenticeship is waiting to be called. The chores included dressing him, putting away his kimono, carrying cases when he travelled. The other side of it is that the master pays for everything, even allowing spending money, over the three years. Then, when you become a master, you are responsible for passing on what you have learnt.

Q4: And you say there is no element of satire, for example on foreigners?

A4: Right. There are no bad characters in Rakugo: a thief will be a bungler, a figure of fun.

Q5: Do Rakugo performers tell only traditional stories, or do they make up their own?

A5: Some do one, some the other. My master only tells his own stories. He has written about 250 of them: you could call them the tradition of the future.

Q6: I believe the first recording in Japan was made by a Rakugo performer.

A6: Yes, Henry Black in 1903; he was connected with a recording company.

Describing the experience of Sunshine's presentation as a very rich one, the President called upon our Patron to propose the vote of thanks. H. I. H. Princess Takamado stated that she had found it very informative, for example on the differences between the Edo and Osaka traditions, and added a question.

Q7: When you perform abroad, is it always on your own?

A7: Yes, though I hope some day to perform with other storytellers.

A reception, hosted by the university, followed, in the course of which Her Imperial Highness proposed a toast to our speaker. The quality of the celebration was enhanced by a gift of Tohoku sake from Mr. Shuzo Takahashi, which a connoisseur from the Council pronounced "very fine". Mrs. Shigeko Tanaka, meanwhile, was assisted both at the entrance to the auditorium and the reception by Ms. Makiko Komada and Ms. Nanako Miyagawa in distributing the exhibition leaflets she has made such an attractive bonus to members of the Society.

[Readers of our *Transactions* will recall a fascinating article by Prof. Patrick Carey about the use of the Westminster Chimes in Japanese schoolrooms, which involved an interview with the individual responsible (Series V, Volume viii, pp. 203-7). In a Sunshine performance on You Tube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbt0jAYDVOW>), these introduce the punchline of a hilarious story – Ed.]

News Notes

¶ The Society's Patron, H. I. H. Princess Takamado, has generously donated a copy of her latest book, 掌中の日本文化 ― 根付に学び、次世代に繋ぐ ("Japanese Culture in the Hollow of the Hand – Passing it on to the Next Generation"), published by Osaka University of Art (ISBN 978-4-9901674-9-3). It will join the collection of Her Highness' publications in our library.

¶ Dr. Ronald Suleski, our former President, and currently Professor and director, Rosenberg Institute for East Asian Studies, Boston, MA, has published an article titled "Manchukuo and Beyond: The Life and Times of Zhang Mengshi" in the *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 14. 1. (2017), pp. 77-97. Zhang Mengshi (張夢實 1922-2014) was born into a life of wealth and privilege. His father Zhang Jinghui (張景惠) was first a top commander under the Chinese warlord Zhang Zuolin (張作霖) and then became Prime Minister (from 1935 to 1945) in the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo (滿洲國). But all that changed in 1945 when the invading Russians arrested the top Chinese and Japanese officials of Manchukuo, including Mengshi and his father, and sent them off to Siberia. Mengshi's autobiography was published in Chinese by his sons shortly after he died in 2014: Dr. Suleski's article introduces the high points of the book, the fascinating account of an eyewitness to many critical events in modern Chinese history.

¶ The Yokohama Archives of History, an institutional member of our Society, has donated complimentary and discount tickets to an exhibition on Vanished Yokohama (横浜・地図にない場所), which will run from April 26 to July 17 from 9:30 – 17:00 (last admission 16:30; open until 19:00, last admission 18:30, on May 27, June 2 & 7; closed Mondays except July 17; tel. 045-201-2100; <http://www.kaikou.city.yokohama.jp/>). The Society is grateful for the gift.

¶ Dr. Ciaran Murray thanks the kind ASJ member who donated some vintage copies of *National Geographic* for him, which turned out to be of great interest. He would like to express his gratitude directly, if his benefactor wishes to get in touch (ciaran@kd5.so-net.ne.jp).

New Members

Katsura Sunshine, Canada

Mr. Kiichi Matsuki, Japan (CEO, Matsuki Group)

Ms. Rose Counsell, Australia (Maruzen-Yushodo Co., Ltd.)

Mr. Ravi Maharjan, Nepal (Student, Daito Bunka University)

Mr. Mahesh Neupane, Nepal (Student, Daito Bunka University)

Mr. Yadav Bhattarai, Nepal (Student, Daito Bunka University)

Mr. Sushil Bhandari, Nepal (Student, Daito Bunka University)

Mr. Nayan Jyoti Subedi, Nepal (Student, Daito Bunka University)

Mr. Kalu Singh Mehta, Nepal (Student, Daito Bunka University)

Ms. Kim You Gene, Korea (Student, Waseda University)

Mr. Jotaro Kato, Japan (Student, Waseda University)

Exhibitions

Complimentary tickets to, and leaflets for, the following exhibitions were made available at the April meeting, and we would like to express our appreciation to the donors.

Complimentary tickets & leaflets:

- 1) "Connecting Past and Present", The Shoto Museum of Art, April 5th - May 21st
- 2) "Japon, l'archipel de la maison", Shiodome Museum, April 8th - June 25th
- 3) "Irises and Mountain Streams in Summer and Autumn", Nezu Museum, April 12th - May 14th
- 4) "Zipang, Land of Gold and Silver", Tokugawa Art Museum, Nagoya, April 15th - May 28th

Discounted tickets and leaflets:

- 5) "Utensils of Cha no Yu - The World of Japanese and Chinese Tastes", Idemitsu Museum of Arts, April 15th - June 4th
- 6) "A World of Flowers - from the Rimpa School to Contemporary Art", Yamatane Museum of Art, April 22nd - June 18th

Leaflets:

- 7) "Orsay Nabis", Mitsubishi Ichigokan Museum, Tokyo, February 4th - May 21st
- 8) "N.S. Harsha: Charming Journey", Mori Art Museum, February 4th - June 11th
- 9) "Skagen - An Artists' Colony in Denmark", National Museum of Western Art, February 10th - May 28th
- 10) "Yayoi Kusama: My Eternal Soul", National Art Center, Tokyo, February 22nd - May 22nd

- 11) "Théodore Chassériau" at the National Museum of Western Art, February 28th - May 28th
- 12) "Animals, Animals. Animals from the Museum Collection at Crafts Gallery", National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, February 28th - May 21st
- 13) "Improvement for Good - Marcel Breuer's Furniture", National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, March 3rd - May 7th
- 14) "Dawn of Japanese Photography: The Anthology", Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, March 7th - May 7th
- 15) "Alfons Mucha", National Art Center, Tokyo, March 8th - June 5th
- 16) "Utagawa Kuniyoshi", Fuchu Art Museum, March 11th - May 7th
- 17) "European Mode", Bunka Gakuin Costume Museum, March 11th - May 16th
- 18) "The Cosmos in a Tea Bowl", National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, March 14th - May 21st
- 19) "Old Masters from the State Hermitage Museum", Mori Arts Center Gallery, March 18th - June 18th
- 20) "Session", University Art Museum Tokyo University of the Arts, March 28th - May 21st
- 21) "Picture Scroll Enthusiasts", Suntory Museum of Arts, March 29th - May 14th
- 22) "Galle Daum", Okada Museum of Art, April 8th - July 21st
- 23) "Japon, l'archipel de la maison", Shiodome Museum, April 8th - June 25th
- 24) "Chanoyu - The Arts of Tea Ceremony, The Essence of Japan", Tokyo National Museum, April 11th - June 4th
- 25) "Nara Saidaiji", Mitsui Memorial Museum, April 15th - June 11th
- 26) "Encounters in Fashion and Art", Yokohama Museum of Art, April 15th - June 25th
- 27) "Le Voyage dans le Temps du XIXe Siecle", Nerima Art Museum, April 16th - June 4th
- 28) "Babel" at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, April 18th - July 2nd
- 29) "The Art of Eric Carle", Setagaya Art Museum, April 22nd - July 2nd
- 30) "Sakamoto Ryoma: Japan's Favorite Hero", Edo Tokyo Museum, April 29th - June 18th
- 31) "Photographer Saul Leiter: a Retrospective", Bunkamura The Museum, April 29th - June 25th
- 32) "Dayanita Singh, Museum Bhaavan", Top Museum, May 20th - July 17th
- 33) "A Sacred Treasure Box", Suntory Museum of Art, May 31st - July 17th
- 34) "Alberto Giacometti", National Art Center, Tokyo, June 14th - September 4th
- 35) "Arcimboldo", National Museum of Western Art, June 20th - September 24th
- 36) "Thailand", Tokyo National Museum, July 4th - August 27th
- 37) "Sunshower: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now", Mori Art Museum, July 5th - October 23rd
- 38) "AMBIENT Lifestyle Items Designed by Naoto Fukasawa" at Shiodome Museum, July 8th - October 1st
- 39) "Geidai Collection", Geidai Museum, July 11th - August 6th, August 11th - September 10th
- 40) "Deep Ocean", National Science Museum, July 11th - October 1st
- 41) "Fantastic Art in Belgium", Bunkamura The Museum, July 15th - September 24th
- 42) "Boston - Great Collectors: Masterpieces from the Museum of Fine Arts", Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, July 20th - October 9th
- 43) "The 120th Anniversary of the Birth of Seiji Togo", Sompo Japan Nipponkoa Museum of Art, September 16th - November 12th
- 44) "Unkei - The Great Master of Buddhist Sculpture", Tokyo National Museum, September 26th - November 26th
- 45) "Tadao Ando: Endeavors", National Art Center, Tokyo, September 27th - December 18th
- 46) "Otto Nebel and his Contemporaries - Chagall, Kandinsky, Klee", Bunkamura The Museum, October 7th - December 17th
- 47) "Kowai-e, Fear in Paintings", Ueno no Mori Museum, October 7th - December 17th
- 48) "Hokusai and Japonisme", National Museum of Western Art, October 21st - January 28th, 2018
- 49) "The Empire of Imagination and Science of Rudolf II", Bunkamura The Museum, January 6th - March 11th, 2018

50) "Bührle Collection - Impressionist Masterpieces from the E.G. Bührle Collection, Zurich, Switzerland", National Art Center, Tokyo, February 14th, 2018 - May 7th, 2018

No. 3 and No. 4 were kindly offered by Mr Yoshio Watanabe of Kind Wear Co., Ltd., which joined the ASJ as an Institutional Member in February. Two swords from his collection are exhibited at No.4. The Nezu Museum provided us with the leaflets of No. 3 in English. Mr Koichi Nezu and Mrs Mihoko Nezu joined the ASJ as Sustaining Members in February.

Editorial Note

We are always happy, as one of the privileges of participation in the Society, to print any news items that members may wish to share: an honour, a promotion, a publication, an exhibition, an appeal for help with research, etc. In order, however slightly, to reduce traffic through our very busy Office, these are best sent direct to the Bulletin Editor, Dr. Ciaran Murray (ciaran@kd5.so-net.ne.jp).

For assistance with the current issue, the Editor is indebted to Ms. Haru Taniguchi, Ms. Annabel James, Prof. Sarah Moate, Prof. Masahira Anesaki, Mrs. Shigeko Tanaka, Ms. Patricia Yarrow and Dr. Robert Morton.

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The Asiatic Society of Japan is delighted to welcome you as a new member!!!

Who We Are

The Asiatic Society of Japan (often referred to as “the ASJ” or simply “the Society”) is a learned organization that strives to serve a general audience of well-read non-specialists who share intellectual interests in “things Japanese”.

The Asiatic Society of Japan is Japan’s oldest learned society. Meeting regularly since its establishment in 1872, the Society prides itself on having been the first academic organization in Japan to promote research and disseminate knowledge about Japan around the world. Among the Society pioneers are such famous Japanologists as Dr. James Hepburn, Sir Ernest Satow, Basil Hall Chamberlain, and William Aston. The historic inaugural meeting of the Society was held in the Yokohama foreign enclave in 1872, shortly after the Meiji Restoration.

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-Postal transfer to Postal Account No. 00120-0-167991

-Bank transfer to Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, Aoyamadori Branch, Ordinary Account,
No. 1048353