



Japanese Storytelling

7th May 2014
Pegasus Theatre

Oxford Brookes University
Department of English and Modern Languages

Programme

PART I

モチモチの木 *The Tree of Courage*
(in English)

Story by Ryusuke Saito
Pictures by Jiro Takidaira

ねこと七夕 *The Cats and Tanabata*
(in Japanese)

Story by Shinsuke
Takasaki
Illustrations by Pana
Stamos

鶴の恩返し *The Grateful Crane*
(in Japanese)

Japanese Folk Tale
Illustrations by Peter Daly

INTERVAL

PART II

花鬼 *Hana Oni* (in Japanese)

Story by Bunnoh Fujisawa
Illustrations by Toshiya
Kobayashi

100万回生きたねこ *The Cat Who Lived a Million Lives*
(in English)

Stories and Pictures by Yoko Sano

モチモチの木 *The Tree of Courage* (1971)

A picture book for children. Illustrations are *kirie, Paper-cutting art*. A story about Mameta, a little boy living with his Granpa. There is a big tree beside his house and the tree lights up magically once a year at night. Only very brave children get to see the magical lights. However, little Mameta is afraid of going to an outside toilet at night.....

ねこと七夕 *The Cats and Tanabata* (2013)

Tanabata is the legendary, romantic story behind two stars on the East and West of the Milky Way... When two lovers in heaven, Orihime and Hikoboshi, incite the anger of God, they are separated by the Milky Way and are only allowed to meet on one day each year, the 7th July. People make a special wish written on a piece of paper and decorate a bamboo branch with them. On the day of Tanabata, Natsuki, Kyohei and Shota are studying together. When Natsuki's cat disappears, Natsuki and her friends search for it. In an enthralling adventure, they unite Natsuki's cat with her mate.

鶴の恩返し *The Grateful Crane* (Japanese Folk Tale)

An old man rescues an injured crane. Later a poor but happy old couple give shelter to a mysterious young woman. Their kindness will be repaid in a magical , but poignant way. Grateful Crane is an evocative tale of compassion, gratitude and the effect of our actions on others.

100 万回生きたねこ *The Cat Who Lived a Million Lives* (1977)

There was once a cat that lived a million years. A million people loved him and a million people cried when he died. One day the cat met a beautiful white cat, but she never looked his way. The cat did three somersaults in front of her and asked

花鬼 *Hana Oni* (2006)

A long long time ago, there was a little girl called Ren. Her father was a medicinal herbalist. Ren helped her father picking flowers for medicinal use. One summer day Ren was out in the mountain picking cluster amaryllis, but she lost her way. When she saw a light and ran towards it, she came to a field full of amaryllis. With the wind, the brilliant red flowers swayed like waves of ocean. The villagers called the field, ‘the Garden of Filth’. Ren wondered, “What a beautiful place. Why is it filthy?” “None would mind if I picked some flowers.’ Ren noticed a little boy was looking at her from the edge of the field. The boy came to Ren giving her a stem of amaryllis flowers. “Thank you.” said Ren. The boy blinked and rubbed his eyes with his white hands. The boy and Ren collected basket full of flowers. Ren gave the boy half of her lunch rice ball. From then on, Ren and the boy picked flowers together in the ‘Garden of Filth’.

One day, the drum beats of the village autumn fair reached to the field. “The festival is on the night of next full moon.” “Come to our fair with me!” Ren asked the boy.

The boy was a child of Oni demons.

On the night of the full moon, the boy will enter adulthood.

Once entering Oni adulthood, the boy will lose his human appearance and change into a demonic figure. He will loose his human words and a human heart.

“ I will teach you how to dance for the fair.” Ren and the boy practiced in the field.

dede tsuku dede tsuku dedetsuku den

The boy was really bad at dancing.

Ren would twirl beautifully, the boy would fall over again and again.

dede tsuku dede tsuku dedetsuku den

‘Ha ha ha’, Ren and the boy laughed and laughed.

On the night of the autumn fair, the boy did not come.

Time passed and Ren grew into a young woman.

That year, the villagers were ordered to go to the “Garden of Filth” to collect amaryllis. There was a bad epidemic, so they needed a lot of amaryllis to make medicine.

The “Garden of Filth” is the ‘Sacred place ‘ for Oni demons.

When the Oni demons learned that villagers had gone into their sacred place, battle broke out.

One night, the villagers pretend to give up and offered a lot of *sake* wine to the demons. They drunk it merrily and soon fell asleep, snoring loudly. The villagers jumped out from the bushes where they were hiding. One by one, they killed demons.

At last there was one left, but he was moving quickly here and there.

The Oni ran toward Ren and poised his sharp claws over Ren.

But, the claws did not come down. He lowered his claws quietly.

His mane shined silver under the moonlight. His big eyes burned red like sparkling fire. Then the Oni uttered a terrible groan.

But Ren was not at all afraid.

“Run, Ren, Run!” A villager shouted and threw a bamboo spear into the demon’s belly. The Oni ran away toward the mountain

That night, Ren went to the Garden of the Filth.

A lonely Oni stood in the middle of the field. The moonlight fell on him. Slowly, he started to dance. He tried to twirl. Thump! He fell. He stood up again and fell again.

Tears ran down Ren’s cheeks.

The Oni looked at Ren with his dark black eyes, silently stretching out his hand with crimson flowers. “Thank you,” said Ren.

As he fell down, the flowers scattered in the air.

Ren kneeled down and placed her hands on him.

The crimson flowers danced in the air.

Tears dropped from Ren’s eyes.

dede tsuku dede tsuku dede tsuku den,

Ren patted the Oni’s shoulders.

They were alone in the field under the pale moonlight. The wind blew his mane silently. The crimson flowers waved quietly.

The drum beats *dede tsuku den,*

A drop of tears from a demon in the mountain

A demon danced under the moonlight

A beat of the drum, a drop of tears

A beat of the drum, danced a demon

dede tsuku dede tsuku dede tsuku den,

A long long time ago, there were a girl and a boy dancing in the mountain.

Shall we start to beat a drum?

dede tsuku dede tsuku dede tsuku den.

Motoki Hirai

Acclaimed worldwide for his imagination and sensitivity, Motoki Hirai has appeared in the music capitals of the East Asia, America and Europe, performing regularly in prestigious venues including Wigmore Hall (London) and Carnegie Hall (New York). Highlights of the current season and beyond include solo recitals in Royal Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Konzerthaus (Vienna), Cadogan Hall, Milton Court, Kings Place (London), Carnegie Hall (NY), Kioi Hall (Tokyo) and concerto performances with orchestras such as Czech Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra. As a composer, Motoki's works have been performed and premièred in such venues as Carnegie Hall (NY); South Bank Centre, Wigmore Hall, St. John's Smith Square, Duke's Hall, Unicorn Theatre, Chelsea Flower Show (London); St. George's (Bristol); Eden Project (Cornwall); Smetana Hall (Prague); Cultural Summer Festival (Bratislava); Maison de la culture du Japon à Paris (Paris); Auditori Pau Casals (Barcelona); Cameri Theatre of Tel Aviv (Israel); Al-Kasaba Theatre (Palestine); as well as La Folle Journée, Tokyo Opera City and NHK Hall (Tokyo). His music has also been used in such films as 'Voice' (2004) and 'The Emperor's Tram Girls' (2005).

Born in Tokyo in 1973 into a highly gifted musical family, Motoki studied piano and composition with his grandfather, the eminent composer Kozaburo Y. Hirai, and violin with his grandmother. After reading philosophy and aesthetics at Keio University in Tokyo, Motoki came to London in 1996 to study at the Royal Academy of Music. Over the years, Motoki has performed for the promotion of world peace and for people in need worldwide in association with organizations such as the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, Japan Society (Tohoku Earthquake Relief Fund), Red Cross, Royal Marsden Cancer Charity, UNESCO and UNICEF. As an artistic emissary of the Japanese government, Motoki has visited France, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, UK, Romania, Oman, Sri Lanka and Malaysia since 1994. Motoki has broadcast internationally on radio and television (Classic FM, BBC, ITV) and has made a number of recordings on CD.

www.motoki-hirai.com

Chie Ishiyama

A freelance news announcer and journalist from Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture. After graduating from university, Chie joined NHK Nagoya Branch and worked as a news presenter from 1994 to 1998. She was a business news presenter and reporter of NHK BS 1 (Worldwide Satellite Channel) from 1998 for ten years. In 2008, she started working as a TV presenter of BS-TBS (Satellite Channel of Tokyo Broadcasting System Television) and also as a radio presenter and reporter of NHK Radio 1. A member of the dramatic reading group *Monogatari Theater*, Chie reads masterpieces of Japanese literature and children's stories to a broad range of audience for the last five years.

World of Japanese Picture Books -Brought to Life through Reading and Music-

The World of Japanese Picture Books Project is an educational programme, introducing Japanese culture through a collaboration between images, reading and live music, which pianist and composer Motoki Hirai has been promoting globally as artistic director. The project began in 2007, when the then Japanese Ambassador to Denmark, Masaki Okada, initiated the Japan Culture Festival to be held in Frederikshavn in August that year. He commissioned composer-pianist Motoki Hirai to write music for two violins based on and inspired by three picture books, and thus ‘The World of Japanese Picture Books Project’ was born. It received great acclaim as ‘a project which has depths in its content in that it is artistically excellent and highly entertaining yet significant in terms of “introducing a culture unique to Japan, encouraging cultural dialogues between nations, and promoting education” ’.

Since its successful première in 2007, the ‘World of Japanese Picture Books’ has been performed in many countries in a variety of languages across the UK, Europe, the US, Middle East and Africa at theatres, concert halls, festivals and schools. It provides a true platform for participatory international cultural exchange owing to the flexible setup, as Japanese reading and performers are also possible (e.g. in the 2012 performance in Israel, the Jews and Arabs performed together, representing hopes to achieve peace through ‘soft power’). There are profound messages and universal themes embedded in each of the stories which are particularly relevant to modern society - including environmental issues, human greed or arrogance, the side effect of civilization, peace, life and death, and family ties. The music is placed in such a way to enhance the experience.

Let’s Read Japanese

Let’s Read Japanese is a series of graded readers for learners of Japanese. Each book at each level includes famous stories from Japan and from other parts of the world. Some are retellings of traditional tales, others are newly commissioned stories that are designed to introduce particular aspects of Japanese culture and society.

Beautiful colour illustrations are woven throughout the text. The texts are graded, with carefully controlled vocabulary and grammar, so that students of Japanese can start enjoying reading a ‘story’ from the early stages of their learning. Teachers will find them an invaluable resource in the classroom and could return to them again and again as students’ language develops. Let’s Read Japanese readers provide the ideal complement to any textbook being used by a student of Japanese anywhere in the world and will ensure hours of pleasurable learning and practise.

The Japanese Editor: Suzuko Anai

www.letsreadjapanese.com



This event was supported by the Japan Foundation

Music and Piano: Motoki Hirai

Programme and translations: Suzuko Anai and Keisuke Honda

Artistic Director: Motoki Hirai and Suzuko Anai

Reading

Hana Oni by Chie Ishiyama

The Tree of Courage by John Lo Breglio

The Cats and Tanabata

Omar Chowdhury, Alex Hughes, Clarissa Marley and Rosie Tayler

The Grateful Crane

Jonathan Boon, Conor Dunne, Alice Fracchia and Anthea Hopkins

Thank you for coming. We hope you enjoyed these stories.