

Happy Anniversary!! Donald Keene Center

In 2006, the Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture, named in honor of the Columbia University Professor, world-renowned scholar and interpreter of Japanese literature and culture, will celebrate its 20th anniversary. Headquartered at Columbia University in New York City, a major hub of cultural exchange, the Center's activities over the years have expanded in scope and impact far beyond the college campus. Its programs and events have featured such eminent Japanese cultural figures as Taeko Kono (author), Hirokazu Koreeda (film-maker), Makoto Ooka (author), Jakuchō Setouchi (writer), Ryotaro Shiba (author), Tadashi Suzuki (artist), Toru Takemitsu (com-

poser) and Tadanori Yokoo (artist).

To commemorate its 20th anniversary, the Donald Keene Center will host a number of special events throughout 2006. They will include the inauguration of a new prize for the international promotion of Japanese culture, to be awarded on April 12. Among the events in the fall is a Gagaku music concert which will be held in Columbia's Miller Theater on September 27 and a commemorative symposium on the history and future of book publishing in Japan, which will take place on October 27-28. More information about the Keene Center's programs, all of which are free and open to the public, may be found on the organization's website at



Donald Keene Center

www.donaldkeenecenter.org.

2006 also represents another milestone pertaining to Donald Keene. It marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of Donald Keene's *Anthology of Japanese Literature*, the first such collection to appear in Western language. Remarkably, the text has remained in print continuously since it was originally published, in two volumes, in 1955-1956, instilling an appreciation of Japanese literature and culture in several generations of western readers.

VISIT JAPAN

HOKKAIDO 北海道



Japan's Winter Wonderland

Hokkaido, located in the northernmost part of Japan, boasts one of the most beautiful snowy white winters on the continent. It is the second largest island in Japan,



Sapporo Yukimatsuri in Odori Avenue Park

occupying about 22% of the total land area but has only 5% of the population. As a result, Hokkaido is not crowded like the rest of the country. Its landscape makes the region quite popular to both local and foreign tourists. With over 1200 festivals, lots of places to ski, drift ice (*ryuhyo*) cruises and great food; there is plenty to see and do in Hokkaido.

Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido, is known for a variety of pleasures for the eyes, mind and stomach. The Snow Festival (*Sapporo Yukimatsuri*), one of the largest in Japan, features hundreds of snow and ice sculptures all displayed on Odori Avenue Park, which runs across the center of the city. The festival, which lasts for seven days, attracts millions of sightseers from all over



Japan and the rest of the world. Hot springs (*onsen*) are also wildly popular among tourists in Hokkaido. There are many public hot springs and hot spring resorts in the region. These onsen would provide a good rest for those who would need a break after a long day of skiing or sightseeing. Travelers can also enjoy a taste of Hokkaido's specialty foods while they relax. Seafood, dairy products, beer, and ramen are all Hokkaido region assets that must be sampled before one can say that their visit is complete.



Geisha Old and New

By Liza Dalby

(Liza Dalby is an anthropologist and writer specializing in Japanese culture. Her first book, *Geisha*, includes her experience as the only Westerner to have become a geisha herself. She was a consultant on the film *Memoirs of a Geisha*.)

Geisha today are conscious anachronisms. The music and dance they perform, the kimono they wear, the hair and makeup that create their distinctive look, all hark back to nineteenth-century popular culture and Japanese ideals of feminine beauty and deportment.

Geisha then were society's fashion leaders. In the nineteenth century, all fashionable women used the white makeup called *oshiroi*—but geisha used it more. When all women wore kimono, adjusting the collar back from the nape was considered sexier—so geisha pulled theirs back furthest. An obi worn low on the hips was chic—so geisha's were lowest. Not only did geisha accentuate everything that was feminine in popular culture, they themselves started most of the fashion trends in clothing, hair, and

makeup.

They lost this role as fashion innovators when novelty was driven more by western modes in the 1920s and 30s. Instead of leading the way by bobbing their hair and discarding kimono for western dresses, geisha entrenched themselves as curators of old-fashioned Japanese modes. This self-conscious traditionalism is appreciated in Japan, a society that takes great pride in its artistic heritage. But now that we are several generations removed from those aesthetic ideals, geisha appear more and more exotic even in their homeland.

Many young Japanese find "the geisha look" old-fashioned and strange. Kyoto's apprentice maiko are keenly aware of modern beauty trends even as they paint their faces white. They experiment with eyelash curlers and lighter coats of makeup more in line with western notions of beauty. Though they do not recognize themselves in the fantasy

world of the film, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, they are likely to be fans of ZiYi Zhang. Some of them may even like her non-traditional fully lip-sticked mouth. They think about how that would look instead of the small dab of red they traditionally brush on the center of their lower lip. Purists may frown, but some maiko will probably give it a try. (www.lizadalby.com)



Liza Dalby

JAPAN INFO is a publication of the Consulate General of Japan for distribution to readers in our jurisdiction. However, the opinions and material contained herein do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Government of Japan.

Please visit our website at www.cgj.org
Send your comments to japaninfo@ny.cgj.org

RESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
S. HACKENSACK, NJ
PERMIT # 13

Consulate General of Japan
Japan Information Center
299 Park Avenue, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10171-0025