Alumni at Work in Portland and Overseas

Alumni of PSU’s Japanese Studies program are pursuing careers in places ranging from Portland to Japan. Here are their stories.

Sarah Neufeld

I think I became a translator because I hate not being able to understand things, and because, when I think something’s interesting, I want everybody else to know about it. I’m in my second year of translating professionally now, and I love it.

I came into PSU’s Japanese program fresh from a year on exchange in Japan, so I didn’t take many language courses. That said, I probably learned more about Japanese culture at PSU than I did in Japan. Done poorly, language study can diminish to the point where it consists solely of memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary. While this technically gives you enough to communicate with native speakers, it tells you precious little about the people with whom you shall be communicating. Through studying a country’s literature, art and drama, it is possible to get a feel for the minds operating in and behind the language one is studying: the language comes alive. Only when something is alive is it possible to fall truly in love with it, and that love is what makes the difference between a job and a career. Through Professor Konimiz’s classes, I developed an insatiable curiosity about the quirkier aspects of Japanese and of Japan as a whole, which has proven invaluable in my work as a translator.

See page 2 for additional alumni profiles.

Community Supporters of the Center for Japanese Studies

The Center for Japanese Studies finds widespread support among community-minded individuals who recognize the importance of education in creating international communication and understanding.

Yoshio and Nikki Kurosaki met as students at Waseda University, Nikki on her year of study abroad from Occidental College. They eventually married and moved to Portland, Nikki’s hometown, in 1987 and joined the business world. They formed Summit Properties, a commercial real estate firm, in 1995. They have since become supporters of many community causes in education and the arts, Nikki as a board member of the Pacific Northwest College of Art, Yoshio on the advisory board of the CJS. At PSU, he says, “The Center for Japanese Studies has been doing a good job in bringing top scholars in business, politics, history, language and the performing arts to Portland for students and the public. I think this is one of the best Japanese Studies centers in the country.” He believes that merely belonging or contributing time and money is not enough. “I think it is important to bring up ideas and suggestions to give the organization the benefit of your experience.” See page 2 for additional profiles of community supporters.
Alumni Profiles, continued

**Gabe Rosen**, Owner of Biwa Restaurant

Gabe came to PSU as a transfer student from Iowa with a dream of owning a restaurant and "exploring how a university education could expand my life." His goals at PSU were to learn a foreign language, to study abroad, and to have a show on the college radio station. Two out of three isn't too bad, he jokes. He visited the linguistics department and met Professor Pat Wetzel and it "started me on a path of long-term ramifications that at the time were unimaginable." Professor Ken Ruoff "provided me with pivotal guidance." He became the PSU representative at the 55th Japan American Student Conference, and subsequently a Japanese government scholar at Hokkaido University, where he completed his degree requirements and returned to Portland -- to cook again. Rosen has just celebrated the third anniversary of his own restaurant, Biwa (SE 9th and Pine), a bustling place with the noise and aromas of a Japanese izakaya (pub) serving what he calls "everyday" Japanese food. There are even plans to expand because of his success so far. He has said that his experience at PSU has greatly influenced his life. He never got that radio show he wanted.

**Amanda Radmacher** I am a proud graduate of PSU, class of 2009. Having declared myself a history major, I spent my first year and a half testing the history waters of PSU by taking various classes. I continued this trend of spontaneity and took a class on modern Japanese history. Insert Eureka moment here. For the rest of my time at PSU I stuck with the Asian theme, taking Japanese classes, and even Asian art history classes. At the time I was concluding the writing of my senior honors thesis, I received the happy news I had been accepted into the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Program). I have been living in Kobe, Japan, for exactly one year now. I assist in English classes and international activities for a junior high school and two elementary schools. It is a very exciting time to be here, participating firsthand as a new approach to elementary English education unique to Kobe (for now) is tested in the classroom. I even find time, here and there, to access my PSU library account, jump to JSTOR, and catch up on a little light reading.

Community Supporters, continued

**Jim and Kimiko King** for ten years ran a language school in Ichikawa, Japan, and a small antiques shop in Portland called Shogun's Gallery. As their family grew they decided to concentrate their efforts in Portland, selling the language school and expanding the antique business in a new location on Portland's trendy 23rd Avenue. That elegant space has been the venue for CJS-sponsored events, and Kimiko's talent for organizing was largely responsible for a full house musical event at Portland's Old Church. Through the years many CJS theatrical productions have relied on the King's generosity in providing authentic Japanese furniture and decorations for the stage. Jim and Kimiko also have provided internships for several PSU students. "I am interested in diversity," says Kimiko. "I see students from other countries on campus, from China, Indonesia, other countries, and I know they see things that are often taken for granted here." With thanks to Ed Reingold for writing these profiles.

**Calendar Spotlight: January 12 Lecture by Dr. Brian Hayashi**

*Asian Americans in the American Spy Service in Asia*

How did Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans affect the larger political developments in East Asia during and after World War II? Given their small numerical presence in the United States and the fact that they were distrusted by federal government officials blinded by anti-Asian stereotypes, one would expect little, if any, impact on the larger picture of the imposition of the American order on East Asia during and after World War II. However, through an analysis of dozens of Asian American spies, if you will, working for the Office of Strategic Services (forerunner of the CIA today), a very different picture emerges. Asian Americans played a significant role in shaping the type of democracy that did and did not take root in East Asia through their service in the United States' first centralized intelligence agency as spies, interpreters, propaganda writers, and guerrilla warfare specialists. **Sponsored by Verne and Aki Naito of Made in Oregon stores.**

**Newly tenured Associate Professor of Economics Hiro Ito will spend his 2010-11 sabbatical conducting research at the Asian Development Bank Institute in Tokyo, Japan. His position at PSU was created through a staff expansion grant provided by the Japan Foundation.**
Professor Ken Ruoff publishes new book with English and Japanese editions appearing almost simultaneously

Ken Ruoff has published a new book, *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith: The Wartime Celebrations of the Empire’s 2600th Anniversary*. A decade in the making, this new book follows Ruoff’s first book *The People’s Emperor* (2001), the Japanese version of which was awarded Japan’s equivalent of the Pulitzer Prize. With the Japanese version of *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith* forthcoming in December, Portland State University has scheduled a book talk (and book signing) by Dr. Ruoff on 25 February 2011 (see upcoming events) in order to have copies of both the English and Japanese versions on hand. He will also be giving book talks throughout North America and in Japan, South Korea, and China. Waseda University in Tokyo and PSU’s Alumni Office are making a major effort to alert PSU alumni in Japan about Professor Ruoff’s talk at Waseda in the evening of January 21.

"Kenneth J. Ruoff is the most distinguished historian of his generation writing about the modern Japanese monarchy. His latest book, looking at the extraordinary celebrations of the 2,600th anniversary of the Japanese royal dynasty and the Japanese empire, is his most powerful and original yet. It is a tour de force of research, scholarship, and exposition, and anyone, anywhere, who is interested in the complex and controversial history of modern Japan or, indeed, the history of the modern world should read it."—Professor Sir David Cannadine, Princeton University and Institute of Historical Research, University of London

Center for Japanese Studies to Host World-Class Noh/Kyogen Performance in March 2011

On 16 March 2011, Portland State University’s Center for Japanese Studies will host the only West Coast performance by the prestigious Kashu-ju-ku Noh Theater from Kyoto. *Noh* is Japan’s oldest and most revered theater art, dating back to the 1300s. It is a spiritual art, expressing the complexity of human relationships as well as our ties to the supernatural and the divine. *Noh* was one of the first performing arts designated an “intangible heritage” by UNESCO. It is music and dance drama featuring gorgeous brocade costumes and beautiful fans and accoutrements, with performances on a simple, polished wood stage.

*Noh* plays are intense explorations of the human soul, but *noh* programs also feature hilarious, energetic farces termed *kyogen* plays. All *kyogen* plays rely on dialogue, slapstick, and pantomime, and they poke fun at human folly. Servants prevail over their masters, and wives over their husbands, turning the social order upside down.

The CJS has an impressive track record of presenting traditional and modern Japanese performances, working frequently with The Japan Foundation and the Japan Society of New York (JSNY). We are presenting the Kashu-ju-ku Noh Theater in collaboration with JSNY, co-presenters of some of PSU’s most ambitious performance events in years past, including the Seinendan Theater Company and Katsura Utamaro’s *rakugo* troupe (comic story-telling), in Spring and Fall of 2006. We feel privileged to provide Portlanders with full scale, professional *noh* and *kyogen* plays.

Kashu-ju-ku Noh Theater is led by Katayama Shingo, member of the prestigious Katayama Noh family that traces its lineage to the 18th century. From the late 1700s until the end of Edo Period (1868), the Katayama family was given the honor of being the primary *noh* performers at the Imperial Palace in Kyoto. In modern times the Katayama family has led the Kyoto Kanze Noh Association—the Kanze are the dominant school of *noh* in Japan. The Katayama are joined by members of the Shigezaya family of *kyogen* actors, the most popular acting troupe in the Kansai region.

The centerpiece of the company’s program is a performance of one of the masterpieces in the repertory, *Aoi no Ue* (Lady Aoi). The play is an adaptation from Japan’s greatest work of literature, the novel *The Tale of Genji* (1008 AD), by Lady Murasaki. The play, *Lady Aoi*, focuses on one of the most frightening moments in the novel, when the beautiful court lady, Rokujo, seeks to murder Lady Aoi, her rival in love, by means of spirit possession and affliction with illness. Prince Genji calls on a tantric exorcist to attempt to save the life of his pregnant wife.

The intensity of this play contrasts with the wacky shenanigans of two servants in the *kyogen* play *Bo-Shibari (Tied to a Pole)* who struggle to outwit their master after he’s tied them up. Their lofty purpose is to steal their master’s sake and get rip-roaring drunk.

The Kashu-ju-ku Noh Theater performance at Portland State University’s Lincoln Hall promises to be an entertaining and informative performance of the sort that can only be seen in Portland once every few decades. It is sure to attract a large audience of theatergoers and Japanese culture enthusiasts.

Meet the Center for Japanese Studies Staff

Melinda Glover began her role as the new Program Director for the Center for Japanese Studies in September. A strong believer in the value of diversity, education, and the arts, Melinda has held past positions in Portland State University’s Office of Affirmative Action and in the Department of Music. In addition to working for the Center for Japanese Studies, she also currently holds the position of Administrative Manager in the Oregon Geographic Alliance in PSU’s Geography Department. She is enthusiastic about meeting the challenges the Center faces during this exciting period of growth, and is looking forward to meeting and working with the Center’s various community partners.

Takako Kawano, the Graduate Assistant, is a Japanese national who completed her Bachelor of Science degree at Portland State University. Subsequently, she enrolled in the Master’s Program in Japanese Language Pedagogy. The fall term marks the beginning of her second year with Center for Japanese Studies. Takako says although she is Japanese and grew up in Japan, she has learned a great deal about Japanese culture, history, and arts through the lectures she has helped to coordinate and through her other experiences with CJS. She considers her assistantship to be fruitful and rewarding.
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PSU’s Center for Japanese Studies is sponsoring a world-class performance of Noh/Kyogen in March 2011. See inside

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