

# Japan America Society of Minnesota



## 通 信

The Tsūshin is a membership publication of the Japan America Society of Minnesota

July 2023 Vol. 32, No. 7

### Recap: Harukaze 2023 *The Boy Who Drew Cats* by Asako Hirabayashi (in-person)



This year's Harukaze ("spring breeze" in Japanese) event was held on June 11, 2023, in Sundin Music Hall at Hamline University. JASM was honored to host the world premiere of the concert opera *The Boy Who Drew Cats* by award-winning composer Asako Hirabayashi in collaboration with award-winning visual artist Mayumi Amada.

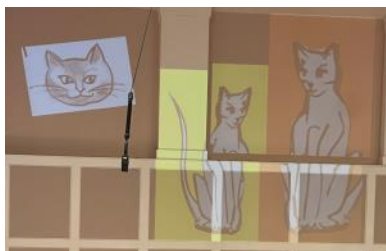


The story alone is a captivating one, but it was made even more profound by the opening remarks from Asako Hirabayashi, who highlighted some of her own personal challenges as a child and a mother, and how they have helped her cultivate strength and understanding throughout her life. Her words were a poignant reminder of our own humanity, and how humility

can prove to be one of our greatest qualities.

*The Story:* Re-imagined by Hirabayashi, the viewer is taken on a journey through the relationship challenges of a father and son who see the world very differently from one another. The ancient Japanese folktale emphasizes how a child's perceived shortcomings can actually help them achieve great success in life. After all, our challenges often make us stronger! In the case of *The Boy Who Drew Cats* it was the child's incessant drawing of cats which proved to be the very thing that not only helped distinguish him as an artist (and hero!) but also helped bring him closer to his father, who was greatly concerned about his son's ability to provide for himself and his future family, if he only wanted to draw cats. This was not the farmer's life he had in mind for his son! But, after running away from home and being challenged by an evil rat in an abandoned cave, the boy drew upon his most beloved pastime and skill to help him ward off danger – through his cats! It was then that his father realized that his son's love of art was not only a great quality his son possessed, but one that could bring people together, and in this case, even save lives.

... continued on page 2.



### Mondale Award Nominations 2023



2022 Mondale Award recipients, Judith and Gayle Fleming, center/right. Mirja Hanson, Mondale Award Committee member, left

JASM hopes to continue the distribution of our esteemed Mondale award this year. If you know someone who has dedicated their efforts to the continued benefit of the U.S.-Japan relationship, please nominate them! All applications must be submitted either by email to [jasm@mn-japan.org](mailto:jasm@mn-japan.org) or by filling out the form [here](#)

by August 16. Find the criteria description [here](#).

In 1997, Japan America Society of Minnesota created the Mondale Award for Japan Minnesota Partnership to recognize outstanding contributions to the building of understanding, cooperation, and respect between the people of Japan and Minnesota. The award was named for — and first presented to — Joan and Walter Mondale to recognize Mrs. Mondale's decades-long effort to promote the arts in both countries, and Ambassador Mondale's service as United States Ambassador to Japan. We will continue celebrating the life and legacy of Walter Mondale through the Japan America community.

### Obon Festival Volunteers Needed



The 2023 Obon Festival will be on **Sunday, August 20th** at Como Park. We are looking for volunteers! Please find [information on our web site](#) describing the various booths and volunteer roles.

**Please fill out the volunteer form [here](#).**

**\*\* Please note that all volunteers need to attend a volunteer workshop via zoom on Thursday, August 10 at 6 pm before the festival, to get the necessary information. We're looking forward to working with you!**

## Letter from the JASM President: Bob Luck



My father-in-law Isao was drafted by the Japanese Imperial Army in 1943 and shipped to Northern Manchuria. Although he never fought Americans, he was no doubt indoctrinated to hate them. My Uncle Bill fought against Japan in Iwo Jima and Okinawa as a US Marine. From the time my wife Sahya and I got married until they each passed away about 10 years ago, Isao and Bill were kind and supportive of us, despite their wartime experiences.

This is not a unique story: based on my own personal experiences and what I have heard from friends and JASM members, mutual feelings of admiration and friendship between Japanese and Americans far outnumber less pleasant emotions. I believe that relationships between our countries and our peoples are as strong as they have ever been, and they are continuing to deepen. Given our history, this is truly a miracle...

... A miracle, but not an accident. Our relationships are built on a lot of hard work by individuals, governments, and organizations such as JASM. I am proud of the work that JASM does to build ties between Japan and Minnesota, and I am thankful for the contributions of our members and supporters. If you are looking for ways to get more involved with JASM and its mission, I have a few suggestions:

- Keep reading the Tsūshin! Send the editor a note with your comments about what you enjoyed or would like to see.
- Attend an event! We have lots of great stuff coming up, including my personal favorite, the Obon festival in Como Park next month.
- Better yet, volunteer for an event! Contact our office if you would like to volunteer.
- Join JASM as a member! If you are already a member, *thank you!* If you have yet to join, or your membership has expired, you can sign up online at [www.mn-japan.org](http://www.mn-japan.org), or by contacting our office.

(JASM office: [jasm@mn-japan.org](mailto:jasm@mn-japan.org))

I hope you have a great summer, and I look forward to seeing you at the Obon festival.

*Bob Luck, JASM President*



*Isao Ohkawa in Matsusaka in 2005. Bob's nieces in the U.S. thought he looked like George Washington with his long white hair.*



*Bill Gotz fishing in Louisiana in 2004.*

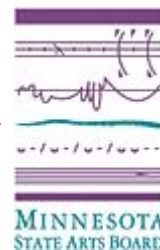
## Recap: Harukaze 2023 *The Boy Who Drew Cats* by Asako Hirabayashi (in-person) *continues...*

JASM would like to thank the entire performance cast (found below), composer Asako Hirabayashi, and visual artist Mayumi Amada. We would also like to thank our event sponsors: The Minnesota State Arts Board Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund (Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment), and Hamline University. And of course, a big thank you to our members and everyone who attended in support of JASM's efforts to continue to provide memorable experiences accessible to all.

*Crystal Neff, JASM Program Volunteer*

### *Cast & Contributions:*

Story, Libretto, & Music by Asako Hirabayashi  
Stage Design by Mayumi Amada  
Brian Arreola (Leading Tenor)  
Kelvin Chan (Leading Baritone)  
Timothy P. Faatz (Tenor)  
Sullivan Ojala Helmbolt (Baritone)  
Justin Staebell (Bass)  
Momoko Tanno (Narrator)  
Daria Adams (Violin)  
Mira Frisch (Cello)  
Ivan Konev (Piano)  
Max Kuzmyak (Videographer)



*This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.*

## Membership News (5/21 – 6/20, 2023)

### Thanks to the following new JASM members:

Ashley and Samantha Akin,  
Tara Bianchi Peterson, Andrea Grant,  
Seda Johannes, Connie and Kent Matsumoto,  
Anders and Abigail Mayland,  
Yasushi Nakagawa, Steve Ozone,  
Eric Skoglund and Mina Skoglund-Ogawa

### Thanks to the following renewing JASM members:

Michael Akin, Mayumi Amada, Holly Brackett,  
Charles Breer, Amy Dickerson, Tom Dietz,  
Michiko Kato Dressen, Dawn Erickson,  
Naomi Fujioka, Kyoko Haines, Jay Ihlenfeld,  
Kathryn Klibanoff, Shuzo Murakami,  
Steven and Yukari Nelson, Jeremy Pierotti,  
John and Hiroko Shade, Larry and Vicki Ostrom,  
Alan Touchberry, Maria Traxler, Halen Traux

### Thanks to the following Corporate Members:

University of Minnesota, Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies  
Winona State University Global Studies and World Languages  
Murata Vios Inc.



## Upcoming: Summer Festival Dance Workshop: Bringing Japanese Summer to the Sculpture Garden (in-person)



*Last year's workshop*

Ms. Traxler will introduce Uraja dance and demonstrate it with a song. "Uraja" is based on the ogre "Ura" from the Okayama folk tale "The Story of Ura". The Uraja-odori Festival is an Okayama event that everyone can participate in and enjoy with a single purpose, regardless of age, gender, or nationality.

This is a family-friendly event. No prior experience is necessary to participate. Please wear clothes that are easy to move in. It will be a fun way to get some exercise and learn about a regional dance of Japan. [Please sign up today!](#) We are looking forward to seeing you there.



**Maria Traxler** is a current member of the Kizuna International Yosakoi Team. She danced in the 2019 Kochi Yosakoi Festival as a Kizuna member, as well as in the 2015 Kochi Yosakoi Festival as a member of the Shimanto Town team Shimamuta.

*(Photo: Maria Traxler)*

You can also watch [the video](#) from last year.

**This event is free for all and open to the public! However, we would still like you to register. Additionally, your donations are much appreciated.**

*This activity is made possible by a grant from Japan Foundation.*



JAPAN FOUNDATION

## Register Today for the 2023 JASM Charity Golf Scramble



JASM will be holding our 3rd annual charity golf scramble event on **Saturday, September 23** at **Pioneer Creek Golf Course** in Maple Plain, MN.

Enjoy a fun day of competition with friends while supporting JASM. This event is limited to 72 participants.

### Registration fee:

Early Bird price through August 23      From August 24 to September 16  
\$90: Non-member, \$75: Member      \$115: Non-member, \$100: Member

Please click [here](#) to register or scan the QR code.

For further information, please contact:

**Tom Haeg**, 612-940-3351 [tomhaeg@msn.com](mailto:tomhaeg@msn.com)

**Marc Blehert**, 763-280-2108 [mblehert@yahoo.com](mailto:mblehert@yahoo.com)



*Please thank our members  
with your support!*

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Red Wing Sister Cities Commission  
Twin Cities Aikido Center  
UMN Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies  
University of North Dakota-Grand Forks  
Winona State University Global Studies and World Languages

### Sakura Circle Membership

Sam and Mirja Hanson  
Noriko Ishida  
Ron and Molly Leonhardt  
Bob and Hisayo Luck  
John and Hiroko Shade

## North Dakota News: Grand Forks Japan Fest!

Here are two events happening in North Dakota this month!  
Please check details using the links below.

Friday, July 7th, 7 pm: [Japan Fest Kick-Off Movie Night](#) at Empire Arts Center

Saturday, July 8th, 10 am - 1 pm: [Grand Forks Japan Fest](#) at Town Square Market

**JAPAN FEST KICK-OFF  
MOVIE NIGHT**

**AT EMPIRE  
ARTS CENTER**  
415 DEMERS AVE,  
GRAND FORKS, ND 58201

**FRIDAY ·  
JULY 7TH, 2023  
7PM-** **FREE**

July 7th is Tanabata, Star Festival in Japan. Let's celebrate Star Festival and kick-off Japan Fest with Japanese activities, music, and movie!

**CHECK OUT THE FACEBOOK EVENT PAGE!**

Special guest performers:  
Duo Cantabile and Red River Trio of University of North Dakota

HOSTED BY **JOI PROGRAM**  
JAPAN OUTREACH INITIATIVE

SPONSORED BY **Mayville State University**

Update from the last issue of Tsūshin: at the Japan Fest Kick-Off Movie Night, there will be special guest performers from the music department of the University of North Dakota:

[Duo Cantabile](#) (Dr. Simona Barbu and Mr. Nariaki Sugiura) and [Red River Trio](#) will perform. They visited Kanuma, a friendship city of Grand Forks, this spring. We are fortunate to be able to hear their music and learn about their experiences in Japan. We hope to see you there!

Aiko Hatano, JASM program assistant

**GRAND FORKS JAPAN FEST!**

Food, Snacks, Performances, Games, Crafts

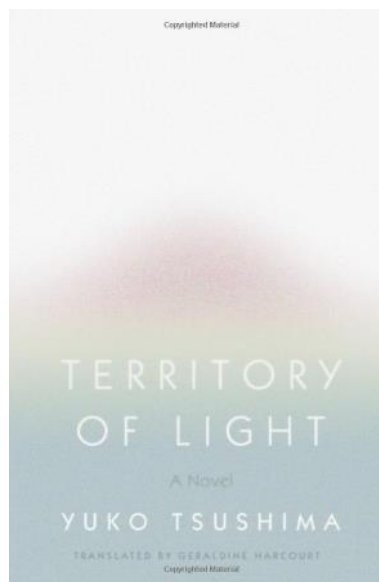
**SATURDAY  
JULY 8, 2023  
10:00 AM-1:00 PM**

Please check the update on Facebook event page!

at the Town Square Farmers Market  
3rd Street & Demers Ave., Grand Forks

**JOI PROGRAM**  
JAPAN OUTREACH INITIATIVE

## Tom Haeg's Book Review



*Territory of Light*; Yuko Tsushima; Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux Publishers, 1979; translated by Geraldine Harcourt, 2018; 183 pages.

*Territory* was written in a span of twelve months from 1978 through 1979 for a Tokyo literary magazine, *Gunzo*. Each chapter represents a short story in the life of a single mother raising her three-year-old child while keeping an entry-level office worker job and maintaining her sanity (notwithstanding a deadbeat father-husband and an unconcerned

societal support system). (Think: Netflix series.)

We are sympathetic to our protagonist, who curiously remains anonymous, while she struggles emotionally to pay her rent, feed her child (sometimes with canned food), and cope with the vicissitudes of cramped urban living. All the while she must deal with her own distractions: seeking solace in drink, engaging in casual sex, and sporadically jettisoning mental acuity. But it is interesting to note that she never claims the low-hanging fruit inherent in the blame game. That would be undignified. She is not interested in the "poor me, the victim" status. She seemingly accepts her duty to endure. In a sense, this is like reading a Japanese adult coming of age story.

It is hard to believe that *Territory* was written over 40 years ago. Japan's demographics have changed. The political institutions now are more sympathetic. The old way of doing business by ignoring the dilemma of parents is no longer sustainable. Parental leave, subsidies, and favorable tax and labor laws are now available. Perhaps someone in the Diet at some time and somehow read Tsushima's stories and was moved enough to make needed legislation. It's interesting how a democracy works when fiction is the catalyst.

*Territory* won the inaugural Prize for New Writers while Harcourt won the 1990 Wheatland Award for literature translation.

Tom Haeg

### JASM Event Calendar

**Sunday, July 9:** Summer Festival Dance Workshop:  
Bringing Japanese Summer to the Sculpture Garden  
(in person)

**Sunday, August 20:** Obon Festival 2023



## University of Minnesota: New Exhibition “In Hot Water: Healing at the Hakone Hot Springs”



to experience the text's stunning illustrations, learn about the medicinal properties of hot springs, and find out how this new acquisition fits into the Wangenstein's stellar history of medicine collection!

-- Anna Opryszko

### About the exhibit

**What:** *In Hot Water: Healing at the Hakone Hot Springs*

**When:** June 1 – September 15, 2023

**Where:** Wangenstein Historical Library, 2-340 Phillips-Wangenstein Building (PWB), second floor concourse, 516 Delaware St SE,

Minneapolis 55455

**Hours:** Monday-Friday 8:30am-4:30pm, free and open to the public

Source: [In Hot Water: Healing at the Hakone Hot Springs - continuum | University of Minnesota Libraries \(umn.edu\)](https://www.lib.umn.edu/in-hot-water)

“In Hot Water: Healing at the Hakone Hot Springs,” a new exhibit at the [Wangenstein Historical Library of Biology and Medicine](https://www.lib.umn.edu/wangenstein) (WHL), explores a newly acquired nineteenth-century manuscript titled “Shichito no Shiori.” This ten-volume set is an illustrated guide to the seven famous hot springs in Hakone, Japan, located 50 miles southwest of Tokyo. Stop by

## Thank You Message from Aiko Hatano, JASM Program Assistant



*Aiko enjoyed being a booth captain for Yo-Yo Tsuru at the Obon Festival 2022*



*JASM office team at the Obon Festival 2022*



*The collaborative event with Consul General of Japan in Chicago and JASM: “Rhythm Of Japan” at North Dakota State University*



*JASM's 50th Anniversary Photo Exhibition 2023*

Hello, JASM members and friends! I have been working voluntarily as a JASM program assistant since January 2022 from Mayville, North Dakota. I will return to Japan on July 22nd and am sad to leave JASM.

I came here as a Japan Outreach Initiative Coordinator based at Mayville State University. The Japan Outreach Initiative program is funded by Japan Foundation, which dispatches volunteer coordinators to the Midwest. I connected with JASM thanks to the Consul General of Japan in Chicago when I was struggling living in rural North Dakota and doing outreach all by myself. Now I am more confident to live here and am proud of all we have accomplished.

I am so thankful for being a part of JASM. As North Dakota has few Japanese cultural resources and I have never worked for nonprofit organizations, I learned a lot from JASM. I enjoyed working with Rio-san and Yoko-san and the volunteers. Though I am not an especially artistic person, I made flyers and programs for several events, and it's great to have someone to

give feedback to me. I really appreciate that I could share what I have learned from JASM with North Dakotans and share what I am doing in ND through JASM. I hope you enjoyed my articles about news from North Dakota in the Tsūshin.

Besides working remotely and attending online JASM events, I came to the Obon Festival, the Annual Gala, and the 50th anniversary photo exhibition. It was so great to meet people at JASM events! Networking and getting to know people are two of the best parts of being part of JASM. I am hoping to keep in touch with people I met here. I do not plan to come back to the U.S. for now, but instead of saying goodbye I would like to say "See you in Japan someday"!

Thank you very much for welcoming me to JASM. I'm looking forward to future JASM online activities!

Respectfully,  
*Aiko Hatano, JASM program assistant*



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JAPAN AMERICA SOCIETY  
of MINNESOTA

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通信

July Tsūshin  
2023

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a non-profit, non-political association engaged in bringing the peoples of Japan and the United States closer together in mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. Through programs and interchange, it endeavors to promote an appreciation of cultural, educational, economic, public, and other affairs of interest to both peoples. Membership in the society is open to individuals, corporations, and other organizations interested in furthering its programs.

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a member of the National Association of Japan-America Societies.

Please report any inaccuracies you find in this publication to [jasm@mn-japan.com](mailto:jasm@mn-japan.com)

### ***June Event: Harukaze 2023, The Boy Who Drew Cats by Asako Hirabayashi (in-person)***

