

Jewels of Kyoto

Traditional dance and music by *maiko* of Gion



A performing *maiko*. Photo by Michael Helbig

The Japan Foundation, Sydney presents a **live performance by geisha** hailing from Japan's most prestigious geisha community, Gion district in Kyoto. Titled 'Jewels of Kyoto', this show is on for one night only at Sydney's **Monkey Baa Theatre Company** on **Tuesday, 23 February 2016**, 6:30–8pm.

Geisha have been commonly romanticized in western books and film; enveloping Japan's iconic performers in mystery for audiences abroad as they struggle to separate fact from fiction. Even today, this profession remains in obscurity to the average Japanese person.

Geisha are **professional female artists** who commit themselves to mastering a variety of traditional Japanese arts, such as music, dance and tea ceremony. In Kyoto, geisha culture is most robust and the training most rigorous. Here, geisha are referred to as *geiko* (lit., 'woman of arts') and their teenaged apprentices are known as *maiko* (lit., 'dancing girl'). A *maiko* dresses in a youthful colour palette; her vibrant kimono is always paired with elaborate hair accessories. When she becomes recognised as a *geiko*, her new style is understated to reflect her maturity and **a successful career depends on her artistry.**

This performance offers an opportunity to experience first-hand the alluring world of geisha. The visiting *geiko* and *maiko* will perform traditional dance and song, offer a glimpse into their lives and host a lesson on the gentle and refined dialect of Kyoto.

Nao Endo, Director of The Japan Foundation, Sydney says, “A geisha’s path is a living tradition that embodies centuries-old Japanese culture and values. I highly recommend fans of Japan and lovers of the arts to enjoy this unique experience that no words can encapsulate.”

As a precursor to the Sydney event, The Japan Foundation, Sydney will host a free film screening of ‘Lady Maiko’ at its premises on Wednesday, 10 February. The film will be in Japanese with English subtitles. As part of their Australian tour, the *maiko* and *geiko* will perform in Perth on Saturday, 27 February.

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PERFORMANCE – SYDNEY

Date:	February 23 (Tuesday), 2016
Time:	6:30pm - 8pm (Doors open 6pm)
Venue:	Monkey Baa Theatre Company Darling Quarter Terrace 3, 1-25 Harbour Street Sydney NSW 2000
Entry:	\$10 per person. Bookings essential.
Ticketing:	Online via www.jpff.org.au In person/over the phone, visit Monkey Baa Theatre or call 1300 131 556. Operating hours are Mon–Fri, 9:30 – 5pm.
General Enquiries:	reception@jpff.org.au / (02) 8239 0055
Website:	www.jpff.org.au

PERFORMANCE - PERTH JAPAN FESTIVAL

Date:	February 27 (Saturday), 2016
Time:	See Perth Japan Festival program for details
Venue:	Forrest Place Perth WA 6000
Entry:	Free admission.
Enquiries:	See www.perthjapanfestival.com/

FILM SCREENING: LADY MAIKO

Date: 10 February (Wednesday), 2016
Time: 6:15pm – 8:30pm (doors open 6pm)
Venue: The Japan Foundation, Sydney
Level 4 (access via lifts)
Central Park
Chippendale NSW 2008
(Opposite UTS Tower)
Entry: Free admission. Bookings essential.
Bookings: www.jpff.org.au
Enquiries: reception@jpff.org.au / 02 8239 0055



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ABOUT GEISHA

Geisha are professional entertainers who solely earn their living through their artistic talents. Due to misinformed stereotypes in western countries, geisha are often mistaken for prostitutes. Geisha tradition traces back to 17th century Edo (former Tokyo), a period of peace and stability when the arts and entertainment flourished. The first geisha, translated as 'arts person', were actually former military men who were advisors and entertainers to their feudal lords. Successful female geisha later turned the profession into a woman's domain. Geisha culture began declining around World War II, a period of time that called for austerity. Although estimates today suggest that fewer than 2000 geisha remain in the field, some English-speaking *geiko* and *maiko* are travelling the world to introduce this traditional Japanese culture to audiences abroad.

ABOUT THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, SYDNEY

The Japan Foundation, Sydney is the Australian arm of the Japan Foundation, which was established by the Japanese government to promote cultural and intellectual exchange between Japan and other nations. It runs a diverse range of programs and events, including exhibitions, talk events, grant programs and Japanese language courses for all levels from beginner to advanced. The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 with a global network of 22 offices in 21 countries. The Australian office was founded in 1978.

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