

VOICES From THE NEW YORKERS

"Weathering with You" at Anime NYC Justin Tedaldi

On Nov. 17, more than 3,000 fans gathered in the Special Events Hall of the Javits Center for the East Coast premiere of "Weathering with You," the latest animated film from celebrated writer/director Makoto Shinkai.



The screening served as the Closing Film event of the annual Anime NYC convention, which in its third year drew a record 46,000 fans over three days. This hotly anticipated new film from Shinkai and producer Genki Kawamura is the follow-up to their critically acclaimed global smash "Your Name" (2016), the highest-grossing Japanese film of the decade.

Produced in English and set for national release in January by New York's own GKIDS (who backed last year's Academy Award-nominated anime film "Mirai"), "Weathering with You" follows high schooler Hodaka, who runs away from his remote island home to Tokyo and quickly finds himself pushed to his financial and personal limits. After befriending the bright and strong-willed Hina, Hodaka witnesses her strange and wonderful ability: the power to stop the rain and clear the sky. Together the two develop a successful "sunshine" startup, but what happens when manipulating the weather leads to even greater problems?

A crowd-pleasing story with elements of comedy and romance that wed the supernatural elements of "Your Name" with the more adult concerns of Shinkai's earlier work "The Garden of Words" (2013),

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Roar in Apollo Theater Japanese singer wins, two pairs from Yoshimoto Creative Agency gets their applause as well

Amateur Night 2019 final round (super top dog) was held November 27th at the Apollo Theater in Harlem and Japanese singer Azumi Takahashi won with an impressive 98 points. She's the first Japanese singer to win in the 85 years history of this competition and won \$20,000.

Two pairs as the first ever "finals guests" as an Asian impressed the crowd of Apollo known for their criticism.

The winners of Yoshimoto Amateur Night Japan, which con-

sists of four dancers ranging in age from 14 to 22 and NY Producer special award winning singer, WAKASA, also performed confidentially as they represented Japan.

Famous R&B singer Joe Gray had a farewell ceremony that night and the CEO of Apollo Theater gave a speech as well. In the finale, all the performers climbed up on the stage and the crowd yelled "Japan!". The ceremony was live-streamed to the whole world.

(Kimiko Matsuo/Translated by Kanta Hakamata)

"Weathering with You" serves up unforgettable animation in its exquisite lensing of an unusually gloomy and rainy Tokyo. Japanese rock band Radwimps, also returning from "Your Name," provide solid music and songs.

"Weathering with You" premieres in the New York metropolitan area with dubbed and subtitled fan pre-

view screenings Jan. 15-16. The film opens nationwide Jan. 17. For more information, visit https://gkids.com/films/weathering-with-you.

Justin has written about Japanese arts and entertainment since 2005. For more of his stories, visit http://jetaany.org/magazine

Kana Usumurasaki get Award from BWAC



Using Japan's Forms of Beauty to Question the Japanese Sense of Happiness

Contemporary Artist Kana Usumurasaki won a certificate of recognition for her entry in "Color", an exhibition held by Red Hook-based Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition's (BWAC). Her work was selected by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) PS1's assistant curator, Jocelyn Miller. The work of art, "Self binded happiness (Red and white)" is made from red and white cloth sewn cylinders tied into a knot. Its design suggests the look of a tied obijime (a thin rope tied around a kimono sash). The red and white colors further symbolize Japan.

The artist, Kana Usumurasaki, said, "I wanted to express the idea of being bound to your culture, of having a mold—is this a lucky thing, or a binding curse? ... In American culture, being bound is a hindrance, it's thought to equal unhappiness, and so I wanted to represent that contrast."

Usumurasaki uses the cultural backdrop of an obi knot to ask of fitting into a mold: is it a blessing or a curse? The piece's double meanings make for a fascinating piece of art, particularly in how it critiques forms that represent esteemed aspects of Japan's culture and traditions.

Usumurasaki is a contempo-

rary artist born in Tokyo in 1988. While a student in Asagaya Art School's IC department (Image Creation department), she took part in a film company's creation of movie previews. After she graduated, she began work at a design firm until coming to the United States in 2016. In 2018 her outdoor installation of a chashitsu (traditional Japanese tea room) at Mana Contemporary Miami earned her recognition. This year, her major work of art, an installation entitled "Crow people" was chosen for exhibition by South Korea's Czung Institute for Contemporary Art.

She came to New York three and a half years ago, and through interacting with artists from all over the world, she was given cause to re-examine her roots in Japanese culture. "Using Japanese forms of beauty as a theme for a work of art has allowed me to leave those forms behind me. [This is important for the future] since I'm always thinking about my past. [I don't want] to be held captive by old ideas, but to always have new concepts and new ideas to continue to make art from," she said.

(Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Marie Calloway)



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