

Welcome to the Neighborhood

Arriving in Japan for the first time can be an overwhelming experience. 'Which way is which', 'what is what' and 'how on earth do you say that again' are all questions that newcomers face on an hourly basis. Thankfully, everyone living in Japan has been through the same experiences and most people are happy to offer advice whenever necessary. And if that's not enough, there are countless professional and non-professional entities operating in Tokyo that are able to steer lost souls in a specific direction depending on the type of advice sought. As this issue is targeted at readers who have arrived in Tokyo for the first time (see promotional feature section entitled New Life in Japan, pages 52-56), we thought it helpful to provide a quick bluffer's guide to clubs, groups and associations that might be able to offer pertinent advice when you need it most. If nothing else, the entities mentioned are always looking for new members and might just give you an avenue in which to direct your energy.

Entrepreneur Association of Tokyo: Founded to support and promote entrepreneurial activities in Tokyo. www.ea-tokyo.com

American Chamber of Commerce in Japan: The ACCJ represents the interests of international businesses in Japan, with close to 3,200 members representing 1,300 companies. www.accj.or.jp/accj.or.jp/content/01_home

British Chamber of Commerce in Japan: The British equivalent. www.bccjapan.com

Australia New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Japan: The antipodean equivalent. www.anzccj.jp

Foreign Executive Women: FEW is a networking organization for foreign women in Japan from all professional backgrounds. For more info, e-mail few@gol.com or visit www.fewjapan.com

Being A Broad: Being A Broad is an online and in-person support and information network for women living overseas. www.being-a-broad.com

Tokyo American Club: Not just for relaxing, the Tokyo American Club also offers banquetting, meeting and seminar facilities as well as a business center for those who need a change of scenery while working. www.tokyoamericanclub.org

Foreign Correspondents' Club Japan: The nerve center of media operations in Japan. www.fccj.or.jp

Debito.org: Social activist and naturalized Japanese citizen Arudou Debito (formerly David Aldwinckle) has put together this gem of a site that includes a wealth of practical info for longer term residents. www.debito.org

SWET: The Society of Writers, Editors & Translators. Self-explanatory, really. www.swet.jp

Ringo: Tokyo's English Mac user group. www.ringo.net

Tokyo PC Users Group: Japan's largest English-speaking personal computer club, with a particular interest in bilingual personal computing. www.tokyoopc.org

International Women in Communications: Networking for women involved in media, design, PR, translating, interpreting, multimedia and the internet. www.us-japan.org

The Foreigner: A volunteer-based monthly ezine that offers features and photos contributed by people who live and play here. www.theforeigner-japan.com

Restorative Yoga Teacher Training Course

Daily life is incredibly stressful, especially in an urban environment such as Tokyo. Most people spend a great deal of energy just trying to survive, often running on adrenaline until they burn out. Hope is, however, available and it comes in the form of restorative yoga.

Restorative yoga encourages the body to relax, calms the nervous system and quiets the mind. It is a deeply relaxing, "passive" practice of Hatha Yoga in which the participant lets go of physical, mental and emotional tension by practicing yoga poses in a fully supported environment, holding the poses for longer durations of time and focusing on the breath. Supported by a variety of props such as bolsters, blankets, blocks, belts, sandbag weights and other props, this practice helps people regain the equilibrium of the body/spirit, allowing deep relaxation, surrender and opening. It is perfect for those who have injuries, those who are recovering from illness, those with physical limitations, or those who simply want to relax and regain harmony and balance in their lives.

Leza Lowitz of Sun & Moon Yoga fame is hosting a 20-hour Restorative Yoga Teacher Training Course over the four Sundays that fall in January. Held between 4:30pm and 9:30pm, the course costs ¥50,000. The sessions are limited to 18 students and demand for places is expected to be great, so interested persons are encouraged to send in application forms as early as possible. It may already be too late. If you wish to apply, send an e-mail to yoga@lezalowitz.com and write "RESTORATIVE TTC" in the subject line. Priority will be given to current Sun & Moon students. If your application is approved, payment instructions will be sent. More information about Sun & Moon Yoga can be found at www.sunandmoon.jp



MARIO BRUNELLO

Music in the Afternoon

The Arion-Edo Foundation is a music-oriented organization in Japan that is actively working to award and support promising young musicians, organize and sponsor music festivals, organize and sponsor concerts and lectures regarding music, hold cultural exchange with other countries, and undertake other projects necessary to achieve the purposes of the foundation. Kyoko Edo, president of the foundation, says it is dedicated to promoting international musical exchange in Japan based upon a truly equal footing. The foundation is the principal organizer of the Arion Afternoon Concert Series, which provides musical gems for those who are unable to attend performances in the evening. Four upcoming concerts in the early New Year are definitely worth penciling into your diary.

First up, is Israeli piano duo Sivan Silver and Gil Garburg, who have been played in around 40 countries around the world since founding in 1997. In their splendid recitals, they play four-handed on one and two pianos at a time. The afternoon concert will take place at 2pm on January 18 at Tsuda Hall in Tokyo. Tickets cost ¥3,800 and reservations can be made by calling 03-5465-1233 or visiting Arion Web Tickets at www.arion-edo.org/ticket

In February, a remarkable string quartet is expected to perform a dazzling program in Tokyo that includes Mozart, Bartok and Beethoven. The Japan String Quartet, which comprises Kubo Yoshi (violin), Midori Kugota (violin), Junji Suganuma (viola) and Ko Iwasaki (cello), will play at 2:30pm on February 3 at Hakuju Hall. Tickets cost ¥5,000. Reservations can be made through Votre Ticket (tel: 03-5355-1280), Lawson (tel: 0570-000-407) or Rakuten (ticket.rakuten.co.jp).

Later in February, Mario Brunello & Andrea Lucchesini play together at Kioi Hall in Tokyo for what promises to be a concert to remember. Mario Brunello is one of Italy's greatest cellists, and already counts numerous performances in Japan. Renowned pianist Andrea Lucchesini has appeared with countless orchestras from around the world. The concert will be held at 7pm on February 15 at Kioi Hall. Tickets cost ¥6,500 /¥3,500 and can be reserved through Kioi Hall Ticket Centre (tel: 03-3237-0061), Votre Ticket (tel: 03-5355-1280), Lawson (tel: 0570-000-407), and Rakuten (ticket.rakuten.co.jp).

Last but not least, Dai Miyata, one of the country's most promising celloists, will be accompanied by pianists Yoshitaka Suzuki and Toshine Numazawa for a captivating program that includes the likes of Cassadó and Rachmaninov. Miyata, winner of the Tokyo Music Competition in 2005, always brings a sense of dynamism to his performances and this one promises to be a corker. The recital will be held at 2pm on March 15 at Tsuda Hall. Tickets cost ¥3,800. Reservations can be made by calling 03-5465-1233 or visiting Arion Web Tickets at the official website: www.arion-edo.org/ticket