



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

Salutations and Sayonaras

On June 12, StoryMasters members and friends gathered to say goodbye to the old Toastmasters year and to usher in the new. What better way to mark the occasion than to settle back and enjoy four wonderful stories!

Hiba Hamdan – *Alissa, The Phoenician Queen of Carthage*

Did you know Dido, the legendary queen from an epic poem, the Aeneid, is based on a real-life Phoenician Queen, Alissa? **Hiba Hamdan** told the story about Queen Alissa. Alissa's wisdom, leadership, and entrepreneurship built the city of Carthage on the northern shores of Africa, now known as Tunisia. When King Iarbas learned about Carthage's prosperity, he demanded that Alissa marry him so that he could reign the country. A war was awaiting if she said no. In order to protect her country and followers without fighting, she gave him some conditions.

Ashton Cynthia Clarke – *Aliens in New York*

"Hey! Didn't Nanny live on St. Nicholas?" **Ashton Cynthia Clarke** exclaimed when she saw a very familiar park. She and her aunt were driving in West Harlem, but her question was met with silence. Ashton is the first generation born in the United States of Jamaican immigrant parents. Like many of us, she didn't know much about her family history. Her parents didn't volunteer to talk about the past, and she didn't care enough to ask about it. But when she signed up for ancestor.com, surprising truths started coming to light one by one...What an intriguing story!

Kathy Garr – *A Huge Smile*

Kathy Garr used to be ashamed to smile because she had buck teeth from sucking her thumb. Whenever someone talked about rabbits, she believed they were making fun of her. Eventually, she conquered the habit of sucking her thumb and began smiling again. When she was in junior high school, she fell in love with flag girls. She wanted to be one of them. At the end of her freshman year, with her older sister's encouragement and support, she auditioned for the flag girl position. Did she win? Well, you need to hear her story!

Pieter Severynen – *The Unique Gift*

The king decreed, "*To vie for my daughter's hand, you need to bring me a unique gift that nobody in the world, even the giver, hasn't seen before.*" It was his sneaky way to repel the suitors from the princess. **Pieter Severynen** started his story in the old fashion way, "Once upon a time," which made us feel like kids again, but his story was much more than a fairytale. Combining the fairy tale with difficult experiences from his own life, Pieter summarized, "*When things around us fall apart, we have to build up a new existence from the broken pieces. We need to work with nature around us.*" After a period of grief and dark depression, he found solace in his beloved garden again, confirming that Mother Nature is the sweetest mother who takes excellent care of us.

Meeting functionaries included Toastmaster **Jon White**, General Evaluator **Aprille Isham**, Timer **Jill Vanderweit**, Wordmaster/Grammarian **Catherine Magruder**, and Evaluators **Cynthia Moore**, **Tina Tomiyama**, **Jacki Williams-Jones**, and **Harold Gee**.

Students are not the only ones who graduate this season. So are Toastmasters. StoryMasters elected new club officers! The 2021-2022 term was successful thanks to our outgoing President, **Mallery McMurtrey's** leadership, her board, other StoryMasters members, and our friends! We will continue to strive to do better. Please welcome our incoming officers! Your support is greatly appreciated.

Outgoing officers:

President: Mallery McMurtrey
 VPE: Jacki Williams-Jones
 VPM: Margaret Mitchell
 VPPR: Miyo Yamauchi
 Secretary: Lin Van Gelder
 SAA: Jill Vanderweit

Incoming officers:

President: Cynthia Moore
 VPE: Jon White
 VPM: Jill Vanderweit
 VPPR: Miyo Yamauchi
 Secretary: Camille Miller
 SAA: Jacki Williams Jones

Next meeting is July 10. ([GUESTS](#), [RSVP FROM HERE](#))

UPCOMING STORYTELLING EVENTS

Many intriguing storytelling events keep coming up. Check them out on [our event page!](#)

June 16 Love Without Freedom: Juneteenth Storytelling with Muriel Johnson

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/love-without-freedom/>

6:30 PM PT / 9:30 PM ET
 Category: Storytelling concert
 Location: Zoom
 Cost: Free

Muriel Johnson shares uncommon stories from the 1800’s of African-Americans navigating love, family and desires of the heart while their bodies were held in captivity.



June 18 How To Be Japanese

<https://miyo.net/how-to-be-japanese>

3:00 PM PT / 6:00 PM ET
 Category: Solo show
 Location: Zoom
 Cost: \$10

Normal: Conforming to a standard; usual, typical, or expected. All of us at some times or in some ways feel like outsiders. That whatever it is that is normal does not include us. But when we enter a new culture, we actually are the outsider. An excellent vantage point to question the status quo.



June 25 Graduate Stories: Stories of moving on

<https://www.bettersaidthandone.com/2022/05/18/graduate-stories/>

4:00 PM PT / 7:00 PM ET
 Category: Storytelling concert
 Location: Hybrid
 Cost: \$5-15

Join emcee Jack Scheer and storytellers Nick Baskerville, Noa Baum, Bonnie Gardner, Giselle Ruzany, Gayle Turner, and Diana Veiga for “The Graduate: stories of growing up or moving on.”



June 26 StoryMasters Storytelling Café — LAST CUP

<https://thestorymasters.org/storytelling-cafe/>

3:00 PM PT / 6:00 PM ET
 Category: Solo show
 Location: Zoom
 Cost: \$10

Storytelling Café will close its door this month. Join us one more time and share your work, whether it’s still a work in progress or a finished product. Everybody is welcome! You’re welcome just to listen, too.



Check out more events at: <https://thestorymasters.org/events/>

Disclaimer: Events are posted as a service to our members, friends and the storytelling community. Posting is not an endorsement.

MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT

Once again, StoryMasters and our friends shined on storytelling stages. Here are just some picks.



Ashton Cynthia Clarke was in demand! She shared a heart-wrenching yet powerful story at Pour One Out on May 11 and wowed the audience again on May 15 at Backstory.

Learn more about:
 - [Pour One Out](#)
 - [Backstory](#)





Hiba Hamdan represented StoryMasters with her story, entitled “*Alissa, Queen of Carthage*” at the Storytelling Association of California (SAC)’s Story Swap Genre Storytelling Series: Legends.

Listen to her story here:
<https://youtu.be/7LZGgm74jOO?t=3397>

[Learn more about SAC.](#)



Our own **Tina Tomiyama**, **Kathy Falco**, and StoryMasters’ friend, **Ann Buxie**, gave a stellar performance at **Barbara H. Clark’s** back patio.

[Learn more about Institute of Musical Arts.](#)



On the same night, **Miyo Yamauchi** took Strong Words’ stage.

[Learn more about Strong Words.](#)



A new storytelling show, “**Revealed**,” hosted by StoryMasters’ friend **Erica Blumfield**, was born! To celebrate the grand opening, **Ashton Cynthia Clarke**, **Miyo Yamauchi**, and another friend, **Vicki Juditz**, shared their personal stories at the intimate Glendale Room.



Beautifully done, StoryMasters and friends! Keep up the story-worthy work!

How To Be Japanese — Miyo-Mazing

by Tina Tomiyama, with help from Ashton Cynthia Clarke, Anna Ziss-Patton and Aprille Isham

Oh, StoryMasters! Like all of you, I've relished **Miyo Yamauchi's** stories, doled out to us once every few months on a Zoom screen—but who could have imagined the tremendous thrill of seeing and hearing Miyo give an hour-long show, live and in-person?



In *“How To Be Japanese: Your Normal Is Not My Normal,”* Miyo braided together six of her most enchanting tales, set in Japan and America, with occasional forays to South Korea and Tijuana. Offered under the auspices of the Hollywood Fringe Festival at a tiny theater in Hollywood, the show sold out within 48 hours, but not before Ashton, Aprille, Anna and I got tickets. (Those who missed the live show can attend the virtual live presentation at 3:00pm PDT on June 18; tickets at <https://miyo.net/how-to-be-japanese/>).

Let's find out what our fellow StoryMasters had to say about the show.

Ashton Cynthia Clarke

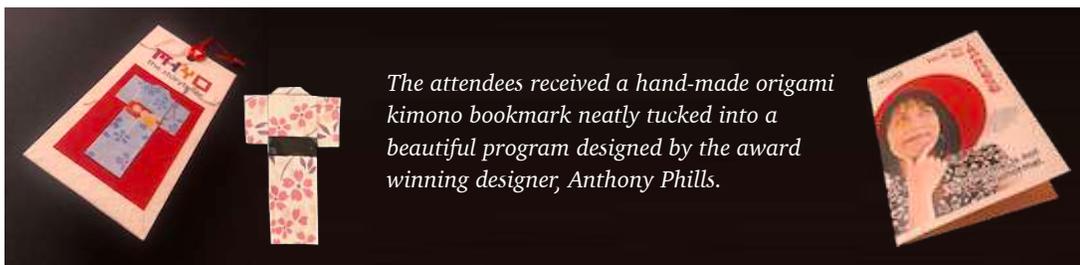
What a delight! Being part of the live audience for Miyo Y's Hollywood Fringe Festival solo show, “How To Be Japanese.”

Miyo skillfully weaves together several stories (a couple of which I had heard before in different iterations), using connectors to produce a smoothly flowing, hilarious and also sweet, one-woman performance. I especially treasured her voices for her different characters. If I have to pick one, I would choose of the story about her grandmother as my favorite.

Oh and let me not forget the talented co-star. What co-star, you ask? Wasn't this a one-woman show? I'm talking about her single prop—a push-able, black cube which served alternately as a pin on a map, a boiling cauldron, and even an actual place for sitting! Miyo made full use of the width of her stage to transport us from place to place and from character to character.

After seeing this show I promise, you will never, ever be xenoglossophobic! I just learned that word; look it up if you have to!

My normal may still not be her normal, but Miyo shows us the precious things we have in common despite our differences. Brava!



The attendees received a hand-made origami kimono bookmark neatly tucked into a beautiful program designed by the award winning designer, Anthony Phills.

Anna Ziss-Patton

Miyo Yamauchi is an artful storyteller. Her autobiographical tales take you to her mesmerizing world. She can be funny, charming, and poignant. The stories about her grandparents in her native Japan were especially moving — horrifying, humorous, perplexing, loving...

Miyo's intimate storytelling, along with the simple yet evocative staging, made an engaging and elegant performance.

Aprille Isham

Kudos for Miyo! She tells us "How to be Japanese," but doesn't warn you about the soaring saga she'll share. Growing up in Japan, details of her grandparents' stoicism, and love for their fiercely independent young granddaughter, are revealed.

Her approach is to thrill you with a background graphics, made to reflect how she views her life. She ambles, she leaps, she bounds with vitality, all the while encircling you in tales of her tryst with cultural differences.

Normal becomes Ambiguous.

Bring her to America where she's trapped by language barriers. For example, the omniscient article "the." Why say the internet, the noodle, the monster?

Miyo will have you laughing and questioning as she splashes in the pond of her reality. She steals the scenes, your mind and your heart.



Filled with awe after this virtuoso performance, I asked Miyo, "How long have you been preparing for this show?" Back in 2019, she told me, she decided to do a solo show in 2020. (Of course, we know what happened to everyone's plans in 2020.) And then last November, NSN (National Storytelling Network) chose Miyo to do a Fringe show for them. The first six months were spent in behind-the-scenes preparations like recruiting team members, planning logistics, and preparing programs, bookmarks, sound effects and visuals. On top of all that, Miyo ambitiously decided to launch an online shop at the same time. (<https://shop.miyo.net>) It was just last May when Miyo started intensive rehearsals.

Barbara Clark tells her students that ten minutes is an ideal length for a story, because "anyone should be able to memorize a ten-minute story." But imagine memorizing an hour's worth of stories! I asked Miyo if she had any special techniques to share. "Be in the moment," she told me. "Even if you forget a sentence here and there, it doesn't matter because as long as you're in the moment, everything flows."

Want to know which stories Miyo told? Here's a brief summary. Her "English rant" (working title "*Q-U-E-U-E*"), with the unforgettable clarion vocal "Mi-mi-mi-mi-mi-YO!" started the show. Next came "*Grandma's Tea*," loving portraits of her Hiroshima grandparents and their nasty-but- miraculous dokudami tea. "*What Happened Yesterday*" offered a comic look at Japanese (and Korean) drinking culture. The time-spanning "*I Know It All*" showcased Miyo's witty reflections on holidays, udon noodles and wisdom. "*Am I Safe?*" dealt with immigration and legal status. She closed out the show with her hilarious "*Hello Kitty*." Oh, who can ever forget wicked Teacher Yamamoto wielding her kendo sword, villainously persecuting poor, perfectionistic young Miyo?

Now we're all wondering, what's next for our shining star? "I'm happy with how my first solo show went," says Miyo, "but it's not over yet because I'm working on the June 18th online show right now, which is a whole different challenge. Also, a couple of theaters are interested in hosting my solo show. There are quite a few areas that I'd like to improve for future in-person shows. My creative thoughts are overloaded right now. Ask me next month!"

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