

## FROM TOKYO TO NASHUA AND BACK

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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNALIST NIROKO NISHIMURA BRINGS A MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE TO HER WORK**



Interviewing an award-winning composer or a world-renowned actor may seem like the stuff of dreams, but for Hiroko Nishimura, it's just part of the job.

A 1995 Rivier graduate, Nishimura is a staff writer for the *International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun*, a Paris- and Tokyo-based daily newspaper that publishes international news and information to non-Japanese readers, both in Japan and throughout the world. Assigned to the arts beat in Tokyo, she spends her workdays reviewing stage productions and interviewing film and stage directors, actors, dancers, musicians, and other international artists. Some interviewees have included composer Andrew Lloyd Webber (“The Phantom of the Opera” and “Miss Saigon,” among many others), British actor Will Kemp (“Van Helsing”), American Ballet

Theatre principal dancer Gillian Murphy, and stage producer Paul Roberts (musical “We Will Rock You”). She also writes an ongoing series of articles profiling the chefs who work at foreign embassies in Japan, and translates domestic news articles from Japanese into English.

Interviewing the elite of entertainment can be glamorous and exciting, but Nishimura never lets admiration get in the way of business. “When I interview celebrities, I’m often allotted only about 30 to 40 minutes because they go through a lot of interviews in a brief promotional visit to Japan,” says Nishimura. “I have to concentrate on connecting with them in a limited time to get everything I need for a story, so I don’t have enough time to get ‘starstruck.’”

An important aspect of Nishimura’s work is the bilingual and multicultural perspective she brings to her stories. “One of my biggest challenges is to write stories clearly and crisply in English, which is obviously not my native language,” she says. Indeed, it was Nishimura’s initial experience in the U.S. that led her to Rivier College and ultimately to her current profession. Born and raised in Tokyo, she attended a summer English language program in Massachusetts at the age of 17 and came to love the atmosphere of New England. After returning to Japan and earning a degree from the Akenohoshi Junior College, she went to work for NEC Corporation in its production control division. “Eventually,” she says, “I came to think about pursuing higher education in the U.S. in order to improve my English. So I worked through a list of schools in the region and ended up applying to Rivier College.”

Attending college as an international student in her late twenties gave Nishimura an outlook that allowed her to share with fellow students in a unique way. “While in the U.S., I had opportunities to introduce Japan’s traditional culture, history, and lifestyles to people, and such experiences helped me to learn more about my country,” she says. “Also, my encounters with people from China, South Korea, the Philippines, India, and Tanzania at Rivier College greatly widened my horizons and made my curiosity about ethnic issues sharp.”

After graduation, Nishimura returned to Tokyo and, while working as a teacher at a language school, was invited to take her current position by a fellow Rivier alumna who worked at the paper. She considers her Rivier experience vital to her ability to bring the necessary international perspective to her work, but as a journalist who did not major in journalism (her Rivier degree is in liberal studies), she is also anxious to continue her education while working. “I learn a lot about the art of reporting on the job,” she says, crediting native English-speaking copy editors for assisting her with some of the language challenges. Nishimura is also careful to keep the principles of journalism in mind: “Having multiple layers of sources is important in terms of making sure I avoid biased reporting.” While she enjoys the arts and entertainment beat, Nishimura hopes that her future in journalism moves into a different arena. “I’d like to find an issue to work on throughout my life,” she says, “not simply as a news story but more as a calling.” She is concerned with all aspects of human rights, particularly HIV/AIDS awareness.

As busy as her professional life may be, Nishimura finds time for her favorite hobbies, including cooking, photography and, especially, scuba diving. “It’s so peaceful, floating in an underwater world where all you have to concentrate on is breathing,” she says. She is also a volunteer at a local library, where she translates Japanese language books and newspaper articles in to Braille, a skill she learned as a high-school student. And most importantly, she looks forward to starting a family. Her fiancé, a NEC employee assigned to the company’s Singapore office, will return to Japan in 2006. It will hopefully be one more goal attained in a life filled with successful endeavors. ■

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