

Weekly Cultural News

Sept. 18 - 24, 2023 (Reiwa 5)

Substitute for monthly Cultural News (1998-2020)

Event Listing for Japanese & Japanese-American Cultural Communities



Los Angeles' Team Kawachi Ondo performed at Chicago Cultural Center in Chicago on Aug. 19 for the 50th anniversary of Chicago and Osaka sister cities relationship. Photo by Tomo Sawairi.

Focusing Folk Performing Arts as Tool of Building Relationships, Business Professor in Los Angeles Leads Japanese Folk Music Team to Chicago Festival



Dr. Shinichi Hirokawa performed as a lead singer of Team Kawachi Ondo. Photo by Tomo Sawairi.

For celebrating the 50th anniversary of the city of Chicago and the city of Osaka sister-city relationship, the Japan Festival Chicago 2023 took place on Aug. 19 at the Chicago Cultural Center.

The event organizer Chicago Japanese American Council (CJAC) invited Team Kawachi Ondo led by Dr.

music. Kawachi Ondo is one of the Japanese traditional folk music and a requiem song to pay tribute to ancestors and spirits. It is an improvisation of performing arts by the common people for 400 years. Afterwards from the Meiji era, many new lyrics were born with associating social events from newspaper articles for example. The lead singer creates ad-lib lyrics on the stage, and it is common to a sing and dances to perform for from 30 minutes to an hour in the live events,

The Kawachi region is located down in the south-eastern corner of Osaka prefecture in Japan, relatively close to the Kansai Airport (KIX).

In the Japan Festival Chicago, local volunteer

Shinichi Hirokawa, Assistant Professor of Westcliff University in Irvine, from Los Angeles to perform "Kawachi Ondo" dance with their live

Los Angeles' Team Kawachi Ondo invited to Chicago festival

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dancers, Okinawa Kenjinkai (prefectural association), Mikoren (Awa Dance group), and the executive committee members of the festival joined the Kawachi Ondo in addition to the regular audiences who participated in Kawachi Ondo dance.

Team Kawachi Ondo in Los Angeles started performing dance and music in 2018 as a stage event within the organization of Kansai Club, Inc. (501(c)(3) organization), a prefectural association in Los Angeles, and Dr. Hirokawa joined the team as an Ondo Tori, or a lead singer, in 2019.

Dr. Hirokawa was born in the city of Niigata, which is the most populous city on the west coast of the mainland of Japan, then moved to Tokyo area for entering a university followed by working there as a sales engineer of Swedish company. The company allowed him to relocate to Osaka where he discovered that the Osaka culture was unique to any other areas he visited in Japan. Osaka is the heart of entertainment, and the locals are fun-loving people from their friendly, outgoing, and humorous characteristics.

Since he came to the U.S. in 2002, he earned MBA in project management and DBA in International Business and published two academic papers. He also contributed to a Japanese company which was developing the U.S. market. He is currently teaching at Westcliff University in Irvine, conducting a consulting business, and serving for non-profit organizations.

Dr. Hirokawa believes that the Kawachi Ondo is one of the best live music to entertain the people both stage dancers and the audience of the live events. He also realizes that this mechanism of Japanese culture that works here in the U.S.

Team Kawachi Ondo has performed Japanese folk dance and music at the Japan Day event at major baseball team Los Angeles Angels in 2019, the New Year Celebration of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California (JCCSC) in 2020, 2022, and 2023 as well as

participating in community events to introduce and promote Japanese folk dance and music.

Their upcoming performances for this year are at the Taste of Japan in Phoenix, Arizona, on Oct. 7, and the Japanese Prefectural Association of Southern California (JPASC) Charity Talent Show on Oct. 8 at the Aratani Theatre in Los Angeles.

Dr. Hirokawa is contributing to the Nikkei, or the Japanese American, community by performing Kawachi Ondo because he believes that it eventually builds the relationship between the U.S. and Japan by strengthening bonds with musicians, harmonizing with dancers, and having an engagement with the audience, and all the community stakeholders. Dr. Hirokawa focuses on Kawachi Ondo and other Japanese folk dance and music as tools in introducing and disseminating the Japanese traditional culture in the U.S.

Awaya-Kai to present 2023 Fall Koto Concert at Armstrong Theatre in Torrance, Saturday, Oct. 14, 2PM

Awaya-kai presents 2023 Fall Concert on Saturday, October 14, 2023 at 2:00 pm at James Armstrong Theatre in Torrance. The 2023 Fall Awaya-kai Concert features six talented guest artists as well as Awaya-kai members including the ones who will perform debut presentation.

It's been six years since the last concert in 2017. Awaya-kai looks forward to seeing audiences in person at this memorable concert.

Tickets: General Admission , \$25: At the Door, \$30 Online Ticket:

<https://torr-internet.choicecrm.net/templates/TORR/?prod=AwayaKai>

Guest Artists:

Gamelan Merdu Kumala Ensemble/ Indonesian music with metallophones gongs, drums, and other accompany instruments

David Cowan/ Percussion

Naomi Ozawa/ Flute and Oboe

Saeko Kujiraoka and Kotoeda Group/ Koto, Sangen and Bass Koto

Ryukukoku Matsuri Daiko L.a. Branch/ Taiko

Kyosuke Kataoka & Asuka Kataoka/ Ryukyuu Style Lion Dance

Contact: Blue Sky Blue Ocean LLC
(424) 350-1472
neeleymomoko@gmail.com

Weekly Cultural News is an alternative publication in place of the Monthly Cultural News (1998-2020) which was suspended in April 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Cultural News Editor)

Japanese folk music group Matsutoyo Kai to present 58th Anniversary Recital at Armstrong Theatre in Torrance, Sunday, Oct. 1, 1PM



The Japanese folk music group, Matsutoyo Kai, is presenting a music and dance program at the Armstrong Theatre on Sunday, October 1, 2023, from 1:00 pm.

The event will celebrate the 58th anniversary of the group and will present a stu-

dent recital with Japanese dancing, and feature three special guest artists from Japan, including a popular recording artist, Naruse Shohei.

Tickets are \$23 for General Admission and are available online at :

<https://matsutoyokai.org/> , or <https://matsutoyo-kai.ticketleap.com/>

Shoseian Teahouse in Glendale, California presents Otsukimi Full Moon Viewing on Friday, Sep. 29, from 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. This event is a fundraiser for the Shoseian Teahouse.

Tickets are \$65 per person and each ticket will provide the following:

1. A Bento - Japanese box meal. You may choose either chicken or fish when you pre-register.
2. One cup of matcha tea and a sweet.

DJ Yui Sensational will provide music throughout the evening. Live music performances of the koto and biwa will also be presented.

Guests will be able to tour the interior of the teahouse. This will be the first time Shoseian Tea House has offered a Full Moon Viewing event at Shoseian.

Space will be limited to 50 participants. Pre-registration is required. [Last day to register is September 21st.](#)



- 6:00 - Gate Opens
- 6:15 - Opening Remarks from the Consul General of Japan
- 6:30 - Katori Shinto Ryu Demo
- 7:00 - Tea Ceremony Demo
- 7:30 - Live Music

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Event Listing of Beautiful Traditional Japanese Life Style in Southern California

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From Hiroshima, Kagura live performance to come to Aratani Theatre for free, Nov. 19, 2PM

The Japanese American Cultural & Community Center in Los Angeles will host Kagura stage performance at Aratani Theatre, 244 South San Pedro Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, on Sunday, Nov. 19, 2023, from 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm.

Titled as Kitahiroshima presents *KAGURA: Divine Tales from Japan*, the Kagura stage performance is presented by Town of Kitahiroshima in Hiroshima Prefecture.

Tickets are free. [RSVP is full: Waiting list](#). This is a rare opportunity to experience the magic of Hiroshima Kagura, a dynamic traditional performing art that combines dramatic storytelling, live music, dazzling costumes, high-energy dancing, and more.

Nov. 19 program will present two of the most famous Hiroshima Kagura plays: Yamata-no-Orochi and Momiji-gari.

In Yamata-no-Orochi, watch a powerful god take on a fearsome eight-headed snake demon bent on devouring a beautiful maiden, and in Momiji-gari, you'll be transported back in time to a lavish maple leaf-viewing party whose charming hostesses are more than meets the eye.

Kagura is a traditional performing art that celebrates and expresses gratitude for the boun-

ties of nature.

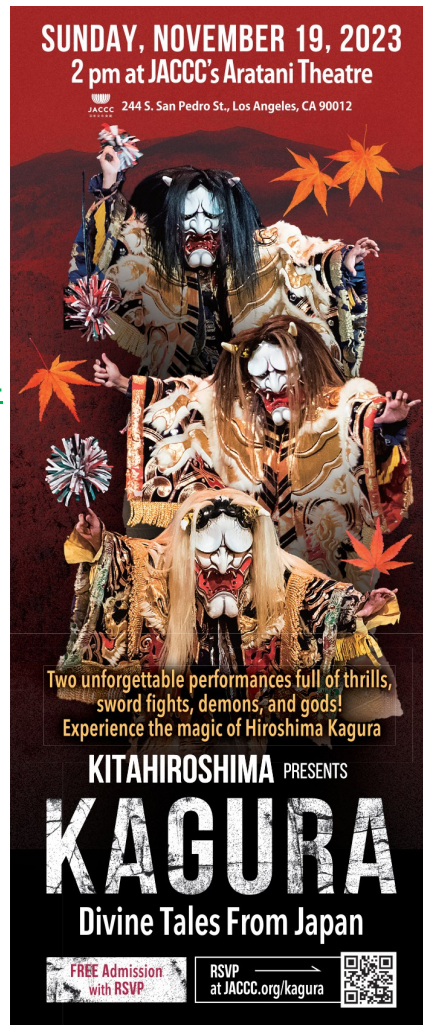
The ancestors of the Japanese people believed that everything that happened was because of the gods. During the autumn harvest, crops were used as offerings to the gods, and festivals were held all over Japan. These festivals included kagura as a gesture of gratitude to the gods for a plentiful harvest.

It was during this period in history that Shinto Shrines were being built around the country, and kagura spread with it.

Today, the art and legacy of kagura continue in many different shapes and forms, passed down from generation to generation from the Shinto priesthood to the local community.

The Kagura program on Nov. 19 is called "Geihoku Kagura" (Northern Hiroshima) and has been preserved and passed along in Hiroshima Prefecture through approximately 150 groups.

Furthermore, numerous competitions have been held and at present, it is the type of Kagura gathering the most attention.



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Japanese American Cultural & Community Center to host Kagura live performance: Yamata-no-orochi & Momiji-gari at Aratani Theatre, Nov. 19, 2PM: Free admission

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Though the performers have to study and work, they attend practice two to three times a week and perform at festivals and events on the weekends.

In Kitahiroshima area, there are said to be over 70 kagura plays at present, including prewar period programs and those created during the postwar period.

Musical accompaniment for kagura consists of a large and small drum, a gong, and a flute.

Surprisingly, kagura has no sheet music. Instead, accompanists learn to play by watching and listening to their predecessors. This is also the reason why kagura music varies from troupe to troupe. In addition to spoken dialogue, kagura also contains songs that are chanted during lively dance scenes.

These songs are ancient Japanese songs that heavily reference Japan's beautiful landscapes and convey the emotions of the scene.

Yamata no Orochi

A Story of the Desperate Struggle to Grow Rice

This Kagura is a story set in ancient Japan about the peoples' desperate attempt to protect their rice fields from the ravages of a raging, flooded river. Rice, the staple of the Japanese diet, requires fertile soil, sunshine, and a sustainable, clean water source to flourish.

The eight-headed serpent, Yamata no Orochi, symbolizes the mountains and their plentiful re-

serves of water, as well as the water that flows from the mountains.

Farmers plant rice seedlings in the spring and wait for the autumn, harvest season. However, if the summer is plagued by heavy rains before the harvest season, the rainwater rushes from the mountains and spills into the rice fields, flooding them and ruining the crops. Serious floods like these are being compared to the serpent swallowing a beloved daughter in the story.

Momijigari

A Story Born from One of Japan's Most Beautiful Seasons

This Kagura performance illustrates how much the climates and seasons of Japan enrich the hearts of the Japanese people. Cold winters are followed by warm springs, bringing beautiful pale pink and white cherry blossoms.

Each year, small parties are held under the cherry trees, called *hanami* (cherry blossom viewing parties). Hot and humid summers give way to crisp autumns and their vibrant red maple leaves, or *momiji*. Similar to *hanami*, small gatherings are also held under the maple leaves called *momiji-gari* (autumn foliage viewing parties).



KAGURA: Divine Tales from Japan is presented by the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, Town of Kitahiroshima in Hiroshima Prefecture; sponsored by Hiroshima Kenjinkai of Southern California; patronized by Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles, JAPAN HOUSE Los Angeles, Japan Foundation Los Angeles, Government of Hiroshima Prefecture.

Japanese American Cultural & Community Center to present “Los Angeles Issei Poetry: The Flowering of Pre-War Japanese American Poetry” workshop, walking tour, and discussion, Sep. 30-Oct. 1

Discover the rich heritage of Issei poetry and immerse yourself in the beauty of Japanese-language literature written in Los Angeles before WWII.

The Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC) in Los Angeles presents “Los Angeles Issei Poetry: The Flowering of Pre-War Japanese American Poetry” workshop, walking tour, and panel discussion in Little Tokyo from Saturday, Sept. 30 to Oct. 1, 2023

These programs celebrate the legacy of the Issei community, the first generation of Japanese immigrants to Los Angeles, through a community-based translation workshop, Little Tokyo poetry walking tour, and a thought-provoking public presentation by artists and humanities scholars.

This program is funded in part by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and a California Humanities Quick Grant.

Event 1: Community-Based Translation Workshop (90 minutes)

Date: September 30, 2023, 9 - 10:30 AM

Location: JACCC, 244 South San Pedro St., Los Angeles, CA 90012

No knowledge of Japanese required! Awaken your inner poet as we delve into the world of Issei poetry through translation. This workshop invites the community to engage with the collaborative art of interpreting and translating Japanese-language poetry.

Translators Andrew Leong and Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda will lead you through the basics of literary translation using materials from the archives of the Issei Poetry Project, which collects Japanese-language literary materials written by Japanese immigrants in California during the prewar period.

The program also discusses the ethics of translation and what it means to work with a community archive. Who do we translate for? What is our positionality to the text? How much historical research should we conduct before working on a text from almost a hundred years ago? How might we engage in best practices around publication of materials? The program invites all community members to attend, prior experience with literary translation and/or reading fluency in Japanese is not a requirement to attend the workshop, though it is of course welcome.

Event 2: Los Angeles Issei Poetry: Artists and Scholars Respond to the Archive

Date: September 30, 2023 11 AM - 12 PM



Location: JACCC, 244 South San Pedro St., Los Angeles, CA 90012

The public is invited to an afternoon of unique interpretations and creative responses to the rich tapestry of Issei literature in JACCC’s Los Angeles Issei Poetry archive. Through a blend of creativity, scholarly insights, and thought-provoking discussions, participants will gain a fresh perspective on the enduring relevance and cultural significance of Issei poetry.

Event 3: Little Tokyo Poetry Walking Tour

Date: October 1, 2023 5 - 6 PM

Location: Little Tokyo, Los Angeles (meet at JACCC)

A guided tour through Little Tokyo, a community steeped in poetic inspiration. Led by knowledgeable guides, this poetry walking tour will take participants on an exploration of iconic landmarks, hidden gems, and literary treasures associated with Issei poetry.

You’ll experience the essence of Japanese-language Issei poetry come to life, gaining a deeper understanding of the first generation’s influence on the poetic landscape of Los Angeles. A partnership with the Little Tokyo Historical Society.

For inquiries and further information, please contact Kenji Liu (Email kliu@jaccc.org and bcc kosaka@jaccc.org).

[Register/RSVP](#)

Building Community Archive for the Future: Help Cultural News by Your Donation to forward Cultural Legacy for next generations



Cultural News was born in 1998 to review and promote numerous Japanese cultural events that take place in Southern California and also

outside the region.

Goals of Cultural News are deepening appreciation of Japanese culture and bring cultural associations to help each others. And Cultural News wishes to provide the most comprehensive source of information regarding Japanese art and cultural events.

The year of 2023 marks the 25 anniversary of Cultural News. In the spring of 2019, the non-profit Cultural News Association was formed to support the missions of Cultural News.

The Cultural News Association set the fund-raising goal at the amount of \$30,000, annually.

PDF edition of Weekly Cultural News

started in June 2020 in place of monthly paper version Cultural News (1998-2020) which was stopped publishing in April 2020 due to the pandemic.

In the website of <https://www.culturalnews.com>, event listings are update for Japanese and Japanese American community.

After three years of hiatus, many cultural events and art exhibitions are coming back after the pandemic. Cultural News is preparing to increase its coverage now.

To that end, we, the Cultural News Association, would appreciate your donation, in any amount, to build the community news archive to forward cultural legacy to next generations.

We would also like to receive your congratulatory message (200-300 words) for the 25th anniversary of Cultural News. We would like to publish your message in Weekly Cultural News.

Sincerely,
SHIGE HIGASHI, Cultural News Editor.
email: higashi@culturalnews.com

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