

Weekly Cultural News

Substitute for monthly Cultural News

November 23 –29, 2020 (Reiwa 2)

Keep Japanese Culture Alive



His efforts of playing shakuhachi for 46 years captured in documentary of John Kaizan Neptune

On Nov. 20, the film *Words Can't Go There* is available on iTunes, Google Play, and Amazon.

Words Can't Go There, recipient of Best Feature Documentary and Best Score at Show Low Film Festival 2020, is now streaming in North America, UK, and Australia and 64 countries worldwide.

Words Can't Go There is a documentary feature film depicting the extraordinary journey of musician John Kaizan Neptune, a California surfer turned Japanese traditional bamboo flute master, as told through his son's perspective.

John Kaizan Neptune was a young California surfer when he discovered the shakuhachi, a traditional Japanese bamboo flute, in Hawaii, which set him on his life path. As an outsider in 1970s Japan, he dived into tradition headfirst, facing and overcoming the prejudice that comes with being a Caucasian pursuing a traditional artform.

He played jazz and classical music, discovered new sounds with the shakuhachi and composed pieces to incorporate his discoveries. He began touring the world, crossing Europe and North

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Due to Corona pandemic, we had to stop publishing monthly Cultural News in April 2020 and started publishing Weekly Cultural News in June 2020

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America including notable venues in Los Angeles and New York and ultimately received the prestigious best album award from the Agency of Cultural Affairs in Japan for his album “Bamboo.” It was the first jazz album and first award by a non-Japanese artist. John even began crafting the instrument himself and blew open the

potential of this ancient instrument in a completely new way.

Directed by his son David Neptune, this personal story delves deep into the life of an artist and a family man and ultimately the sacrifices he made to cross cultural borders and become a pivotal figure in the evolution of this rare instrument.

His efforts of playing shakuhachi for 46 years captured in documentary of John Kaizan Neptune

Born in California in 1951, John Neptune was an adventurous boy who loved playing baseball and catching lizards in the desert with his father and brother.

John went on to attend the University of Hawaii mainly because he absolutely loved to surf. Uninspired by traditional academics, he realized he was less and less interested in pursuing a degree or a conventional life path.

He decided to drop out of school to further pursue his love of surfing in South

America. With one more semester already paid for, he asked for recommendations and ended up in a class called ethnomusicology – the study of world music.

This class opened up the idea of music as a way of understanding culture and exploring different ways of thinking. It was because of it that John first heard the sound of the shakuhachi – a traditional Japanese flute made from a single piece of bamboo.

Completely taken by the instrument, he saved up some money and moved to Japan in 1973 at the age of 22 for the sole purpose of studying at the Tozan school of shakuhachi.



After several years of focused training and overcoming challenges in Kyoto, he earned his degree of mastery, along with his name, “Kaizan,” which means ‘ocean mountain’ in Japanese.

From there, he moved to Tokyo and quickly became known as the rising star of the shakuhachi world, where he encountered much praise but also occasional criticism.

Through 46 years of steadfast dedication to the shakuhachi and 23 albums encompassing different styles of music including jazz, classical, traditional Japanese,

and world fusion, John has become one of the top masters of the instrument and a world class musician.

He continues to live in Chiba, Japan where he composes music and crafts the shakuhachi, among other experimental bamboo instruments.

While he lives and breathes music, he is also an avid mountain climber, surfer, punster, grandfather of two and occasional skateboarder – as he says at his ripe age of 65, “it’s all downhill from here... so pass me a skateboard!”

<https://projectkaizan.com/>

Los Angeles' cultural center starts "365 Days of Ikebana" virtual exhibition

The 2020 Sogetsu Ikebana Los Angeles Branch Fall Exhibition, hosted by the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, is now on view at www.jaccc.org/sogetsu from Nov. 20, 2020 through Jan. 10, 2021.

On display are 50 beautiful arrangements by Sogetsu Los Angeles branch members, part of JACCC's "365 Days of Ikebana" project, a year-long rotating exhibition that will feature works from three major schools of ikebana in Los Angeles: Ikenobo; Ohara; and Sogetsu.

Ravi GuneWardena, Director of Sogetsu Ikebana Los Angeles Branch, invites the public to follow participants' posts on JACCC's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts for the first 50 days of Sogetsu exhibitors starting Nov. 23. Follow Sogetsu LA on Instagram @ikebana.sogetsu.la for other posts throughout



Japan House Los Angeles launches virtual/online experience of "Windowology"

Japan House Los Angeles, a Japanese cultural showcase by Japanese government, is hosting its new exhibition "Windowology: New Architectural Views from Japan" with a navigable 3D virtual tour and exclusive video content about the exhibition from Prof. Taro Igarashi of Tohoku University.

"Windowology" exhibition developed prior to the

pandemic but extraordinarily pertinent now, Windowology examines the role of windows as cultural objects and the ways in which they frame our vision and give unique perspectives on the world.

<https://www.japanhousela.com/exhibitions/windowology/> from Oct. 24, 2020 through Jan.03, 2021



Shige Higashi started **Cultural News** in 1998 to build a network of Japanese cultural community in Southern California. Due to Corona pandemic, the format of **Cultural News** had to change from monthly paper to weekly PDF. But the mission of **Cultural News** remains the same: promoting Japanese culture and art in Southern California. Non-profit organization Cultural News Association has been formed to support the mission of **Cultural News**. Your contribution would be appreciated at <https://www.culturalnews.com/donation>

Wakamatsu Farm, preservation project of first Japanese settlement in California in 1869, breaks ground on Education Center structure

PLACERVILLE, CA. – American River

Conservancy (ARC) breaks ground on a new Education Center (rendering) at Wakamatsu Farm during Open Farm Day on Nov. 21 at 12:00 noon.

The innovative pavilion-style structure will adjoin the native plant nursery, nature play space, fruit orchard, and teahouse within an area called the *Outdoor Learning Campus* at Wakamatsu Farm.

Each year, the building will serve approximately 1,400 visitors as they learn, explore, and play outside of the traditional classroom at the historic Farm.

Architectural Nexus of Sacramento designed the new building to demonstrate "green" technologies. Solar panels and a rainwater catchment system will illustrate how easy it is to harness renewable resources and conserve precious water.

When complete, the structure will inspire students and visitors to take these solutions to their homes, classrooms, and work places.

The open-air building is a visionary solution accommodating visitors of all ages and abilities while they explore the natural, agricultural, and cultural resources of the scenic 272-acre Farm.

Encompassing rolling fields, woodlands, and walking trails, Wakamatsu Farm is the site of the first Japanese Colony in America established in 1869.

The Conservancy owns and offers the Farm to the public during private and public tours, events, classes, and festivals.

Individuals can privately rent portions the Farm, including an historic farmhouse, commercial kitchen, and eventually the new Education Center. The far-sighted structure will remain an



asset for communities within the greater Sacramento region for generations to come.

ARC has secured approximately \$300,000 in funding for Phase 1 construction, which will provide a sheltered open-air space for greeting visitors and hosting educational programs.

Funding has come from California State Parks, Schwemm Family Foundation, and many generous individual donors. Local contractors have been selected to complete Phase 1 construction of this project.

However, Phase 1 construction does not include electricity or restrooms. Fundraising is underway to add these amenities during Phase 2 construction. ARC welcomes donations for Phase 2 completion, including funds, building materials, and construction services.

The Nov. 21 ceremony includes the fourth installation of engraved plaques recognizing major supporters on the Donor Wall of Honor at Wakamatsu Farm.

Contact wakamatsu@ARConservancy.org for additional details. Discover more about Wakamatsu Farm at ARConservancy.org/wakamatsu.

Let's learn about Japanese percussion music through video: Series #23 features "The Sound of Edo"

By Mariko Watabe

There are dance videos and shamisen videos. But KABUKI HAYASHI (Japanese percussion) videos are rarely found or discussed especially in English or with English subtitles.

I have decided to make them as I believe this art is too precious to be hidden or lost. With the guidance of Master Katada Shinjuro, I am trying to uncover the world of HAYASHI by producing YouTube videos in Japanese language with English subtitles.

To view the video from #01 to #22, visit [Tsuzumibito Chanel at YouTube](#)

Ohayashi Juku (Kabuki Series) #23, https://youtu.be/bOQ4Ak7tl_M, The Sound of Edo, is a review of the six-part series on the sounds related to the life of people in the Edo period.

They are "Tori Kagura" which sets the scene of the town of Edo. It was played with many of the hayashi instruments to open the curtain to emphasizing footsteps.

"Shaden", which was used to create a pleasant and uplifting atmosphere. "Shaden" is a pattern played by the shime-daiko.

"Tama", which is to emphasize a child playing with a bouncing ball. It is improvised by kotsuzumi players as they adapt to how the dancer and shamisen players improvise on stage.

"Sawagi" which set the scene of the pleasure quarters. The scenes usually used certain patterns made by kotsuzumis, an okawa, and a



drums.

"Ondo" the rhythmic relaxing patterns is played by e-daiko, and followed by chappa. This is flexible pattern while hayashi typically has a stricter rhythm.

"Fire Sounds" is a pattern used to emphasize fire and wind out of the original fire alarm pattern.

The rhythm patterns help to emphasize certain emotions and help set the scene. Through Kabuki, it helps to paint a picture of what it was like to live in the age of the Edo period. Overall it shows how the Hayashi art was developed into what we see today.

Mariko Watabe has been introducing Kabuki dance and music to American audiences nationwide for over 40 years. She goes by her stage names such as; Kimisen Katada for Hayashi, Kyosho Yamato for Yamatogaku, Kichitoji Kineya for Nagauta; and Marifuji Bando for dance.

She is currently living in Los Angeles area. Her activities and performances are found at <http://fujijapanesemusic.org>

Weekly Cultural News introduces virtual events of Japanese art and culture in the U.S. One Month Subscription fee for \$9
<https://www.culturalnews.com/subscription>