

Weekly Cultural News

Substitute for monthly Cultural News December 14 - 20, 2020 (Reiwa 2)

Keep Japanese Culture Alive

Actor/English Rakugo performer Ken Saito's online debut from New York, Dec. 21, 8:00PM, EST

Online "Rakugo Night 4"
by Ken Saito
Featuring "Shiba -hama"
(Shiba beach)
YouTube Live
Monday, December 21, 2020
8:00 PM – 9:00 PM, EST

Japan-born actor Ken Saito brought his first solo English Rakugo stage at the Actors Theater Workshop in Manhattan, New York, in March 2018.



The December 21, 2020 stage will be Saito's fourth Rakugo Night and his first online performance.

Born and raised in Sendai, Japan, he decided to become an actor since his childhood. But his intuition told him to learn foreign languages before starting actor's career. In his early 20's, he learned Korean language in Seoul, Korea, for two years, and studied English at Vancouver, Canada, for three years.

After that, in his mid 20's, he joined one of major theater companies in Tokyo as actor apprentice. He started building up his career as an actor by learning essential acting methods and playing

multiple roles for plays that the company produced.

After five years in Tokyo, Saito decided to enter the Herbert Berghof Studio, professional acting school in Manhattan, New York.

When he finished his two years program at HB Studio, he was given one year stay permission by OPT program. Unlike most actors who were looking for auditions, he started to train himself to become English Rakugo performer under the direction of Jim Boerlin, renown faculty in HB Studio.

Continuing to page 2

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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Actor/English Rakugo performer Ken Saito's online debut from New York, Monday, Dec. 21

Continued from page 1

The Actors Theater Workshop in March 2018 was his first Rakugo stage. Since then, Saito holds solo Rakugo performances and presented his performances at weddings, birthday parties, and many special occasions.

Rakugo is a form of Japanese verbal entertainment originated a few hundred years ago. The lone storyteller sits on stage, using only a paper fan and a small handkerchief as props, and without standing up from sitting position, the rakugo artist depicts a long and complicated comical or sentimental story.

The story always involves the dialogue of two or more characters. The difference between the characters depicted only through change in pitch, tone, and a slight turn of the head.

The Story of "Shiba-hama" (Shiba beach)

This is one of the most comical and sweetest Rakugo stories and always considered as one of the bests of all time. "Shiba-hama" tells a beautiful story about a marriage couple lived in Edo period, about their struggle and love. And the story happens at year-end so it's a perfect



timing to perform and deliver it to people in this season.

Trailer (YouTube) <https://youtu.be/LbwcuSZIIA>

Donation: This online event is based on donation, so basically it's free. But registration is required at <https://rakugonight4.eventbrite.com>

YouTube Live will start on Monday, Dec. 21 at 8:00PM, EST

The URL of the event page will be sent to your email address after your registrations.

For more information, contact Ken Saito via ken2020ny@gmail.com

In New York, Japan-born actor rediscovers Rakugo as his repertoire



Cultural News will feature New York-based actor / English Rakugo performer Ken Saito at the Webinar event "Miracle Night by Cultural News" on Thursday, Dec. 17 at 7:00 pm, PST.

Ken Saito is the first self-trained English Rakugo performer in the U.S. Five years ago, Saito had only two choices of movie actor or theater actor as career

before he came to New York to enter a professional actor school. But in New York, he met many unique artists who are followed by enthusiastic fans. In his case, he rediscovered Rakugo as his repertoire. There are hundreds of traditional Japanese stories in the Rakugo genre. But a few of the stories translated into English from a literary perspective. To participate the Dec. 17 Webinar, visit www.culturalnews.com

Los Angeles: Japanese cultural collections in 5,000-square-foot to close for good at end of December

A narrow stairwell in a seemingly ordinary warehouse opens up into a 5,000-square-foot loft space that looks like a magical explosion of color and culture. The bright and beautiful space houses the fantastic collection of Peter Lai, a fashion designer who fell in love with Japanese design at an early age and has spent decades amassing a treasure trove of art, antiques, and collectibles from Japan.

The eclectic collection fills this sprawling secret space, which Lai calls the “Japanese Cultural Village.” The space is divided into sections that artfully display his collection according to theme.

There’s a section for fans, lanterns, kimonos, trinkets, ceramics, fabrics, and of course, costumes.

Lai was born in Hong Kong and initially went into the family business as a costume designer. But in a bold move, he decided to leave China and move to Los Angeles to pursue fashion, an endeavor in which he was extremely successful.

His eccentric and flamboyant designs, inspired by traditional Japanese and Chinese styles, were highly acclaimed and have been worn by Hollywood celebrities.

Lai ran a popular boutique shop until he retired in 2013 and could devote his full attention to his



longtime dream of creating a space teeming with Japanese design. (Source: Atlas Obscura)

Going Away Sayonara to Peter Lai and his Japanese Village, leaving us for good at the end of December.

Peter will be available for his charming personal tours over the coming two weeks.

By appointment only: (626) 375-2040, peterlai88@hotmail.com

Located in the Arts District near Little Tokyo and Urth Café

See short film at: <https://youtu.be/6p-20bF3sro>



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>

Japanese Percussion Lesson #26: Let's look at concepts behind western orchestra and kabuki music

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 #25, visit [Tsuzumibito Chanel at YouTube](#)

Ohayashi Juku (Kabuki Series) #26 <https://youtu.be/hdvUSqo2CTk>, Music inside of an Orchestra Pit and Music on a Platform, is the third video which explores the difference between the Western orchestra and Japanese Kabuki music.

We previously learned how Japanese music is played without a conductor and why they always perform in a Straight-Line Arrangement.

In this video, we look into the reasons why Japanese music is always played on platforms on stage and Western orchestras many times play hidden inside of an orchestra pit.

In this video, we look at the concepts behind the two different set ups. How it is okay for Western



musicians to only be able to see the conductor, while Japanese musicians are in clear view of the dancers. The ways Kabuki musicians and dancers interact which require them to be in close proximity to each other. As well as other functional differences between a Western orchestra and Japanese Kabuki musicians that lead to these two different setups.

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>

FINAL SALE

Peter Lai's Japanese Village and Peter Lai Fashions

30-70% Off
EVERYTHING MUST GO
(Even display furniture)

- Peter Lai's finely-tailored original, unique, outrageous, one-of-a-kind fashion designs, dresses, jackets, pants, skirts, capes, hats, scarves, vests, shawls, shoes, belts, sunglasses, eyeglasses, hats, masks, handbags and more.

- Antique Japanese and Chinese costumes, *kimono*, *yukata*, *obi*, clothes, footwear including *geta* & *zori*, *Ningyo* and other dolls, furnishing, fans, umbrellas, Edo wigs, hair ornaments & accoutrements, ceramics, lacquerware, *jubako*, scrolls, vases, fabric, statues, art, lanterns, bamboo and wood screens and decor items and more.

- Sewing essentials including fabric, embroidery, beads, buttons, zippers, fasteners, leather, feathers, notions and more.

- Endless miscellany including stationery, books, paper, CDs+DVDs and more.

- All furnishings and decorations.

- And much, much more.

Two week countdown...best items go first!

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

(626) 375-2040 • peterlai88@hotmail.com

Located in the downtown L.A. Arts District near Little Tokyo and Urth Café

See short film at: <https://youtu.be/6p-20bF3sro>