

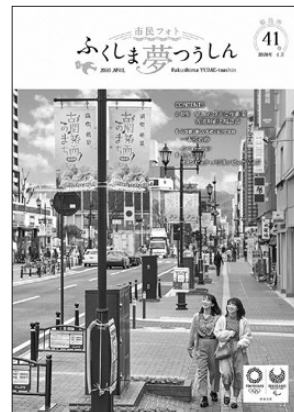
Fukushima Dreams – a quarterly publication of Fukushima City — APRIL 2020

Thank you for picking up this quarters' "Fukushima Dreams – a quarterly publication of Fukushima City".

In this issue, we hope that you will learn more about, and be moved by the various charms that Fukushima City has to offer.

With a population of around 290,000 people, Fukushima is surrounded by the beauty of nature. Due to its location, the city has a characteristic basin climate, and is a famous fruit production area: producing many varieties through the seasons, including cherries, peaches, Asian pears, grapes and apples.

We hope that through this edition, you'll come to appreciate even a little of what Fukushima City has to offer.



P. 2, 3

① Music flowed from within when he looked at the music sheets

Yuji Koseki, the great composer of the Showa era, and Fukushima City

Koseki's melodies, such as "Eikan wa Kimi ni Kagayaku" and the "Olympic March," resonate with people across generations and are sung even today. Yuji Koseki used his music to stand alongside the people of Japan during the turbulent Showa era, and he is recognized as Fukushima City's first honorary citizen. In this Olympic year, the spring issue features Yuji Koseki, the great composer from the Showa era and the model upon which the dramatic TV series "Yell" starting March 30, was based.

He hails from a kimono shop in Omachi, Fukushima City

On August 11, 1909, Yuji Koseki was born in a kimono shop in the Omachi neighborhood of Fukushima City. Today, there is a monument indicating where his house stood in Omachi.

Koseki's father was a music fan and purchased a gramophone for his kimono shop. It is said that as a child Koseki loved to listen to records while drawing pictures. In elementary school, his homeroom teacher loved music very much. In his autobiography he wrote, "our teacher was so enthusiastic about music education, he had us write our own nursery songs." Not satisfied with learning music in school alone, Koseki started buying sheet music. Seeing this, his mother purchased a tabletop keyboard that even had the black keys. From that day forward, he was consumed with the piano and by the time he graduated elementary school, he was able to read music and write his own songs on music sheets.

Even at Fukushima Commercial High School every day was immersed in music

In April 1922, Koseki entered Fukushima Commercial High School with plans to carry on the family business. Even in high school, he continued to immerse himself in music daily. He bought sheet after sheet of expensive music paper and began serious composing and arranging. At a regular performance of the "Fukushima Harmonica Society" presided over by an alumnus of his high school, Koseki played his own arrangement of the "William Tell Overture" with the group, and he went to record concerts presented by the "Hi no Tori no Kai" in which older friends were active members.

For roughly 45 years, Yuji Koseki continued to create music in a variety of genres. It is said he wrote approximately 5,000 songs. Why not listen to Koseki's melodies, which still resonate in the hearts of people today, and take a stroll through the town where this famous composer was born?



② Commentary from Kazuhiro Tsuchiya, Chief Producer of "Yell"

The dramatic TV series "Yell" is a fictional story based on Mr. and Mrs. Koseki, but a large number of Yuji Koseki's music can be heard throughout the series, so please keep your ears open for them.

We filmed on location in Fukushima in October last year when a typhoon had hit the area, and despite the fact that there were people affected by the disaster, everyone was very cooperative with our filming. You will see where we filmed Fukushima's beautiful woods as the backdrop for the title of the show. I hope to communicate the attractiveness of Fukushima's abundant natural scenery and its warm people through the show.

Commentary from Masataka Kubota (who plays Yuichi Koyama)

In preparing for my role as Yuichi, I had the opportunity to speak with people who knew Mr. Koseki well, and I got the feeling that everyone was always cheering for Mr. Koseki and that he was the type of person who never made enemies. Though he might have felt anger or hate towards someone, my impression is that he would have turned those feelings into a different sort of affection. I imagine that even if he was shunned by some, he would have used his power of music and his personality to embrace everyone around him. Those are the qualities that I hope will shine through in my performance.

On location in Mr. Koseki's hometown of Fukushima City, we filmed a scene with more than 100 local extras where I played the harmonica in front of them. To be honest, I was really feeling the pressure in the beginning, but after each cut, everyone would applaud and cheer me on after each song giving me the courage to finish the scene. I think that made the final product a really warm and powerful scene. I hope you enjoy it too.

P. 4, 5

① Full of fighting spirit

② I heard the Yomiuri Giants' team song "Kyojingu no Uta - Tokon Komete" (meaning "Giants' song, full of fighting spirit") was written to commemorate the team's 30th anniversary. I know that it was written by Yuji Koseki, a composer born in Fukushima City. It has a melody that is very easy to sing to. I travel to the stadium 70-80 times a year to watch the games and always sing along with great cheer. I always get excited when I hear songs like the fight song for the athletes and the team song. Especially just before the 7th inning offensive. Lucky seven! When everyone sings, my heart just soars. When they win, the song is played again and it makes me sing along again too.

I want to continue singing "Tokon Komete" because it's important to me. This year is the Olympic year and the opening game will start earlier than usual, so I started practicing my cheers earlier than usual too. Let's all sing "Tokon Komete" and cheer on the Giants at Tokyo Dome together.

③ Rokko Oroshi

④ The fight song for the Hanshin Tigers, "Osaka Tigers no Uta (Rokko Oroshi)," which is the oldest team song of any Japanese professional baseball team, was written when the baseball team was established, and it was the first record I had ever bought. When the team name changed from "Osaka" to "Hanshin," that part of the song lyrics changed too, but it has been sung for more than 80 years. The song is so beloved that a few decades ago when the team wanted to change the song to something a little more modern, the fans were so strongly against it, the team gave up on the idea. It's always sung before a game starts, but also around the middle of the game and whenever the Tigers score a point. To us, "Rokko Oroshi" means the same as when Americans sing "Stars and Stripes"



Forever” with their hands on their chests.

The father of “Rokko Oroshi,” Yuji Koseki, did not make it into the baseball hall of fame this year, but I am hoping he will next year. We will continue to sing Rokko Oroshi with great pride.

⑤Konpeki no Sora (Waseda University’s First Fight Song)

This song put Yuji Koseki’s name out into the world and became the fight song that sparked a succession of famous songs in the world of sports. When he composed Waseda University’s fight song through the introduction of an acquaintance, Waseda had a series of consecutive wins in the six-university league, which resulted in an increase of requests to write fight songs for sports teams.

“Konpeki no Sora” is a song that draws victory and makes people happy for the victory. When we sing “Konpeki no Sora” as the cheer squad before a game, it serves to bring the athletes and the spectators together as one, which has the power to create an atmosphere in the venue, so I sing it with emotion.

All Waseda students can sing “Konpeki no Sora” without being taught the song by anyone, as it is truly the spirit of Waseda.

Winning the championship of the Tokyo Big Six Baseball League has escaped Waseda for four years running, so we truly need the strength of people’s support right now. With “Konpeki no Sora,” we will be the champions this year!

⑥Olympic March

This “Olympic March” was performed at the opening ceremony at the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964. After writing so many army songs during the war, Yuji Koseki was happy to have the opportunity to compose a song for the Olympics, a celebration of peace. Reconstruction and peace were his inspiration when writing the song.

The trio mid-song is very moving and the climax in the finale swells all at once. “Olympic March” is fun for the performers as well. When I see audience members shedding a tear when I perform “Olympic March” at concerts, I can see how much this song has taken hold of people’s hearts.

My dream is for each member of the band to play the song at the coming Tokyo Olympics opening ceremony with the same inspiration our forefather Yuji Koseki had in his heart when he composed it, and to communicate the energy of Fukushima to the people of the world.

P. 6, 7

①The best time to see the 300-year-old weeping cherry blossom tree is from mid to late April

Approximately 20 minutes west of JR Fukushima Station by car. Jitoku-ji Temple, which is said to have been built according to the wishes of Date Masamune’s father, Terumune in the Muromachi period, is on a mountain only a short distance from Azuma Sports Park.

In front of the main prayer hall stands a “Tanemaki Sakura” or literally, seed-planting cherry blossom tree, that has been designated as a Fukushima City Natural Monument. Its name comes from the fact that since ancient times, when the cherry blossoms bloomed on the tree, it meant it was seed planting time. The roughly 300-year-old weeping cherry blossom tree blooms approximately one week later than the trees in the city’s central area. This year once again the best time to view it will most likely be from mid-April to the end of the month. We would appreciate it if you could put your hands together in prayer at the main prayer hall first before basking in the tree’s glory.

Don’t miss the grandchild of the Tanemaki Sakura tree or the Edohigan blooming on the hill

It goes without saying that cherry blossoms go into full bloom when the weather gets warmer, but the cherry blossoms falling lightly off the trees are also quite nice.

The Hosui cherry blossom tree in the Matsukawa area of Fukushima City grew from a branch taken from the Tanemaki cherry blossom tree, and on the grounds of Jitoku-ji Temple, there is another cherry blossom tree that started with a branch from the Hosui tree. In other words, it is the grandchild tree of the Tanemaki Cherry Blossom tree.

There is also one lone cherry blossom tree that stands among the cedars lining the sloped road to Jitoku-ji Temple. It is an Edohigan cherry blossom tree designated by Fukushima City as a tree for conservation. When the tree is in bloom, it is illuminated between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m., and the parishioner’s Ladies Club offers tea service, so please come out and enjoy it for yourself.



②Hosui Cherry Blossom

③Ozoi Shidare (weeping) Cherry Blossom

④Jorakuen Shidare (weeping) Cherry Blossom

⑤Akaiwa Tanemaki (seed-planting) Cherry Blossom

⑥Saigo-no-Meoto (couple) Cherry Blossom

⑦Suwayama Cherry Blossom

P8

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