

Fukushima Dreams – a quarterly publication of Fukushima City — OCTOBER 2022

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 280,000 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 Fukubun: Fukushima-style Culture

An autumn of culture is now upon us. Fukushima is the homeplace of a variety of cultures and facilities that are unique to this city, such as Yuji Koseki's melodies, a squatting clay figurine, the old Hirose Theater, and Fukushima City Museum of Photography, which is known in Japanese as Hana no Shashinkan. Since the previous fiscal year, Fukushima City has been focusing on Fukushima-style culture and has been developing a number of initiatives as the Fukubun Project to convey to citizens and visitors alike the appeal of the Fukushima-style culture that has been refined by generations of local people during different eras. Through several cultural facilities of which Fukushima is proud; namely the Yuji Koseki Memorial Museum, Fukushima City Concert Hall (Fukushin Yume no Ongakudo), Fukushima City Museum of Photography, the archeological site Jomopia Miyahata, and the open-air folk museum Minka-en, we will work to widely promote the appeal of Fukushima-style culture and make the city a place where people are truly happy to have been born and raised! In this issue, we introduce some of the attractions of these facilities with the cooperation of four people who are associated with them.

② A Jomon Period Historical Park: Remembering Messages from 3,500 Years Ago

③ Jomopia Miyahata

④ Rika HONMA

⑤ Struck by the deep spirituality of the ancients and hooked on Jomon and clay figurines

My interest in clay dolls began two years ago when the Doki-Doki Jomon Shopping Street event was held. This was a stamp-rally style event at which a replica of a squatting clay figurine dating back to the late Jomon period (around 3,500 years ago) and real earthenware vessels were exhibited at 12 cooperating stores in the shopping district, provided visitors with some unexpected encounters on the streets of Fukushima.

At my family's music store, we displayed some earthenware vessels inside the store. Many of the people participating in the stamp rally were women, and as we chatted about various topics while they were getting their stamps, I got goose bumps when I learned that the squatting clay figurine represented a woman and that it had been made with the hope that this woman would give birth safely and raise healthy children in an age when about half of all babies would be stillborn or would have died in infancy.

The Covid-19 pandemic made me think more about "life and death", and so I visited Jomopia Miyahata to learn more about this subject. At the Jomon People's Departures and Prayers section of the hands-on learning facility Joimon, I was struck by the deep spirituality of the Jomon people, as the curator told us that they were serious about life and viewed it as regenerative, and that they prayed fervently. As I listened to the explanations about how everyone worked together to build pit dwellings and large "posthole" (hottate-bashira) buildings, which are considered to have been used as sacred prayer places, and how it is believed that it was the women who brought the villagers together, I became totally hooked (laughing).



The "Pi~Gu~♡Kai" was formed to promote the appeal of Jomon and clay figurines from Fukushima!

The Pi-Gu~♡Kai is a project that began in October 2021. Before that, the organizers invited people to submit nicknames for a squatting clay figurine unearthed in a peach orchard, and we received 4,140 entries from all over the country. We chose to name this object the Squatting Clay Figurine Pi-Gu~, as had been suggested by a woman from Tokushima. Then, in order to promote this particular figurine as a treasure of Fukushima, we set up a sort of fan club where aficionados of clay figurines and Jomon culture can share their thoughts and explore the fascination of this artifact in greater depth. We named the group the Pi-Gu~♡Kai, and I became one of the three core members.

We are taking on a variety of challenges, including hosting roundtable discussions with guests who are experts in archaeology and introducing our members' prized possessions. One event that left a particularly strong impression on me was Fukushima Clay Figurine Day which was held last autumn. As part of the so-called Machikado Museum, clay figurines and clay vessels were displayed at facilities and stores throughout the city, and original products were sold, including the very cute Pi-Gu~Pan bread, Clay Figurine T-shirts, and Clay Figurine Day Tenugui (hand towels). At the same time, we started recruiting members, and I am happy to report that more than 150 people from all over the country have registered. This year we are focusing mainly on roundtable discussions, so please check our website for dates and times.

A great spot that you can use casually and learn about history

To summarize the allure of Jomopia in a few words, I would say that it is possible to go back in time to the Jomon period simply by taking a 20-minute drive from the city center. It's a spacious, quiet, and safe spot, so you don't have to worry if you are visiting with small children. Some people even go for a run or a walk there with their dogs. No matter how many times you view the exhibition room, there is always something new to discover. The squatting clay figurine Pi-Gu~ can be viewed from the front, back, left, or right, and can be recognized as a pregnant woman with a swollen belly depending on the angle. The Jomon pattern around the waist is also beautiful, so I hope you will take a closer look. At Jomopia, there is also a full menu of Jomon hands-on activities, such as making clay pottery, making magatama (comma-shaped beads), which can also be used as accessories, and making fire. By all means, come along and challenge yourself at Jomopia.

P. 4, 5

① To Understand the Past is to Predict the Future Minka-en Bears Witness to Fukushima's History

② Fukushima City Minka-en

③ Hironori Kaketa

④ A logical exhibition of scenery from the good old days

The main attraction of Minka-en is its collection of private houses, including a silkworm farmhouse, an inn, and a playhouse, that were all built in the Edo period (1603-1868), and are probably the oldest buildings of their kind in Fukushima Prefecture. All of these buildings have distinguished histories. For example, the former Kakujiken (later renamed Koyokan) was one of Fukushima's leading kappo-ryokan restaurants, which operated from around the end of the Edo period and into the early Meiji era. This building is also known for their association with important events and people in Fukushima's history. The former Kanno residence, one of the oldest farmhouses in the prefecture, is a one-story house, about half of which has an earthen-floor area called a doma. This area was used as a workshop where people laid out mats on the floor to work on in the winter or during rainy weather. With the progress of time, the doma area of newly built farmhouses gradually became narrower, so a house with a large doma can be considered to be an old house. Moreover, the folk implements and artifacts on display are organized in the order of the work process they were used for and are displayed in a logical manner. That is another attraction of Minka-en.

The Kyu Hirose-za, a model of preservation and utilization

During the Edo period and the Meiji era, residents who made their fortunes the raw silk trade organized the Yanagawa Hirose-za Association to raise funds for the construction of a theater named the Hirose-za, which was completed in the former Yanagawa Town of the Date County (the current Date City) around 1887. Originally built as an entertainment facility for local residents, the theater was equipped with a variety of functions to create spectacular scenes that would excite the audience, including a revolving stage, a hanamachi elevated passageway and a temporary hanamichi, a stage lift, a grapevine trellis, and a musomado window. However, during the Showa era, motion pictures became increasingly popular, and after the Second World War, the theater was renovated into a movie theater. Later, the building had to be removed due to the widening of the Hirose River following flood damage, and since at the time relocating and preserving it in Yanagawa proved to be impractical, Fukushima City decided to take it over.



In 1994, the building was moved and restored to its original state as much as possible in Minka-en, and reopened as the Kyu Hirose-za (the Former Hirose-za Theater). Four years later, the building was designated as an Important Cultural Property of Japan. There are only a handful of such playhouses remaining in the entire country. Moreover, the building has not only been preserved as a cultural asset, but also restored as a venue for plays and performances, which is truly an amazing achievement. After all, cultural assets can only come alive when they embody a well-balanced mixture of both "preservation" and "utilization". The manner in which the Kyu Hirose-za is being utilized make it a model for other restoration projects to follow.

Art is scenery. The atmosphere of the Kyu Hirose-za intensifies the audience's experience.

Over the years, a variety of events originating both inside and outside the prefecture have been held at the Kyu Hirose-za, beginning with Hinoemata Kabuki, which has been designated an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Asset of Fukushima Prefecture.

Among the local presentations, the Kenpou (Prefectural North) Folk Performing Arts Exchange Event, which was held for three consecutive years beginning in 2003, left a lasting impression. The organizers expanded the scope of the festival to encompass the northern part of the prefecture and requested performances of distinctive folk performing arts. As folk performing arts are often performed on an outdoor stage, there was a concern that the stage of the Kyu Hirose-za might be too small, but the performers made the most of the limited space and there was no need to worry. Taking place in the atmosphere of the Kyu Hirose-za, everyone was very impressed with this event. It is often said that the performing arts can be summed up by the "scenery", but ambience of the surroundings, including the chirping of cicadas and birds, and the sound of the wind, is also important. The combination of the scenery and the atmosphere deepens the emotion of the performance.

Learning from the past. Minka-en, where you can find tips regarding the SDGs.

For instance, the sunken hearth was a place where the order of seating was strictly determined. The hearth was not only for heating, but was also a sacred space where Shinto gods dwelled in the fire as well as a location for holding annual ceremonies. And the seating order also served to educate the children. In the old days, at Setsubun (the last day of winter in the traditional Japanese calendar), people used to attempt to divine the weather for the year ahead by laying beans by the hearth fire, a practice called saku-ura. If the side of the beans closest to the fire were scorched, this was interpreted to mean that the weather would be bad in the first half of the month and good in the second half. They would write the results of the divination on a half sheet of paper and use it as a guideline for the coming year.

On the doma, they would weave straw to make ropes and cloaks, collect the remainder for their sleeping quarters, and eventually use it as compost, all in a continuous cycle of life. You probably already knew that. When we think about the future, we also need to consider the past. To understand the past is to predict the future. This is one reason why we look at old things. It seems as though Minka-en is filled with hints that could be useful in pursuing the "SDGs" that are so popular these days.

P. 6, 7

① One of Japan's Leading Concert Halls that Moves the Audience with its Rich Acoustics

② Fukushin Yume no Ongakudo (Fukushima City Concert Hall)

③ General Advisor to Fukushima City on Music & Cultural Affairs
Artistic Director of the Koseki Yuji no Machi Fukushima Chamber Orchestra
Naoyuki Miura

④ A permanent orchestra begins operating based in Fukushima City Concert Hall.

As the general advisor to Fukushima City on music and cultural affairs, a position appointed by the City Government, I am engaged in a wide range of activities. Utilizing the connections established in the course of my musical activities, I persistently lobbied for the production of a morning drama serial Yell, modeled on the life of Yuji Koseki and his wife, Kinko. Two years ago, this wish was finally granted. Then, last autumn, the first permanent orchestra, the Koseki Yuji no Machi Fukushima Chamber Orchestra, was established.

The orchestra is a small chamber orchestra (with about 40 musicians) that perfectly complements the acoustics (reverberation) of the large hall, which is the biggest feature of this concert hall. In order to take full advantage of the resonance of the large hall, which is a favorite of professional performers from Japan and abroad, the balance of sound is the most important single aspect. It is my hope that more and more musicians will make the Concert Hall their home, and that they will fully appreciate, communicate, and popularize its appeal.

I have high expectations of an orchestra familiar with the attractions of the large hall.

The Fukushima Chamber Orchestra held its anniversary concert in October 2021 and a Christmas concert in December. These concerts were exactly as I had imagined they would be. I could feel the sounds overlapping and resonating with my entire body. What impressed me even more was everyone's love of Fukushima. It was a wonderful time, filled with the desire to "do something for Fukushima". I have high expectations that the orchestra will continue to produce more and more music that compliments the large hall.

We are planning to hold two more regular concerts this year. Ideally, we would like to expand the program so that it can be held once a month, and we would like to contribute to the development of top-notch human resources for the future by actively recruiting young performers. With a view to continuing the program over the long term, we would like to appoint a professional resident conductor who has connections with Fukushima to be the key conductor. In the future, I hope they will also take over the position of artistic director, which I currently hold.

The 1st Fukushima City Yuji Koseki Composition Contest to be held in November.

Another major topic is the 1st Fukushima City Yuji Koseki Composition Contest. In order to build on the achievements of Yuji Koseki, this new project has been planned and will be brought to fruition this year with the aim of nurturing the next generation of young aspiring composers and creating opportunities for them to launch their careers in the music world. The judges will consist of five prominent composers, including Shinichiro Ikebe, a professor emeritus at Tokyo College of Music, who has received an award for distinguished service to culture. Applications are already closed and the musical score screening will take place in September, with the final competition scheduled for Sunday, November 27 at the Concert Hall. The melodies will be conducted by Norichika Iimori and performed by the Siena Wind Orchestra.

Having lived with music for a long time, if you were to ask me, "What is music?", I would answer "soul". By which I mean what we call the spirit, or the heart. Now, the heart in this sense is an abstract thing; it is nowhere to be found. However, I believe that an orchestra can express it. Please come along to the Concert Hall this autumn when we will once again be offering a program full of vibrant music that will inspire the audience with its rich sound.

⑤ Violinist

Saki Takagi

⑥ A dreamlike hall that presents a different expression for each piece performed.

In addition to performing mainly in the Kanto region, I am also teaching younger students as an instructor. Since 2011, I have given regular recitals in Fukushima City as well as concerts with fellow musicians from Fukushima, although this is not something I can do as often as I like. Just when I was looking for a way of delivering more music to the public, I heard about the Fukushima Chamber Orchestra. It has long been a wish of mine to have a professional orchestra in my hometown, and I am delighted and honored to be able to participate. Many of the members are from Fukushima, and we are all very close friends. Even among them, I learn a lot from their sincere approach to music and the process of creating a precise ensemble. In the course of this process, we approach the music with sincerity and creating a precise ensemble is a great learning experience. The Concert Hall is a hall that I have been familiar with ever since I was a child, but it is also a dreamlike hall that presents a different expression for each piece performed. I look forward to seeing you all at this magnificent hall, of which Fukushima City can be justly proud.



P. 8

① Fukubun Photo Rally

We are currently holding a photo rally to explore Fukushima's unique culture! The winners will receive gorgeous prizes!
We are looking forward to seeing everybody's creative photos, whether they are beautiful, unexpected, or just plain fun.

② Fukushima Sweets Premium

We certify a variety of irresistible sweets made using Fukushima City agricultural produce as Fukushima City brands and promote them both inside and outside the city!
Some of these certified products can be ordered, and we hope that as many people as possible will get to taste these premium sweets.

For more information, including on places where you can buy these confections, please visit the Fukushima City homepage.

