

PERFORMERS



SORA, SHODO

Portland, Oregon-based Artist, SORA, has been practicing her art from age 6 and for the last 5 years as a performing artist, expressing herself using Shodo skills. She has built a portfolio of varied accomplishments, including referenced articles, exhibitions, and academic achievements. Sora combines striking and meaningful visual art with entrancing performance art. Sora's art is often created at live performance events, accompanied by musicians from around the world. Her spontaneous creations are inspired by the surrounding environment as well as the spirit and energies she feels from her audience.



MIKE PENNY, SHAMISEN & SHAKUHACHI

Mike Penny is an award-winning Tsugaru Shamisen performer and composer from Los Angeles, CA. He first studied shamisen from 2004-2005 with Kevin Kmetz, and later received the Japan Foundation's Uchida Fellowship which allowed him to study in Tokyo. Mike has given hundreds of public performances and workshops throughout Japan and the US. Through his many performances and viral video performances on YouTube, he has gained a following for his unprecedented style of shamisen playing. In recent years, Mike has been active as a studio musician, contributing his shamisen stylings to projects such as Sony PlayStation's Ghost of Tsushima's original soundtrack, and others. Mike also works for the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles as a Japanese Language Grants Specialist.



KYLE ABBOTT, SHAMISEN & SHAKUHACHI

Kyle Abbott has been playing shamisen since 2004. He has spent 16 years pursuing the construction of the instrument and published a book to teach anyone how to build and play their own. Kyle has competed in and received the Judge's Special Award in the highest division at Hirosaki World Tsugaru Shamisen Tournament. He also founded the first international shamisen workshop series called ShamiCamp (which was hosted in Tokyo, Berlin, and San Jose Japantown), and is also the founder of Bachido, the international shamisen community consisting of over 4000 members. Kyle also recorded and produced two 'Monsters of Shamisen' albums ('Stellar' and 'Resonance'), and recorded and produced two solo albums, (The Cuckoo and Frosty: A Retrospective Christmas), with two more on the way.



MATSURIZA, TAIKO

Maturiza means “Festival of Drumming.” The group was established in 1983. Maturiza demonstrates the traditional art of Japanese drumming known as “Taiko” and plays both traditional music as well as self-composed arrangements. The group’s dynamic style emphasizes speed, fluidity and power which combined with their choreographed movements creates a performance rich in sight and sound. Maturiza performs in Walt Disney World and have decided to stay in Orlando, FL to continue sharing Taiko music with audiences around the country.

SPEAKERS

SEN. BILL HAGERTY, WELCOME REMARKS

FORMER US AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

MARI MARUYAMA, MODERATOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OBIRIN GAKUEN FOUNDATION OF AMERICA
FORMER JOI PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

TAKEO SUZUKI

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CGE, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CHATTANOOGA
FORMER JOI COORDINATOR (Y2, ARKANSAS), FORMER JOI SUPERVISOR (Y8, ARKANSAS)

NATSUKI ANDERSON

CHAIR OF DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES, MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
FORMER JOI SUPERVISOR (Y10, WEST VIRGINIA)

ASAMI NAKANO

LECTURER IN JAPANESE, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
FORMER JOI COORDINATOR (Y12, TENNESSEE)

JAPAN OUTREACH INITIATIVE 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS
OCTOBER 28, 2021 | CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

AIRI YAMAMOTO

JAPANESE TEACHER, CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FORMER JOI COORDINATOR (Y15, KENTUCKY)

NOZOMI MORGAN, MODERATOR

CEO AND FOUNDER, MICHIKI MORGAN WORLDWIDE

KAYOKO FUKUSHIMA

CONSUL GENERAL OF JAPAN IN NASHVILLE

YOSHI DOMOTO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE JAPAN-AMERICA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA
FORMER JOI SUPERVISOR (Y14, GEORGIA)

MASAMI TYSON

GLOBAL DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT AND TRADE, STATE OF TENNESSEE

NAOKO YAMAZAKI, KEYNOTE

FORMER JAXA ASTRONAUT AND NASA MISSION SPECIALIST ABOARD SPACE SHUTTLE
DISCOVERY