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**Japan Society
Presents**

***Waves Across Time:
Traditional Dance and Music of Okinawa***

Two Live, In-person Performances:

Friday, March 18 at 7:30pm &

Saturday, March 19 at 7:30pm

**Japan Society
(333 East 47th Street)**

New York, NY, February 11, 2022 – Marking the 50th anniversary of the return of Okinawa to Japan following the U.S.'s post-WWII occupation, a group of the islands' most exquisite dancers will perform a diverse program of Okinawan traditional performing arts accompanied by live music. Presented by **Japan Society**, this live, in-person program ***Waves Across Time: Traditional Dance and Music of Okinawa*** will have two performances only, March 18 & March 19 at 7:30pm, at Japan Society (333 East 47th Street). Additionally, this presentation is part of a five-city U.S. tour organized and produced by Japan Society, traveling to Furman University (Greenville, SC), The Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.); Williams Center for the Arts at Lafayette College (Easton, PA), and UChicago Presents at the University of Chicago (Chicago, IL).

In this program, versatile artists selected by the award-winning young artistic director of the National Theatre Okinawa, **Michihiko Kakazu**, will perform highlights chosen by Kakazu from the traditional repertoires of ***kumiodori*** and ***zo odori***. This program reflects Okinawa's complex history and rich performing arts heritage.

Kumiodori, a form of noh-inspired theater developed when the island archipelago of Okinawa was an independent kingdom called Ryukyu (15th to late-19th centuries), was designated an Intangible Cultural Asset by UNESCO in 2010. The classical dance and music repertoire from the Ryukyu Kingdom, performed in bright, gorgeous costumes, is elegant and deliberate with dignified melodies and rhythmic accompaniment.

Zo odori are popular folk dances that originated in 19th century, as the Ryukyu Kingdom was dissolved and the royal courts disbanded. These energetic and dynamic folk dances, often performed barefoot in a simple kimono made of indigo-dyed fabric or abaca cloth, feature the cheerful rhythms of typical Okinawan music.

The first half of this live program begins with two independent dance pieces developed from excerpts of the classical **kumiodori** titled “Manzai Techuchi.” The first excerpt, “Sakamoto-bushi,” is a female duo dance performed with Okinawan castanets called *yotsudake*. The second piece is a dance between two young brothers disguised as street performers as a ploy to avenge their parents. This section concludes with an excerpt from “Timiji-no-en,” a romantic masterpiece from the *kumiodori* repertoire, featuring a popular scene called “Shinobi no ba” (or, “A Scene of Secrecy”), depicting the secret rendezvous of two star-crossed lovers. This scene includes several well-known classical Ryukyuan ensemble pieces, as well as solo instrumental pieces for the koto and *fue* (flute).

The second half of the program features a variety of **zo odori** pieces, including a female dance that expresses the joy of a journey; a duet between a male and female dancer about life in a fishing village; and a dance that employs karate and weaponry such as *sai* and *nunchaku*; and a love duet. The program culminates with a narrative medley from the *zo odori* repertoire, representing farmers and fishermen gathered together to embrace their village life.

Throughout the performance, an ensemble of musicians will accompany this stunning array of works on the **sanshin** — a snakeskin-covered banjo-like instrument unique to the islands, as well as other traditional instruments. The brightly-dyed **bingata** costumes and the island music's iconic use of pentatonic scales further immerse audiences in the traditional performing styles of Japan's southernmost prefecture.

Waves Across Time: Traditional Dance and Music of Okinawa takes place at **Japan Society** on **Friday, March 18** and **Saturday, March 19** at **7:30 PM**.

A pre-performance lecture, introducing Okinawa's history and the development of its unique dance forms and musical instruments, starts one-hour before each performance. Available to ticketholders.

Tickets are \$42 / \$32 Japan Society members. Tickets can be purchased online at www.japansociety.org or by calling the Box Office at 212-715-1258 (M-F 9:00am – 5:00pm). Japan Society is located at 333 East 47th Street, between First and Second Avenues (accessible by the 4/5/6 at 42nd Street-Grand Central Station or the E at Lexington Avenue and 53rd Street).

Visitors will be required to show proof of vaccination and photo ID, as well as proof of a booster shot for anyone who is eligible, with a 4-week grace period after eligibility. For the health and safety of our staff and visitors, we kindly ask that you wear a KN95 or N95 mask that covers your nose and mouth at all times. KN95 masks will be provided upon request if you do not have one. View our current visitor policies and safety protocols [here](#). For more information, call 212-832-1155 or visit <http://www.japansociety.org>

>> Related Events:

Workshop: Introduction to Okinawan Dance / Saturday, March 19; 11:00am – 1:00pm

Learn about the history of Okinawa's performing arts through an in-person, interactive dance workshop that introduces the movements and rhythms of Okinawa's traditional court dances and popular folk dances. This intimate workshop also allows participants to view the traditional *bingata*-dyed costumes and stylized rustic apparel used in each dance form. *Tickets on sale February 17. Max. 25 participants.*

Okinawan Dance Workshop for Families / Sunday, March 20; 10:30am – 11:45am

This in-person family workshop explores not only the stylized movements and gestures of Okinawa's traditional court dances and popular folkdances, but also the beats and sounds of Okinawa's iconic music. Be swept away in this introductory lesson that includes the chance to see the performers' costumes and musical instruments up close. *Tickets on sale February 17. Max. 20 participants for ages 5+.*

About Japan Society

Japan Society continues a return to live, in-person performance with programs in the disciplines of theater, dance, music and more, slated for Fall 2021 and Winter/Spring 2022. In Fall 2021, Japan Society gave spotlight to the local artistic community, with the timely and topical works of three NYC-based artists with deep ties to Japan and its culture – **Suzi Takahashi's *The Story Box*** (September 11 – co-presented and produced by HERE), **Aya Ogawa's *The Nosebleed*** (October 1 – 10), and **Sachiyo Takahashi's *SHEEP #1*** (November 4 – 7).

In Winter/Spring 2022, **Japan Society** welcomes back international artists including emerging Japanese playwright **Shoko Matsumura** with ***Cooking Up*** (December 6); performers from Japan, Taiwan and Korea in the Society's **19th Contemporary Dance Festival** (January 14 & 15); and an immersive audio performance of young, female composer Yu Kuwabara's *shomyo* piece ***Spiral Mandala Ceremony***, designed by Brooklyn-based multimedia artist **Tei Blow** and recorded by **Shomyo no Kai**—a group of esoteric Buddhist priests (February 24 - 27). In Spring 2022, following this presentation of ***Waves Across Time: Traditional Dance and Music of Okinawa***, the Society will present and ***OKI: Music of the Ainu*** (May 6, 2022).

Japan Society is the premier organization connecting Japanese arts, culture, business, and society with audiences in NYC and around the world. In over 100 years of work, we've inspired generations by establishing ourselves as pioneers in supporting international exchanges in arts and culture, business and policy, as well as education between Japan and the U.S. This year, Japan Society is celebrating our heritage through the 50th anniversary of our landmark building, designed by the late architect Junzo Yoshimura, with the launch of a new distinct modern logo and visual identity.

Since the inception of **Japan Society Performing Arts Program**, the Program has brought 1000+ productions of and inspired by Japan to audiences in NYC and beyond through North American tours organized by Japan Society. Programs range from the traditional arts to contemporary theater, dance and music. Since the establishment of the Performing Arts Endowment in 2005, the Society also commissions non-Japanese artists to create Japan-related new works through fostering cross-cultural collaboration that has become part of its important mission.

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