

**VOICES From
THE NEW YORKERS**
COOL JAPAN

 by **Kia Cheleen**

The first time I ever went sailing was when I lived in Aichi-ken in Japan in 1996. I met a Japanese man named Mr. Inaba, who was



a humble civil servant and co-owned a sailboat with his friends. They all chipped in money to pay for the boat, insurance, docking fees and maintenance.

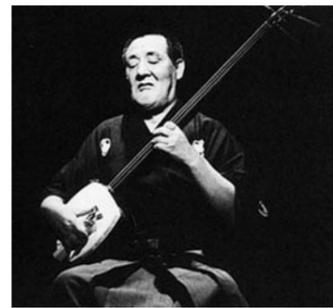
One day, Mr. Inaba invited me and several non-Japanese friends to go sailing. Even though he could not speak much English, he made great efforts to provide us with a unique sailboat experience in the Pacific Ocean with his *omotenashi*. He was standing in the small galley of the sailboat, chopping green onions to go over the freshly-cut soba noodles, and had a case of Kirin beer chilled in a cooler. He had prepared Japanese dried squid snacks, rice crackers and *yokan*, a thick jelly and red bean paste dessert. As we pulled away from the docks and grew further and further from land, we could view beautiful coast lines and appreciate the varied topography of Japan.

Fast forward 23 years, and Mr. Inaba is the mayor of his town, and I have taken basic sailing lessons at a local NYC sailing school. At first, learning to sail on the Hudson River was terrifying, with varying weather conditions and so much water traffic. There are large cruise ships, the Staten Island Ferry, jet skiers, power boats and commuter ferries. But being able to see Manhattan and New Jersey from the water has given me a new perspective of where I live. New York looks surprisingly calm and peaceful. Thank you, Mr. Inaba, for the introduction to sailing so long ago!

(Kia Cheleen is an inter-cultural consultant and a Japanese/English writer, translator and interpreter. Visit her at www.gillespieglobal.net or e-mail kcheleen@gmail.com)

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints


 Chikuzan Takahashi
(1910-1998)

Explore the Horizon

The Passion of Shamisen: Fumiyoshi Comes to Carnegie Hall

The first time the God of Tsugaru Shamisen, Takeyama Takahashi the First, held a concert at Japan Society in New York, he received great praise and was featured on *The New York Times* with great coverage.

Thirty-three years later, the shamisen player who has inherited the

spirit of Takeyama Takahashi the First, Fumiyoshi, will perform on Saturday, October 5, at Carnegie Hall.

The performance will be an amazing opportunity to experience the style of Takeyama's traditional shamisen music, as well as his famous Moment Art. The

performance will send its audience into a trance-like state, and intoxicate them with Fumiyoshi's art of shamisen.

The song "Tightrope", which was heavily inspired by New York, will be played for the first time. As the title insinuates, the tightened strings will play



a melody that will touch your heart-strings. The song incorporates not only the shamisen, but also features the sounds of the piano, violin, cajon and riq.

The ultimate art of Fumiyoshi is the pioneer of a new area of shamisen. Overpassing time, the horizon of the unknown world opens in front of Fumiyoshi.

(Article by Ryoichi Miura / Translated by Kanta Hakamata)

Agata Morio on Stage Motion Picture Show at Producers Club

Agata Morio, who made his musical debut in 1972 with the song "Red Elegy", will be holding a talk at the Producers Club Theaters / The Grand Theatre (358 West 44th Street, 3rd Floor) on Sunday, September 29 at 3:00 and 7:00 p.m.

In 2017, Agata produced the film "Looking for Sato Keiko", which looked back on his 45-year-long music career. His primary school teacher, Sato Keiko, awed him and made his spirit of inquiry stronger. She showed him an interesting interpretation of the world, as well as how to express his feelings through music. She is still the fountainhead of his creativity. Agata kept exploring his mentor's mind, and, after being inspired by Bob Dylan, ended up in New York City.

Now, he will talk about his late mentor Sato Keiko at the very place she inspired him to go. The 90-minute show incorporates gushing images and naked words, along with Agata's music. Jun Suenaga, a radio personali-



ty, will host, with Agata Morio as the guest. A clip from the film "Looking for Sato Keiko" will also be shown. The show consists of a mix of Agata's live music and a talk show segment. He will also perform some songs, including "The teacher Sato Keiko is a cruel person" and "Red Elegy".

(Article by Ryoichi Miura / Translated by Chikako Iwasaki)



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Beauty of Curved Lines Expressed by Brush and Ink in Modern Art

NY WOMAN

Born in Nara and brought up to work in the world of traditional calligraphy, Ms. Masumi Sakagami was inspired by calligraphy's artistic nature and decided to start her new life as an artist in New York. She graduated from the dedicated calligraphy department of Nara University of Education, which had been established together with the calligraphy department of Tokyo Gakugei University, with each department accepting only 15 students. After graduation, Ms. Sakagami taught in senior high school for 20 years. At the same time, she received a number of prestigious awards as a calligrapher.

What changed her calligraphy career were the words of her two young sons: "We don't understand whether those works are good or bad." Ms. Sakagami felt a slight sting in her heart. "What about those?" she asked as she drew many circles by brush on white paper. "Awesome!" her sons shouted with admiration. That was the moment when she thought about expressing her art by means of the calligraphy brush. She started exploring abstract art in Kobe more than 10 years ago.

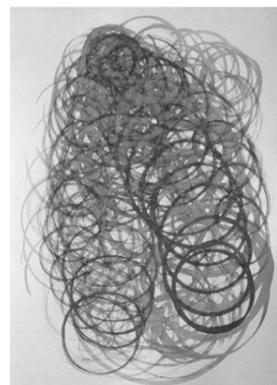
Ms. Sakagami thought about coming to Chelsea in New York to pursue her artistic endeavors when she was invited by the Walter Wickiser Gallery in Chelsea in 2013 to open her very first dedicated show. That was followed by another show at Kawata Gallery in Kobe. This May, Ms. Sakagami returned to the Walter Wickiser Gallery, and exhibited at the 27th Exhibition of the Japan Committee of the Federation of Asian Artists in Fukuoka in July. She will continue enthusiastically exhibiting when she shows her private collection "Quietude" at the Hammond Museum in

North Salem, New York from September 11 until November 9.

Three years ago, she was looking for an opportunity to come to New York to realize her dream of working as an artist, when she saw an advertisement for a teaching position at the New York Ikuei Gakuen. She applied and was promptly accepted, and has been teaching various subjects, such as calligraphy, at elementary and middle schools in New York and New Jersey, including Friends Academy and Port Washington, ever since.

While exploring the fine art world, the principal at Ikuei Gakuen, Mr. Toru Okamoto, who is himself an artist taught by Ikuo Hirayama at the Tokyo University of Art, suggested that she devote herself fully to art.

Ms. Sakagami remembered the words of a famous Japanese philosopher, Kitaro Nishida: "If protected by the wall, a sheep can always eat fresh grass, but once it chooses to go outside, it may have to work hard even to get dead grass." She appreciates Nishida's words. She wishes to create works that will endure over time. Her life may already be a work of contemporary art. (Article and photo by Ryoichi Miura / Translated by Kinue Imai Weinstein)


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ORGANIC PIGMENT ON PAPER

Artist Masumi Sakagami

