

The 3<sup>rd</sup>

# Folk Performing Arts Now!

in TOHOKU

“Bond” Formed by Folk Performing Arts

– 10 years since the earthquake and tsunami in 2011, and toward the future –



Ogatsu Town, Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture

## Ogatsu Date no Kurofune Daiko

*Date's black ship drum in Ogatsu Town*



Kamaishi City, Iwate Prefecture

## Unosumai Toramai

*Tiger dance in the Unosumai district*



Namie Town, Futaba County, Fukushima Prefecture

## Ukedo no Taue Odori

*Rice planting dance in the Ukedo district*

Date Saturday, December 11, 2021

Venue Maruhon MakiArt Terrace ( Small Hall )  
(Ishinomaki City Cultural Complex)

Organizer JA Tourism & Communications

Cooperator Tateito-Yokoito llc.

# “Bond” Formed by Folk Performing Arts

– 10 years since the earthquake and tsunami in 2011, and toward the future –

This year marks the 10th year since the Great East Japan Earthquake inflicted catastrophic damage on Northeast Japan, or the Tohoku region. JA Tourism & Communications will hold “The 3rd Folk Performing Arts Now! in Tohoku: “Bond” formed by folk performing arts –10 years since the earthquake and tsunami in 2011, and toward the future” on December 11, 2021 at Ishinomaki City Cultural Complex MARUHON MAKIART TERRACE in cooperation with tateito-yokoito llc., which works on handing down the culture of the Tohoku region and spreading its appeal. Three organizations, which have engaged in inheriting the folk performing arts handed down in the region ceaselessly for centuries although their important tools were swept away by the tsunami, will be on stage showing the traditional art and dances.



Rice planting dance

## Performance Schedule

- 13:00 Opening
- 13:00~ Address from the organizer
- 13:05~ Addresses from guests
- 13:10~ *Part 1*  
Introduction of municipalities by three preservation groups, folk performance arts  
*Kamaishi-shi, Iwate Prefecture:*  
**Unosumai Toramai**  
*Namie-machi, Futaba-gun, Fukushima Prefecture:*  
**Ukedo no Taue Odori**  
*Ogatsu-cho, Ishinomaki-shi, Miyagi Prefecture:*  
**Ogatsu Date no Kurofune Daiko**
- 15:10~ Intermission
- 15:20~ *Part 2*  
Panel Discussion  
**“Bond” formed by folk performing arts**  
—10 years since the earthquake and tsunami in 2011, and toward the future—
- 16:00~ Closing

## Unosumai Toramai [ Tiger dance in the Unosumai district ]

Kamaishi City, Iwate Prefecture

“Toramai” is a folk performing art inherited in Kamaishi City, Iwate Prefecture, since the middle Edo Period (18th century). At that time, fishermen who went out to sea often could not get back home due to stormy weather, and their families’ deepest wish was their safe return to the port. People in the region started to perform a dance as prayer for fishermen’s safety with tiger costumes on according to a proverb, “A tiger will walk a thousand leagues and a thousand leagues back for its cub,” and this is believed to be how Toramai spread among the fishermen along the coast.

Of the Toramai dances performed by 14 organizations based in Kamaishi City, “Unosumai Toramai” is called “Mesutora” (a tigress) because it is danced by imitating tigers’ slow and elegant movements. The tools stored were all swept away when the earthquake took place;

however, the drums and the tiger head, which have been handed down from generation to generation in the Unosumai district, were miraculously discovered. The tiger head found then is now enshrined in a household Shinto altar, giving the members of the preservation society mental support. Mr. Masato Obara, who is the representative of the Unosumai Young Men’s Association, said, “At last, we can perform ‘Kado-buchi’ in which we go door to door in our neighborhood and do the Toramai dance, as we did before the earthquake hit. The issue facing us is how we raise successors. We would like to help children understand the significance of the dance and find fun in the festival through practice.”

\*The group voluntarily refrains from the Kado-buchi event this year in order to prevent the spread of Covid-19.



A tiger dance goes down the street



Sasabami, in which a tiger bites bamboo leaves in order to sharpen its fangs

Ukedo no Taue Odori, which has been inherited since the late Edo Period (19th century), is a dance dedicated to the god of Kusano Shrine during the annual festival, Amba Matsuri. Long ago, the people in the district of Ukedo gathered at the shrine for dedicating a rice planting dance to the god and praying for the productiveness of grain in the wake of a poor crop that they once had, and this dedication resulted in a bountiful harvest that year. Since then, the dance has been passed on from generation to generation.

The residents of the Ukedo district in the town of Namie, Fukushima Prefecture were scattered all over Japan due to the devastating damage by the tsunami and the nuclear accident. Although the evacuation order was lifted on March 31, 2017 in the prefecture except for some districts, many people are still forced to live as evacuees.

The Ukedo Folk Performing Arts Preservation Association taught

dances to 4th to 6th grade students of Ukedo Elementary School before the earthquake occurred. Ten years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake. Children in the district usually detach themselves from the rice planting dance as they grow up. Today, the Association invites siblings of the children who do the dance to the activities and inherit the dance culture in a wide age group from 2-year-old children right up to adults. While experiencing difficulty in getting together for practice due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Ms. Shigeko Sasaki of the preservation association spoke of the group's aspirations toward the future, saying that their rice planting dance has one of the most sophisticated choreographies in the hand dances inherited in Fukushima Prefecture, and they would like to make continuing efforts to live up to the reputation.



A dance dedicated to the god of Kusano Shrine after the earthquake



Kusano Shrine before the earthquake

## Ogatsu Date no Kurofune Daiko [ Date's black ship drum in Ogatsu Town ]

"Ogatsu Date no Kurofune Daiko" was started in 1991 as one of the projects commemorating the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the town of Ogatsu, Monou County, Miyagi Prefecture.

"Date no Kurofune," or Date's black ship, is said to be a ship named San Juan Bautista that departed from Kuretsubo in the town of Ogatsu (present Ishinomaki City) carrying a Japanese envoy to Europe about 400 years ago in the Keicho era (17th century) (there are many opinions in this regard). With Japanese drums, the group's signature piece: "Date no Kurofune" depicts the voyage of the Keicho envoy sent to Europe under orders from the feudal lord Date Masamune, the founder of the Sendai Clan.

The members of the preservation association were invited to an event titled Anjinsai Taiko Kassen (Anjinsai festival drum battle) held in Ito City, Shizuoka Prefecture, when they felt uncertain as to how they would be engaged in their activities after they lost their homes due to the earthquake and were unable to find places to practice or store their drums. Mr. Yukihiko Yotsukura, a member of the preservation association of Ogatsu Date no Kurofune Daiko, looked back on that time, saying that the experience of performing in the Anjinsai festival

with nothing but the clothes on their back and their profound gratitude to the support from a lot of people motivated them to get back to their association's activities.

The association aims to serve as an organization that creates a bond between the town of Ogatsu and people leaving the town through proactive involvement with people and festivals in Ogatsu, such as joint activities with the town's Shishimai (lion dance) preservation association and provision of instructions about the art at Ogatsu Junior High School.



A mind-blowing performance that amazed the audience in Ogatsu Taiko Matsuri (drum festival)



The Japanese drums performance

### Note

Folk Performing Arts Now! is aimed at helping revitalize rural areas, in the true sense of the word, by spreading the value and appeal of folk performing arts handed down in such places as farming, mountain, and fishing villages so that as many people as possible can recognize them as regional resources or national treasures. We strive to give a sense of security and safety to both the performers and the audience at the performance event scheduled for Saturday, December 11 by adhering to the guidelines on preventive measures against Covid-19. An archive of the event will be available on the Internet in late January of 2022.