

READING & SCRIPT:

Shiro Sano

Actor



Raised in Matsue. Shiro was a founding member of "Shakespeare Theatre," a troupe estab-

lished in 1975. In 1980, he joined another troupe "Gekidan Jokyo Gekijo", which was headed by Juro Kara. He made his screen debut in 1986. In 1999, he produced his first movie *Karaoke*. He has acted in more than 110 productions, including foreign movies. Interested in the fantastic since childhood, he has long had a fascination with the works of Lafcadio Hearn, many of which are related to Matsue. Through his activities and engagement with visual works, he has developed a deep interest in, and passion for, the world of Hearn. He began "The Lafcadio Hearn Reading Performance" in Matsue in 2006, and this project has now come to occupy a central place in his life and work. His partner in this performance is the guitarist Kyoji Yamamoto. Shiro and Kyoji were classmates at Matsue Minami High School, and deepened their friendship through their mutual affection for music. In 2009, Shiro donated a first edition of *The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn: In Sixteen Volumes* to the American College of Greece.

MUSIC:

Kyoji Yamamoto

Guitarist/Musician



Born and raised in Matsue. Kyoji began playing the guitar at the age of fifteen, and enrolled

in the Yamaha Nemu Music Conservatory three years later. His reputation as an extremely talented guitarist was established right from the start of his career, and he was appointed as the lead guitarist and vocalist of BOW WOW. The band quickly gained popularity through touring with both Aerosmith and Kiss. Kyoji's dynamic playing and exceptional technique led him to become one of the forerunners of the Japanese rock scene. He later formed VOW WOW. Based in London, the band recorded and performed in the UK, around Europe and the US for four years. Highly regarded internationally, Kyoji has influenced some world-famous artists, and is ever-active on the global stage, demonstrating his wide range of musicianship. In addition to releasing several instrumental albums, he holds sessions with jazz-fusion musicians, performs in acoustic recitals, and creates the music for the "Lafcadio Hearn Reading Performance" in collaboration with Shiro Sano. He is also a renowned producer for other international artists.

LECTURE (9 & 11 OCT):

Bon Koizumi

Professor, the University of Shimane;
Great-grandson of Lafcadio Hearn



Born and raised in Tokyo, Bon majored in folklore at Seijo University and Graduate

School of Seijo University in Tokyo. His work involves the research and discovery of cultural resources for tourism development. For twelve years, he has led the Summer School for Children—Super Hearn Course—, a workshop aimed at nurturing the five senses of its participants.

In addition, he has produced ghost tours in Matsue and several other locations in Japan, and contributed to the promotion of cultural tourism and education. Recently, he has been following in the footsteps of Lafcadio Hearn, travelling around the world and producing various events in cities related to the writer, that focus on Hearn's open mind. Such activities have led to the successful development of partnerships with those cities. Besides his professorship, he is adviser to the Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum in Matsue, and director emeritus at the Yaizu Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum.

Lafcadio Hearn
Reading Performance

Maraudo 橋

Visitors from the World Beyond

DUBLIN

Fri 9 Oct, 1.30PM
St. Ann's Church

WATERFORD

Sun 11 Oct, 3PM
Garter Lane Arts Centre



GALWAY

Tue 13 Oct, 6.30PM
Nun's Island Theatre

on.fb.me/1eEEedj



ORIGINAL TEXT : Lafcadio Hearn
READING & SCRIPT: Shiro Sano
MUSIC: Kyoji Yamamoto
SUPERVISER & NAVIGATION: Bon Koizumi
ORGANISER: Sanin Japan-Ireland Association
CO-ORGANISER: Embassy of Japan in Ireland
SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS: TOYOKO INN, KINKODO LTD., FEXCO, Matsue City, St. Ann's Church, Garter Lane Arts Centre, Nun's Island Theatre, Embassy of Ireland in Japan, Galway 2020, Galway Arts Centre, Wa Café, The San-in Chuo Shimpo Newspaper Co., Ltd.
COOPERATORS: Fáilte Ireland/Tourism Ireland, Toshinobu Takashima



Message

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to have been given the opportunity to perform 稀人 Maraudo—Visitors from the World Beyond, a show comprising works by the great Irish writer Lafcadio Hearn.

We perform through the spoken word and music, with myself, Shiro Sano, in the role of the storyteller, and Kyoji Yamamoto playing the guitar. We have been performing Hearn's works regularly over the past nine years in our hometown of Matsue City, which is known as The Province of the Gods, and also in Tokyo.

In July, 2014, we performed in Greece, Hearn's birthplace, on the occasion of the 110th anniversary of his death.

Hearn was separated from his parents at an early age. He felt much affection for his Greek mother, but did not think well of his father, who moved the family to Ireland before separating from his wife and then leaving the

country. Even so, I think Hearn's sensitivity was developed through the fairytales of Ireland, and Celtic culture, and this is reflected in his writings.

Hearn may not have thought well of his father. However, when I read Hearn's works, I feel that in some way he is making an offering to his father, and trying to come to terms with his relationship with the parent whom he would not meet again.

We hope that, through our performance, Hearn's father can appreciate the profound world of his son.

Our performance is in Japanese, with English subtitles. We hope you do not find this too much of a burden. We would like you to immerse yourself in the sounds of Japanese, a language Hearn loved, and the music, which transcends the boundary between the East and the West.

We hope you enjoy our performance!

Shiro Sano

October, 2015

Commentary

Just as Ireland has the Hill of Tara, so does Japan have ancient stone circles. What lies beyond such circles? With music as our guide, we transcend time and space, dream and reality, and journey into the mind of Lafcadio Hearn, to perhaps glimpse the world beyond.

1. Lafcadio Hearn's Brother (*Atlantic Monthly*, January 1923)

Lafcadio Hearn was born in Greece and spent his childhood in Ireland, the birthplace of his father. He later moved to the USA, where he earned a living as a newspaper reporter and journalist.

Hearn was deeply hurt by his parents' divorce and the breakup of the family. However, his family remained in his thoughts, and he felt deep affection for them throughout his life.

A letter written by Hearn to his brother expressed his inner conflicts regarding his family. At the time Hearn was living in New York, a symbol of modern civilization. However Hearn preferred older, more traditional values over modern life.

We aim to express his feelings towards Ireland, Greece and his family as he battled with loneliness.

Our performance is in Japanese, with English subti-

les. We hope you do not find this too much of a burden. We would like you to immerse yourself in the sounds of Japanese, a language Hearn loved, and the music, which transcends the boundary between the East and the West.

2. Hi-mawari (*Kwaidan*, 1904)

This story is from *Kwaidan*, a work which is synonymous with Hearn in Japan. *Kwaidan* consists mainly of old Japanese tales, but in "Hi-mawari", which means "sunflower", Hearn recalls a day from his childhood in Ireland. He and his cousin Robert were playing in the woods, and while there, he told Robert an old Welsh story about a fairy ring. In his later years, Hearn saw a sunflower in the village of Takata near Tokyo, and was perhaps reminded of that day in the woods in Ireland.

The memories of that day with his cousin suggest that, despite Hearn's fear of fairies, ghosts, wanderers and other unworldly beings, in them, he also sensed a kind of freedom.

3. My Guardian Angel (*The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn* by Elizabeth Bisland, 1906)

Hearn was brought up by his great-aunt, who was a strict Catholic. Every autumn, a young woman, known as Cousin Jane, came to stay in

Hearn's great-aunt's house until the following spring. Jane had wanted to become a nun, and had strong beliefs which she preached in earnest. When Hearn asked her why he should try to please God more than to please anybody else, Jane's reply terrified him. From then on, Hearn hated Jane, and wished her dead. As if he had cursed her, Jane actually died.

However, Hearn was unaware of Jane's death, and one day, he saw her walking in the house, dressed in black. He followed her and tried to speak to her, but she did not reply. He recoiled in horror when, trying to look at her face, he realised that she had no face! Then, right before Hearn's eyes, Jane disappeared. Perhaps Hearn was haunted by the thought that by wishing Jane dead, he had killed her. Our performance includes requiem music for the repose of Jane's soul.

4. Mujina (*Kwaidan*, 1904)

This story is from *Kwaidan*. It takes place in Edo, the city now known as Tokyo. In those days, the city at night was not the bright place it is today, but was covered in darkness.

One night, an old merchant was walking up a slope which ran alongside a moat. There, he noticed a woman, who appeared to be from a good family, crouching and weeping bitterly. He stopped

to see if he could help her, but when she turned around, he saw that she had no face! The terrified merchant panicked and ran away. He ran towards a light in the distance, which turned out to be the lantern of a soba noodle stall. Breathlessly, he told the soba noodle seller what he had seen. The seller listened to the story about the woman with no face, but he did not seem at all frightened. He turned to the merchant, to show him his face...

The merchant's experience parallels the trauma Hearn experienced from the death of Cousin Jane.

5. Chin Chin Kobakama (*The Japanese Fairy Tales*, 1903)

This story is from *The Japanese Fairy Tales*. The book was made as a souvenir for people from overseas, and was printed on traditional Japanese paper.

A girl from a respectable family married a noble samurai warrior. She had been brought up with maids and servants attending to her needs, and thus had no experience of doing anything for herself. Her husband was often away at war, and left alone for long periods of time, she became lazy and idle.

One night, hundreds of fairy folk appeared in her room. She was terrified, and asked her husband to help her...but who were these folk?

And why did they suddenly appear? The answer lies in the young wife's actions.

This story demonstrates that the fairies of Ireland and the fairies of Japan may have quite a lot in common.

6. A Living God (*Gleaning in Buddha-Fields*, 1897)

The earthquake and tsunami which struck Japan on 11 March, 2011 caused huge damage and claimed the lives of many victims. The cleanup of the damaged Fukushima nuclear power plant continues to this day.

A devastating tsunami on a similar scale to this recent disaster struck Japan in 1896, a few years after Hearn's arrival. Perhaps Hearn had a presentiment that a similar disaster would occur in the future, when he wrote "A Living God".

This story is based on actual events from 1854, when a large earthquake struck Japan and triggered a tsunami. In telling this story, Hearn used the reporting skills he honed while working as a journalist in the USA. Hearn had previously written about the damage caused by a storm on the Grand Isle of Louisiana where he lived before coming to Japan, in his work *Chita: A Memory of Last Island*. Hearn was very conscious of natural disasters, and I think there is a lot we can learn from his insights into these occurrences.

How does Ireland, a country with no nuclear power stations, perceive Japan, a nation that while prone to earthquakes, has many such plants? And, if Hearn could see Japan now, what would he say?

If we consider that international society is focused on economic benefits, there can be no going back for Japan. It is true that Japan enjoys the benefits of such a society but it is because we are living in such a world that we can dream of peace. We have the chance to learn lessons from the past. We could harness the power of imagination to comprehend all things in nature, and avoid making the same mistakes again.

How can we accept our current reality and turn our dreams into a new reality? I feel that this is the question Hearn is asking us.

7. Hi-mawari (*Kwaidan*, 1904)

We end with a further passage from "Hi-mawari". However, the words which float in the air are unspoken. Let's imagine that inaudible voice, and the figure we cannot see.

Maybe the face of the harper who appeared in the forest of the fairies resembles that of Hearn? Or maybe it is a face with no features? Who can say?

Anything is possible because this is Ireland and the world beyond is never far away.