



Celebrating the 70th Issue of ザ・AZABU

The Azabu Regional City Office issues the Community Information Paper "The AZABU" to share and collect local information in the Azabu Area. The inaugural preparatory issue was published in May 2006, and the first issue was issued in October. "The AZABU" has been published now for twenty years, and this is issue No. 70. For each issue, editorial members bring ideas to the table and decide the paper's content.

There are no rules for topics featured on the cover page, but as many visually appealing photos are used, as large as possible.

In The AZABU No. 23 for March 2013, the first page of the series "Fascinating Artistic Azabu" appeared. The article featured an interview and works from Mr. IGARASHI Takenobu, the artist who created the Public Art piece "KUMO" (cloud) which floats softly close to Nanzan Elementary School at the far end of the Azabu Juban Shopping Street. After that, Mr. SASAKI Itaru, the artist who created the "Kimi-chan Statue" located in Patio Juban also in the Azabu Juban Shopping District, and Mr. UCHIDA Shigeru, the artist who created the street furniture titled "I Can't Give You Anything But Love..." located at one side of Roppongi Keyakizaka-Dori Street, were featured (in No. 24 and No. 25 respectively). They told us very interesting stories.

Also, the "Kanaderu Otome" statue (a girl who plays music), that stands on one side of Roppongi Crossing as the symbol of peace and reconstruction, created by Mr. HONGO Shin, and "A Statue of a Newspaper Boy" created by Ms. ASAKURA Kyoko located in Arisugawa-no-miya Memorial Park, were featured in No. 33 and No. 54 respectively, focusing on their histories and backgrounds.

As art can be interpreted in many ways, a wide variety of arts have been featured in "The AZABU". Some buildings themselves are art. Therefore, historic buildings such as the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Azabudai (in No. 40), the Former Ishimaru Residence in Minami Azabu (in No. 42) and Waro Flat in Azabudai (in No. 50), were featured in detail. Of course, new buildings were also focused on, such as the Azabu Library that reopened after renovation (in No. 29), and the Hungarian Cultural Institute Tokyo (later renamed the Liszt Institute Hungarian Cultural Center Tokyo) opened in Azabu Juban (in No. 51).

Unique Japanese arts were also featured. Among these were the stunning tile mural of a sailing ship in Takeno-Yu (in No. 43), the last remaining public bath in Azabu, and Japanese designed body armor (in No. 44), in connection with Daimyo Residences located in Azabu in the old days.

What kind of art will we encounter next? We are curious and quite excited about what fascinating art we will find up to issue No. 80, issue No. 100, and beyond! All suggestions from you are welcome.

All back issues of "The AZABU" can be accessed on the Minato City WEB page.



麻布びと

Azabu – A Human Story
Preserving Voices of Azabu
for the Future



Ms. KONDO Chiaki
(27 years old)
Tsugaru-jamisen
performer and
Japanese folk singer

An Azabu Nadeshiko (Japanese young lady) conveys memories of Azabu through the tones of Tsugaru-jamisen, a traditional Japanese three-stringed instrument. In this way, a traditional Japanese art form is maintained and preserved for the future.

She started learning to play the Tsugaru-jamisen and traditional folksongs early. After graduating university, she started performing as a Tsugaru-jamisen player and Japanese folk singer. This young rising star in the Japanese music scene, who recently expanded her range of expression as a singer-songwriter, is a true Azabu native. We asked Ms. KONDO Chiaki about her history so far and current thoughts.



Standing with her grandmother and grandfather who ran a sushi restaurant: Shot around the time she started going to folk singing lessons with her grandmother.

Young female Tsugaru-jamisen performers and Japanese folk singers are quite rare. How has she pursued a career in Japanese traditional music, while growing up in Azabu?

“My parents were always busy running a sushi restaurant, so I spent a lot of time with my grandmother. She took lessons in Japanese folk singing, and I went with her, which is how I became familiar with the Japanese folksong world.”

She started singing folksongs when she was as young as three years old. She was raised in a family that enjoyed Japanese folk songs as part of their daily life, and she is the fourth generation in such a family. Her singing instructor came from Akita Prefecture and used Tsugaru-jamisen for accompaniment during the lessons. Ms. KONDO was fascinated by the tones of Tsugaru-jamisen and when she was six years old, she said that she would like to try playing it herself. It was then she started learning to play the Tsugaru-jamisen.

By the time she was 27, she already had more than 20 years’ experience playing Tsugaru-jamisen. However, she did not intend to go professional in the beginning. “To tell you the truth, when I was a university student, I didn’t have any idea about what to do after graduation.” The self-assessment workshop she participated in during her job-hunting period, brought her to a turning point. She said that “when I was asked, “what would you really want to do, if you found out the world would end soon?” The first thing that came to her mind was “play music”.

“At that time, I realized that what I really wanted to do from the bottom of my heart was play music”. During the coronavirus pandemic, she started uploading videos of her playing Tsugaru-jamisen on YouTube while job hunting. She was invited to join a Japanese rock band and started music activities in October 2020. s well as performing in the Tessen-kai Noh Theater in Minami Aoyama, she performed overseas including in France, Poland and Thailand. She had continued her activities across genres, such as collaborating with a famous rock guitarist. Recently, she has collaborated with several performers who play other instruments such as trumpet, piano and erhu. Her chances to perform in Minato City, including in local bon-dance festival, and events in Iki-iki Plaze and autumn festivals at her old school (elementary school), have continued to increase.

She also is developing her range as a singer-songwriter with the stage name of “Cheek Ee”. She said, “I was very glad to hear that my original song was used for the opening of a community radio in Shiogama City in Miyagi Prefecture. I am exploring new forms of musical expression based on Japanese folksongs and Shamisen.”

This town of Azabu is very special for her, as she has spent a lot of her time in and around this area from nursery school to university days (she went to senior high school in a different area). “In my elementary school, I had many classmates from abroad, including Hungary, France, Myanmar, Korea, China and Taiwan. I realized later that it had seemed quite normal for me at the time, but it had been really valuable and special.” Based on this experience, she learned international cultural cooperation.

“When I return from regional or overseas tours, I am always really happy to be home. Azabu is very much an urban town, but for me, it is a very quiet and peaceful place. Azabu is rich in nature, and has many slopes, where new and old elements blend together. be-



lieve that the perfect balance of old and new is the appeal of the town of Azabu.”

The way she lives, maintaining Japanese traditional music while simultaneously pursuing modern forms of music, somehow reflects the town of Azabu, that builds upon its history, accepting various changes. For the last question, we asked what she dreams of for her future.

“The number of young people who want to learn to play traditional Japanese musical instruments and folk songs decreases every year. would like to deliver a healing sound, based on Tsugaru-jamisen and folk singing, expressing myself in my own personal style, which I believe “Cool”. I hope that my ideas can be passed down to the young generation, as well as the people of my generation. Music has the power to unite people into one beyond language, borders and generations. My dream is to contribute to peace with music in the future, as a goodwill ambassador for the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).”

What she can do, what she wants to do and what she should do, for all of them, she approaches seriously in her current activities. I want to deliver music with all my heart in each of my daily activities”, she added so. I want to deliver music with all my heart in each of my daily activities”.

Link to
Ms. KONDO Chiaki
WEB site
or YouTube
from here.



● KONDO Chiaki Official WEB site
<https://chiakikondo.studio.site/>



● YouTube
[https://www.youtube.com/
@chiakikondo3211](https://www.youtube.com/@chiakikondo3211)



Many cards, photos and pamphlets with her profile: There are also photos of her young days and performances in local festival.



Performance scene in “Fuyo-no-ma” (Fuyo Room) in Meiji Memorial Hall.



Photo shot when she won in the Japanese folksong contest in 2025 in the Adult and Young Group, organized by the Nishi Tokyo Branch of the Japanese Folksong and Dance Foundation.



Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary,
Her Excellency Ms. Mylene de Joya GARCIA-ALBANO

Republic of the Philippines

Area: 298,170 km² (About 80% the size of Japan)

Capital City: Manila (Metropolitan Area Population about 14,000,000)
(Population Census by PSA in 2024)

Languages: National Language is Filipino, and Official Languages are Filipino and English. (180 other languages are also spoken)

Head of the State: H. E. Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos, Jr.

Legislature: Bicameral System

(Upper House: 24 seats, six-year term,
no third consecutive term)
(Lower House: 311 seats, three-year term,
no fourth consecutive term)

Reference: Ministry of Foreign Affairs website
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/philippines/index.html>

Republic of
the Philippines

Interview Support:
Embassy of the Philippines in Japan

Visiting Ambassadors From the “World” of Azabu



Republic of the Philippines

From Azabu, the town where we are “Weaving the Future Together”
Philippines-Japan Diplomatic Relationship 70th Anniversary,
Aiming Even Further

The First Female Ambassador of the Philippines to Japan, exploring the Town, Culture
and the Next Generation

At the Embassy of the Philippines in Japan, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Her Excellency Ms. Mylene de Joya GARCIA-ALBANO (Hereinafter referred to as “Ambassador Garcia-Albano”), engages in daily activities, as the first female ambassador of the Philippines to Japan. The Ambassador Garcia-Albano has legal experience as a lawyer, and a career in public policy and international fields. She has been serving as an ambassador in Japan since 2023. She maintains the consistent position that connects people and bridges cultures, while valuing dialogue. Now, celebrating the 70th anniversary of normalization of diplomatic ties between Philippines and Japan, she focuses on a multicultural town where people happily coexist and a great future for the next generation.

Azabu, an Ideal Community

“Azabu is a true melting pot of cultures, where we can live safely”.

This is what Ambassador Garcia-Albano told us. While Azabu is an international town where there are many embassies, it has a friendly environment where families, senior citizens and working people coexist comfortably. Although she is in the position of representing a foreign mission, she doesn't feel nervous, but rather warmth and safety when she walks around town.

The Philippines-Japan Diplomatic Relationship at the 70th Anniversary

In 2026, the Philippines and Japan reached a major milestone, the 70th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic ties between Philippines and Japan. The relationship between Philippines and Japan was built upon a post-war reconciliation. Japan and the Philippines have shared values in terms of the rule of law and democracy. Based on it, our relationship has developed into a wide range of fields including economics, human resource development and even security. Today, our diplomatic relationship has enhanced its presence as an important strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific Region.

The Message behind the “Weaving” Symbol

The theme of the 70th anniversary is “Weaving the Future Together: Peace, Prosperity,

Possibilities.” The Commemorative Logo of the 70th Anniversary is “abaca”, Manila hemp, which was the first exported Filipino product to Japan. Together with this in the logo is Japanese “Shimenawa”, sacred Shinto rope. The different fibers, coming from two distinctly different cultures, are woven together to create a strong bond. This is a powerful symbol representing the 70-year Philippines-Japan Relationship.

A Window on Filipino Culture located in Azabu

There is the place where we can experience this “Weaving” together of our two cultures. It's called “SENTRO RIZAL Tokyo”, a cultural base in the Embassy of the Philippines in Tokyo. In addition to literary works and historical materials, there are traditional textiles, dolls in traditional costumes, musical instruments, etc. on display. The multitude of cultures that coexist in the Philippines can be experienced in this place. Woven fabric products are not mere handicrafts, but they are valuable artifacts that speak to nature, life and local memories.

In the Next 70 years, People will continue to support each other.

There are more than 340,000 Filipinos living in Japan*. In our daily life, the two countries are connected, through cultural exchange and local events. What Ambassador Garcia-Albano sets her sights on, as the First Female Ambassador of the Philippines to Japan, is the next 70 years. Her

wish is to build much more inclusive society through culture and dialogue, addressing shared issues such as climate change, isolation and loneliness. The future is already being woven together quietly from the corner of our Azabu town.

The 70-year story of the Philippines-Japan Diplomatic Relationship is the History of Strong Human Interaction.

Human interactions breathe life into the town of Azabu, creating bonds of culture and human relationships.

The bonds continue to grow even outside Japan.

Ambassador Garcia-Albano, thank you very much for your cooperation with our research, even though you are very busy.

* Resource: “Number of Foreign Residents as of the end of June 2025” press material prepared by the Immigration Services Agency of Japan
https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/publications/press/13_00057.html

Embassy of the Philippines in Japan Website
<https://tokyo.philembassy.net/>

AZABU and Cebu Island Two towns Far Apart, yet Somehow Similar

Cebu Island in the Philippines is very popular among Japanese people. Cebu island is geographically far from Azabu, but this island is known for its beautiful blue sea and friendly people. Cebu and Azabu have something in common. They both have an atmosphere where people naturally come together in a friendly atmosphere going beyond national and cultural differences. Cebu Island is not only tourist spot, but also a place of daily life. Azabu also is an international town, and a place of daily life. We imagine that this point would be the reason why Ambassador Garcia-Albano feels comfortable in this town. The closeness between people, must be the most important thing fostered by the Philippines-Japan relationship.

PICK UP

Holding the 70th Anniversary
of the Normalization
of Philippines-Japan Diplomatic Relations,
Commemorative Cultural Events

* In 2026, commemorative events include a film festival, a food festival, and a traditional performing arts performance. These events highlight the shared values and culture by of the Philippines and Japan. For details, access the Embassy of the Philippines in Japan Website or SNS that will keep you updated.



① The official name of the capital city of Manila is “Metropolitan Manila”. Metropolitan Manila is formed as a collective of Manila City and other 17 administrative municipalities.

② Cebu Island is a popular tourist spot even for Japanese people. Everybody is fascinated by the endless blue sky and its white sandy beach. The direct flight from Japan is very convenient.



③ The area around Donsol in Southern Luzon, is known as a whale shark migration route, the world's largest fish. Swimming with whale sharks is a popular attraction, where participants swim with whale sharks reaching up to 12 meters in length.

④ Philippine style shaved ice is called “Halo-halo”. This means “Mix-mix” in Tagalog, and is topped with fruit, ice cream and coconut. In the Philippines, this sweet is provided all year round.



The World Heritage Historic City of Vigan is located about 400km north of Manila, where historic cobblestone streets and a townscape that looks the same as when it was built in the Spanish colonial period.



The World Heritage Paoay Church on Luzon Island, one of the Baroque churches of the Philippines: It is one of the few Spanish-style churches designed by Filipinos.

● Photos from ① to ⑥ are provided by Philippine Department of Tourism.
(Researched by KOBORI Mayuko and TAKAYANAGI Yukiko and Text by KOBORI Mayuko)



SENTRO RIZAL-Tokyo: Library established in the Embassy of the Philippines in Tokyo. This library is a hub of Filipino culture in Japan, where books and materials of Filipino history, culture and literature are collected.



Bust of Jose Rizal: The library in the Embassy of the Philippines in Tokyo was named after Jose Rizal who was a philosopher, writer and medical doctor representative of the Philippines in the 19th century. He is very well known as a national hero, and for his literary works including “Noli Me Tangere” (Touch Me Not) and “El Filibusterismo” (The Reign of Greed), etc.



Woven fabric (Inabel fabric): Traditional woven fabric originated in the Ilocos Region in the north part of the Philippines, which features patterns inspired by nature and the environment.



Dolls: These dolls dressed in Filipino traditional costumes, such as clothing made of Pina (pineapple) fiber, show the spread of weaving culture in the Philippines.



Musical Instrument (Kulintang): Percussion instrument using brass-made gongs, indigenous to the Mindanao region in the southern part of the Philippines, that is played in religious festivals



Mr. Sébastien Martin's Profile

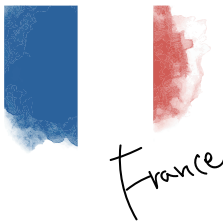
- He was born in 1977 in Nantes, France.
- He built up culinary experience in high-end French restaurants in Brittany and other places in France, England and Italy.
- He learned how to cook Japanese cuisine under Chef YOSHINO Tateru in the restaurant "Stella Maris" in Paris.
- In 2003, he came to Japan for the grand opening of the two-star Michelin restaurant "L'ATELIER de Joel Robuchon" in Roppongi Hills.
- In 2004, he was inaugurated as the Executive Chef of the French Embassy in Japan (Current Occupation). He handles events and receptions in the Embassy and prestigious brands.



Editor's Azabu Enjoy Eating Report 9

Serving in Azabu for 20 years, Mr. Sébastien Martin, Executive Chef at the French Embassy in Japan, speaks about cuisine as a bridge between Japan and France.

Mr. Sébastien Martin who came from the Brittany region in France, has supported the kitchen in the French Embassy for more than twenty years. He is the Ambassador's chef and has been connecting people and culture through cuisine with Japanese local food. His passion for this is described below.



A Chef who grew up in Brittany

The Brittany Peninsula is located in the northwest of France. This area is surrounded by the sea and has an abundance of fish and dairy products. Local food culture is rooted in this land. Sébastien's father ran a bakery and crepe shop. He watched his father working and wanted to become a chef since he was a child.

"The Cuisine of Brittany is simple. When we have good, natural ingredients, we try not to process it more than we have to". They have the wisdom to avoid wasting the limited amount of seasonal fresh food and improve on the ways to store it in daily life.



Sébastien's Local Cuisine "Nantes Cake": Photo provided by Mr. Sébastien Martin

Encountering a Japanese Chef helped deepened his interest in Japan

After graduating from cooking school, he had many chances to work with Japanese chefs in several places in France and Italy.

"Japanese people are very diligent, and value both technical skill and careful preparation. I also greatly value these qualities." They prepare the ingredients carefully and waste nothing. They prioritize quality and level of completion over flashy presentation. He felt a sense of affinity with Japanese chefs and was naturally fascinated by the idea of cooking in Japan.

In 2004, while he was working for a restaurant in Roppongi, he heard that the French Ambassador's chef would be retiring. Sébastien was interested in the job at the Embassy. He passed the interview and was hired. "There was no cooking test. I think that they choose staff based on the character and

mindset of the applicant". The embassy chose well, and he has provided them with 20-years of service.

The job of the Ambassador's Chef is to "Treat guests to a great culinary experience."

The work he does for the Embassy varies depending on the event or guest. For a sit-down dinner, he has prepared meals for up to 120 guests, and for a large reception such as the Paris Festival, he has served meals for 1,500 people. Currently, he works with three full time staff, with part timers are called in when they are very busy. "The more guests we have, the more important careful planning becomes", Sébastien told us. The sauce or stew is prepared in advance, with thorough preparation so that he can move without hesitation on the day.

His dishes are not limited to the Brittany-style, and he makes French local cuisine such as Southern French or Alsatian, depending on the occasion. He told us that he focuses on balancing flavors in particular, using Japanese fish and vegetables with French culinary techniques. "It is an important point for both Japanese and French cuisines, that base sauces and dashi are essential". Focusing on this shared point, he has been carefully creating dishes one at a time.

Also, when Japanese ingredients are to be used, he feels strongly about the connection to Brittany. He commented that "Both places are located close to the sea and all the ingredients in both places vary depending on the season. Also, our way of thinking is similar in that umami is brought out through fermentation and preservation." They are connected at the core, such as the importance of seafood freshness, and the inherent taste of the ingredients must be highlighted with simple cooking. In this way, the umami is brought out, etc.

While going about his daily tasks, Sébastien's interests have expanded naturally, not limited to "cooking only", but also to the exploration of ingredients from all over Japan, how it is produced, and even the people involved.



Menu

- 1 Nakamura's "Gold Egg", with Sevruga caviar crème and lime
- 2 Florilège of small vegetables produced on Noto Peninsula, and Macadamia hummus
- 3 Velouté (creamy soup) with a gentle spice aroma
- 4 Fine jellied Blue Swimmer Crab, and Smooth cauliflower cream
- 5 Lobster produced along the Brittany Coast, Creamy green pea purée, and Spicy paprika pepper creamy sauce
- 6 Assorted chocolates, Milk and peanuts, Dark roast espresso, Chili pepper, Orange & Vanilla & Caramel

Photos provided by Mr. Sébastien Martin

Visiting everywhere in Japan to learn about local food and meet people

"Brittany People love to travel. Going to unknown places, checking out local food and talking to people, that's the best way to learn." Such is the temperament of the Brittany People, and his roots as a chef.

He actually visited the places Japanese food is produced, including Miyagi, Noto, Fukui, Kagoshima and Miyazaki. He also talked to producers and ate in local restaurants. In this way, he became much more focused in his cooking.

He was amazed by the difference in the taste of beef depending on the region. "For meat from the same type of cow is totally different depending on where it is from". His experience brings out the best of what he is cooking.

In the Embassy he often uses ingredients from all over Japan and sometimes conveys their backgrounds. "Information about where the ingredients come from can be conveyed through the way it is cooked, which is very important." This is a good way to convey the charm of local areas.



Left Photo) Visiting producers on Notojima Island in Nanao City, Ishikawa Prefecture
Right Photo) In the Kampo Wagyu Farm, in Sekimura Village, Miyazaki Prefecture
Photo provided by Mr. Sébastien Martin

In the Town of Azabu, Everyday Communication Continues.

Azabu is not only a place of work for Sébastien, but is also a place he has lived for a long time. Through his job in the French Embassy, his ties with the local community have gradually deepened.

In particular, the most memorable project was his experience connecting with schools and school children in and around Azabu. Students from the International French School visited the French Embassy and Sébastien cooked together with them. "The children cut vegetables and carefully smelled the sauce very seriously! They were so cute. This experience left me with a much stronger impression than that any large official event."

Sébastien makes cooking videos and participates in activities to introduce French cuisine to school lunches. He spreads French food culture through school lunches. He interacts through cooking not only on special occasions, but also in daily life.

For his future, he told us hesitantly, "It is still just a dream, but in the future, I hope to run a small bakery or restaurant close to the sea, like my father."

His journey as a chef, fostered by the seas of France and Japan, will continue indefinitely.

French Embassy <https://jp.diplomatie.gouv.fr/ja>



X (Formerly Twitter)



Facebook



Instagram



“Roppongi Jiro” A Singer from the Mori Building



Mr. Roppongi Jiro

Mr. Roppongi Jiro (true name KAWASAKI Toshio) (hereinafter called “Jiro-san”) joined Mori Building Co., Ltd. after he graduated from the Chuo University Faculty of Commerce. He was appointed as President of Laforet Harajuku Co. Ltd., after serving as Director of Mori Building Management Co. Ltd., Managing Director of Mori Building Distribution Systems Co. Ltd., and Director of the Mori Building Co. Ltd. He retired the company after serving as an advisor, and for the next stage of his life, he pivoted to volunteer activities. He chose special nursing homes for the elderly as a way of repaying the kindness he had received from his parents. His volunteer work includes spoken word performances and singing, where he talks about the history of the Showa Era and sings old Showa Era Japanese pop songs together with the residents. The benefits to their health are easy to see, from their smiles and obvious stress relief, etc. After the coronavirus pandemic, he started streaming videos on the YouTube channel “M-Musubi”. When he worked at the Mori Building as the Executive in charge of all commercial facilities, he was involved in the urban development of Roppongi and Harajuku such as Omotesando Hills as well as the Keyaki-zaka illumination projects, Halloween Parties and the Tokyo International Film Festival, etc. When Roppongi Hills was completed, he set up the Roppongi Hills Bon Dance suitable for a new Roppongi Town, co-organized by the Mori Building and the Roppongi Hills Community Association, and he made his debut as a singer named “Roppongi Jiro”. He carries a karaoke set in his own car and sets it up himself in nursing homes to comfort residents. When I see him, I look up to and relate to him living this stage of his life. What we are concerned about is, the succession problem of the “Roppon-jin Ondo” (Roppongi people dance music) singer. If they ask a professional, it costs money. So, an audition was held at TV Asahi’s studio where amateurs who wanted to sing “Roppon-jin Ondo”, gathered together. Judges included Jiro-san, Mr. HANAYAGI Itoyuki, Master of Hanayagi School of Japanese Dance, and Mr. ITO Kasuga, Chairperson of the Community Department of Roppongi Community Association, and some others. I also myself participated in the audition to make it exciting, but was soon disqualified.

For “Roppon-jin Ondo”, Jiro-san’s “kobushi-mawashi” (vibrato) and tone perfectly fit the song. Jiro-san has the great love for the local community, and there is no other person but he who is a good match. However, he is elderly. If no successor is found, I imagine a generative AI Jiro-san would have to sing that song. It seems that “Roppongi Jiro” is inseparable from “Roppon-jin Ondo”.



During a break at Jiro-san’s performance: showing from left, Jiro-san, legendary Muse “Ms. KOBAYASHI Asami” who participates in the Bon Dance festival every year, and me

Roppongi Jiro’s debut song “Roppon-jin Ondo”

“Roppon-jin Ondo” is a dance song, sung in the Roppongi Bon Dance Festival held every year in the Roppongi Hills Arena (multipurpose square) for three days on Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the end of August, the same time as the Azabu Juban Summer Festival.

Unlike the “Roppongi Ondo” or “Roppongi Kou-ta” from before, “Roppon-jin Ondo” now includes the word “Person”, not “Tree” (“Roppon-gi” stands for “Six Trees”). “Roppon-jin” stands for the people who live and work in and come to Roppongi for enjoyment.

When Roppongi Hills was completed, this word “Roppon-jin” was created as catch copy. In Roppongi, there are many shrines and each of them has a unique annual festival of their own. Also, each neighborhood association has its own local festival. Non-professional people were voluntarily involved in the planning of Bon Dance event where many people can participate in, and the creation of “Roppon-jin Ondo” song. The event planning was centered around Jiro-san, who was at that time the person in charge of events organized by the Mori Building. The late Mr. MORI Minoru, the owner of the Mori Building Co. Ltd. at that time, praised Jiro-san who had dreamed of becoming a professional singer and was confident in his singing. Mr. MORI told him “You planned a very interesting project! You should sing the Bon Dance song live on the platform when the Bon Dance is performed”. In this way, Jiro-san was chosen as the singer. For “Roppon-jin Ondo”, lyrics were written by volunteer company staff members and the music was composed by Mr. YAMAUTSURI Takahiro. At first, the lyrics only went up to the sixth verse. However, Mrs. MORI Yoshiko, wife of the owner, requested that “Because Roppongi will become a cultural town, please include the museum in the lyrics”. In the end, there became 9 verses. For example, in the second verse, lyrics translate to, “Hah, when we watch the sunrise from above the clouds, happiness will surely come. We watch movies, go shopping and enjoy delicious food. Six rings will change the world. Roppon-jin, enjoy to the fullest! Sore Yoi Yoi Yoi, Sore Yoi Yoi Yoi”. It is clearly a song written by amateurs. However, the lyrics perfectly match the song and are very enjoyable. I suppose that the number of verses will increase according to the flow of the times and changes in Roppongi. The Yushima Tenjin Shrine’s Shiraume-Taiko drummers (young women’s Japanese drum team), liven up the Bon Dance from a high wooden platform. The dance was choreographed by Mr. HANAYAGI Itoyuki. On the festival day, the beautiful young ladies of the Itoyuki Hanayagi Dance Group dance around the singer “Jiro-san” on the platform. “Tokyo Ondo”, “Hanabi Ondo” and “Doraemon Ondo” that kids are crazy about, are sung. However, “Roppon-jin Ondo” is repeatedly sung both at the beginning and at the end, and also for an encore. In this way, the Roppongi Hills original Bon Dance song “Roppon-jin Ondo”, sung by Jiro-san, was completed.



Bon Dance shown from Keyakizaka Complex on the 1st floor of the Hillside building in Roppongi Hills



Bon Dance scene with “Roppon-jin Ondo”

The Musical Drama “Rakugeki Roppongi Gaku” is performed on the eve of the Roppongi Hills Bon Dance Festival

“Dengaku” is a form of public entertainment that became all the rage nationwide after first developing in Kyoto in the Middle Ages. It appeared as a rice planting festival, and festivals praying for a good harvest. After the Kamakura Period, elements of acrobatic performances and performing arts were added to it, and professional performers “Dengaku Hoshi” appeared. However, in the Muromachi Period “Sarugaku” (Monkey Music) and “Nohgaku” (Noh Plays) began to displace “Dengaku” performing arts. Around this time, the late Mr. NOMURA Kosuke, Kyogen performer (NOMURA Mannojo the 5th), led the revival of it as “Daidengaku” for the modern age. A Roppongi Hills Version was introduced into this festival and renamed “Rakugeki Roppongi Gaku”. Under the instructions of the non-profit organization “ACT.JT”,



Group Photo of Performers in Costume

and in cooperation with the Mori Building and the Roppongi Hills Community Association, every year this performing art is performed on the eve of the Roppongi Hills Bon Dance Festival. “Bangaku” is inspired by “Yamabushi Kagura” (mountain ascetic kagura), and is a performing art where performers dance powerfully but lightly. “Wazaogi” is a semi-professional dance group, whose members study and eventually take over “Daidengaku”. As well as “Wazaogi”, people of all ages from seniors to elementary school students can participate in “Bangaku”. Performers practice for a month and a half to foster a sense of unity and learn to dance lively to the up-tempo rhythm of Japanese drums and flutes. Towards the end, performers and spectators really let loose and all dance together. The entire venue is swept up in a whirlwind of enthusiasm. Spectators are fascinated by the multicolored outfits and instruments being played, which immerse themselves in the magnificent space. I have been participating in this dance festival as the oldest dancer for a long time, and I feel like the whole world is connected, seeing large crowds of people of all ages and nationalities dancing together as one. I feel sublime bliss.



“Bangaku” Dance performance in the “Rakugeki Roppongi Gaku” music drama



“Rakugeki Roppongi Gaku” practice scene in Minato City Roppongi Junior High School



The Mansion* of the Former Viscount Nabeshima was built at 1- Mamiana-cho in the middle of the Meiji Period. Later, it was divided in two, and transferred to Gokokuji Temple and Myojuji Temple. In the last edition, it was reported that both buildings still exist. In this edition, the history of the building is uncovered and the evolution of the town and associated people are described.

The place* is collectively called "Mamiana" in this edition. It had changed to "Ikura Mamiana-cho" in 1872, "Mamiana-cho" in 1911 and finally to "Azabu Mamiana-cho" in 1947. The "Viscount Nabeshima" refers to the "Former Hasunoike Domain Lord Nabeshima Family". However, the "Former Kashima Domain Lord Nabeshima Family" and the "Former Ogi Domain Lord Nabeshima Family" were also Viscounts.

Mamiana-cho in the Meiji Period

NABESHIMA Naotada, the 9th head lord of the Former Hasunoike Domain family, Hizen Province, lived at 12, Shin-Ryudo-cho (present-day 3-4, Roppongi 7-chome) where their domain residence in Edo remained for some while after the Meiji Restoration (1868). Around 1893 after Naotada passed away, NABESHIMA Naotoh, the 10th head of the Nabeshima Family moved to 1- Mamiana-cho.

What it was like back then is described in a book titled "Dai Tokyo Hanjoki" written by SHIMAZAKI Toson, a famous poet and novelist in the Meiji Period. Along the street (present-day Gaien-Higashi-Dori Avenue) going from Ikura Crossing to Ikura-Katamachi, it was said that "on the left-hand side there were many residences including Nabeshima, Matsudaira, Tsuzuki, Ariga, and the Sagara Families, etc. On the right-hand side, there were the residences of the Inaba, Tokugawa and Hoshi Families, etc. They were all magnificent residences, and each of them had a tall massive wall and gate", and "Until the first year of Taisho, in this area there was no train running and it was in dead quiet even in the daytime".

The Town Changed after the Great Kanto Earthquake

In 1923, the Great Kanto Earthquake occurred. It was decided that central government ministries and agencies were to be concentrated in the Kasumigaseki area as part of the reconstruction plan. There were Embassies or Legations of the Soviet Union (present-day Russia), Italy, Belgium and China which had all relocated to the Kasumigaseki area. Large former Daimyo residence sites were considered as relocation sites for these diplomatic missions. For the Soviet Embassy, the Baron Tsuzuki Family Residence (total about 14,630m²) adjacent to Viscount Nabeshima Family Residence in Mamiana-cho, was selected. For the Legation of Republic of China, part of the Marquis Tokugawa Family Residence across from Nabeshima Family site (present-day Diplomatic Archives Main Building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan) was selected.

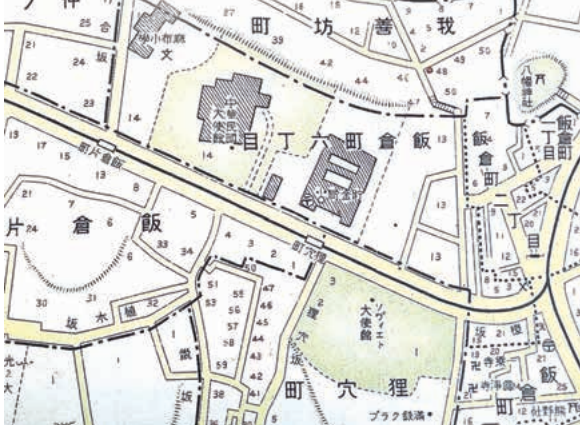
NABESHIMA Naokazu, the 11th head of the Hasunoike Nabeshima Family, decided to sell his family's residence, and moved to a western-style building at 28 - Fujimi-cho (present-day Minami-Azabu 4-chome) and lived there temporarily. After that, he built a "South of France style" building in Aoyama Mimami-cho and moved there. Naokazu had resided in France during his service in the army and had become familiar with foreigners. This is perhaps why he chose to live in a western-style building. The entrance hall of their old building in Mamiana-cho was transferred to Gokokuji Temple. In addition, the Japanese-style building that had been extended on the occasion of Naokazu's marriage in 1904, was transferred to Myojuji Temple. It was 1928 when Soviet Embassy building was completed on the site of the former Nabeshima Family's residence. 4

Myojuji Temple and UCHIDA Yoshikazu

Do you know the name "UCHIDA Yoshikazu" (1885 - 1972)? He was a famous architect who served as President of the University of Tokyo. He designed a series of buildings called "Uchida Gothic", including the Yasuda Auditorium and led the architectural industry from the Taisho to the Showa Era. Uchida's family were rice dealers in Fukagawa and they had been long-time parishioners of the Myojuji Temple that was located in Fukagawa Sarue at that time. Therefore, it is said that Yoshikazu supported the construction for Myojuji Temple, damaged by the Great Kanto Earthquake, when the temple moved from Fukagawa to Setagaya. The Viscount Nabeshima Residence became unoccupied after the Great Kanto Earthquake, and Myojuji Temple knew about it. The temple decided to move the Japanese-style building in the Viscount Nabeshima Residence to their ground as a guest house. It seems that Yoshikazu was involved in this as well.



Present Embassy of the Russian Federation in Japan: There is a wide-open sky above the property.



In 1937 Map referred from Minato City Local History Museum "Additional Minato City Modern Times Area Map Azabu-Roppongi" published in 2010



Myojuji Temple Guest House (From Former Viscount Nabeshima Residence) Great Hall 1, 3, Appearance 2



After that, son and grandson of Yoshikazu also became architects. They have conducted building maintenance and have done historical research together with successive chief priests of Myojuji Temple. In 2008, the relocated building was designated as a tangible cultural property by Setagaya City.

This time, I was able to enter the great hall on the 2nd floor of the guest house with special consideration from Myojuji Temple. There is a coved and coffered high ceiling, and sliding glass doors on the veranda surrounding the tatami room. Really superb. The Nabeshima Family entertained their foreign guests with chairs and tables on the tatami. This is a valuable chance to experience the living space of Daimyo peers between the end of the Meiji Period and the beginning of Taisho Period. 1, 2, 3

UCHIDA Yoshikazu had deep ties to Azabu. His mother brought him up as a single mother. The parents' house of his mother was in Azabu Takeya-cho (present-day Minami Azabu 1-chome). In 1909, he moved out and became independent. He lived in 12 - Ryudo-cho (Former Nabeshima residence site before it was moved to Mamiana-cho, a mysterious connection). In 1927, he built his own house on the top of Hotta- zaka Slope (present day Nishi Azabu 4-chome) in Kogai-cho and made this place his final home. The Institute of Public Health building designed by himself (present-day Minato City Local History Museum) would likely have been visible from his study window.

Traces of Mamiana-cho left in Gokokuji Temple

The construction time or relocation background of the former entrance hall moved to Gokokuji Temple, are unknown so far. However, the daughter (born in 1924) of NABESHIMA Naokazu said that "I heard often from my mother that the gate of the old building was donated to Gokokuji". Therefore, the entrance hall would be older than the guest house relocated to Myojuji Temple. In Gokokuji Temple, the transferred entrance hall is sparingly used as the entrance hall of the national treasure "Gekkoden Hall" (Moonlight Hall) and is beautifully preserved. 5 Also, on the wall close to the back door, a metal plate engraved with "Azabu Mamiana" remains almost intact. 6 When I inquired about it to the "Electric Power Historical Museum", they answered that it would be from the "Tokyo Electric Light Co., Ltd." the first electric power company in Japan. When electric power was first supplied to the Nabeshima residence and when the plate was put up cannot be confirmed. However, the power supply to Azabu-ku started in 1891. At that time, power lines had already been installed along the present Gaien-Higashi Dori Avenue. Such a small plate is surely a valuable historical marker.



Gokokuji Temple (Entrance Hall of Former Viscount Nabeshima Residence)



Tokyo Electric Light Co., Ltd. Plate

● Main References:
"About Myojuji Temple Guest House: Former Nabeshima Residence" written by MIYOSHI Hiroaki, published by Hongakuzan Myojuji Temple in 2009
"Recollection of Miyoshi Nissho Holy Priest" written by MIYOSHI Hiroaki, published by Hongakuzan Myojuji Temple in 1991
"Corrected and Added Directory of the Peerage" published by Hakubunkan in 1894
"History of the Embassy" (Embassy of Russian Federation in Japan website)
"About Relocation of the Russian Federation in Japan Embassy" (National Archive of Japan Request No. Hei 15 Zaimu 00232100)
● Research Support and Material Provision
Hokke School (Honmon Sect) Hongakuzan Myojuji Temple, Electric Power Historical Museum

(Researched, text and photos shot by YAMAKI Ayako)



Information Items in July



Declaration System for Current Owners of Fixed Asset Tax and City Planning Tax (Within Tokyo's 23 Wards).

Based on the Declaration System for Current Owners, when the owner of the land/house dies, within three months, the new owner such as a successor (current owner) needs to declare himself/herself as the new owner. For more information of the system, access the website of Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation or contact the office as follows.

When the owner or the land/house dies, please consider registering the inheritance as soon as possible.

Inquiries:
For properties, etc., located in Minato City:
Minato City Metropolitan Taxation Office Tel: 03-5549-3800 (Rep.)

Notification about continuation of the Relief Measures for Fixed Asset Tax and City Planning Tax in FY2026. (Within Tokyo's 23 Wards).

(1) Measures to reduce the upper limit charge level of Fixed Asset Tax/City Planning Tax for commercial areas, etc., (2) Tax Exemption for Fixed Asset Tax/City Planning Tax for small non-residential land, (3) Tax Exemption for Fixed Asset Tax/City Planning Tax for small residential land, (4) Tax Exemption for Fixed Asset Tax/City Planning Tax for houses rebuilt or renovated for earthquake resistance, (5) Tax Exemption for Fixed Asset Tax/City Planning Tax for the houses rebuilt or land where old house has been demolished, in the Fireproof Special Zone, are also applied throughout FY 2026. (For (4) and (5), the application period is extended to the end of FY2030).

For more information, access Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation Website or contact the office as follows.

Inquiries:
For house/land located in Minato City
Minato City Metropolitan Taxation Office Tel: 03-5549-3804 (Fixed Asset Tax Team)

Tax Statement can be used when applying for real estate registration.

When applying for real estate registration, the price of your fixed assets should be written down on the form. This is for calculating the registration license tax amount. The price can also be confirmed in the Tax Statement sent to you in June along with the "Fixed Asset Tax & City Planning Tax Payment Notice". So, the Valuation of Fixed Assets paid certificate is not required.

For more information, access Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation Website.

https://www.tax.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/shitsumon/real_estate/o#o31

Save-Energy Promotion Tax System for Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Owners Tax Reduction for Corporate Business Tax and Individual Business Tax

Tokyo Metropolitan Government reduces the Corporate Business Tax and Individual Business Tax to support small and medium-sized enterprise owners for them to obtain the energy-saving equipment, etc.

For details, refer to "About the Metropolitan Tax Mitigation System for Environment" on the Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation Website.

Inquiries:
For the Save-Energy Promotion Tax System for Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Owners, contact the office as follows.

Responsible Metropolitan Taxation Office or Office in charge of Each Tax Item
Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation:
Taxation Department (For Corporations): 03-5388-2963
Taxation Department (For Individuals): 03-5388-2969

For Tokyo Carbon Reduction Reporting Program and Recommended Equipment
Reception Counter for Tokyo Carbon Reduction Reporting Program: 03-5388-3433
For Recommended Equipment: 03-5990-5087



Inaugural "Roppongi Clean-up Special Project: Fallen Leaf Clean-up & Sweet Potato Roasting"!

Roppongi Hills Community Association first held the "Roppongi Clean-up Special Project: Fallen Leaf Clean-up & Sweet Potato Roasting" event on January 18th, 2026 (Sunday) in cooperation with the Nanzan Elementary School Area Disaster Prevention Council!

A total of 300 participants came together under a clear blue sky and mainly adults cleaned up around the neighborhood. Also, children collected leaves in Mohri Garden in Roppongi Hills. After that, they moved to the school ground of Roppongi Junior High School and enjoyed roasted sweet potato over a bonfire to strengthen connections.

The event has become a true community-wide effort. Minato City Azabu Regional City Office provided equipment for preparing pork miso soup, and Azabu Fire Station offered fire extinguishing and fire truck ride experiences in support of children. Neighboring participants enjoyed interacting with each other and the event led to an improvement in disaster prevention capabilities. We will work hand in hand with our neighbors to be an even more open Community Association where anyone can join.

Contributor: Roppongi Hills Community Association



● The Roppongi Clean-up event is held on the third Saturday (basically) every month. We look forward to your participation.
● <https://www.roppongihills.com/association/cleanup/>

● Roppongi Hills Community Association Activity Information (Instagram) can be accessed from here.



Why don't you join us? Come and join the Roppongi Safety and Peace of Mind Project Campaign!

Once a month, local residents, staff members of shops and companies, and government bodies come together to carry out cleaning activities around Roppongi Crossing. Coffee packs with an original design are handed out to pedestrians as a PR activity for the Roppongi Charter for Safety and Peace of Mind. Cleaning with everyone and promoting "good manners" can help you see the town from a different perspective. Sometimes, you can exchange smiles with the people walking down the road, and they might say, "Keep it up!" or Thank you!" How about spending a fulfilling time with us? If you are interested in our activities, don't hesitate to contact us!



Campaign activity



Information from the Azabu Regional City Office

The FY2026 Minato City Comprehensive Disaster Prevention Drills will be conducted in Azabu!

The Minato City Comprehensive Disaster Prevention Drills will be conducted at a site in Azabu to share the lessons learned from past disasters and prepare for future ones, such as a large earthquake that could directly hit the Tokyo area.

Date and Time

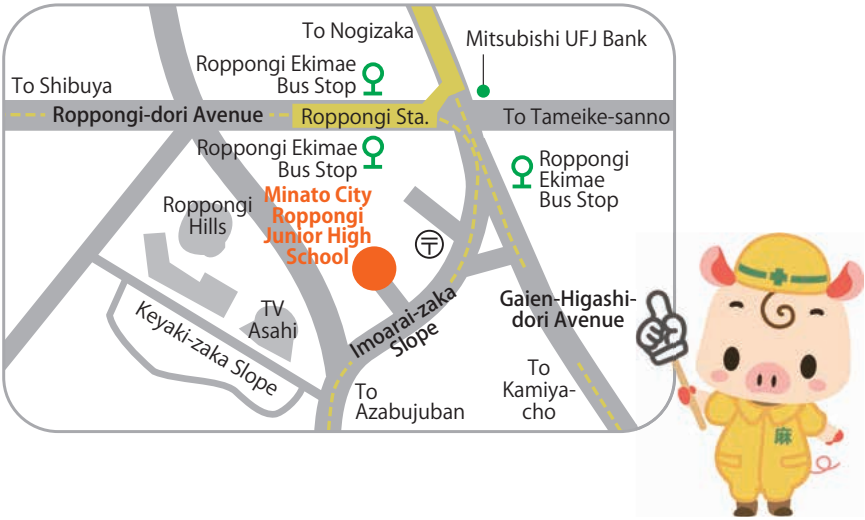
9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Sunday October 25, 2026 (planned)

Location

Minato City Roppongi Junior High School (6-8-16 Roppongi, Minato City)

Drills

Drills will be carried out on the school ground and in the gymnasium.



Full of neighborhood information not found in any guidebook! The community social media app “PIAZZA”



Connect with other Azabu lovers!

This app gathers local information useful for daily life in the Azabu area from users, such as: “We are holding a festival in Azabu-juban.” “I’m thinking of giving my electric fan away to someone in the area.” “Please recommend a dentist for children in or around the Roppongi/Higashi-azabu area.” etc.

New information from the government such as crime or disaster prevention information, local government news, and event news will be posted when relevant.

You’ll be able to find anything and everything on the PIAZZA app, from general and interesting information about the area (without having to go out and search yourself!) to specific topics like how to address concerns about taking care of children locally.

Inquiries: Collaboration Project Subsection, Collaboration Project Section, Azabu Regional City Office
Tel: 03-5114-8802



Three-step registration procedure

- STEP 1

Download the PIAZZA application.
- STEP 2

Register your name through your email address or Facebook account.
- STEP 3

Input your name and birthplace and select “Azabu/Roppongi Area”.

Your information will help somebody!
Get involved to enjoy living in Azabu even more!



Download the app from here.



The “Home Evacuation Guidebook For When an Earthquake Strikes” is being distributed!



If your house is not damaged in an earthquake etc., do not go to a shelter: consider “Home Evacuation,” or “sheltering in place,” and continue living at home.

Shelters are temporary living spaces for people who cannot live at home, because their homes were seriously damaged, collapsed or burnt down, etc. Living space in a shelter is limited. Because of this, we need to be careful about privacy, health management and hygiene management (such as for toilets, etc.) Therefore, each of us needs to realize the importance of home evacuation.

For this reason, the Azabu Regional City Office has created the “Home Evacuation Guidebook For When an Earthquake Strikes,” recommending home evacuation in the Azabu area following an earthquake. This guidebook outlines important details regarding safely living at home during a disaster, telling us exactly what home evacuation means, what we should prepare, etc.

This guidebook is being distributed at the Collaboration Project Section counter at the Azabu Regional City Office.

More details about the guidebook can be found on the Minato City website.

Access our website using this QR code to read the “Home Evacuation Guidebook For When an Earthquake Strikes”.



Evacuation shelters can become overcrowded.



Inquiries: Collaboration Project Subsection, Collaboration Project Section, Azabu Regional City Office
Tel: 03-5114-8802

● Locations of the Newsletter: Roppongi 1-chome, Roppongi, Hiroo, Azabujuban and Akabanebashi subway stations, The Chii Bus, Minato Library, Azabu Library, Minami-azabu Iki-Iki Plaza, Nishi- azabu Iki-Iki Plaza, Iigura Iki-Iki Plaza, Azabu Civic Center, Azabu Regional City Office, etc.

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Editor’s Note

Azabu is of course actually in Tokyo. However, for me, it sometimes feels like a unique little “village”. This world is smaller than you think, there are long-standing relationships, and a time-honored community. I heard that there are some people who move into the city from the countryside because they are not good at interacting with others. However, this is a similar “village-like” area in the middle of Tokyo. After all, whether in the countryside or the city, when we interact with others, we all converge in an area with a radius of around 5 meters. We as modern people want to enjoy our freedom. However, our happiness is greatly influenced by the relationships we have with others. This can be seen as somewhat paradoxical.

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“Minato Call” information service answers your questions about everyday life! Feel free to ask about services provided by City Hall, facility guides, event information, and more. Available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm every day.

* This service is also available in English.

Minato Call

Tel: 03-5472-3710 Fax: 03-5777-8752

Inquiry submission form: <https://www.city.minato.tokyo.jp/kouchou/kusei/kocho/iken/form-inquiry.html>

The original article is written in Japanese.