

Important Intangible Cultural Properties holders (so-called Living National Treasures) Koshiwaka Kyoyama II (ROKYOKU-SHI)

Koshiwaka Kyoyama II to be recognized as an Important Intangible Cultural Properties holders (so-called Living National Treasures). The certification ceremony will be held at the Agency for Cultural Affairs on December 2, 2024 (Brighton Hotel Kyoto).

What is *ROKYOKU(NANIWABUSHI)*?



ROKYOKU (= *NANIWABUSHI*) (hereafter unified as *ROKYOKU*) is one of the traditional Japanese storytelling arts.

Originally it is performed by two performers, a *ROKYOKU-SHI* and a *KYOKUSHI*. The *ROKYOKU-SHI* takes vocal part, sometimes sings the story to music, sometimes speaks the words as a character, and sometimes recites the story. In opera, the *ROKYOKU-SHI* is responsible for the singing, dialogues, and recitative. The *KYOKUSHI* is a *SHAMISEN* player who takes care of the instrumental part.

The *ROKYOKU-SHI* performs the background of the story, the description of the scene setting, and all of the characters' conversations by himself. The *KYOKUSHI* improvises a piece based on what the *ROKYOKU-SHI* is performing. There is no musical score. Each *ROKYOKU-SHI* has his or her own method of singing, and the *KYOKUSHI* must adapt to his or her individuality.

In addition to providing musical accompaniment, they are role of setting the rhythm instruments and the music.

The origin roots of *ROKYOKU* have not been identified, but it can

be thought of as folklore with a story. The same is other *JORURI*.

From its spontaneous and simple form, *ROKYOKU* has gradually become more technical and sophisticated. From outdoor performances, it moved into the theater.

As the acting and singing skills and acting skill of the *ROKYOKU* performers improved. Many story repertory were transplanted from *KODAN*. Its content became enriching and making it popular throughout Japan in the first half of the 20th century. The influence of *ROKYOKU* was enormous, and in many case it was used for political propaganda.

Koshiwaka Kyoyama II (1954~)



Real name: Kazumitsu Fukumoto. Born in Himeji, Hyogo Prefecture on April 1, 1954. He is the fourth son of Koshiwaka Kyoyama (*ROKYOKU-SHI*) I and Mitsue Kyoyama (*KYOKUSHI*). After seven months later of his born, the father Koshiwaka I ran away from home. He was raised as the child of his mother and her second husband.

He was passionate about playing the guitar as a student, but was so moved by listening the 33rpm record by Koshiwaka I occasionally. After that he decided to become a *ROKYOKU-SHI*.

Later, he was shocked to learn that he was the biological son of Koshiwaka I. In 1971, at the age of 17, he became the pupil of Koshiwaka I. First stage name was Fukutaro Kyoyama, In 1973 that he performed at Azumi Paradise as debutant stage. His mother, Mitsue was a *KYOKUSHI* at that time, and under her strict lesson and advice, he quickly improved his skills. In 2004, he finally succeeded to the name of Koshiwaka II.

He has inherited a vast number of repertory from Koshiwaka I. He has performed many of his favorite stories, including the “AIZU NO KOTETSU” (story of old outlaw) series and the “HIDARI JINGORO”(story of genius architecture master) series. He has performed both hard and soft repertory.

He is a master in all three aspects of *ROKYOKU*: good voice, dialogue (the conversational part), and recitative. His occasional wisecracks of warning are also superb.

As president of the *ROKYOKU SHINYU KYOKAI* (association of *ROKYOKU* in Osaka), he is actively involved in the training of young performers and is committed to the revival of *ROKYOKU*.

Since 2016, he has been holding the “*KYOYAMA KOSHIWAKA RECITAL*” (produced by MIYAOKA HIROHIDE OFFICE CO., LTD.) twice a year at Asakusa *MOKUBATEI*, the Mecca of *ROKYOKU*.

This recital won the Grand Prize in the Popular Performing Arts Division of the 75th Agency for Cultural Affairs Arts Festival in 2020, and in 2023 he received the 73rd Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Art Encouragement Prize in the Popular Performing Arts Division.

In November 2021, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of his debut, he gave a five-day recital “*KYOYAMA KOSHIWAKA FESTIVAL*” (produced by MIYAOKA HIROHIDE OFFICE CO., LTD.) at Asakusa *MOKUBATEI*. This series of performances received rave reviews.

In 2024, in celebration of his 70th birthday, he hold “*KYOYAMA KOSHIWAKA FESTIVAL*” (produced by MIYAOKA HIROHIDE OFFICE CO., LTD.) again in Tokyo and Osaka for 2 days for each.

In July, to be recognized as an Important Intangible Cultural Properties holders (so-called Living National Treasures). Koshiwaka II will be first *ROKYOKU-SHI* who has aforementioned title. The certification ceremony will be held at the Agency for Cultural Affairs on December 2, 2024 (Brighton Hotel Kyoto).

The Fascination world of Koshiwana Kyoyama II



KOSHI KYOYAMA I, the grand master of Koshiwaka II, created “KOSHI-BUSHI”(the original *ROKYOKU* method by him) a style

with unique long-breathing singing. It is said that KOSHI I was diver from the seaside area, and that his lungs were strengthened from a young age, resulting in the completion of this unique long-breathing section.

His apprentice, Koshiwaka I (father of Koshiwaka II), succeeded to create a more up-tempo, cheerful, and rhythmical “KOSHIWAKA-BUSHI” (the original *ROKYOKU* method by him) which was a great success. Koshiwaka II follow the “KOSHIWAKA-BUSHI” and improve his art.

One of the characteristics of the “KOSHIWAKA-BUSHI” is the vividness of the voice. The clarity diction of words and context, combined with the quality of the voice, make it the pinnacle of easy listening *ROKYOKU*.

The presence of a *KYOKUSHI* is extremely important in *ROKYOKU*, where musical elements are indispensable. *KYOKUSHI* must be able to play the flexible *SHAMISEN*, which sometimes plays the rhythm part, sometimes the melody, and

sometimes the sound effects. Needless to say, the *ROKYOKU-SHI* and *KYOKUSHI* must be in good rapport in order for the performance to be successful. It is surprising that there is no sheet music for this. In recent years, Haduki Ipputei has consistently served as the *KYOKUSHI* for Koshiwaka II. It is her dedication to the shamisen that makes Koshiwaka II brilliant.

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Commemorative performance will be held in Osaka

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