



# JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL ARIZONA

## Event Program

September 12th (Fri) 2025  
September 13th (Sat) 2025

Presented by



In partnership with

Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts



ASU Media and Immersive eXperience (MIX) Center  
50 N. Centennial Way Mesa, AZ 85201

# Welcome to the Third Annual Japanese Film Festival of Arizona!

I'm truly honored to have you with us. As the founder of this festival, I want to personally thank you for being part of our growing community—a community brought together by a shared love for storytelling, culture, and connection.

This year holds particular significance: 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. As we reflect on this historic milestone, we are reminded of the importance of understanding, empathy, and reconciliation. Cinema has long served as a bridge between cultures, a medium through which we can explore our shared humanity, learn from the past, and imagine a better future. At JFFA, we embrace that role with open hearts and minds.

The Japanese Film Festival of Arizona is a labor of love, organized entirely by volunteers who believe deeply in the power of cinema to build bridges and spark meaningful conversations. Our mission is simple but powerful: to share the richness, depth, and beauty of Japanese cinema with Arizona audiences, and to create a space where people can connect across languages, generations, and experiences.

We are also pleased to partner with ASU's Sidney Potier New American Film School for the first time and hold the festival at the MIX Center, which serves as an important hub for education and creative practice. Our collaboration with their faculty, staff, and students has been both enriching and deeply valued.

This year's program features a dynamic lineup of films—from heartfelt comedies and powerful dramas to rare cultural gems, many of which are being shown in Arizona for the very first time. Each film is a window into a unique story, tradition, or emotion, and we hope they move and inspire you as much as they've inspired us.

We've come a long way in just three years—but we can't continue without your support. Whether through your attendance, membership, donation, or time as a volunteer, your involvement helps us sustain and grow this one-of-a-kind cultural event.

Thank you again for joining us during this meaningful year.

We are so glad you're here, and we look forward to many more seasons of sharing stories that matter.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Harumi Maejima, Founder and Executive Director



JAPANESE CULTURE CLUB OF ARIZONA

## WE ARE YOUR BRIDGE BETWEEN ARIZONA AND JAPAN

The third year of the Arizona Japanese Film Festival brings the best of a broad selection of Japanese cinema to Arizona in order to draw greater recognition of filmmakers and strengthen the ties between Arizona and Japan. By showing Japanese films, we aim to support and deepen the understanding of our cultures through the love and joy of movies.

All films that participate in the Festival will have a unique chance to showcase their Japanese films to Arizona, through the exposure and media attention we will create at this festival.

Arizona Japanese Film Festival is organized by the Japanese Culture Club of Arizona (JCCA), a 501(c)(3) charitable non-profit organization.

Visit our website: [jffarizona.org](http://jffarizona.org)

Visit Japanese Culture Club of AZ website at: [www.japanesecultureclubofaz.org](http://www.japanesecultureclubofaz.org)

JOIN US!



**INFORMATION:** All ticket sales are final. No refunds or exchanges. All films and the screening order are subject to change without notice. Photographs may be taken at this event. The pictures may be used on associated websites, social media, and for marketing purposes related to the Japanese Film Festival. For more detailed information and updates, please check [jffarizona.org](http://jffarizona.org)

Children 12 and under, accompanied by a parent or guardian, receive free admission to film screenings. Parental discretion is advised; films are not MPAA rated unless otherwise indicated.

# FILMS SCHEDULE

## Friday, September 12

- 2:30 pm:** Opening Music Performance  
Tsugaru Shamisen by Sho Asano
- 2:45 pm:** Opening Remarks
- 3 pm:** Opening Film - BISHU
- 6:45 pm:** Music Performance - Tsugaru  
Shamisen by Sho Asano
- 7 pm:** Movie Night - MIRAI

## Saturday, September 13

- 9:30 am:** Opening Music Performance  
Shakuhachi by Yu-Jin Seisui
- 9:45 am:** Opening Remarks
- 10:00 am:** Shorts Program
- 11:30 am:** Short Film and Cultural Workshop
- 1 pm:** WHO'S DANCING NOW
- 3:30 pm:** LOVE SONG FROM HIROSHIMA
- 6:30 pm:** Closing Night Film  
GODZILLA MINUS ONE

\*Films in Japanese or other non-English languages are presented with English subtitles.  
English dialogue is not subtitled unless otherwise noted.

## ENDORSEMENT

在ロサンゼルス日本国総領事館  
CONSULATE GENERAL OF JAPAN  
LOS ANGELES

## PRESENTED BY



## SPONSORS



## SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS



### Opening Film:

## BISHU

Friday, September 12, 3 pm | Theater 201

Arizona Premiere

**Directed by Tatsuro Nishikawa | 124 min**

In Japan's Bishu region, known for its wool textile production, this tenderly crafted film follows a high schooler with a developmental disability and her family, who operate a faltering textile factory. Despite her father's opposition, she dreams of winning a fashion design competition using fabric woven at their family's factory.



### Movie Night

in collaboration with MIX Center:

## MIRAI

Friday, September 12, 7 pm | Theater 201

*Free event, Family Friendly Program*

**Directed by Mamoru Hosoda | 98 min**

Written and directed by acclaimed director Mamoru Hosoda, this Academy Award®-nominated feature animation tells the story of a young boy whose world is turned upside down by the arrival of his new baby sister, Mirai. One day, he encounters mysterious visitors in the garden and embarks on a journey through time and space, uncovering his family's memories. The film was an official selection at Cannes Directors' Fortnight.



### Closing Night Film:

## GODZILLA MINUS ONE

Saturday, September 13, 6:30 pm | Theater 201

**Directed by Takashi Yamazaki | 125 min**

This epic film made history in 2024 by becoming the first non-English-language movie to win the Academy Award® for Best Visual Effects. As one of the latest installments in the iconic Godzilla franchise—the pioneer of the Japanese kaiju (giant monster) genre—the film delivers spectacular monster battles while exploring profound themes of destruction, humanity, and the consequences of war. Set in the immediate aftermath of World War II, a massive threat rises off the coast of Tokyo. Koichi, haunted by his first encounter with Godzilla, finds a chance to confront his past and seek redemption.



## WHO'S DANCING NOW

Saturday, September 13, 1 pm | Theater 201

**Directed by Shun Coney (Konii) | 115 min**

Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a workaholic middle-aged man grows increasingly isolated at work. When his wife and daughter leave him, he joins the support group that gradually transforms his world. Filmmaker Shun Coney, known for tackling social issues through his independent productions, collaborated with singer-songwriter and first-time actor Ryoichi Higuchi, who himself lives with Parkinson's disease.



Filmmaker in attendance

## LOVE SONG FROM HIROSHIMA

Saturday, September 13, 3:30 pm | Theater 201

**Directed by Hideyuki Tokigawa | 102 min**

Marking the 80th anniversary of Hiroshima's atomic bombing, this magical realism film honors the importance of remembering the past and fostering peace. Two local youths in Hiroshima encounter an American tourist with a special ability to sense the city's history. The film explores themes of peace, the enduring impact of the atomic bombing, and the intertwining of history with the present day.



## SHORT FILM AND CULTURAL WORKSHOP

Saturday, September 13, 11:30 am | Theater 201

### YURI

**Directed by Johnnie Hobbs | 20 min**

A colossal yet timid black Russian weightlifter befriends an elderly Japanese shut-in and helps her de-clutter her life. In the process, he learns Ikebana, the ancient art of flower arranging, and comes to understand his place in the world.

**Filmmaker in attendance**

Followed by a demonstration by

### Ping Wei, Master of Sogetsu Ikebana

**Ping Wei Sogetsu Ikebana Artist  
Sogetsu Teacher's Association, Komon.**

Ikebana, the Japanese floral art, lends me ideas and tools of creating in other art forms. Based on the principle of simplicity, the three elements of ikebana, line, mass and color, are universal in other art disciplines. From organic, botanical materials to inorganic, abstract lines and masses, the end results of ikebana has to return to organic, harmonic one.



## SHORTS PROGRAM

Saturday, September 13, 10 am | Theater 201

### LAST ORDER

**Directed by Hayato Otogi  
10 min | drama**

This enchanting single-take film takes us to a local bar about to close for the night, where a man enters, lost in memory of his late wife.



## I AM A MOLE

Directed by Ayaka Kawasaki  
12 min | animation

In this charming family animation, a shy little mole who's spent his whole life underground accidentally tunnels into the bright, exciting world above.



## TENEMENT OF SECRET TALK

Directed by Abu Shahed Emon  
11 min | comedy

Filmed at Japan's renowned Shochiku Studio, this jidaigeki (Japanese period drama) follows a ronin—a samurai without a lord—who awaits his reward but instead receives only a bottle of sake and a quiet henchman who shares an enigmatic tale about a stone rumored to hold secrets.

Filmmaker in attendance



## MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Directed by Raito Nishizaka  
11 min | drama

An intimate story of a young woman grappling with a complicated relationship with her single mother, who confronts the wounds of her past when she reunites with a childhood friend, now a single mother herself.



## RESETTLEMENT - CHICAGO STORY

Directed by Reina Higashitani  
16 min | drama

A heartwarming tale of a Japanese American teen and her immigrant family as they navigate life running a struggling dry-cleaning business in Chicago, shortly after their community endured forced incarceration during World War II.

Filmmaker in attendance



# GUEST ARTISTS - OPENING MUSIC PERFORMANCES

Friday, September 12, 2:30 pm & 6:45 pm | Theater 201

## Sho Asano, Tsugaru Shamisen

Born in Sendai, Japan, Sho Asano began his musical journey at age three with the Japanese drum and took up the Tsugaru shamisen at five. He studied under Sangen Odashimaru Tokuo Odashima II and became the youngest performer at the Tsugaru Shamisen World Convention at just seven, later earning multiple top honors. A graduate of Keio University, Asano is dedicated to preserving and sharing traditional Japanese music. As a recognized cultural ambassador, he has participated in national initiatives such as the "Nippon Takaramono Project" and "Beyond 2020," promoting Japanese heritage through music and performance.

\*Tsugaru shamisen is a three-stringed Japanese instrument from northern Japan, known for its powerful, rhythmic sound and improvisational style.



Saturday, September 13, 9:30 am | Theater 201

## Yu-Jin Seisui, Shakuhachi player

Based in Phoenix, AZ, Yu-Jin Seisui got interested in Shakuhachi over 20 years ago. Since 2003, he has been studying various styles of music with several teachers. In 2015, Yu-Jin became a member of the Myoan-Ji (明暗寺) Zen Temple (Kyoto, Japan), and received the name Soku-Shin (息心) from his teacher. Since 2023, Yu-Jin has been studying to receive teaching certification from Myoan-Ji under the name Seisui (清水). The ceremony is scheduled at the temple in Kyoto for November 2025.

\*Shakuhachi is a traditional Japanese bamboo flute introduced with Buddhism. Once used solely for spiritual practice, it evolved into a folk instrument by the late 19th century. Today, its sound appears in meditation, film, and even jazz and blues.



## THANK YOU & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Japanese Film Festival Arizona 2025

#### Committee and Volunteers

#### Sponsors

**BookOFF, JBAA, Kratzer Consulting, and Better from Within**

#### Director of Programming

Reina Higashitani, Assistant Professor  
The Sidney Poitier New American Film School  
Arizona State University

#### 2025 ASU Interns

Samantha Hidalgo Hidalgo  
Sara Maksimovic

#### 2025 Committee Members

Hirono Sekiguchi  
Emilio Rodriguez Izquierdo  
Brad Uyeda  
Jesus Fadel Ramirez  
Matt Burkett

Advisor: Hiroshi Kono

#### Collaboration partners

Japanese Film Festival Los Angeles  
New York Japan Cinefest  
MarCreation



## Join our team, Koshio Gumi!

*Feel Your Body and Soul Through  
Traditional Japanese Drumming "Taiko"*



We are welcoming new students of all ages to play and  
experience Taiko (Japanese Drumming) with us!!



**New Beginners Class Time in MESA!**  
**Saturdays - 3 pm - 5 pm**

Taiko is not only beating the drums but includes  
Japanese traditional discipline with  
**SHIN (心) Spirit, GI (技) Skill, TAI (体) Body**  
to create a great team and community building with  
Wa (和) Taiko (太鼓) Drumming spirit for YOU

Please contact us to sign up!  
480-622-1330 or [koshiogumiaz@gmail.com](mailto:koshiogumiaz@gmail.com)  
[www.Kenkoshio.com](http://www.Kenkoshio.com) / [www.KoshioGumi.com](http://www.KoshioGumi.com)

