

Shishi-Odori



(Photo by Keiko Matsumoto)

Shishi-Odori is a popular performing art commonly handed down from generation to generation in the Tohoku (northeast) region of Japan. Though varied in styles and forms, the main feature of the dance is the dancer's mask called *Shishi-Gashira* (deer mask), representing an imaginary creature as a divine messenger. The drum hung at the waist and two long bamboo sticks called *Sasara* on the back weigh about 20 kilograms (44 pounds). The dynamic dance is enjoyed by the public to this day.

Shishi-Odori is performed as a ritual on different occasions, such as a memorial service for ancestral spirits or in order to purify evil spirits, or sometimes in expression of gratitude for an abundant harvest. Although there are many different stories of the origin of *Shishi-Odori*, each shows a strong connection between the people who lived in that region and the nature around them.

We are delighted to invite two dancers, Mr. Shutaro Koiwa and Mr. Yasuo Sato from The 300-year old Gyozan Maikawa School Shishi Odori Preservation Group to perform a participatory demonstration. As it will be an opportunity not to be missed, be sure to come discover the spectacular Japanese performing art of *Shishi-Odori*!

The schedule of *Shishi-Odori* performance during the Seattle Cherry Blossom and Japanese Cultural Festival is as follows (schedule is subject to change):

April 26th (Friday)	11:00 a.m.-11:40 a.m. – Fisher Pavilion
	2:00 p.m.- 2:30 p.m. – Seattle Center Pavilion
April 27th (Saturday)	11:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Seattle Center Pavilion
	4:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m. – Seattle Center Pavilion
April 28th (Sunday)	4:00-5:00 p.m. – Seattle Center Pavilion