

# Japan America Society of Minnesota



# 通信

The Tsūshin is a membership publication of the Japan America Society of Minnesota

April 2021 Vol. 30, No. 4

## Recap: Virtual Corporate Roundtable North Dakota Edition



Mr. Bob Sinner

During the late afternoon of March 9<sup>th</sup>, JASM held its North Dakota Virtual Corporate Roundtable event. This event was led by ND farmer and businessman Robert (Bob) Sinner. Bob shared the history and growth of his family-owned business, SB&B Foods, Inc., from its conception to its current dealings in international trade, specifically with Japan.

JASM Executive Director Rio Saito began with sincere thanks to all who attended; next, new JASM Board Member Joe Montgomery introduced Mr. Sinner. Before discussing the history of his company, Mr. Sinner described the passion that first led him to the Japanese agricultural market 32 years ago, utilizing co-ops and popular Japanese soy-based goods such as *nattō* and tofu.



Joe Montgomery  
JASM Board Member



SB&B Foods began in 1906 as a family farming business and has stayed that way over many generations, with Mr. Sinner eventually taking over in the 80's and starting trade with Japan in 1989. There was a particular emphasis on communicating "the land," the expansive, reliable agricultural Upper Midwest, being of the utmost importance when marketing his agricultural products abroad. Following IP trends and keeping up with specific in-demand qualities such as non-GMO, food safety, and traceability/sustainability were also emphasized. Mr. Sinner also mentioned that there have been difficulties transporting goods from as remote a location as North Dakota, although past problems seem slight compared to the future opportunities the area offers.

JASM would like to extend a huge thank you to Mr. Sinner for his participation in this very informative Corporate Roundtable.

JASM would also like to extend thanks to the National Association of Japan-America Societies (NAJAS) and the Embassy of Japan for sponsorship. Thanks also to the Consulate General of Japan and the North Dakota Trade Office (NDTO) for supporting this event.

## 29th National Japan Bowl— Digital Japan Bowl II



Please click the poster to enlarge it.

The winners of J-Quiz – the JASM educational event for high school students – will participate in the 29th National Japan Bowl-Digital Japan Bowl II on Thursday/Friday, April 8/9, 2021. The event is hosted and organized by Japan America Society of Washington, DC (JASWDC).

We wish all the J-Quiz winners the best of luck!

The championship round will be livestreamed on JASWDC's YouTube page on Friday, April 9 from 6 to 9 p.m. (EST).

## Upcoming: Live from Akita, Kiritanpo Lesson with the America-Japan Society of Akita



JASM is very excited to have the [America-Japan Society of Akita \(秋田日米協会\)](#), JASM's Sister Association, conducting a program for us on *kiritanpo*, the specialty of Akita prefecture, on **Thursday, April 8th at 7:00 p.m. (Friday, April 9th at 9 a.m. in Japan)** LIVE from Akita!

Kiritanpo is made from cooked, half-smashed rice that is placed on a skewer. You may know that Akita prefecture, which is located in northern Japan, is famous for its rice. Please register today!



**\$8: Non-Member**  
**Free: JASM Members**  
*Fee is not refundable but is transferable. Please become a member to support JASM.*

Register [HERE!](#)



**The America-Japan Society of Akita** has been and always will be proactive in enhancing mutual understanding between American and Japanese people. Opening doors for both sides, we host activities to facilitate cultural/economic exchange

and to deepen friendship between the people.

## Letter from JASM President



*Elizabeth Fehrmann  
JASM President*

Welcome to spring, JASM family! While we typically do get a “big thaw” plus a snowstorm (or two) each year as we head into the warmer months, this year’s warming trend feels a little bit warmer than others in recent memory. Certainly, some of the flowers in my garden think so; as of mid-March, the yarrow, anise hyssop, and sedum were already showing new, green growth through last year’s leaf cover. I hope they weren’t shocked too much by the (very much expected) snow!

Before we get into recent and upcoming events, I’d like to highlight a major accomplishment from earlier in the year. Back in February, after a year-long effort, the Board of Directors finally approved JASM’s first Strategic Plan in many, many years! Thank you, Board members, for your enthusiasm and persistence throughout the last year. I’m really looking forward to digging in and taking concrete steps to make sure JASM is able to grow on a solid organizational foundation and a renewed mission, vision, and purpose. Thanks once again to Mirja Hanson for facilitating the planning sessions for us, and for thinking quickly to adjust a traditionally in-person process as needed due to the unusual circumstances brought on by the pandemic.

Now, on to recent JASM events. I was happy to “see” so many of you at Shinshunkai! “Shinshunkai” replaced our traditional Shinnenkai event this year due to the pandemic and a few other factors, and it was our very first general-public, audience participation event on the Hopin platform. The silver lining of being forced to host this particular event on a virtual platform was the opportunity it afforded us to involve several new-to-JASM artists, as well as give well-known artists in our community a new way to provide context for and demonstrate their art. I hope that you found the depth and breadth of content both entertaining and informative; I know I had trouble getting through everything due to the sheer volume of awesome material. (I might have paused and re-watched Stubbings-san’s kitsuke video so I could practice tying obi a couple times in a row...)

Don’t forget: we have the last part of Shinshunkai coming up yet, this time featuring rakugo. Personally, I’ve never had the chance to watch a live rakugo performance, so I’m pretty excited for this one. Head over to the JASM website and be sure you’re signed up for the event on April 18!

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn’t take this opportunity to remind everyone of the continued need for engagement and outreach both inside and outside of our community. Recent high-profile tragedies have — unfortunately — brought back to the fore the troubling rise in anti-Asian sentiment in the United States. While I don’t have any quick solutions, I can say, with confidence, that JASM will keep doing what it does best: bring people together at the grassroots level in mutual respect and understanding for cross-cultural exchange and appreciation. I want to thank each and every one of you as members, friends, and family of JASM, for the part you all play in ensuring our community fosters goodwill, nurtures positive relationships, and provides a safe space for Asians and Asian Americans in Minnesota.

Regards,  
Elizabeth Fehrmann

### Calendar — April

29th National Japan Bowl — Digital Japan Bowl II, Japan America Society of Washington DC, **April 8th/9th**

Live from Akita, Kiritanpo Lesson with the America-Japan Society of Akita, **April 8th**

Rakugo by Tozaburo Yanagiya: **April 18**

### Become a JASM Member online *Support our mission and become a member!*

1. Go to [mn-japan.org](http://mn-japan.org)
2. At the top, hover over ‘Support’ then click on ‘Become a JASM member’ or click [here](#).
3. Select your membership type and read the benefits and instructions.

### Membership News (2/21-3/20, 2021)

#### Thanks to the following new JASM members:

Jameson Carter Collins, Sarah Coomber,  
Aaron Eastwood, Akiko Hayashida, Bob Joy,  
Jakub and Rei Nemeč, Jose Rivera,  
Maritza Steele, Yoko Toda, Shigeki Yatsuya

#### Thanks to the following renewing JASM members:

Samiel and Akiko Durbin, Peter Hill,  
Andrew Morris, Barbara Shields

#### Thanks to the following renewing

##### Corporate members:

Mall of America  
Winona State University  
Daikin Applied  
JETAA MN



**Upcoming: Rakugo by Tozaburo Yanagiya:  
Shinshunkai (新春会) Part 2**



**April 18th from 3-4pm** as part 2 of Shinshunkai, or the spring festival, we are honored to present Mr. Tozaburo Yanagiya, Rakugo storyteller! We would like you all to join us!

**One of the stories will be told in Japanese, the rest will be in English.**

**What is Rakugo?**

Rakugo is a traditional verbal art originating from Japan. The Rakugo-ka, or Rakugo storyteller sits down and depicts a comical story only using their voice, minimal gesture, and two props: “Sensu” (a fan) and “Tenugui” (a hand towel). Because of the very limited visual elements, Rakugo is enjoyed using the Rakugo-ka’s verbal technique and the listeners’ imaginations.

**\$8: Member**

**\$10: Non-member**

**Sunday, April 18th 3:00pm-4:00pm**

Please sign up today! (Click [here](#) to register.)  
The ticket is not refundable, but is transferable.

**About Tozaburo Yanagihara:**

Tozaburo “Zabu” Yanagiya III is a world-renowned Rakugo storyteller residing in New York. Since 2014, he has been given the status of “Shin-uchi”, otherwise known as the highest rank in traditional Japanese comedy.

Since 2018, Zabu has been actively performing in the United States, with over 30 shows within schools, community centers, and retirement homes. These opportunities influenced his decision to permanently relocate to the US in July 2019.

Unfortunately, with COVID-19 in the way, his ongoing project of performing in all 50 states is currently in hiatus. However, that doesn’t stop his mission to make people all over the world smile through Rakugo. Please join Zabu for an online performance of Rakugo to enlighten your day.



*Please thank our members  
with your support!*

**Corporate Benefactor Members**

Anime Twin Cities, Inc.  
Daikin Applied  
Delta Air Lines, Inc.  
MTS Systems Corporation  
Sawai Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd.  
Taiyo International

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Dorsey & Whitney LLP

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MGK, Inc.  
Minnesota Council of Teachers of Japanese  
Naigai Industries U.S.A. Inc.  
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Origami Restaurant  
Sakura Restaurant  
Saint Paul Saints Baseball Club  
Saji-Ya Restaurant  
Suishin Restaurant  
Tomodachi  
Zen Healing Center

**Nonprofit Members**

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JETRO Chicago  
JP Network, St. Cloud State University  
KCC–Japan Education Exchange  
Macalester College Asian Language & Culture Department  
Minneapolis Japanese School  
Minneapolis Institute of Art  
Minnesota Orchestra  
Mu Performing Arts  
NDSU-Emily Reynolds Historic Costume Collection  
Twin Cities Aikido Center  
UMN Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies  
University of North Dakota-Grand Forks  
Winona State University Global Studies Dept.



## Recap: Shinshunkai (新春会) - Online Spring Festival

On the lovely Sunday afternoon of March 14<sup>th</sup>, JASM held its Online Shinshunkai event, or Online Spring Festival, held in place of the usual Shinnenkai. The event brought together people from all around the country to engage in a diversity of cultural entertainment. As the name suggests, it was held entirely online, primarily using the site *Hopin*. There was a total of 11 different events attendees were able to join throughout the afternoon. The event began at 3:00pm with an introduction by JASM Executive Director Rio Saito, who introduced herself and then gave a basic rundown of the *Hopin* site. Everyone was free to explore the *expo* channel to view 10 different cultural-related videos as well as join hangout rooms in separate channels to simply chat with other attendees between videos or work out individual technical problems. Everyone was to reconvene at 5:00pm for the closing ceremony. While there was no Shinnenkai this year, Saito stated, she is more than happy to have Shinshunkai in its place.

Of the 10 “booths” attendees could visit in *expo*, one of them doubled as two events, titled “Kazha” and the “Kazha Meet-and-Greet,” respectively. The first was a video by Kazha, a Japanese rock duo formed in 2009 by singer-songwriter Kazuha Oda (Kazha) and guitarist Hideki Matsushige. Kazha sang two songs, titled “Singing to the Same Stars” and “Sakura.” The first was written by Kazha, while the second was a cover of “Sakura” written by Naotaro Moriyama with a piano accompaniment by Aunt Kokeko. The songs evoked images of spring and hope as the video swapped between Kazha’s singing and pictures of fans and concerts, then ending with a positive “hope to see you soon!” message.



The Meet-and-Greet took place in a separate channel called “Session,” where those who chose to register in advance could talk one-on-one with Kazha. Though there were some technical difficulties at first, each person who wanted to meet her, many proudly displaying their Kazha merch, were able to. Each guest was also able to take a screenshot with her and were sent signed postcards for attending.



There were additional booths related to music performances that could be attended such as *shamisen* and *taiko*. For *shamisen*, this performance involved professional *shamisen* musician Momokusu Iwata playing three different songs, each involving spring-related themes. The first was “Houki” (箒), meaning “broom,” which was fairly energetic and had a fast tempo, followed by “Takeda no Komoriuta” (竹田の子守唄) and “Jyonkara Bushi” (じょんから節).

The *taiko* performance was done by Craig Schultz, Chiaki O’Brien, and Hiroshi Yoshino of Ensō Daiko TaikoArts Midwest. The song, titled “Matsuri,” was originally arranged by former artistic director Rick Shiomi, but, as Schultz-san points out, this version goes under the title “Japanese Spring.” Opening with flute melodies by O’Brien-san and Yoshino-san, the song undergoes multiple tempo and volume changes as the thunderous *taiko* and soft flute melodies made even the harsh Minnesota winter thaw and give way to spring.



Tangentially related to music were performances by local non-binary half Japanese drag king Damien “Nijiya” D’Luxe, a brief history and performance of ballet from professional ballet dancer Yuki Tokuda, and various performances by the Twin Cities Japanese kids’ dancing group Thunder Wave.

Damien Nijiya gave a sparkling performance as they cosplayed the character Goku from the popular Dragonball series and sang the series’ English opening song while rolling around on their “flying nimbus” cloud. They also gave a quite inventive impersonation of the four members of Japanese 80’s rock band Yokohama Ginbae while singing their hit song “Tsuppari High School Rock’n Roll.” Yuki Tokuda opened by giving a brief history of ballet in addition to showing her old and new pointe shoes. Additionally, she provided a very emotional ballet performance to “Song to the Moon” from the opera *Rusalka*. Thunder Wave presented many past performances while narrating with a brief history of the group and their role in the community. Many of the songs danced to were contemporary Japanese pop songs that really showed the electrifying energy of the Japanese youth in our community.

There were also several other videos attendees could watch such as the building of



beautiful *ikebana* arrangements from Sogetsu Ikebana, the “Art of Tying Obi” by Tomoko Stubbings where she displayed multiple kimono as she taught how to tie *obi*, an intro to *kendama* and its health benefits by the Kendama Institute, and how to make some scrumptious *dango mochi* as taught by Tomoko Drake and her granddaughter. We closed out this year’s Shinshunkai with *tejime*, a customary Japanese closing involving the rhythmic clapping of hands, as taught by Don Katagiri.

We would again like to extend huge thanks to all of the wonderful performers for the amazing work you put together and to all of the attendees for choosing to festively bring in the spring with JASM this year. This event was sponsored by the Metro Regional Arts Council.

## In the Wake of Atlanta Shooting

Dear Friends and Family,  
We are devastated and heartbroken by the tragedy that happened in Atlanta, Georgia. We are feeling so much grief, anger, and fear for the people of our community. We cannot fathom how this kind of hateful crime can be done to anyone.

JASM is here to stand with all Asian American communities. Our mission still is to connect people to learn about each other and grow together. Please check in with your Asian friends and family, let them know that they are loved. Please hear Asian people's voices by asking them to share their stories. Although vicious hateful acts have occurred, they will not stop us from carrying on with what we are here to do. JASM will continue to create spaces for everyone to come together and show love and care to one another. Please join us and let your community know you welcome everyone.

Meanwhile, here are some organizations you can support to stay connected and make a positive impact for our community.

[Stop AAPI Hate](#)

[GoldHouse](#)

[Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#) (Asian Law Caucus)

[Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment](#) (CAPE)

[Twin Cities Japanese American Citizens League](#) (JACL)

Also, please support Minnesota's many Asian-owned business. Here are JASM's business members, to start with:

[JK's Table](#)

[Origami](#)

[Saji-Ya](#)

[Sakura](#)

[Suishin Restaurant](#)

[Tomodachi](#)

[Kiku Enterprise](#)

Voyager Group Inc

Thank you very much for your support, always  
Rio Saito, JASM Executive Director

在ミネソタ、在米日本人、関係者のみなさま

ジョージア州アトランタでのアジア人を狙った襲撃事件を受けて、いきどおりと不安の日々を送られている方も多いかと存じます。ミネソタ日米協会(JASM)として、アジア系のコミュニティがこのような被害に合うことに、悲しみ、怒り、恐れを感じます。このような人種差別による犯罪がなぜ起こらねばならないのか、全く理解しがたいところです。JASMは、全てのアジア人、アジア系アメリカ人、関連団体と常に協力を図りながら活動をしています。私たちが目標にかかげていることは、人々が交流を深め、お互いの違いを理解し学び合い、共に成長していくことです。

もし人種差別に基づく被害に遭遇したり、周囲の家族や友人が被害にあわれた場合は、お互いに知らせ合い相談してください。お互いに情報を共有してください。このような悪質な人種差別に基づく行為に対して、黙秘することなく、一人ひとりの人権が尊重される社会であることをあきらめてはいけません。JASMは、人々が集まり、お互いの違いに思いやりを持って助け合うコミュニティです。JASMがそのような誰もが参加できるコミュニティであることを、周囲の方にもお知らせください。

今回の人種差別に基づく事件に対し、サポートを続けている団体がありますので参考にしてください。(上記リンク参照)

また、地元のアジア系ビジネスのサポートもよろしくお願ひします。JASMのビジネスメンバーである企業、店舗等です。(上記参照)

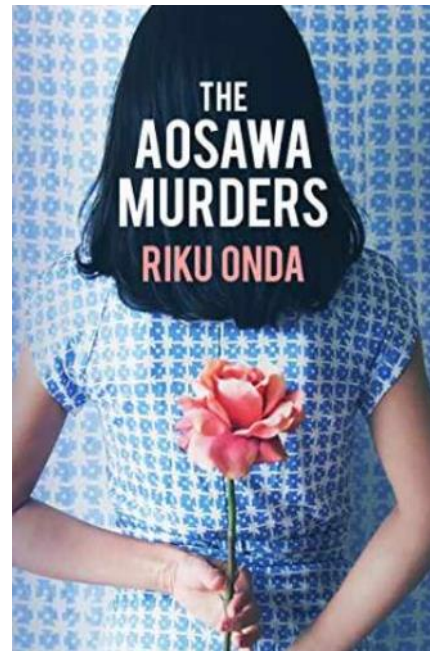
平素からの皆様のご協力に感謝いたします。

ミネソタ日米協会 エグゼクティブディレクター

齋藤 りお

## Tom Haeg's Book Review

*The Aosawa Murders*; Riku Onda, Bitter Lemon Press, 2005;  
English translation by Alison Watt, 2020.



A wealthy Japanese family birthday party ends in the poisoning deaths of 17 attendees. Only one escaped death: a young, blind, seemingly innocent daughter, Hisako. Our steadfast sleuth then painstakingly shadows Hisako for the next 30 years to solve the crime.

But the point of the plot is not to see who did it; we already know (or suspect we know) who: Hisako. The stereotypical *whodunit* focus is not our concern. Instead, it's the *whydunit* and *howdunit* featuring an atypical approach in Japanese mystery literature known as *shin honkaku*, or the (excuse the oxymoron) new orthodox way of writing. Our detective sojourn relies not on deductive reasoning but on instinct to solve the enigma. It delves for clues in the inner sanctum of one's psyche rather than the proverbial, overlooked hair follicle. Proving motive is paramount while the gumshoe, Detective 1.0 format takes a back seat. Move over Arthur Conan Doyle, step aside, Columbo.

Onda's writing style in this, her premiere mystery novel, is somewhat amorphous: conversation gaps, flashbacks, changing voices, questions everywhere and a stream of consciousness; it entreats the reader's patience to just hold back, pay attention and read on. While at times I found it annoying to re-read paragraphs and chapters to follow the storyline, it ultimately proved rewarding and made sense in the end.

Point of order. *Murders*, originally written in Japanese in 2005, was recently translated into English in 2020. Meanwhile, in 2010, the Japanese statute of limitations for murder was abolished. Perhaps the 2020 English version could have been edited to reflect the change. It wasn't, and unfortunately the translation now shows some age.

Riku Onda's *Murders* is the recipient of the 59<sup>th</sup> Mystery Writers of Japan award for Best Novel.

Tom Haeg



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of MINNESOTA

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# 通信

Tsūshin  
April 2021

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a non-profit, non-political association engaged in bringing the peoples of Japan and the United States closer together in mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. Through programs and interchange, it endeavors to promote an appreciation of cultural, educational, economic, public, and other affairs of interest to both peoples. Membership in the society is open to individuals, corporations, and other organizations interested in furthering its programs.

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a member of the National Association of Japan-America Societies.

Please report any inaccuracies you find in this publication to [jasm@us-japan.com](mailto:jasm@us-japan.com)

## JASM March Events (Top middle and right: Corporate Roundtable. Other photos, 2021 Shinshunkai.)

