
Discover the world of sit-down comedy!

***Rakugo* with Katsura Sunshine**

Public Talk & Show



The Japan Foundation, Sydney is proud to present an event program featuring **Katsura Sunshine**, a Canadian-born, Japan-based entertainer who is professionally trained in the traditional Japanese art of *rakugo* (comic storytelling).

On **March 26** (Thursday), Sunshine will appear in a **talk event**, 'Stories Behind the Storytellers'. On **March 28** (Saturday), he will give a **solo *rakugo* show**, 'Katsura Sunshine on Stage'. Both events are **free** and will be held at The Japan Foundation, Sydney premises in **Central Park**.

Seven years ago, Katsura Sunshine (then **Gregory Robic**) was accepted by *rakugo* master Katsura Bunshi IV as an apprentice. Since his professional debut in Singapore in 2009, Sunshine has followed his dream of introducing the *rakugo* tradition to English-speaking audiences around the world with shows in **Canada, North America, the UK, Europe, Japan, and now Australia**. This month, Sunshine heads Down Under, giving Australians the rare chance to sample this great old-school style of entertainment locally.

It's a little-known fact that Australia has a 120-year-old connection with the seemingly distant tradition of *rakugo*. In the late 19th century, **Adelaide-born Henry Black** became the first Westerner to become a professional *rakugo* performer in Japan. Katsura Sunshine follows in Black's footsteps as the only other Western performer to date who has completed a formal apprenticeship in the art.

In addition to his *rakugo* show in Sydney, Sunshine will also appear in a talk event with Henry Black's biographer, Dr Ian McArthur, which promises to shed light on topics ranging from the appeal of the *rakugo* stage to the experience of apprenticing in a traditional art in Japan. The talk will be moderated by Dr Carol Hayes, Senior Lecturer in Japanese Studies at Australian National University.

Sunshine will also perform in Adelaide on March 29 and Canberra on April 1, organised by the Japan-Australia Friendship Association and the Australia-Japan Society ACT respectively.

Says Katsura Sunshine, "I'm really looking forward to performing in Australia for the first time, especially because it's the birthplace of Henry Black, who was a true trailblazer for his time. *Rakugo* may be a Japanese art, but I think the stripped-back nature of this style of comedy has a universal appeal – a theory I'm yet to disprove!"

EVENT DETAILS

March 26
(Thursday)
@ 6pm

Public talk

Stories Behind the Storytellers

Katsura Sunshine & Dr Ian McArthur (biographer of Henry Black)
Moderated by Dr Carol Hayes (ANU)

Free CHOYA (Japanese sweet fruit liqueur) tastings available on the night.



March 28
(Saturday)
@ 2pm

Rakugo show (in English)

Katsura Sunshine on Stage

Venue:	The Japan Foundation, Sydney Level 4, Central Park 28 Broadway Chippendale NSW 2008
Admission:	Admission free; RSVP essential.
Enquiries/RSVP:	reception@jpf.org.au / 02 8239 0055
Website:	www.jpf.org.au

ABOUT RAKUGO

Rakugo is the traditional Japanese art of comic storytelling. It is a form of folk entertainment that developed around 400 years ago and is still enjoyed in Japan today. *Rakugo* is typically performed solo while kneeling on a cushion, wearing kimono and using only a cloth and a fan as props. Repertoires traditionally include a mix of classic and original tales.

ABOUT KATSURA SUNSHINE



A classics student from Canada in a former life, Katsura Sunshine began his three-year *rakugo* apprenticeship in Japan in 2008 under the *rakugo* master Katsura Bunshi IV. Since making his professional *rakugo* debut in 2009, he has performed widely both in Japan and overseas. Like his teacher, Sunshine specialises in the Kamigata *rakugo*, which is particular to the Kansai region of Japan (i.e., Osaka and surrounds). Kansai is known as Japan's home of comedy, and even ordinary locals have a reputation for witty banter and a love of punchlines.

ABOUT HENRY BLACK



Henry Black (1858 – 1923) was born in Adelaide. His father, John Black, was an entrepreneur and journalist. Henry was six years old when his family moved to Japan. He developed a strong affinity for Japan, eventually becoming naturalised as a Japanese citizen and living out the remainder of his life there. An encounter with the world of vaudeville-style theatre saw Henry first take to the stage as an entertainer at age 17. His early experiences with theatre brought him into contact with the world of *rakugo* comic storytelling, which he dabbled in for many years (against the wishes of his family) before turning to the stage full-time as a storyteller in 1886. Black later went on to train in and perform Kabuki in Japan as well.

ABOUT IAN MCARTHUR



Dr Ian McArthur is an educator, writer and journalist specialising in Asian affairs with a focus on Japan. He is also the biographer of 19th-century Australian *rakugo* artist, Henry Black. A former Tokyo correspondent, Ian has published books about Black in Japanese and English, and has been awarded the Inoue Yasushi Award for Outstanding Research in Japanese Literature in Australia. Ian is an honorary associate in the Department of Japanese Studies at The University of Sydney, and is writing a work of historical fiction about Henry Black.

ABOUT CAROL HAYES



Dr Carol Hayes is a senior lecturer in Japanese Studies at Australian National University. Her research interests include Japanese literature, film and popular culture such as anime and manga. Carol's current projects include a monograph on modern Japanese poet Hagiwara Sakutarō, a co-authored book on film adaptations of pre-war Japanese novels, and a translation of a memoir by Hiroshima bomb survivor and war bride Teruko Blair.

ABOUT THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, SYDNEY

The Japan Foundation, Sydney is the Australian arm of the Japan Foundation, which was established by the Japanese government to promote cultural and intellectual exchange between Japan and other nations. It runs a diverse range of programs and events, including exhibitions, talk events, grant programs and Japanese language courses for all levels from beginner to advanced. The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 with a global network of 22 offices in 21 countries. The Australian office was founded in 1977.



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For more information please see www.jpff.org.au or contact:
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