

Discovery Theater & The Freer & Sackler Galleries!

Welcome to *Kodomo-no-hi* – Children’s Day

Each **May 5th**, Japan celebrates **Children’s Day, or *Kodomo-no-hi*** (pronounced *Koh-doh-moh-noh-hee*). Because May 5th was originally a festival for boys, and since girls have their own festival on March 3rd, boys get most of the attention on *Kodomo-no-hi*. At birth, sons are given Samurai **warrior dolls** complete with swords and armor. Families display these dolls on Children’s Day to help the boys become as strong and fearless as the Samurai. Kids also fold colored paper into **samurai helmets** to wear, and get to eat **special treats**, including rice dumplings wrapped in oak leaves (*kashiwamochi*) or rice cakes filled with sweet bean paste and wrapped in bamboo leaves (*chimaki*). Boys might take a bath with iris leaves in the water to give strength and keep illness away.

When they are born, boys are also given cloth or paper **kites in the shape of a carp** (a kind of fish). On Children’s Day, each family displays its kites, if possible taking them outside to fly from a tall pole. There are usually **a row of kites**. The father’s kite is the longest – up to 20 feet! – and black and white in color. The mother’s kite is red and white, and slightly shorter. Then comes a blue and white kite for each son in the family.

Why a carp? In stories, the carp is said to have the strength and determination to fight its way up swift-running streams, cascades, and waterfalls. The carp’s drive to overcome such obstacles makes it a symbol of the **strength and will-power** a boy needs to succeed against life’s difficulties as he becomes a man. When the wind catches the carp kites, they seem to swim in the air like a real fish, bringing the lesson of the carp to life.



Shizumi Shigeto Manale & the Kodomo Dance Troupe

Born and raised in Japan and trained by “Living National Treasures” in *Kyogen* (Japan’s traditional comedy theater form) and *jiuta mai* (a type of Japanese classical dance), Shizumi is a dancer, choreographer, playwright, documentary film producer, and director of Japanese cultural programs. Her many achievements include producing a Japanese arts-in-education exchange program focused on Deaf culture for Gallaudet University, collaborating with Zen garden master Yotaro Ono from Kyoto to create a Zen garden exhibition at the National Geographic Society. Her latest project is a documentary film and book about the children of Hiroshima, focusing on the story of American citizens who assisted the schoolchildren survivors, and of recently discovered drawings that the children sent to America in thanks.

This program was made possible by a grant from The Smithsonian Women’s Committee.



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For the past five years, Shizumi has served as artistic coordinator for the National Cherry Blossom Festival's opening ceremonies, and she and several children were featured dancers for the 2008 opening. DC-area audiences may also remember Shizumi as the primary image on posters for the Washington National Opera's recent production of *Madama Butterfly*.

Varied and always exciting, Shizumi's work allows audiences to explore the grace, strength, and humor of traditional and modern Japanese theater and learn about the cultural connections between Japan and China, Korea, and America. She is also the founder, artistic director, and choreographer of the **Shizumi Kodomo Dance Troupe**, a non-profit organization founded to give children a creative experience in the performing arts and the opportunity to learn about and share Japanese culture. The multicultural company is comprised of young performers ages 5 to 16 who have discovered that dance and song form an international language. Learn more about Shizumi and SKDT at kodomodance.org.

Fold It Yourself!

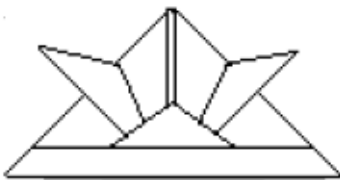
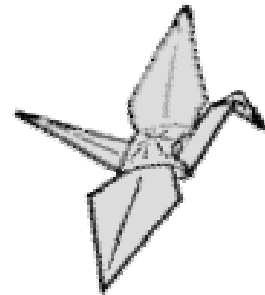
Origami is the ancient Japanese art of folding a single square of paper into a shape or object. Today, *origami* continues to be popular and is even used to teach geometry concepts to schoolchildren.

The *tsuru* or crane, a symbol of long life and good luck in Japan, is one of the most popular origami shapes. Want to fold one yourself? Many books and websites have instructions; try

www.monkey.org/~aidan/origami/crane

or

www.sadako.org/foldingcranes.htm.



On Children's Day, kids make and decorate origami *kabuto*, or samurai helmets. Find out how at

www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/origami/Samuraihat

or

exhibits.denverartmuseum.org/asianart/kids/make_stuff/origami_helmet.html.

Teacher Resources on the Web

- As part of the Embassy of Japan, the **Japanese Information and Culture Center (JICC)** exists to share information about Japan and Japanese culture. For a list of educational programs and resources, see www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/services.htm, or download a teacher's guide at www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/Teacher%20Information.pdf.
- **The Freer and Sackler Galleries** offer group tours, teacher events, online guides, materials to order, volunteer opportunities, and more! Check out the goodies at their website, www.asia.si.edu/education/teachers.htm.