

Where **actors** stroll the streets

Kawaharada Mayumi explores west Kyoto Harbour



IN THE HEIAN PERIOD, Saiin was known as *sai no kawara* – a place where paupers buried their children in shallow graves. By the Edo Period, farmers had cultivated the area into market gardens, growing rich in the process. Their legacy is the huge old farmhouses of the region, especially on the west side of Nishioji-shijo.

In the early 20th century, the expansion of the Kyoto public transport system shaped the locality. The Keifuku Railway opened in 1910, followed by Hankyu Line service from Takatsuki to Saiin in 1928. The area changed further when the Kyoto City government widened Shijo-dori in the 1930s.

During breaks from filming, actors from the Shochiku and Toei film studios ambled the Saiin backstreets. Omae Street was a frequented thoroughfare, where today the healthy lunch sets at Café Nature (closed Sun.; 11:30-16:30; tel: 075-821-3458) are popular with the many students who pass through Saiin on their way to and from university.

The Diamond City Hana Shopping Mall has changed the old way

of life. (Open daily: shops 10:00-22:00, restaurants 10:00-23:00; tel: 075-326-8701; <http://hana.diamondcity.co.jp/cgi-bin/index.cgi>) Foreigners in particular like the shopping mall, as the U.K.-based clothing chain Next, has a branch there. To compete with the mall, the Nishishin Michi Shotengai shops now take fax orders and deliver fruit and vegetables to elderly residents. They also have a work-experience program for junior and senior high school students from throughout Japan.

In the evening, the *tachinomiya* and *izakaya* along the lanes south of Hankyu Saiin Station raise their shutters. Le Monument Bleu, the best Belgian restaurant in Kyoto, is in this area (closed Mon.; 18:00-26:00; tel: 075-315-7000; www.monumentbleu.com). It is renowned for its mussels, and pumpkin quiche. For some early 20th century grandeur in a converted kimono factory, a pre-dinner drink at Kita-hei (open daily 17:30-23:00, Thu. to Sun., bar: 23:00-02:00, tel: 075-311-1873, <http://jurakudai.com/kitahei.htm>) is a good choice.



KTO SELECTS

■ MUSIC JULY 26 BLOWING FREELY



Axel Dörner works in the fields of improvised music, new music, and jazz. He has developed a totally unique style of trumpet-playing based in part on unusual, often self-invented techniques. Among his extensive activities are performances with Butch Morris and Mats Gustafsson, and recordings with Otomo Yoshihide. See him with three of Japan's finest improvisors Ezaki Masafumi, Koike Toshihiro, and Unami Taku at Osaka's excellent Fukugan Gallery (www.fukugan.net) on July 26. Show starts at 19:30; tickets: ¥1,800. Call 06-6253-3266 for more.

■ DANCE / DRAMA JULY 28-29, AUGUST 4-5 LET'S GET PHYSICAL



PHOTO: KATAOKA YOTA

Biwako Hall, in Otsu, Shiga, presents its Summer Festival 2007 in late July and early August. The theme is physical expression and the highly respected Batik dance company from Tokyo (tickets: ¥3,000), the

first Japan appearance of German choreographer/dancer Sasha Waltz (¥4,000/¥6,000), and an award-winning Japanese performance of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* (¥2,500). Call 077-523-7136 or see www.biwako-hall.or.jp/kouen/event_syousai/070728.html for more information (in Japanese).

■ FILM JULY 20-24 IT'S HERE AND IT'S QUEER

It's queer flicks time again in Osaka. From July 20 to 24, the third annual Kansai Queer Film Festival will be screening movies about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender lives at Hep Hall in Umeda. Most of the films have never been screened in Kansai before and some will be making their Japan premiere. Among the 14 programmes are *Enough Man*, a U.S. documentary exploring body image, relationships, and sex from the perspective of nine female to male transgender people and their partners; *The Gymnast* (also from the U.S.), a tale of sexual awakening for two women who become dance partners, and *Zero Degrees of Separation* from Canada, a documentary about mixed Palestinian and Israeli gay and lesbian couples and the challenges they confront. Tickets are ¥1,600 (¥1,400 advance). For information, call 080-3820-2731 or see www.kansai-qfff.org

■ FESTIVAL JUNE 23-JULY 7 STARS IN THE SKY

The annual Tanabata Festival celebrates the legend of Orihime (Vega) and Hikoboshi (Altair), two lovers who were fated to meet one day a year on July 7. In celebration, bamboo branches with colored paper and handwritten poetry and wishes begin to appear outside schools and private homes, but the most famous decorations are those used in the Sendai festival. See a sampling of these and other ornaments 173 meters in the air at Osaka's Sky Building between June 23 and July 7. See www.skybldg.co.jp/event/tanabata/index.html or call 06-6440-3901. Admission to the Floating Garden Observatory (40th floor) is ¥700.