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Himeji Cultural and International Exchange Foundation
– newsletter editing volunteers (<https://www.himeji-iec.or.jp>)

<People> Mr. Simon Rowe (Australia)



Mr. Rowe is from New Zealand, and moved to Melbourne in Australia when he was 16 years old. He has been in Himeji since 1997. He is teaching at university and writing as an author. Mr. Rowe’s short story “Good Night Papa” was made into a film. His latest short stories collection was published last year.

Q: What brought you to Japan?

A: I had written articles about things such as travel as a freelance writer before I came to Japan. I have been to more than 30 countries to collect information and do interviews. I also visited Japan to write articles. Japan was a mysterious country for me at that time and I became interested in Japanese culture.

Q: What is your impression of Himeji?

A: Himeji is very convenient to live. People in Himeji are very friendly and kind. I feel relaxed every time I come back to Himeji from my work trips and interviews.

Himeji also has a good balanced mix of modern and traditional culture. I especially like the festivals and I have written articles about Nada Kenka Matsuri a lot.

Q: How do you feel about being a writer and a teacher?

A: I sometimes use my novels as a textbook in my class at university. Some students want to get a job in the film and animation industry. I think my novels can be more useful than academic papers. I also collect data for my novels when I go overseas for my university work.

Q: Tell us about your next plan.

A: There is a story about a single mother detective in my short stories collection which was published last year. I want to write a book where she is the main character.

“Arcrea Himeji” recently opened as a new exchange base in Himeji city

Himeji Cultural Convention Center opened on September 1st. Nicknamed “Arcrea Himeji,” “Arcrea” is a combination of the words “Arc” and “Creation”. It was named with the idea that it would be a bridge for new creations to continue into the future.

It’s a 10-minute walk east from JR Himeji Station via the covered walkway. Various events can be hosted in the three halls, studios, the exhibition hall, and meeting rooms.

- Large Hall 2,010 seats

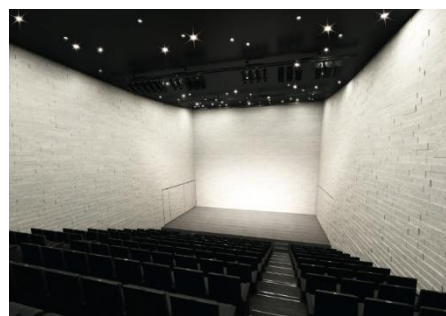
The first of its kind in Harima district, this hall has over 2,000 seats. An ambient hall, the balcony style seating on the 2nd and 3rd floors provides an up-close view of the stage. As an exchange base of culture and art domestic and international concerts, performances, stage acts, as well as lectures or panel discussions can be held here.



Large hall

- Medium Hall 693 seats

Seats spread in a fan-shape make this hall ideal for various kinds of ceremonies or lectures including theatrical plays and music concerts.



Small hall

- Small Hall 164 seats

This tiered seating hall is perfect for intimate concerts, individual or small group presentations, workshops, or seminars.

- Exhibition Hall approx. 4,000m², Roof height approx. 9m

This pillarless, single floor hall can be separated into three rooms depending on the scale of the event. Exhibitions, trade fairs, ceremonies or parties can be held here. In addition, a partially covered outdoor square called “Nigiwai Hiroba” can be used as an outdoor exhibition center.



- Meeting rooms 10 rooms

This 690m² multipurpose venue is equipped with partitions to accommodate various sizes. Available for not only meetings but also receptions or exhibitions.





Sen-hime and Himeji

On December 11th and 12th, “Opera -SENHIME-” will be performed as one of the Arcrea Himeji opening events. Let’s get to know more about Sen-hime, a historical figure associated with Himeji.

🌸 Sen-hime (1597~1666)

Sen-hime is the granddaughter of TOKUGAWA Ieyasu, the first *shogun* of the *Edo* shogunate government. Her first marriage was to TOYOTOMI Hideyori at the age of seven in 1603. After losing Hideyori in a battle, she married HONDA Tadatoki from the Kuwana clan (present-day Mie Prefecture) in 1616. In 1617, she and Tadatoki moved to Himeji Castle. They got along very well and had a daughter, Katsu-hime, in 1618 and a son, Kochiyo, in 1619. However, she had a series of misfortunes, including the death of Kochiyo at the age of three in 1621 and the death of Tadatoki from illness in 1626.



After Tadatoki’s death, Sen-hime returned to Edo (present-day Tokyo) with Katsu-hime. Later, Sen-hime took the tonsure[※], changing her name as Tenjuin and she mourned her two husbands who had passed away.

※tonsure…A woman of high status who becomes a nun and practices Buddhism.

🌸 Himeji, where Sen-hime spent her days

When Sen-hime moved to Himeji Castle, the people of Harima welcomed the beautiful princess who was from the *Shogun's* family. Although Sen-hime was in Himeji for only ten years, the days she spent with her husband and children are said to have been the happiest of her life.

🌸 Places associated with Sen-hime

① Nishinomaru of Himeji Castle

It is believed that Sen-hime and Tadatoki’s residence was located here. It is enclosed by a 240m Hyakken corridor. It is said that Sen-hime used the corridor daily, facing northwest toward Mt. Otokoyama, to pray for the prosperity and happiness of the HONDA family. Additionally, Kesho tower at the end of the corridor was used by Sen-hime as a place to rest.



Mt. Otokoyama seen from the Hyakken corridor

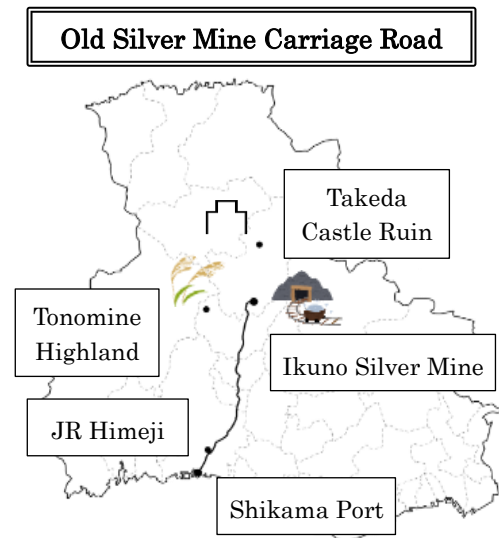
② Mt. Otokoyama Sen-hime Tenmangu Shrine

The shrine was built by Sen-hime in 1623 at the foot of Mt. Otokoyama. It was built facing east so that it could be worshipped from Himeji Castle. Because of Sen-hime and Tadatoki’s loving bond, it is said that this shrine brings fortune to romantic relationships. The TOKUGAWA family clan crest, a three-leaved hollyhock, is engraved in several places around the shrine.



Enjoy the Fall Weather at the Old Silver Mine Carriage Road

“Old silver mine carriage road” is the road made for delivering silver from Ikuno silver mine to Shikama Port in Himeji. In 1868, the *Meiji* government hired French mining engineer Jean-François Coignet and developed the road to modernize Japanese industry. It is the first industrial highway in Japan and is registered as a Japan Heritage site. There are some great places around it to visit in autumn.



1. Ikuno Silver Mine

Ikuno Silver Mine opened in 807, early *Heian* era. It closed in 1973, but you can still go into the mine and view the stone walls while animatronic miners depict how it was to work there.

Time needed: Approximately 40 min.

Access: 🚗 10 min. from Ikuno Ramp, Bantan Renraku Road

🚌 8 min. from JR Bantan Line Ikuno Station by Shinki Green Bus and additional 10 min. walk

Admission: 900 yen for adults, 600 yen for high school or junior high school students, 400 yen for elementary school students; free parking available

2. Tonomine hiking course

Tonomine Highlands, which is famous for its Japanese pampas grass field, is also known as the place where the movie *Norwegian Wood* and historical drama series were filmed. You also can find various alpine plants in the wetlands.

Time needed: Approximately 90 min., or 3 to 5 hours if visiting the Mineyama Highlands

Access: 🚗 30 min. from Kanzaki-minami Ramp, Bantan Renraku Road

Additional access: During the Japanese pampas grass season (October to early November), there is bus service from Teramae Station, JR Bantan Line, to take you directly to Tonomine Highlands. Paid parking available

3. Takeda Castle Ruins and Ritsuun-kyo Canyon

Takeda castle, build at the top of a mountain 350m high, was chosen as one of the top 100 castles in Japan. If weather permits, you can see the castle ruins floating in a sea of clouds from Ritsuun-kyo canyon on chilly, early fall mornings – giving rise to nicknames such as "castle in the sky" or "Japanese Machu Picchu."

Access: 🚗 approximately 15 min. to each spot from Asago Interchange, Bantan Renraku Road

🚌 (Takeda Castle) 40 min. walk to the west from Takeda Station, JR Bantan Line

(Ritsuun-kyo) 40 min. walk to the east from Takeda Station. (15 mins by taxi for each)

Admission: (Takeda Castle ruins) 500 yen for adults and high school students, and free for children (Ritsuun-kyo) 200 yen

What's the difference? ~Food~

They look almost the same, but have different names. Have you ever wondered “what's the difference?” We would like to introduce you to some familiar foods that are similar but different.

Takikomi gohan, Maze gohan, Okowa

Takikomi gohan

This is made by cooking *dashi*, seasonings, and ingredients together with rice. You can add fish, meat, seasonal vegetables, or other ingredients as you like. Depending on the region, it is also called “*Kayaku gohan*”, “*Gomoku gohan*” or “*Aji gohan*”.

Maze gohan

This is a mixture of cooked rice and seasoned ingredients.

Okowa

This is made by steaming glutinous rice. “*Sekihan*,” which is steamed rice mixed with red beans, is also a type of *okowa*.



Senbei, Okaki, Arare

Senbei

This is made from non-glutinous rice. This is the same rice that we usually eat. It is less sticky, so it is less likely to swell and is often hard.

Okaki · *Arare*

These are made from glutinous rice. The larger ones are called “*Okaki*” and the smaller ones are called “*Arare*”. Glutinous rice swells easily when cooked, so it is often softer than *senbei*.



Manju, Daifuku, Dango

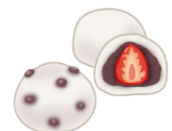
Manju

Dough made by kneading flour is wrapped around sweetened bean paste or other ingredients, then steamed or baked. “*Kohaku Manju*” is eaten when celebrating, “*Kuri Manju*” is in the shape of chestnuts, and “*Momiji Manju*” is in the shape of maple leaves, etc.



Daifuku

The dough made by kneading glutinous rice or rice flour is wrapped around ingredients such as sweetened bean paste. This includes “*Choco Daifuku*” in which the sweetened bean paste filling is replaced with chocolate, “*Ichigo Daifuku*” which contains sweetened bean paste and strawberries, and “*Mame Daifuku*” in which the dough is mixed with beans, etc.



Dango

This is made by kneading glutinous rice or non-glutinous rice flour, rolling it into small balls, and steaming or boiling it. Some are seasoned with soy sauce or soybean flour, and some are skewered.



☆Announcements from the Himeji Cultural and International Exchange Foundation☆

■“My International Exchange” exhibition will be held!

From November 15th to 30th, we will hold an exhibition called “My International Exchange”, which exhibits International Exchange photos and *Senryu* on the 1st floor of Egret Himeji. We hope you enjoy it.



Senryu...A poem composed of 17 syllables and arranged in lines of 5-7-5 morae.
Unlike *haiku*, there are no rules such as using seasonal vocabulary.

◇◆◇Letter from the Editor◆◆◇

Sown as seedlings in the spring, the tall grass has grown with plenty of rice – time to harvest. Every year, festivals are held to thank God for the rich harvest. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the festivals have been canceled. But I hope have the opportunity to get in touch with nature. Take care and stay healthy.



Disaster Prevention Vocabulary of This Issue

^{ていでん}
停電 *Teiden*: Power outage
Ex) ^{けいかくていでん}
計画停電 *Keikaku-Teiden*: Rolling blackout

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These names are used with the contributors' permission.
Their assistance is much appreciated.

You can read previous issues of “VIVA! ひめじ” on the Himeji Cultural and International Exchange Foundation’s website (International Exchange Section) (<https://www.himeji-iec.or.jp/>).

The next issue will be available in December 2021.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. We are also looking for translators and native speakers to assist us with translating and proofreading upcoming editions. If you are interested, please contact us at the following address.

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