



# 紙フィルム研究プロジェクト

The Japanese Paper Film Project

PRESENTS

## THE WORLD OF JAPANESE PAPER FILMS

WITH INTRODUCTION BY  
ERIC FADEN, PROFESSOR OF FILM/MEDIA STUDIES (BUCKNELL)

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY  
DUO YUMENO

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### **Short Description**

For a brief period in the 1930s, Japan produced films on paper – yes, paper! – instead of celluloid. This format has largely been forgotten but The Japanese Paper Film Project worked with several Japanese museums, film archives, and individual collectors to digitize and preserve over 200 surviving films. Our show presents a curated program of these paper films – both live action films and anime – along with live musical accompaniment by Duo Yumeno on koto and cello.

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### **What are “Paper Films”?**

In the 1930s, several Japanese companies produced films made on paper (called *kami firumu*, 紙フィルム) instead of celluloid. The paper films included live action films as well as anime. The films were often in color and some films had synchronized sound tracks on 78rpm vinyl.

Given the short period of production, the varying paper quality, and WWII’s devastation, very few Japanese paper film prints survive. Those prints that do survive are too fragile to play on their original projectors and thus, most films haven’t been seen in over 85 years.

The Japanese Paper Film Project started at Bucknell University (Lewisburg, PA) in 2019 and is dedicated to preserving the surviving films. The project gathered faculty and students from Film/Media Studies, East Asian Studies, Mechanical Engineering, and Computer Science to create a custom digital film scanner along with bespoke software for reanimating paper films. From 2023 - 2025, project members traveled to Japan and worked with museums, collectors, and film archives in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe to scan about 300 surviving films.

## About the Program

“The World of Japanese Paper Films” features a curated collection of digitized Japanese paper films with a wide range of genres: live action documentary, abridged versions of live action Japanese and international feature films (some now lost in their original 35mm format) plus lots of anime. Animated paper films give us a peek into the origins of contemporary anime with films that celebrate various historical and fictional samurais, rōnin, and ninjas. In addition, several popular 1930s manga characters (Norakuro and Sutakora Sacchan, amongst others) appear in paper films. Long before Miyazaki, Japanese paper films created animated fairy tales about Shinto gods and mythological creatures.

The program includes both silent and sound paper films with each film running 1 - 4 minutes. For those films without a soundtrack, Duo Yumeno (koto player Yoko Reikano Kimura and cellist Hikaru Tamaki) provide live accompaniment blending traditional Japanese music with Western classical influences.

All films are in Japanese with English subtitles. The program runs approximately 75 - 85 minutes (including a 10 minute introduction). Films are generally suitable for ages 10 and up though some films contain cartoonish graphic violence (beheadings, ritual suicide, and bisections – the Edo period was a tough time!).

## About the Performers

**Eric Faden** is a Professor of Film/Media Studies at Bucknell University (Lewisburg, PA). His research has appeared in a wide range of journals and anthologies. He also pioneered the video essay format with works appearing in journals like *Vectors* and *InTransition* along with international screenings in museums and film festivals in the US, France, Australia, and the UK. In 2017, he began researching Japanese cinema while teaching at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan.

## **Duo Yumeno**

New York based koto / shamisen player and singer **Yoko Reikano Kimura** and cellist **Hikaru Tamaki** create a singular fusion sound, inspired by tradition but with a contemporary sensibility.

**Yoko Reikano Kimura** is one of the most captivating artistic voices of Japanese koto and shamisen consistently praised by critics for her musical elegance and versatile repertoire. Based in the US and Japan, Kimura has played



major venues around the world, and is admired for her authoritative interpretation of the classics and her passionate advocacy of new music.

**Hikaru Tamaki** plays regularly as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral player in the US and Japan. He served as the principal cellist of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and was a member of the Freimann String Quartet from 2001 until 2013.

For more information: [kamifirumu.scholar.bucknell.edu](http://kamifirumu.scholar.bucknell.edu)

High Resolution images: [https://kamifirumu.scholar.bucknell.edu/promotional\\_materials](https://kamifirumu.scholar.bucknell.edu/promotional_materials)

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