

# Japanese Descendants Build Bridges Between Japan and Brazil

A New Fusion of Cultures Born in a São Paulo Commune

Migration between Japan and Brazil has a long history going back more than a century. Since the first 800 Japanese migrants arrived in Brazil aboard the *Kasato-maru* in 1908, the number of Japanese migrants to that country is said to have totaled 1.9 million people. They have contributed to Brazilian society in various fields, including agriculture, politics, and education, and have served as a bridge between the two countries. The farm established by the Yuba family, which migrated in 1926, is a good example.

Yuba Farm was set up as a commune in the Aliança district of São Paulo State in 1935 based on the wish of the founder, the late Isamu Yuba, to “create a new culture in Brazil that incorporates the characteristics of the Japanese people.” Today 56 people, comprising four generations of Japanese descendants, live a communal life on this farm, combining agricultural work and artistic activities. Masakatsu Yazaki, who migrated from Japan about 50 years ago, describes the philosophy of Isamu Yuba as “cultivation, prayer, and art.” This maxim lives on in the daily life of the farm today. When the sun rises, the farmers go out to work in the fields, growing fruit and vegetables. In the evenings, after dinner, they practice ballet and Japanese and Brazilian choral songs and offer instruction to local people.

The name “Yuba” became well known in Brazil after 1962, when the farmers established the Yuba Ballet Troupe. The troupe gradually attracted attention as it toured around the country, performing dance arrangements of the traditional Japanese song “Sakura,” as well as original ballet, and in 1978 it staged a homecoming performance in Japan. The troupe’s accomplishments in promoting exchange between Japan and Brazil through its artistic activities over many years were recognized in 2008, when it received a Japanese Foreign Minister’s Commendation and an award for distinguished services in culture from the Brazilian Ministry of Culture; it was the first time for a group of Japanese descendants to be presented with this Brazilian prize. Today the ballet troupe is conducting daily lessons in which anyone can participate.

Yuba Farm celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2015. The farm’s annual Christmas show is attended by around 400 people, a majority of the residents in the Aliança district, and is a merry affair. On this occasion, the troupe stages performances rooted in the cultures of both Japan and Brazil, including the traditional Japanese dance “Yosakoi soran” and “Rising,” an original ballet based on the theme of Brazil’s magnificent nature.

Yazaki remarks, “The ideals of Isamu Yuba provide insights for the survival of immigrants in Brazilian society, and we believe that it is the mission of immigrants to settle on this land and help develop Brazilian culture. If the unchanging life on the farm continues for a century, then we will be able to say proudly that a new culture fusing Japan and Brazil has been born. In order to pass on Yuba culture to the future, we must carry on thinking about the role of the farm.” Yuba Farm’s existence will continue to shine as a symbol of Japanese-Brazilian friendship.



The Yuba Ballet Troupe performs the original “Festo do Interior,” created in preparation for its visit to Japan in 1991. The troupe, in which local children also take part, offers a stage for exchange, holding lessons in which not only Japanese descendants but other local residents can participate.



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1. Since the annual Christmas show attracts many spectators, it is held twice, on December 25 and 30. Japanese songs and hymns are performed, and the audience sings along. 2. Theater Yuba, built on the farm in 1961, can accommodate up to 800 people. 3. Guavas, which are one of Yuba Farm’s specialties, can be harvested throughout the year and are praised for their good taste. The farm also ships mangoes, shiitake, okra, pumpkins, and other products. 4. Travelers from Brazil and around the world now come to visit the farm, attracted by reports of the relaxed pace and freedom of life here.