



A Poetry Documentary

Songs Still Sung: Voices from the Tsunami Shores

(2020, 80 minutes)

Director/Editor/Cinematographer: Suzuki Yoi

Developer/Producer: Arai Takako

New Asian Currents Official Selection

Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival 2021



Songs Still Sung: Voices from the Tsunami Shores

A GIFT FROM THEIR GENERATION TO THE FUTURE!

After the Tohoku Triple Disaster of 2011, the poet Arai Takako led a series of translation workshops with tsunami survivors in Ofunato, Iwate Prefecture, using short poems by the early 20th-century poet Ishikawa Takuboku. Takuboku was from Iwate, too, but he wrote his poems in a literary standard Japanese. Workshop participants translated his poems into their regional dialect, called “Kesengo.” A collection of 100 Takuboku poems with their translations was published in 2017.

In this documentary film, a companion to the book, Arai interviews five women from Ofunato, ages 79 to 100, who have survived as many as three tsunamis in the past century! They talk about their childhood memories, their fortitude in the face of war and natural disaster, and the extraordinary depth of spoken Kesengo. Director Suzuki Yoi’s rich poetic sensibility offers a vision of humanity in all its complexity, as the film weaves together their Takuboku translations, poetry by the women themselves, and local songs. Their stories and their language will become a part of everyone who listens to their voices.

- Director/Editor/Cinematographer: Suzuki Yoi
- Developer/Producer: Arai Takako
- Featuring: Konno Sumino, Miura Fujiko, Iwabuchi Ayako, Kinno Takako, Saito Yoko, Arai Takako, and the people of Ofunato
- Production assistance: Kinno Takako, Nakamura Sachiko, Konno Owako
- Development assistance: Higuchi Yoshizumi, Nakamura Sachiko
- Title calligraphy: Enomoto Ryoichi
- Companion volume: 『東北おんば訳 石川啄木のうた』
(*Poems of Ishikawa Takuboku in the Voices of Tōhoku Grandmas*, ed. Arai Takako, Miraisha, 2017)
- English subtitles: Kendall Heitzman
and the Workshop in Japanese Literary Translation at the University of Iowa
- Special thanks to: Jugemutei (Ofunato City, Iwate Prefecture), Museum of Contemporary Japanese Poetry, Tanka, and Haiku (Kitakami City, Iwate Prefecture), Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Saitama University, International Writing Program (IWP) at the University of Iowa