

Takachiho Shrine: Kagura Hall

The key episodes of Japanese mythology have been preserved in and around the town of Takachiho in part thanks to the *yokagura* dance tradition. Formal performances of the dances take place annually at 20 select venues throughout the town and are largely held for the residents of those communities. However, in recent years, Takachiho *yokagura* has started to attract visitors, both from other parts of Japan and from overseas. To provide a venue that shares this sacred heritage with visitors from outside the area, the Kagura Hall (Kaguraden) within the grounds of Takachiho Shrine puts on four of the 33 episodes. The spacious hall just a few steps from the main sanctuary of the shrine has a broad stage festooned with masks of the kind used in the dances. Dancers, mostly male performers known as *honadon* who are accompanied by a *hayashi* ensemble playing traditional flutes and drums, enact the dances of the gods Tajikarao, Uzume, Totori, and Goshintai throughout the year.