

## Aratate Shrine

Aratate Shrine venerates Ame no Uzume and Sarutahiko no Mikoto, deities who according to legend were married and lived on these shrine grounds. These deities represent the model of matrimonial bliss and fulfillment that draws worshippers even today. The shrine's name comes from the story that they used rough wood (*ara-ki*) to hastily construct (*tate*) the shrine.

Ame no Uzume, the “Goddess of Divine Revelry,” performed the hilarious dance that brought the Sun Goddess out of her cave, bringing light back to the world. Among Sarutahiko's powers are guidance in travel, and in the early chronicles he is credited with guiding Ninigi no Mikoto when he descended from the heavens to found Japan's ruling family. Those who seek guidance in their careers, their family's well-being, or their search for a partner come to the shrine to consult in private with its priests.

Of special note are two paintings in the Prayer Hall, which also reflect the additional role of the shrine's deities as protectors of entertainers and entertainment. One shows Ame no Uzume during her legendary dance, which is said to be the origin of ritual shrine dances (*kagura*) performed throughout Japan and a highlight of Takachiho. The second portrays that powerful first meeting of Ame no Uzume and Sarutahiko, so struck with each other they couldn't wait to build their home. Many visitors—including those from Japan's entertainment world—also make a point of striking the wooden boards that hang throughout the shrine grounds and along paths of its grove. These boards are known as the “lucky seven virtue blocks” (*shichifuku tokuju bangi*), and striking them seven times with the accompanying mallets, is said to bring good fortune and fulfillment of prayers.