

## ***Hikite* Float Pulling Team**

The Nebuta Festival revolves around the Nebuta floats, which are moved by the *hikite* (float pullers) who are responsible for getting the show moving. Each float has around 20 *hikite*, normally young men, who are positioned directly underneath the float with 10 at the front and 10 at the back. Weighing up to 4 tons, the Nebuta floats rest on a large truck chassis and tires, but being a *hikite* is hard work. The carriers are tasked with maneuvering the float, pushing against large, wooden yokes to move it forward and backward as well as swiveling it 360 degrees.

The *hikite* take orders from the *sensumochi* (float conductor), who stands in front of the float and issues directions with whistles and fan movements. Different whistle tones and turns of the fan tell the *hikite* how to maneuver the float for the most dynamic motion. Rather than just pushing straight ahead, the *hikite* follow the *sensumochi*'s instructions, for example, to stop and tip the Nebuta float towards an audience of onlookers, so they can see the intricate details up close.