

LET'S DANCE DANBEE ODORI

ABOUT MAEBASHI FESTIVAL AND DANBEE ODORI

The Maebashi Festival is one of the Three Greatest Festivals of the city and it is traditionally held for two days on the second weekend of October. The city organized it for the first time in 1948 to keep the citizens' hopes high for the reconstruction they were putting efforts into after the Second World War ended.

The festival is a joyful and animated event taking place all over the streets of the city center and every year is attended by crowds of citizens and tourists. The festival consists of many events and includes a parade of Maebashi neighborhoods'



floats, dance parades, music performances, exhibition of portable shrines and stalls with delicious food.



However, one of the most peculiar events is the **Danbee Odori Parade**, a dance event taking place in the afternoon of both the two festival days.

Several companies, organizations and associations in the city join the event forming groups that perform this famous dance, wearing colorful costumes or traditional clothes and dancing in turns for 2-3 hours. Each group shows its own style of dancing, which may be extremely

professional or typical of amateurs, and wear its own colored uniform and make up. Citizens who are not part of any organization or company but still want to join the dancing parade can participate by joining to the activities of the well-known **Genki 21 Danbee Odori Dance Group**, headed by **Mr. Ito Kenichi**.

The Danbee Odori parade was included for the first time as an activity of the Maebashi Festival celebrations in 1995. The dance choreography is specifically created for a traditional song from the 1960s titled "*Maebashi Ondo*" (Maebashi Ballad) and includes a mix of jazz, funk and samba rhythms giving the dance a very peculiar international atmosphere. At the same time, the use of the **Japanese castanets** gives it a traditional character too, with their traditional ginkgo tree leaf shape. These castanets are called *ōichō* (big ginkgo) and their shape reminds everyone about the ginkgo tree, one of the symbols adopted by the city. At certain times during the performance the dancers also shout the phrase "*sō danbee*", an expression typical of Gunma dialect meaning "*isn't like this?*" that makes the dance even more lively, fun and exciting.



ENJOY THE FESTIVAL: DANCE WITH US!

Every year, from September, the **Maebashi City Hall** cooperates with the **Maebashi International Association** and the **Genki 21 Danbee Odori Dance Group** to offer an opportunity for international residents to join the Danbee Dance Parade. This is a chance for non-Japanese residents living in Maebashi and other closer areas to experience the city culture, make new friends and know more about the city and the community the live in.

The activity consists of at least **4 lessons** held by Mr. Ito between September and October every Monday evening from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. The **castanets**, as well as the “**uniforms**” to wear during the festival, will be lent out to the participants by the Maebashi International Association. So, the only things you will need to bring are yourselves, your drinks, your towels and your smiles!

Of course, participating to the practice is not mandatory, but it is highly recommended if you want to meet new friends, or if you wish to refine your dancing skills to surprise the audience with your great performance.

In case you cannot join the practice, you can also try learning the dance by watching the video lessons Mr. Ito uploaded on **Youtube!** (*Ref. to the link and the QR Code included below*)

When the date and time of our performance is decided, we will meet at the designated place and then join the dance parade for about one hour.



★ PARTICIPATION IS FREE AND EVERYBODY IS WELCOME TO JOIN ★
BUT APPLYING BEFOREHAND IS REQUIRED



- **Dates:** every Monday from Sept. 9 – Oct. 7 Maebashi Festival
- **Time:** 7:30pm to 8:30 pm
- **Place:** Maebashi Genki 21 Nigiwai Hall (1F)
Address: Maebashi City, Honmachi 2-12-1
- **Target:** foreign nationals living in Maebashi & surroundings
- **Limited to:** 30 participants
- **No registration fees required!**
- **Things you may need:** towels, drinks, sportswear
- **Performance:** October 12 (Sat.) or 13 (Sun.) / TBC

Please apply via e-mail or phone providing your name, address and contacts to the office below.

Maebashi City Hall - Cultural and International Affairs Division
Telephone: 027-898-6516
E-mail: bunka@city.maebashi.gunma.jp



LEARN THE DANCE HERE ↓

