

# Samurai celebration of WA's Japan links

■ Shannon Hampton

Outside of Kyoto it is rare even for the Japanese to see maiko and samurai perform in traditional dress — but today Perth gets the experience for the first time for the Perth Japan Festival.

The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken the Kuroda Bushi Association of Harima in Hyogo to Perth to perform classical songs and dance to mark 35 years since the sister-State relationship between Hyogo Prefecture and WA began.

Three geika and two maiko, commonly called geisha, have also come to Perth for the Japan Foundation to mark 40 years of friendship between the nations.

Perth Japan Festival chairman Chiharu Fukumoto said the unique performances were rarely seen in public so for it to happen in central Perth was special.

"You can't really see maiko anywhere in Japan other than (the old imperial capital) Kyoto," he said.

"So this is a really, really



Warrior way: Takehiro Otsuka with Alexandra Latto and Yeehern Kim. Picture: Michael Wilson

rare opportunity to see the real maiko girls. Even some Japanese people have never seen maiko... and not many people have seen real (samurai) armour up close."

Mr Fukumoto said more than 15,000 people were expected in Forrest Place for the festival.

Yesterday students from Applecross Senior High and St George's Anglican Grammar schools were taught Japanese song and dance by the Kuroda Bushi Association of Harima, including samurai Takehiro Otsuka.

Applecross student Yeehern Kim, 14, tried on the

samurai armour. "It's heavy," he said.

"The warriors would have had to be very strong to fight in this."

The festival has displays by local Japanese groups, with traditional food and drink, and runs from 11am to 6pm today.