

Memories of Summer School

My greatest Shakuhachi Summer

By Katja Kornetzky

This year it was the first time that a Shakuhachi summer school was taking place in Europe, and I was really looking forward to going there.



First of all it gave me the chance to meet my teacher Jim Franklin and also Veronique Piron, who I had met last in Tokyo. I was very impressed when I saw the program on the website. It showed so many different teachers from so many different schools and so many styles. Wow, what a great chance I thought. I wasn't sure whether I really had the skills to participate in all those sessions, but anyway, I thought listening in might be helpful, too.

The first morning of summer school I immediately enjoyed the atmosphere in our little practice room of SOAS. People blowing Ro, others chatting, and they came really from all over the world. It was a very lively atmosphere, indeed!

Afterwards I was amazed at how quiet and focused we all could be when we were blowing Ro together. It felt like each of us was being held by the group, a wonderful feeling.

From that point, socialising went smoothly. First you start talking to your neighbour about the little cracks in your instrument, then continue how you started playing the instrument. To me it seems that everybody who plays Shakuhachi has an interesting tale to tell.



The sessions provided a balanced mixture of intense learning, laughing and listening, and the concerts were just extraordinary. Also the final concert on Saturday took the best out of us.

After the four days I left London feeling invigorated and energized. Back in Germany, I immediately started drawing my impressions. Out come a few pictures, some of people who I was very impressed with (or maybe easy to draw), or some gestures, expressions that had left a deep imprint on my mind.

I felt that the people I met in London will stay close to me for a long time and I am looking forward to seeing the European Shakuhachi Society grow.



Shakuhachi Summer School 2006

Just an impression by Hans von Loon

Travelling by train from Holland to London, I was wondering what was awaiting me there, as this was the first time for me to attend such a happening, and it was also the first time that it was possible for shakuhachi players to meet at a shakuhachi festival in Europe.

Getting out of the train at Waterloo station, the crowd was overwhelming, and it took me some time to find out how the metro worked, and after getting on the wrong metro at first, I finally managed to get to Kings Cross, from where I knew how to get to Dinwiddy House. After nearly being hit by car a few times (they all drive on the wrong side of the road) I arrived at my room. After dinner I went for a walk, to find out where SOAS was, and how long it would take me next morning to get there. For someone from the Dutch countryside, it is very noisy and crowded in London.

Next morning the big moment was there: start of summer school. We had to subscribe first, and make choices of which lessons we would like to attend. I did not know the differences between all the styles, but filled in the form as I thought it would best fit with my level of playing. I study shakuhachi for six years now with Kees Kort in Holland, so I know a bit how to read Kinko scores, and fortunately it was enough to understand what was taught in the lessons.

Then the teachers introduced themselves, and lessons started. The first lesson for me was Hi Fu Mi Hachi Gaeshi with Michael Coxall. For me this was a very difficult piece, but he patiently taught us so many techniques in that music, that I have enough material to study for years. One of the things that I also learned is that it is best to know how the music has to sound, because the Japanese play notes that are not written, and write things they don't play. And amazing how many fingerings there are for the note HA.

In the afternoon there was Zensabo Honkyoku with Okuda Atsuya. To make confusion even bigger, he invented a new notation system, but his lessons were great. When Kiku was not there to translate, he went on, just saying "O.K." after each line, and continued. His lessons were really fun for me. And for such a famous teacher, he stays so modest.



Okuda's class.

In Brian's lessons I found out that improvisation is also possible if you're a beginning student.

Then there were very good lectures. I was very happy to have John Neptune check my flute. I bought it without really knowing the qualities of the instrument, but it appeared to be a really good one, so now I know it is me who has to improve, and not the shak. As a result of his talk in which he gave some practice tips, I am now experimenting with recording myself, and it really helps to find the weak spots in my playing. He also amazed me by showing how many different sounds you can get from a shakuhachi.

The atmosphere was very good. Relations between students and teachers felt very relaxed and as the days passed by, the group became one more and more. Last day, when playing our daily Hi Fu Mi Cho, I was touched, so many people playing such a simple song, being one altogether. When going home, it felt as having made lots of new friends.

Students concert was going beyond frontiers for me again, as I don't dare to play in public normally, and now did 3 pieces ! It was wonderful how even people playing for the first time in their live, did give their first concert.

All together it was for me an impressive event, which I will never forget, and in which I have met two teachers with whom I can study in the future, Tilo Burdach and Veronique Piron.

Last but not least, compliments for Kiku and Michael for the huge task of organizing such an event so well. It was great.

SOAS Shakuhachi Summer School

Ramblings from a lonely Tozan player by Nigel Puttergill

After studying under the Tozan School of shakuhachi in Kyoto for three years, I returned last summer to the UK with no idea on how to continue my shakuhachi studies. I desperately tried to find a Tozan teacher in the UK, but without success. However, after searching the internet for some time I eventually made contact with Kiku Day. She was most helpful, but couldn't help me find a Tozan teacher in the UK. Although at that point I was not able to further my studies under the Tozan School, Kiku kindly registered me on various mailing lists to keep me up to date on SOAS events and activities in London. It is from Kiku Day that I came to learn of the Shakuhachi Summer School.

Realizing that most of the Summer School participants were likely to be Kinko players, I was somewhat reluctant to participate at first, as I can only read Tozan notation. Eventually I did decide to participate in the event, because the Summer School offered an opportunity for me to continue my shakuhachi studies in the UK.

Although in Japan I studied honkyoku, sankyoku, shinkyoku and minyo to an intermediate level, the first day at the summer school was an absolute disaster. I felt quite stupid not being able to read kinko notation, or being able to participate to a level I knew I was capable of. It was so frustrating that I nearly packed my bags and left for home after the first day.

The second day was better. There was a small glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. I found teachers who were very supportive and helped in explaining Kinko

notation; I found wonderful new friends with a common interest in shakuhachi; I met world class shakuhachi players; and most important of all I began to learn new things. From thereon life just got better and better.

By the end of the four day summer school I was reluctant to return home. I didn't want to leave my new found friends and teachers. It was a fabulous experience to meet, learn from, and talk to some of the best international players in the shakuhachi world. I can't think of any other way one could have gained so much knowledge and experience in such a short time. I started the Summer School as a lonely Tozan player in UK, and left as a European Shakuhachi player belonging to an International school.

It was a fabulous experience, and one that will be difficult to better. For those who couldn't make the Summer School, I can only say that you missed out on a wonderful event. For those who were there (including organizers, teachers, guests and students) I can only say THANK YOU for everything you gave to me.

I have many wonderful memories (like most of you) from those four days, but most of them I will keep to myself. Each one of us gained something from those few days together, but one thing I think we all experienced was a real strong common bond. If you have the same feeling, then lets work together to strengthen the European Shakuhachi Society and make the 2nd International Summer School (wherever that may be) as good as the first.

Reflections on Shakuhachi Summer School

By Jeff Bateman

It now, unfortunately, seems like the distant past but the Shakuhachi Summer School was really a great experience for me.

It was truly wonderful to be able to have the opportunity to meet so many people with a similar interest in Japanese music. It was also a great opportunity to be exposed to some of the different genre of Shakuhachi.

The contrast between the deeply spiritual aspect of Shakuhachi and the purely technical aspect was also refreshing.

For me the Shakuhachi will always be a tool for reaching something deeper and focusing the mind. Regardless of 'level achieved' I think that each person can gain something and draw something out of the sound of the Shakuhachi. Whether it is sound for meditation or whether it is described as music is not important.

I was first attracted to the Shakuhachi for meditation. But studying with Michael Coxall over the last couple of years has helped me appreciate Sankyoku.

If I were to mention everybody who inspired me at the summer school the list would be long as it included both teachers and students. However, top of the list has to come the Okuda family. I felt that each one of them brought a special something and it was so lovely to see a family together at such an event. I especially enjoyed the spontaneous performances of Okuda sensei during the breaks. Looking forward to seeing you all again next year.



Summer School Memories (a mini recap)

by Stephanie Hiller

As temperatures soared to a squelchy 39C, the first ever Pan-European Shakuhachi Summer School began.

Memories? Oh yes, I have some wonderful memories:

- Putting faces to names of people I'd emailed, but never met
- Meeting new people who all wanted to talk about shakuhachi ☺
- Finding out that I was not alone in my obsession!
- So many happy faces - everyone was having such a great time and everyone was so friendly!

Highlight: Getting to meet, hear and learn from all those teachers who had only been a name up until now.

Lowligh: Having to leave right after the Student concert, and missing the party ☹

Scary moment: Having to rush off and change my trousers on the last day (thank goodness I had my suitcase with me!) as the ones I was wearing were in danger of falling down! A clear lesson to us all *never* to lose weight ;-)*

Regret: I didn't make more of an effort to learn people's names (I think we should all have had our names tattooed on our foreheads when we arrived – maybe next time?!)

So, over-riding memories of Summer School are a feeling of being surrounded by lovely, friendly, like-minded people, all having a great time and learning from each other. Roll on next year!!!

Oh, did I mention – it was HOT!!

* Well, clearly musical activities and clothes falling off is a theme for me – the first (and I had hoped, last!) experience for me being when my skirt fell off on stage at the Royal Albert Hall (fortunately, as part of a choir of c200) – but that, as they say, is another story.

“Seek the sound which is evoked from within....improved, polished and developed inside yourself. The Shakuhachi demands of you your candid self – thus, put your whole being into the Shakuhachi. Inhale once and expire. There is no second chance in life. Each exhalation must be pure.”

MIYAMOTO MUSASHI
