

European Shakuhachi Festival Prague, 2010
August 27th, 20:00

Zen: Sound and Silence

--Program--

Betsuden Shika no Tone, Kiku Day

Takiochi, Jim Franklin

Takiochi no Kyoku, Simura Zenpo

Yûgure no Kyoku, Gunnar Jinmei Linder

Tsuru no Sugomori, Yamamoto Shinzan + Aizawa Rozan

--INTERMISSION--

Itchoken Banshiki, Vlastislav Matoušek:

Shinkyorei, Christopher Yohmei Blasdel

Eichigo San'ya, Simura Zenpo

Piece Explanations:

Betsuden Shika no Tohne. *Shiki no Tone*, or the *Distant Cry of the Deer*, is one of the most famous of all shakuhachi *hokyoku* pieces and exists in various versions in many styles. The piece is usually performed as a duet and is programmatic, conjuring up the sounds of a male and female deer crying out to each other in the Autumnal woods. *Betsuden* refers to the level of transmission.

Takiochi no Kyoku is one of the most famous of all shakuhachi *honkyoku*, with a simple structure that imparts a fresh feeling to the listeners. Titles with the same name can be found in Myôan Shinpo and Taizan Styles, the Kinko Style, the Seien Style and the Chikuho Style. The piece is said to be composed by the head priest of Ryûgen Temple, near the Asahi Waterfalls in Izu Peninsula. Tonight's performance uses a 3.3 *shaku*, *jinashi* shakuhachi, with complicated, rich overtones and interesting noises.

Yûgure no Kyoku, with its quiet introduction of repeated phrases in the lower register, evokes the magical time of the gloaming—a period of the day when light gradually fades and shapes lose their color and form as they dissolve into darkness. At such times, the sounds of the natural world grow in intensity, and the ear becomes sensitive to sounds normally hidden by the light. Midway through, the piece jumps into the high register and stirs the senses in a nocturnal excitement before dissolving again into the lower tones and finally disappearing into the darkness of night.

Tsuru no Sugomori (“Song of the Cranes”) Tozan Style. Nakao Tozan (1876-1956), the founder of the Tozan School of shakuhachi, composed this duet version of *Tsuru no Sugomori* in 1905 by arranging the *kokyū* piece of the same name. The Tozan version is programmatic, depicting the nesting life of cranes and uses shakuhachi techniques to deftly imitate the sounds of the cranes. The piece begins slowly, like a free-rhythm *honkyoku*, but builds up into metered response patterns, called *kakeai*.

Ichōken Banshiki, is the Banshiki piece transmitted from Itchō-ken Temple, a famous *komusō* temple in Kyushu. *Banshiki*, which is originally a term used in *gagaku* court music, refers to the tuning of the same name, in modern pitches corresponding to B. *Banshiki* is also performed in the Kinko Style repertory.

Shinkyorei, along with *Kokūreibo* and *Mukaijireibo* are the three most sacred pieces in the Kinko *honkyoku* repertory. The term *kyorei* refers to the “bell which isn’t” that the putative founder of the Fuke Sect, Fuke, used to urge followers toward enlightenment.

Echigo San’ya was transmitted from Shūhōzan Myōan Temple in Echigo Province, present day Niigata Prefecture. *Sanya* is a very common name for shakuhachi *honkyoku*. Since the *komusō* pieces were originally orally transmitted, they were written with a variety of *kanji*, all conveying different meanings. The term *Sanya* may refer to ancient Sanskrit, the structure of the piece itself or a place name.