

European Shakuhachi Festival Prague, 2010
August 28th, 20:00

Japanese: Tradition Present

--Program--

Yûgao, Shamisen: Kikuko Sato, Koto: Watanabe Haruko, Shakuhachi: Gunnar Jinmei Linder

Sô Kyorei, Shakuhachi, Simura Zenpo

Sasa no Tsuyu, Shamisen: Kikuko Sato, Shakuhachi: Christopher Yohmei Blasdel

--INTERMISSION--

Fune no Yume, Shamisen: Kikuko Sato, Shakuhachi: Gunnar Jinmei Linder

Shigure, Katsuragi, Noh Dance: Matsui Akira, Shakuhachi: Christopher Yohmei Blasdel

Piece Explanations:

Yûgao was composed by Kikuoka Kengyô, with lyrics based on the *Evening Faces* chapter from the early 11th century Japanese novel, *Tale of the Genji*. Prince Genji, an amorous boy of seventeen, visits his old foster mother in a slightly neglected area of Kyoto. On the way, he stops to admire several evening glories blooming in a fence. Just then, a maid-servant appears with an evening glory, *yûgao*, poised on a perfumed fan and a poem: a gift from the young women in the house. Genji resolves to find out who this young admirer might be. He calls her Yûgao and manages to have a brief love affair with her, but Genji's previous lover, Rokujô, becomes intensely jealous and sends a vindictive spirit to kill Yûgao, who dies in Genji's arms.

Sôkyorei is from the Myôan Shinpo Sect, which predates the present-day Myôan Taizan Sect organized after the Meiji Restoration (1868). *Kyorei* is one of the most sacred

pieces in the *honkyoku* repertory, and in the Shinpo Sect, *Kyorei* is divided into three versions, *Shi*, *Gyô* and *Sô*. *Sô* refers to the style of performance.

The piece *Kyorei* refers to the putative founder of the Fuke Sect, Fuke of Tang period China, who wandered the streets ringing a large bell. It is said his disciple tried to imitate with a shakuhachi the sound of his master's bell, hence the name *Kyorei* ("The Bell that Isn't").

Sasa no Tsuyu. *Shamisen* part: Kikuoka Kengyou (1792-1847), Lyrics: Shimade Ryojô. The title literally means "dew drops (*tsuyu*) on a bamboo leaf (*sasa*)," but this refers to the Japanese *sake* rice wine, as *sasa* is an old Japanese word for *sake*. Indeed, this piece is also known just as ***Sake***. The text extols the virtues and pleasure of drinking. One of the most interesting and demanding parts of this piece are the call and response (*kakeai*) sections. The *shamisen* sets up a short melodic phrase and the shakuhachi responds, and vice versa. The timing and subtle phrasing of the *kakeai* require careful attention, but the result is an intriguing musical dialogue between the instruments.

Shigure, Katsuragi. The *noh* theater is Japan's penultimate expression of literature, movement, song, costume and mask. Beginning in the 14th century, *noh* is often referred to as the oldest extant theater form in the world. Master Noh dancer (*shite*) of the Kita style has choreographed this *noh* dance to two pieces by contemporary Japanese composer Takahashi Yûji, *Shigure* and *Katsuragi*.