

**HAIKU**

**A TRADITIONAL TENPUKU  
PIECE LOST TO TIME**

**YAMAGUCHI GŌRO:  
HIS LEGACY**

**IGNITION COMMISSION  
ELIZABETH BROWN**

# BAMBOO

Autumn/Winter 2024

Newsletter of the European Shakuhachi Society



**TEXAS  
HERE WE COME!**

**FINLAND SUMMER  
SCHOOL 2024 DIARY**

**COLLECTION  
CHRISTOPH WAGNER**

**REAR VIEW MIRROR  
CD & BOOK REVIEWS**





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BAMBOO – The Newsletter of the European Shakuhachi Society – Autumn/Winter 2024

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## A Deep Breath, Relax... A Word From Your Chairperson

Dear ESS Members and shakuhachi friends,

Hope you are all well!

Let me welcome you to the autumn/winter issue of BAMBOO, filled with exciting aspects and stories about our beloved instrument as well as inspiring memories from our big summer event in Finland this year.

Needless to say that our Finland Summer School was the highlight of our activities this year. Being at the Friendship Inn venue, with its homely charm, the picturesque surroundings of Kruusila and taking meals together, it felt indeed at times like a large shakuhachi family gathering. Thanks for being there everybody!

A particular focus point, for teacher and participants alike, was the ESS commission "Echoes Of The Taiga" composed by Marty Regan and premiered at the Summer School concert in the Sibelius Museum in Turku. Given the limited rehearsal time everybody worked really hard and concentrated to deliver a great performance at the concert. We certainly hope to have other ESS commissions in the future.

Talking about the future ESS calendar, the ESS Board will follow the tradition of taking a year off in 2025 due to the World Shakuhachi Festival taking place in Texas from 17. to 20. April next year. We hope you all too find this path of action the right way for the ESS to take. We feel that the global shakuhachi community needs to work together whenever possible and not intrude on each others' projects and in this spirit we let the spotlight shine on the efforts of the WSF2025 organisers and the superlative event they are putting together right now, which will feature 55+ invited international guests, 10 concerts, 72 workshops and more.

We would encourage every ESS member and shakuhachi player to consider attending the WSF2025. To support this we took the exciting step to create 10 ESS WSF2025 scholarships for ESS members and we hope this will inspire and help some of you to attend the event. (see page 11 onwards)

In regard to the ESS Summer School in Athens, this means we will now focus our attention on the summer of 2026. Of course 2026 being the 20th anniversary of the ESS, we are planning to make it a worthwhile occasion and in this way hope to make up for the longer wait than usual.

For now there is of course the ESS Online Events which commenced in November and continue through until May 17th. (more about the programme on the following pages). In this event series we are experimenting again with some new formats, as well as having some free events, to try to reach to as many of the shakuhachi community as are out there to meet and learn together, even if only online for now.

As always any comments or suggestions please contact us on [info@shakuhachisociety.eu](mailto:info@shakuhachisociety.eu).

Best wishes

Thorsten Knaub, ESS Chairperson

## And Breathe... A Word From Your Editors

Dear ESS Members and shakuhachi people,

Who sang this?

*"Old bald long-tail/You scurry to the lamp room/And dip your tail in the oil./Be sure to soak it very, very well.  
Little house mice! To the lady's powder room/To chew the wig stand!"*

To my surprise, it's a mouse general, giving orders to a mouse army, in a *jiuta* piece titled "Kyoku Nezumi." Cunning shamisen techniques are used to imitate the mice. It's in Christopher Blasdel and Gunnar Linder's new book about *jiuta*, reviewed in this issue. "*Sakumono jiuta* pieces are humorous in nature," writes Blasdel, "and were often improvised on the spot by the master performers."

Also under review are records by Elizabeth Brown, a new book from Akikazu Nakamura and a live show by the ex-saxophonist-turned-shakuhachi-player Shabaka Hutchings.

Our regular "Ignition Commission" is a new work by Elizabeth Brown. In our regular feature "Rear View Mirror" a shakuhachi player looks back at a classic recording: this time it's the turn of Detta Danford to listen to Hozan Yamamoto's *Ginkai (Silver World)* from five decades ago.

We have some more shakuhachi haiku poetry, illustrated by Kazuko Hohki's *sumi-e* ink painting. And a first look at Christoph Wagner's collection of hundred-year-old postcards. Ralph Samuelson tells us about decades of study with Yamaguchi Goro, and Rafael Fuchigami reports on a rare samurai flute in Kyushu, where his research has restored a lost piece of music back to life.

Then we have reports from various shakuhachi schools: H el ene Seiyu Codjo and Etsuko Kondo have been to Finland, while John Garner has been studying with Cornelius Shinzen Boots and his Black Earth School in Scotland.

Finally, looking forward to 2025, Marek Kimei Matvija previews the 15th Prague International Shakuhachi Festival (featuring The Shakuhachi 5), and there's masses of information about the World Shakuhachi Festival in Texas, including those hot new ESS scholarships. Did I mention the ESS Online Event Series, stretching from November 2024 to May 2025? I didn't? Well, it's on the very next page of your *Bamboo* magazine.

The Editors





# ESS ONLINE 2024-25

play • learn • compose • share • listen • talk • enjoy

**#1 3 Nov 2024**

**ESS Sunday Brunch**

**FREE**

Kyle Chōmei Kamal Helou

**#2 10 + 17 Nov + 1 Dec 2024**

**Composing for Shakuhachi**

Chris Molina

**#3 19 Jan 2025**

**ESS New Year Concert**

**FREE**

ESS Members & guests

**#4 15/16 Feb 2025**

**Honkyoku/Sankyoku**

Zenyoji Keisuke • Christopher Yohmei Blasdel  
Martha Reika Fabrique • Suizan Lagrost

**#5 2 Mar 2025**

**ESS Sunday Brunch**

**FREE**

Hélène Seiyu Codjo

**#6 4 May 2025**

**ESS Sunday Brunch**

**FREE**

Horacio Curti

**#7 17 May 2025**

**Anime & Game Tunes**

Seimo Yamaguchi







# ESS ONLINE 2024-25

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## ESS ONLINE EVENTS 2024-25

We are happy to announce the ESS Online Events for 2024-25!

After the success of our last event series, we have another wide selection of events lined up for you. We invite you to seven events spread out between 3. November 2024 and 17. May 2025. As we are always curious to try out new ideas, we will have some new formats and hope there is something for everybody – we are certainly very excited by what is coming up!

Quick overview of the ESS Online Events 2024-25:

### **3. November 2024 Event #1**

ESS Sunday Brunch with Kyle Chōmei Kamal Helou

### **10. + 17. November & 1 December 2024 Event #2**

Composing for Shakuhachi with Chris Molina

### **19. January 2025 Event #3**

ESS New Year Concert – ESS Members & guests

### **15./16. February 2025 Event #4**

Intermediate/Advanced workshop with Zenyoji Keisuke,  
Christopher Yohmei Blasdel, Martha Reika Fabrique, Jean-François Suizan Lagrost

### **2. March 2025 Event #5**

ESS Sunday Brunch with Hélène Seiyu Codjo

### **4. May 2025 Event #6**

ESS Sunday Brunch with Horacio Curti

### **17. May 2025 Event #7**

Anime & Game Tunes with Seimo Yamaguchi





# ESS ONLINE 2024-25

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The season started off on the 3. November with the new format of ESS Shakuhachi Sunday Brunch, a mix of informal gathering and formal teaching open to all levels. Often just listening in can be a helpful experience too if you just started the shakuhachi and are not yet so familiar with it all. Each brunch starts off with blowing some ro-buki together to get into the Sunday morning spirit. There will be some teachings about techniques, and in the last hour or so, there will be a specific piece taught.

In between we imagine a kind of open space where we will try to accommodate the particular mix of the people present. This may mean an open mic kind of slot, where you can present your playing to get feedback from the session leader. There are also potential slots for some short talks and other type of presentations or discussions as well as Q & A about shakuhachi related issues. Each Brunch will have its own flavours.

The Sunday Brunch is a free event to attend and will be led by an experienced shakuhachi player and teacher. Our 'Chef de partie' for the very successful and well attended 3. November Sunday Shakuhachi Brunches was Kyle Chōmei Kamal Helou. and in 2025 we will have Hélène Seiyu Codjo (2 March) and Horacio Curti (4. May).

November saw also the start of a three-session shakuhachi course about composition skills and technique. We are thrilled to have Chris Molina, shakuhachi composer and performer, to guide us through the basic ingredients and approaches to write and compose music for shakuhachi. This course is open to all levels, and in particular welcomes people with no prior composing experience. The initial two sessions of *Composing for Shakuhachi - A Beginner's Guide for Turning Ideas into Music* were on 10. and 17. November. After a two week period for creation and polishing we then have a final session on 1. December, where participants will each have the option to present a short composition, either as live performance or recorded mp3, and where they then can share their feedback.





# ESS ONLINE 2024-25

play • learn • compose • share • listen • talk • enjoy

Next year our online programme continues with the ESS New Year Concert on 19. January 2025. As in 2024, we have scheduled the annual online gathering at a quieter moment in the year. We hope it will give us the energy and strength to sustain us through 2025. This year, besides the usual members contributions, our particular focus will be the WSF2025 in Texas and we will get a special preview of some of the invited performers as well as a presentation of the WSF Planning Committee. As in previous years the ESS New Year concert is a free event too. (Registration required).

As we continue our event series we have a dedicated intermediate/advanced workshop lined up for the 15+16 February 2025. Here we have from Japan Zenyoji Keisuke (Kimpu-ryū Nezasa-ha), from USA Christopher Yohmei Blasdel (Kinko-ryu/Chikumeisha) and Martha Reika Fabrique (Kurahashi Yodo II) as well as our European guest Jean-François Suizan Lagrost (Shin-Tozan-ryū). The sessions will feature a mix of traditional *honkyoku* and *sankyoku* pieces. Not to miss, for any level.

As already mentioned we will have two more Sunday Shakuhachi Brunches in 2025, starting with Hélène Seiyu Codjo on 2. March and Horacio Curti on 4. May.

This already brings us to May and our last event, and again to an area of shakuhachi music we have not explored that much within the ESS. On 17. May we will welcome Seimo Yamaguchi to introduce and teach us his favourite anime and game tunes. Cosplay is an option of course. :-)

Hope to see you online!  
Thorsten Knaub, ESS Chairperson





**ESS ONLINE 2024-25**  
play • learn • compose • share • listen • talk • enjoy



# ESS Sunday Brunch

**FREE**

Nov 3 • March 2 • May 4  
10h00 - 12h30-ish

We serve: ro-buki \* technique \* open mic  
\* pieces \* talk \* Q&A \* honkyoku ...  
beginners welcome

*Chef de partie*

**Nov 3: Kyle Chōmei Kamal Helou**

**March 2: Hélène Seiyu Codjo**

**May 4: Horacio Curti**

Registration: <https://events.shakuhachisociety.eu>



**TEXAS HERE WE COME!**

**WORLD SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL 2025 - LET'S GO, WITH A HELPING HAND FROM THE ESS SCHOLARSHIPS.  
DON'T DELAY, APPLY TODAY!**

*The ESS is happy to announce*



**ESS WSF2025  
SCHOLARSHIPS  
of \$550/€500  
for  
ESS MEMBERS**



# TEXAS HERE WE COME!

WORLD SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL 2025 - LET'S GO, WITH A HELPING HAND FROM THE ESS SCHOLARSHIPS.  
DON'T DELAY, APPLY TODAY!

## 10 ESS WSF2025 Scholarships of \$550/€500 each available for ESS Members

Applications are now open!



### Where is the WSF2025?

The next World Shakuhachi Festival (WSF) will be from 17. to 20 April 2025 at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, USA. This will be the 8th WSF and the first since London WSF in 2018.

### What is happening there?

There will be 55+ invited international guests, featuring the highest level of global shakuhachi performers. Festival registration gives you admission to 10 concerts, participation in more than 72 workshops, R/T chartered coach transportation to Round Top Concert Hall, three catered events, including the gala dinner in Round Top, Tote bag, T-shirt, festival badge and the WSF 2025 programme booklet.

### Who is eligible?

All ESS members are eligible and welcome to apply.

### I am only a beginner, can I also apply?

Yes all ESS members regardless of their playing experience or playing level may apply. The ESS wants to support as much a diverse selection of its members as possible.

### What other criteria are there for selection?

At the heart of your application is a short essay (~300 words) telling us about your circumstances, in terms of finance and in regards to your shakuhachi journey, and what you think you will gain from your attendance of the WSF2025. Otherwise, to spread the joy as much as possible, we will aim to represent a variety of countries, playing levels, schools and styles to honour our remit of supporting all shades of shakuhachi practice. We are particular encouraging our European members to see this as a great opportunity to be part of the WSF next year.

### Great stuff, how do I apply?

Head over to the WSF2025 website to the registration page [[->https://wsf2025.com/scholarships](https://wsf2025.com/scholarships)]. There will be a link to the online application form waiting for you. Please note ESS Scholarship applications can only be made through this dedicated online form. No applications or other supporting materials sent by email or in other ways to the ESS will be considered. By applying to the ESS Scholarship you also accept our Terms & Conditions (see below).



# TEXAS HERE WE COME!

WORLD SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL 2025 - LET'S GO, WITH A HELPING HAND FROM THE ESS SCHOLARSHIPS.

DON'T DELAY, APPLY TODAY!

## **How much is the award of the ESS WSF2025 Scholarship?**

The ESS scholarship amount of \$550/€500 contains two elements. There is a full fee waiver of the WSF 2025 “early bird” registration fee (\$350). WSF 2025 will provide ESS scholarship recipients with a designated “PROMOCODE” to register for free.

The additional \$200, which may e.g. support travel expenses, or other costs in relation to the WSF2025 attendance at the discretion of the recipient, will be received after showing proof of registration.

All scholarship recipients, in the same manner as regular attendees who pay for their registration fees, will also receive an online discount code to book the WSF 2025 selected hotels for a special discounted rate.

## **Aren't there also some other WSF2025 Scholarships too?**

Yes, there are two different scholarships. There is a WSF 2025 Scholarship Fund for general participants worldwide. Additionally, there are 10 ESS Scholarships reserved for ESS Members only. There are part of the same application form. By indicating your ESS membership you will automatically be considered for the ESS Scholarship. Applicants may receive one or the other, but not both. An unsuccessful ESS members scholarship application may still be considered by the WSF Scholarship selection committee and may receive a WSF 2025 “early bird” registration fee waiver if remaining funds allow.

## **What are the deadlines?**

The deadline for submitting the applications is December 15, 2024.

Scholarship application results will be reported to all applicants by December 26, 2024.

## **Will I be mentioned in the programme?**

Yes, by default all scholarship recipients will have their name listed in the WSF 2025 programme unless otherwise requested by the recipient.

Good luck!

The ESS Board [www.shakuhachisociety.eu](http://www.shakuhachisociety.eu)

## **Terms & Conditions**

In the event that an ESS scholarship recipient will not attend the WSF2025 after all, due to personal or other outside circumstances, and if the additional \$200 have already been given to the recipient, this \$200 needs to be given back to the ESS within a to be agreed time span.

The registration fees waiver issued by the WSF2025 through the ‘PROMOCODE’ cannot be exchanged to the equivalent amount in cash.

Also, in the same manner, the WSF 2025 cancellation/refund policy is not applicable for registrations made through a ‘PROMOCODE’ issued as part of the ESS Scholarship award.

The decision of the ESS selection panel is final.

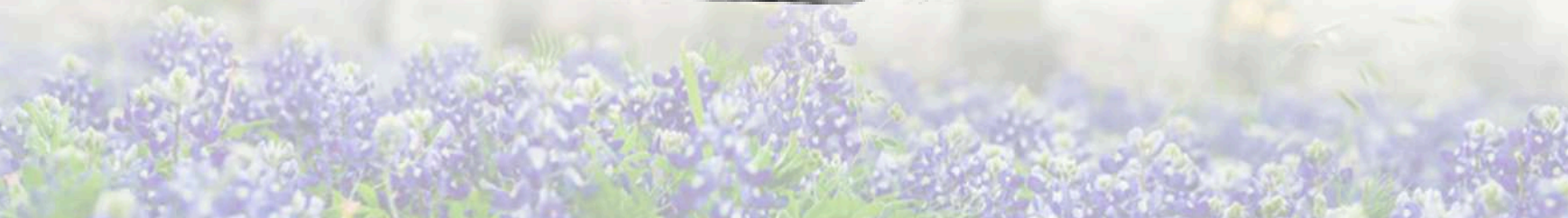
ESS Board Members and ESS Advisors cannot apply for the ESS WSF2025 Scholarship.



**TEXAS HERE WE COME!**

**WORLD SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL 2025 - LET'S GO, WITH A HELPING HAND FROM THE ESS SCHOLARSHIPS.**

**DON'T DELAY, APPLY TODAY!**





# TEXAS HERE WE COME!

WORLD SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL 2025 - LET'S GO, WITH A HELPING HAND FROM THE ESS SCHOLARSHIPS.  
DON'T DELAY, APPLY TODAY!

## WORLD SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL TEXAS 2025

The World Shakuhachi Festival Texas 2025 is a celebration of everything shakuhachi – the Japanese end-blown bamboo flute. It is a quadrennial gathering of hundreds of people from around the world who come together to perform and hear performances, attend workshops, swap anecdotes, and share the history and wonder of this stunning Japanese musical tradition, both amongst themselves and with the local community and public.

From April 16~20, 2025, the School of Performance, Visualization, and Fine Arts at Texas A&M University (College Station, Texas) will host the 8th incarnation of this international gathering. Performers, students, composers, scholars, and shakuhachi enthusiasts will visit from throughout the United States and Japan, as well as from China, Taiwan, Australia, Europe, and the Americas. With fields awash in bluebonnets and temperate weather, spring in Texas is a perfect time to hold an international music festival. Add the haunting sound of the shakuhachi – a sound that has already captured the imagination of millions of people worldwide – and you have a festival for everyone to enjoy. There will be a wide variety of public opportunities for audiences to join registered participants and experience something truly special.

What is this evocative instrument? Originally from China, the shakuhachi arrived in Japan almost 1,300 years ago. The musical tradition that flourishes today was developed centuries ago among an elite group of Japanese Buddhist monks, many of them former samurai warriors. They practiced their flutes as meticulously as they practiced their sword technique, hoping to achieve a moment of enlightenment. The confluence of sound and silence, music seemingly abstract yet profoundly moving, the peace and calm of deep breathing... all from a single piece of bamboo.

Over the past several decades, Japanese popular culture has taken hold around the world. Today, the captivating sounds of Japanese traditional music have become a part of global consciousness. The shakuhachi and other Japanese instruments such as taiko drums have been embraced by musicians and composers from many cultures and are practiced and performed on every continent. The shakuhachi is now commonly heard in film scores, anime, and in video games. It has gained traction in classical music, jazz, and rock n' roll. Music of the shakuhachi went interstellar when the "Golden Record" was launched on the Voyager II spacecraft in 1977, featuring a recording of the shakuhachi legend, previous National Living Treasure YAMAGUCHI Gorō (1933-1999). The current National Living Treasure NOMURA Hōzan is among the nearly 55 guest artists from around the world we have invited to attend and share their artistry. There will be three mainstage concerts held at Rudder Theater on the A&M campus on April 17, 18, and 20. A gala concert will be held at Festival Hill in Round Top, TX, on April 19.



# TEXAS HERE WE COME!

**WORLD SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL 2025 - LET'S GO, WITH A HELPING HAND FROM THE ESS SCHOLARSHIPS.  
DON'T DELAY, APPLY TODAY!**

Founded by Katsuya YOKOYAMA (1934 – 2010), the WSF has a history that extends back to 1994, when the first international gathering of shakuhachi players was held in Bisei, Okayama Prefecture, Japan. Subsequent WSF Festivals have been held in Boulder, USA (1998), Tokyo, Japan (2002), New York, USA (2004), Sydney, Australia (2008), Kyoto, Japan (2012), and London, UK (2018). WSF 2025 will transform the campus of Texas A&M and the cities of Bryan/College Station with the music of the shakuhachi, a magical instrument that somehow has the power to transcend national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries:

[www.wsf2025.com](http://www.wsf2025.com)



## **World Shakuhachi Festival Texas 2025**

April 17~20, 2025

College Station, Texas USA  
Texas A&M University

2025年4月17日~20日

アメリカ テキサス州

テキサスA&M大学にて





# TEXAS HERE WE COME!

**WORLD SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL 2025 - LET'S GO, WITH A HELPING HAND FROM THE ESS SCHOLARSHIPS.  
DON'T DELAY, APPLY TODAY!**

The upcoming WSF2025 in Texas is a unique gathering of the global shakuhachi community and with 55+ invited international guests, 10 concerts, 72 workshops it will feature the highest level of international shakuhachi performers coming together for years to come. If an ESS Summer School gives you a buzz for the rest of the year, a WSF will buzz and resonate with you for many, many years to come!

I would like to encourage ESS members as well as the wider shakuhachi community to attend if at all possible. In particular I hope that the ESS Boards' decision to create the 10 ESS scholarships reserved for ESS members will help some of you to make it possible to attend the WSF2025. We are very excited about this new step to show our commitment to shakuhachi and to help our members to reach out for new valuable experiences.

THORSTEN KNAUB, ESS CHAIRPERSON

## More voices about World Shakuhachi Festival...

If you never attended a WSF, it's more than a giant ESS summerschool. WSF gather the most important figures of the shakuhachi scene, from Japan and elsewhere. At a WSF you can learn from all those players and see them performing in lots of concerts. You can discover a huge number of styles. While accessing shakuhachi related resources is often difficult in Europe, everything is there in a WSF (artefacts, knowledge, art), the most difficult is to choose. If money is a problem, the ESS offers grants to support your attendance at the next WSF. Please, consider applying.

CHRISTOPHE KAZAN GASTON

If you can, do participate in WSF! It is so stimulating to meet other people with the same interest, but with different backgrounds. And you can study with and hear a lot of different styles and fantastic performances. See you in Texas!

GUNNAR JINMEI LINDER

The last WSF happened in 2018, meaning seven years ago. Looking at the state of the world, when and where will the next one happen? That's a real question as this is asking a lot of organisation, long time in advance, engaging generous volunteers. So if you can put WSF Texas 2025 into your agenda, of course with the excitement of meeting the Japanese and International shakuhachi community, it might be the right time to think to join now.

VÉRONIQUE PIRON



# An ESS Summer School Diary

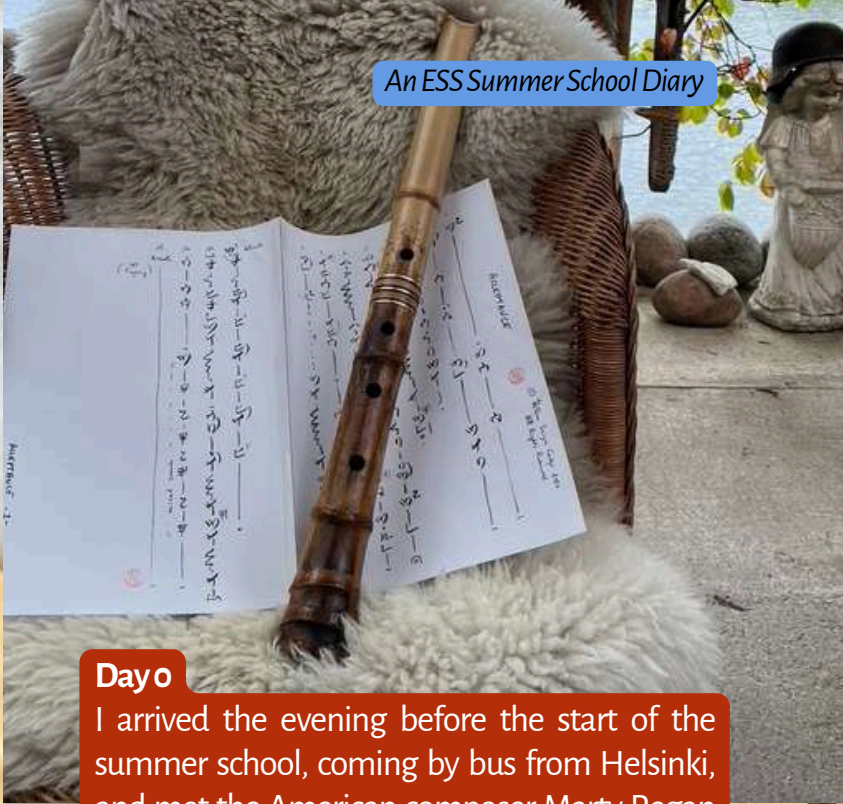
by Hélène Seiyu Codjo

The ESS summer school in Kruusila (Finland) from 29 July to 1 August 2024 was my third participation in such an event, after Paris (France) in 2015 and Vejle (Denmark) in 2017.

## Preparations

Participating in such an event requires some preparation in advance: choice of the pieces to teach and perform, preparing the scores, making recordings, providing information needed by the organizing team, etc. The Hijiri-Kai school I belong to is a small school founded by Fukuda Teruhisa. There are probably only a few hundred of us playing this style in the world. What would be unique for the participants of the summer school to learn from me? I decided to go for modern compositions by Fukuda Sensei and myself, since there are hardly any possibilities to come into contact with Sensei's beautiful music outside of school. I thought it would be a great opportunity to share it with the international participants and the concert audiences, as the teachers are expected to perform two of the pieces they teach during the event.

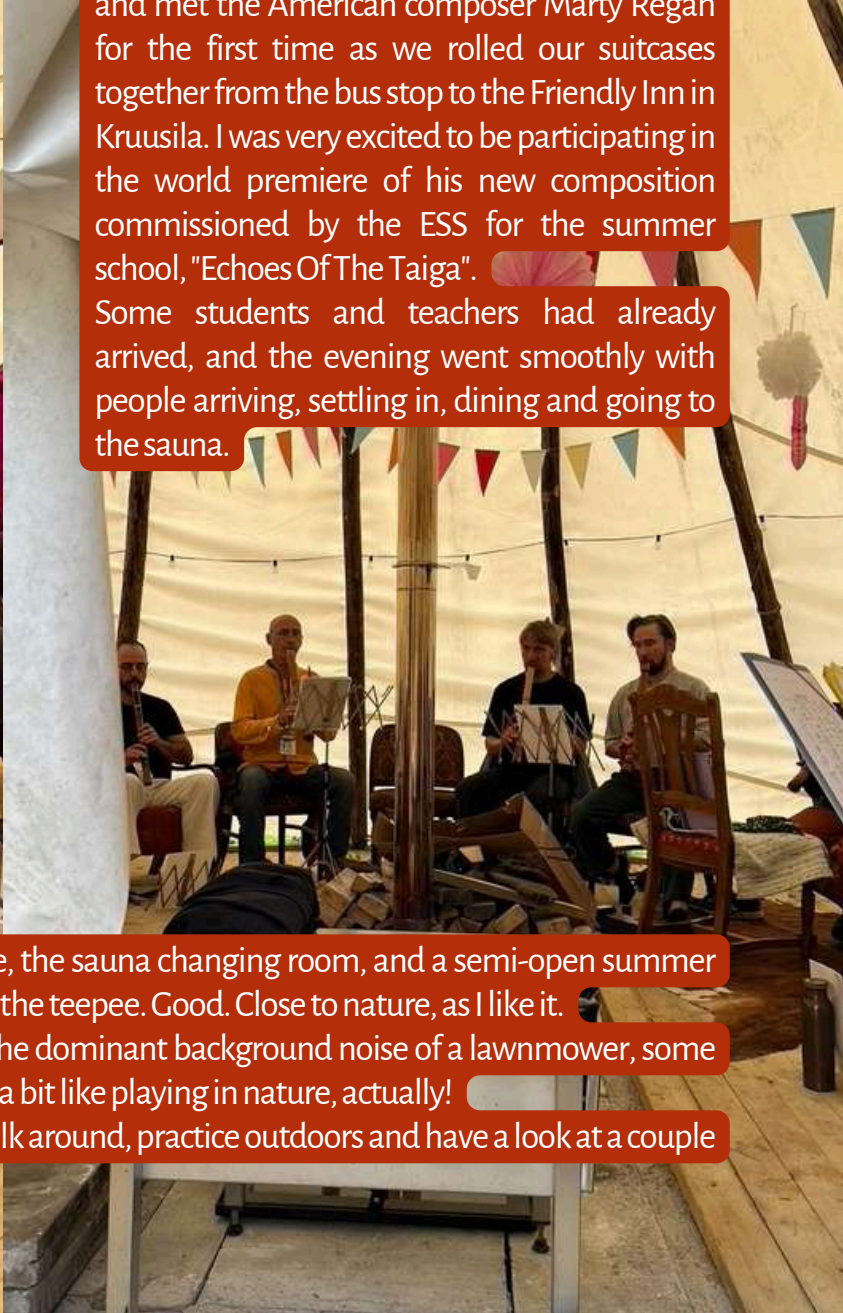




**Day o**

I arrived the evening before the start of the summer school, coming by bus from Helsinki, and met the American composer Marty Regan for the first time as we rolled our suitcases together from the bus stop to the Friendly Inn in Kruusila. I was very excited to be participating in the world premiere of his new composition commissioned by the ESS for the summer school, "Echoes Of The Taiga".

Some students and teachers had already arrived, and the evening went smoothly with people arriving, settling in, dining and going to the sauna.



**Day 1**

Tour of the teaching rooms, including a kind of teepee, the sauna changing room, and a semi-open summer terrace overlooking the lake. I was mainly scheduled in the teepee. Good. Close to nature, as I like it.

During my classes in the teepee, we had to deal with the dominant background noise of a lawnmower, some wind flags, and the visit from a rooster and hens. It was a bit like playing in nature, actually!

This first day, I had the morning free which I used to walk around, practice outdoors and have a look at a couple of classes.





### Beginners

One of the principles of the summer school is that the beginners meet different teachers and approaches to shakuhachi during the event. It is a unique opportunity to experience the variety of sounds and personalities, but it can also be confusing to have to deal with five different fingering charts, notations and study materials, to start with. For a teacher, the term 'beginners' ranges from people who haven't started yet (absolute beginners) to people able to play the basic notes over an octave or two, but who haven't learned *meri-kari* technique yet. A fairly broad term.

Since I was last to meet the beginners, I went to the beginning of their very first class given by Kiku Day, in order to meet them briefly and get an idea of what to expect.

### Teaching

The schedule had me start my first day of teaching with my own compositions, "Fukurō" and "Acceptance", from my CD *Reflection*. It was the first time I had the opportunity to teach my own compositions at an international event and it was very special for me.

I chose these two pieces in the hope that the students would still enjoy playing them after the event. I was touched by their dedication and enthusiasm to study my music, and the way they seemed to experience it.

### Echoes Of The Taiga

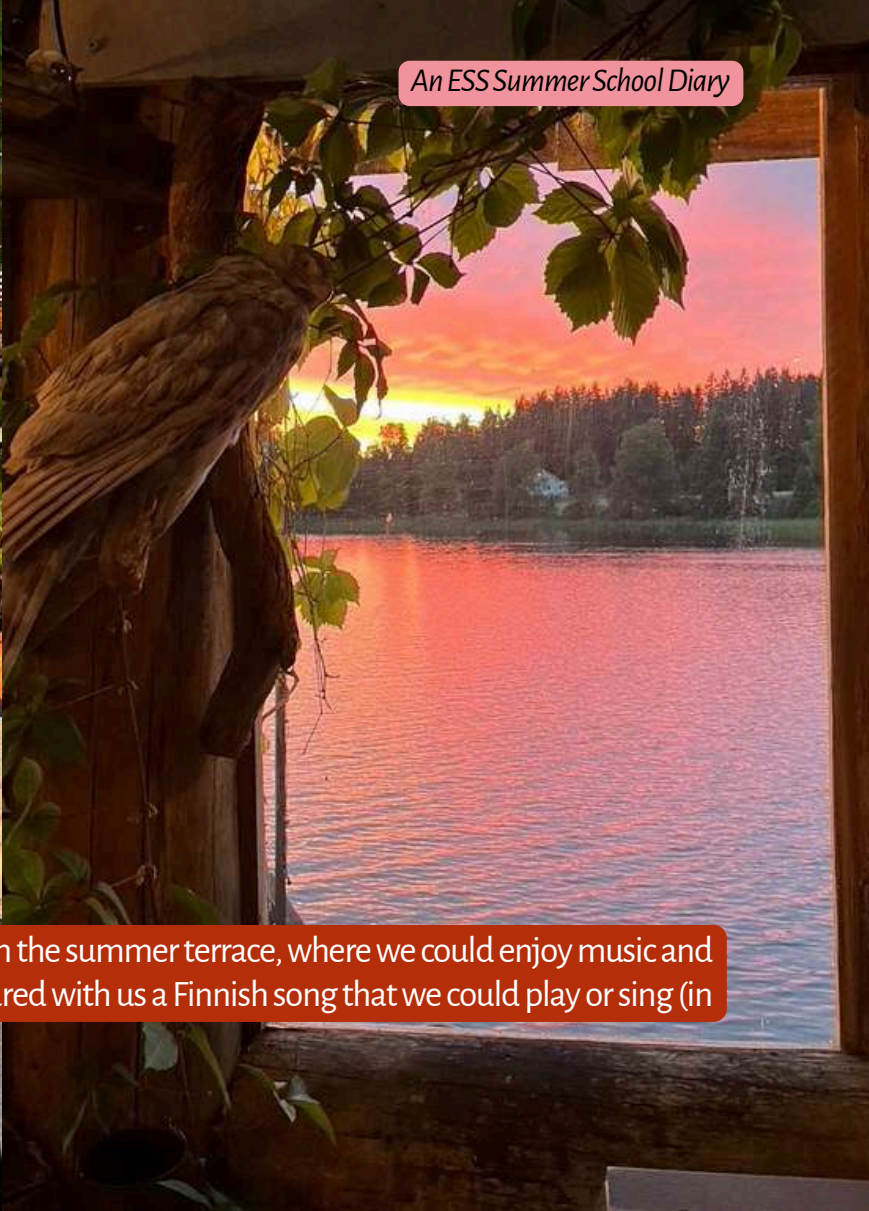
After the afternoon classes and before dinner, the first rehearsal of "Echoes Of The Taiga" took place. Marty's precise direction and instructions helped to quickly get an idea of the piece and where to pay attention. The next rehearsal was to be practised in sections. I volunteered to take charge of my group, the second 1.8 shakuhachi.





### Open mic concert

After dinner, a varied and informal concert took place in the summer terrace, where we could enjoy music and a beautiful sunset at the same time. Otto Eskelinen shared with us a Finnish song that we could play or sing (in Finnish!). It was a great moment of conviviality.



### Day 2

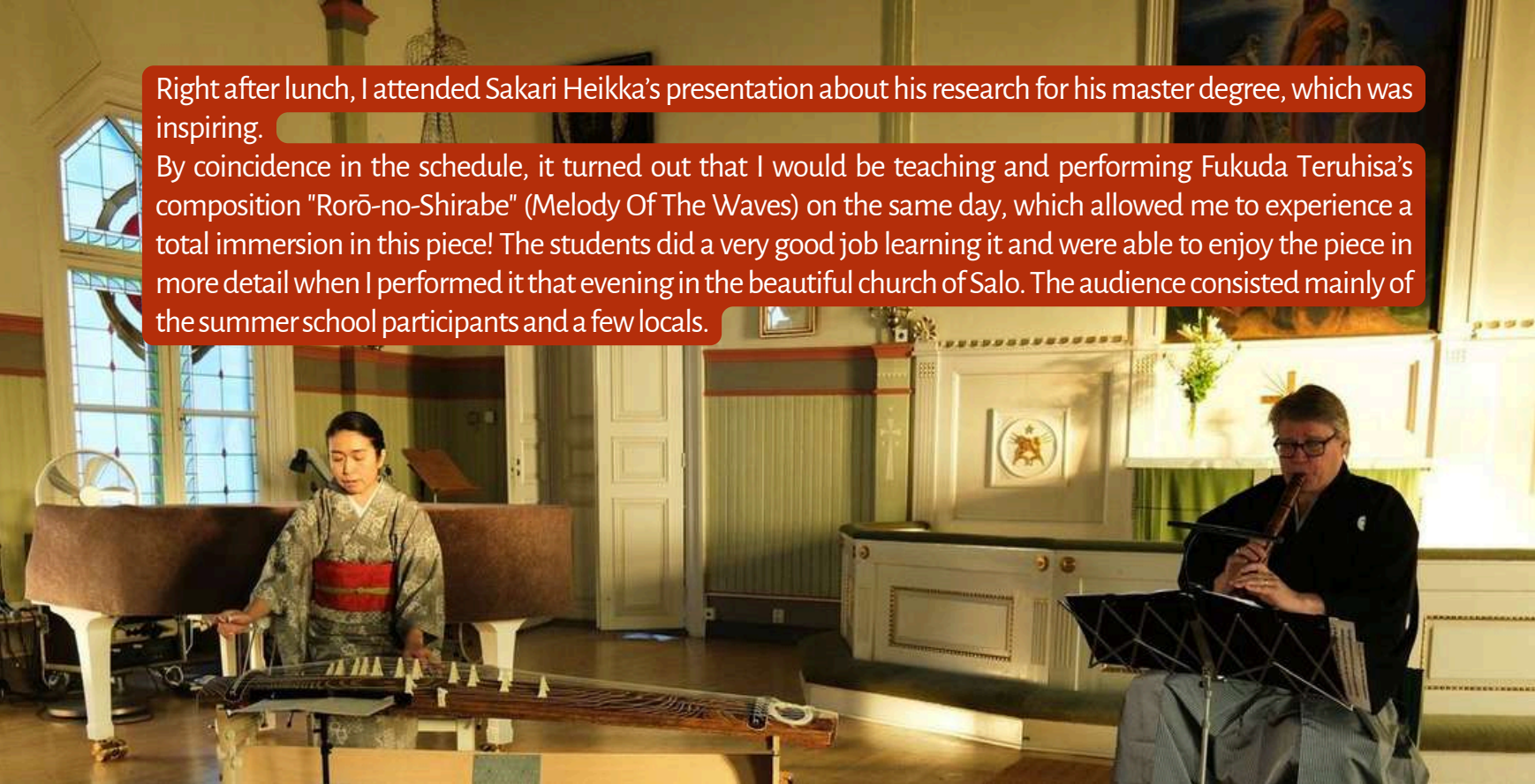
I was lucky enough to have another morning off which I used to practice for the first teachers' concert in the evening as well as the solo parts of Marty's composition that I was to play. But I had time enough to attend one of Otto's classes about playing Finnish music on shakuhachi, which was interesting and fun.





Right after lunch, I attended Sakari Heikka's presentation about his research for his master degree, which was inspiring.

By coincidence in the schedule, it turned out that I would be teaching and performing Fukuda Teruhisa's composition "Rorō-no-Shirabe" (Melody Of The Waves) on the same day, which allowed me to experience a total immersion in this piece! The students did a very good job learning it and were able to enjoy the piece in more detail when I performed it that evening in the beautiful church of Salo. The audience consisted mainly of the summer school participants and a few locals.



From left to right: Emmanuelle Rouaud, Aaro Haavisto, Otto Eskelinen, Naoko Kikuchi, Kiku Day, Gunnar Jinmei Linder, Tani Yasunori, Riley Lee, Thorsten Knaub, Hélène Seiyu Codjo, Sakari Heikka



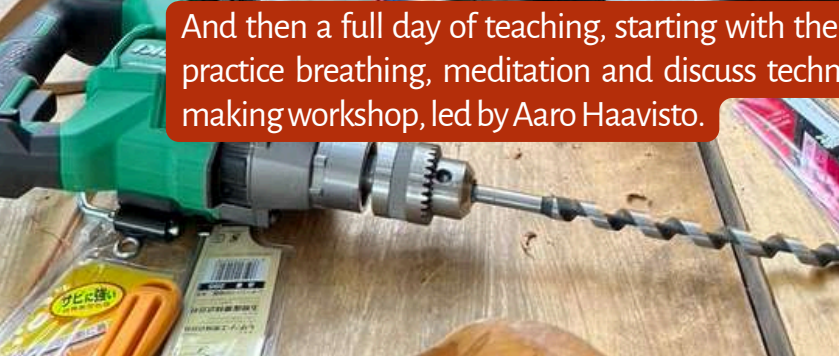


Day 3

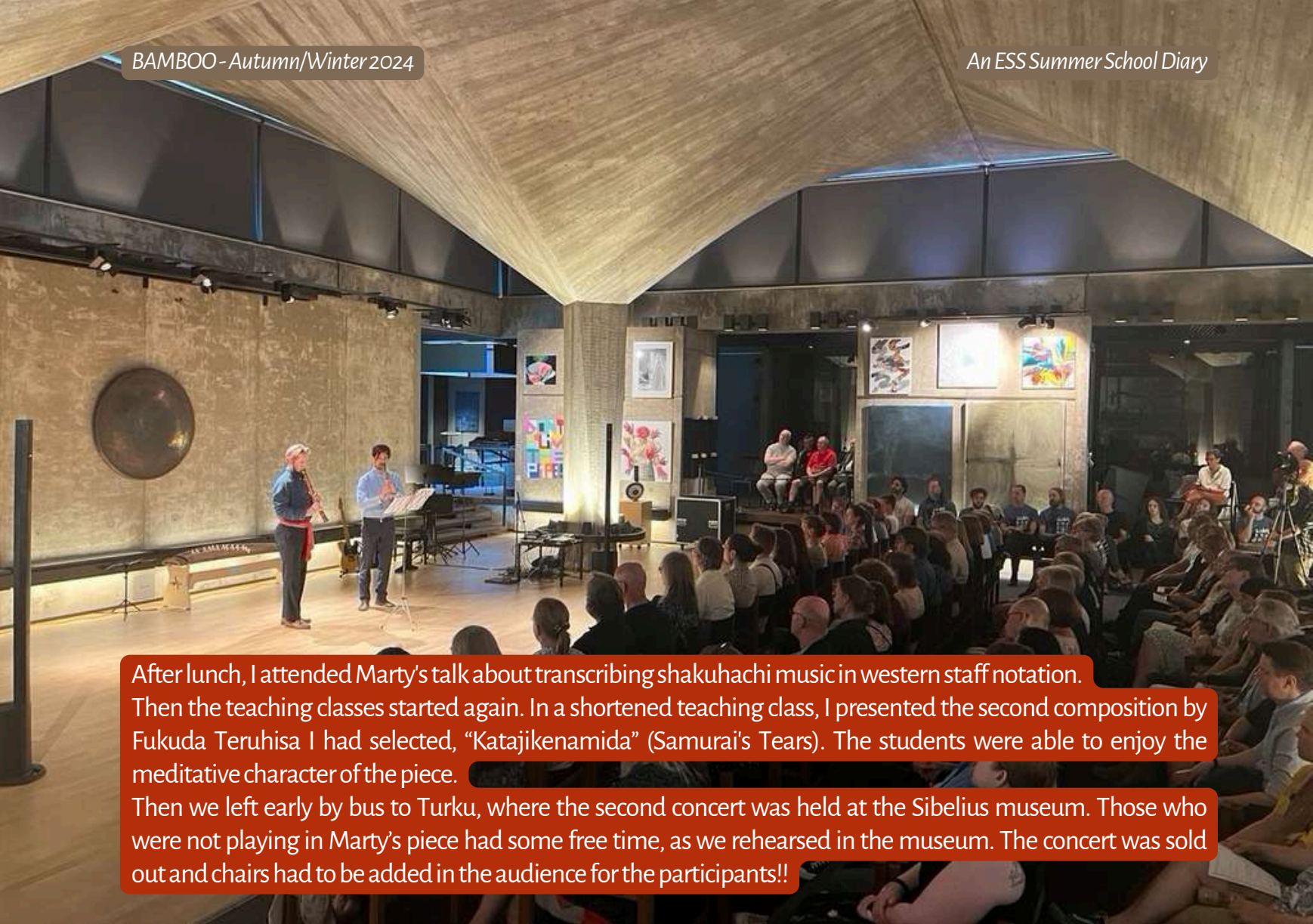
Already halfway! This was the busiest day of the event! Breakfast, *Ro-buki*, a short rehearsal of "Echoes", conducted by participant and choir conductor Tassos Tataroglou. Then a group photo, with the help of my husband Wim Scheenen. All this happened before 10 am!



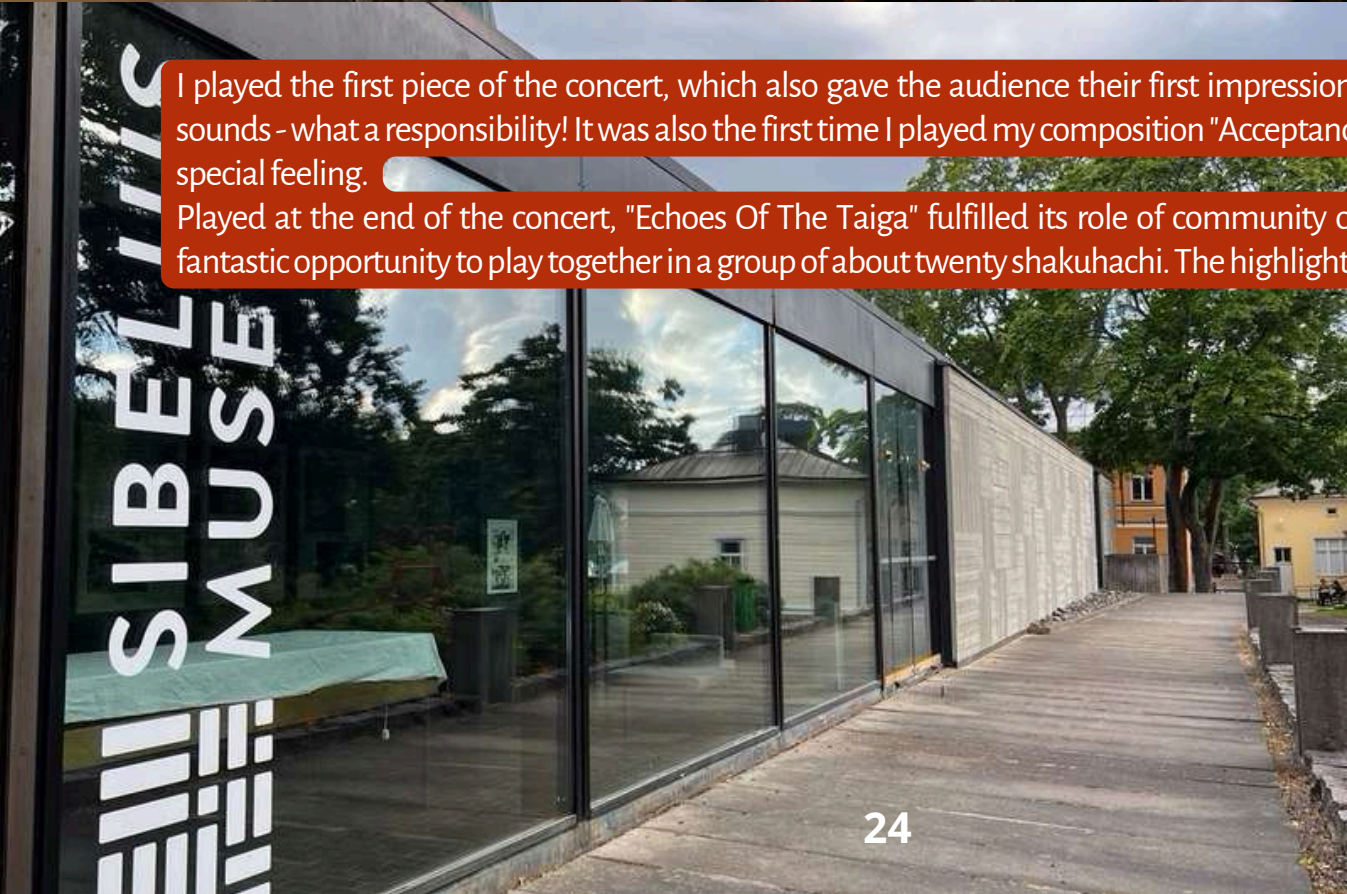
And then a full day of teaching, starting with the beginners in the sauna changing room. We took time to practice breathing, meditation and discuss technical issues. Next to us was happening the first hitoyogiri making workshop, led by Aaro Haavisto.







After lunch, I attended Marty's talk about transcribing shakuhachi music in western staff notation. Then the teaching classes started again. In a shortened teaching class, I presented the second composition by Fukuda Teruhisa I had selected, "Katajikenamida" (Samurai's Tears). The students were able to enjoy the meditative character of the piece. Then we left early by bus to Turku, where the second concert was held at the Sibelius museum. Those who were not playing in Marty's piece had some free time, as we rehearsed in the museum. The concert was sold out and chairs had to be added in the audience for the participants!!



I played the first piece of the concert, which also gave the audience their first impression of the shakuhachi sounds - what a responsibility! It was also the first time I played my composition "Acceptance" in concert, a very special feeling. Played at the end of the concert, "Echoes Of The Taiga" fulfilled its role of community cohesion and was a fantastic opportunity to play together in a group of about twenty shakuhachi. The highlight of the concert!







“Echoes Of The Taiga” (composed by Marty Regan, 2024) World Premiere, performed by (from left to right): Shakuhachi I (1.8): Tani Yasunori, Aaro Haavisto, Daniel Ribble, Michael Hartley, Etsuko Kondo, Larysa Istomina, Jaakko Kuikka, Gunnar Jinmei Linder; Shakuhachi III (2.4): Riley Lee, Kiku Day, Emmanuelle Rouaud, Michael Gregory; Shakuhachi II (1.8): Nina Haarer, Otto Eskelinen, Sakari Heikka, Martijn van Sliedregt, Adrian Sheriff, Thorsten Knaub, Antonin Jech, H el ene Seiyu Codjo.



From left to right: Aaro Haavisto, Daniel Ribble, Tani Yasunori, Gunnar Jinmei Linder, Riley Lee, Kiku Day, Emmanuelle Rouaud, Nina Haarer, Otto Eskelinen, Thorsten Knaub, H el ene Seiyu Codjo



**Day 4***Ro-buki*

For the third morning *Ro-buki*, I was asked to lead the session, after Tani Yasunori on Day 2 and Riley Lee on Day 3. I was happy to share my personal approach to it and hope it inspired the participants.



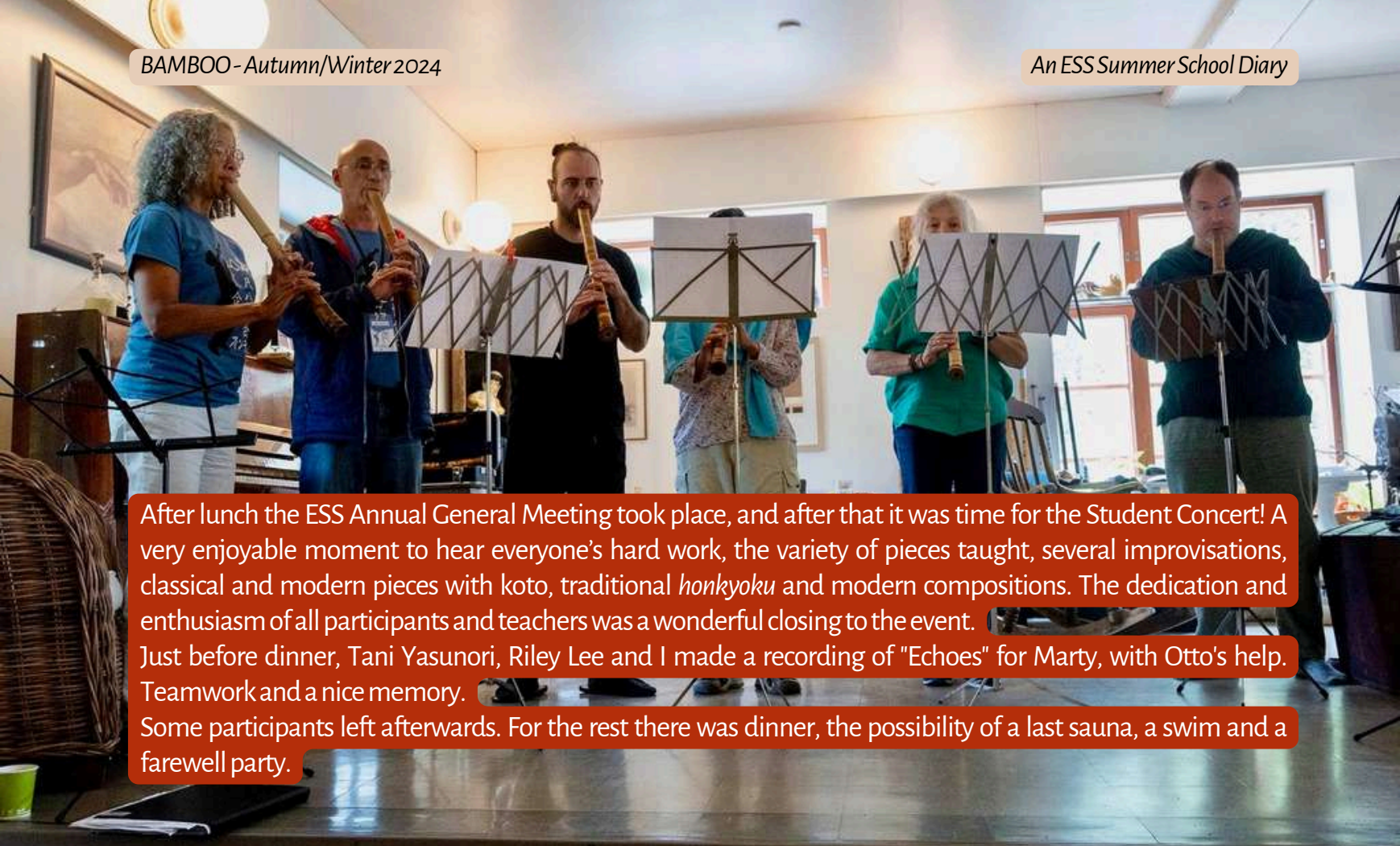
For my second day of classes with the beginners, I took them outside to play, as the rain had stopped. They could experience the difference in space and sound, and enjoy some birdsong and insects. I taught them by ear the first of my "Ten Easy Pentatonic Melodies For Beginners", which is called RO.

Then we went back to the sauna dressing classroom for the second part of the class, to play it with notation and learn the second melody, TSU.

They agreed to play RO by heart for the Student Concert in the afternoon!







After lunch the ESS Annual General Meeting took place, and after that it was time for the Student Concert! A very enjoyable moment to hear everyone's hard work, the variety of pieces taught, several improvisations, classical and modern pieces with koto, traditional *honkyoku* and modern compositions. The dedication and enthusiasm of all participants and teachers was a wonderful closing to the event.

Just before dinner, Tani Yasunori, Riley Lee and I made a recording of "Echoes" for Marty, with Otto's help. Teamwork and a nice memory.

Some participants left afterwards. For the rest there was dinner, the possibility of a last sauna, a swim and a farewell party.

### Day 5

This summer school gave me the opportunity to meet in real life people I was in contact with through social media or online teaching, to see again students, friends and colleagues, to meet new people during classes and informal chats, and to discover a bit of the beautiful country of Finland and its friendly people.

There is nothing like live sound, live meetings, live playing together, sharing, laughing, talking, eating, going to sauna, swimming, enjoying life.

Thank you all! Hope to see you again soon! 🍷



Photos: H el ene Codjo & Wim Scheenen



# String Instruments In The ESS Summer School



Emmanuelle Rouaud & Henri Algadafe (electric guitar)



Student concert (*sokyoku* class)



Student concert (*shinkyoku* class)



Naoko Kikuchi (koto)



Emmanuelle Rouaud & Henri Algadafe



Naoko Kikuchi (shamisen) & Gunnar Jinmei Linder



# Review Of ESS Summer School In Finland

by Etsuko Kondo

This was my first time participating in ESS events, which turned out to be a wonderful experience.

This summer, it's been nearly one year since I moved from Japan to the Netherlands. It is a fortunate thing for me that Europe has this large community of Shakuhachi players despite the long distance from Japan.

I was at the Summer School only for the final two days after finishing my work in Amsterdam. The workshops I went for were "Out of Thin Air" by Mr Riley Lee, "Daiotsugaeshi" by Ms Kiku Day, and the Hitoyogiri workshop by Mr Aaro Haavisto.

My aim during this event was to try something new. The two pieces I played there were written in a way that was unfamiliar to me and I found a few characters I had never seen. This is probably a sort of typical experience with Shakuhachi music. If you play the piano, for example, the musical notation should be almost universal wherever you see a score. This variety of notation reminded me not only of different schools but the wide range of tone colors which I find fascinating about this instrument.

Creating a Hitoyogiri was another first try for me. It felt a little surreal for me to casually join the cozy little group in Finland to make over 600-year-old Japanese flutes. Making the Hitoyogiri was simply fun, and that also let me observe the practice of preserving culture.

It was also a pleasure that I was allowed to join the group performance of "Echoes Of The Taiga" at the teachers' concert. It was thrilling to be on the same stage with so many Shakuhachi players, including the professionals.

What I loved about this Summer School in general was the open-minded atmosphere, welcoming anybody if they played or had an interest in the Shakuhachi.

Most people at the event were new to me yet it was comfortable to talk with them because I did not have to expect any surprise or negative reaction from them about playing this old instrument. It has been played more by Japanese men in history, but now it is fortunately open to anybody. It was truly a delightful time to immerse myself in Shakuhachi music in a mixture of different schools, nationalities, ages and genders.

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone involved with the event and look forward to playing Shakuhachi together somewhere someday.







竹吹イテ

月見草花

雲流

月

カ



With my bamboo flute  
blow the cloud foam  
off the moon

竹吹いて、  
月からはらう  
雲の泡

Take fuite  
tsuki kara harau  
kumo no awa

-Galina Sgonnik





*Photo: Stéphane Pellennec*



La forêt sans vent,  
un long souffle dans le bambou,  
le moustique s'envole

The forest without wind,  
a long breath into the bamboo,  
the mosquito flies away

森の奥  
竹ふく息で  
蚊をはらう

Mori no oku  
Take fuku iki de,  
Ka wo harau

-Stéphane Pellennec





音無イ

問ハキニコソ

仏アリ



か



Solo en el Ma  
se desveló el Budha  
Solo en la no-nota  
comprendí.

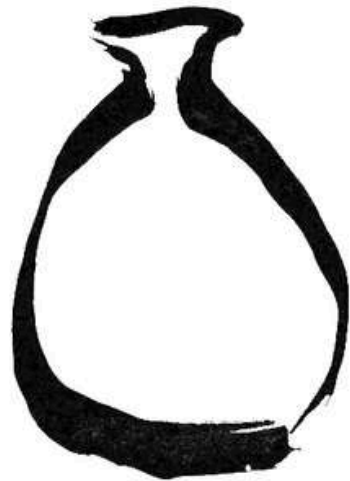
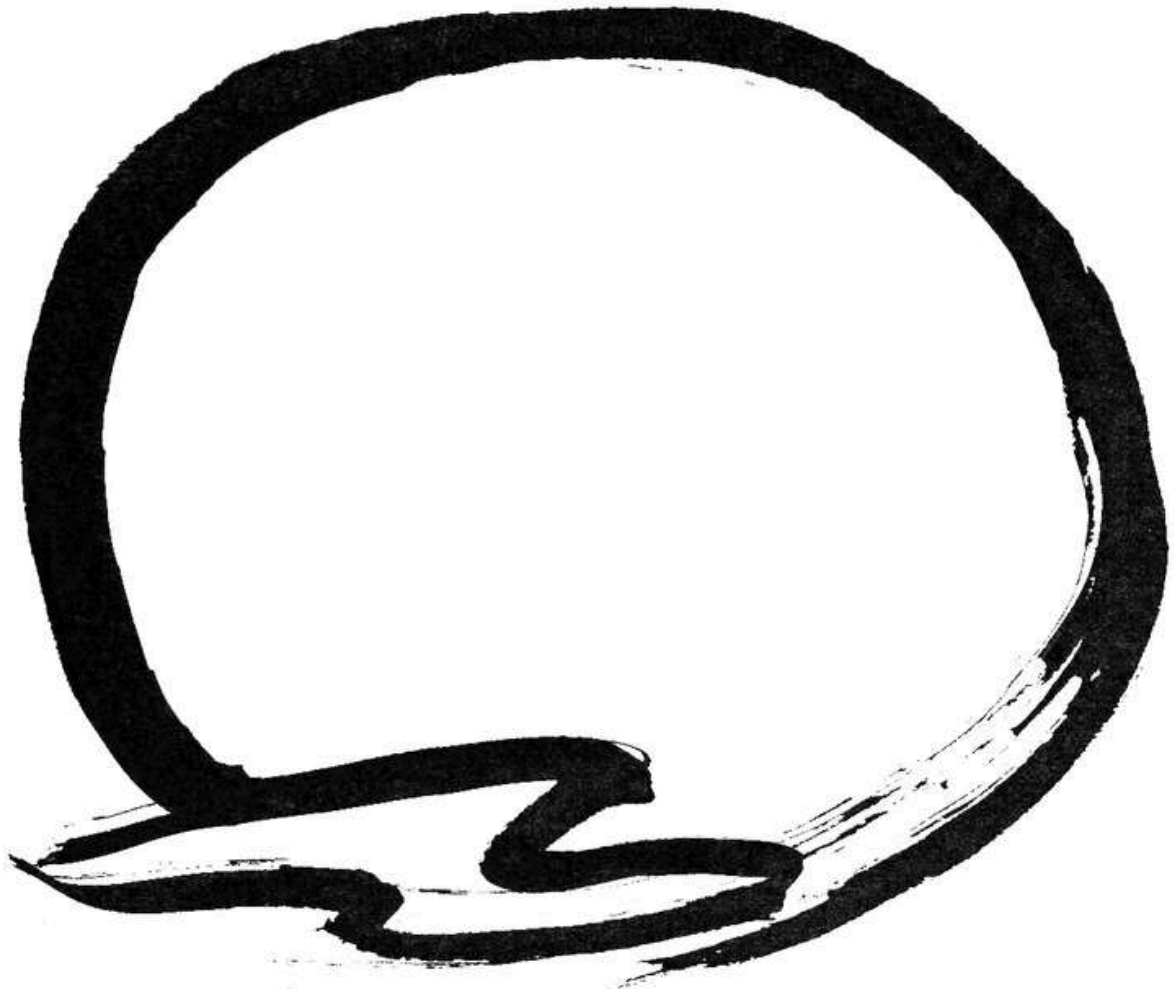
Only in Ma  
the Buddha was revealed  
Only in the non-note  
I understood

音のない  
間の中にこそ  
仏あり

Oto no nai  
ma no naka ni koso  
hotoke ari

-Hawwa Morales







竹の音に悲  
しみを聴  
く宴かな

Take no ne ni,  
kanashimi o kiku,  
utage kana

In the sound of bamboo,  
I hear the sadness  
in the gathering.

-Kazuko Hohki







竹通る息吹  
きが作る  
嵐かな

Take tooru,  
ibuki ga tsukuru,  
arashi kana

The breath  
through a bamboo,  
creates a storm

-Kazuko Hohki



# YAMAGUCHI GORŌ, ROCK OF AGES

by Ralph Samuelson

In my fifty-five years of Kinko Ryū shakuhachi study, I have been privileged and blessed to have three extraordinary teachers. Araki Kodō V, Yamaguchi Gorō, and Yamato Shudō were each born into a deep tradition of Kinko Ryū shakuhachi, and it is only because of them that I have any understanding at all of this multifaceted instrument and its music. I remain deeply grateful.

In the fall of 1969, I began graduate studies in the music department of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. I had been an anthropology student and was a flutist engaged with improvisation, jazz and an early interest in world music (still a new term at the time). My intention was to study ethnomusicology and the flute music of South India, as the renowned Indian flutist T. Viswanathan was teaching there and I had been deeply moved by his recordings. When I arrived at Wesleyan, however, I was told that Mr. Viswanathan was in India for the year. I searched for another flute to study and discovered that a musician from Japan named Araki Kodō V was teaching the Japanese shakuhachi, an instrument I had never heard of. I learned that historically it had some connection with Zen Buddhism, that the teacher came from a prominent lineage of important players, and that the shakuhachi program had been introduced at Wesleyan two years earlier by another teacher named Yamaguchi Gorō.

I began shakuhachi lessons and entered a path which changed my life forever, a path on which I still journey today. The unique and beautiful sound of the shakuhachi captivated me completely, and Araki Sensei was a superb and inspiring teacher during those first two years of study. I began to learn the fundamentals of playing this challenging instrument and to study several pieces. Perhaps most importantly, I gleaned some introductory insight into the ethos surrounding the instrument and its music. The profound early lessons I learned at that time included the necessity of focused concentration, the goal of consistency and purity in playing, and the supreme value of respect - for the instrument, the notation, and of course the music. Much of this I didn't fully understand and appreciate until later.

In addition to instrumental lessons, I undertook research for a Master's thesis focusing on stylistic elements of Kinko Ryū *honkyoku*. I studied recordings by a variety of shakuhachi greats including Araki Sensei, Nōtomi Judō, Yamaguchi Gorō, Aoki Reibo and a few others. (There wasn't much available in those days.) Yamaguchi Gorō's Nonesuch recording, *A Bell Ringing In The Empty Sky*, had been made in New York during his 1967-68 tenure at Wesleyan. It was the first recording of shakuhachi music widely distributed in the US and was still a new entry in the landscape of



recorded music. The sound on that recording was totally different from other shakuhachi sounds I had heard. It enveloped me like a blanket, with a quality of supreme warmth and serenity. How could a shakuhachi player make a sound like that?

In the summer of 1971, after completing my degree, I went to Tokyo to deepen my studies of shakuhachi. The musicologist Koizumi Fumio, who had been a guest professor at Wesleyan, and Araki Sensei both strongly suggested that I study with Yamaguchi Gorō. When I arrived in Tokyo, Professor Koizumi made a telephone call and gave me an introductory letter, and two weeks later I went to the Yamaguchi home. There, I was warmly greeted by Yamaguchi Sensei and his wife, Yamada Ryū koto player Yamaguchi Hōzumi, who both had fond memories of their year in America, and by his mother as well. Because my Japanese was very rudimentary at that point, I was accompanied by a friend who helped me set arrangements for lessons and learn the basic conditions under which I would study. Thus began a nearly 30-year relationship with a singular and remarkable person, teacher, artist, and mentor who inspired me in ways musical, personal, spiritual and beyond.

**This combination of stillness and sound was a perfect reflection of Yamaguchi Sensei's kindness, humility, honesty and unsurpassed musicianship.**

Lesson days were held twice a week, I believe at that time on Monday and Thursday. There was no appointed lesson time and I would appear and listen to Yamaguchi teaching other students while I waited my turn. Lessons took place in a beautiful room, which I am sure many have seen in photos if not in person. In the traditional manner, teacher and student sit *seiza* facing each other across a table with the notation laid out between them. In this way, the student is immersed in the teacher's sound. Unlike many shakuhachi players, Yamaguchi held his bodily pose in nearly complete stillness, and the sound that emerged from his flute was nothing short of glorious. I visualized not only that empty sky (*Kokū*) or empty bell (*Kyo-Rei*), but a sturdy rock out of which poured a great universal, life-nurturing, reverberating tone. I couldn't help but recall the title of the well-known Christian hymn, "Rock of Ages." Over time, I came to understand that this combination of stillness and sound was a perfect reflection of Yamaguchi Sensei's kindness, humility, honesty and unsurpassed musicianship, expressing a deep understanding of beauty and the human spirit. The experience of shakuhachi lessons with Yamaguchi Gorō is elegantly described in detail in Christopher Yohmei's lovely book, *The Single Tone: A Personal Journey Into Shakuhachi Music* (Printed Matter Press, 2005).



There were two core life lessons I learned early from Yamaguchi Gorō: the value of natural kindness, and the importance of learning through self-discovery. This is an embarrassing story, but I will tell it anyway. When I first arrived from the US to begin my lessons, he asked me what shakuhachi music I had studied at Wesleyan University. I presented a list of several pieces and then naïvely explained that it was the *honkyoku* repertoire that I wanted to study in Japan. At that moment I had no idea how foolish and inappropriate this was. Yet rather than tell me so directly, Yamaguchi actually handed me one of his own *honkyoku* books, with handwritten notes made by his father, on a Monday lesson day and suggested I make a copy and bring it back on Thursday. (At that time I was teaching an English conversation class at the Xerox Corporation in Tokyo, so getting a copy made was no problem!) I gratefully did this and began lessons on *Hi Fu Mi Hachi Gaeshi*, the first piece in the Kinko Ryū *honkyoku* compilation. However, I soon noticed that very few students were studying this repertoire, and those who did so were all highly skilled players. And when I went into my “warm-up” lesson with Minagawa Kimei, an elderly teacher who had been a student of Yamaguchi Shirō, he said with awe, “Oh, you are studying *honkyoku*!” As I spoke to the other students, I realized that *honkyoku* study occurs only after many years, when the core repertoire of *gaikyoku* has been learned and a certain technical and musical fluency achieved. When I finally asked Yamaguchi Sensei, “I should not actually be studying this music now, should I?”, he gently replied, “Yes, that is true.” I added, “Should I study *gaikyoku* pieces now?” And he answered again, “Yes, that is true.” And so the *honkyoku* was put away for several years. Had he told me this from the start I may have been frustrated and resentful, being young and impatient; he understood this and gently guided me to the correct answer. This episode led me to great humility in learning the complex and rich tradition of shakuhachi music.

Yamaguchi’s “learn by self-discovery” approach, if I may call it that, was reflected in smaller, more practical ways. For example, if we were playing a piece together in a lesson and I was out of tune on a certain note, he wouldn’t immediately correct me. Rather, when we came to that passage or a similar one again, he would emphasize that pitch by blowing a bit more strongly toward me to see if I could catch it. Similarly with rhythm - if my rhythm was off, he would emphasize the beats more strongly. It was only when I wasn’t self-correcting after several guiding hints of this type that he would verbally offer instruction. Thankfully, that didn’t happen too often. (Or maybe there were times when he just gave up on me and didn’t bother.) I believe that this is a very effective way to learn - when you find it on your own, you internalize it and it becomes part of you. That was one aspect of Yamaguchi’s genius as a teacher.



Yamaguchi Gorō



During my years of study with Yamaguchi Gorō, I of course had many questions about shakuhachi - the instrument and the music. He always led me in the right direction, helping me discover my own truth. When I was trying to understand more about instrument construction, he showed me a number of flutes of his own and then finally introduced me to shakuhachi maker Ebinuma Tomekichi. I made weekly visits to Ebinuma's shop for about a year, trying to learn to make a flute; I wasn't very good at this but I learned a lot about the instrument. When I began to ask a series of questions about shakuhachi history and the relationship to Zen Buddhist philosophy and practice, Yamaguchi introduced me to Tominomori Kyozan, who had been a friend of his father. Kyozan Sensei was a teacher of Myōan shakuhachi in the Taizan-ha lineage and a scholar who had been studying shakuhachi history and Zen practice for his entire life. He told me that if I wanted to understand the essence of shakuhachi practice and *honkyoku* I should study Myōan pieces. He called Yamaguchi Sensei, who enthusiastically agreed, supporting my interest. I studied with Kyozan Sensei until his death in 1975 and I continue learning that tradition periodically with his student, Ōi Yūshin.

**He always led me in the right direction, helping me discover my own truth.**

My first two years of study with Yamaguchi Gorō were from 1971-73. I then returned to Wesleyan University to continue graduate studies in ethnomusicology, and during my next two years there the visiting shakuhachi teacher was Yamato Shūdō II. Yamato Sensei, from Kyushu, was first trained by his father, a student of Araki Kodō III, and later became a leading disciple of Nōtomi Judō. He was, and still is, a very exacting and dedicated teacher, attuned to every detail of his students' playing. In contrast to Yamaguchi, he would quickly point out and correct any mistakes being made, and he pushed me to my limit and beyond. Through him I learned the primary importance of focusing on every nuance and detail of music and technique, no matter how long or fast a piece may be, and that was a great help to me in my later studies with Yamaguchi. I continued studies with Yamato Sensei following Yamaguchi's death.

In 1975 I returned to Tokyo for dissertation (never completed) research and continued studies with Yamaguchi. I think because I was a foreigner, because it was clear that I was not going to reside long-term in Japan, and because of his connection to Wesleyan, he was very open to the idea that I had studied with two other Kinko Ryū teachers. In fact he was quite curious about the *shiro-fu* notation of the Araki/Nōtomi lineage. I remember at least two times at which we were going to study a piece that I had learned previously with that notation, and rather than take out his own *ao-fu* score he said, "Oh, let's play that one (*shiro-fu*)". As far as I understood, he hadn't been familiar with those scores and found them very intriguing. He was also very interested in the different playing techniques I had learned from the other teachers.



When I left Tokyo near the end of 1976 to take a job in New York, I maintained close communication with Yamaguchi Sensei through telephone, postcards, and a kind of osmosis, the same osmosis that I believe was key to the teaching/learning process with him. Then, in 1981, I began making regular visits to Tokyo once or twice each year for work. Every time I would reserve a day to visit and study with him. He and his wife would welcome me graciously and I would have several hours of personalized music instruction. In 1987, on the 20th anniversary of their visit to Wesleyan University, I arranged a short concert tour for them in the US, a rare opportunity for American audiences to hear shakuhachi and *sankyoku* music at its very best. We had a lot of fun travelling for eight days, an opportunity I could never have in Japan, and this brought us all closer together. It was during that tour that I had the privilege of playing *Shika No Tōne* in concert with Yamaguchi Sensei, without doubt a highlight of my life. I was able to continue annual visits with him right until the year before he died.



*Yamaguchi Gorō and Ralph Samuelson playing Shika no Tōne.  
Wesleyan University concert, October 1987*



Yamaguchi Gorō was a thoroughly unique individual and shakuhachi player. His heart and soul radiated kindness, purity, calm, and care, and his shakuhachi playing seamlessly melded supreme artistry with profound understanding. As we all know, the shakuhachi is a difficult and challenging instrument physically and musically, and he was the rare player who could make it all appear effortless. If we try to play like him, we simply can't.

At my initial meeting with Tominomori Kyozan, at Yamaguchi's introduction, the first words Kyozan Sensei said to me were, "Kinko Ryū shakuhachi is not Zen Shakuhachi - except when played by Yamaguchi Gorō." At first I was puzzled by this declaration, as I understood Yamaguchi's playing of *honkyoku* to be especially musical and artistic. But then I immediately came back to that glorious tone, the stillness and beauty, the "Rock of Ages" emitting the Universal Sound, offering a fullness of truth in each individual note. He was a rock and a vessel for that Universal Sound, I believe brought to life on Earth for that purpose.

Ralph Samuelson

September 2024

Adapted from my essay, "Yamaguchi Gorō, Chitose no Iwa", in *Yūgen naru Hibiki: Ningen Kokuhō Yamaguchi Gorō no Shakuhachi to Shōgai*. Geijitsu-sha, 2008. 🍵



# REPORT ON THE RESTORATION AND FIRST PUBLIC PERFORMANCE OF “CHIGO-DERE”: A TRADITIONAL TENPUKU PIECE LOST TO TIME

by Rafael Hiroshi Fuchigami

## Tenpuku and Chigo-uta

The traditional tenpuku flute, which closely resembles the shakuhachi in shape, scale, and musical style, has been preserved since time immemorial as a unique instrument and an intrinsic part of the cultural identity of Kagoshima Prefecture. Although its origins are not precisely known, in the past, the tenpuku was played by samurai warriors. With their lives immersed in battles and rigorous sword training, or even after lifting their spirits by chanting epic narratives accompanied by the biwa, the sound of the tenpuku brought them a sense of calm. Today, the representatives of tenpuku are direct descendants of these warriors, preserving their traditions through the activities of the Tenpuku Association of Kagoshima.

There are seven tenpuku pieces, all solo, that have been passed down to the present day, three of these—Shirabe, Tsutsune, and Takane—are purely instrumental. The others—Ten'noshiyama, Senpesan, Ichiyana, and Anoyama—have sung versions, which form part of the Chigo-uta (Songs of Chigo) repertoire.

In Kagoshima, the term chigo historically referred to young boys, whose age ranged from childhood to adolescence. Later, these young people were called nise until they reached adulthood. These names were also part of the samurai Gōjū education system. These boys were seen as symbols of youth and beauty, and homosexual relations among the samurai of the region were culturally accepted and even encouraged.

Chigo-uta were sung informally, and their lyrics contained amorous content and, in some cases, referred to acts of violence. These songs had a significant influence on the tenpuku repertoire, although their tradition has disappeared and there are currently no people who sing them.

The relation between the sung version and the tenpuku version of the Chigo-uta pieces is uncertain, as the melodies of the two versions differ, and there are too few historical documents to clarify how they were practiced in the past.





This repertoire of seven tenpuku pieces was transmitted by Ryoichi Ota (1887-1959) to his disciple Kunitoshi Shirao (1920-2006) at a time when tenpuku was almost extinct. For decades, they were the sole guardians of this knowledge, which is now shared among the members of the Tenpuku Association, represented by Kunihide Shirao, Kunitoshi's son. In addition to these seven pieces, there are documents that mention the existence of other pieces, such as "Chigo-dere", which had a sung version as part of the Chigo-uta repertoire.

### **Research and Restoration of "Chigo-dere"**

Since 2016, I have been researching the musicological and cultural aspects of Tenpuku. In 2021, I became a member of the Tenpuku Association and have been studying directly with Shirao Sensei, learning from several Tenpuku veterans in Kagoshima. Through this experience, I have dedicated myself to the performance and making of Tenpuku, as well as the study of Chigo-uta pieces.

The restoration of the Chigo-uta piece came directly as a request from Shirao Sensei. This was the impetus that led me to study the Chigo-uta pieces and delve deeper into the analysis of the seven tenpuku pieces.

Based on historical documents, such as recordings of sung versions of the Chigo-uta pieces and a comparative analysis between these songs and the instrumental versions of the tenpuku pieces, it was possible to research and propose a reconstruction of the "Chigo-dere" melody, as well as clarify certain aspects regarding the relation between the vocal and instrumental versions performed by the tenpuku of these pieces.

For the restoration, I conducted two studies, titled "Ornamental Techniques of the Tenpuku: A Comparative Analysis with the Shakuhachi" and "Restoration of Chigo-uta Pieces Performed with the Tenpuku." This research, along with all activities related to the restoration of "Chigo-dere", took place at the Institute of Ethnomusicology at the Tokyo College of Music and received funding from two institutions: "The Kao Foundation for Arts and Sciences" and "Kawai Foundation for Sound Technology & Music." The world premiere of the restored version of "Chigo-dere" took place on October 12 of this year during a lecture-concert entitled "The Restoration of Pieces of the Mysterious 'Tenpuku' Flute: A Reinterpretation of the Warrior Spirit of the Samurai of Satsuma."



### The First Performance of Restored “Chigo-dere”

The lecture-concert took place in Studio B at the Tokyo College of Music and was attended by around 180 people. Attendees included professors of musicology and ethnomusicology at the university, professional shakuhachi musicians, institutions related to Kagoshima culture, students, and the general public. The event was widely publicized, including in the October issue of the *Hogaku Journal*.

Shirao Sensei participated as a lecturer, addressing the history of tenpuku and the culture of Kagoshima. I lectured on the analysis of Chigo-uta pieces and tenpuku solo pieces, as well as shedding light on the “Chigo-dere” restoration process. Taking turns with Shirao Sensei, we performed the seven tenpuku pieces.

At the end came the most eagerly awaited moment: Shirao Sensei gave the first public performance of the “Chigo-dere”. His performance, deeply connected to the local Kagoshima tradition, was extremely beautiful, moving, and full of cultural significance.

In addition to the reconstruction of “Chigo-dere” and its public performance, the piece was formally recognized by Shirao Sensei and was accepted by the Tenpuku Association as the eighth piece in the tenpuku repertoire. Thus, the importance of this restoration work lies not only in the reconstruction of a melody or the enrichment of academic knowledge about tenpuku pieces, but also in the re-establishment of the practice of playing this piece among the people of Kagoshima.



*Shirao Sensei performance*

## Final Thoughts

Restoring traditional music that has ceased to be transmitted over time is a complex task. In fact, it's important to note that music, as a sound phenomenon, dissolves in time, unlike other arts, such as sculpture or architecture, whose material forms are perpetuated.

In this way, a restoration does not necessarily imply that the piece has been played exactly as it was in the past. Rather, it represents the construction of a proposal for what, based on historical documents and thorough musical analysis, could represent a melody that may have been performed in the past.

In any case, the restoration of "Chigo-dere" as a piece and practice is a means of reconnecting with a tradition once practiced by ancestral tenpuku players, but which has been lost over time.

It was an honor for me to be entrusted directly by Shirao Sensei with the mission to restore "Chigo-dere" and to have the piece publicly premiered by him. I hope that "Chigo-dere" will be perpetuated as the eighth Tenpuku piece and that it will act as a bridge between past and present. ●



*Rafael Hiroshi Fuchigami playing the Tenpuku*



## COLLECTION CHRISTOPH WAGNER

by Clive Bell

Christoph Wagner is a music writer from south Germany, now based in Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire in the UK. His latest book (in German) is *Lichtwärts! (Towards The Light!)*, about the birth of the first eco-movements in south-west Germany, 1880-1940.

He has also published books on the accordion, yodelling and the underground rock scene of the 60s and 70s in Germany.

For many years he collected postcards of musicians in junk shops and flea markets. In his own words, "Each card is its own little world, and its secrets can never be disclosed. Even the simplest questions turn out to be embarassingly difficult to answer: Who were those people? How did they live? ... Above all, what did this world sound like?"

In 2004 Wagner published a book of his postcards, each image accompanied by a short essay by a musician: *Ear & Eye: Encounters With World Music*. Now the ESS Newsletter is delighted that we can show you a few of these postcards, and we start with two Japanese examples. The date is early twentieth century.

More info: <https://christophwagnermusic.blogspot.com/>



*Sunny Japan. Next page: Japanese Musicians.*

*Collection Christoph Wagner*



JAPANESE MUSICIANS.





# SCOTLAND HINTERLANDS RETREAT 2024 BLACK EARTH SHAKUHACHI SCHOOL

by John Garner

In early August, grandmaster Cornelius Shinzen Boots and students of his Black Earth Shakuhachi School gathered at Chapelhope Farmhouse in the Scottish Borders for a week of bamboo breathing and spiritual cultivation. We had been drawn to the house after a lengthy search. As the student on the ground in the North of England, the Borders had been my suggestion; I've always found my time in the area to be both cleansing and mystical. Unbeknownst to me during the trip, Chapelhope was once the site of a 'quite extensive settlement', and there are several mounds with internal chambers, which one commentator posits as possible hermit cells where Christian ascetics would live in remote solitude (Elliot, 2016). Blissful quiet, country air, and a carpet of stars at night; an auspicious location indeed.



*Chapelhope Farmhouse (photo by John Garner)*



The retreat was divided into two parts: three days of intensive workshops, culminating in a concert in nearby Bedrule, followed by three days of reflection, exploration, and free play, punctuated by a performance in Glasgow.

The first morning began with Noble Silence, leaving only the sheep and the gale force winds outside to speak (perhaps the elements wished to join us in our breathing), followed by group meditation alternating between Ro (each player on their deepest flute) and Zazen, interspersed with readings by Shinzen Sensei. One such, marking the first words spoken during the weekend, situated the musical focus within a far broader canvas:

‘What happens if we dismantle all of our human conceptual constructions, all of the explanations and assumptions that structure consciousness and orient us and define us as centers of identity? To do that not in the abstract, but at the level of immediate experience. What would that leave us?’ (Hinton, 2020, Introduction).

We embarked on the formal study with ‘Nezasa No Shirabe’, an opportunity to begin deciphering the intricacies of Taniguchi *honkyoku* scores, to consider technical and expressive aspects and challenges of the work, learning by listening to Shinzen Sensei and trying things alone and in ensemble. In this way, we experienced everything from varying perspectives. From here, we moved on to circular breathing, improvisation in the Dorian mode, and ensemble playing, approaching the latter through two of Shinzen Sensei’s pieces, ‘AH & OM Take the Stage’ (duet) and ‘The Heavy Root Speaks’ (quartet). This second work offered an opportunity to begin reading western notation on the shakuhachi.

Impressing upon us his commitment to ‘pan-stylism’ and delving into a key figure in the western side of the Black Earth School lineage, Shinzen Sensei chose *The Case of the Three Sided Dream* as our evening viewing, a 2014 documentary about the wizardly jazz musician Rahsaan Roland Kirk, directed by Adam Kahan. In his short life, Kirk developed a way of playing, guided by what he called ‘the religion of dream’ (Kahan, 2014), utilising circular breathing and oftentimes multiple simultaneous horns, that remains astonishingly unique to this day. Later in the week, film night features included *You See Me Laughin’: The Last Of The Hill Country Bluesmen*; *Sukiyaki And Chips: The Japanese Sounds Of Music*; and *Amongst White Clouds*.

The second and third days proceeded in like fashion, opening with meditation, proceeding to workshops on ‘Yamagoe’; blues scales; breath effects; Shinzen Sensei’s compositions ‘Purgatory’ (a chance to learn about his application of blues stylisations to the shakuhachi), ‘Shakthamunki’, and ‘In Which the Sound Contemplates Your Existence’; and more ensemble playing. There were solo lessons which all students were invited to observe, giving me an opportunity to initiate my relationship with a newly acquired LaCrosse 2.5 *taimu* with my teacher’s guidance. The other attendees were playing 2.5 – 2.9 *jinashi* wide-bore flutes, *taimu* or *taimu*-like, and so I was grateful for their accumulated big bamboo wisdom.



We were welcomed at Bedrule Kirk by a hearty audience. The church looks out over a spectacular landscape, striking in the unusual shapes of the hills across the valley. We each performed solo (*honkyoku*, pieces by Shinzen Sensei, and a composition by student Mavrick Miller) and in ensemble (Shinzen Sensei's aforementioned group pieces). After a delicious home-cooked meal in the village hall, Miller gave an impromptu performance of *honshirabe* for our generous hosts.

During the remaining three days, blessed by good weather, we hiked up Grey Mare's Tail for a session by the picturesque Loch Skeen; visited Innerleithen (amazing food at Pies And Coffee — sadly soon to close) and the historic Cuddy Bridge and Pirn Hill Fort; spent the day in Glasgow, playing in the evening to a small yet receptive audience at The Old Hairdresser's. For the opening set, I returned to my first instrument, the violin. Together with violinist Marie Schreer and the Black Earthers, we improvised in increasingly large ensembles. Shinzen Sensei was the featured soloist for the second set, with occasional help from Kevin Chen and me (now back on bamboo).



*Group session on the banks of Loch Skeen (photo by Ruth Garner)*



I have come away from the retreat riding a wave of pure delight. Not only have I developed friendships with beautiful individuals across the globe, but my relationship with the shakuhachi has deepened immeasurably. Although the instrument has a rich tradition of contemplation in solitude, there is no substitute for community when it comes to learning, particularly when we understand true learning as something that 'liberate[s] us into a larger identity that is woven integrally into landscape, earth, and Cosmos' (Hinton, 2020, Introduction).

I would like to extend my gratitude to all who made this retreat possible, with special mentions to my sister, Ruth Garner, who looked after us with an indefatigable smile; my fellow Black Earth students for your kind-hearted collegiality; and Cornelius Shinzen Boots for sharing your wisdom and leading the way.

To read more about the Black Earth Shakuhachi School, please visit <http://blackearthshakuhachi.com>.



*Sensei and students in the Chapelhope Farmhouse garden. Left to right: Alex Merck, John Garner, Kevin Chen, Christian 'Bainn' Briggs, Cornelius Shinzen Boots, Mavrick Miller (photo by Ruth Garner)*

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# ALONE

for solo shakuhachi



by Elizabeth Brown

So much of my shakuhachi life is alone: daily practice, long breaths, *honkyoku* ... but somehow the sound of shakuhachi makes me feel part of everything around me. The sound lives inside me even when I'm not playing. Also, I think the word 'alone' is a beautiful-sounding word! Many phrases in this piece, such as the first and last phrases, are the same sonic shape as saying the word very slowly: aah...loooone.

Everything stays in the low register. The long note in each phrase is the most important note. Please remember shakuhachi's simple origins, and please play with as much beauty and resonance as possible!



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*Alone* for solo shakuhachi Elizabeth Brown 2024

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# ELIZABETH BROWN: CDS REVIEWED

by Clive Bell

## Trio Getsuro Music At Innisfree

Ralph Samuelson and Elizabeth Brown, shakuhachi  
Issui Minegishi, ichigenkin  
Hermit Music 2022  
<https://triogetsuro.hearnow.com/>



Born in Alabama but now based in Brooklyn, Elizabeth Brown is a leading composer for Japanese traditional instruments. She also has rich experience as a performer on flute, shakuhachi and theremin. Since 1982 she has studied shakuhachi with Ralph Samuelson, who was a pupil of Goro Yamaguchi. As a composer she has built on a deep knowledge of Japanese musics to develop her own voice. It's an attractive style, melodic but never sentimental; often dreamlike, always thoughtful.

Brown's Trio Getsuro is an intimate group of two shakuhachis (herself and Samuelson) plus the rarely heard ichigenkin of Issui Minegishi. The ichigenkin is a one-string horizontal zither, and Issui was the fourth heir of the Seikyo-do Ichigenkin tradition. Sadly she died in 2023, in her fifties.

*Music At Innisfree* is a programme which Trio Getsuro had performed at Innisfree, a public garden in New York state originally designed in the 1930s along classical Chinese and Japanese lines. The opening 15 minute piece, "Aki Meguri Kite" (Autumn comes round again), is the only piece here composed by Brown, and is a setting of two poems written by survivors of the 2011 Fukushima earthquake. The two shakuhachis echo each other, shifting in and out of unison, while the ichigenkin loops and slides around figures, sounding more acidic and medieval than a koto. A signature of the group is the timbral contrast between the sweetness of the flutes and the bracing twang of the zither.

Another piece specially composed for the trio is "Jyun On" (Pure sound) by Robert Carl, a US professor of composition. Elsewhere we hear "Take No Tomo" (Bamboo friend), an 18th century piece by Kakuho based on an 8th century poem; and "Sagari Ha No Kyoku" (Falling leaves), a traditional shakuhachi melody arranged by Goro Yamaguchi, with an ichigenkin part devised by Brown. The trio also tackle an ichigenkin

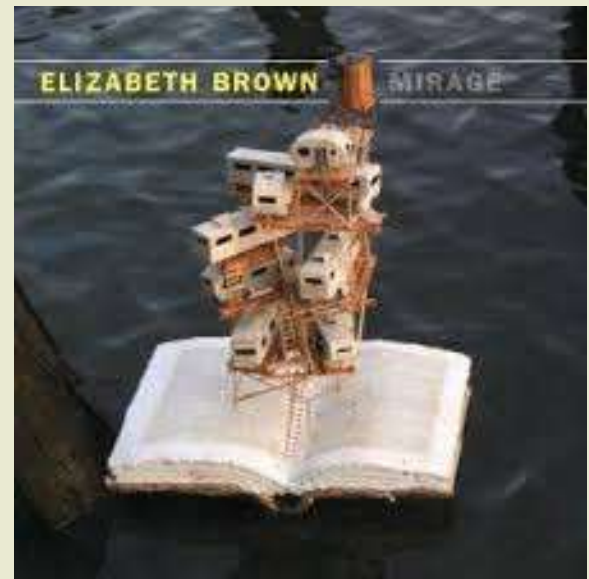


piece: "Fuji", composed in 1986 by Issui Matsuzaki, Issui Minegishi's teacher and her great-grandmother. The twelfth century verse is by Saigyō, and the shakuhachi part was added by Akihito Obama. Trio Getsuro have undertaken a lot of creative arranging and re-composing to create their spare, atmospheric repertoire, and sound-wise we are almost back in the tenth century Heian period, amidst the poetic melancholy of *The Tale Of Genji*.

## Elizabeth Brown Mirage

eNew World Records 2013

<https://www.discogs.com/release/7569776-Elizabeth-Brown-Mirage/image/SW1hZ2U6Mzg1NzcyMjU=>



*Mirage*, on the other hand, is a fascinating and rewarding collection of Elizabeth Brown compositions from 2004 to 2011. We have to wait for the album's second half for the shakuhachi to appear, but meanwhile we get to hear her play theremin in various unlikely contexts. "Seahorse" attempts to reproduce seahorses galloping through the water, as Brown's agile theremin swoops and glides across the Harry Partch-invented percussion of Dean Drummond's Newband ensemble. "Piranesi" and "Three Arias From 'A Bookmobile For Dreamers'" are collaborative soundtracks for videos by Brown's husband Lothar Osterburg, who also produced the album cover, a striking image of a stack of tiny model caravans perched on an open book, floating above water.

These are assorted excursions into grown up fairyland, but eventually we reach the title track, where Brown's shakuhachi waltzes around the Momenta string quartet. Twelve minutes long, "Mirage" is a delightful reverie with a watery quality - never flashy but exploring its own subtle drama. If I was being picky, I would say the shakuhachi is slightly under-recorded, and needs the same grain and presence as the strings.

Like "Mirage", Brown's "Shinshoufuu-kei, Or An Imagined Landscape" also won a Japanese composition prize. This is a four-part suite written for Pro Musica Nipponia, an eleven piece ensemble of traditional instruments, plus a conductor (Yasushi Inada). Sho, drums and koto are all featured, and the three shakuhachi players are Makoto Takei, Takashi Harago and Hiromu Motonaga. So this is a chamber orchestral sound. In the second part - "Aged, Mossy Rock" - the sho hangs like moss, while shakuhachi drapes melody across repeated jabs of *shamisen*. These are pictures painted with sound. In the final section, "Departure", *shamisen* and koto keep a steady rhythm till interrupted by outbursts of noh flute and percussion. Somehow Brown finds a way to join up these different worlds into a satisfying whole: something like a dream of noh while ballroom dancing. 🍵

# BREATHING WITH MISSOKU: THE UNDISCOVERED ZEN SECRET OF JAPANESE CULTURE

review by Clive Bell

## **Breathing With Missoku: The Undiscovered Zen Secret Of Japanese Culture**

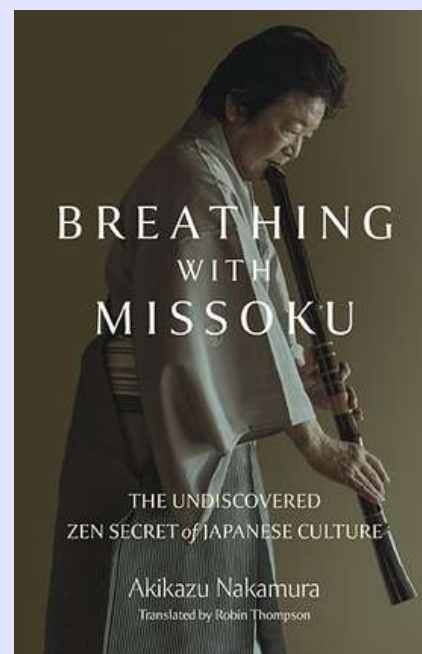
Akikazu Nakamura

Translated by Robin Thompson

O-Books Pbk/Ebook 168 pp

published Nov 26th 2024

<https://www.collectiveinkbooks.com/o-books/our-books/breathing-with-missoku-undiscovered-zen-secret-japanese>



In 2006 Akikazu Nakamura was looking at Hokusai prints in a museum in Washington DC. Suddenly he had an epiphany: "Features that I'd never noticed before suddenly struck me with almost dizzying force. For example, a close inspection shows that all the figures depicted in Hokusai's images have tilted pelvises and bent knees; no one is depicted standing bolt upright."

Nakamura identifies this posture, the centre of gravity lowered onto the pelvis and abdomen, as characteristic of old Japan. He links it to a breath technique he was taught by a student of Watazumido, called Missoku - secret/esoteric breathing - and this is at the heart of his new book. Photos and diagrams describe how to practise Missoku, breathing in with a distended lower abdomen. Eventually, he says, you are "hiding the breath during both inhalation and exhalation and conveying the impression to yourself and to others that you aren't breathing at all."

Perhaps the results can be heard on Nakamura's 2001 album *The World Of Zen Music*, a collection of *honkyoku* collected from the Itchoken temple in Kyushu. The playing is remarkable and quite forceful, and it can be difficult to identify when the player is breathing. Of course, in Nakamura's case this is complicated by his mastery of circular breathing, making him almost unique among shakuhachi players.



Having started his career studying quantum chemistry in Yokohama, Nakamura switched to shakuhachi and, aged 29, attended Berklee School Of Music in the US, a hotbed of jazz virtuosos. His teachers freely admitted to complete ignorance of Japanese traditions, and Nakamura himself probably didn't know much more. However, since then he has gone deep into tradition, and in *Missoku* he feels he has found a key to unlock much of what distinguished old Japan from the West. *Missoku* helps us understand ninja, bunraku and noh theatres, and even the way dialogue is spoken in the films of Yasujiro Ozu. As with the Hokusai prints in Washington, there's hardly an area of Japanese tradition that Nakamura can't illuminate using *Missoku*.

Nakamura's main teacher was Katsuya Yokoyama, but he also studied in Hakata, Kyushu with an elderly monk who had learned from Watazumido. The early part of the book gives fascinating glimpses of these lessons, and personally I would have preferred a memoir dealing with Nakamura's learning experiences, and his subsequent struggles in Berklee. However, this is not that book. Rather it's a kind of self-help manual for understanding Japanese tradition via *Missoku*. Plus there's a heavy dose of the myth of Japanese exceptionalism, frequently stressing the uniqueness of Japanese brains and bodies. *Missoku* is front and centre, and typically of the genre, it explains everything and will improve your life immeasurably. So Nakamura's book takes its place on the Collective Ink publishing list alongside *Crystals For Your Inner Goddess* and *Soul Connection With Horses*. It's given a very clear translation by Robin Thompson. 🍵

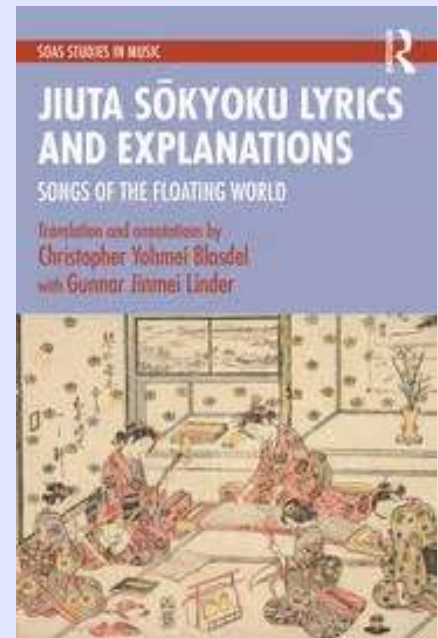
# JIUTA SOKYOKU LYRICS AND EXPLANATIONS

review by Clive Bell

## Jiuta Sokyoku Lyrics And Explanations: Songs Of The Floating World

Christopher Yohmei Blasdel with Gunnar Jinmei Linder  
Routledge Hbk/Ebook 342 pp

<https://www.routledge.com/Jiuta-Sokyoku-Lyrics-and-Explanations-Songs-of-the-Floating-World/Blasdel/p/book/9781032698540>



Shakuhachi master Christopher Blasdel has done a great service to anyone interested in Japanese classical chamber music, shedding much light onto the music known as *jiuta sokyoku* or *sankyoku*. This is sung poetry accompanied by koto, *shamisen* and shakuhachi, from the Edo period (1603-1868). This was actually the first Japanese music I encountered, listening to LPs in the 1970s, and I remember finding it intriguing but opaque. How the sounds were organised was hard to understand, let alone the meaning of the sung lyrics. Later I spent many years performing this repertoire in the UK at a strange series of concerts, parties and corporate events, and this is the book I should have had by my side.

Blasdel and Linder (both students of Yamaguchi Goro) conduct us through 75 *jiuta* pieces - if you've ever tackled one, it's almost certainly covered here. So this is a handbook for looking up tunes, and can be compared to Joep Bor's *The Raga Guide*, also beautifully illustrated, which does a similar job for fans of the Hindustani raga.

Let's take the elegant "Chidori No Kyoku" as an example (it was always one of my favourites). In an intro we learn it was composed around 1855 by Nagoya based Yoshizawa Kengyo II, originally for bowed *kokyū* but then transcribed for koto. The lyrics are a pair of poems from early and late Heian period (913 and 1124). We see those lyrics in Japanese, then in Romanized Japanese on the left and a literal English translation on the right. Instrumental interludes are noted. Then we see a full translation. Finally, Blasdel's notes give the koto tuning - *kokin-joshi* - invented by Yoshizawa after he studied gagaku. "Chidori" is grouped with a list of other *kokin-gumi* pieces written in the same tuning.



There are no pictures of *chidori* plovers, but the book's generous offering of 25 full colour woodblock prints includes a charming mandarin duck with camellias in snow by Hiroshige. This appears next to "Yuki" (snow), a *jiuta* with 19th century lyrics depicting a geisha waiting all night for her lover to arrive. "*I find it wrenching to hear the cry of the mandarin duck pining for her mate in her freezing nest.*" "Yuki" contains a melodic figure that was so well known it could be used in kabuki to indicate a snow scene in a play.

A 1760 print by Ishikawa Toyonobu (also on the cover) shows an all-women ensemble playing in a tatami mat room. Koto and *shamisen* are at the centre, with shakuhachi and *kokyu* played by much younger girls.

In a fascinating introductory chapter, Blasdel and Linder take us through the history and context of this music, where the instruments came from and who played it. The *shamisen* arrived from Okinawa, while the *kokyu* may have developed from a Portuguese bowed rebec. *Jiuta* music itself seems to have evolved from earlier epic storytelling by biwa players. The lyrics have a surprising range, from ancient poetry to tales of geisha life comparable to modern enka ballads. There's even improvisatory humour, exemplified by the anonymous "Kyoku Nezumi": a bold troupe of mice raid the pantry at night, as a *shamisen* plectrum squeaks eloquently on the strings. "*First, fourteen or fifteen of you go to the living room and kitchen, / Careful of the wasabi grater! / By the sink is a water jar, / Don't slip and fall in!*" 🐭

# SHABAKA HUTCHINGS PERFORMANCE BARBICAN, LONDON UK. MAY 2024.

by Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis

He walks on stage with a large cotton bag in his hands, greets the audience with a smile, then proceeds to take out a dozen wooden flutes and place them one by one on the table. This takes a few minutes of uncertain silence from the audience. The stage is framed by a dark curtain at the back and flooded with red lights, which suits darker skin and makes Shabaka look naturally at ease on stage.

He picks up one of the flutes, a long-ish shakuhachi, and approaches the microphone.

Who is Shabaka Hutchings?

Shabaka is a British-Barbadian performer and composer, most famous as bandleader in *The Comet Is Coming*, *Sons Of Kemet*, and *Shabaka And The Ancestors*. He studied classical clarinet before taking up the more extrovert saxophone, and over the years, from his early days at Dalston's Total Refreshment Centre, he slowly and steadily became an indispensable part of the London new jazz scene, selling out concerts on international stages.

Shabaka discovered the shakuhachi in 2019, which resonated deeply within, and it only took four years to announce that he would no longer play the saxophone, focusing instead on 'flutes', which surprised some followers. I remember enjoying a beer with a fellow dad from the local school, a fan of his *The Comet Is Coming* years, who confided in me that he recently attended a Shabaka gig and instead of the upbeat afrobeat fusion dance atmosphere he got a mellow, wistful, esoteric thing and he wasn't quite sure what to make of it.

Tonight is Shabaka's first public performance as flute-Shabaka, performing material from his very recent album release - *Perceive Its Beauty, Acknowledge Its Grace* - in the company of an eclectic and very talented group of musicians, including Aline Bzhezinska (harp), Dave Okumu (guitar) and Eska Mtungwazi (vocals). In what must be a first at the Barbican Centre, he starts the concert by playing ro-buki, grounding himself as well as the audience into this new Shabaka-sound, before he starts pushing away from the gravity of the ro, and over the next five minutes he floats and swings and takes us on a playful and entertaining improvisation.

Shabaka then grabs a different flute, while Elliot Galvin slides in with a beautifully arranged setup of modular synths, and Hinako Omori fills the space with more lush synths. The smoke machine occasionally blows wisps of smoke that hover gently above the performers like clouds, fitting visuals in a music that seems to be constantly floating. The texture of the music ebbs and flows, the musicians sensitive and responsive to each other. I remember late nights at the Dalston Boys Club in the early 2000s, sitting on the floor and listening to an ebby and flowy Orchestra Elastique do its magic, strong, lush, pulsating textures droning us out of this world.





I would describe his shakuhachi sound as rustic and nimble: a hermit who has achieved nirvana, not in the clean, quiet confines of a Zen temple, but in a small wooden hut up in the mountains exposed to the elements. In "As The Planets And The Stars Collapse", he is joined by Miriam Adefris and Alina Bzhezhska (harps) in an elusive and sorrowful piece, similar to early Arve Henriksen works like *Sakuteiki* or *Chiaroscuro*. Some pieces ("End Of Innocence") are gentle, a fragile reflection on a pond surface; others are a folk-synth Björk-like explosion of colour ("Living"). Perhaps most memorable in the concert was a powerful piece with the whole ensemble, a relentless swelling of texture so immersive during an increasing crescendo, one of Shabaka's jingle sticks flew off his hand from the intensity of playing.

Often, the music builds and subsides, ebbs and flows, often with unexpected endings. The flute melodies don't 'go' anywhere: they are repeated riffs and patterns which slowly break free of their confines and expand organically, but never with too much intention, direction, or linear narrative. As a shakuhachi player, what I notice is that he plays a lot of open holes and I get the feeling that this allows him to tap into his finger agility the best. At the same time I feel he is somewhat neglecting the very limitations that make the shakuhachi uniquely shakuhachi. Will he explore the more vulnerable side of the shakuhachi in the future? Most memorably, in the middle of the concert, he took the microphone and greeted the audience:

*"It's great to be able to imagine something and be able to share it with people. I've been thinking a lot recently about imaginative capacity and speculative energy. I think it's not a music thing: it's a human thing, and as artists our role is to imagine a future people haven't been given in front of their eyes."*

Who is Shabaka Hutchings? Is he a musician or is he the shaman, Shabaka-man, the magician-musician who seduces us into wordly truths with his sound? When I interviewed Shabaka for the Sound and Music podcast in 2020, he talked about how music is a communal experience, something very deeply human, and this is clearly taking centre stage in his work. He now plays with his cards open, invites us to join him in this journey of sounds but also of community; and reminds us that music is much more than organised sound - it is a way of being human together, a lesson shared with the audience tonight through the universal flute.



Line-up: Shabaka Hutchings (winds), Miriam Adefris (harp), Alina Bzhezhska (harp), Hinako Omori (keys, synths), Elliot Galvin (piano), Dave Okumu (guitar), Eska Mtungwazi (vocals), Moses Sumney (vocals).

[www.shabakahutchings.com](http://www.shabakahutchings.com)

Podcast:

<https://soundandmusic.org/post/sound-and-music-podcast-episode-5-invitations/>



## REAR VIEW MIRROR

by Detta Danford

Hozan Yamamoto

### *Ginkai (Silver World)*

Universal Music Company, 1971

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBvEGkjQCYA>



Hozan Yamamoto is a legend both of the shakuhachi and of Japanese jazz. He was recognised as a 'living national treasure' by the Japanese government in 2002. *Ginkai (Silver World)* was recorded in 1970 and brings together jazz instrumentalists Gary Peacock (bass), Masabumi Kikuchi (piano) and Hiroshi Murakami (drums). It is a highly acclaimed example of a fusion experiment with jazz and Japanese classical music.

When first listening to *Ginkai*, my initial thoughts were intrigue and a degree of aural adjustment that came with the feeling that I was indeed entering another world. Although an improviser, I'm certainly not a jazz musician. My practice is centred around a place of openness and collaboration, and although I've had periods in my life when I've been immersed in various forms of jazz, let's say it wouldn't be my musical starting point. So, when I was invited to listen to Yamamoto's record, my response was, hmm... interesting, alongside a healthy dose of curiosity and intrigue.



So I came to the record with open ears. The first thing that struck me is the relationship between the players, their approaches to sound making and their dialogues and conversations. The second stand out element is of course Yamamoto's sound, piercing the musical environment with singular clarity and intention. At different points Yamamoto's playing soars and intertwines with the ensemble with incredible flexibility, strength and beauty.

"Prologue" begins with hypnotic piano, as the shakuhachi sings out, phrases emerging, sustaining and disappearing. There are meeting points - the ends of Yamamoto's phrases blending into the sound of the bass and ringing piano and cymbals. The second track, "Silver World", creates a sound of echos, of call and response. The shakuhachi at first floats distantly, a lone soloist conversing with and soothing the energy of the rest of the band. Yamamoto's *koro koro* later joins the groove, interweaving freely around lines and shapes created by the others. Kikuchi's playing also captures me on this track, as he offers a delicate harmonic reimagining of the shakuhachi's lines.

At the centre of the album, "Stone Garden Of Ryoan Temple" seems to form a bridge. This track made me listen differently. Perhaps because of its freer nature, I loved hearing Yamamoto's sound leading the other instruments, at once independent and intricately interwoven. For me the way each player listens and responds is striking. There is an equality in their interactions and a sense of four people exploring, uncovering and discovering. As a listener, grasping even a small sense of this feels electrifying and exciting.

**Each track feels like entering a different room in a party and I'm drawn into each one, and find myself moving and listening in different ways.**

Overall, what I hear in the album is Yamamoto experimenting, exploring and having a lot of fun, and that is joyous and infectious to listen to. Each track feels like entering a different room in a party and I'm drawn into each one, and find myself moving and listening in different ways. "A Heavy Shower" gets me bopping about with unexpected enthusiasm. You can't help but move to this music, and I'm not thinking about what the instruments are or where they come from, just enjoying the beat, the band and the freeform movement.

I hear four musicians meeting each other and conversing, reaching across spaces to connect, share and create a musical language. Arguably it's Yamamoto who is stretching the furthest – and his ability to move around the instrument, sometimes almost it seems bending and stretching the shakuhachi to play in the way that he wants to, is compelling. By the end I'm not even thinking about the shakuhachi as shakuhachi, I'm just enjoying the sound of these four guys and the world they are creating.

I listened to this record whilst on a trip to Japan, visiting Tokyo and Kobe. I was teaching approaches to collaborative practice and working with student musicians on ways of creating new music together. Much of what we were focusing on was how to create music where each person's voice is heard, where we collectively create something that we couldn't have made on our own. We discussed being confident enough to put yourself and your distinct personality and sound into the music. Reflecting now, I'm struck by the ways in which *Silver World* seems to be exploring similar terrain - attempting to find ways that allow space for each player to speak and yet also to make something other, something more than their individual sounds and artistic voices can achieve alone.

I discussed the record with Eiko, a friend and colleague working with me on the project and in astute form she commented, 'Well, he must have had a very flexible brain'. The final track, "Epilogue", I found to be a deeply moving end to an epic journey. Circling back to the slow ostinato of the opening, the shakuhachi here sounds, not surprisingly, tired from its efforts. I felt a deep sense of coming to rest.

In an interview with Yamamoto's son, Hozan Yamamoto 2nd, Ken Hidaka asked, which work do you think Yamamoto was most proud of? To which his son replied, "It is *Ginkai (Silver World)*. For my father, he considered it to be a point of origin." 🍵



# 15th INTERNATIONAL SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL PRAGUE

A message from the artistic director, Marek Kimei Matvija

Greetings to all lovers of shakuhachi and Japanese culture!

I would like to introduce you to the 15th International Shakuhachi Festival Prague. Our festival is held every two years in Prague and hosts top Japanese shakuhachi and koto players from Japan and around the world.

Five days of concerts, workshops, study groups and lectures related to traditional and new music for Japanese instruments await you.

## **From Tokyo to Prague**

For the 15th edition of our festival, we will bring a unique guest to Prague - The Shakuhachi 5. A five-member ensemble of star shakuhachi players. Each member represents a different style of playing, each has a great solo career, and each has a unique sound. Together they represent a new generation of players with contemporary musical thinking and unprecedented virtuosity.

Within Japan, there is a tradition of similar eclectic ensembles bringing together top players, such as the Shakuhachi Sanbon Kai Trio (Hōzan, Yokoyama, Reibō) or Tokyo Sanjūsōdan Trio (Miyata, Muraoka, Yokoyama). For the first time in history, however, we have a top quality five-member ensemble.

As there was virtually no repertoire for five shakuhachi flutes at the time of the ensemble's formation, its members approached top composers, Japanese and international. Our festival contributed to this creative mission. Together with James Nyoraku Schlefer, a prominent player from New York, we co-commissioned a new work by British-Japanese composer Dai Fujikura. This piece was premiered in 2020, at the first concert of The Shakuhachi 5.

The collaboration between The Shakuhachi 5 and ISFP continues. Their concert in Prague will feature a new composition by the exceptional Czech composer Miroslav Srnka, accompanied by a short film by Marek Matvija.

## **Japan, young and passionate**

I'm very happy that we are able to present distinctive Japanese music imbued with passion for sound. It doesn't discriminate against "non-musical" sounds, but rather observes them, stages them and gets carried away by them.

Already I'm keenly anticipating the recital of the Japanese koto player Naoko Kikuchi. She is returning here to perform her recital arranged especially for our festival. She will be accompanied by her students and together they will perform an energetic ensemble piece for koto: "Homura" by Tadao Sawai, never heard in the Czech Republic before.

Energetic jazz drawing on Japanese folk aesthetics will be presented by John Kaizan Neptune and Akihisa Kominato together with Czech jazz musicians.

The final concert has been organised together with the BERG Orchestra: "WAKAMONO" (Youth) has been prepared by the conductor Peter Vrábel. As its title suggests, the concert will feature works by great young composers from Japan and the Czech Republic. Vrábel's musical experience and bold dramaturgical imagination I find very appealing and inspiring. Since 2016 we have had five concerts together. Each of them has presented exceptional dramaturgy, set design and venue. I dare to say that the work of Peter Vrábel and Eva Kesslová from the BERG orchestra is world-class, and the response to these concerts from our international guests matches this.

### **Teaching and perception**

It is a rule of our festival that the main guests both perform and teach. The main guests of ISFP 2025 are the following shakuhachi and koto players: Ken-ichi Tajima, Naoko Kikuchi, Akihito Obama, John Kaizan Neptune, Reison Kuroda, Kizan Kawamura, Akihisa Kominato and Gunnar Jinmei Linder, with others to be confirmed.

I am pleased that we have been able to greatly expand the teaching of joint compositions for koto and shakuhachi. John Kaizan Neptune, a legend of jazz shakuhachi, and Naoko Kikuchi, a top Sawai School koto player living in Germany, will collaborate on this program. Neptune is the author of many successful compositions that are accessible to both Japanese and western musical thought. He will personally teach a selection of these compositions.

We also try to offer our visitors an outlook beyond the realm of Japanese music. In collaboration with HAMU Prague and its teacher Tomas Reindl, a symposium on "Music, Therapy, Meditation, Spirituality" will be held on 19 June. Academics, composers, therapists and performers will present their research and experiences.

The festival centre and official partner of the festival is the Faculty of Music of the Academy of Performing Arts (HAMU). All courses will take place in the Renaissance palace of HAMU in the historical centre of Prague. HAMU will host community matinees from the Curated Open Mic series featuring professional and amateur players. Other concerts will be at the New Town Hall and other venues currently under negotiation.

Events such as ISFP are an incentive to the growth of European shakuhachi. I hope to see you there.

With kind regards,

Marek Kimei Matvija  
artistic director  
International Shakuhachi Festival Prague 2025

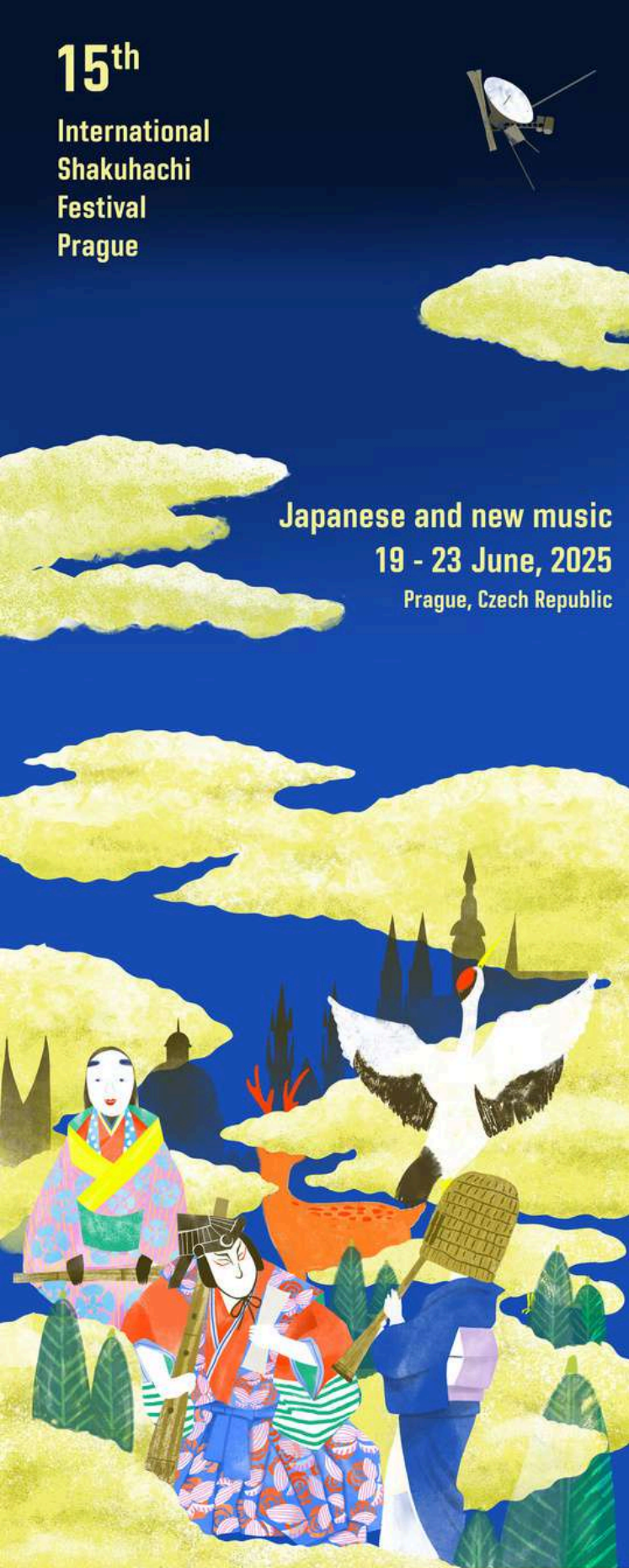
PS: If you would like to share your music in concert at ISFP 2025, please message me at [marek@neiro.org](mailto:marek@neiro.org)!



15<sup>th</sup>

International  
Shakuhachi  
Festival  
Prague

Japanese and new music  
19 - 23 June, 2025  
Prague, Czech Republic



**THE SHAKUHACHI 5**, Naoko KIKUCHI,

John Kaizan NEPTUNE, Gunnar Jinmei LINDER, The BERG Orchestra,  
Dietmar Ippū HERRIGER, Marek Kimei MATVIJA, and many others!

[www.isfp.cz](http://www.isfp.cz)

ISFP 2025

## Summary of International Shakuhachi Festival Prague 2025

### ISFP 2025 schedule

June 16-18 Shakuhachi Making Workshop with John Kaizan Neptune ([www.neiro.org](http://www.neiro.org))

June 19 Music, Therapy, Meditation, Spirituality Symposium & ISFP 2025 Opening Concert ZEN: Sound and Silence ([www.isfp.cz](http://www.isfp.cz))

June 19-23 ISFP 2025, Teaching and Concerts ([www.isfp.cz](http://www.isfp.cz))

### Invited guests (selection)

Akihito Obama (Chikushinkai), Kizan Kawamura (Tōzan ryū), Reison Kuroda (Kinko ryū Reibō kai), Akihisa Kominato (Kinko ryū Chikumeisha), Ken-ichi Tajima (Jikishō ryū), Naoko Kikuchi (Sawai & Ikuta ryū), John Kaizan Neptune (Tōzan ryū), Gunnar Jinmei Linder Ph.D. (Kinko ryū Chikumeisha), Dietmar Ippū Herriger (Myōan Itchōken), Marek Kimei Matvija (Myōan & Kinko ryū Kifū kai)

### Adjacent to the festival: shakuhachi making workshops

Three days before the festival we offer a unique opportunity to make your own shakuhachi under the guidance of professional maker John Kaizan Neptune at the NEIRO studio in Prague. Each workshop is for seven participants, and suitable bamboo and tools are provided.

After 2025, the following International Shakuhachi Festival Prague will take place in June 2027.

[www.isfp.cz](http://www.isfp.cz)

# INTERNATIONAL SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL PRAGUE 2025 SYMPOSIUM

Organized by NEIRO Association for Expanding Arts in cooperation with the Music Theory Department, Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague

Call For Papers: One-day conference, June 19th, 2025

Academy of Performing Arts Prague, The Czech Republic, and online

## **MUSIC, THERAPY, MEDITATION, SPIRITUALITY**

Music has been associated with magic, healing, prayer, shamanic practices, meditation, trance, invocation of spirits and other phenomena since the prehistory of mankind. The approach to music as a purely artistic product and as a means of entertainment, relaxation, or aesthetic enjoyment is a relatively young phenomenon and is rather a privilege of Euro-American culture of the last few centuries.

Countless examples of the targeted therapeutic use of music can be found in various traditions around the world. To name a few: ancient Greece, various African-American cults, shamanic practices, the healing trance rituals of the Zár (Ethiopia) or Gnawa (Morocco), etc. The field of music therapy has achieved considerable development in recent decades, both at the institutional level (within various institutes, hospitals, etc.) and in the form of individual sessions. There is extensive new research in this field, with new emerging methods using different musical instruments or voice. The self-therapeutic effects of voice work, drumming and the combination of music and movement are also well known and popular.

The traditions of sacred music have been maintained for centuries/millennia in virtually all world religions and cults, in many forms and styles. However, the evolution of sacred music has not stopped, and in the context of globalization, various traditional expressions are being transferred across the globe to other settings, thus changing both their structure and their purpose and effect. A case in point is the use of overtone singing in the West, brought from Central Asia (especially Tuva and Mongolia), where it is used in secular folk music. In the western world, however, a new style of spiritual or meditation music has emerged based on this technique (for example the work of David Hykes). Another very distinctive phenomenon is the globalized singing of Indian mantras, which have spread all over the world and are mostly sung in western adaptation with guitar chordal accompaniment, sometimes in connection with electronic dance music, etc.

In the tradition of the Japanese shakuhachi playing it is said "ichi-on-jo-butsumi": in a single tone - a Buddha. The combination of breath and sound, produced either by voice or wind instruments are widely used in various practices, both in Europe and Asia (i.e. shakuhachi playing as part of spiritual practice both in private and in monasteries as a communal practice).



The effect of music and sound on humans is continuously the subject of a wide range of research, reflections and theories. We ask, for example:

What are the mechanisms of the therapeutic influence of music on humans? What do current neuro-scientific theories have to say about this?

What role does music play in different spiritual traditions? What new musical-spiritual phenomena are emerging nowadays?

What new techniques and approaches does contemporary music therapy bring us? What is the importance of the choice of particular musical instruments or vocal techniques?

These and many other questions are intended to be shared at the ISFP 2025 symposium.conference. We invite music theorists, psychologists, composers, music therapists or performers who have something to say on this topic to submit proposals for their 20-minute presentations, which will then be followed by a 10 minute discussion. If necessary, the presentation can be extended with a musical demonstration of maximum 10 minutes. Abstracts must not exceed 300 words.

Selected papers with topics falling within the scope of musicology, artistic research, ethnomusicology, organology and music theory will be published upon peer review in *Živá Hudba/Living Music Review*, the journal of the Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

Written papers, however, are not mandatory for the symposium presentations.

This symposium will be conducted in English and broadcasted online.

### **Important Dates**

Abstract and recording (optional) submission deadline: 31 January 2025. Notice of acceptance deadline: 28 February 2025. Full papers for reviewed publication submission deadline: 30 April 2025. Symposium date: 19 June 2025. Submission: Online at <https://isfp.cz/2025/en/symposium/isfp-2025-symposium-registration-form/>

Presentation format: 20 min +10 min

Paper Formal Requirements and Submission

Please see the website of *Živá Hudba/Living Music Review*: <https://ziva-hudba.info/for-authors/>

Should you have any questions about the paper publication, please contact the symposium coordinator Anna Matviija at [anna@neiro.org](mailto:anna@neiro.org)

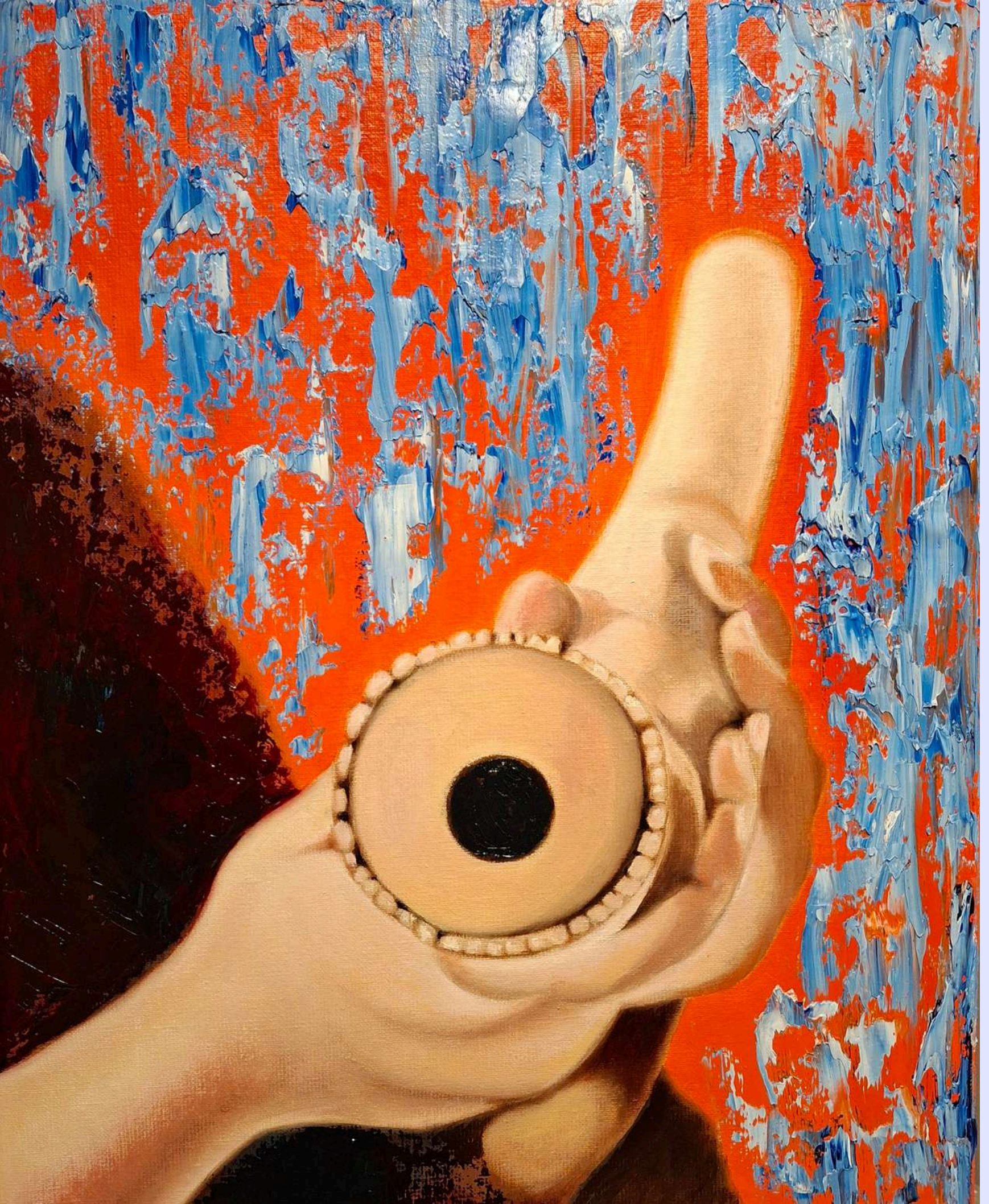
Symposium Fees and Registration

Speaker fee: 40 EUR (to be paid by speaker to the symposium)

Please register online at: <https://isfp.cz/2025/en/symposium/isfp-2025-symposium-registration-form/>

*Tamara Rogozina*  
*40x50 cm, oil on canvas*







# MEMBER'S AREA

## HOW TO BECOME AN ESS MEMBER

The European Shakuhachi Society is a non-profit organisation devoted to the dissemination of the shakuhachi in all its different aspects throughout Europe through a wide variety of events, publications and other activities.

All board members and helpers work on a volunteer basis and receive no financial benefit but the Society needs money for organising a range of events, such as the annual summer schools. This comes from the membership fees.

Membership of the ESS is open to any person, both players or non-players, interested in the music of the shakuhachi in all its forms. Since the ESS is not affiliated with any particular school or aesthetic direction, its members represent a broad cross-section of styles and genres of shakuhachi. Supporting the ESS through joining is a means of helping maintain a coordinating resource of the shakuhachi in Europe.

The benefits of membership include access to information about shakuhachi events and tuition throughout Europe and beyond, as well as discounted participation fees at events such as the European Shakuhachi Summer Schools (discounts that are generally greater than the cost of the membership fee itself).

Furthermore there is the ESS Members' Area at [members.shakuhachisociety.eu](http://members.shakuhachisociety.eu), which consists of exclusive online resources, eg concert and lesson recordings of past Summer Schools and online events, previous Summer School notations and the ESS Newsletter back-issues.

Once you have a valid membership subscription, our secretary will issue you with the relevant information on how you can access the online content.

The annual membership subscription fee is €20 or for a one-off payment of € 300 you can obtain Lifetime membership.

To join the ESS:

- 1) Visit the membership page on the ESS website and choose the membership subscription which suits you. <http://shakuhachisociety.eu/about-the-ess/ess-membership/>
- 2) Please send an email to [member@shakuhachisociety.eu](mailto:member@shakuhachisociety.eu) or [info@shakuhachisociety.eu](mailto:info@shakuhachisociety.eu), giving your name and contact details, and if you wish, a little information about your interest in and experience with the shakuhachi.
- 3) If you cannot make payment using PayPal, please send an email to [member@shakuhachisociety.eu](mailto:member@shakuhachisociety.eu) and we will find a way to help you.

We are looking forward to welcome you!



## HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE ESS

### ESS WEBSITE

You can find our website at [www.shakuhachisociety.eu](http://www.shakuhachisociety.eu)

There you will find information about shakuhachi, the ESS structure as well as past events and the ESS calendar of upcoming shakuhachi events in Europe.

General enquiries: [info@shakuhachisociety.eu](mailto:info@shakuhachisociety.eu)

Online events enquiries: [online-events@shakuhachisociety.eu](mailto:online-events@shakuhachisociety.eu)

For questions about membership: [member@shakuhachisociety.eu](mailto:member@shakuhachisociety.eu)

ESS newsletter: [newsletter@shakuhachisociety.eu](mailto:newsletter@shakuhachisociety.eu)

The ESS will endeavour to respond quickly to any query.

### ESS MEMBERS' AREA (MEMBERS' WEBSITE)

Resources like video, audio and notation for registered ESS members : [members.shakuhachisociety.eu](http://members.shakuhachisociety.eu)

### ESS YouTube CHANNEL

[ <https://www.youtube.com/@europeanshakuhachisociety/> ]

The ESS YouTube channel is where you can find the latest announcement videos, some old trailers and videos from the ESS archive. More to be added soon.

### ESS FACEBOOK PAGE

[ <https://www.facebook.com/europeanshakuhachisociety/> ]

Visit the ESS Facebook page run by the ESS Board to get all the latest ESS news and re-discover items of the ESS archive or simply to ask a question or advice on shakuhachi.

### ESS FACEBOOK COMMUNITY GROUP

[ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/156126251071128/> ]

Visit the community group looked after by ex-Board members and volunteers and join the discussions and benefit from the connections worldwide.

### ESS FORUM

Looked after by ex-Board members and volunteers, the Forum "Practice, Culture and History of Japanese Bamboo Flute 尺八" is at : [www.shakuhachiforum.eu](http://www.shakuhachiforum.eu)

Visit the forum and take part in discussions with shakuhachi players, teachers and makers from all over Europe and beyond. Although less frequented than in the past, it is still a great resource for information to get you started on your shakuhachi questions.

## ESS NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTOR'S GUIDELINES

The aim of the ESS Newsletter (NL) is to create a platform for members and non-members to further develop an understanding of shakuhachi and place it in a wider context than just their own individual study and experience. It includes a diverse range of topics and new ideas, information, knowledge, materials and reflections on shakuhachi and the people who shape the musical scene.

We encourage everyone to send in ideas for articles you would like to write or topics you would like to read about to the publications office by email at: [newsletter@shakuhachisociety.eu](mailto:newsletter@shakuhachisociety.eu)

Before each new number, a 'call for contributions' will be issued and a deadline for submission will be set, but please feel free to send us your ideas on possible articles any time you want.

In order to assist the authors in their task and to ensure some consistency, the following brief guidelines have been drawn up:

**Article length:** The NL includes articles of different lengths up to approximately 2,000 words. In special cases, longer articles focusing on specific topics or issues, which require a more in-depth analysis may also be considered.

**Text format:** Please send your text in a text document (doc, docx, rtf). You can use any font and format since the text will be adjusted to the NL format.

**Audiovisual materials/external links:** We encourage the authors to include links to audiovisual materials that can enhance the experience of the reader in terms of material specifically and directly relating to the analysis or review of the topic of the article and avoiding self promotion.

Please send the pictures or other multi-media materials separately and contact the editors beforehand. If the size of the files makes them difficult to be sent by e-mail please use services like [wetransfer.com](http://wetransfer.com).

**Picture format:** Please send your pictures in jpg, png or tiff format with a minimum resolution of 150dpi.

**Reviews:** Should you wish for any shakuhachi material to be reviewed in the NL (recordings, books, etc.), please contact us with the particulars and the editors will get back to you.

Reviews of materials, such as books and CD's, will appear in the first available issue of the NL after being received by the editors. Reviews of events, such as summer schools, workshops, master classes and concerts, need to be submitted by the deadline for the next edition of the NL, i.e. within a maximum of 6 months after the event.

Please provide acknowledgement/credit for the use of any other author's material.

Please avoid self-promotion.



The NL includes announcements on non-ESS events. Should you want your event's information to be included, please note that these events should take place after the publication of the respective NL edition (please consult the editors for exact dates of issue) and you should send the following information:

Date / Period

Description of your event

Venue

Cost

Contact information

Picture (may be edited to fit the needs of the NL format)

After submission, the articles will be proofread and edited, if necessary, with permission of the authors when practically possible. Editors will always try their best to find agreement with the authors but you should note that eventually the editors' decision will be final. The publication language is English, any material received in other languages will be translated into English and, if the editors deems it appropriate, presented alongside the original language version.

The ESS Newsletter exists thanks to the authors, translators and illustrators who so generously offer their knowledge, time and energy to provide materials. Please, be one of them.

ESS publications office

**The next ESS Newsletter is published on June 1, 2025.  
There will be a call for contributions nearer the publication date.  
Please do not hesitate to contact us in the meantime  
with any questions or suggestions.**



BAMBOO