

WORLD SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL TEXAS 2025

BAMBOO

Spring/Summer 2025

Newsletter of the European Shakuhachi Society



ROOTS OF THE HITOYOGIRI
SHAKUHACHI (I)

IGNITION COMMISSION
HÉLÈNE SEIYU CODJO

HANNSPETER
KUNZ PRINTS

YAMAGUCHI GŌRO:
HIS LEGACY (II)



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BAMBOO – The Newsletter of the European Shakuhachi Society – Spring/Summer 2025

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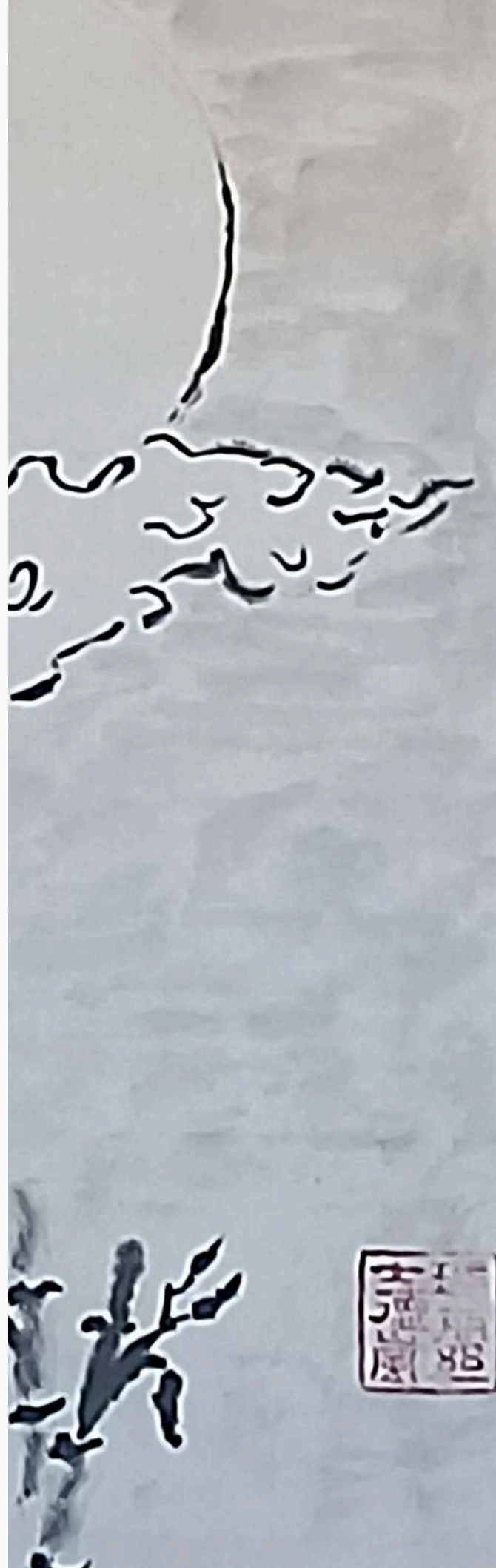
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A Deep Breath, Relax... A Word From Your Chairperson

Dear ESS Members and shakuhachi friends,

Hope you are all well!

Let me welcome you to the spring/summer edition of BAMBOO! Many thanks again to our publication team for compiling such a varied shakuhachi newsletter.

Usually at this time I would be talking all about our ESS Summer School, but, as you know, this being an WSF year, the ESS took a step back and concentrated fully on supporting the global community and the event in Texas (17-20 April). Together with the WSF we also offered a number of ESS scholarships to provide real opportunities for ESS members to attend the WSF, and did what we could in general to create a bit of WSF buzz.

Given the seven year gap since the ESS staged the London 2018 WSF, it was not just an overdue event, but, I feel, also a reminder for people of the importance of being able to convene and exchange in the shakuhachi community on a wider and global level in one place. The 'off-line', aka the 'real world', still provides this special experience and challenge.

Jumping to the European summer, we are very happy to announce our support for the International Shakuhachi Festival Prague 2025, which may be the last in its current form. Four Prague Passes have been offered to ESS members to attend the festival. Have a good time!

The first months of 2025 have brought much excitement but also some sad and tragic news. Dr David Hughes, *minyō* expert and performer, and long-time ESS friend, supporter and teacher at ESS events, passed away this May. I have many fond memories of David's workshops and sessions, and his performing of *minyō* songs. A great loss.

This February we also lost ESS member Damon Rawnsley, a shakuhachi player who initially started his journey a long time ago with Yoshikazu Iwamoto. As a frequent attendee at ESS events and a contributor to BAMBOO, his presence and philosophical curiosity will be greatly missed too.

As always any comments or suggestions please contact us on info@shakuhachisociety.eu.

Best wishes

Thorsten Knaub, ESS Chairperson

And Breathe... A Word From Your Editors

*No, it isn't hot in Texas; and the cool night dew is falling,
And the katydids are chirping in the grass beside the pool;
And from out the moonlit distances the mocking-birds are calling,
And I know the days are hazy and the nights perfumed and cool.*

So wrote Judd Mortimer Lewis, who became the state's Poet Laureate in 1932. If Lewis had been outside listening in April 2025, he could have added shakuhachi to his list of delightful, evocative sounds.

In this issue of *Bamboo* we have two reports from the Texas World Shakuhachi Festival, both highly positive but seen through different personal lenses by Cornelius Boots and ESS chairperson Thorsten Knaub.

Then get your breath back with haiku poems by Galina Sgonnik and Kazuko Hohki, illustrated by Kazuko's *sumi-e* ink paintings. There's more visual enjoyment from Hannspeter Kunz's print collection - every print features a flute! - and Christoph Wagner's postcards.

We have the first in a series of Nick Bellando articles about the mysterious *hitoyogiri* flute, and Nick has also supplied this issue's *Rear View Mirror* feature, dusting off a forgotten LP.

Our *Ignition Commission*, to help those starting out, is a new tortoise-shaped composition by Hélène Seiyu Codjo. Elsewhere Christopher Yohmei Blasdel reminisces about studying with the great Yamaguchi Goro, adding to Ralph Samuelson's thoughts in our last issue.

Francis Moore tells us that *Shakuhachi Is Punk!* and we look forward to the 15th (and last?) International Shakuhachi Festival Prague.

*Oh, it isn't hot in Texas, for the cool gulf breeze is blowing,
And the cattle all are standing underneath the wide oak trees,
Or are wending slowly homeward from the pasture, lowing, lowing;
And a drone comes softly to me from the honey-laden bees.*

...unless that drone came from the row of 3.6 flutes on page 33?

Enjoy reading!
The Editors

ONE SOUND, ONE WORLD

World Shakuhachi Festival 2025 report by Thorsten Knaub

Most of us who experienced shakuhachi gatherings on local, European or global level, know that they are dense experiences, often boosting one's shakuhachi batteries for weeks, months, if not years to come. Texas 2025, after a gap of seven years (partly due to that pandemic), and with about 235 shakuhachi people attending, was clearly a long awaited moment for a renewed coming together.

WSF in Texas!

The WSF 2025 in Texas is the eighth major international shakuhachi festival to be held since the original 1994 WSF took place in Bisei, Okayama Prefecture, Japan.

Subsequently the World Shakuhachi Festival took place in Boulder, USA (1998), Tokyo, Japan (2002), New York, USA (2004), Sydney, Australia (2008), Kyoto, Japan (2012) and London (2018) and is now a major gathering of professional and amateur performers, scholars, and enthusiasts of the shakuhachi from around the globe and a sign of how much the shakuhachi has travelled around the world since.

When sometime in 2022 (after WSF2022 in China was cancelled), main organiser Marty Regan initially shared his thought with Tim McLaughlin (Dean of the College of Performance, Visualization and Fine Arts at Texas A&M University), to bring a WSF to the middle of Texas, and appreciating the recent previous locations: New York, Sydney, Kyoto, London... College Station... it did not feel like it was going to be an easy or even possible scenario.

Some more meetings, a lot of work in between and three years later, here we are, April 17~20, 2025, the WSF has arrived. 84 workshops and lectures, exhibitions, masterclasses, 10 afternoon and evening concerts, 3 open mic concerts, as well as 5 outreach concerts happening before and after WSF in major Texan cities, with 67 invited international guests [<https://wsf2025.com/invited-guests>] and about 165 shakuhachi participants are ready to share their shakuhachi knowledge and enthusiasm at the College Station campus.

[<https://wsf2025.com/welcome>]

College Station - Texas A&M University

If you are curious the A&M stands for Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, and it opened on Oct 4, 1876, as the state's first public institution of higher education. It is now one of the largest universities of the United States by student numbers. At College Station, the main campus, there are 72,560 students (autumn 2024) with about 4,320 faculty and staff.

Preparing for the WSF visit there were numerous visits to Google Streetview and attempts to visualize the huge and sprawling nature of the A&M campus, which covers an area of 21 km² (5,200 acres), but nothing prepared us for navigating it all in 30° C heat, plus arriving from a cool European April. Fortunately the official WSF partner hotels where almost all of us invitees as well as the participants were staying, were within manageable distance, with only one eight-lane road (ie a Texas 'local road') to cross.

The day before - Symposium

It was really useful to arrive a day earlier and deal with the main jet-lag, but more importantly have time to visit the WSF2025 Symposium too. Dr Kiku Day was in charge of the organisation and the selection was done by Drs Gunnar Jinmei Linder, Martha Fabrique, William Connor, Cory LeFevers, Matthew Campbell and Martin Regan. The ten chosen contributors, who could not all be present, left us with three remote contributions via Zoom. The room in the Melbern G. Glasscock Center was fairly full, maybe around 35 people.

The symposium was presented in the form of three panels, each panel compromising 3-4 speakers with a 30 minute slot each. (see full schedule here: [<https://wsf2025.com/symposium>]) On Panel 1: *Shakuhachi Analysis* (of performance practices) we had Paul Engle, LeRon Harrison (via Zoom) and Bruno Deschênes (Zoom). After lunch there was Panel 2: *Diverse Roles of the Shakuhachi in Society and the Arts* with Koji Matsunobu, Philip Horan, Lauren Rubin and Lydia Snyder; and Panel 3: *Shakuhachi Composition*, presented by Jim Franklin (Zoom), Garrett Grosbeck and Daiwei Lu.

Just before lunch we had the Keynote Speaker Kanda Kayu with *The Dissemination of Traditional Shakuhachi Music Across Japan*. We travelled from the three-node *miyogiri* to the root end 7-node shakuhachi, via *borō* and *komusō*; we also met the *hōgechaku* of Kyushu Region, of 1 *shaku* 3 *sun* 8 *bu* length; and - maybe most fascinating - we listened to maybe the earliest recordings (1913) of *Koku* and *Tsuru no Sugomori* played by Higuchi Taizan (35th Kanshu of Myōan-ji). Kanda Kayu was very enthusiastic and clearly wanted to tell us more, but having already gone past his slotted time we had to stop.

As a non-ethnomusicologist mainly concerned with playing that shakuhachi thing, and therefore not primarily focusing on dissecting shakuhachi practice with all the academic tools at hand, this kind of conceptual analysis and contextual research is nevertheless important. Just listening in and picking up a few pointers here and there from the dedicated scholars, amateur and professional, sharing their passion and knowledge, certainly is a suitable introduction and priming for the following WSF itself.

Howdy ya'll!

Yes, indeed, but what did you say? "Howdy ya'll!" It echoed again through the Courtyard of the Liberal Arts and Humanities (LAH) Building. This was agenda point 1 of the WSF - the welcome social. Of course we all did our homework and could reply with a perfect Texan Howdy!

Greetings out of the way, we had a series of introductions of the people who made this WSF happen. Marty Regan, executive director, welcomed the Texas WSF2025 Planning Committee members to the front: Martha Reika Fabrique, James Nyoraku Schlefer, Elliot Kanshin Kallen, Dale Kakuon Gutt, Alberto Gyōja Battaglino, Steven Kōchiku Casano, senior advisers Christopher Yohmei Blasdel and David Kansuke Wheeler. Not to start a rumour, but David as well as Marty may have used holographic doubles to be at so many places seemingly instantly, doing translation, driving, chatting, announcing and many other assistances over the next four festival days and beyond.

We met the JSPN who were doing the heavy lifting of navigating funding sources Japan-side. Represented here by Obama Akihito, Kōhei Matsumoto and Kizan Kawamura. Next up Peter Dayton, winner of the Composition Competition, whose new piece will be premiered on day 4, as well as Kōzan Shiba, creator of the group piece which all the participants and invitees will perform together (days 3 and 4.)

Also we met the interpreters, some being there as performers as well, (Sayuri Inoue, Etsuko Kondo, Emi Miyata, Rita Ueda, Aaro Haavisto, Garret Groesbeck, Kyle Helou and Sayō Zenyōji), who will be so essential and committed in the next days to make sure we all can follow the workshops in English, and some of the many student volunteers (59 altogether!), the red-shirts (ie wearing a red coloured version of the official WSF T-Shirt), who will be so helpful in the next days, be it as impromptu translators, information kiosks, lunch distributors or most importantly guiding the shakuhachi crowds through the college campus to keep us from getting lost.

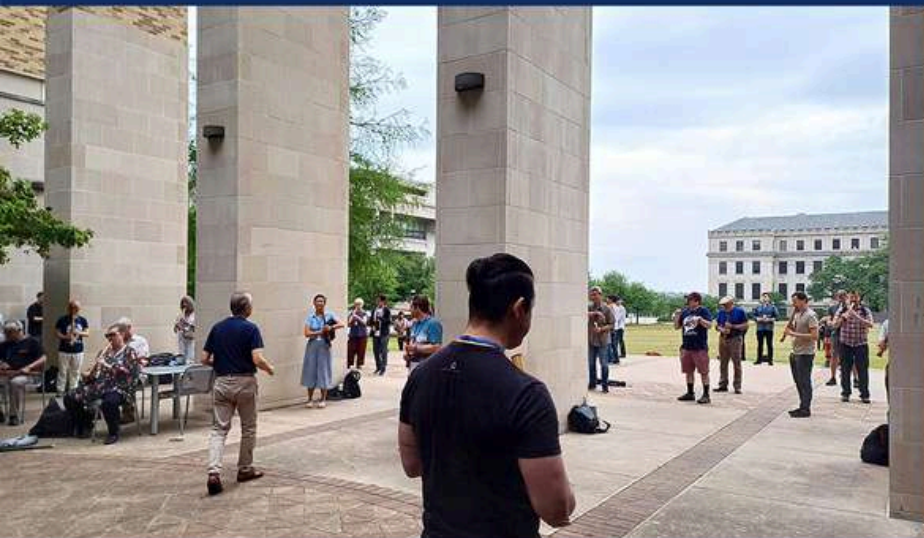
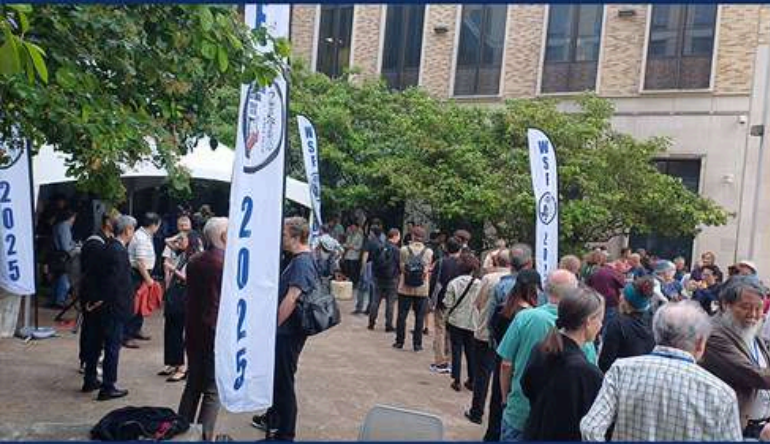
After all the introductions and initial thankyou's the WSF2025 in Texas was officially ready to start next morning. But before the shakuhachi sounds would take possession of LAAH and T&M in general, it was the university's premier steel-pan ensemble, Maroon Steel, who provided the live music for the welcome party. After it was time to head back to the hotels and after a quick visit to the hotel bar, trying to catch some jet-lagged sleep to be as fresh as possible for day 1.

WSFWSFWSF!!!

Day 1 started early for me, 6h30-ish. The first rehearsal was set for 8 o'clock sharp at LAAH. On the schedule was the rehearsal for Fujiwara Dozan's composition *Chikusei Shōei* (*Bamboo Voice, Pine Tree Silhouette*), commissioned by JSPN in 2023.

And it did start at 8. Dozan took the conducting position and after a few initial explanatory comments the next 45 minutes were full of high concentration playing and taking in some more of his remarks. Usually 8 in the morning is not the time I take out the shakuhachi, I must admit, but now standing and playing next to Nakajima Kōzan and Japan's Living National Treasure of shakuhachi, Hōzan Nomura, somehow focused my mind... the performance was scheduled for the evening concert on Day 2. Good, one more rehearsal will be happening.

WSF2025 Howdy ya'll!



Clockwise from top left: A & M University Texas Campus; Lunchpacks are ready to be picked up; Social welcome – Marty Regan, Director WSF2025 introduces Planning Committee and Advisers: Elliot Kallen, David Wheeler, Martha Fabrique, Dale Gutt, Alberto Battagliano, Steven Casano, Christopher Blasdel and James Schlefer.; Lunchtime; WSF2025 Deco – Entrance hall of main location (LAAH); Morning ro-buki – WSF participants spreading out over the LAAH courtyard; Social welcome – WSF crowd mingling and queueing for welcome buffet.

Chikusei Shōei is a quartet for 3 x 1.8 shakuhachi and 1 x 2.4 shakuhachi, with each voice shared between JSPN members and non-Japanese players. So we were about 28 altogether, equally distributed across the 4 'voices' of the piece, with 16 players not Japanese and a JSPN contingent of 12 players.

And while we were rehearsing, the first general group *ro-buki* got under way starting from 8h15 at the LAAH courtyard and with it the WSF truly got going. This was followed by the 'official opening meeting' for everyone at 8h45, which after a few announcements was of course another rehearsal for the really big group piece for all the participants. Kōzan Shiba's WSF2025 commission *Jijimuge* got its first sounding. Kōzan conducted and did her best to tame 200+ shakuhachi, as more structure was revealed too. The first performance is set for Day 3 evening concert, so there is still time to polish a few things.

Afterwards the workshops and classes started, and with about 84 of them over the next four days it will obviously not be possible to mention and assess all of them here in this report, but I will have a subjective summary in some of the next paragraphs. For a quick overview probably best to visit the relevant page on the WSF2025 website [<https://wsf2025.com/workshops>]. As for the concerts there were the six afternoon concerts and the four main evening concerts. [<https://wsf2025.com/concerts>]

Concerts

Due to a change in the concert schedule the very first sound of the very first afternoon concert on Day 1 was not a shakuhachi... it was a metallic sounding burst when Emmanuelle Rouaud pressed the foot pedal to activate the live-electronic set-up to perform the world premiere of Henri Algadafe's 2025 composition *As It Rises, So It Falls*. The shakuhachi though came in soon after, and started building tone sequences and melodic patterns, sometimes seemingly denied by the electronic replies, other times leading and guiding the electronic echoes. A great start to the concert.

And this being the first of the afternoon concerts at the Black Box Theater at LAAH there was only standing room. Just after, the Wood Prophets Bass Shakuhachi Quartet - Cornelius Boots with Kevin Chen, John Garner and Alex Merck - riffing rhythmically on their long, wide *jinashi* shakuhachi, reminding me at moments of a steam engine, and each taking their solo turns, before returning into their rhythmic steam cloud.

As the concert proceeded we also stepped further back towards past compositions. One of them being Aoki Reibo II's *Mumyō No Kyoku* (Bright Dream, 1976) performed by Aoki Reibo III. The serenity of this modern honkyoku was beautifully rendered by Reibo III. No hurry, great phrasing. And as the Black Box Theater was not providing much of a supporting acoustic resonance, the shakuhachi performers, in particular solo performers, had to be on their best embouchure to carry and project the sound.

The remaining pieces were all solo performances *Mujū Shinkyoku* (Wandering Spirit) by Nyodo Jin (1937) performed by his grandson Ray Jin; *Mei* (Kazuo Fukushima 1962) performed by Kenichi Tajima; followed by *Prelude To Watermill* (Teiji Itō 1972) performed by Ralph Samuelson; and finally *Azuma No Kyoku* (Music of the East) a traditional honkyoku, performed by Jon Johnston, closed the very first concert. A great start to the WSF concerts.

One of the realities of a WSF is that it is impossible to visit and attend everything that happens and that one would like, and the second afternoon concert I missed due to being at some workshop. Reading again the concert programme I slightly regret my choice now. [<https://wsf2025.com/concerts> — afternoon concert B]

The Liberal Arts and Humanities (LAAH) Building being the main location for morning gathering, *ro-buki*, announcements, workshops and afternoon concerts, we now convened at a different campus location, The 700 seat Rudder Theater, for the first themed evening and official WSF2025 opening concert, “Shakuhachi Around The Globe”. No parallel classes or workshops were happening at this time. We had, naturally, a sequence of fine speeches, reminding us from varying perspectives of the efforts, time and pleasure it is to have the WSF at College Station – Marty Regan, Executive Director of WSF2025 and Professor of Music Composition at T&M, was followed by Tim McLaughlin (Dean, College of Performance, Visualization, and Fine Arts) and completed by John Nichols, Mayor of College Station. This kind of ceremonial ornamentation also helps to frame the importance and uniqueness of a global shakuhachi gathering for me.

Nevertheless, it was time for the sound of the shakuhachi to fill the theater space. And what better start could we hope for than the traditional honkyoku *Reibo-Nagashi* (Yearning for the Bell) expertly rendered by Gunnar Jinmei Linder in Kinko-ryū style.

I will not be able to describe each piece from this and all the following concerts, so I'll give my subjective pick of what I like, found interesting and what I was most impressed with.

In the first evening concert I would like to mention *Tall Grasses* (Elizabeth Brown 2024). A quiet and precise composition beautifully brought to live by Ralph Samuelson, Hélène Seiyū Codjo, Kinya Sogawa, Akihito Obama, Ichirō Seki, Danilo Baikyō Tomic, Martha Reika Fabrique, Riley Lee, Suizan Lagrost, Hungwen Tsai, Steven Kōchiku Casano, Kyle Chōmei Helou and Christopher Foss with Elizabeth Brown herself conducting. After the quiet sounds of Brown I really enjoyed the exuberance and playfulness of *Silk Road Fantasy Suite, mvt. 5: Turtle Dance* (Jiping Zhao 2010) presented by Bowen Yang on shakuhachi, with Sayo Zenyōji accompanying on piano.

We also had the duet *Kochō* (Butterfly) a world premiere of Kōzan Shiba's 2025 composition, here performed by herself with Kōzan Nakajima. I think this was also new ground - besides experiencing a great performance we also had two high level Japanese female shakuhachi players playing a duet at a WSF and playing their own compositions.

On the second day it was very busy and I caught only a few performances of afternoon concert 'D' — having been present at rehearsals in France already for *Bingo Braz* (The Big Bagpipe) (Véronique Piron 2025), a duet performed by Véronique Piron and Teruo Furuya, it was great to hear the piece played out in a performance setting. Sometimes reminiscent of a march, the shakuhachi were playfully tapping along mimicking the bag pipes, infusing the shakuhachi with a Breton sensibility.

Also it was great to see the Tanabe brothers in action — Shōzan Tanabe and Retsuzan Tanabe performing *UkonTsurubami* (Saffron and Deep Gray) written by Shiroto Aizawa (1992) — another fantastic performance this afternoon.

Back at the evening concerts the second night was themed *Japanese Masters and Masterpieces* and was mainly a showcase of the JSPN (the Japanese Shakuhachi professional-Players Network). It was also, as already mentioned, the day of the performance of *Chikusei Shōei* (Bamboo Voice, Pine Tree Silhouette) by Dōzan Fujiwara 2023. The JSPN players — Daisuke Kaminaga, Kizan Kawamura, Akihisa Kominato, Kōzan Shiba, Kuniyoshi Sugawara, Kinya Sogawa, Ken-ichi Tajima, Retsuzan Tanabe, Kōzan Nakajima, Hōzan Nomura, Kōhei Matsumoto — took the first row seated with the rest of us — Steven Kōchiku Casano, Elliot Kanshin Kallen, Marek Kimei Matvija, Yang Bowen, Martha Reika Fabrique, James Nyoraku Schlefer, Dale Kakuon Gutt, Alberto Cyōja Battaglino, Adam Robinson, Thorsten Knaub, Zac Zinger, Kyle Chōmei Helou, Philip Horan, Cornelius Boots, Karl Young, Emmanuelle Rouaud — taking our position just behind, standing. In any case Dozan's quartet, with each voice supported by about six players sounded all good to me and it was a great experience. It was one of my personal highlights to contribute to that concert.

Afterwards we had one of my favourite traditional honkyoku pieces, *Ukigumo* (Floating Clouds), here beautifully performed by Toshimitsu Ishikawa, followed by a rather powerful *Shika No Tōne* (Distant Cry of the Deer), the traditional Kinko-ryū *honkyoku*, brought here to the stage with all the nuances and energy by Jūmei Tokumaru and Tomoe Kaneko.

Still to mention are the group pieces by JSPN performers — *Inyōku* (Phrases of Shadow and Light) for shakuhachi ensemble (Hōzan Yamamoto I 1974) performed by Hōzan Nomura, Retsuzan Tanabe, Shōzan Tanabe, Dōzan Fujiwara, Kizan Kawamura, Kōzan Shiba, Daisuke Kaminaga and Kōzan Nakajima; and *Shadows, Shades, and Silhouettes* (Marty Regan 2024 - commissioned by JSPN) also played by an all-star ensemble and brilliantly performed by Kinya Sogawa, Toshimitsu Ishikawa, Kōhei Matsumoto, Ichirō Seki, Hiromu Motonaga, Kenichi Tajima, Akihisa Kominato and Akihito Obama.

The concert performance level at the WSF was simply amazing, just trying to pick highlights is almost impossible given the packed and varied programming. Last but not least on the second night there was also Fujiwara Dozan performing Dai Fujikura's *Korokoro* (2015). Dozan's control of the shakuhachi and its tone colour and volume is simply mesmerising.

The third evening concert themed Gala Concert with the title *Treasures of Shakuhachi Musical Heritage – From Then To Now* brought a change to the WSF proceedings as we travelled to the one-hour drive away small town (village) of Round Top (more about the trip in a separate paragraph).

The Gala Concert at the Round Top Concert Hall - a truly spectacular all wooden building, boasting excellent acoustics and an eccentric interior - already made clear that this would be a special evening and it was a spectacular concert. The programming was clever enough to build up a sequence of varied and different performances, contrasting with each other enough to celebrate the variety but also complementing each other to see a kind of trajectory of shakuhachi development from the past to the future.

Difficult to pick highlights here too: of course listening to my own teacher Teruo Furuya, performing the kind of WSF classic *Wadatsumi no Iroko no Miya* (A Story in Abyssal Palace) by Randō Fukuda 1928, with longtime shakuhachi companions Kaoru Kakizakai and Kazushi Matama, was always a moment to cherish. It is just such a powerful piece and played with that attention and experience it simply 'rocks'.

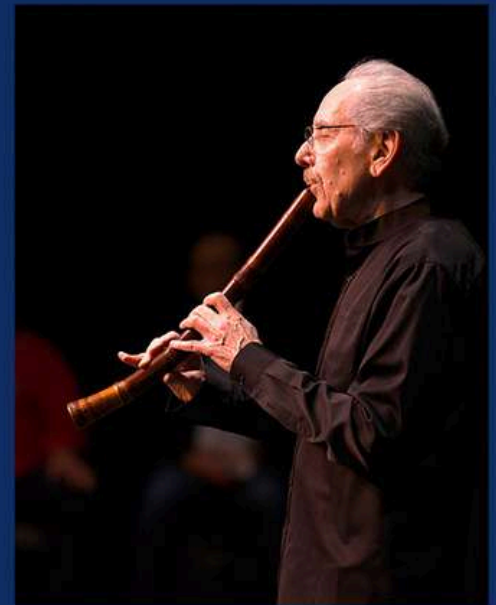
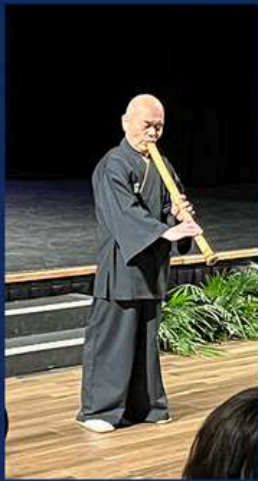
Stan Kakudō Richardson's austere, no-frills opener with *Renpo-ken Sugomori* (Nesting of the Cranes) from Renpo Temple set the mood for the more traditional first half, where we also had *Onoe no Matsu* (Pines on the Bluff) brought to us by the Japanese players Keisuke Zenyōji (shakuhachi), Akiko Fujimoto (voice/shamisen) and Yōko Hihara on the koto. A simply sublime performance, of three great musicians who are in full control of every detail and never in a hurry or doubt of where they are taking the song. They truly disappear in the sound and become the music.

And picking the highlights means picking everything at the Roundhouse Top concert hall this evening. Akihisa Kominato's soulful rendition of *Esashi Oiwake* (Esashi Herder Song), a Hokkaido folk (*min'yō*) song, for me laid bare something about the universality expressed through folk music. Although far removed from 'country music' per se, it nevertheless felt oddly local and far at the same time. The first half came to a close with Japan's National Living Treasurer Hōzan Nomura playing *Kōgetsuchō* (Lament to the Moon), a piece composed by Tozan-ryū founder Tozan Nakao in 1904. Serene perfection.

Cornelius Boots opened the second half with *Black Earth*, his 2018 composition, riffing up and down the scale on his Taimu *jinashi*, pushing body posture to the limits, an effective use of circular breathing brought us right back into it. Also Boots was certainly best dressed performer here, echoing the brown hues of the wooden concert hall perfectly with his wild west wardrobe.

Following on we had a timely reminder of spring – *Haru No Umi* (The Sea in Spring), an 'evergreen' by Michio Miyagi from 1929 – flawlessly performed by Suizan Lagrost on shakuhachi and Yōko Hihara on koto. We almost jumped a century to Yoshimi Tsujimoto's 2024 composition *Gyō* (The Practice) utilising a looping pedal (and another piece in the festival exploring electronics) to build up beautiful melody phrases, looping them and ornamenting them further.

WSF2025 Opening, Evening & Afternoon Concerts



Clockwise from top left: Evening Concert day2: *Shika No Tōne* – Jūmei Tokumaru and Tomoe Kaneko; Opening Concert: *Tall Grasses* (Elizabeth Brown 2024) for performers see report; Opening Concert: *Kochō* (Kōzan Shiba 2025) – Kōzan Shiba, Kōzan Nakajima; Afternoon Concert: *Prelude to Watermill* (Teiji Itō 1972) – Ralph Samuelson; Afternoon Concert: *As it rises, so it falls* (Henri Algadafe 2025) – Emmanuelle Rouaud; Afternoon Concert: *Hifumi hachigaesi no shirabe* – Kohmei Mizuno; Evening Concert day2: *Ukigumo* – Toshimitsu Ishikawa

WSF2025 Gala Concert : Treasures of Shakuhachi Musical Heritage–From Then to Now



Clockwise from top: Renpo-ken Sugomori from Renpo Temple

– Stan Kakudō Richardson

Kōgetsuchō (Tozan Nakao 1904) – Hōzan Nomura

Onoe no Matsu – Keisuke Zenyōji, Akiko Fujimoto: voice, shamisen,

Yōko Hihara: koto

Esashi Oiwake (Hokkaido folk song) – Akihisa Kominato



Next page: clockwise from top left: Black Earth (Cornelius Boots 2018) – Cornelius Boots

Haru no Umi (Michio Miyagi 1929) – Suizan Lagrost, Yōko Hihara: koto

Wadatsumi no Iroko no Miya (Randō Fukuda 1928) – Teruo Furuya, Kaoru Kakizakai, Kazushi Matama,

Cyō (Yoshimi Tsujimoto 2024) – Yoshimi Tsujimoto

Sarasōju (Akira Nishimura 2021 - commissioned by The Shakuhachi 5)

Akihito Obama, Kenichi Tajima, Akihisa Kominato, Reison Kuroda, Kizan Kawamura

WSF2025 Gala Concert :



WSF2025 Closing Concert : Transcending Time and Space – The Future of the Shakuhachi



Clockwise from top left: *Satoshi* (Recollections) (Yūji Takahashi 2007) **Zenpo Shimura**; *Haiku in Variation* (Zac Zinger 2020) **Zac Zinger** & the Apollo Chamber Players (violin, **Matthew J. Detrick**; violin, **Anabel Ramirez**; viola, **Tonya Burton**; cello, **Matthew Dudzik**); *Voice of the Rain* (Ross Edwards 2015) **Riley Lee** & the Apollo Chamber Players; *The Demonstration* (Peter Dayton 2025) with Soprano: **Rebecca Hays**, shakuhachi: **Dōzan Fujiwara**, koto: **Yoko Hihara**, violoncello: **Elizabeth Lee**; *Byoh* (The Boundless) (Ryōhei Hirose 1972) **Christopher Yohmei Blasdel**; *Bamboo Dances* (James Nyoraku Schlefer 2025) with **James Nyoraku Schlefer** & the Apollo Chamber Players; *Pentatonic Concerto* (Ichirō Seki 2023) with **John Kaizan Neptune**, **Kizan Kawamura**, **Akihito Obama**, **Ichirō Seki**, **Kinya Sogawa**; *Voyage* (Marty Regan 2008 - commissioned by WSF 2008, Sydney) **Shōzan Tanabe** & the Apollo Chamber Players;

Last but not least, maybe a peek into the future, as The Shakuhachi 5 took to the stage –Kenichi Tajima, Kizan Kawamura, Akihisa Kominato, Reison Kuroda standing in a semi circle with Akihito Obama taking center spot in front with a 2.4 shakuhachi. The piece *Sarasōju* (Sal Tree Grove) written by Akira Nishimura in 2021 and commissioned by The Shakuhachi 5. I think this performance was not only the highlight of the Gala concert it may have been the performance of the festival. Difficult to describe the sheer power and energy moved around by the five shakuhachi players. Pushing their shakuhachi to sonic limits but always in control of the proceedings and listening to each other, bouncing melodic lines and *muraiki* to each other, at times a roaring shakuhachi thunderstorm, and when finally sounds start to recede and fade out, we will have to wait for Akihito Obama, sitting in front in a meditative pose, channeling the last inaudible sounds, to move his flute away from his lips, to break finally into rapturous applause and indeed standing ovations. “Houston, Round Top here. The Shakuhachi 5 have landed.”

Workshops, Classes and Lectures

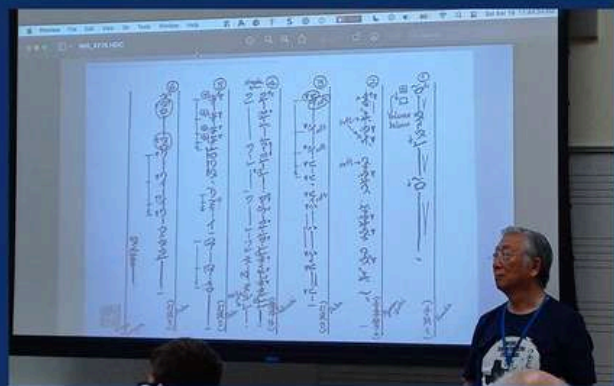
As mentioned in the introduction there were about 84 workshops, classes and lectures over the four days of the festival. 9h30 to 10h45 and 11h15 to 12h30, with the afternoon sessions at 13h30 to 14h45 and the final session from 15h15 to 16h30. I think these timings and durations worked well (Day 3 was different as we travelled to the concert hall in Fayette County, hence no afternoon sessions.)

Broadly speaking I would say there were maybe four different areas one could group the sessions — there were a number dealing with aspects of technique, playing/practicing tips, breathing and posture, eg Kenichi Tajima’s *Techniques for Producing Effortless and Loud Sounds*. Then there were the usual workshops on learning particular pieces (of course many different schools were present), eg Shōzan Tanabe’s session on *Kan Otsuby Hōzan Yamamoto I: Techniques Direct from the Composer*. Then a number of more lecture structured sessions about particular players and other historic events, eg Ray Jin on the *The Life of Nyodō Jin from his birth to his activities in the U.S.*, and finally sessions, maybe more ethnomusicologically oriented, about shakuhachi in various outside contexts, whether education, with other instruments, or observations about its internationality, eg Rita Ueda and Mark Armamini with *Shakuhachi in the Intercultural Ensemble*.

Definitely plenty to choose from, and in the nature of these kind of events one will miss something one wanted to hear/see too. My totally subjective selection (ie some of the ones I wanted and managed to attend): Dōzan Fujiwara’s class on *Efficient Sound Production: Breathing and Playing* was rather busy, and we saw another approach and thinking about breath control and shaping the sound, in particular analysing one’s embouchure as well as warm-up movements to relax body muscles.

Kuniyoshi Sugawara’s *Research Into the Performance Records of Hirosawa Seiki and Explanation of Playing Techniques by Okamoto Chikugai*. Very interesting and eye-opening. Seemingly endless variations on the fingering of the *tamane* (flutter tongue) sounds in the Tsuru pieces, perfectly brought to life by Kuniyoshi who demonstrated each fingering combination with easy precision.

WSF2025 Workshops, Classes & Lectures



*Clockwise from top left: Kuniyoshi Sugawara's Research Into the Performance Records of Hirose Seiki and Explanation of Playing Techniques by Okamoto Chikugai; Kinya Sogawa's on How to Perform Watazumi Doso's Works and the Importance of Singing; Dōzan Fujiwara – Efficient Sound Production: Breathing and Playing; Teruo Furuya's How To Turn Honkyoku Melodies Into Song; WSF workshop: Aoki Reibo III's teaching of *Shika No Tōne*.*

As mentioned another group of lessons were mainly about transmission of a piece in a particular school or style. Here I attended Aoki Reibo III's teaching of *Shika No Tone* (Distant Sounds of Deer). Being a classic piece of Kinko-ryū style and being myself used to the Kinko-ish KSK version of the piece, I was curious about the differences here. Aoki Reibo's version here felt closer to the source perhaps, as Yokoyama's version, not a big surprise, streamlined some ornamentation or phrases for increased fluidity of the whole (I would think). In any case fantastic playing and teaching by Aoki Reibo III.

Also very busy was Kinya Sogawa's on *How to Perform Watazumi Doso's Works and the Importance of Singing*. We were warned we all have to sing ... together ... where we went phrase by phrase through some transcription of Watazumi's *Chosi* and *Sanya* versions and Sogawa's comments about rise and fall of pitch and volume.

Of course it was a special pleasure to listen to my teacher Teruo Furuya, who in his session *How To Turn Honkyoku Melodies Into Song*, concentrated there on how to make the shakuhachi sing rather. Selecting and analysing key phrases of Yokoyama lineage/KSK honkyoku in *Tamuke*, *Azuma Jishi*, *Takiochi*, and *Daha* to demonstrate how breath and muscle control shapes the finer details of volume and colouring in the *honkyoku* phrasing. It is that control that turns the written score into music.

And many more. In general all the workshops seemed well presented and evenly attended. We had dedicated translation as needed and the rooms in general were planned out well enough to offer mostly enough space for everyone. Of course there are always a couple of super-popular sessions where the room bursts and seating is floor based for some.

My own humble contribution (although possible the longest workshop with its daily 9h30 to 17h00 running time), titled slightly tongue in cheek; *The Department of Moving Image Improvisation* was actually more a video installation* with an optional workshop element. The projection consisted out 25 movie clips from Japanese silent classics, via Texan set Westerns, to NASA's moon footage, with varying duration, fading into each other. The task was to get inspired to ornament the silent imagery (the occasional purposely left sound fragment notwithstanding) with shakuhachi improvisation. 'DIY soundtracks' in short. Some took up the challenge others took a kind of refuge in the silence of the projected image, maybe to recharge or simply flowing quietly with the imagery (*my thanks here to John D. Moeller from A&M, for setting-up the technical equipment needed).

Round Top Excursion

Four large buses pulled up at the hotels just after we collected our lunch packs. The logistic challenge was to bring about 235 shakuhachi people to a place about 90 minutes drive away, let them loose for two hours, and get (most of) them subsequently to the concert hall near by.

Fortunately the small town/village/cluster of houses, which counted about 87 inhabitants at the most recent census, is used to sudden population increases and once we arrived we were immediately greeted by the major Judith Vincent, who gave us a short rundown of the history of the place. Afterwards everyone dispersed to explore Round Top settlement for themselves. Basically little shops and cafes in cute wooden houses offering some Texan wares. And yes, there were one or two who returned later with a cowboy hat. Others found the Round Top Brewing & Kitchen and their Palomino, a Pre-Prohibition Style American Pilsner which seemed a fitting spot to stare over the bar veranda. A few tables were occupied by Japanese connoisseurs too.

Then the magic of getting everybody back into the four buses to drive the small distance to the actual Round Top Concert Hall for the Gala concert evening. The 1000-seater Concert Hall was built in the 70s and is a masterpiece of wooden beam structure. The metal framework is clad all in pine, a soft wood, with the exception of the dividers, which are poplar, a hard wood. The elaborate woodwork, such as the compass stars and the Gothic-inspired balcony fronts, adds more than visual appeal. A magnificent looking and sounding venue. After the excellent concert (see concert paragraph), we were again ushered into the buses and chauffeured to the evening meal.

The Gala evening buffet was at The Compound, an old barn like location ready to receive 200+ hungry shakuhachi people. In general it has to be said this as well as all the other catering at WSF was more than excellent. Being Texas there were of course always some serious barbecued meaty options, but vegetarians were well looked after too. Also being Texas there was plenty, and no one ended up hungry. This was true for the two inclusive buffet dinners as well as the four excellent lunch packs, delivered each day on time to the LAAH courtyard with distribution overseen by the 'red-shirt' volunteers.

Meanwhile back at the Compound, plates, bottles and glasses emptied and the laid out 8 seats at-a-table structure slowly but surely disintegrating as people mingled all over the place. Just as we immersed in the live country music provided by Ralphie and the RCs, there it was again. The sound of that bamboo flute. Only the necessity of the intake of fuel (food & drink) stopped it for while, but now it was back even more intense. There was John Neptune bluesing it out in country style, giving instruction to the country band, who with a friendly stoic nod indicated silently — "Sure, we'll follow..." Soon after there was a queue of shakuhachi improvisers with Ralphie and the RCs providing the rhythmic base ground for the shakuhachi to flourish and ultimately it was John Neptune again, this time bouncing solos off with Zac Zinger, who closed the session and let the RCs take back full control.

Thanks to our drivers and helpers again, everybody somehow got on the buses in the total darkness of late evening Fayette County Texas; and after the initial shock of having Keanu Reeves as *John Wick* pulping up some baddies on the bus's TV screens these went black and we could delve into our mind to process all the events of the day. It was a safe, albeit later than expected, arrival back at the hotels.

Round Top Excursion & Concert Hall



Clockwise from top left: Round Top: Our transport is waiting; Round Top: WSF crowd listening to the major Judith Vincent telling the history of the place; Round Top's pretty houses; Taking a break at the Round Top Brewing & Kitchen; Jamming – John Kaizan Neptune vs. Zac Zinger (i.e. madake vs aluminium?) with Ralphie and the RCs at The Compound, Fayette County Texas; Round Top Concert Hall, Intermission; Gala buffet dinner at The Compound, Fayette County Texas.

Jijimuge or Freedom from Worldly Obstacles

Kōzan Shiba's *Jijimuge* meaning 'Freedom from Worldly Obstacles' was the WSF2025 group piece commission. Group piece here meaning literally everybody, in particular the participants. This is a new-ish tradition — besides of course the group renderings of *Tamuke* – and in London 2018 we had the commission *A Thousand Bamboo in a Dancing Wind* by Verity Lane, which I remember also required certain choreographic elements to be mastered. But anyway, the 2025 commission strove towards a 'modern' *Tamuke*, encompassing all levels of player.

Altogether we had time slots for about five rehearsals, which seemed adequate as morning rehearsal communication to 200+ shakuhachi players has its own challenges and some instructions did get lost somewhere for sure. Kōzan Shiba who was conducting her piece, was also patient in explaining its overall structure. There were two voices of shakuhachi. First one dedicated to 1.8 and the second to any length really (but it was mostly 2.4s). The score showed some helpful lettering from A through to G as well as written instructions like "Inhale over four beats" ... "Freely with the indicated notes" ... "Gradually louder" ... "Repeat 2 or 3 times". Main patterns going up and down the natural scale of the shakuhachi, with the 2.4s (or any non 1.8) doing the second voice, being mainly an open hi, or just wind noises. As you see it was pretty free, hence also it was important to get those few crucial moments of unison right.

The first public performance was scheduled for none other than the Gala Concert at the Roundhouse Top Concert Hall. The plan was for the participants to scatter as much as possible among the still unaware audience. Then, after the greetings and welcome part, on the cue of Kozan's handbell being rung, draw their shakuhachi and start their windy sounds, quietly building up to the first crescendo. A hand gesture of Kozan would then abruptly silence the thunderous noise pool of 200 shakuhachi, before guiding the crowd with another gesture into the simple, but effective melodic patterns. The final part saw us then again slowly fading out with pattern and wind noises side by side, before disappearing altogether and a final handbell rung to denote the end.

Well done everybody, that's for sure! Also, it's hard to overstate the importance of these group experiences where the boundaries between audience, performer and participant cease to exist and the communal aspect of playing and experiencing the shakuhachi together moves to the front. It is also a mighty sound to have that amount of shakuhachi at one place at one time.

There was another *Jijimuge* performance on Day 4 at the Closing Concert and as everybody was so confident that it would be fine, it was decided to skip the planned rehearsal in the venue itself. And dare I say, the performance on that evening at the Rudder Theater may have been the most moving and effective of the two *Jijimuge* performances. Maybe there was already a sense of farewell, which mixed in a feeling of melancholy among the participants. [<https://youtu.be/Am7kLtzqbxk?feature=shared>]

Katsuya Yokoyama Tribute

Day 4. The last day. Really!? Actually, in my experience it is around midday day 2 when suddenly time seems to begin to accelerate, like a roller coaster reaching full speed, the ride is unstoppable then. But there was still a full day ahead, and reaching the final morning of the final day of WSF2025 it was time to look back and honour the great Katsuya Yokoyama (1934-2010), who not only founded the Kokusai Shakuhachi Kenshūkan (KSK) with the intention to make the shakuhachi a global instrument, but also initiated the very first International or World Shakuhachi Festival in Bisei, Okayama Prefecture in 1994.

His idea to have a meeting of shakuhachi players beyond the constraints of their particular school or style became the blueprint of the subsequent World Shakuhachi Festivals (and also of course we the ESS took inspiration here to create our annual mixed Summer Schools in Europe).

Now in 2025 we had the senior Japanese KSK players – Teruo Furuya, Kazushi Matama, Kaoru Kakizakai, Toshimitsu Ishikawa, Kinya Sogawa – leading a special ro-buki session outside right at Century Square located in the middle of cafe shops and the Texan public. And as it is also traditional at these occasions, they swapped their 1.8s for the monumental looking bamboo beasts of 3.6 length (also in D). The deeper octave D adding some low humming sounds to the proceedings. And eventually out of this ocean of mournful ROs, we will slip into a glacial slow rendition of *Tamuke*. It was a very moving experience.

WSF2025 Composition Competition aka Friends of Chamber Music BCS (Bryan/College Station) Texas World Cultural Heritage Chamber Music Composition Competition for Shakuhachi

It is a long name for a competition but having received 91 anonymous applications from 24 countries, it was clear that this, the first composition commission at a WSF, was a hugely popular move, and with that amount of applications the decision process was highly competitive and demanded a lot of work. The selection committee, headed by New York based composer Elizabeth Brown and Japanese composer Ichirō Seki, was so impressed with the high quality of submissions across the board and thanked all of the participating composers for their contributions.

Ultimately the commission was awarded to Peter Dayton, described as a “composer whose heart and care are palpable,” who writes lyrical and powerful vocal, solo, and chamber music, with recent nominations for Critic's Choice by Opera News, which praised Dayton's “fresh and interesting sounds.”

Indeed, Peter Dayton's commission *The Demonstration* was a refreshing new addition to contemporary repertoire for shakuhachi, inspired by the American poet Cid Corman's poem and his time in Japan. Soprano Rebecca Hays' powerful voice brought the text of the poem to life, with Dozan Fujiwara's shakuhachi providing complementary interweaving melodic lines, played with all the precision and expressiveness Fujiwara is known for. The chamber quartet was completed by Yoko Hihara on the koto and Elizabeth Lee on the violoncello. Bravo! We should look forward to Dayton's future work incorporating the shakuhachi.

Ichirō

Tribute, Celebration & Farewell



Clockwise from top left: Katsuya Yokoyama Tribute: after ro-buki WSF group plays Tamuke; WSF group says hello!; Good-bye social at the George Hotel: Final Announcements by Marty Regan; Shakuhachi Playing Competition: Christopher Blasdel announcing the winners: third place Takeuchi, Kazuhiro, second Sarah Umezono and number one spot Toyama Masahiro, Japan (in center); WSF organisers of past and present and future: Riley Lee, Matama Kazushi, David Wheeler, Christopher Blasdel, Danilo Baiyô Tomic (Sao Paulo), Teruo Furuya, Kakizakai Kaoru, Kiku Day, Marty Regan, Kurahashi Yôdô, Thorsten Knaub; Riley Lee and Teruo Furuya with 3.6 shakuhachi.

Shakuhachi Performers Competition

Besides the Composition Competition this WSF also had a Shakuhachi Performance Competition. From the initial 17 submissions there were 10 finalists convening at the last day at Rudder Forum to battle it out. The shakuhachi competition usually requires the contestant to play one of the required pieces (*Vista* by Elizabeth Brown, *A Capricious Angel* by Ichiro Seki) and then the free chosen piece. It was then strictly ten minutes performance time, stop-watch at the ready by the overseer Elliot Kanshin Kallen, and Christopher Yohmei Blasdel doing the introductions:

The ten finalists and their chosen pieces were Zhang Zonghao (China), *Vista*, *Chidori no Kyoku Kaede*; Zhao Haoyu (China), *Vista*, *Koden Sugomori*; Fujikawa Touma (Japan), *A Capricious Angel*, *Kan Otsu*; Umezono Sarah (USA), *Vista*, *Hachigaeshi*; Itō Kenzan (Japan), *Vista*, *Kogarashi*; Kandō, Aidan (USA), *Vista*, *Hōshun*; Zhou Wei (China), *Vista*, *Ajikan*; Ling, Brian Hok Kan (Hong Kong), *A Capricious Angel*, *Shika no Toone*; Takeuchi Kazuhiro (Japan), *Vista*, *San'an* and Toyama Masahiro (Japan), *A Capricious Angel*, *Shikyoku*.

The judges overseeing the competition concert were Dozan Fujiwara, Akihito Obama, Kaneko Tomoe, Hélène Codjo, Yang Bowen, Zac Zinger and Stan Richardson.

It was evident that all the finalists were all extremely well prepared and taking this moment as serious as it gets. It really felt like each performer gave a very personal interpretation of the pieces, the technical level in general was also high. But of course in the end, in the nature of competitions, fine details or particularly impressive playing puts some people apart. Ultimately, after lengthy deliberation and discussion, three winners were announced. In third place Takeuchi, Kazuhiro (Japan), second was Sarah Umezono (USA) and the number one spot went to Toyama, Masahiro (Japan). Yeah, well done!

WSF Shop

Roooooooo, Tsuuuuuuu, Reeeeeee, Chiiiiiiiiiii.....Chi-re-chi-reeeee... Korokorokoro....Chi-re-chi-reeeee..... on about a dozen of shakuhachi or so, mixed with lively chatter and negotiating talk, that was the constant background sound in the WSF Shop. We had about 20 vendors offering all a shakuhachi player's heart desires — old and new *jiari*, *ji-mori*, *ji-nashi* shakuhachi, from simple PVC shakuhachi to highly engineered aluminium tubes. CDs, books and all kind of accessories and bamboo craft in general.

This WSF opted for a shop only open in the breaks — so we had the morning break (10:45-11:15), lunch break (12:30-13:30), afternoon break (14:45-15:15) and the pre-dinner break (16:30-17:00) — which made sense as not to overlap with the workshops and concerts, but it also created a constant sense of rush-hour business when open... Roooooooo, Tsuuuuuuu, Reeeeeee, Chiiiiiiiiiii...Chi-re-chi-ree ... Korokorokorokorokoro...Chiiiiiiiiiii.....Chiiiiiiiiiii.... I think in the end, some payment mechanisms delays notwithstanding, it was a great WSF shop and I think most vendors did fine too. Also again, a big thanks to the red-shirts volunteers and other T&M staff for managing the crowds and check-out process and keeping a cool head in the busy room. Tsuuuu Reeeee Chiiiiiiii.....Chi-re-chi-reeeeeTsuuu.

Open Mic Concerts

There were three Open Mic Concerts at the Texan WSF. The process was simple — each morning (except for excursion day 3) there was a list to sign up for the evening. In charge of managing the process and to compère during the performances was Elliot Kashin Kallen, the President of the International Shakuhachi Society. Each evening also brought a new location and a new acoustic environment. It is of course a special challenge to play Open Mic at the WSF, stepping in front of a shakuhachi playing and knowing audience is no small step (a giant leap for some). But then again the WSF crowd is also goodnatured and supportive of each other at this event.

The first venue was maybe the most taxing as it was outside, Century Square, in the bar/restaurant area, even with amplification, there was still a bit of wind to negotiate on that evening. The seven 'samurai' who were brave enough to venture out were Danny Allen *Sanya*, Takeuchi Kazuhiro *Nana-dan Tsuru no Sugomori*, Tyler Schlegel *Kinpu-ryū Shirabe*, Toji Kaido Perlman *Jinbo Sanya*, Vincent W.J. van Gerven *Dako no Kyoku*, Nimoto Hiroaki *Sagariha* and Toyama Masahiro with *Makiri*.

The second night was at Benjamin Knox Gallery and Wine Bar. The gallery part was showing paintings in a style of their own — Neo-realist Texan or T&M focused illustration celebrating the local spirit and resilience of Aggieland (the local name of A&M Texas with its agricultural roots) — but anyway we were here for the open mic and tasting the local wine. This longish wooden bar/restaurant actually had a good acoustic. Proceedings opened with Kurahashi Yōdō and Mujuan students playing *Kyorei*, Haoyu Zhao *Kudariba & Improvisation*, Tony Clark *El cant dels Ocells*, Itō Kenzan *Kogarashi*, Sam Chaney *Kuroda Bushi*, Tyler Schlegel *Seien-ryū Sanya*, Curtis Brandt *Choshi*, Marek Kimei Matvija *Verses and Words*, Toyama Masahiro *Daha*, Eli Kohlenberg *Kumoi Jishi*, Marco Karaku Burmester *Jinbo Sanya* and the Fujikawa brothers playing *Shuki no Shirabe*.

The third and last open mic was also the last of the WSF, this time we gathered at The Canteen, which was the bar part of the Cavalry Hotel. Being the last evening, it was the last chance to mingle in spite of everybody needing to get up early next day. The acoustic worked well with slight amplification keeping a good balance with the general noise floor of people talking and drinking.

The Meian Group players opened with another version of *Choshi*, followed by a special performance of Mika Kimura solo singing, then Nancy Beckman & Tom Bickley *Two for T* (Pauline Oliveros), Adam Robinson & Marek Kimei Matvija *Shika no Tōne*, Philip Horan Irish Dance, Mike Rosenlof *Kumoi Jishi*, Ryan and Aaron Knoll *Nesting of the Cranes* (Chikuho); and Peter Irish's juggling act (accompanied by John Neptune's improvisation) closed the night and the official programme of WSF2025. Everybody applauded each other, deservedly.

Good-bye social, good-bye College Station and the announcement

The last of the celebrations with buffet table dinner was at the George Hotel, one of the official WSF accommodation venues, and a great farewell it was. There was a tangible sense of satisfaction and excitement in the air after those four intense days of learning, playing and performing together. As Marty Regan and David Wheeler were wrapping up WSF 2025 Texas, there was no doubt that the festival in the heartland of Texas acknowledged and celebrated the fact that North America is a firmly established territory for the shakuhachi with a substantial representation of various schools, styles and approaches to the instrument and its repertoire. Also it was felt that the gathering at A & M university will leave a lasting impression on College Station, Texas, the US shakuhachi groups and the wider global shakuhachi community.

What was left were the last remaining agenda points: There were the official announcements of the Shakuhachi Performance Competition where Takeuchi Kazuhiro (Japan) third position, Sarah Umezono (USA) second - and the winner, Toyama Masahiro (Japan) - got their due acknowledgements, applause, their respective cheques (\$200, \$800, and \$1500) and a WSF certificate to hold dear.

Then we seamlessly moved into raffle mode and an eclectic mix of 'prizes' was handed out — from Texas themed ties, shawls — with some initial items it was not immediately clear if indeed the winner was indeed the lucky one — to prints of maps and illustrations, building up to an actual bamboo 1.6 shakuhachi! Far from everybody of course went home with a raffle prize, but the enjoyment was still universal.

Next up was nothing less than the announcement of the WSF to come ... cue many impressions of drum rolls and shakuhachi trills... no, not yet, first was the Parade of past shakuhachi WSFs with their respective organisers and advisers who were present in Texas - Christopher Blasdel (adviser on many WSF including Texas); David Wheeler, Texas adviser and organiser of Boulder (1998); a special mention to the three KSK senior masters as the representatives of the very first WSF in Bisei 1994 (and advisers on all other WSFs) - Teruo Furuya, Kaoru Kakizakai, Kazushi Matama; then Riley Lee (Sydney 2008); Kurahashi Yōdō (Kyoto 2012); and finally myself and Kiku Day from the WSF executive committee of London 2018. That little ceremony was completed with Danilo Baikyō Tomic announcing the next WSF destination...

Hello São Paulo!

For the ESS Newsletter Danilo Baikyō Tomic has sent us the following message: *"We are very happy to announce to the international shakuhachi community our intention to hold the next WSF in São Paulo, Brazil. After being present at all WSF editions since 2004 (NY), I was very honoured and flattered to have been nominated to be the executive director of what will be the first WSF in Latin America."*

It seems to us that the right year to hold it would be in 2028 (July), when the 120th anniversary of Japanese immigration to Brazil will be celebrated. It will be an opportunity to integrate the event with a series of others that will take place, which can help us to obtain support and sponsorship. The size of the event will depend on how much we can raise. I kindly ask anyone who can help us gather the financial conditions to make it possible to contact me so that we can form an international cooperation network.

Since 1908, the Japanese presence in Brazil has been established in various fields of culture and in various places in the country, especially in São Paulo. It seems very significant to us that it will happen here. But the main thing is that we can make the sound of the shakuhachi echo as a message of peace and world integration.”

Sejam todos muito bem vindos a São Paulo!

(Welcome everyone to São Paulo!)

(みなさん、サンパウロへようこそ！)

Coda

Leaving for Houston on Monday was hard. Although it was only five days we have been at College Station, a WSF is so full of events and intense experiences that the mind clearly believes we have been there for weeks. So finding oneself in the deserted streets of downtown Houston seemed far removed from the friendly, and lively college campus of A&M University.

Fortunately there was still one WSF outreach concert scheduled while being in Houston: Wednesday evening at the Asia Society Texas Center. It was just a pleasure after a couple of days being transported back into that WSF feeling and witness that Über-Concert of Hozan Nōmura, National Living Treasure of the shakuhachi, Zenyōji Keisuke, Akiko Fujimoto and Yōko Hihara. Mesmerising performances of *Onoe no Matsu*, *Iwashimizu*, *Echigo Sanya*, *Zangetsu* and (encore) *Haru no Umi*. The spirited opening *Shika No Tone* was performed by Zenyōji Keisuke and David Kansuke Wheeler on this occasion.

Afterwards, a last goodbye to the performers and Marty and David, and all that was left was taking the flight back next day to Europe with pockets full of memories. 🍷

TONE, LOVE & LORE

REFLECTIONS ON THE EPIC SHAKUHACHI FEST IN TEXAS

by Cornelius Boots

For us, from our point of view, behind every door in every groovy tale, story or myth, there is someone practicing a natural, end-blown flute. On Dagobah, for instance, just before Luke crash-landed his X-wing, Yoda was naturally deep in Ro, long tones, *honkyoku* and swamp-sutra chanting – as he awaited the slow-cooking of his famously tasty stew. Where do you suppose Gandalf suddenly jets off to in such a rush all the time? He put his 2.4 in Shadowfax's saddlebag, but he needs his 2.8 to initiate the Ringwraith defeat spells – obviously! Filmmakers and comic artists just don't see deeply or clearly enough to really give us these scenes, but we know they are happening.

On Dagobah, for instance, just before Luke crash-landed his X-wing, Yoda was naturally deep in Ro, long tones, *honkyoku* and swamp-sutra chanting

The big reveal of seeing such magical music-making in-person – featuring dozens of real-life superheroes that we often know only through the variegated myths on The Internet – was not only satisfying to the 220-plus World Shakuhachi Festival 2025 participants and artists, it also seemed to be a welcomed and supported occurrence in the vast land of Texas, one of those United States that has leaned heavily on its own lore and myth-making over the last couple centuries.

The shakuhachi has several more centuries of its own legends and lore beyond Texas, but when these two met in mid-April 2025, not only did they get along – they became fast friends. This allowed for a thick crowd to form and cohere together for a few days out of our love and dedication to the history, musicality and distinct tone of this bamboo flute. There's no substitute for direct empirical experience, and there's no limits to what the shakuhachi flute can do musically. I believe that festival director and Texas A&M professor Dr Marty Regan truly grew the festival from this twin-seedling. After over 15 years in Texas, Marty knew that the atmosphere, the people, and the relaxed friendliness would somehow, despite any prejudices or assumptions, be the perfect container for everyone attending to go as deeply as they wanted into the one-of-a-kind, polyvalent musicality of this ancient bamboo flute.

I've been around the scene. Not as long as some, but longer than many. I know many of the core crowd, and many of them know me. Others know me as one of those Internet Shakuhachi Superheroes, and still others might have no interest in what I am creating and offering on this instrument. This kind of pressure-cooker event can sometimes exacerbate ego-battles, personal and artistic tensions or just plain, old-fashioned Drama. I must say, there was precious little of this on overt display at this particular festival, and this allowed a focus on the music and the people making it to stay central. I'm not saying there weren't some twists on the path – at any rate, don't you want me to write about those? Don't we all crave the drama? Sometimes, I think we want the drama more than the music, so I intend to confound that lower modality and instead lean towards the positive – but sure, I will toss a few spicy meatballs in here. Why not. A prose reflection on something that was just “great, super, great” could fall flat. So how about this for a demi-meatball: I came into this event with expectations so low, they could not possibly have been confirmed.

Why were my expectations so low? I know how much time, cooperation and planning an event of this scope takes. I also know how much time, dedication and raw love this instrument demands from us. And that's just to get playing at a basic, intermediate level. To play and create at the level we saw and heard in Texas takes heaping mounds of devotion, specific life choices and time, time, time. And yet, I have learned to recalibrate my expectations at these larger events, so to speak. This is because in the past, as a lifelong professional woodwind instrumentalist, performer and composer, I have observed that those who simply meet a kind of status quo, a middle-marker, can sometimes just stop there and call it good. “Box checked,” they seem to say to themselves and those around them, “I have achieved or nearly achieved the same level of playing that my teacher did, and that is good enough.” This is one of the traps of so-called 'classical' or 'traditional' instruments and music styles. They can't always tell the difference between when they are only perfectly trapped in amber, rather than vitally thriving. What am I saying here? Amber is beautiful but thriving is vital. Yes, I am making a hierarchy of artistry. Life emerges from life, not from preservation. It's not my own original idea, but it does appear to function as a law, whether we admit it or not. I not only admit it: I celebrate it.

But this happening in Texas did not merely meet some middle-marker; it literally exceeded expectations. It over-achieved. Let's get down to brass tacks: what blew our minds at this event? A mix of the usual suspects and some newcomers for sure. My focus was on rehearsing, performing, checking in with my students who were in attendance and giving my one workshop, so I am not the best guide in the rearview, as it were. But a few things stand out: Zac Zinger was slinging mile-a-minute riffs that had sparrows envious. Not that it's a speed competition, but also Bowan Yang was absolutely shredding on the first evening concert, an excellent performance. Dōzan Fujiwara kept getting back onstage one evening and doing more and more adventurous stuff each time: first as a conductor/composer; then as a member of a



"Chikusei Shōei" by Dōzan Fujiwara. Rudder Theater Friday night (Photo: Aaron Kruziki)

shakuhachi octet; and lastly as a soloist. Many composer-performers like myself, Elizabeth Brown, James Nyoraku Schlefer and Kōzan Shiba had feature-slots to showcase our personal portals to breathing bamboo richness. Yoshimi Tsujimoto and Emmanuelle Rouaud each presented one of those very risky tropes: the 'wind instrument with electronics' genre: and succeeded in giving us enjoyable and well-crafted performances. Overall, the high caliber of playing was matched only by the variety of personal sounds and timbres – something I am always seeking at events like this. Ensembles of various sizes kept showing up and leaving the audience better than they found it: shakuhachi duos, quartets, quintets and more; jazz trio plus shakuhachi; string quartet with shakuhachi soloist; giant shakuhachi choir; that old chestnut the *sankyoku* ensemble; and brand new configurations such as composition competition winner Peter Dayton's piece that had the cello and a soprano joining koto and shakuhachi.

Workshops ranged widely and contained both granular detail and general support practices and theory. I enjoyed the singing practice of *dokyoku* in Kinya Sogawa's workshop where I both debated with him about the appropriate dynamics of *dai-meri* pitches and connected with him through our mutual love of bigger bamboos. Which does bring up another hope of mine for the future: I personally would like to hear more bigger flutes featured. At this event, they did appear frequently and to great effect within ensembles, including a one-time-only gathering of 3.6's as part of the Katsuya Yokoyama memorial Tamuke Choir performance – but I can count on one hand the prominent low flute soloists. I'm more than happy to fill that role whenever it's needed, yes, I prefer to spend most of my time in that niche, but at this point I also want to enjoy these low flute sounds coming from other players, too. I am wondering if maybe we need our own spin-off festival. After 30 years of growing pains, this very thing finally happened in my other woodwinding sphere of clarinetdom: there are now International Low Clarinet Festivals every other year, the first one having been in 2023. The writing is on the wall: destiny beckons for a big bamboo gathering.



*Sunday Morning, Century Square - group RO and Tamuke in memory of Katsuya Yokoyama incl. line of 3.6's
(Photo Aaron Kruziki)*

As I said, I've been around the scene – both the international shakuhachi scene (since 2001) and the international clarinet scene (since 1994) and know to keep my expectations low, or at least open and loose. My experience is that daytime concerts are sometimes anemic, and the evening concerts try too hard to be some kind of orgiastic, pompous display of pageantry. The true, honest voice of our beloved instrument can get lost in some of these messes. It's not that I don't love something that is truly epic, of course I do, but here is a summary of my *ethos* and my preference: the whole art, the craft of woodwinding to me is generating epic power from within a very distilled, crystalline structure, such as a soloist or a small group of 4 or 5 people, acoustically and with only the breath and the flute(s). That's my approach in general. And, against the odds, this Texas event actually did focus on chamber-sized ensembles of great variety and non-encumbered solo playing that spanned a range of timbres, narratives, styles and emotions. Let me be more clear: there was no boredom, there was a high degree of artistry and there was an extremely high level of musicianship at virtually all times in this festival.

But I'm not gonna give you a play-by-play, I just want to highlight a few personal reflections. Let's look at some specifics non-chronologically. The Thursday afternoon mini-concert on which my bass shakuhachi quartet, The Wood Prophets, got to perform was the first highlight for me. This group has struggled to achieve stable personnel since its inception in 2019, but three of my students filled out the quartet for this concert: Kevin Chen, John Garner and Alex Merck. The piece we played, "Wood Prophecy," is a 15-minute epic closing movement of the five-movement woodwind animism saga, Wood Prophecy. We chopped it down to ten minutes for this, however, and we had to rehearse for months remotely, each of us residing in different locations: San Francisco, North Carolina, Philadelphia and the UK. Finally playing together was incredible, and we got in just enough in-person rehearsals to make our performance rock solid. Our flutes – longer, wide-bore, natural-bore – combine to form a unique timbre and texture that is deeply satisfying to generate. The audience seemed both supportive and responsive to our efforts.

The Saturday field trip to Round Top was, I think we can all agree, a truly special experience. To get away from campus and hotels and see the rolling green landscape of a bit of rural America (agrochemicals and dodgy politics aside) was a welcome contrast to the previous two, three or four days (depending on how early you arrived in College Station to rehearse or help with logistics and production, or participate in the Symposium, etc). As a lucky Gala Concert performer, I was not present during the hang-in-the-town-of-Round-Top portion of the field trip, instead, I was at the Festival Hall venue and grounds. But back in October, at the tail-end of my Texas A&M Glasscock Center For Humanities Research short-term fellowship, Marty had taken me out to the town. We bought old maps and ate pie. We 'soaked in' the local flavors (mostly in the form of pie and maps) and scouted out the very locations that we then returned to with everybody in April during the actual festival, namely, Festival Hall and then the Peck Barn where the dinner and country band segment of the evening took place.

The blues jam portion of this dinner wherein a handful of the more improvisationally-inclined bamboosers – including your humble narrator – got to sit in with the band is already legendary. Or at least Suizan Lagrost has just posted a video of it on Facebook this morning, so you can check it out for yourself and see what you think. A memorable image of that evening is Marek Matvija entering the barn from the outdoor bar, wearing a cowboy hat, carrying four beers in bottles, looking quite at home and content. He then delivered this line: "I am fully acculturated" – wonderfully iterated with his Czech accent, naturally. Before that, however, I had a brief but unexpectedly deep experience as myself, Kevin Chen (my student and co-director) plus one of the stellar volunteers guided an envoy of vehicles from a far-flung part of "the Compound" into the Peck Barn's actual parking lot, which had been elusive to accurately locate. We had our three little cellphone flashlights waving around and it seemed effective, so we felt like high-achiever worker bees, or ants. As the line of cars gave way to the four charter buses, I experienced a kind of whale-presence, a palpable, bizarre awe and wonder as these behemoth vehicles slowly passed within two feet of my parking post and into the (correct) lot. As a sufferer of pulmonary neurosis and a person with high-fidelity (aka 'sensitive') smell and hearing, I have every reason to avoid or even despise big, stinky buses. But right there, on that night, they were not buses, but majestic humpbacks carrying dozens of joyful shakuhachi players in their bellies and gliding towards the post-concert festivities of food, more music and authentic, casual conviviality. And: pie!



Blues jam with Ralphie and the RCs plus shakuhachi soloists. Round Top Peck Barn (Photo: Kevin Chen)

The Round Top concert itself was a true highlight, certainly for me personally but seemingly also to all other performers and attendees. The sound, aesthetic and atmosphere of this impressive-yet-intimate hall really did elevate the whole experience, and every performance of the night was stellar. I will have to use the word magic, which I don't use lightly or metaphorically. All the elements were aligned. To have this opportunity to present one of my most archetypal and enjoyable-to-play solo bass shakuhachi compositions ("Black Earth", after which I also named my shakuhachi school) for players from around the world merged with a local audience – this was a life-highlight for which I am deeply grateful. Responses from the audience and my students in attendance were positive for the whole concert, even relative to the high bar set at the rest of the festival on campus.

That being said, it wasn't all roses and truffles: the soundcheck ran impressively behind schedule (a theme that seemed to recur on Sunday's final concert as well) and the backstage 'green room' was just a kind of hallway in which everyone was lined up at a folding table for all of our wardrobe changes, and there was really nowhere to warm-up and play before going onstage. Everyone seemed cool, calm and adaptable, however – notably the rock stars of The Shakuhachi 5 – so I (mostly) followed suit. Which reminds me, I also wore my new chestnut tweed suit, which felt like a good match for the venue. But yes, I learned a few casual Zen lessons directly from a few established shakuhachi presentation luminaries – like previous festival directors Kiku Day, Riley Lee and David Kansuke Wheeler – on that night: go with the flow, don't sweat the small stuff, and if you really want to stake out your own soundcheck time, bring some electronic gadgets that don't work quite right. Then you can take as long as you want.



Previous page photos. Above: Cornelius Boots, Round Top concert (Photo: Justin Kling). Below: The Wood Prophets bass shakuhachi quartet performing "Wood Prophecy", Black Box Theater (Photo: Justin Kling)

Even with so much merriment and remarkable music transpiring, it's easy to get worn out and cranky at these full-tilt, immersion events. Dehydration can happen, jet-lag catches up, late nights, early mornings – sometimes, right around Day 3 or 4, our unflattering selves can bubble up to the surface. This of course provides the perfect reminder that each of us, all of us have this edgy, condemning, closed-off shadow-self lurking just around the corner, and wouldn't it be great if we transformed these characters into something constructive and productive for the common goal of engaging, celebrating, continuing and evolving this ultra-rarified woodwinding art form known as shakuhachi? Perhaps this is a case of 'easier said than done.' But for five days in mid-April 2025 in College Station, Texas, over 200 bamboo flute nerds did manage to generate a nearly 100% positive escapade of concerts, workshops, socializing and artistic exchange that forever uplifted and changed the historical timeline of this distilled and mysterious musical instrument.

Are we just legends in our own minds? Do the people around us truly care, or are they just putting up with us most of the time? The monkey-mind has its own stock of meatballs that it loves to lob over. Sometimes at these gatherings – which, I repeat, can often be pressure-cookers – the monkey-mind meatballs really start to build up. This wasn't the case for me or my 12 or so students who attended, and it didn't seem to be an issue for anyone last week. That alone is a real achievement, but most importantly, the actual music and the good vibes were firmly established and maintained at a significant level for the entire event. We did, in fact, have a plethora of vibrant voices engaging the 道 (-do) of shakuhachi in genuine and deep ways. So, everyone was a winner. But actually, the table I was at for the final dinner contained the chief winners. Of the handful of raffle prizes generously awarded post-dinner, we had three winners at our table! The very first prize went to me: a nifty bandana. A few numbers later, Kizan Kawamura, three seats to my right, won lip balm in a cactus-shaped tube and then, Kevin, to my immediate left, won the final and grand prize: a 1.6 shakuhachi...! In a decisive display of intention-become-manifestation, we had been chanting his raffle number over and over in the sincere hopes of him winning. It worked! Even though there were more excellent performances just after this at the final open mic, this winning streak for our table was a great capping event for the whole festival. Maybe luck has something to do with good fortune, or maybe the bamboo deities were smiling upon our whole Texas shakuhachi congregation for the duration.

Did we adequately share our love of this instrument and its music? Did we make our collective mark on the mercurial timeline of music lore and cross-cultural cross-pollination? Only time will tell, but I intuit that we all left Texas with our artistic, metaphorical bellies full and content, yet also ready for more. The whole Texas team, Marty, the committee, all the staff, volunteers, artists, participants and funders deserve a hearty Thanks and a kindly tip-of-the-hat for making this festival a reality. May we all move onward with wonderful tone, collegiate conviviality and good fortune for many decades and centuries to come. 🍵



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民

ハデ

吹り歌皆

雲雀が師



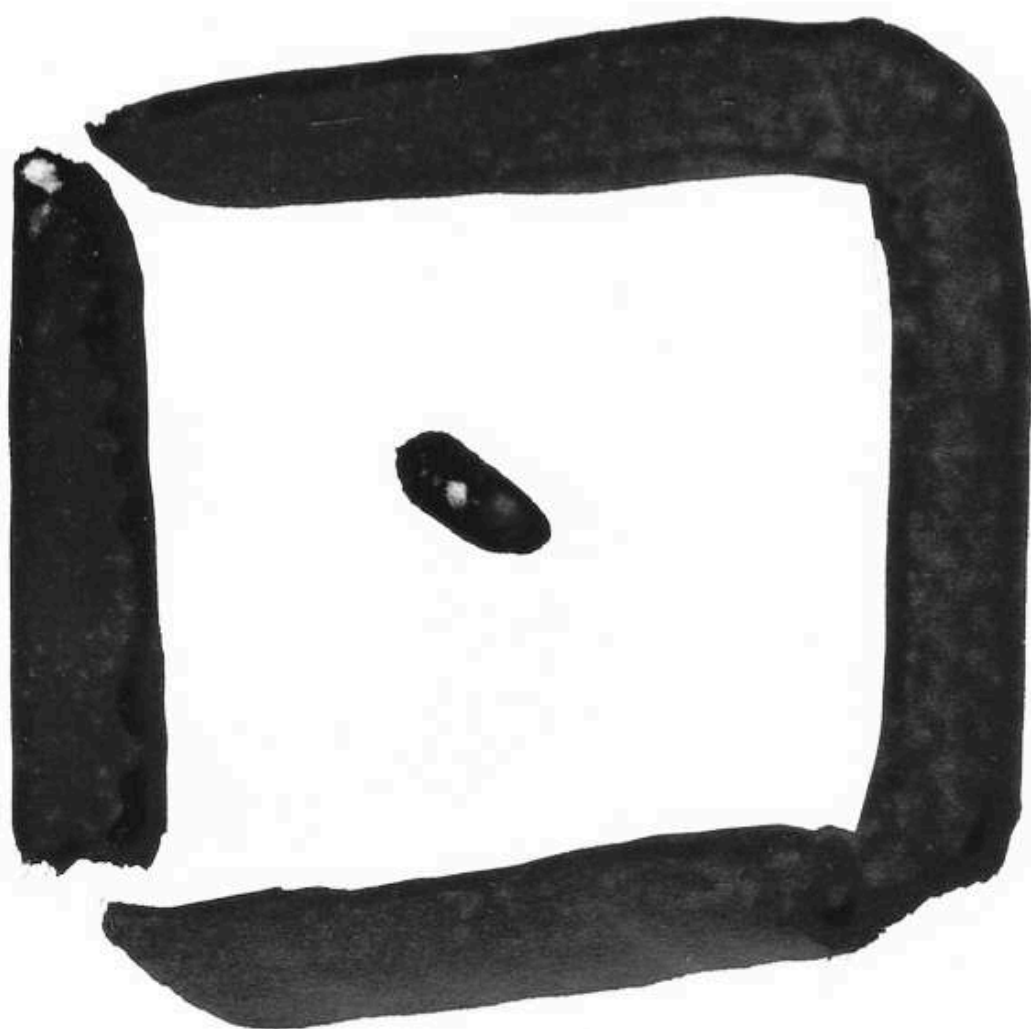
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Before I took out my shakuhachi
lark the bird whistled
all my songs

尺八で
吹く歌は皆
雲雀が師

Shakuhachi de
fuku uta wa mina
hibari ga shi

-Galina Sgonnik



The hands cover holes
of shakuhachi,
they are dark.

尺八の
穴にかぶさる
手の黒さ

Shakuhachi no,
ana ni kabusaru,
te no kurosa

-Kazuko Hohki

THE MUSIC AND HUMANITY OF GORŌ YAMAGUCHI

by Christopher Yohmei Blasdel

In 1972, at age twenty, I arrived in Tokyo for a year-abroad study program at Waseda University and began immediately looking for a shakuhachi teacher. To my great fortune I was introduced to Gorō Yamaguchi, and lessons were arranged for me at his home in Yoyogi.

The first lesson stands out vividly in my memory. Yamaguchi's house was pre-war vintage, and stepping inside I was transported to another world. In his tatami-matted practice room, students sat formally on their knees in a semicircle around the teacher. The atmosphere was reverential, even solemn. As I entered, they all turned to regard the young foreigner who suddenly entered their space, and I felt very out of place.

However, Yamaguchi broke the tension with a smile and easy-to-understand Japanese. His warm voice put me at ease, and he pointed to an open spot on the tatami and told me to sit and wait for my turn. My *keiko* (training) began at that moment.

Mondays were lesson days. They were not by appointment; rather they were on a first-come first-served basis. That meant during peak hours I may have a lengthy wait, but I soon realized the benefits of listening and observing other students' lessons while waiting my turn, as it familiarized me with the pieces. Above all, however, hearing Yamaguchi's persistent but gently haunting sounds, like a continuous ostinato, induced in me a reverie, halting thoughts of time's passage.

Inexperienced and unsure of proper etiquette, I was definitely nervous when I sat in front of Yamaguchi for the first time. I keenly felt the gaze of the other students behind me. Yamaguchi, however, was patient and understanding. He inquired about my previous musical experience. I replied that I played some flute, and he then assured me that I'd be able to easily produce a sound on the shakuhachi.

As Yamaguchi predicted, the sound came easily for me, but everything else—the rhythms, nuances, timing and pitch—all took much longer to master. One of my first realizations about the shakuhachi was how complicated was the music, in spite of the instrument being so simply constructed.

My Japanese was still basic. This forced me, probably for the best, to stay quiet and observe and imitate the teacher. However, even after I gained proficiency in Japanese, explanatory words never held much currency in Yamaguchi's teaching method. Unlike music lessons in the West, where musical analysis is part of the musical training, Yamaguchi's lessons were based primarily on imitation. Of course, if I asked a question, he did his best to provide a clear answer, but he normally didn't volunteer information unless asked. Words were just not an important factor. This forced me into an active listening mode to carefully detect subtle differences of his timbre, pitch and exquisite fingering techniques.

Imitation, observation and wordless transmission are common in Japan's traditional arts, especially for Yamaguchi's generation. Music learned through the body rather than the intellect penetrates deeply into one's consciousness.

Every week I sat in front of Yamaguchi while we played through my practice piece. We played together once, then I played it alone. He then corrected my mistakes before we played through it one more time, sometimes with him singing the shakuhachi part. Yamaguchi usually didn't stop during the play-through, even if the student got lost. Although frustrating, this non-stop method allowed me to experience the overall flow of the piece.

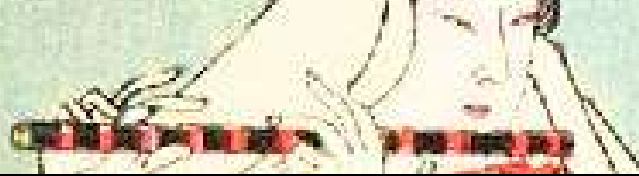
Yamaguchi required his students to study the entire *sankyoku* repertory (consisting of about 75 *jiuta* shamisen and *sōkyoku* koto songs) before beginning the technically demanding Kinko-style *honkyoku*. This was done to ensure that the student had the necessary techniques for playing the *honkyoku*. Although as a young student I was eager to begin the *honkyoku* as soon as possible, the long years of practicing *sankyoku* ensemble pieces prepared me for an effortless transition into the *honkyoku*. More importantly, it also taught me the beauty of the Japanese language in song.

Yamaguchi's powerful tones were always a source of inspiration. He patiently understood and overlooked my youthful foolishness and breaches of etiquette, and the loneliness and stress I felt as a foreign student facing a large and unfamiliar city seemed to disappear during shakuhachi lessons with him.

Although Yamaguchi deeply respected the Zen aspects of shakuhachi playing, he never dwelled on the topic. His music beautifully harmonized the traditional flow of the shakuhachi, steeped in the mysticism and religiosity cultivated throughout ancient Asian and Japanese cultures, with an enlightened and refined life as a modern musician. Yamaguchi believed that the relationship between one's humanity and artistry was inseparable. He often emphasized that true musicianship meant that one must develop their personality along with musical technique. It had not occurred to me, at that young age, that personality was as malleable as the music, and that one needed to refine both. That was his 'Zen.'

Due to the connection of the Zen tradition and shakuhachi, people often ask me if I undertake formal meditation practices. My answer is always no. I work on perfecting my tones, pitch, musicality and the memorization of pieces. Music is my spiritual training, and it is as deep and meaningful as any sort of austerity discipline a dedicated Zen monk may undergo. In other words, music itself is the Way. Animating and informing this realization is the knowledge that music is undertaken not for the sake of oneself, but ultimately for the sake of others. I know of no greater joy than pleasing an audience through a fine performance. We are just the vessel for the music, and the more we work to improve the vessel the greater is our gift of music.

It has now been over 50 years since I began studying with Yamaguchi-sensei, and 25 years since his passing. Very few others have had the impact on my life as Yamaguchi did. 🍵



JAPANESE PRINTS WITH FLUTES

by Hannspeter Kunz

Introduction by Clive Bell

Hannspeter Kunz, a German collector of Japanese prints, has generously allowed *Bamboo* to present a selection from his collection: prints featuring shakuhachi. Our thanks also to Christoph Wagner for the contact.

Hannspeter Kunz, now a retired English and German language teacher in southwest Germany, started collecting *ukiyo-e* in the 1970s, after his father-in-law introduced him to Japanese prints. Like many late 19th century collectors and artists before him, Hannspeter Kunz instantly became enthused.

Besides collecting, he has set up a library, which has enabled him to organize many local and regional exhibitions in southern Germany.

More images can be seen at his website: <https://www.ukiyo-e-gallery.de>

The protagonist of a *Kabuki* play performed around 1850-60 is carrying a bamboo flute as if it were one of his weapons. It turns out that this bamboo stick is a shakuhachi flute: "One foot eight, an end-blown flute, played in offstage *kabuki* music, and also an important prop."

One such *otokodate* is shown in a print [*next page*] by Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1865). The series title of the ten sheets includes the first three syllables of the term *otokodate*: *Eiyu mitate junin otoko*. This is usually translated as: ten *kabuki* actors in the role of dandy-like characters. In this case not only the posture of "a man in full," but also the wicked animals on his *kimono* - together with the gods of wind and thunder - give the viewer an idea of what the *otokodate* should look like: a strong young man able to use his wooden flute as a club.

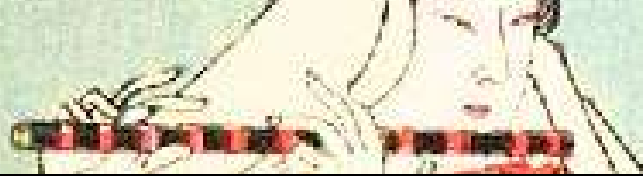
In a commentary about an *otokodate* in the play "Sukeroku Yukari on Edo Zakura", Brandon and Leiter define this *kabuki* character more precisely: "These men saw themselves as self-appointed defenders of the townsmen class against the deprivations of the *samurai*, and numerous popular legends sprang up around their sense of justice, honor, and style.

In reality, they were probably little more than flashily dressed hoodlums and gamblers, the precursor of today's urban gangsters, the *yakuza*, but from the late seventeenth century on they began to be idealized as dashing and gallant *Kabuki* heroes (...) fearless, quick to anger, and with an insouciant style that no *samurai* could match" (James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter: *Kabuki Plays On Stage*, Vol. 3, 2002, p. 294).



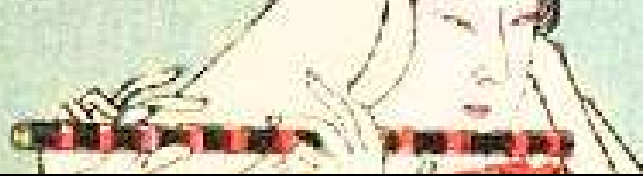
榮優見立
十人男 金神蝶五郎

梓云々應需
一陽齋也立國也



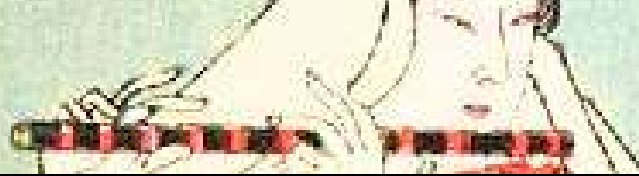
In this woodblock print by Toyohara Kunichika (1835-1900), dating from 1868, the *kabuki* actor Nakamura Shikan is portrayed in the role of an *otokodate* holding an umbrella, and his shakuhachi sticking out of his obi in the back. His kimono's decoration shows a huge carp trying to conquer the downstream thrust of a waterfall. The symbol of a jumping carp in falling waters is often used at the boy's festival - on the fifth day of the fifth month - emphasizing virtues like strength and endurance, which also apply to the *otokodate*.





Female roles had to be performed by male actors in *Kabuki* plays because women were not allowed on stage. Shunkosai Hokushu, an artist who was active from 1809 to 1832 in Osaka, shows the actor Sawamura Tanosuke II in the female role of Yakko no Koman, in the play *Deiri Minato* – Boats Leaving The Harbour.





In this scene Tanosuke seems to be about to play the flute, which shows that not only men were privileged to play a shakuhachi but also women. The print was published in 1814, a time when the *otokodate* were not yet popular in *Kabuki* plays. 🍵



Artist: Toyohara Chikanobu (豊原周延, 1838–1912)

ROOTS OF THE *HITOYOGIRI* SHAKUHACHI

by Nick Bellando

Up until the mid-1600s (when the longer *Fuke* shakuhachi gained popularity), when someone said 'shakuhachi' they were usually referring to what we now call the *hitoyogiri*. A short flute of about 1.1 *shaku*, it has only one node (*hito yo*) and five holes, which yield tones slightly different from those of the *Fuke* shakuhachi of the Edo period. In ancient manuscripts it is also called *tanteki* (short flute) and *dōshō* (from the Chinese *dong xiao*). The *dōshō* was originally about 1.9 *shaku*, with six holes, and may have been called 'shakuhachi' on account of its length (1.9 of earlier generations was equivalent to what we know today as 1.8). One document - *Gayū Manroku*, an illustrated encyclopedia of the arts written by Ōeda Ryūhō in 1755 - says this:

"It is rare to find someone who knows of what we call the *dōshō*. It is long and thin, with a delicate sound. While the *dōshō* itself has been passed down, its music and playing technique have not. In today's world, what we call the *hitoyogiri* should be understood as a variant of the *dōshō*. Of old it was called the shakuhachi ... but now there is a long, fat flute commonly called the shakuhachi. It is used together with the *sangen* [shamisen], and thus its technique is corrupt and its sound is vulgar."

Ōeda does two things here - first, he says that what was originally shakuhachi is now called *hitoyogiri* in order to distinguish it from the newer, larger shakuhachi. Second, he separates the *hitoyogiri* from the secular world of entertainment (in this case, bar songs played with shamisen). Playing bar songs is of course not the stated purpose of the *Fuke* shakuhachi either, but it would seem that some players made time for such activities. Regardless, the author's point is that the *hitoyogiri* shakuhachi was closer to the domain of religious music, i.e. that which seeks to connect the seen and unseen worlds, uniting the heart with the way of heaven.

He continues to give us examples from history:

"In *Tosai Zuihitsu* (a collection of essays from the late 1400s), it is said that Jikaku Daishi (aka Ennin, a Tendai Buddhist priest who died in 864), during a period when his voice couldn't produce enough volume, instead used a shakuhachi to intone the Amida Sutra."

I'm unsure, however, how Ōeda knows that this was a *hitoyogiri* shakuhachi, and not a Dosho or Gagaku shakuhachi, since the latter two are potentially older and share the same name.

Either way, it's of interest that Jikaku was using a shakuhachi to intone the Amida Sutra. In his time, Pure Land Buddhism hadn't yet developed, but its roots were already present in Tendai Buddhism. Later, in the Kamakura era, Honen (died 1212) founded Pure Land Buddhism, centering around the veneration of Amida Buddha. Notably, Pure Land chant employs the same *Ritsu* and *Ryo* modalities as the *hitoyogiri*. It's also around this era that we begin to encounter more historically verifiable *hitoyogiri* players - many of them being Pure Land monks, with some Zen monks and aficionados, not to mention poets, swordmakers and other artists in the mix as well.

The first that I'm aware of is Ton'a, a Pure Land monk and poet (1289-1372). He is credited in the earliest *hitoyogiri* score collections with composing the piece "Korobi".

The first that I'm aware of is Ton'a, a Pure Land monk and poet (1289-1372). He is credited in the earliest *hitoyogiri* score collections with composing the piece "Korobi". His shakuhachi, bearing a *maki-e* 老人 Oibito / Old Man, makes an appearance in Socho's journals. Socho (1448-1532) was a *samurai* and *renga* poet (think collaborative *tanka* poems) who, though he didn't play shakuhachi himself, frequently heard it played by friends and acquaintances. One such instance was at a memorial for Ikkyū Sojun, another *hitoyogiri*-playing Zen monk and poet, who had passed away a few decades earlier. Socho, at one point, records having acquired the Ton'a Oibito shakuhachi. The flute also appears in a mid Edo-era catalog of historical items, and still remains in storage today at Saioku-ji, a temple once frequented by Socho.

The last anecdote in *Gayu Manroku* is quoted from *Yoshino Shui*, a collection of stories written around 1358. This reports that Tsukushi no Miya (died 1346), son of Emperor Godaigo, during his youth, “obtained a shakuhachi, and came to play it with a heaven-born skill, evoking a sense of mystery. When he played for the Emperor on a visit to Yoshino, a great number of unusual fish danced up out of the water, causing a marvellous sensation that was unparalleled.” Ōeda goes on to note that although some claim Tsukushi no Miya as the founder of the classical school of *hitoyogiri* shakuhachi, this is false, as Jikaku was already playing it long before. I’m not sure if this is provable, but regardless, with known players like Ton’a, Tsukushi no Miya, and Ikkyū Sōjun active around this time, we can say that the classical style of *hitoyogiri* dates back at least as far as the mid-1300s.

The hitoyogiri shakuhachi was played primarily by Pure Land and Zen monks, as well as by *samurai* and poets.

Thus we have the first element of our background: the *hitoyogiri* shakuhachi was played primarily by Pure Land and Zen monks, as well as by *samurai* and poets. Its pieces were used not for musical entertainment, but rather for personal and mutual edification, as a meditative practice - like sonic poetry shared among friends while discussing religion and philosophy. In the next instalment, we’ll dive a little deeper into the lives of some historical *hitoyogiri* shakuhachi players to learn more about their approach to playing.

Nick Bellando, after quite a bit of research, has founded *Shin Sosa-ryu Shakuhachi*, a school of classical *hitoyogiri* that revives the ancient tradition of Ton’a, Ikkyū, and others.

If you want to learn the *hitoyogiri* shakuhachi as played by the monks and poets of ancient Japan, there is a beginners’ course starting this summer. Visit www.hon-on.com/lessons.html to sign up, or contact Nick with any questions.

CHRISTOPH WAGNER: POSTCARD COLLECTION

by Clive Bell

We are delighted to present two more images from Christoph's collection of postcards. The first two can be found in our last issue, Bamboo Winter 2024.

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.

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 embarrassingly 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*. The date of these cards is the early twentieth century.

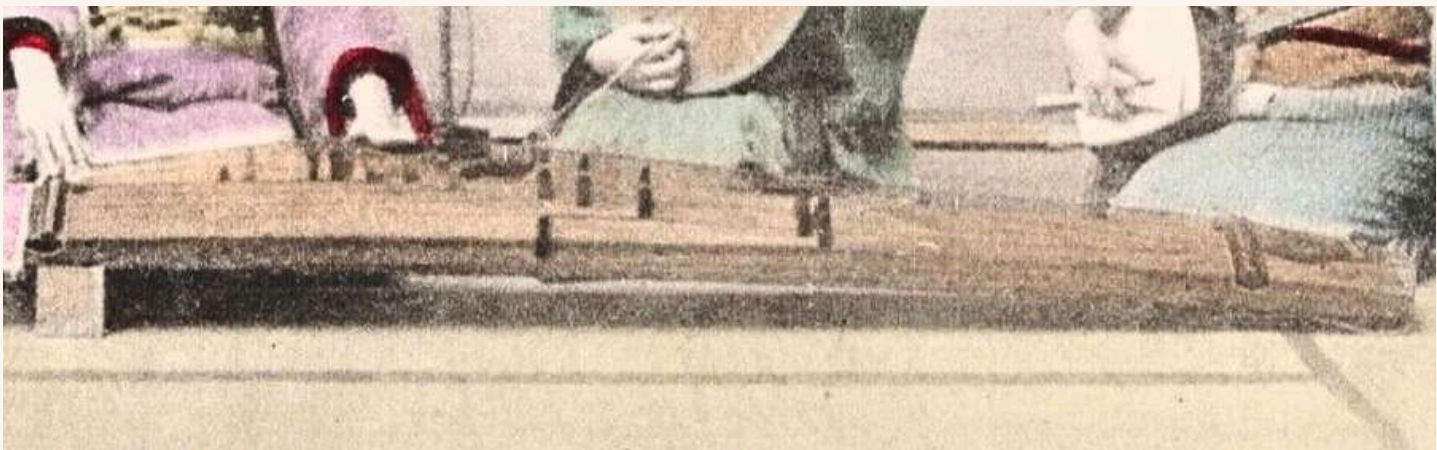
More info: <https://christophwagnermusic.blogspot.com/>



Women musicians (I)
Collection Christoph Wagner



Women musicians (II)
Collection Christoph Wagner

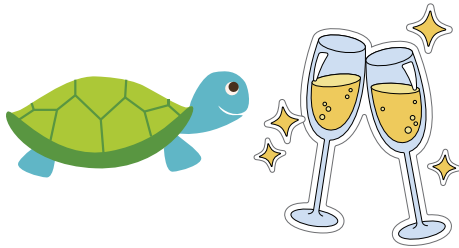


Women musicians (II). Detail of a koto
Collection Christoph Wagner



Ignition Commission

We celebrate that with this issue we have consolidated the "Ignition Commission" series with the fourth piece specially composed for BAMBOO, the ESS newsletter. Thanks to Araki Kodo VI, Bronwyn Kirkpatrick, Elizabeth Brown and Hélène Seiyu Codjo!



A celebration! This is our fourth "Ignition Commission" piece specially composed for BAMBOO, the ESS newsletter. The Ignition Commission now feels fully established as a continuing series in the magazine.

This time our composer is Hélène Seiyu Codjo. Many thanks to our previous contributors: Araki Kodo VI, Bronwyn Kirkpatrick and Elizabeth Brown!



Kyoku

Araki Kodo VI

BAMBOO
Autumn/Winter 2023



Twilight

Bronwyn Kirkpatrick

BAMBOO
Spring/Summer 2024



Alone

Elizabeth Brown

BAMBOO
Autumn/Winter 2024



Kame no shirabe

Hélène Seiyu Codjo

BAMBOO
Spring/Summer 2025

KAME NO SHIRABE 亀の調

Tortoise's Melody

for solo shakuhachi

by Hélène Seiyu 聖優

*With calm and tranquility you'll reach your goals.*

If you sometimes feel like you are progressing slowly on your shakuhachi journey, this piece is a celebration of the slow pace of the tortoise. Slowness gives time to look at the details, to feel what is happening when you play, inside and out. It gives space to deepen your practice. In some cultures, the tortoise is a symbol of wisdom, longevity and protection.

The Japanese word for tortoise is *kame* 力メ which are the *katakana* used for the *meri* メ - *kari* 力 technique. Move your head up (*kari* 力) and down (*meri* メ) with the flexibility of a tortoise's neck!

This composition uses the basic pentatonic scale *RO-TSU-RE-CHI-RI-I* in the *Otsu* (first) register and a few notes in the *Kan* (second) register, with the addition of *TSU-meri* (slightly *meri*). See fingering chart.

Play *TSU-meri* by covering half of the first hole. You can also play it by lowering your head and moving back up. ㄣ

Play *RO-meri* by starting in the *meri* position and moving up to the *kari* position (*Nayashi* ornament).

N.B.: *RO* after *RI* is always *Kan*. If you have difficulty with the second register, you can also play the last columns (8) in *Otsu*.

Rhythm is slow and without beat.

A vertical line | on the right side of a note indicates that this note should be short.

- breath mark. Optional in parentheses (-)

o silence

> repetition of the previous note

Enjoy slowness!

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled 'BAMBOO'. The notation is presented on a five-line staff with a treble clef. Above the staff, there are vertical columns of dots representing notes. Each column has a vertical line on its right side, indicating a short note. The notes are organized into two groups: the first group has 8 notes (RO, RO, TSU, TSU, RE, CHI, RI, I) and the second group has 4 notes (RO, TSU, TSU, RE). Below the staff, there are handwritten symbols corresponding to each note. The lyrics 'RO meri TSU meri CHI RI I RO TSU meri TSU RE' are written below the staff. The notes are: RO (meri), RO (meri), TSU (meri), TSU (meri), RE, CHI, RI, I, RO, TSU (meri), TSU, RE.

→ [Audio link](#)



REAR VIEW MIRROR

by Nick Bellando

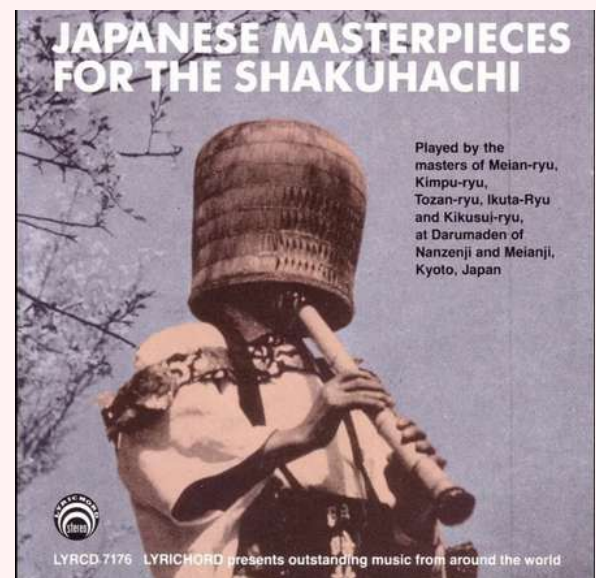
Masters Of Meian-Ryu, Kimpu-Ryu, Tozan-Ryu
and Kikusui-Ryu

Japanese Masterpieces For The Shakuhachi

Lyrichord, 1967

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1eEmNp_xZs

Recordings of (mostly) old-style players in Kyoto and Nara.



I don't often listen to shakuhachi recordings, any more than I would listen to a recording of someone meditating. To me, the value for prayer, meditation, etc, comes in doing it yourself, or together with others. That said, I do find much value in playing shakuhachi along with recordings. It helps me to listen more closely; when you can feel your own version of the piece as you listen, letting go of your own ways to an extent to make room for the other player, you notice their feeling as well. Playing together, I always find a person there in the recording who I like, who I can learn from. Of course, I can only do this with pieces and styles that I'm familiar with; I don't know the Tozan piece on this album ("Sekiheki No Fu"), so I'll skip over that, and focus on the two pieces in this collection that stand out to me the most. The whole record is certainly worth a listen, regardless.

"Koku" is played in the Myoan version. You'll hear two players, playing together yet not precisely the same. Listen to their *chi-meri* - one player is playing it lower, at the half-tone you'd expect in more modern playing. The other player still plays it *meri*, but just enough to make the tone darker, not as low as the other player. As they play, both players adjust to each other to some extent. Their *tsu*, for the most part, is a *chu-meri*, proper to an older style of playing - sometimes lighter or darker, but usually not going down as far as the half-tone above *ro*. Modern players may think, "He can't play *meri* enough" or "They're out of tune," but that's not accurate. The *meri* tones in old-style playing don't generally use the newer *miyakobushi* (urban) scale; they tend to prefer the older *inakabushi* (rural) scale, which lacks the deep half-tones. Interestingly, they don't play the whole piece. I was playing along, and noticed that the entire middle third of the piece is missing. Maybe they were short on time, or short on space on the record.

"Matsukaze" is a piece from my home town's native school of shakuhachi, Kinpu-ryu (the only surviving branch of the Edo era Nezasa-ha Fuke shakuhachi sect). The pieces took on and developed some characteristics found in other northern schools, specifically the *chigiri* (the mysterious interplay of *tsu* and *ro*) and *otoshi* (the distinct double-*nyashi* that drops in after *ro*), techniques which give Aomori players a rather distinct flavor. The first thing that stood out to me in this recording (as well as that of "Shirabe" and "Sagari Ha" later in the record) is that their *chigiri* is a bit different, and their *otoshi* is replaced with a single *nyashi*. This is probably an indication that they are not 'native' players of the school, which makes sense given the location of the recording. Even so, their tone color and style speaks old-style Myoan, making their Kinpu-ryu pieces feel perfectly natural. The two players seem to start out maybe a bit self-conscious on account of being recorded. It feels like they're putting on a performance - except as the recording progresses, the piece takes over, and they seem to get more comfortable - and then they're just playing, with wonderful warmth and frankness. My favorite part is their *tsu* in the *chigiri*: *tsu-tu-ru—tsu-RO*. Modern players play a *tsu dai-meri* here; those on the recording play it warmer, closer to *chu-meri*, just like my favorite Aomori player, Uchiyama Reigetsu. I could tell that I was listening to people from outside of Aomori, but their overall flavor made their playing feel right at home. 🍵

Nick Bellando lives with his family in Aomori, Japan, where he makes and teaches old-style shakuhachi, and gets by with a little help from his friends.

Nick has uploaded an example of Uchiyama Reigetsu playing "Matsukaze" here:
<https://www.hon-on.com/files/Reigetsu-Matsukaze.m4a>

SHAKUHACHI IS PUNK! A PUBLIC CONVERSATION

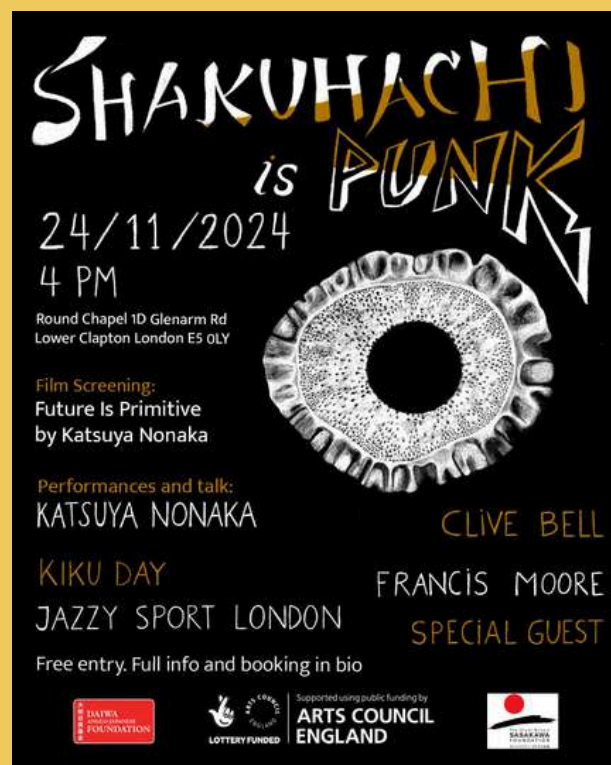
by Francis Moore

This article is a shortened version of a public conversation that happened last November (2024) in London between five shakuhachi players: Katsuya Nonaka, Clive Bell, Kiku Day, Shabaka Hutchings, and Francis Moore. The event was curated by myself, Francis Moore, with a consideration towards these artists' efforts in engaging in questions of agency within shakuhachi culture. While originating from a desire to organise a screening of Nonaka's film *Future Is Primitive* (a 2015 documentary that looks into the dual cultures of shakuhachi and skateboarding in Japan), it grew into a desire to gather these players together to celebrate and consider their shared chosen culture.

For an instrument so associated with antiquity in Japan, my own personal endeavours into it without a teacher was made even more intimidating by my complete naiveté about the culture I was choosing to engage in. I believe that as soon as you're interested in a culture, you're a part of it in some way, but that it's important to constantly consider how. As you move through different forms of understanding I think it's valuable to reflect on these personal notions of cultural engagement, particularly from the position of an outsider.

We moved through the topics of skateboarding, *Jinashi* vs *Jiari* shakuhachi, DIY, and what it means to practice a culture...

[Editor's note: This was a well attended London event, organised by Francis, in Hackney's beautiful Round Chapel. Shabaka is well known for playing sax with The Comet Is Coming and The Sons Of Kemet. Katsuya performs with Seppuku Pistols, an Edo-period punk combo known for playing in the street. Katsuya's documentary film, *Future Is Primitive*, interviews many shakuhachi players and many skateboarders about problems faced by both communities in the modern world. In the film, a discussion about the *jiari* modernisation of shakuhachi is paralleled by skateboarding's dilemma: street skating vs competitive 'sport boarding'. The film was reviewed by Clive Bell in *Bamboo* 2017 Vol. 1]



Shakuhachi is Punk! flyer

Clive Bell: So before we start talking, let me ask the audience. Put your hand up if you ever saw the shakuhachi being played before, the instrument we just heard. [Lots of hands go up] ...

Francis Moore and Kiku Day: Pretty good.

Kiku Day: It's better than Japan!

Clive Bell: Katsuya, since you made this film, skateboarding is now an Olympic sport. How do you feel about that?

Katsuya Nonaka: Actually, it's taken the course I expected. Especially in Japan people see it as a sport and only accept it as that. But street skating is harder and harder, and the 'sport boarding' is killing the street culture. So it's a weird feeling, but I can see child sport skaters still embracing street skating. When they become teenagers some become more curious in the culture and pursue street skating instead of contests.

Clive Bell: I'm going to turn to Shabaka now, who probably a lot of you know. An ex-saxophonist -

Shabaka Hutchings: A recovering saxophonist.

Clive Bell: And you know Katsuya quite well, so tell me about that.

Shabaka Hutchings: Katsuya kindly offered to show me the process of harvesting and making a shakuhachi. Leaving it to cure for a year, and I'm going back soon to complete the final step of making them. For me, it's a slow process in learning the flutes and seeing actually what the thing is. I'm in no rush to really do it. Just being exposed to the process and then seeing it again and being able to reflect on it will deepen my understanding of what I'm doing, because I'm not really learning with teachers. All I can do is watch people do the thing and soak some of it up. For instance: Katsuya, I'm not even sure if you know, but you were the first person I heard play shakuhachi in person.

There's a dynamic range of the shakuhachi that's distorted when you hear it on records, there's this kind of dynamic range that you don't assume when hearing the audio coming at you live. There's a whole dimension of actual resonance, and what the resonance does in relation to your own body, that you're aware of. And that's for me part of the shakuhachi.

Clive Bell: Kiku, would you say the shakuhachi is less popular in Japan now than when I went there in the 1970s? It seems to have declined since then.

Kiku Day: Yes, it has declined. It's actually very interesting. You know, I do research on shakuhachi, so when I read old newspapers, from the 1930s and 1940s, there are little articles about shakuhachi

everywhere, and there are ads everywhere. I was researching how the shakuhachi was used during World War Two, and, in the beginning I was like, wow! So much shakuhachi during the war, until I realised it's just because so many people played it. So by the 1970s it had already declined after the peak in the 60s, probably. When I went there it kept on declining. But what has changed a little bit now is that the shakuhachi and also other Japanese traditional instruments have entered pop culture and pop music. But if you measure the membership of the big groups, how many members [play shakuhachi], it's still declining and has been declining ever since the 70s probably.

Clive Bell: So Shabaka, something I want to ask you is about the Japanese tradition and your relationship to it - because when a lot of people learn shakuhachi there's a tradition of solo pieces like the one we heard Katsuya play. This is a big thing that a lot of people want to play. Each shakuhachi player has to decide what their attitude is to the tradition. Could you talk about that?

Shabaka Hutchings: Yeah. I mean, I guess I've thought about these concepts in relation to jazz before coming to shakuhachi. I've done a lot of processing about where I stand in relation to someone else's music, it's always been that if I try to understand the instrument itself, audibly on a sonic level, know the music that [the shakuhachi is] within, but just try to practice every day and have a line in my practice where I'm working on the things that I think personally I need to develop myself within, at some point it intersects. So at some point within the jazz thing, because I understood what the music sounded like and I was actually practising in a way that connected my physical actions to what I was hearing inside - it meant that I could play jazz. I understood basic harmony, and I'm still learning what the groundwork of fundamental harmony is.

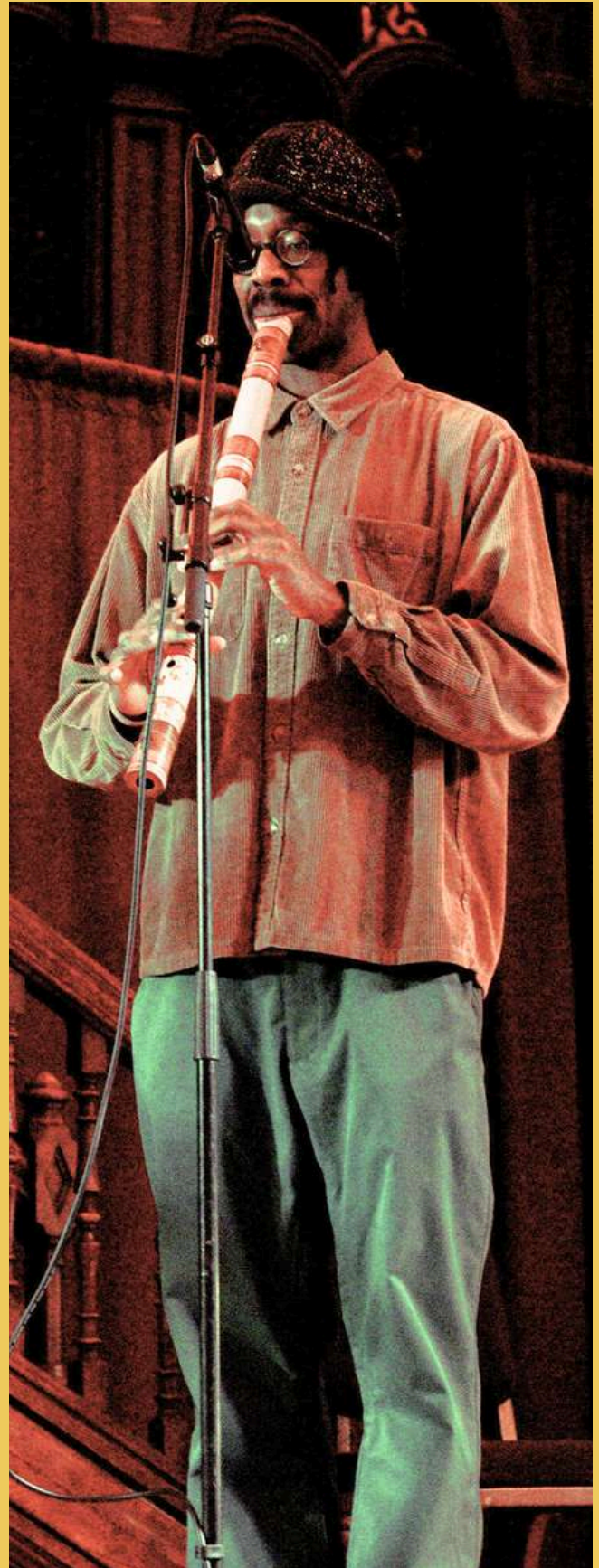
In relation to shakuhachi in particular, you're talking about Japanese culture. And for me it's something that I've just not come to grips with fully conceptually yet because there's understanding a culture by reading about it and by seeing the depictions of it, and then there's understanding the culture by living within it. And I can't live in Japan at the moment. I think that there's a difference between the reflections of a culture, like the things that highlight what a culture is and the culture itself. So for me I can only see in relation to black diasporic culture, the culture that I guess I'm coming from, the aspect of the culture that, for instance, if you would say what aspects of African culture are significant, you might say dance, you might say arts. Those things highlight an aspect of the culture. But for me, it's not the culture. The culture is an attitude, a world view held by a group of people that's reflected by certain things that you might describe as the culture, but for me that's not the culture itself. The culture is the attitude. So the only way for me to understand the Japanese attitude is to just spend time with Japanese people as much as possible, you know? Which is not very much, because I'm a touring musician, but it's just about trying to understand what the thing is. So in learning shakuhachi, I've been trying to just focus on principles as opposed to specifics at this stage.

One of the things that I think I understand of Japanese culture is an aspect of uprightness but relaxation as this kind of pendulum circular thing. And I've just understood this from my dealings with people. But at the moment this is what I see as a principle that circumvents the whole thing.

So in practising the shakuhachi, I might just try to figure out, 'How do I stay upright but have some sense of flow with the thing?' And that's how I'm treating that aspect of culture - what the cultural aspects represent and what they mean to me in my particular investigations. And it's ongoing, you know.

In my personal practice I'm trying to play long notes and create a pressurised environment that's only released in the pinpoint of the top of the mouth. And that's the practice. So for me, there's the tradition, there's the pieces, and then there's like, can you play a note starting from 0, going to like 0.000001 and slowly build it up. And it takes so much practice to just get that and be able to bring it up and then bring it down. I don't have time to play the pieces. I'm still literally learning. I'm trying to get a note to sound at a particular dynamic, and sometimes pieces can get in the way of actually just learning how to play the instrument. I've just got so much to do, I'm going to try to just keep practising every day - play those long tones and then it'll come together at some point.

I come from a background of learning classical music, and there's a lot of things that I've had to battle with, going through an institutional learning of European classical music. So I'm not in any big rush to learn someone else's classical music. But I do appreciate that there's things like technical specificities, and there's aspects of just the enjoyment of playing the pieces and understanding how it fits into what the instrument can do. But like I said, I'm trying to literally just play a note and get it from 0 to 0.000001.



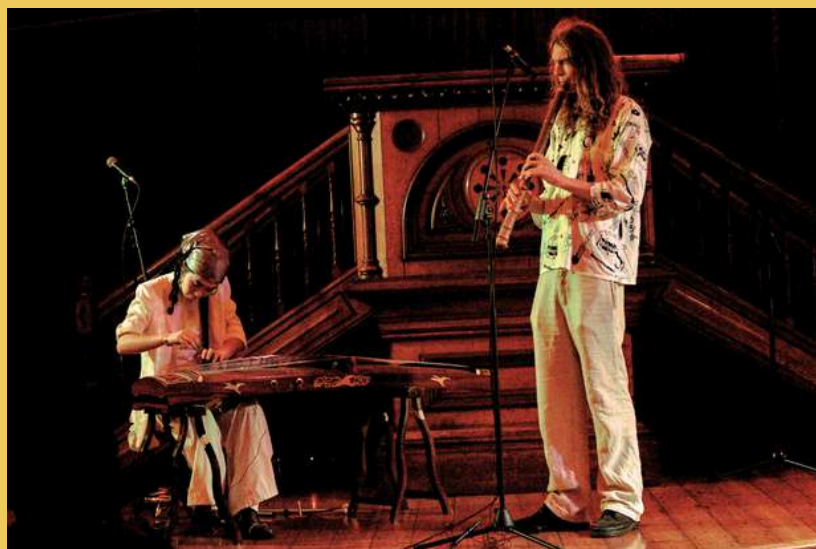
Shabaka Hutchings



Clive Bell, Masumi Endo and Shabaka Hutchings



Hyelim Kim and Kiku Day



Zhuyang Leiu (guzheng) and Francis Moore

Question from the audience: 'Can you talk about shakuhachi performance in relation to other instruments?'

Kiku Day: So the shakuhachi in the form we know now was first used as a solo instrument. And among this group of so-called monks, there was actually a kind of a rule that they shouldn't play other pieces, like ensemble music. However we know that there's plenty of evidence of Komuso playing ensemble music, and the first reason for the shakuhachi beginning to be changed in construction was this ensemble music. So there was a particular Edo period of ensemble music that was very loved at the time and has a huge repertoire. The shakuhachi entered that. But after the shakuhachi became liberated - it wasn't just the Komuso monks that had a monopoly of playing the instrument - it actually went wild. There were lots of compositions written. So today the shakuhachi is used with lots of other instruments, and especially musicians educated at the conservatories in Japan.

Clive Bell: The shakuhachi is a quiet instrument designed for small rooms. This room is much too big for shakuhachi playing. And, it's a bit like the viol, where Baroque English music was played in small rooms. Those instruments don't project to the back of the hall. You sit close to them so you can see the player wincing as they play. That intimacy is part of the music. Then later on someone invents the orchestra and the halls get really big, so all flutes had to get louder. If you're sitting in an orchestra playing a western flute in a Mahler symphony, you've got to have a good flute that plays loud, and the debate in the film about *Jiari* and *Jinashi* is a very interesting debate. Part of it is about how loud are you going to play, and if you want to play loud.

Katsuya Nonaka: Talking about volume - I think that's the whole point of playing shakuhachi. It's the beauty of it. Because it's really quiet you can hear the surroundings too, it's a part of the music. And also we think this way, that shakuhachi sound is part of the surroundings, so eventually there's no me. The feeling that I get, probably you too (the audience)... That it's not just me, but it's all of us. I play really loud music too. The band called Seppuku Pistols is obviously inspired by Sex Pistols and we use Japanese traditional instruments and then play really hardcore music and it's super loud. And I love that. But I also equally love playing shakuhachi, but only in that zone.



From left to right: Masumi Endo, Clive Bell, Francis Moore, Shabaka Hutchings, Katsuya Nonaka, Kiku Day and Hyelim Kim

Shabaka Hutchings: I guess you're talking about cultural exchange and what happens when you put the sonic culture - literally the dynamic that's associated with a group of people - next to another aesthetic. Is it 50:50 in terms of the balance of power, in terms of who goes towards who? And the problem is, in a lot of cases, it's not. So people don't go towards the shakuhachi. It shouldn't be 'Can the shakuhachi player play as loud as the other instruments' - it's 'Can the other instruments play as quietly as shakuhachi?' and in most cases it just takes a bigger level of technique to be able to come down. When I recorded my last album, we did it with no headphones and no separation, so it forced everyone. And because I'm the bandleader, it means I told everyone that you can't play louder than I'm playing. It's my session and I'm playing these quiet flutes, and you just gotta deal with it, you know?

Kiku Day: So we're talking about shakuhachi making as well. Both Katsuya Nonaka and I are trained by the same teacher [Okuda Atsuya], and he belongs to somewhere in between. It's certainly a minority, but maybe not as much as the Myoan players. For him, it was a very important aspect of our training that we went and picked up bamboo in the mountains and then preserved them. And then later on he also did workshops, and taught us how to make our own shakuhachi. which is kind of in the line of what the Komuso did. They made their own instruments.

Katusya Nonaka: So when you play *Jinashi*, the old traditional way, you can just make it by yourself. Anyone can do that. The door is open, and that DIY aspect is really punk to me. The most important thing that I believe about shakuhachi is there's no bad bamboo. The change of shakuhachi, becoming Jiari, becoming standardised, I think it really represents society as well. Then I found that the original old style of shakuhachi was the complete opposite. The approach is that humans have to adjust to nature and then you can have the music. It's not changing the nature for people's convenience.

Shabaka Hutchings: I guess my final thought is just - what does it look like when a culture dies? If the orthodox rendition of the culture is being some way threatened by modernisation. And I'm just talking in general, not specifically with Japan. What does it look like when it's actually being overrun and when it is no more? And I guess it looks like no archive, because the existence of an archive means that even if there's one player of the traditional shakuhachi way, as long as there's a way of someone looking back and seeing how you do it and trying, and being able to understand what the thing is, it means that the culture is continued. As far as I can see with the shakuhachi, there's enough archives. There's no real fear of the traditional classical way disappearing. Unless the archive were to disappear.

Kiku Day: A living culture is always changing, so no problem.



The full version of this talk can be watched on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=NuP8_O6P-qA

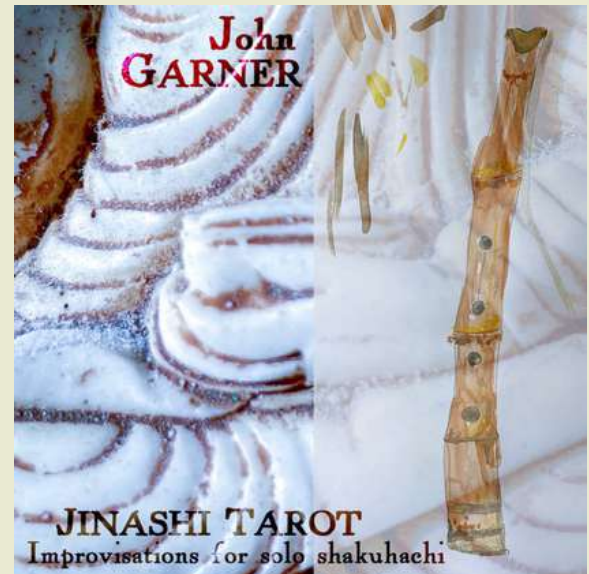
Edited and Produced by Francis Moore
Photos by Jordan Minga
Artwork by Tara Pasveer 🎨

CD REVIEW: JINASHI TAROT

John Garner
Jinashi Tarot

Bandcamp:

<https://johnjamesgarner.bandcamp.com/album/jinashi-tarot>



Nenthead in Cumbria, one of the highest villages in England, is where John Garner recorded this set of solo shakuhachi pieces. Primarily a violinist, Garner took with him *jinashi* flutes by Ken Lacosse and Perry Yung on his solitary retreat in the heart of the north Pennines. He also took along a set of tarot cards by the US artist Patrick Valenza, and many of these sixteen short improvised tracks are inspired by one of those cards.

Straight away it's clear Garner has an attractive sound, a good ear and a straightforward approach. Often using a very low flute, he traces out a slow melody and sees where it will lead him. "Obedient Blue" is an exploration on a higher pitched 1.8 flute. My favourite piece is "Lies & Despair", where the mood is darker and Garner injects some breathy colour into his sound. "Ace Of Pentacles" is also intriguing, starting with a firmly split note and progressing from there into calm melody. "Nine Of Cups" offers some beautiful eerie moments.

Garner has a broad musical background, from classical violin to the south Indian Carnatic tradition, and on to jazz and other forms of improvisation. Since 2021 he has been studying shakuhachi with Cornelius Shinzen Boots. He has also written widely on Buddhist practice and other philosophical issues as they apply to music making. Many of his recordings can be heard via his website.

Much of the album communicates well, and on a piece like "Temperance" I can hear Garner enjoying the physical sound he's making. My reservations have to do with the whole thing feeling like a personal spiritual project: I don't know whether Garner dealt his cards, recorded one piece a day, and then kept everything with no editing, but sometimes it feels like that. "Queen Of Swords" is a brave attempt on a difficult flute, and valid as a sketch of where Garner would like to go, but seems just outside his technical grasp. Likewise on "Eight Of Wands" the ideas outpace the ability. These large flutes can take a while before they consent to play what you can already hear in your head. Clearly Garner has the musicality, and hopefully the patience, to get there in the end. 🍀

John Garner's new album of shakuhachi duos with Hervé Perez, *Bell Of Evening Skies*, can be heard at: <https://nexttime.bandcamp.com/album/bell-of-evening-skies>

Clive Bell

CD REVIEW: THE NIGHT IS A FLOWER

Zac Gvi & Clive Bell *The Night Is A Flower*

8004 Records

<https://8004records.bandcamp.com/album/the-night-is-a-flower>



What happens when you match two wind instruments at the opposite ends of the size spectrum? You get something like Clive Bell and Zac Gvi's album, *The Night Is A Flower*.

Arguably, the pipe organ, sometimes called the 'king of instruments', with its hundreds (sometimes thousands) of pipes, is the largest wind instrument (if not the largest instrument of any kind) currently known to humanity. Here, Bell and Gvi contrast this acoustic marvel with a much smaller marvel - the single tube of the shakuhachi (perhaps the 'Zen monk of instruments'?). Mediating between these extremes, Bell also plays khène (Thai mouth organ) and Cretan pipes at a few points (such as track 2, "Sky Trumpets").

The music covers a vast territory, from arrangements of traditional Japanese material (track 4, "Itsuki No Komoriuta"), through versions of western pieces such as Gershwin's "My Man's Gone Now" (track 1), and on to more experimental improvisations and compositions in diverse styles and moods, from the gentle textures of "Verba Novesma" and "Just For A Moment", to the wildly dynamic sonic interweavings of the aforementioned "Sky Trumpets". In this way, the album bridges the worlds of the shakuhachi and the organ in their traditional or 'culture of origin' contexts, and the realms of transcultural music creation with these instruments, whereby the shakuhachi, while maintaining its identity, does not necessarily sound 'Japanese',

and the organ's textures are a far cry from Bach, revealing more of an affinity with modern composers such as Messiaen, with references to the shakuhachi mixed in. Given this broad musical scope, there is something for everyone on this album, and the journey is fascinating, sometimes surprising - and in my opinion highly successful.

The playing, both of shakuhachi (and khène and Cretan pipes) by Bell and organ by Gvi, is always masterful. Additionally, the recording process reveals a great deal of fantasy, particularly concerning the organ. Beyond capturing the sound of the instruments in the acoustic space in which they were performed, microphones were also positioned inside the organ, revealing its 'inner life'. This expresses itself in a directness of the organ sound sometimes missing on more 'normal' organ recordings. Furthermore, the listener is often privileged to hear the mechanical workings of the instrument. For instance, on "Aisnar Blues", the sound of the tremulant mechanism on one of the ranks of pipes is audible. This augments the texture to the extent that it becomes (to my ears) an acoustic 'drum machine', providing a regular background pulse - a creative use of the usually-hidden workings of the instrument. A similar effect emerges briefly in more subtle form towards the end of the final track of the album ("Just For A Moment").

Given its musical breadth and unusual qualities, this album is highly recommended for all those interested in the potential directions in which the shakuhachi (and organ, and the other wind instruments employed) can be taken, outside of their traditional roles and genres. 🍵

Jim Franklin

WORLD SHAKUHACHI MENTORING DAY 2024/2025

by Adam Robinson

World Shakuhachi Mentoring Day is a series of online, panel adjudicated, classes created with the goal of giving aspiring shakuhachi teachers a chance to design a lesson on a piece in collaboration with their teacher and present their lesson to an audience of judges and students.

For my two lessons my teacher Ralph Samuelson and I picked two different approaches to this idea. In my first lesson in 2024 we created a short version of the *Kinko Ryu honkyoku*, “Kyō Reibo”, and in the 2025 session we focused on details in the *Kinko* style and technique of playing through the example of a folk tune, “Kuroda Bushi”. My lessons were evaluated in detail by Jim Franklin in 2024 and Horatio Curti in 2025. Both sessions were thoroughly inspiring and challenging.

Reflecting on these sessions, the biggest challenge in 2024 was to fit all of the material I wanted to talk about in a one-hour window. In 2025, with more focused and nuanced material, the challenge was to know when to stop talking about the material and to just play our shakuhachi! Both sessions gave me valuable insight into how to teach through a computer. I was able to tackle how to deal with framing the hands, flute, and body, when to stop and take questions, how to manage the app, and how to create clear goals and takeaways for students who might only see me once. I enjoyed the process of learning these things and all of the kind feedback I received helped me feel inspired to polish my abilities in this medium further.

I was impressed at how the panel of teachers made every student-teacher feel that even with a lot to work on (in my case), there is a feeling of mutual respect and encouragement within the greater network of shakuhachi professionals. I want to say thank you in particular to Christophe Gaston, Kiku Day, Markus Guhe and Michael Coxall, whose organizational prowess opened this opportunity to us; and to all of the panellists for being such exemplary adjudicators. I was inspired by their kind and detailed approach to the feedback they had for each of us. The core of the lesson became not only about how to teach for my own ambitions but about how to organize material in clear, understandable ways, give constructive feedback that inspires students to keep going, and to understand a plurality of viewpoints within this artistic niche. Great lessons for life! 🍵

WORLD SHAKUHACHI MENTORING DAY 2024/2025

by Marco Burmester

The World Shakuhachi Mentoring Day helps aspiring shakuhachi teachers to improve their teaching skills while also fostering the international shakuhachi community. The mentoring process culminates in the mentoring day on which all candidates teach one piece of their choice in a workshop-style online lesson, after which established shakuhachi teachers give constructive feedback. There are no winners or losers - everyone just learns from the experience. Participation is free and all work is done voluntarily.

An apprentice teacher typically participates in two mentoring days. I already had the pleasure to teach two *honkyoku* pieces: “Azuma No Kyoku” (Ichchoken Temple, Kyushu) on May 11, 2024, and “Choshi” (Fudaiji Temple, Hamamatsu) on March 30, 2025.

A couple of months before the mentoring day, I developed a lesson outline and gave a trial lesson to my teacher James Schlefer. In a second step, I was able to refine my approach with feedback from Kiku Day and Jean-François Lagrost after giving them a trial lesson. On the mentoring day, initial feedback came from student participants. After a closed-door assessment by all teachers, principal feedback came from yet another teacher: Gunnar Linder and Christophe Gaston. As a result, I have received feedback from various people of different background, lineage or school. This made it a very fruitful learning experience.



Screenshot of the WSMD

Both pieces were of intermediate level because they have *kari* and *meri* in high as well as low octaves. In the one-hour lesson, I wanted participants to be able to learn an entire piece but at the same time have plenty of time playing shakuhachi. I chose “Choshi” because it is relatively short, and “Azuma No Kyoku” because it has repeating patterns, so I don’t have to explain every phrase of the piece - this compensates for the relative length.

Compared to my previous teaching efforts, I had to work on four aspects:

1. Online vs in-person lesson. Improving online teaching skills is a declared goal of the program. This included aspects like basic technical skills of how to handle Zoom (sound settings, sharing a presentation), best practice use of the camera (which angle is best to show flute and fingers, use of background picture or not) and the best way to time the sequence of explanation, playing, waiting for participant responses as well as effective use of feedback tools (eg chat, raise hand). This was a field with a lot of room for improvement because I hadn't taught online before and I was not used to Zoom but another video conferencing software.
2. One-on-one vs group lesson. The lesson is meant to be in workshop-style which has more elements of a lecture than an individual lesson. So, the progress of teaching is more determined by the teacher and the content the teacher wants to convey during the given time, rather than driven by the learning progress of the student. This is aggravated by the difficulty of observing the learning progress within the group because the teacher cannot listen to the group's playing and there is not enough time to have every student play separately to give corrections.
3. Oral vs written transmission. Workshop-style and online-situation both contribute to a more literal transmission of how to play a piece. Because it is technically difficult to maintain a feedback-loop between students and teacher there is a stronger focus on the intellectual understanding of the piece, rather than learning through playing-along and gradually adjusting. There is something deeply unsatisfying about this aspect because so much of what shakuhachi, especially *honkyoku*, is about is in the subtle nuances. The written aspect is further emphasized by annotated sheet music, written explanations and the need for fingering charts due to students from different lineages.
4. Students of the same vs different lineage. When teaching a student of the same lineage, he or she has prior knowledge about how things are done within that lineage including familiarity with the type of notation. On that basis, learning advances at a different pace than trying to teach a piece to outsiders of that lineage. The more different lineages among participating students, the more the focus may divert towards explaining the differences between the various schools. This is quite a challenge when preparing for a lesson. It requires considerable effort to keep a healthy balance during the lesson to stay focused on teaching the piece while not losing the audience on the way.

All these aspects have been quite challenging and have required a considerable amount of time and energy to tackle. In some cases, it took a while to just be aware of the difficulties and find the appropriate attitude to deal with the situations during a lesson and then improve in the second round.

Not long after the mentoring day, I received my *Jun Shihan* teaching license and shakuhachi name *Karaku*. I am grateful for the experience and appreciate the time and effort everyone put into this program. I encourage aspiring shakuhachi teachers to participate in this program and hope that more people sign up as participants to the online lessons to make the teaching situation more real going forward.

Please join the next World Shakuhachi Mentoring Day—it makes our shakuhachi community stronger! 🍵

DAMON RAWNSLEY - AN OBITUARY

by Kiku Day

Damon Rawnsley was for many years one of the most reliable persons present at any given shakuhachi event, lesson or gathering in the UK or online. Certainly he has been a very stable face among shakuhachi players in the UK since 2012 if not before.

Damon unfortunately passed away on the 23rd of February 2025 in a tragic accident, when he went missing from his boat on a stormy night. Damon's boat was moored at the Chiswick Pier on the river Thames in London. It's believed he may have gone up to collect coal and slipped off his boat. His body was found four days later. Damon is survived by his partner Mika, his 18 year old son and his three brothers.

Damon's passing is a loss in the whole European shakuhachi community, let alone the community in the UK. He was always keen and friendly and had an unquestionable passion for the shakuhachi. He would participate in any of the events organized by the ESS, World Shakuhachi Day, *robuki* during Covid-19 etc. He was never afraid of trying to play if a teacher asked if anyone wanted to do so.

A word from his partner, Mika:

Damon truly loved the shakuhachi and would wake up at five every morning, meditate, eat breakfast, and then practice until it was time to go to work. But he often had other obligations and would frequently sigh, "Never enough time!!" He always looked forward to his Zoom lessons. After they ended, he would say it was difficult and review his notes and recordings, saying he needed to improve before the next lesson.

He had just started happily practising "Takiuchi", which he had learned in his last lesson, when the accident happened... He had so many things he wanted to do and new books he wanted to read. I remember him laughing about his dream of living in a bamboo forest in Japan and playing shakuhachi every day.

I would like to encourage everyone who knew Damon or had seen him at various events to play "Tamuke" or "Banshiki"; honoring Damon, remembering his love for the shakuhachi, the fact that we share that love, and cherishing the community he was part of.

On the 5th of July a ceremony in memory of Damon will take place:

The Crucible Foundry

Unit 15A Parsons Green Depot

33-39 Parsons Green Lane

London SW6 4HH



Damon Rawnsley

DR DAVID W. HUGHES - AN OBITUARY

by Kiku Day

David Hughes is mostly known in the ESS for introducing us to *minyō* (folk song) shakuhachi. The first time was at the European Shakuhachi Summer School in London (2011), when *minyō* shakuhachi player and expert Endo Yoshinori was invited as the main guest together with Kodama Hiroyuki. But the *minyō* workshops and performances would never have been so excellent – had it not been for David Hughes. He then suggested we invite Yoshie Campbell, an award-winning *minyō* singer. It was the first time anyone in London had worked with Yoshie; but certainly not the last time. David also invited Hibiki – a *Tsugaru-jamisen* player recently arrived in London. And together with singer Sylvia Vale and David's wife Gina Barnes, the team was ready for the Summer School.

I mention this story here because it's a classic example of what happened when David got involved. He got people together and gave numerous people opportunities to teach or perform.

David was also pivotal in organising the *minyō* part of the World Shakuhachi Festival 2018 in London, held at Goldsmiths, University of London. Without him we would not have been introduced to the Japan Minyō Association and the Aomori Minyō Association, who applied to the Ministry of Culture in Japan for the biggest grant for the festival. David and Gina also performed and taught at the Summer School in Barcelona.

David worked as a lecturer at SOAS, University of London. Here he tirelessly introduced students, colleagues and the general public to many kinds of music. But his heart was with Japanese *minyō*. He could burst into song at any time. David supported the creation of the ESS and followed the ESS from its first meeting in 2006. He always made a point of voting for the ESS committee even if he was not present.

Together with David, Joe Browning and I set up regular meetings of shakuhachi players at SOAS around 2012. It ended when only the *minyō* people were meeting, but this meant that many shakuhachi players learned *minyō* shakuhachi playing. The SOAS Minyō Group still continues to this day.

Many of David's hundreds of students, colleagues and friends will remember him and be inspired by him. Generations to come will benefit from his research publications, for example:

- Allison Tokita and David W. Hughes: *The Ashgate Research Companion To Japanese Music*. SOAS Musicology Series, Ashgate.
- *Traditional Folk Song in Modern Japan: Sources, Sentiment and Society*; Brill.

I am glad that I, together with Matt Gillan and Patrick Huang, managed to publish a Festschrift in his honour: *Folk And Songs In Japan And Beyond: Ethnomusicological Essays in Honour of David W. Hughes*; Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

David received the following acknowledgements:

2017: Decoration from the Government of Japan: Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette.

2018: The 30th Annual Fumio Koizumi Prize for Ethnomusicology, Japan.

Dr. David Hughes



15. International Shakuhachi Festival Prague



Japanese and new music
19. - 23. 6. 2025
www.ISFP.cz

INTERNATIONALSHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL PRAGUE, JUNE 19–23, 2025

The 15th—and final—edition of ISFP is coming on strong, supported by the international shakuhachi community!

The International Shakuhachi Festival Prague (ISFP) has long stood as a pillar of the vibrant and ever-growing European shakuhachi scene. Since its founding in 2007, the festival has served as an international platform for learning shakuhachi, an academic symposium, and a concert series featuring leading artists from Japan and around the world. Since 2017, ISFP has been held biennially, allowing more time for the preparation of a high-quality program. It is also the only event worldwide to regularly present works for shakuhachi and Western instruments in orchestral or large ensemble formats.

However, in early 2025, ISFP faced severe financial difficulties following significant cuts in public funding.

“At one point, we were looking at a deficit of close to €20,000,” says Marek Kimei Matvija, artistic director and co-founder of the festival. “We seriously considered cancelling the event altogether. Even with our own financial contributions and waiving our fees, the outlook was grim.”

“After intense internal discussions,” Matvija continues, “we made the decision to restructure and commit to our artists and everyone who had joined us on this three-year journey of preparation. We also reached out to the communities our festival serves—both domestic and international—and were overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity we received from around the world. Thanks to the support of generous individuals, Japanese art lovers, and the Zeměkvět Foundation, the day is saved—we are a GO!”

Though the team has restructured and costs have been trimmed, the heart of ISFP—the learning opportunities and concerts—remains intact and uncompromised.

“As this will be the final edition of ISFP, we want everyone to make the best memories. The community deserves it,” Matvija concludes.

From Tradition to the Future

The ISFP 2025 program bridges the spiritual heritage of the shakuhachi with trendsetting contemporary music, offering a glimpse into the future of the instrument.

The festival's headliners are The SHAKUHACHI 5, a world-class ensemble bringing together Japanese master players from different traditions: Akihito Obama, Reison Kuroda, Kizan Kawamura, Akihisa Kominato and Ken-ichi Tajima are among the foremost shakuhachi artists performing today.

The ensemble has commissioned new works from top international composers—creating history in the process. ISFP helped sponsor their first commission in 2020, from renowned composer Dai Fujikura. Since then, The SHAKUHACHI 5 has built a celebrated repertoire. Their debut album earned them a feature on the cover of *Hōgaku Journal*, Japan's leading publication for traditional music.

Their performance of Akira Nishimura's "Sarasōju" at the World Shakuhachi Festival in Texas earned a standing ovation and was widely regarded as the event's highlight. At ISFP 2025, they will premiere a new work by award-winning Czech composer Miroslav Srnka at Prague's prestigious DOX+ hall.



The Shakuhachi 5

For Koto and Shakuhachi

Europe's koto community is also on the rise, thanks to the efforts of Naoko Kikuchi and the late Makiko Goto. Kikuchi will lead three koto study groups at ISFP 2025—two of them in parallel with shakuhachi study groups led by Gunnar Jinmei Linder and John Kaizan Neptune. This provides a unique opportunity for players of both instruments to learn together and explore modern and traditional repertoire.

Kikuchi will also give a solo recital, featuring a newly commissioned work by Edward Mascall-Robson for koto and shakuhachi. The program's centerpiece will be Takashi Yoshimatsu's transcendent piece "Within Dreams, Without Dreams", performed with Reison Kuroda.

From Bamboo to Sound

Since 2019, John Kaizan Neptune—jazz shakuhachi pioneer and master craftsman—has been a regular guest at ISFP. His musicality, humor and scientific approach to shakuhachi making make his workshops a perennial favorite (this year's making workshops are already sold out). At ISFP 2025, he will perform with Akihisa Kominato and the acclaimed Robert Balzar Trio in a special crossover concert.

Youth Looks Ahead

The final concert of ISFP 2025, titled *Wakamono* ("Youth" in Japanese), will be performed by the BERG Orchestra under the direction of conductor and dramaturge Peter Vrábel. Shaped by his artistic vision, the bold program features new compositions for shakuhachi and large ensemble by rising Czech composers Lucie Páčová and Michael Prokop, with soloists Kizan Kawamura and Ken-ichi Tajima. Works by Japanese composers Sachie Kobayashi and Naoki Sakata complete this forward-looking line-up.



Akihito Obama and BERG Orchestra

Heritage and Inheritance

Founded by Christopher Yohmei Blasdel, Vlastislav Matoušek, and Marek Kimei Matvija, ISFP began as the Prague Shakuhachi Summer School, a small-scale camp for sharing essential shakuhachi skills. It quickly grew into an ambitious cultural festival centered on the shakuhachi's aesthetics and cultural significance.

Over the years, ISFP has engaged with artists across disciplines, exploring themes such as sound environments, field recording, sound meditation, and aleatoric music—often blending the worlds of traditional Japanese music and contemporary sound art.

The most recent editions have explored the treasures of 20th and 21st century Japanese composition, bringing rarely performed works by Tōru Takemitsu, Malika Kishino, Maki Ishii, Ryōhei Hirose and others to Czech audiences.

Through its unique blend of skill-sharing and cross-cultural exploration, ISFP has grown into a deeply rooted presence in Europe's musical landscape. Now, as this great tree falls, its legacy will live on in the seeds it scattered—ideas, collaborations, and inspirations that took root in its shade and will grow in the years to come.

International Shakuhachi Festival Prague 2025 June 19–23, Prague, Czech Republic

www.isfp.cz

Organized by the NEIRO Association for Expanding Arts, and supported by the Czech Ministry of Culture, Japan Foundation, Tokyo Arts Council, HAMU, Zeměkvět Foundation, Czech Culture Fund, Czech-Japanese Society and Hotel AXA.

15th and last!

International Shakuhachi Festival Prague

Japanese and new music
19th - 23rd June, 2025



THE SHAKUHACHI 5

Naoko KIKUCHI, John Kaizan NEPTUNE, Robert BALZAR Trio,
BERG Orchestra, Gunnar Jinmei LINDER, Vlastislav MATOUŠEK,
Dietmar Ippū HERRIGER, Marek Kimei MATVIJA, Aaro Sensui HAAVISTO,
and many more!



www.isfp.cz



The technique in which I completed this work is screenprint which I've had a chance to learn in Grafikskolan in Stockholm. You can't imagine the pleasure I got from making this work! Feels incredible when an art piece made in oil on paper a few years ago can now transform and find new life in another color and another technique that is more relevant to the times we live in. In the artwork I showed my Ukrainian teacher of Shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute) play his instrument. Now he is in the military, defending our homeland from Russian invaders. He got wounded and underwent medical treatment. In my new work "Sensei's hands" I showed this tension and my feelings about what's happening to my teacher and friend.

Tamara Rogozina



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, 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.

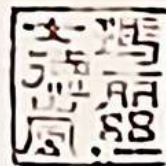
To join the ESS:

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 or 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 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

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

Online events enquiries: online-events@shakuhachisociety.eu

For questions about membership: member@shakuhachisociety.eu

ESS newsletter: 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

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 BAMBOO NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTOR'S GUIDELINES

The aim of the ESS *Bamboo* Newsletter 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

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 newsletter 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 newsletter 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.

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

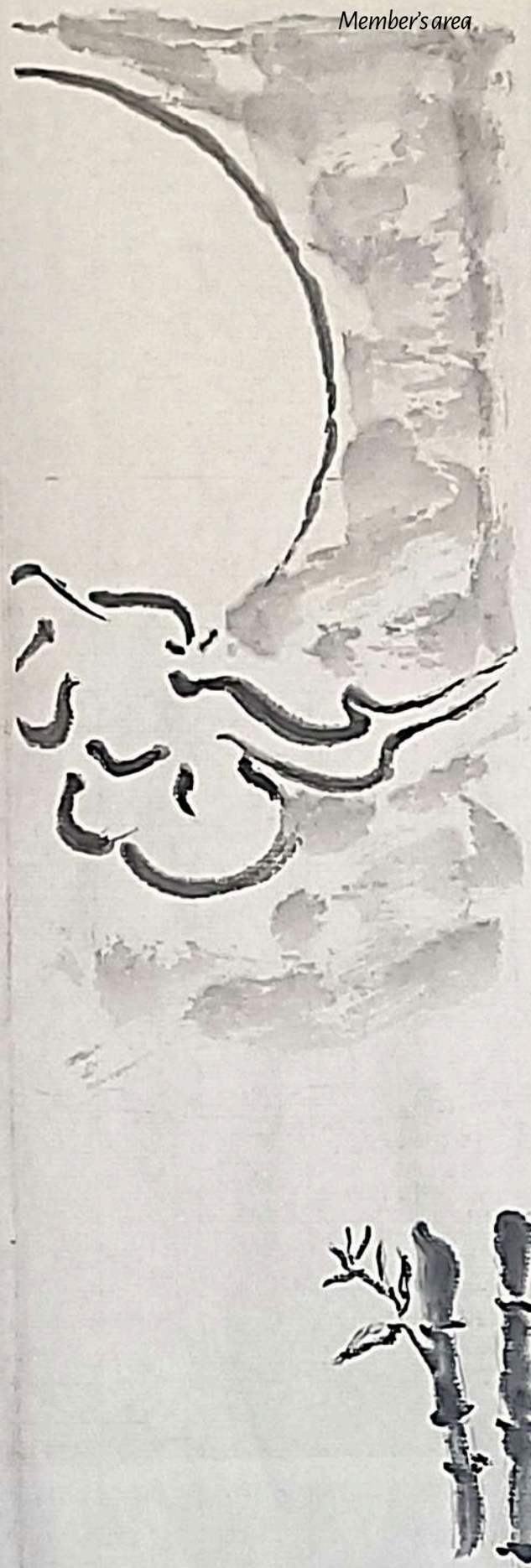
Reviews: Should you wish for any shakuhachi material to be reviewed in the newsletter (recordings, books, etc.), please contact us with the particulars and the editors will get back to you.

Reviews of materials, such as books and CD's, will appear in the first available issue of the newsletter 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 newsletter, 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.

Member's area



The newsletter 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 newsletter 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 *Bamboo* 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 *Bamboo* Newsletter is published on December 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.

