

European Shakuhachi Society
Newsletter
2019, Vol.1



Grateful thanks in this number to:

- *Jon Kypros* for the cover picture
- *Atsuo Hashimoto, Thorsten Knaub*, for the pictures
- *Mike McInerney* for the English

2019 Vol. 1

Publication officers:

Véronique Piron and Jose Vargas-Zuñiga

Dear shakuhachi friends,

We want to welcome you to this Spring issue of the ESS newsletter, hoping that you're enjoying the energy of this wonderful season of the year.

In this edition you'll find three articles written by Kiku Day, our chairperson, which show very much her dedication to the shakuhachi and the ESS: the Chairperson's Letter, letting us know that time has come for a changeover in the ESS board, a substantial interview with the 42nd kansu Seian Genshin regarding, among other things, the dissemination of Myōanji's shakuhachi playing in Japan and abroad, and a review about the Bell shakuhachi (a jinashi shakuhachi replica made from a bamboo eco-composite), a new instrument dedicated to beginners.

This time you'll find a special ESS announcement, about the ESS member area set up recently online on the ESS website by our previous webmaster Thorsten Knaub for the benefit of the ESS members. If you haven't yet, take a look at it, there's much to be seen!

As usual you'll find the maker's corner, this time an interview with very famous maker Miura Ryuho, a couple of CD reviews, a couple of pieces of poetry from some of our members, and a bit of art to bring this edition to life.

In July 2019, the ESS Shakuhachi Summerschool will happen in Portugal, in Lisbon. We are pushing our boundaries a bit more Southern this time: it is a new destination for us, one where a new shakuhachi community is growing. Finally you'll find an overview of the whole event in this edition, written by Michael Coxall, so we hope to meet you all there this summer.

We want to thank the people who collaborated in this number, and again we ask your help especially for translations of articles that we'll need soon in the EU edition, to spread the news to all our European friends.

We would also appreciate your comments, to encourage us in our task, and to help us to improve. Please think already about articles, pieces of poetry, etc. you'd like to put in : let's make the newsletter be your shakuhachi magazine.

With all our best wishes,

The Publication officers :
Véronique Piron and Jose Vargas-Zuñiga

Summer has arrived! And I hope all members of the ESS and also other readers of the ESS Newsletter are enjoying this magical time of the year. Now is the season to play outside! And also, to be looking forward to the European Shakuhachi Summer School in Lisbon, which is coming up soon!

This *Letter from the Chairperson* is a very special one for me. This will be my last one! I have served 10 years as the Chairperson of the ESS. This was not planned at all. We wrote in our constitution that one person can only remain the chairperson for 2 years. Jim Franklin – the first chairperson of the ESS stayed on the post for 2 years. Then I became the chairperson... and we realised we had to change our own rule. At that time the ESS was still a new society and it had not yet settled enough to have members volunteering for the task of being a chairperson. This meant I remained on the post. First, I thought I would step down in 2017 after the WSF16. This was then prolonged to after WSF18 due to the cancellation of WSF16. And this is where we are now; 2019! The ESS has grown into a more mature society with more members, a clearer profile about our role as the shakuhachi platform in Europe, and we now also have more people who are prepared to offer their time and energy to do volunteer work for shakuhachi in Europe. This is a great achievement.

It has been done before but I cannot refrain from doing it again: going back in the history of the ESS. We had our founding general meeting at SOAS, University of London in 2006 during the first European Shakuhachi Summer School, which was organised by Michael Soumei Coxall and myself. We have since had summer schools in the following locations:

2006: London, UK

2007: Munster, France

2008: - *no summer school due to WSF08 in Sydney, Australia*

2009: Leiden, the Netherlands

2010: Prague, Czech Republic

2011: London, UK

2012: - *no summer school due to WSF12 in Kyoto, Japan*

2013: Barcelona, Spain

2014: Radolzell, Germany

2015: Paris, France

2016: Barcelona, Spain

2017: Vejle, Denmark

2018: - *no summer school due to WSF18 in London, UK*

2019: Lisbon, Portugal

I cannot refrain from being proud of what we have achieved in the ESS.

The ESS became a registered charity under the Charity Commission for England and Wales in 2008. This has worked very well during the course of the existence of the ESS. However, with Brexit threatening and the convenience of using Euro as the main

currency for the ESS – it is time for the ESS to move base. We have decided to move the headquarters to France. Thus the new ESS board will have to work on this transition from a UK-based till a France-based organisation. We cannot know presently whether this transition will happen in 2019 or 2020. However, it seems necessary to take this step. I wish the next ESS board all the best with this work and the future. I am sure we can expect great Summer Schools and other events.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the board members of the present board:

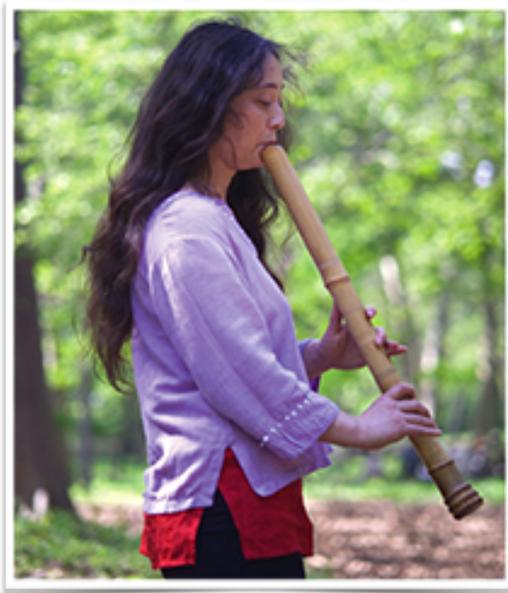
Nina Haarer, Nigel Puttergill, José Vargas, Véronique Piron and Markus Guhe.

And the past board members: Jim Franklin, Michael Soumei Coxall, Thorsten Knaub, Philip Horan, Stephanie Hiller, Joe Browning, Adrian Bain and all the advisors: Gunnar Jinmei Linder, Jean-François Suizan Lagrost, Horacio Curti, Emmanuelle Rouad, Christophe Gaston, Ruud Baanders, James Long, César Viana. If I have forgotten anybody, I apologise.

The list of names shows how many people have been involved since 2006. This is for a chairperson, who has been sitting on this post for so long – very satisfying. A big thank you to all of you for your time and efforts!

If any of the ESS members would like to help and have an influence on the ESS, please come forward.

For 52 days starting at 22 February I walked the Shikoku88 pilgrimage, which involved not only walking 1200 km but also playing at least two honkyoku pieces at all 88 temples on the route – one piece in front of the *Hondō* or Main Temple and then another in front of *Daishidō* or the temple of Kobo Daishi. This was a great way of switching over from WSF18 organisation modus to being able to feel my own body and playing again. I can say I played at least 176 honkyoku pieces in 52 days. I also played honkyoku pieces to thank people who had helped me on my way. Shakuhachi is not a party instrument unless you play *min'yō* but it has the ability to help connecting with people. This was a great experience and it was a wonderful way to prepare for the shift in my life outside the board of the ESS!

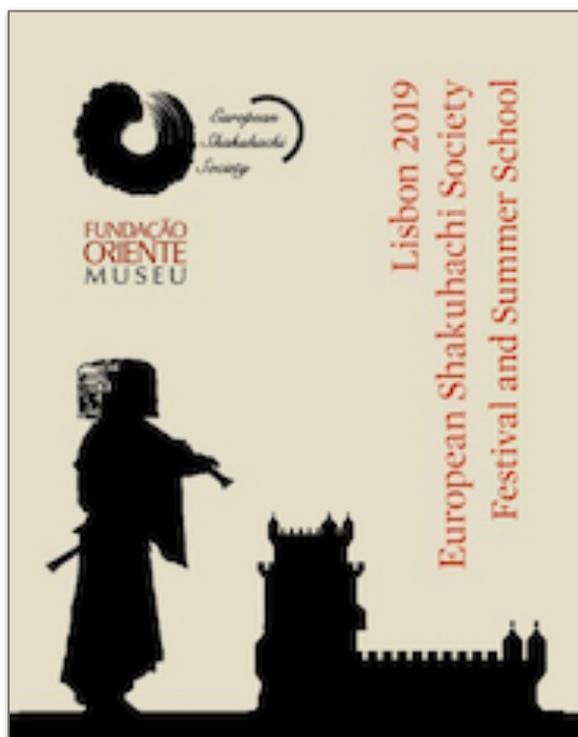


I am grateful for the trust and confidence the members of the ESS have placed in me as chairperson for this long, and wish to express a heartfelt THANK YOU! Thank you to everyone, who support the ESS.

Best wishes,
Dr. Kiku Day – chairperson of the ESS

ESS Summer School in Lisbon, July 2019

by *Michael Soumei Coxall*



Following on from last year's hugely successful World Shakuhachi Festival in London, ESS is very excited to be holding its next annual Summer School in the wonderful city of Lisbon 25th – 28th July, 2019, under the kind auspices of the Fundação Oriente Museum in Belem, right on the Tagus River, very near to the centre of Lisbon, cooled by a refreshing breeze from the sea and the sonorous tones of the shakuhachi.

This Summer School in line with all the previous ESS summer schools since its first in London in 2006, will be a celebration and rich learning experience of both traditional and contemporary Japanese music featuring some of Japan's finest musicians as well as teachers from around Europe in four days of workshops, talks, lectures and concerts making it a perfect opportunity to learn new pieces from a wide

variety of styles and genres and to mix with the growing community of shakuhachi players and teachers from across Europe and beyond.

Zenyoji Keisuke, recipient of numerous prestigious awards from the Japanese Ministry of Culture, will be teaching pieces from the Nezasa-ha repertoire as well as a grand jiuta ensemble piece while Kodama Hiroyuki will be running a 2-day shakuhachi making workshop and also teaching a major piece from the Zensabo repertoire. The third guest from Japan is rising star Kuroda Reison, the winner of the Hōgaku Journal International Shakuhachi Competition held at the World Shakuhachi 2018 Festival, who will be teaching a contemporary ensemble piece.

Workshops on other honkyoku and sankyoku styles including Hijirikai, Kinko-ryu, Tozan-ryu, Zensabo and KSK are also important features of the event as well as Min'yō classes led by Dr. David Hughes, Recipient of the Imperial Order of the Rising Sun award and the Koizumi Fumio prize for ethnomusicology, together with Prof. Gina Barnes. Another main focus of the event is looking at how the shakuhachi can be used in improvisation, both by itself and in collaboration with other instruments, and local performers including the renowned violinist Carlos Zingaro, will be joining in workshops to explore a range of ideas, while other sessions will work on developing

particular shakuhachi techniques to extend the scope of improvisation as well as playing tips.

Both the traditional sankyoku and contemporary ensemble workshops will feature two accomplished koto and shamisen players resident in Paris, Miyazaki Mieko and Takahashi Gaho, who will also be appearing in the concerts.

The workshops will be taught at two different levels: Elementary and Intermediate/Advanced. There will also be a 4-day Beginners workshop and a 2-day shakuhachi making workshop as well as individual lessons on shakuhachi, koto and shamisen depending on the teaching and learning schedules. The programme is divided into two 2-day blocs to allow participants to follow the same workshops for 2 days and then choose others for the following 2 days. 'Shakuhachi Introduction' workshops, taught in Portuguese, will also be held on the Saturday and Sunday mornings of the 27th and 28th July for complete beginners who are unable to attend the whole 4 days full-time. English will be the language of instruction in all other workshops. Participants who do not have their own shakuhachi will be able to borrow or buy inexpensive flutes at the event and other shakuhachi and related items will be on sale in the shop.

As in previous Summer Schools, concerts feature prominently at the event with an Open Mic Night on the first evening, followed by two Teacher's Concerts and ending with the Student's Concert on the Sunday before the Farewell Party. Also, for the first time at an ESS Summer School. Late Night Club Sessions are planned for the first 2 nights in a nearby club to allow anyone to perform or improvise in an informal space or just to enjoy the local vino verde wine and soak up the vibrant night life of Lisbon after a day of wonderful shakuhachi immersion.

Hope to see you there!

Full details of the event can be found at: www.lisbon2019.shakuhachisociety.eu

Suizen

*Ice scars thicken bamboo walls
To hold future tones,
Like Wind blowing
Through the bamboo grove;
Clack, clack clack...
And now a note,
Nightingale calling.*

Eric Wuersten



**Interview with Seian Genshin,
the 42nd kansu (head) of Myōanji
on the occasion of the second anniversary
since his appointment.**

by *Kiku Day*

*You'll find a previous article in ESS NL 2017-2 :
"DENPOUE A Change of Leadership for
Myoan's Taizan Ha", by Daniel Ribble (p.9)*



Seian Genshin and I have discussed the dissemination of Myōanji's shakuhachi playing in Japan and abroad – or rather the lack of it and realised that Genshin is a kansu of his era, full of new ideas and the will to make changes.

KD: Genshin sensei, you spoke about the fact that Myōanji did not have an aim to attract new players or focus on internationalisation until now. How do you see this?

SG: This is correct. There has been no awareness of the need to appeal to the outside world. Just continuing doing what we have been doing so far and just among ourselves. Our shakuhachi playing does not aim at neither stage performances or receiving applause but rather to just play facing Buddha.

Just to take an example, when Kurahashi Yodo II sensei invited us to perform at the World Shakuhachi Festival in Kyoto in 2012 we did not know how to react. Kurahashi is a board member of the Kyochiku Zenji Hōsankai at Myōanji. Some had the opinion that we do not play on stage. After some discussion we accepted the invitation. It somehow also felt like fate because of the relationship with Kurahashi sensei. But we have not really been proactive searching for performance opportunities and the various kansu before me were not conscious about this.

KD: Can you explain why there are recordings left of the older Myōanji players? Did recording pieces have the aim to leave behind sound for future Myōan players for study purposes?

SG: The aim of CDs and vinyl recordings was not to disseminate widely out to the general public. The attitude was that it would be a pity *not* to leave behind documentation. The only players who have left behind documentation of their playing are: the 37th kansu Tanikita Muchiku (谷北無竹) sensei when he was around 70 years old, Inagaki Ihaku (稲垣衣白) sensei recorded with a tape recorder the full repertoire. And then there is the recordings of my teacher the 40th kansu Yoshimura Soshin (芳村宗心) sensei, which we have released as a Booklet with CDs. But also here, the aim is to leave behind the sounds of the present best as a reference for new players of Myōan Taizan Ha style. So you can only purchase it within Myōanji. I don't think he was thinking of selling it beyond that.

KD: Now it seems like there are changes on the way at Myōanji?

SG: Japanese traditional or conservative groups will resist if reforms or transformations were made too quickly. I felt that just because I have become kansu, I could not just do as I like. Now two years have passed and I have entered my third year as kansu, slowly I wish to present the board for the basic thoughts behind the changes I would like to implement. I have therefore written a document on how I see Myōanji and our future – or rather what I want to do in the future.

Before I explain about Item 1, I would like to describe the structure of Myōanji and the subgroups existing:

1. When players have passed their kaiden, they receive what is called shihan in other ryūha but we call it dōshu. There is a group of dōshu – around 200 at present and that group is called Dōshukai (明暗導主会).
2. Then there is the group of followers or admirers of Kyochiku Zenji – the monk who founded Myōanji called Kyochiku Zenji Hōsankai (虚竹禅師奉讃会). There are many members from other schools in this group. This group does a large gathering once a year. Overall, one can say there are these two groups at Myōanji. But there is one more called:
3. Myōan Kyōkai. This was created with Higuchi Taizan as the pivotal figure in Meiji 23 (1890). This group played an important role in persuading the new Meiji government to let people play shakuhachi after the abolishment of the Fuke sect. This group exists on almost only paper and is quite inactive. It is however, still the only authority that can issue a komusō gyōka kyokasho (虚無僧行化許可証) – a permit to become a komusō. You have to pay for it of course. But this is the same document carried by komusō during the Edo period. They had to show it as identification when crossing boundaries. The komusō were allowed to enter all provinces if they showed this document called tegata. A little like a passport today. That is the only activity of Myōan Kyōkai. In Item 1, I am expressing my hope to make Myōan Kyōkai more active and play a role in the shakuhachi world today.

KD: Is Myōan Kyōkai an independent group alongside the other two?

SG: Yes, all three groups are subgroups under Myōanji. The leader above these groups is the chief priest (jyūshoku) or the kansu. Each of the groups has a board chairperson. Although there is the Komusō Kenkyūkai in Tokyo, I am hoping we can host lectures on for example on komusō at Myōanji in Kyoto. I am convinced there are people who would like to try to become a komusō, so lectures for them would be appropriate.

Item 2 is dealing with the wish to formulate the substance of Zen shakuhachi [playing shakuhachi as a Zen Buddhist ritual or meditation]

Just like a Zen monk would persist sitting down in meditation or recite sutra every day and thereby investigate Zen in order to master it, we can through the act of playing investigate and approach Zen in order to master it. That is at least what I believe. We talk about it a lot but when it comes down to practicalities, what then? I have personally – especially since I became kansu – been aware that I need to continue investigating this Zen connection and play shakuhachi with Zen awareness. From about 5 years ago – around the same time I was asked if I would consider becoming

the next kansu – I have played every morning without exception Chōshi and Kyorei, in the afternoon I play Mukaiji, Kokū and Yamato Chōshi. This I do every day. And from this year I have chosen one piece I will play 1000 times in a year. That means 3 times a day. I try to suggest to my fellow Myōan players to do the same or something similar. I feel myself that little by little by playing every day and accumulate the experience of playing as a ritual - I begin to understand a little bit of what Zen shakuhachi is. So instead of nodding to theoretical narratives about shakuhachi in Zen – even though theory is of course also important – I have assigned this challenge for myself and worked hard to do this training every single day. I do feel I have discovered aspects that can be points of reference on the way to *satori* (enlightenment) although I am far from that goal of course. However, I feel by doing it every day I have been able to systematize some experiences. I feel it is important that I – as a kansu – have worked on and have such experiences. We need to in Myōanji to accumulate more training and experiences like this.

Item 3 is about collecting other pieces related to Myōanji which are not in the Taizan-ha repertoire.

KD: Do you mean such pieces as Shinpō Ryū?

SG: Yes, Shinpō Ryū is the former repertoire of Myōanji, so they have an obvious relevance to Myōanji. Although we cannot play Shinpō Ryū at present it would be very relevant as a study of Myōanji history. There are also pieces that many of our colleagues play that somewhat relates to Myōanji. We play them sometimes but I would like to collect them and organise them so we know what we have. They are also part of [what we call] the Myōan repertoire which is an oral tradition. So I would like to – in the future record the pieces, write new clear scores and write the history and meaning of these pieces. Basically document them.

In item 4, I describe a booklet with an outline of Myōanji we are in the process of making. It is expected to be published within the next 6 month. At the end of the booklet, there will also be an English text about Myōanji and Myōan shakuhachi. That is a written publication but we actually have precious sound sources of the kansu since Higuchi Taizan, who was the 35th kansu. We are planning to put some of these recordings on to two CDs and make them available for people to use as a reference. We are editing these recordings now so they should be available within this year. They will be for sale.

As an inspiration to players interested in the spiritual aspect of shakuhachi playing, we are also making a CD for which I have recorded the ‘san kyorei pieces’ (e.g.,: Kyorei, Mukaiji and Kokū) while the Oshō (highest ranking priest in Zen Buddhism) from Myōanji have recorded ‘han’ya shingyō’ (heart sutra) and two other sutras related to Myōanji.

Just like the monks chant sutras every single morning I think of this as a CD suggesting a way to implement a practice of playing. Firstly, there will be Oshō’s ‘han’ya shingyō’, then Myōan ‘shidanoge’ (明暗四打偈) sutra. Then I play Chōshi, Mukaiji, Kokū, Yamato Chōshi. Then at the end there will be the ‘Suizen gyōke seiganmon’ (吹禪行化誓願文) sutra. We still had space left on the CD, so we have added Yamato Chōshi played by Kojima sensei using Koizumi sensei’s score. When I play it I am using Yoshimura sensei’s score. Then we have ‘Kokū’ played by Tanikita



sensei and Koizumi sensei at Nanzenji Temple in Kyoto, which also includes the wonderful sound of a temple bell - a rare post-war recording. The copyright of this recording is in the United States. We have asked Daniel Ryudo to help us to get the right to publish it. Then there is a piece relating to prayer, 'Shizu' played by Tanikita sensei and Yoshimura sensei's 'Yoshiya no kyoku'. In the end I play 'Hifumi Hachigaeshi'.

KD: You have many plans.

SG: Yes, indeed.

Item 5 deals with Japan's increasingly ageing society, which can also be said about the decreasing shakuhachi population. But in Europe, China and the US, the shakuhachi populations are increasing. Myōanji has not at all been part of this dissemination of shakuhachi

outside Japan but I believe it is important we also appeal to players both in and outside Japan. In Japan we need to show especially young players the merits of Myōan. I have also more students now. I went on a Zen meditation retreat in 'Sanzen kai'. Several people heard me playing every day and realized that the shakuhachi is also meditation and prayer and felt attracted to it. One of them has entered Myōanji and begun training. The best is to make people realise there is such a world as Myōan. I really hope we can have some key persons with kaiden (shihan) also abroad who will disseminate the style. I am also sure there will be players, who already play shakuhachi that would be interested in learning Myōan style as well. We of course welcome players who already play other styles.

KD: Does this mean to enter Myōanji? [It costs 8000 yen to become a life member of Myōanji]

SG: Yes. I hope people will appreciate the existence of Myōan. All shakuhachi styles and Ryūha are wonderful and do fantastic work. But Myōanji is trying to maintain and preserve the playing of Zen shakuhachi. I hope this can appeal to more players through the work I have described. I hope when people will discover there is such a wonderful world as well.

KD: As I understand it - one can say that of course sound changes and the Myōan style changed drastically with Higuchi Taizan's work - but it has been a group that maintained the aim of playing shakuhachi for spiritual reasons quite clearly.

SG: I think it has.

KD: Thank you so much for all the information and for describing your aims as a kansu for Myōanji. Good luck with it and thank you for your time.

*Sometimes I just blow
Because blowing is an end of stillness.*

*In this moving world,
To move as the world moves - As one with the world -
Is move into the true stillness of becoming.*

Mike McInerney

The Bell Shakuhachi – a jinashi shakuhachi replica made from a bamboo eco-composite

by Kiku Day

The news of the Bell Shakuhachi by Jon Kypros - a new alternative to the Yuu and PVC shakuhachi has spread like a wildfire across the Internet. Jon is at present constantly trying to keep up with the orders and there is a waiting time. The Bell Shakuhachi is a copy of a jinashi shakuhachi made by Jon himself. He handcrafts each Bell Shakuhachi in a mould and does the colouring of the surface, which makes it look like a real bamboo. The bamboo eco-composite material also adds to the bamboo looks. It is furthermore lighter than ABS (the type of plastic used to make LEGO bricks from which the Yuu is made) and weighs around 370 g., which is close to the weight of a standard jinuri/jiari shakuhachi and slightly heavier than a jinashi shakuhachi 1.8 – at least in my experience (these things vary of course). I was worried about the resin. Would it be a toxic glue somehow? Since the resin is part of the secret, I couldn't make Jon answer what exactly it is (fair enough as it is also a business) but he assured me that this was a part he had taken long to research and find the best solution. He told me that "the flutes are inert, no BPA (Bisphenol A), no heavy metals, not harmful. It has less if a carbon footprint than a cluster of bananas or a beef cheeseburger" in an email exchange. I understood Jon has chosen with care and thought about both environmental and health issues, which is really reassuring. The Bell Shakuhachi does not crack or split and is water resistant. Thus, you can play it in the bath or on the surfing board. So, it looks great and is hardy like any other plastic shakuhachi. So how does it play?

Once you hold it in your hand, it becomes clear that it is *not* made of bamboo. It does not quite feel like real bamboo. But it never tried to be a bamboo flute as such. It has the shape of the mould created around a jinashi shakuhachi, so I did not feel there was a problem with this. Many people, who are attracted to the shakuhachi often prefer the instrument to be made of bamboo. There is a romantic ideal of the shakuhachi being a simple instrument (or at least many thinks it is simple) made of natural material. But since bamboo root end shakuhachi can be so expensive, and I usually do not recommend people to buy a root-end shakuhachi before they know playing this instrument is something they want to continue for a long time – then the Bell Shakuhachi is a great alternative since it looks so close to a real bamboo shakuhachi. And plays so easily and well.



The Bell Shakuhachi is well tuned. It is a fairly slim standard bore size shakuhachi, which I think is good if you are in the early days of your shakuhachi journey. One of my students found the utaguchi to be too narrow – but I believe for most people it would be great. It is responsive, has a big tone and basically plays like any good standard shakuhachi. I personally do not think it is important whether the mould was made from a jinashi shakuhachi or not. It actually plays well however you blow. The Bell Shakuhachi would therefore be a great stepping stone for any player who at a later point will be interested in continuing with either jinashi or jinuri shakuhachi. It really didn't feel like an extreme jinashi type of flute you which would not be able to respond positively to strong jiari shakuhachi breathing techniques.

I am sure it is obvious for the reader at this point - but I can highly recommend the Bell Shakuhachi for any player starting out on the long and windy shakuhachi journey or for anyone who needs a sturdy shakuhachi to travel with or have lying around in the house so you can pick it up and play at when-ever you happen to pass by it without worrying about it cracking. I am really happy we now have this decent priced alternative to a bamboo shakuhachi!

Thank you Jon!

Maker: Jon Kypros

Price: \$159

For more information see: <http://flutedojo.com/shakuhachi-for-sale/bell-shakuhachi>

Interview with Miura Ryuho

By Jose Vargas-Zuñiga

Miura Ryuho is one of the most successful makers today, and a key person in developing the contemporary shakuhachi.

JV- Many thanks for your time, could you please tell us how did your shakuhachi journey begin?

MR- When I was in primary school, I used to play recorder. Around 1962, when I was about 10 years, I met a man playing min'yô shakuhachi in the street, that was my first contact with the instrument. Then I watched Misora Hibari, the woman pop singer, on the TV, singing a song called Yawara with Minoru Muraoka, a famous shakuhachi player. That was the second meeting.

I was in high school when I bought a cheap shakuhachi in a music shop, then I began playing. One day, coming back from school by bicycle, I heard the sound of a shakuhachi, I knocked at the door, and I found my first teacher. He was a sankyoku player, and so I began learning sankyoku, if he had been a min'yô player, then I would be playing min'yô now.

He was also a shakuhachi maker. I loved handcrafting, and though he did not teach me shakuhachi making, he showed me all the tools, and I began making by myself.

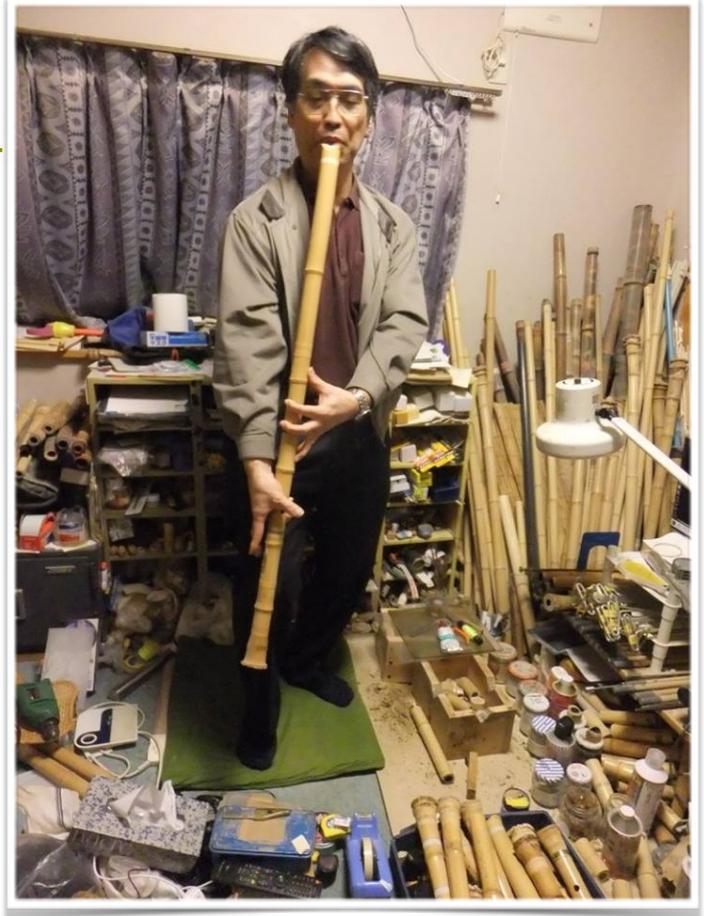
When I left high school, I got a job in Yamaha, in Hamamatsu, I stood there for two years. Hamamatsu was closed to Shimizu, where the Yokoyama family lived. Somebody introduced me to Yokoyama Rampo, and that's how my career started.

I was told that Yokoyama Rampo was a famous shakuhachi maker, and I wanted to learn from him, but he just said "No", when I asked. He didn't take shakuhachi making students, so I had to do it by myself, and slowly, little by little, I started making shakuhachi.

I made some long shakuhachi, and both, Yokoyama Rampo and Yokoyama Katsuya were shocked in the beginning, those days long shakuhachi were unusual. Now, 2.4 shakuhachi are standard, and they are considered medium size, but then, long bamboo were something used to hang the washed clothes. Yamaha factory was by a bamboo forest, so I went there at midnight and harvested some long poles, but they were not good at all.

JV- So, you had no shakuhachi making teacher?

MR- Some makers showed me the tools and some techniques, but 95% I learnt by



myself. But I could do my free will, and had no limitations from a teacher, as a result that was good.

I studied many shakuhachi from different makers, and developed my own way from there.

JV- Which are the differences from the old making ways, comparing to your way?

That's a difficult question to explain in words, let's say I tried to make shakuhachi able to play all different kinds of music, that's the main difference. Also, many makers crafted 1.8 shakuhachi, but very few makers, or none at all, made long shakuhachi.

Old long shakuhachi were jinashi, I was the first one who started making long jiari.

My inspiration was the saxophone family, soprano, alto, tenor, etc., I tried to do the same with shakuhachi. But I had to make a lot of different calculations and experiments.

I was also inspired by the okurauro, a Japanese instrument made before world war II, up to 3.7 shaku long, another kind of flute with utaguchi. I never listen to any of them, there are in museums, but I knew it was possible making such long instruments.

Besides, if you cut the head of a recorder, you have something like a shakuhachi, and recorders have different lengths, some are very long too.

JV- Which shakuhachi lengths are the shortest and longest you have made?

MR- I made from 1.1 to 3.7 jiari shakuhachi.

JV- I suppose you make those long ones in three parts, at least...

MR- Yes, and I made a 3.7 with 6 holes. (He looks for a picture in his phone to show me)

JV- Then, the next question is: who can play that length? I would like to meet that person. (He shows me the picture of himself playing that 3.7) So, it's you the one who can play it, amazing. (We both laugh)

MR- I don't make instruments I cannot play.

JV- Could you tell about your playing masters?

MR- I learnt from Yokoyama Ranpo in Shimizu for 2 or 3 years, then he recommended me going to Tokyo to learn from his son, Yokoyama Katsuya. I received lessons from him, more or less for a year, and that was the beginning of our relation. I moved to Kokubunji in Tokyo, but at that time I had no job, and the money run out, so I went back to Akita because I had a proposal to teach shakuhachi there.

I stood in Akita for seven years, and I started repairing shakuhachi. I received instruments from many different makers, and I had the opportunity of studying them. Those years, though I did not make many instruments, I worked on my long shakuhachi.

The koto players in Akita looked for me to play sankyoku with them, Akita was the countryside, there were not many players, and I learnt to play modern styles with Yokoyama Katsuya, so people were happy with my playing.

At that time I married, and my wife was a classical singer, so I wanted to study more how to play with singing, and we moved together to Tokyo again. I continued learning shakuhachi playing from Yokoyama Katsuya, and then I started to work with him,



making the Yokoyama brand shakuhachi. That was around 1985. We worked a lot together, he had many students who asked to make many new shakuhachi, and there my career as a maker began.

JV- You played many different styles, which is your favourite?

MR- I would say honkyoku is my favourite style.

JV- And finally, there is anything you would like to say, to end this interview?

(He thinks about, and doubts...)

JV- Maybe, please buy my instruments,.. (We laugh)

MR- Yokoyama sensei made wonderful music, but the instruments' requirements are difficult. Not many shakuhachi can play that style correctly. My aim always was to make shakuhachi able to play that music with the right pitch and volume. I would like European people to know more about Yokoyama's music.

Sometimes, my instruments go abroad, to America for instance, and the owner wants the tuning adjusted, because they think tsu note is too low. But I made it that way in order for the instrument to play tsu no meri with the right pitch. I would like people to understand that.

JV- Thank you very much for your time and kindness.

(Many thanks to my jiri shakuhachi making sensei Takahashi Toyomi, for his invaluable help with this interview)

by Thorsten Knaub





**CD FLOT SUSPENDU / *SUSPENDED FLOW*
(Véronique Piron, 2018)**

by **Mike McInerney**

Studio Gimini, Brittany-France
Gérard Lhomme

1. Passageway
2. Incantation
3. *Shingetsu*
4. Suspended Flow
5. *Daha*
6. Messenger-flight
7. *Reibo*
8. Migration
9. *Kuyô no kyoku*
10. *Mukaiji*

Flot Suspendu (Suspended Flow) combines core repertoire pieces from the Hon Kyoku with original compositions from the performing artist, Véronique Piron. The album has been carefully put together with an ear to overall flow and shape, and the repertoire pieces have been well selected to articulate this shape, while counterpointing the original compositions that they surround. The understated use of double tracking and interspersed natural ambiances in her own compositions underpins the abiding aesthetic, which emphasises atmosphere and references from the natural world.

The album opens with an evocative compound of non-instrumental sounds – moving water, a suitably monastic bell and, later on, the sounds of birds in a rural landscape. These provide a supportive ambience for the first track, *Passageway*, which combines them with a shortened rendition – the opening five phrases rounded off with an original coda - of *Mukaiji* (translated here as *Flute in the Ocean Mist*).

Piron's playing style has a great clarity of tone and an elegant way with nuance. There is something refined, yet steely, about the way she approaches the core repertoire, and the pieces chosen by her for this album have given her a chance to revel in this combination of grace and power. *Daha*, for instance, which forms the fifth track, breaks the contemplative mood which has suffused the album to this point with a performance of striking vigour. *Shingetsu*, by contrast (track 3), is gently and soberly placed. It has been closely miked by Lhomme, which allows the listener to get close to the incidental sounds which, in this performance, play a key role in its expression.

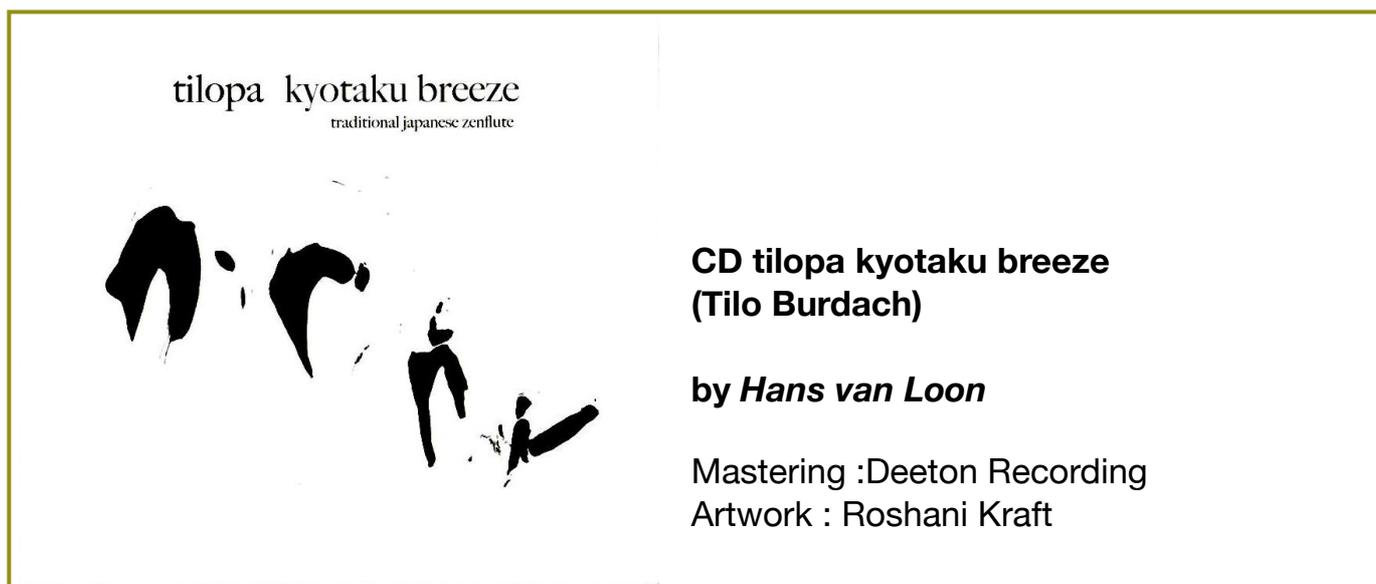
The four original tracks that are interlaced between these repertoire pieces – *Incantation* (tr. 2), *Suspended Flow* (tr. 4), *Messenger-Flight* (Tr. 6) and *Migration* (tr. 8) – allow Mme Piron to explore her own melodic sensibility. Each track is accompanied by its own subtle ambience, either from shakuhachi double-tracking or from the inclusion of natural acoustic sounds. The depth of tone heard in her Hon Kyoku solos is now applied to a pitch series which is both unconventional and radical, in the purest sense of the word, in being derived simply from the “five holes of the flute, [either] open or closed” (from the album cover notes). Choosing this resource as her basis has enabled the artist to create a soundworld whose consistency only reveals itself to the listener over time, as it appears through these four pieces, and which enables her to explore subtle, but invariant, contrasts of pitch and tone. For me, it was not until 3½ minutes into *Messenger-Flight*, when the melody dips into a ruminative section clearly reminiscent of the opening of *Incantation*, that the consistency and evocative power of this device really became apparent.

Messenger-Flight is the most substantial of the four original works. Reminiscent of Frank Denyer’s *Winged Play* (1984) in its almost conversational use of trills to evoke something avian and mercurial, it displays Piron’s substantial understanding of the shakuhachi in the number of subtly contrasted, corresponding, and always idiomatic trills and shakes she has found across the instrument’s range.

Piron’s inherent musicality shines through these compositions in the way that one melodic phrase grows organically from its predecessor. Her ability to sustain this melodic flow is apparent in the opening section of *Incantation*, which opens with more than three minutes of unbroken melodic development, and continues with alternating sections of variable length, each exploring a melodic fragment in the same vein. The parallels, and tensions, between this approach and Hon Kyoku melodic development lends the album an ambivalent sense of unity.

The album closes as it began, with a soundscape of water, bell and bird song. Finally, *Mukaiji* is played in full, on a longer instrument, bringing Piron’s musical expedition to a satisfyingly grounded conclusion.

Link to the [Cd page](#)



I am glad to be able to announce a new CD of *Kyotaku*, made by my teacher Tilo Burdach (Tilopa). Especially as there are not so many *Kyotaku* CDs available, this remarkable addition is very welcome. The CD contains some of the most played traditional Honkyoku pieces by the *Kyotaku* School:

01. Koku
02. Kyorei
03. Ajikan
04. Reibo
05. Saji



Where the playing by Koku Nishimura is very strong, Samurai style and powerful, Tilopa's masterful playing is characterized by its pureness and naturalness of sound. You can hear and feel the softness; very relaxing to listen to. The playing is very smooth and the breathing feels so natural, with taking all the time for the in-breath. He really takes his time to let every tone take its place. The sound lets the silence shine through. A real masterpiece in my opinion.

The mastering of the CD is done very well by Deeton Recording. The artwork on the cover is by Thilo's wife Roshani Kraft and gives the CD an extra Zen impression. So, I can really recommend the CD, and I am sure that even non-shakuhachi people will enjoy this very relaxing playing very much.

Cd to be ordered directly to : tiloburdach@web.de
Tilo Burdach, website : [www. http://tilopa.de/](http://tilopa.de/)

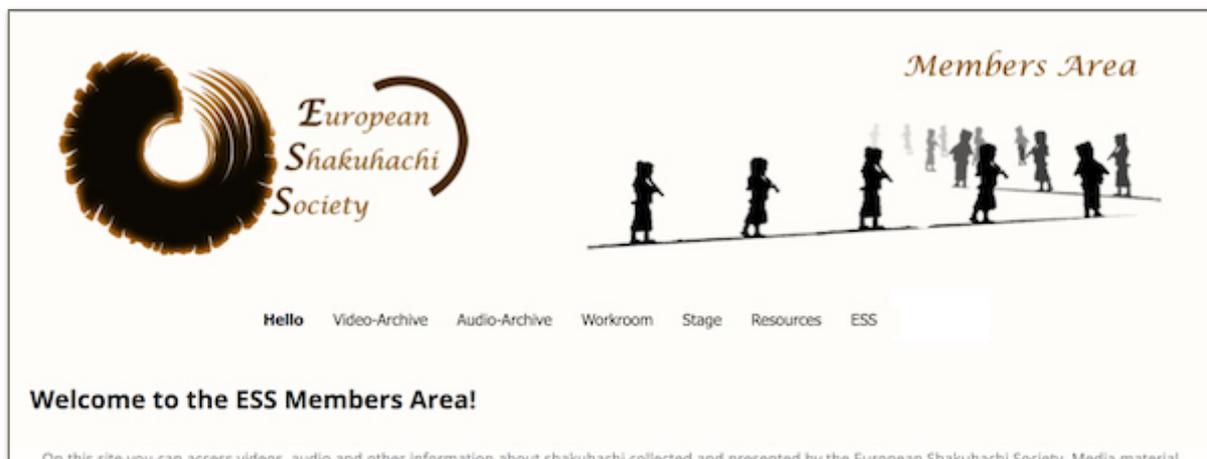
ESS Members Area online now

by **Thorsten Knaub**

Ex-media and communication officer for the ESS

I want to introduce you to a new aspect of your ESS membership which was launched at the end of February 2019: The ESS Members Area.

For several years there was an intention, being voiced in various AGMs over the years, to create some kind of online space focusing on the members and to provide a tangible benefit for being a member of the European Shakuhachi Society, who through their yearly contribution help to facilitate the Summer Schools and to maintain our online presence and in turn help to support the growth and diversification of the shakuhachi throughout Europe. Finally there was enough time to put the finishing touches on the members website and upload and organise the existing materials.



The Members Area [<http://members.shakuhachisociety.eu>] exists as an exclusive online archive and repository encompassing resources like the Video/Audio Archive with concert recordings of past Summer Schools and events. For the time being there are video recordings covering concert performances at Radolfzell (2014), Barcelona (2013) as well as short extracts about London (2011) and London (2006) published. [e.g. <http://members.shakuhachisociety.eu/video-archive/barcelona-2013/>]

There are also audio only recordings covering two pre-Summerschool concerts from Radolfzell (*Shakuhachi – The Japanese Flute* featuring the Japanese guests FURUYA Teruo, KAKIZAKAI Kaoru & MATAMA Kazushi) and *Bamboo Old and New*, a concert featuring teachers and guests of Radolfzell 2014.

[<http://members.shakuhachisociety.eu/audio-archive/radolfzell-2014/>]

Besides the audio-visual content, there is a section 'Resources' where members can access Summer School notation and relevant audio reference samples spanning the years 2014 to 2017. [<http://members.shakuhachisociety.eu/notation/>]. There are also the complete back-issues of the ESS newsletter starting from October 2006 which make interesting reading and give a good overview of the development of the shakuhachi activities in Europe during that period. [<http://members.shakuhachisociety.eu/resources/ess-newsletters/>]. This 'Resources' section aims to include more information regarding e.g. shakuhachi making in the future.

Members Area

European Shakuhachi Society

Hello **Video-Archive** Audio-Archive Workroom Stage Resources ESS

VIDEO ARCHIVE EUROPEAN SHAKUHACHI SUMMER SCHOOL BARCELONA 25th – 28th July 2013

MUSIC of SILENCE (I)

Teachers' Concert 25.07.2013, L'Auditori ESMUC

Teachers' Concert Barcelona 2013

Franklin, composed by Miquel Ollu.

Teachers' Concert Barcelona 2013
"Tsuru no Sugomori" performed by Horacio Curti.

Teachers' Concert Barcelona 2013
"Under the Rose" (Premiere) performed by Kakizakai Kaoru. Under the Rose was

Teachers' Concert Barcelona 2013
"Bamboo Born" performed by John Kalzan Neptune and Daniel Pérez (electric guitar).

Teachers' Concert Barcelona 2013
"West of Somewhere" performed by John Kalzan Neptune and Daniel Pérez (electric

**SUMMER SCHOOL
25 – 28 July 2013**

Other sections in the Members Area which are only penciled in for now, include the 'Workroom' and the 'Stage' pages. These are there to show potential directions to expand the members site in the future, with e.g. the 'Workroom' would host explanatory videos or other materials created by experienced players/teachers covering particular techniques or pieces, the 'Stage' offering a place to live stream ESS or related events.

The exact direction and feasibility, taking into account available time and administrative resources, of these or other future expansions will need to be discussed between members and present/future committees.

Presently it may be prudent to focus onto an increase of the existing audio-visual aspect of the site. Largely the videos came from my own documentations and production, and I would like to use the space here to ask any members who have unpublished material relating to the remit of the Members Area (e.g. Summer School workshop or concert footage) to get in touch with the ESS to see if any of this could be considered to be included in the future.

For now the videos which are lined up to be uploaded during this year will include the jam session between John Kaizan Neptune and Brian Tairaku Ritchie (electric bass) during the first Summer School in London 2006, a recent video document *Jinashi Shakuhachi Making* by Kiku Day following KODAMA Hiroyuki talking and demonstrating his jinashi shakuhachi making process. Furthermore there is the video documentation of the 2011 concert at SOAS, London, *Folk Music Japan: a celebration of Tōhoku*, a charity concert in response to the earthquake and tsunami catastrophe in Japan in 2011, featuring YOSHIHIRO Endo, the special min'yō guest of the 2011 ESS Summer School. And of course there will be some footage about WSF2018 in London at some stage too.

Once new material is uploaded an email will be sent to all current members and any member with a valid membership subscription can access the online content. If you have not received the current password or just subscribed recently to ESS membership, please contact the ESS at member@shakuhachisociety.eu or info@shakuhachisociety.eu to receive instructions on how to access the members site.

Enjoy!

The ESS Guidelines for Contributors

The aim of the ESS 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, therefore, includes, among others, a diverse range of topics and new ideas, information, knowledge, materials and reflections on shakuhachi and the people who shape the musical scene.

As far as is practical, the articles will be translated into some of the main languages used in the European shakuhachi context. All this is accomplished by the selfless effort of the authors, translators and editors.

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 articles' will be issued and a deadline for submission 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:

1. Please feel free to contact us on the topic you would like to write about beforehand and keep in mind that the ESS Newsletter does not publish information on future events (except those organised by the ESS), instead ESS calendar updates will be sent out periodically. These will aim to include all upcoming events across Europe.
2. 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.
3. Article length: the Newsletter includes articles of different lengths up to approximately 2,000 words.
4. 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.
5. Please use as many multi-media materials as possible including pictures and external links.
6. Please send the pictures or other multi-media materials separately (contact the editors if the size of the files makes them difficult to be sent by e-mail).
7. Please send your pictures in jpg, png or tiff format with a minimum resolution of 150 dpi.
8. Please provide acknowledgement/credit for the use of any other author's material.
9. Please avoid self-promotion

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 articles will then be translated when possible and the issue formatted.

This 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

ESS Membership

The European Shakuhachi Society is a non-profit organisation and a registered UK charity 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 discounts at www.shakuhachi.com and also fee reductions for the annual European Shakuhachi Summer Schools (discounts that are generally greater than the cost of the membership fee itself). The annual membership fee is €20.

To join the ESS:

1) Visit the membership page on the ESS website and choose the membership

subscription which suits you.

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.

Ways to get in touch

Homepage

ESS homepage (including event calendar): <http://shakuhachisociety.eu>

Previous newsletters: <http://shakuhachisociety.eu/publications/newsletter/>

Email

General enquiries: info@shakuhachisociety.eu

ESS membership: member@shakuhachisociety.eu

ESS newsletter: newsletter@shakuhachisociety.eu

Forum

www.shakuhachiforum.eu

Facebook

[European Shakuhachi Society Facebook Group](#)

Twitter

Follow us on twitter [@ESS_Events](#)

To announce an event on the Twitter account of the ESS, please send your message to this email address : twitter@shakuhachiforum.eu

