

Spring / Summer 2023

BAMBOO

Newsletter of the European Shakuhachi Society

ESS Dublin 2023

Experiences in Japan

Riley Lee

Araki Kodō VI

LeRon Harrison

Markus Guhe

Interview with Kakizakai Kaoru

Zensabo Ukraine

Reviews

Art & collaborations

Interview with José María
Sánchez-Verdú, composer

World Shakuhachi Festival
Texas 2025



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Letter from the chairperson

Dear ESS Members and shakuhachi friends,

Hope you are all well and let me welcome you to this new edition of BAMBOO.

The main event on the horizon is of course the ESS Summer School in Dublin, which takes place from 20 to 23 July 2023. After our last summer event was in 2019 in Lisbon and due to the pandemic we could not stage a safe and sound event in the intermittent years, it is really hard to overstate how great it is to have the Dublin event so close now.

To meet in person, exchange ideas and experience the sound of shakuhachi close up is what it is all about in this community. And this year's venue, the Irish Institute of Song and Music in Balbriggan, County Dublin, (Balbriggan is a small sea-side town about 40 minutes by train to Dublin City centre), certainly has the make-up as a place of communal experience. The venue has its own on campus accommodation option (Bedford Quarters Hostel), which is available at a special rate for participants and for catering there is a Café and Restaurant on site too. The venue has also outdoor space and a garden with sitting areas to relax. And if you want to change the scenery for a moment just take a stroll on the nearby beach.

Needless to say the ESS and Philip Horan with his team in Ireland are working hard to deliver a great Summer School experience, fine tuning schedules and concert programmes. In addition this year the ESS offered a special grant to the organisers to sponsor two European Teachers participation of their choice at the Summer School - Naoko Kikuchi and Jean-François Suizan Lagrost.

And to bring you a taster of all the invitees and their teaching projects, we just launched a series of video introductions on our recently refurbished YouTube channel [youtube.com/@europeanshakuhachisociety]. Please have a look.

This year's line up again: Riley Lee, Araki Kodo VI, Naoko Kikuchi, Kiku Day, Michael Soumei Coxall, Horacio Curti, Suizan Jean-François Suizan Lagrost, Emmanuelle Rouaud, Thorsten Knaub, José Seizan Vargas and Philip Suimei Horan.

Find all the information here: dublin2023.shakuhachisociety.eu/

As far as the ESS public platforms go I am also happy to report that the ESS now has a dedicated ESS Facebook Page run by the ESS Board, [facebook.com/europeanshakuhachisociety/] which focuses on presenting ESS events and bits and pieces from the growing archive of the ESS. Feel free to pop in and comment, we are always interested in feedback and thoughts. This new FB Page works in tandem with our established but newly named ESS Community Facebook Group run by dedicated volunteers. [facebook.com/groups/156126251071128]

And as always, please feel free to contact us at info@shakuhachisociety.eu with any suggestions, comments or questions.

Take care and hope to see you in Balbriggan, Dublin!

Best wishes
Thorsten Knaub, ESS Chairperson

Letter from the editors

Dear ESS members and shakuhachi people,

We are happy to present to you the Spring/Summer 2023 edition of BAMBOO, the Newsletter of the European Shakuhachi Society.

This is our first issue as editors of BAMBOO. Constituting a new team has been a challenge. We have learned how to work internally, establish internal calendars, work as a team, learn how to use editing software and many other things. For this reason, we have maintained the general design of the magazine, and we have tried to continue with the profile of level from the previous issues.

In the first pages there is information about the ESS Summer School that will take place from 20-23 July 2023 in Dublin. On the last pages you will find links to the videos of the Road to Dublin Online Events 2 & 3. Enjoy!

One of the main themes of this issue has been to collect experiences in Japan, complementing the previous issue's articles on transmission. Riley Lee explains four photographs that illustrate his time in Japan when he was a student, many years ago. Araki Kodō VI also tells us in detail some experiences with his father, emphasising advice before going on stage to perform a concert. LeRon Harrison offers us some reflections from the perspective of an American *gagaku* performer. Finally, Markus Guhe explains his experience within the framework of the KSK Europe scholarship studying with Kakizakai Kaoru.

Another issue we want to emphasize is the creation of new music for shakuhachi, and especially from composers who are dedicated professionally and primarily to composition. Many of them are not shakuhachi performers, but as professional composers they can give an interesting and creative perspective on shakuhachi composition and improvisation. In this context, we publish an interview with the composer José María Sánchez-Verdú, one of the greatest exponents of current European creation, and whose catalog includes a work for shakuhachi and guitar. On the same path, Jim Franklin presents his experiences with shakuhachi and live electronics.

Clive Bell gives us a nice CD review of a Riley Lee album. Markus Guhe collaborates with an interesting interview and a concert review of Kakizakai Kaoru's concert in Edinburgh. In wartime, the shakuhachi group from Zensabo Ukraine gives us a review of the meeting they had with Atsuya Okuda. There is also space for the expression of other artistic disciplines, with drawings by Tamara Rogozina, Julien Richard and Sean Riley, as well as some haikus by Kerry King. BAMBOO welcomes collaborations from people connected to shakuhachi regardless of their level of practice. For this reason, we are glad to have a "Report of a shakuhachi beginner", by Samarpan David Kent.

Finally, there is an announcement about the World Shakuhachi Festival that will take place in 2025. A great event!

We would not like to end this letter without thanking the valuable and kind collaboration of Hawwa Morales, who has assisted us in organising the ESS Newsletter Team with this new period. Thank you so much, Hawwa!

Happy reading & thanks again for all your contributions!

ESS Newsletter publishing team

ESS SUMMER SCHOOL

20-23 JULY 2023

RILEY LEE ARAKI KODŌ VI NAKO KIKUCHI KIKU DAY
MICHAEL SOUMEI COXALL SUIZAN JEAN-FRANÇOIS LAGROST
HORACIO CURTI JOSÉ SEIZAN VARGAS THORSTEN KNAUB
EMMANUELLE ROUAUD PHILIP SUIMEI HORAN



ESS SUMMER SCHOOL

The ESS Summer School is back!

Almost unbelievably the last time where we all could meet face to face to play and learn shakuhachi together was in 2019 in Lisbon. Although we had regular virtual gatherings through our Zoom programme, we were still looking forward to the opportunity to share again the same location and experience the social mingling and exchange the ESS Summer Schools bring along with them.

Now thanks to Philip Horan and his team in Ireland, who, after the 2020 covid induced cancellation and the huge disappointment to be stopped in mid-organisation, picked themselves up again and brought the ESS event to Ireland after all.

Rocky Road to Dublin indeed, but now we are ready and have a fantastic line-up and programme prepared to make this a memorable and exciting shakuhachi summer!

Dates: Thursday 20 July to Sunday 23 July 2023

Venue: Irish Institute of Music and Song, Balbriggan, County Dublin

All the info here: dublin2023.shakuhachisociety.eu

Who is teaching and a quick glance at some of this year's sessions

As our guests from afar, we welcome **Riley Lee**, with a shakuhachi experience and career spanning 50+ years and with over 70 albums to his credit, probably the most streamed shakuhachi player with 40 million+ listenings.

Lee will teach arrangements of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). His recently released triple CD of her music, *Breath of the Earth / Songs of Hildegard* featured the *honkyoku*-like songs by this visionary medieval composer. His workshops will also feature his original composition 'Adrift on the sea of tranquility' and the unique Chikuho *honkyoku* 'Ryuhei' with its mantra-like final section.

We are also very happy to have **Araki Kodō VI**, the current head of the Kodō lineage. A rare opportunity to encounter the Kodō lineage's perspective on the tradition of Kinko-ryū shakuhachi, which is carried now into the sixth generations by the Araki family.

Kodō VI will teach *honkyoku* such as Shika no Tone and Tsuki no Kyoku from Kodō-kai, his family lineage. He will also share the unique approach of his father's playing in the teaching of the *sankyoku* 'Chidori no kyoku'.

Kiku Day, besides teaching pieces of the Zensabo style, will give two fascinating talks. The first, 'The multi-faceted Shakuhachi: Militarism, Healing and Spirituality' will explore the role of the shakuhachi during the first half of the 20th century of Japanese militarism and nationalism. Another talk, The shakuhachi, its capricious background and the body in performance will look at the role of Zen in shakuhachi and explore the *komi-buki* technique.

Michael Soumei Coxall (Chikumeisha) will lead workshops in traditional *sankyoku* music including 'Keshi no Hana' and 'Sono no Aki.'

Horacio Curti (KSK) will teach *honkyoku* from his school as well as an improvisation workshop.

Suizan Jean-François Lagrost (Tozan) will teach the duet Tsuido by Yamamoto Hozan as well as the *honkyoku* Iwashimizu.

Emmanuelle Rouaud will present the music of contemporary French composer Henri Algadafe in concert and workshops, teaching De Vagues et d'élans for shakuhachi & electric guitar.

Emmanuelle Rouaud & Thorsten Knaub will present a practical orientated workshop spread over three sessions exploring the use of experimental and contemporary shakuhachi techniques in the context of Improvisation, Narrative & Moving Image.

Jose Vargas will give an improvisation with live electronics workshop as well as a talk on bamboo.

For Irish music enthusiasts, **Philip Suimei Horan** will lead workshops in playing Irish music on shakuhachi. There will also be beginner workshops for tin whistle and bodhrán. All participants will also be invited to experience the fun of an Irish céilí (Irish dancing) and some live Irish music.

As for koto and shamisen we welcome **Naoko Kikuchi**, one of the outstanding current players, equally at home in traditional as in the contemporary music styles.

Get to know them at: dublin2023.shakuhachisociety.eu/teachers/

There is also a 2-day ji-nashi shakuhachi making workshop (**Jose Vargas & Thorsten Knaub**). Please tick the box on the registration form to secure your place. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

We also set aside time for a session for questions, repair, etc, relating to jinashi (José) jiari (Thorsten).

All in all there will be 50+ workshops, masterclasses, talks, concerts, etc. so to see the whole programme take a moment to get to know the pieces and activities on offer at:

<http://dublin2023.shakuhachisociety.eu/schedule/>

Teaching Levels

In general, teaching will be offered at four levels: beginners, elementary, intermediate and advanced. For those who have never played the shakuhachi before and who want to discover this amazing instrument, there will also be a 4-day beginners' course taught by experienced professional players. Shakuhachi will be available to borrow or buy.



Registration

There is still time to register and join us in Ireland this summer. There is a **standard 4-day / discounted ESS members 4-day pass**, a **student/discounted ESS members student pass** as well as a **day pass**. The registration fees cover all group teaching, workshops, talks, concerts and activities at the Summer School.

Alternatively there is an **online package**, which includes selected live streams from the main teaching room with different teachers each day to allow online participants to join and sit in virtually for the classes/workshops. The package includes a live stream of the teacher's concert. Additionally the online participants will also have access to all the Summer School materials (scores, mp3, etc.).

For exact details and overview of the different registration options please visit:

<http://dublin2023.shakuhachisociety.eu/fees-and-payment/>

The registration/payment page can also be accessed directly here:

<http://shakuhachisociety.eu/dublin-2023-pp/>

Accommodation

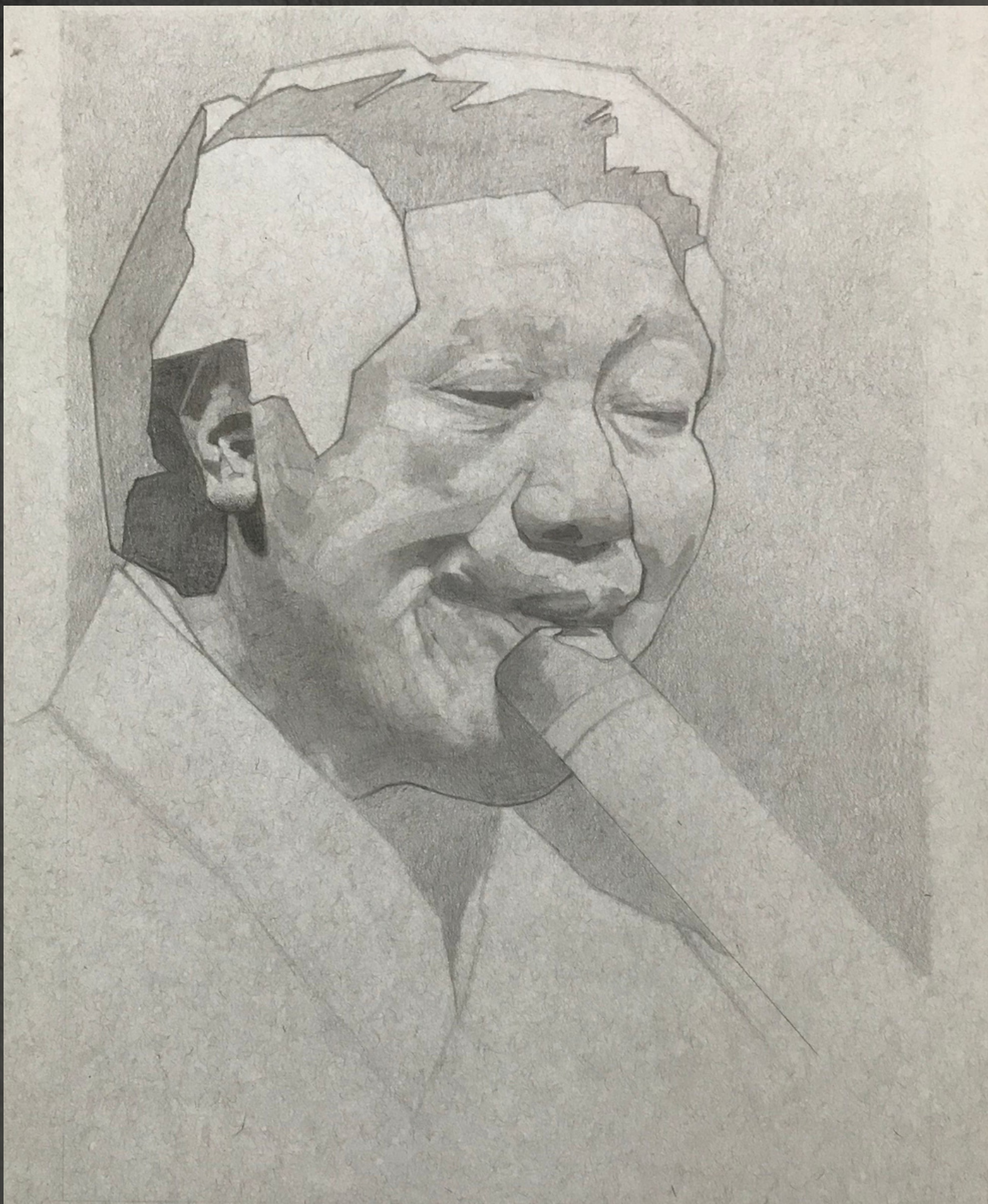
The Summer School location in County Dublin is the small sea side town of Balbriggan. The town is a very popular holiday destination and to avoid disappointment we would recommend to you to book your accommodation as soon as possible.

There are two special ESS Dublin 2023 accommodation offers:

1. The Venue itself has an on campus hostel style facility, the Bedford Quarters Hostel, which is available at a special price for Summer School participants and can only be booked through the website. Overall the rooms have 36 beds available.
2. The beautiful Bracken Court Hotel is less than 5 minutes walk from the Summer School venue. There is a discount code for Summer School participants.

For either of these offers see full details and booking process at:

dublin2023.shakuhachisociety.eu/accommodation/



Sean Riley
Kinya Sogawa, 2022

RILEY LEE

Riley Lee explains four old photographs from the time when he was a shakuhachi student in Japan.



This photo was taken at Honolulu Airport in the early 1980s. Yokoyama Sensei is in the middle. I don't remember the name of the person on the right. He was a 747 pilot for Northwest Orient Airlines and as a hobby, flew this small 4-seater, his own little 'toy'.

Back then many (most?) long haul Pacific flights stopped in Hawai'i to refuel. Yokoyama Sensei was in Honolulu for a few days in between a big tour of the mainland USA and returning to Japan. My long-term student Terry Ueno, had a senior position in Northwest Orient's ground staff. He would frequently possible, bump me up to business class whenever I flew to Japan on his airline (back in the day when that was easier to do!). Terry thought Yokoyama Sensei would enjoy a joyride in a small plane over Oahu, so he arranged for his friend, the pilot to take us up one morning.

It was great up above the islands and the ocean. Yokoyama Sensei, as expected, was thoroughly enjoying the ride. That is, until suddenly after a bit of turbulence, a bolt suddenly fell from the ceiling of the plane, possibly into Sensei's lap. He jumped and yelled. The pilot looked over his shoulder, saw the bolt, then glanced up to where it had fallen from. He then said totally nonchalantly, "Don't worry. That's nothing important", and continued to point out more interesting sights down below.

Yokoyama Sensei was noticeably quieter after that. I think he was quite relieved when we finally landed. :-)



This picture was probably taken around the mid 1970s. From left to right, Konō Gyokuzan (younger son), Konō Gyokusui I, Sakai Chikuho II (2nd row) and Konō Gyokusui II (older son). In the background is Gyokusui's storage shed. If you look closely, you can see big square 'bins'. The bins are three rows high and I think there are five bins per row. To the right on the other side of the shed are more bins.

The bins are full of cut bamboo. Each bin was one year's harvest (done by professional shakuhachi bamboo cutters by this stage). So there were at least a couple of decades of bamboo being cured in the shed. The father and two sons (all shakuhachi makers) didn't make as many shakuhachi in a year as there are bamboo in each bin. This meant that they had the luxury of choosing only the better pieces to make into shakuhachi.

While walking slowly back to the house for a cup of tea, Gyokusui I took me aside and said, "You know, I really don't know how to make good shakuhachi." That certainly stopped me in my tracks! At that time, he would have been in his 70s, and so probably would have been making shakuhachi for half a century. He was definitely considered a master maker in the shakuhachi community. Gyokusui looked at me and continued, "Yes, all of my good shakuhachi are just flukes!"

I think Gyokusui's definition of 'good' would equate to my definition of 'exceptionally, unbelievably superb'! What a lovely, yet powerful lesson he gave me during that brief stroll back to the house. Two lessons, really. One about how to carry humility, lightly, not making a big deal about it. The other lesson was about setting my own standards for myself and setting them much higher than the standards others might set for me.



This photo, I believe was taken during a lesson with Yokoyama Sensei in 1988 or 1989. If so, it would have been at Bisei in Okayama, where Sensei founded the International Shakuhachi Study Centre (KSK). The reason I think it's then is because of the shakuhachi lying in front of me. I can date the photo from it. It has to be very long (the nodes or joints are so far apart!). It also has a noticeable kink around the 3rd joint from the root end.

That flute I believe is one that Nara-based Yamaguchi Shūgetsu made for me while I was in Japan for a year (1988-1989) doing research for my PhD thesis. It is about 3.1 shaku in length, and its fundamental is F. I probably brought it to my lesson to show Yokoyama-sensei, though I don't remember this. It's a very good flute, but doesn't come apart and is, alas, too long to travel with these days.

Notice the cassette player to my left. I don't remember that either; it might have been Sensei's for students who wanted to record their lessons. I almost never recorded my lessons, so I'm pretty sure it wasn't my cassette player. But who knows? I have forgotten a lot of things!

It's difficult to tell in this old photo (sorry, I don't have a higher resolution copy), but Yokoyama Sensei could be singing, while I followed. I sometimes thought his singing was even better than his shakuhachi-playing, if that was possible. After I finished the piece or the section I was working on, he often asked all the other students in the room to critique my playing, in the sense of what could be improved. But regardless, he would then proceed to tell me what was not right. I think he assumed that I knew what I did do right, if anything, without him having to tell me, because he never did. :-)



This photo has me stumped. I think it's in Yokoyama Sensei's Nakano apartment/studio, and probably in the late 1970s. To me, Yokoyama Sensei looks younger than in the airplane photo. I would have been living in Honolulu at that time and visiting Sensei.

I don't think I was a 'proper' or full-time student of Yokoyama Sensei at that time, but I visited him whenever I went to Japan, which was fairly regularly. This might explain the seating arrangement. I'm definitely not having a lesson; I don't even have a shakuhachi with me. Rather it appears that Yokoyama Sensei is playing for me, and no doubt for the other students in the room.

So, look at this photo. There sits one of the world's greatest shakuhachi players and teachers in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, at the peak of his career, and during what could be called the heyday of traditional shakuhachi in Japan. He's probably performing a *honkyoku*, and he's playing just for the few students that are in the room. And there I am, sitting beside him, only a metre away, watching and listening to him!

Wow. How wonderful is that? And yet, I don't remember this scene at all. That means I probably didn't appreciate it at the time, either. How dumb is that!! We never seem to appreciate our 'right here and now' as much it deserves! Do you think you'll remember what I might be teaching you at the ESS, in 45 years time?

Nowadays, I'm constantly reminding myself to "Pay attention!!"

Riley Lee

ARAKI KODŌ VI

Araki Kodō VI talks about some aspects of his experience in Japan with his father and several tips he gave him before going on stage to perform a concert.

Looking back on the late-spring of 1988, newly arrived to peak-Bubble Japan and not yet 18 years of age, it's easy to say I was overwhelmed. By the end of the summer, I would have inherited the name Baikyoku, which had been the name my family played under before becoming Kodō since the time of Kodō II (Chikuō I). There is some confusion as to why I was Baikyoku IV when Iwami Baikyoku was also known as the fourth. The reason is simple: I was the 4th Araki Baikyoku. My grandfather died when my father was so young, he never held that particular title, so it skipped a generation.

Memories of that time are hazy, partly due to over-programming, and partly because as a kid raised in Seattle, Washington known for its temperate climate, I was unprepared for the oppressive heat of Japanese summers. There is a smoky haze of hot, humid air that colours every recollection. My concert debut in Shimonoseki barely registers because of my near heat stroke-induced stupor but also because I was nearly blind with stage-fright.

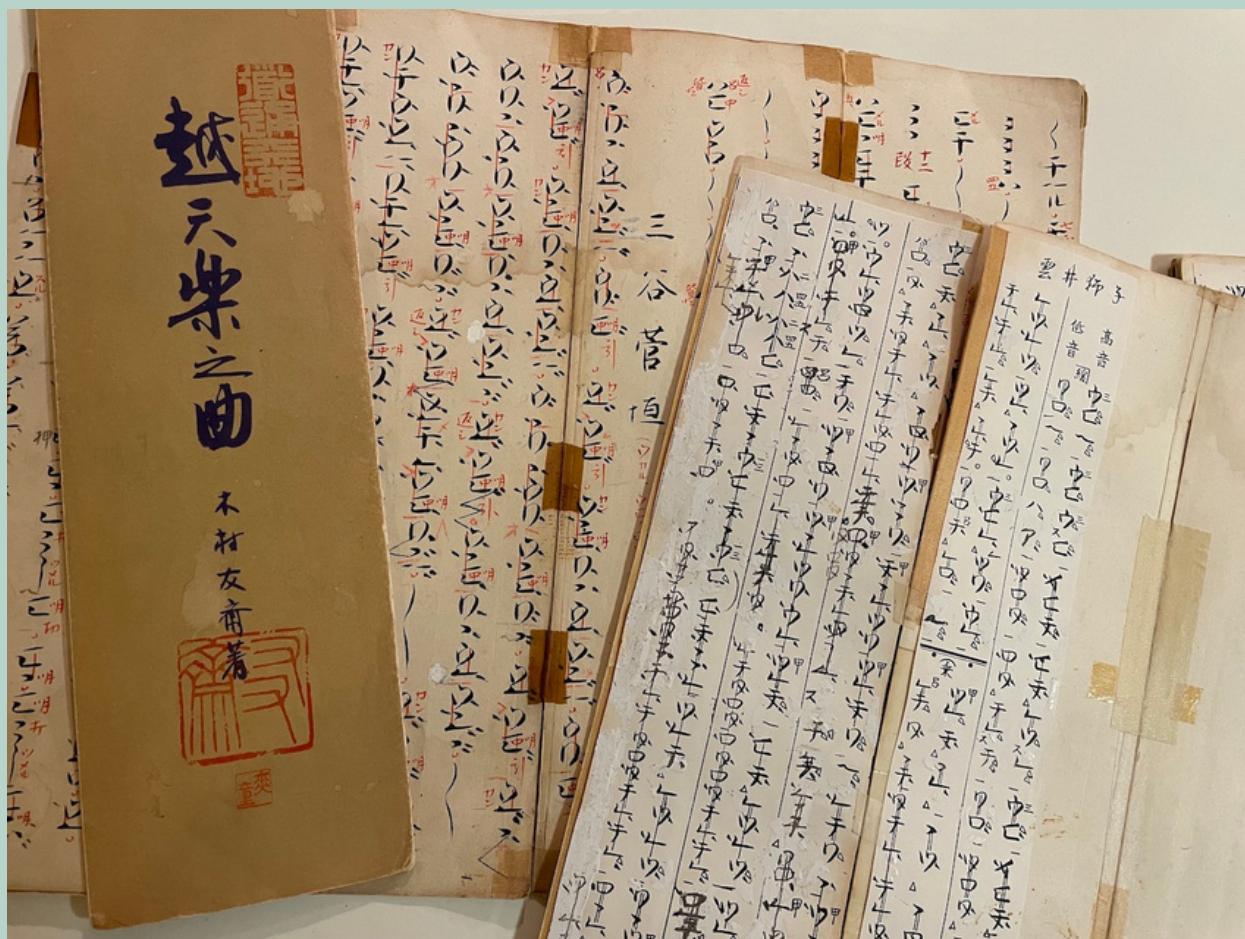


On stage in Kokura with my father in 1989

I played three duets with my father, Kodō V that day, two of them arrangements of his father, Kodō IV. The first was *E Ten Raku*, a *gagaku* piece my grandfather arranged as a duet for shakuhachi. The second was his rendition of *Kumoi Jishi*, and third we played my father's arrangement of *Sanya Sugagaki* for two shakuhachi.

This was not just my first time on stage. It was also my first time wearing formal *kimono* and *hakama*. Given the state of my nerves at the time, I may as well have been laced up in a straight jacket. I was equally panicked about stepping on stage as I was on how to use the toilet.

My father's last words to me before the curtain was raised with a low electric hum were, "No mistakes." But as soon as I brought my head up from my deep bow, I felt okay. Not great, but I knew the worst was over. Interestingly, as I stepped off stage, my anxiety ratcheted right back up to its previous levels, then subsided again as soon as I returned. Rinse, repeat. All told, I think I made a decent showing.



From left to right: *E Ten Raku*, *Sanya Sugagaki*, *Kumoi Jishi*

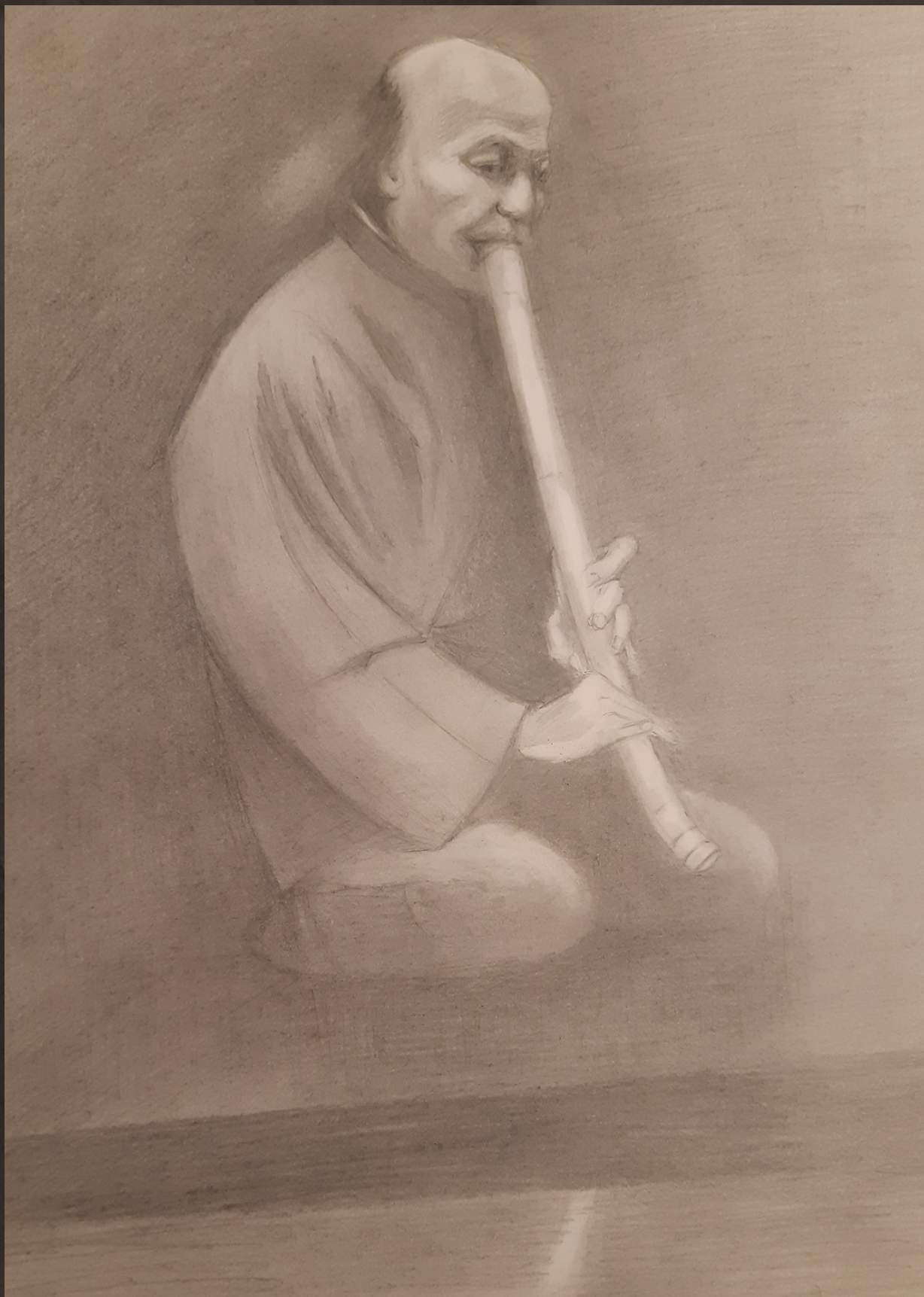
Of the many pearls of wisdom imparted to me by my father, his thoughts on practice were and still are the most salient. He told me the reason we have to practice so much is because no matter how prepared you can possibly be, you'll never be at 100%. Maybe it's your nerves. Maybe it's too hot or too cold. Maybe you're just in a bad humour. Whatever the reason, we'll never be at our best. So, be so well-rehearsed that you're still good enough, even at 80%.

Before that concert, I had never measurably committed to any one thing in my life, so I would occasionally get impatient with the seemingly endless hours of practice. My first concert truly demonstrated the desperate importance of practice. Every stray thought or sensation will attempt to worm its way into your mind and derail your performance. I am grateful to my father that he never let me take a shortcut, and that he instilled the importance of practice so deeply.

Araki Kodō VI



At the Kodō-kai okeikoba (rehearsal space) in Okachimachi, Tokyo



Tamara Rogozina
Sensei, 2023, paper, pencil, 29.4x42 cm

REFLECTIONS OF AN AMERICAN GAGAKU PLAYER

LeRon James Harrison has been playing *gagaku* for 20 years, studying under the former Imperial Court Musician Tōgi Suenobu and the current Court Musician Tōgi Suenaga. He is an independent scholar and holds a PhD in East Asian Languages and Literature from the University of California, Irvine. Below he tells us about his experiences studying *gagaku* in Japan.

LeRon JAMES HARRISON

When I departed Los Angeles International Airport on my year and a half Monbushō dissertation fellowship in October 2007, my blue canvas music bag held only my *hichiriki* and the accompanying music score. When I returned to Los Angeles in March 2009, the bag also had a *ryūteki* and its score, a pair of *shakubyōshi* (clappers), and CDs of *gagaku* music. There were also two sets of court robes and a set of programs I attended over the year and half in one of my suitcases. Having played *gagaku* exclusively in Los Angeles, I found myself stepping into a world where *gagaku* was not as closed off and opportunities and invitations to perform were not few and far between; rather, there were so many performances of *gagaku* that they constituted a musical season on par with musical seasons of philharmonics in the major cities of the Western world. And never could I have imagined upon my arrival in Tokyo that October would I not only be able to attend so many performances of *gagaku*, but also have the chance to perform in one. The time spent attending *gagaku* performances and playing in a performance would be important to me and help me become the scholarly practitioner of *gagaku* that I am today.

1+1=A Dozen

During the four years of playing *gagaku* in Los Angeles, I had several opportunities to perform as a member of the Tenrikyo Los Angeles and Kinnara Gagaku Ensembles, but the only opportunity to attend a performance by another group came in 2004 when Reigakusha performed Takemitsu's "In An Autumn Garden" at the Walt Disney Hall. In Tokyo, I got to see a broader space for performing *gagaku*. Tokyo serves as home base for several of the major *gagaku* ensembles; The Imperial Court Musicians, Reigakusha, and Nihon Gagakkai are all located in Tokyo and perform there on a regular basis. The Court Musicians perform in spring and autumn at the Imperial Palace as well as Meiji Shrine; Reigakusha perform at the Yotsuta Kumin Hall in Shinjuku; Nihon Gagakkai performs in November at the Small Theater of the National Theatre. When you start to add the other groups in the Tokyo area such as the Mizuho Gagakkai, Gagaku Dōyūkai, and Jūnionkai who offer their own performances, along with the Tenri University Gagaku Ensemble and their performances centered around chapters from the *Tale of Genji* in early spring and a cycle of performances emerges. For a practitioner like me who was still getting his bearings in the music, it was a series of opportunities to hear pieces—pieces I had experience playing, pieces I had only seen in the score, pieces I had never heard before—live. Most times the experience was only hearing the pieces and seeing the dances, but some performances allowed for me to talk to the musicians after the performances. Particularly the performances of the Mizuho Gagakkai at their home base of the Otama Inari Shrine allowed me to talk with musicians and draw inspiration and counsel from them.

Performing Gagaku in Japan

Upon arriving in Japan in October 2007, I hadn't really planned on performing *gagaku* in any group. I was leaving the groups I normally played with and if there was an opportunity to perform it would depend on whatever group I joined. The first group I entered, the Gagaku Dōyūkai in Shinagawa, was very strict, or as I put it in terms of practice, it had a very strong normative governance. By this I mean it had very strong ideas of the right and wrong way to engage in *gagaku*. Among that governance was a strong sense of seniority (*jōge kankei*) and I was the newest member, so there was no apparent sign I would be even eligible to perform. But eventually the strong sense of seniority and the accompanying isolation became too much of a problem for me and I left the Dōyūkai. I again encountered the seniority and isolation in the next group I joined and ended up leaving there too. The New Year of 2008 came, and I decided to pay my respects to my first *gagaku* teacher, Tōgi Suenobu. After explaining my previous stints with the other *gagaku* group, he invited me to come to his group at the Ichigaya Kamegaoka Hachimangu Shrine; I did and stayed there the remainder of my time in Japan.

2008 was the tenth anniversary of the group and to mark the anniversary there would be a performance at Yotsuya Kumin Hall in November; the practices leading up to it started in May. I myself was content with just being included in the group and allowed to be part of the performance. But one Friday we started to go over *Koromogae*, the *saibara* piece that we would perform in the concert. The role of *kutō* (句頭), the lead vocalist who sings the opening phrase, hadn't been decided. Tōgi-sensei merely looked at me and nodded for me to try singing the opening phrase after singing the phrase. I opened my mouth and sang the opening: *ko-ro-mo-ga-e*; once I finished, not only Tōgi-sensei but the other members of the group nodded their approval of my performance. With that approval the role of *kutō* was mine.

The role of *kutō* not only meant taking the lead on *Koromogae* but also *Urayasu no mai*, the *kagura* piece we would perform in the second part of the concert. And I also had the role of *ondō* (音頭—lead *hichiriki*) on one of the instrumental pieces after *Koromogae*. So, where I had entered Japan with no vision of performing, I ended up having a rather big role in a performance. I received advice in performing vocally and went out and purchased a pair of *shakubyōshi* (clappers) as the *kutō* marks out the rhythm of *Koromogae* from the beginning throughout the piece.

The months went by, and I grew more and more comfortable in the parts I had in the performance. There were two performances before the anniversary performance that gave me experience. In August we had to perform *Urayasu no mai* at the Annual Festival of the shrine; September saw us performing a version of the full performance in front of the shrine for an audience.

The day of the performance arrived, and with it came some nervousness since I was performing on the same stage I had seen Reigakusha perform on. One thing about the stage that was unique was a folding screen style backdrop made of acoustic foam; the screen helped the sound project forward towards the audience. It was all part of the acoustics of the hall. The performance went off largely without a hitch. If there was a difficulty on my part, it was the dryness of my throat from sitting under the stage lights in my *hitatare* (court robes) and *shitagi* (underrobe) with an *ebōshi* (a flexible court cap) on my head tied in the back. In the intermission between the first and second parts, I found myself drinking tea to wet my mouth and throat every chance I could.

A week after the performance we celebrated with a dinner in the practice hall of the shrine. We went over the comments on the questionnaire we handed out to the audience. For my part the comments were largely the same: the audience was shocked to see an African American walk out on and take a central place on stage, but once I began to sing, they were impressed with the quality of my voice.

In thinking back on the course of events, I could've stayed at the Dōyūkai and learned a lot; I would've gone through the entirety of the pieces in the score. But I wouldn't have had the opportunity to perform let alone be the lead in a performance. But the thing that led me to leave and set everything in motion was the sense of community. I didn't feel a sense of community in the Doyukai or the other group; there was a sense of community at Ichigaya and I didn't want to let that community down by performing poorly. To this very day I still perform *Koromogae* and *Urayasu no mai*, which I attribute to the community of Ichigaya, the community that allowed me to enter and join and perform.

Connections Within and Beyond Gagaku

Of all the performances that I attended while in Japan, there is one that speaks to the readership of shakuhachi players reading this article. I don't remember its full name and its program is not among the ones I brought back. But the final word in the title has stayed with me all these years: *tsudo* (集い). It was the first time I had seen this word and I immediately looked it up once I got home; I got the translation of "gathering" from the Japanese-English dictionary. But the nuance is more a gathering in a place for some common purpose or goal.

The event itself was largely a sankyoku event with performances of shamisen, shakuhachi, and koto, but there was a performance of *gagaku* amongst them and that was the cause for me to go. I left after the *gagaku* performance and ran into the *gagaku* performers in front of the elevators. At the time it didn't really remain in my mind, but looking back at the event from my memory I must ask: what was the common purpose or goal in having *gagaku* played in an essentially sankyoku concert? Was it just to open the space up to *gagaku* for a moment? If so that doesn't seem to be a common goal, but rather a momentary goal.



LeRon Harrison playing with Matsumoto Baisho sensei at the Palo Alto Buddhist Temple

This *tsudoj*, now that I think back on it, is akin to my time at the Dōyūkai. Where there was space to practice and learn pieces at the Dōyūkai, there was no personal engagement with me as a *hichiriki* player or as a person, no sense of sharing knowledge or participating together in music making. Similarly, with the *tsudoj*, there was space and time for the *gagaku* musicians to perform, but no apparent sense of sharing knowledge or working together to make this performance happen. To encounter the musicians at the elevators a short time after their performance lends itself to this reading.

Over the years I have questioned the distance that *gagaku* has with other traditional music, especially in contrast to the actual physical distance among the communities of *gagaku* in the US and Europe. Is it so difficult for *shamisen*, *shakuhachi*, or *koto* players to reach out to a *gagaku* practitioner or group if there is such a group in the same area? I recently wrote in a forthcoming piece that non-engagement with *gagaku* by other traditional Japanese music is rooted in their regularities of behavior; that is, not engaging with *gagaku* is a regularity and accepted as completely normal. So, it first takes an awareness of the fact that you don't reach out to *gagaku* to change the situation. Or in the case of *tsudoj*, that *gagaku* and other traditional music don't reach out to each other. This is something that has come to my mind from the *tsudoj*. The second step is to actually reach out and start engaging with musicians on a personal level. I myself have done that; during my time at Stanford University, I became friends with a *shamisen* and *shakuhachi* performer from Japan who came to perform in the spring, eventually leading to a performance of *E Ten Raku* between him on *shamisen* and myself on *ryūteki*. In doing so I think it was an actual *tsudoj*, both of us working together and achieving the performance. But I wouldn't have tried to do this if I hadn't had gone to that *tsudoj*.

Conclusion

The year and a half I spent in Japan shaped me as a practitioner and a scholar of *gagaku*. It expanded my ability to play the music and I learned new pieces there. As a practitioner I saw *gagaku* had a space and a performance cycle and that the notions of *gagaku* as being different from other traditional music didn't hold much weight. That led me to begin to think about why the alterity of *gagaku* was so overdetermined and to write my first scholarly article on the subject. But it also led me to think about collaborating with traditional music in a way that treats both sides as equal partners and tries to avoid marginalizing *gagaku*. But none of the thoughts and questions that drive my scholarly work would be present if I hadn't had the experiences in Japan. So I can truly say that I am the *gagaku* practitioner and scholar I am today because of the time I spent in Japan.

MARKUS GUHE

In 2017 I was lucky enough to be awarded the KSK Europe scholarship, which made it possible for me to go to Japan for three months (the maximum duration of a tourist visa) and study with my teacher Kakizakai Kaoru sensei.

I stayed in Japan from 5 July to 3 October, using the maximum number of days for a tourist visa and spent most of the time in Kakizakai sensei's trailer in Chichibu. Typical living conditions in Japan are quite cramped, so it is often difficult to find a space where – even during the day – practising shakuhachi is tolerated. This trailer therefore is an ideal space, as it is big enough to comfortably house two people and far enough from the neighbouring houses to not disturb anybody, although playing should stop at 10 pm.

When Kakizakai sensei was not travelling (which he did a lot in pre-pandemic times), I had three private lessons in Chichibu per week and also often one additional lesson on Saturdays on his teaching day in Tokyo for a total of 31 lessons.

My own impression is that my playing improved very much in this intensive study period. Comments from other people (who cannot escape hearing me practise) seemed to corroborate this. I think the main factors for the improvement were:

Personal lessons. Almost all previous lessons I had with Kakizakai sensei were via video chat. While for me this is a fantastic technology (without which it probably would not have been possible for me to learn shakuhachi at all), many of the finer points of technique do not come across as clearly and immediate as in a face-to-face setting. Additionally, playing together – a central element of traditional shakuhachi instruction – is not possible in video chat.

Frequent lessons. Having a lesson every two or three days meant I received feedback frequently, which made it possible to work on specific aspects of interpretation or technique in a focussed and intensive manner.

Kakizakai sensei took a lot of time teaching me – compared to the usual 30 minutes in video lessons, he often allowed an hour or even more for each lesson, for which I am very grateful. This took a lot of pressure off to remember and ask all the questions in the usual short time window, and we had many in-depth discussions of technique and interpretation. The KSK Europe scholarship offered me the opportunity to step away from my 'normal life' and give me the space to solely focus on shakuhachi practice. I met many of Kakizakai sensei's other students when I observed their lessons on his teaching day in Tokyo, and there were some opportunities to 'talk shakuhachi' – a chance I otherwise only have at the ESS Summer Schools or at workshops.

During my visit I focussed on 'non-solo' pieces of the KSK repertoire to make the most of the opportunity to be in a live learning environment. I studied the following pieces: Kumoi jishi (KSK *honkyoku*), Shika no tone (KSK *honkyoku*), Tone no funauta (Fukuda Rando), Shoganken reibo (KSK *honkyoku*) and Tsuru no sugomori (KSK *honkyoku*; with Furuya-sensei)

In addition to my lessons with Kakizakai sensei, I undertook the following activities:

- I was a special guest in a taiko concert by Kurumaya Masaaki in Fukui, who invited me for a collaboration between taiko and shakuhachi.
- I attended the Summer KSK workshop in Bisei as a student volunteer.
- I had lessons with Furuya sensei at the KSK Bisei workshop and in Tokyo.
- I attended Earth Celebration on Sado Island; resulting from that:
- I had a shinobue lesson with Kanou sensei, a former Kodo member and shakuhachi player who learnt from Yokoyama sensei. This gave me a new perspective on fundamentals of shinobue and shakuhachi technique, furthering my understanding of the substantial similarities between these instruments.
- I attended shakuhachi concerts by Ishigawa san (shakuhachi and koto) and Sugawara san (solo shakuhachi).
- I visited the Mejiro shakuhachi and shinobue shop.
- I visited Seika Shakuhachi in Kyoto. (The Kitahara family are expert Tozan shakuhachi makers.)
- I participated in some taiko classes.

Conclusion

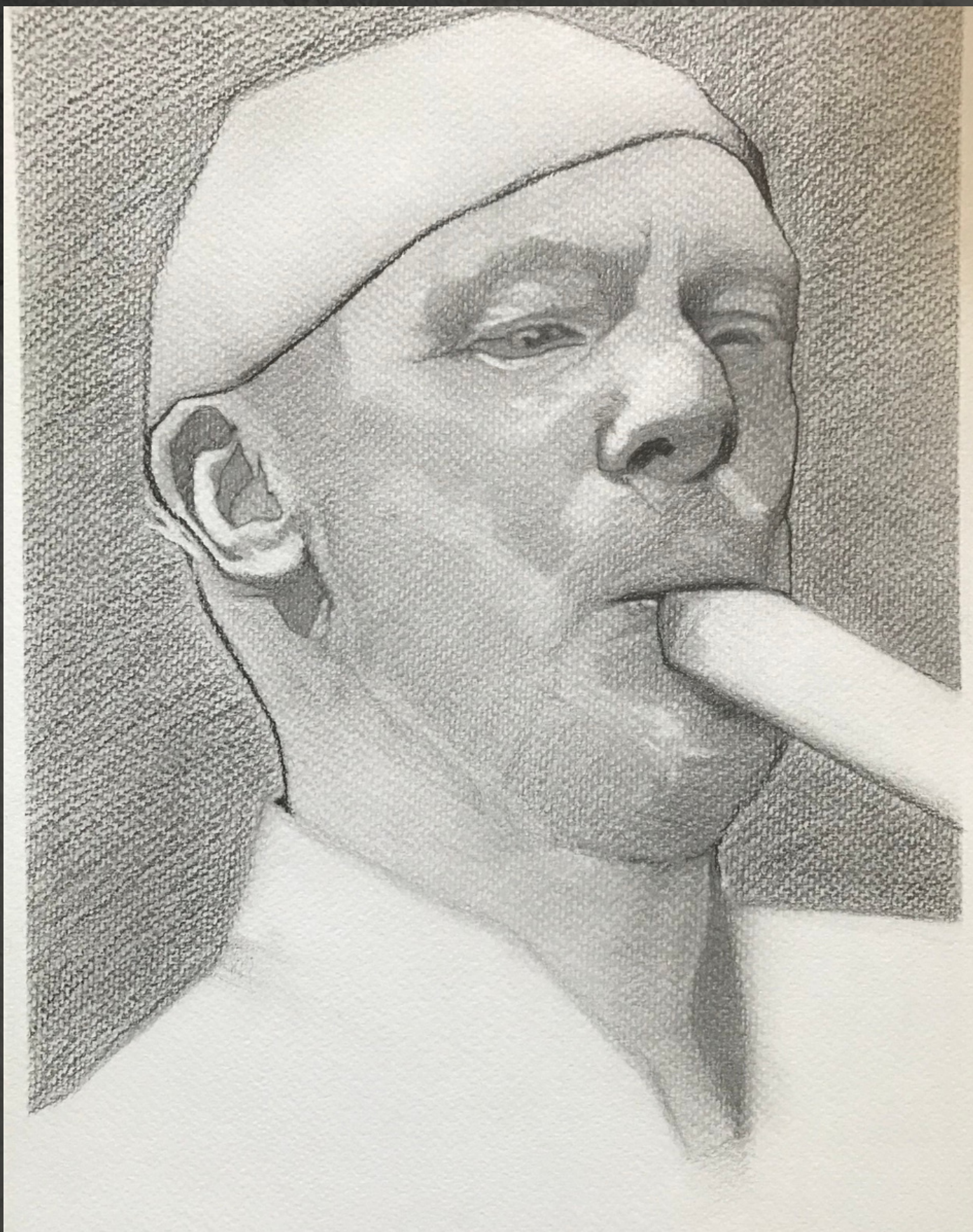
In addition to many small improvements of shakuhachi technique, what I took most from learning directly from Kakizakai sensei and Furuya sensei as well as observing other senior players and other students' lessons is their high level of focus when playing, not just during performances but also when playing with students in private lessons. As it is not possible to play together in video lessons, playing together with Kakizakai sensei regularly helped me to understand better how to play (*honkyoku* in particular).

Concluding I would like to point out that Kakizakai sensei was a very generous host, not only taking care of my accommodation but also many practical aspects of life in Japan like Internet access, travel or informing me about interesting activities.

If you ever have a chance to stay in the 'Chichibu shakuhachi trailer', use it and enjoy the time! It is a truly unique opportunity!



Chichibu shakuhachi trailer



Sean Riley
John Kaizan Neptune, 2023



Tamara Rogozina
Shakuhachi player, 2023, mixtexnic, paper, 30x40 cm

JOSÉ MARÍA SÁNCHEZ-VERDÚ, COMPOSER

José María Sánchez-Verdú, one of the main Spanish composers of today, has attended an interview for the ESS Newsletter where he explains his work *Mizu no oto*, for shakuhachi and guitar.

ESS: Tell us about your work *Mizu no oto*, for shakuhachi and guitar...

José María Sánchez-Verdú: The piece was premiered by Jesús Sáiz Huedo (guitar) and Alfredo García Martín-Córdova (shakuhachi) on December 1st, 1997 at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, and was recorded by Radio Nacional de España. It has been played quite a few times. And even the shakuhachi part has sometimes been done with other instruments (transverse flute, soprano saxophone), trying to imitate the original instrument.

It was commissioned by that duo. Alfredo is a great connoisseur of this instrument, and with him I was able to work the piece. It was a confluence in time between the interests of this performer and my own interests for deferential perspectives of musical creation. And that is why looking towards music of other cultures took already then a very important place for me, (today it is essential).

ESS: Do you have other works for traditional Japanese voices or instruments or based on Noh theater or other traditional arts?

S-V: Yes, after *Mizu no oto* there have been many links with Japanese music from gestures and sonorities on Western instruments to which I wanted to approach the sound of the shakuhachi again, or the shamisen, or the voice of Noh theater. I remember pieces like *Im Rauschen des Augenblicks* (for trio, 1997), based on several Japanese haikus; or *Cuaderno de imágenes* (for quintet, 1999). I have a shamisen at home. I bought it during one of my stays in Japan. And in parallel I am a huge admirer of Japanese calligraphy, and Japanese art in general. One of my last stage works was actually premiered in Tokyo. It is a piece of musical theater (*Far Water*, 2019) in which a violin and a Noh theater singer develop a whole project close to a piece of Noh theater but in an abstract way; the geometry of space plays a decisive role in it. More recently I have continued to work with the voice of the Noh theater in my play *Hacia la luz* (2019-2020). It is in a huge composition for eighty bass voices of men, small women's choir, organ and large orchestra, based on the Proemio of Parmenides' Poem. It is sung in ancient Greek. The goddess part of this text was embodied by Rioko Aoki, combining the voice and tradition of the Noh theater ritual with a work that has its roots in the oldest tradition of magic and *logos* at the dawn of philosophy in Europe.

ESS: Considering that the shakuhachi is a particularly complex instrument, how did you find out about its composition technique? What bibliography did you find on the technique for shakuhachi? Do you have an instrument at home to try? Do you play the instrument?

S-V: I don't have the instrument. All my approach has been through books, recordings, and the joint work at that time with Alfredo García Martín-Córdova. Texts on Japanese painting, by Japanese writers, poets or philosophers, etc. are actually also part of my approach to this type of instruments.

ESS: What does the characteristic air sound of shakuhachi suggest to you?

S-V: I love the sound of the air immensely. Not only for the primordial but for the poetic transcendence that it entails, its closeness to breathing and nature. These processes remain essential in my work as a composer.

Mizu no oto
("Ruido de agua")

水
の
音

shakuhachi
guitarra

scordatura: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫ ⑬ ⑭ ⑮ ⑯ ⑰ ⑱ ⑲ ⑳ ㉑ ㉒ ㉓ ㉔ ㉕ ㉖ ㉗ ㉘ ㉙ ㉚ ㉛ ㉜ ㉝ ㉞ ㉟ ㊱ ㊲ ㊳ ㊴ ㊵ ㊶ ㊷ ㊸ ㊹ ㊺ ㊻ ㊼ ㊽ ㊾ ㊿

1

Jose M. Sánchez-Verdú
3 agos. 1997

First page of *Mizu no oto*, for shakuhachi and guitar (Breitkopf & Härtel)

ESS: In the first bar of *Mizu no oto* score there is a special fingering. How was the process of finding this fingering?

S-V: Everything emerges from several books, and especially from the work together with Alfredo García Martín-Córdova. This was how I was able to go deeper into the techniques of writing and performing this instrument.

ESS: Can you comment on the metric approach of the work?

S-V: The work combines a very metric and almost geometric side with an enormous agogic and flexibility. The combination of both materials determines the organicity of the entire piece.

ESS: What did attract or does attract to you to shakuhachi?

S-V: I love the enormous flexibility of its relationship with time and the great fragility of its sound. In this it is no less important the intimate link of the instrument with the human breath, and with the body of the performer as an expression of a whole vital aesthetic.

ESS: Do you plan to write other works for shakuhachi?

S-V: Not at the moment ...

Handwritten musical score for the last bars of *Mizu no oto*, for shakuhachi and guitar (Breitkopf & Härtel). The score includes tempo markings such as *ritardando*, *molto*, and *moltoissimo*, along with performance instructions like *gliss.* and *Solo!*. A box indicates a tempo of $\text{♩} = 58$. The bottom system features a *solo aire* section. A note at the bottom left specifies: ** glissando velocissimo con la palma de la mano derecha desde el I punto hasta el punto sobre las cuerdas, sin dejarlas vibrar.* The score is signed *Jose K. Verdú* and dated *3-8-99 (Tolosa)*.

Last bars of *Mizu no oto*, for shakuhachi and guitar (Breitkopf & Härtel)

ESS: What kind of activities do you currently do, besides composition?

S-V: My main facet is that of composer. But I often act as a conductor, especially in Germany and other countries (Austria, Italy, Poland, Netherlands, Belgium, etc., or Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay...). Normally it is 20th century music, not only mine but of many other current composers (Ligeti, Xenakis, etc.) and many premieres. The other facet that I love and develop for many years is the one as composition teacher. I have been professor of composition until now in Dresden, Hannover and Zaragoza, and since 2001 at the Robert Schumann Hochschule in Düsseldorf. More recently I have worked as a professor at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Madrid. The reflection on composition from research and pedagogy touches technical, aesthetic, philosophical aspects, etc. and seems to me a natural extension of my facet as a composer. I love it. And sharing this experience with young composers seems great to me. It also gives me a lot of freedom to have security, and to be able to draw up complex or longer-term projects that need some stability.

ESS: Thank you very much for attending us and for explaining the musical aspects of *Mizu no oto*.

S-V: Thank you very much.

<https://sanchez-verdu.com/>



José María Sánchez-Verdú
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KAKIZAKAI KAORU

Markus Guhe interviews and reviews the concert of Kakizakai Kaoru during his visit to Edinburgh in March 2023.

MG: I'd like to start with the name KSK, which roughly translates to International Shakuhachi Training Center. Something like 'training centre' I would associate that maybe more with an academic institution or with research or something like that. Most other shakuhachi lineages have 'bamboo' or a place name, e.g. Azuma-ryu. So it seems like a very unusual name for a group of shakuhachi players.

KK: My teacher made the group and gave it the name. It was in 1988 or 89. He was busy and he often went outside of Japan, and so he had many non-Japanese students at that time. At that time, I mean before he died.

But he had many trips to outside Japan. He had many non-Japanese students. So probably he felt this shakuhachi culture will be much more popular all over the world. So he really wanted to put kokusai (international) at the top of the name of the group.

And kenshukan: My teacher's ideal image was to get together in a place and live there, being a farmer during the daytime, playing shakuhachi during nighttime. Because a long time ago he was asked to come to Ondekoza, a taiko group on Sado island. He was very amazed by the Ondekoza style.

The taiko players lived together in a building that used to be a school. There was a too small number of kids, so the school was given up, and Ondekoza came there and stayed – running, doing taiko practice. My teacher was amazed by the system and he really wanted to build almost the same system. And looked for a place that used to be a school – a school ground and buildings. By chance he found an almost ideal building in Okayama prefecture, Bisei cho.

And he started that. But it's very difficult to live together and farm; it's very difficult. But the name was chosen because of Yokoyama sensei's ideal image.

[...]

MG: So what is the KSK today? What is the structure? Is it an organisation? Yokohama sensei, as I understand it, wanted to break away from the old iemoto system; this very hierarchical system, where you have many degrees of proficiency and do many tests and then you get certificate and then you have to pay money and all this. The structure of the KSK is very different. Is there a 'Head of KSK'? Is there a Board of Trustees?

KK: It is very difficult. Yokoyama sensei was the only person who could sit at the top of the group. After his passing it's not easy to somehow get somebody instead of Yokoyama sensei. But Yokoyama sensei's music is loved very much all over the world.

So I can help to expand Yokoyama sensei's music more, and some of my colleagues do the same thing. As an association, it is not a very strong association. When you make an association it is not easy to keep a high quality. I mean, long-term students should get to the high positions. But I don't know if he or she is very good or not. So it's very difficult to keep the quality with an association system.

So, I can say, he was not very good at making an association, because he wanted to keep everyone's playing quality high. Some people can be very good easily, someone else needs a long time to be good. In an association the older person should get to the higher positions. This is very natural. But thinking about playing quality it's possible to be the opposite.

So it is not easy to keep the balance of the association. So, yeah, he said we should make some kind of association, but I felt he's not good at making that kind of group. But his music is loved by people all over the world.

MG: Yes, he is a very big influence outside of Japan.

KK: Yeah, last year we had a video competition. Sometimes when another organisation makes a video competition, in many cases half or more are in the Yokoyama lineage. And the top 5 or 3 come from the Yokoyama lineage. This happens often. So he left a big influence all over the world.

The whole interview is available:

[Part 1:
The KSK](#)

[Part 2:
Playing shakuhachi](#)

[Part 3:
Personal, Zen, Future](#)



Kakizakai Kaoru in the concert of Edinburgh

Concert review

On one of his rare visits to Europe, Kaoru Kakizakai was visiting Edinburgh in March 2023. In addition to teaching he also gave a concert on 25 March in the Cornerstone Centre of St John's Church in Edinburgh. The programme consisted of classical *honkyoku* pieces and works by Fukuda Rando. Kakizakai sensei had also invited me to play two duos with him (Tone no funauta and Shika no tone). An audience of about 50 people attended the concert. When talking to some of them afterwards, it became clear that – quite surprisingly for me –

most had actually been to a shakuhachi concert before, but many commented on the fact that this was the first time they had the opportunity to hear shakuhachi duos being played live and were impressed by the blending of sounds of the two flutes.

Kakizakai sensei remarked that playing *honkyoku* typically has the effect of calming the people in the audience, and that certainly could be felt during the concert. But at the end the appreciation was made clear by a long applause, which prompted an encore of Tabibito no uta.

The Japanese consulate in Edinburgh is always very supportive of Japanese musical and cultural activities. This time the Japanese Deputy Consul General Ms Minori Ishii was in attendance.

Chichibu Haiku

by Kerry King

I

(After Basho)

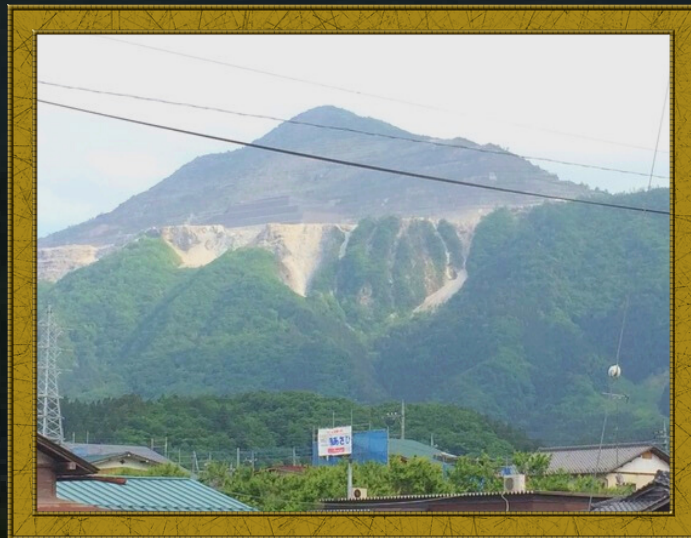
Trees blooming in Chichibu
The Master and I listen
To the sound of Ro buki.

II

At the foot of Mt Buko
camped in The Trailer
I practice *Shingetsu*
a song of the Moon.

III

Learning *Yamagoe*
overcoming obstacles
again Spring.



Mt. Buko, Chichibu

CD REVIEW

Clive Bell is all ears to examine the way the shakuhachi joins ancestral instruments like the didgeridoo.

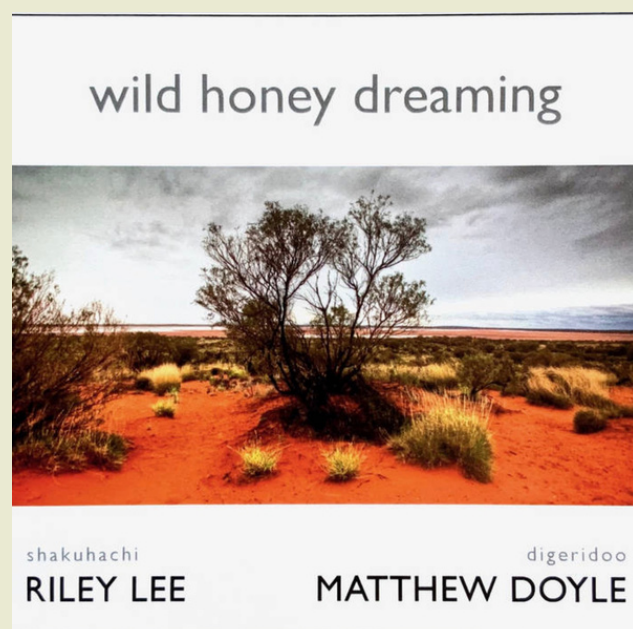
Riley Lee & Matthew Doyle

Wild Honey Dreaming

<https://rileylee.bandcamp.com/album/wild-honey-dreaming>

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/album/6g44TA7OgJXufvup1DrKep>


We think of the shakuhachi as an ancient instrument, but it's a relative newcomer alongside the seventy millennia of the Australian Aboriginal tradition. Wild Honey Dreaming pairs Japanese flute with Aboriginal didgeridoo. Riley Lee has lived in Australia for many years, and will teach at the 2023 ESS Dublin Summer School. The didgeridoo player is Matthew Doyle, a descendant of the Muruwari Aboriginal nation. He danced and played with the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre before forming his own company, Wuruniri Music & Dance.




The album was originally released on CD in 1993, but is newly available on Bandcamp. It opens with the birdcalls of an Australian dawn, before a low shakuhachi enters. A didgeridoo drone lies prone across the musical landscape, like the land itself, while Lee moves around Japanese scales. "Ancestral Beings" continues in Lee's poised, austere pace, informed by *honkyoku* pieces. There is tempo here, but it's glacial and unhurried. Lee's tremolo glissandi conjure a ghostscape. He uses dynamics effectively to explore a range of timbres.

On the title track Doyle takes a similarly timbral approach - here are two didgeridoos layered, and we hear sudden barks like a stag in the forest. His voice leaps or purrs through the instrument, lending ambiguity to the sound. Then on "Ghost Gums And The Moon" we get three shakuhachis layered: the music is delicate and bright, but super slow. Everything is concordant, with no clashes or shocks. It's a little like listening to the wind. Though I might wish for a more adventurous spirit, on its own terms it's beautifully done.

There's a change of mood for "Spirit's Dance", as Lee sings out higher pitched spirals and arabesques, in a major key. This has a medieval melodic feel, while "Traveller's Song" is folksy and evokes a hike in the mountains.



This recording brings together two instruments that originate from cultures that could not be more disparate in their outward manifestations, the 70,000 year-old Aboriginal culture of the vast Australian continent, and the comparatively young Japanese culture of the islands east of the Asian continent.



Traditionally, the playing of both the shakuhachi and the didgeridoo is a profound activity. In shakuhachi playing, the act of transforming one's breath into a meditative "One Sound" that contains the essence of "Becoming Buddha" requires a special mind-body-spirit that can transcend one's mundane existence. The spiritual element of the sounds that emanate from the didgeridoo is equally profound and requires a similar mental, physical and spiritual state of being from the performer.

There are other similarities. Both the shakuhachi and the didgeridoo are wind instruments. Both are simple in construction: long hollow tubes of bamboo and wood with no external mechanisms such as keys, strings or reeds.


It is no surprise that the two instruments combine so well in this recording.

1. Daybreak at Katatjuta 7:23
2. Ancestral Beings 5:27
3. Child's Lament - Mother Where Are You 5:55
4. Wild Honey Dreaming 5:18
5. Ghost Gums and the Moon 7:54
6. Spirits' Dance: The Wind of Change 6:50
7. Traveller's Song 5:10
8. Desert Stars 6:25
9. Space Time Transformations 5:48

Shakuhachi by Riley Lee. Didgeridoo by Matthew Doyle.
Synthesizers by Michael Atherton. Engineered by Michael Gissing.
Produced by Michael Atherton.
Recorded at the National Acoustics Laboratory.
Mixed at Digital City Studio, Sydney Australia.
Riley Lee photo by Rudi van Starrex
Design by janssonlee

Daybreak at Katatjuta, Child's Lament - Mother Where Are You, Spirits' Dance, and 'Desert Stars' by Riley Lee and Matthew Doyle.
Ancestral Beings, Ghost Gums and the Moon, and Traveller's Song by Riley Lee.
Wild Honey Dreaming by Matthew Doyle.
Space Time Transformation by Riley Lee, Matthew Doyle and Michael Atherton.

©1993 Riley Lee © 2013 Sound of Bamboo www.rileylee.net



Much of the album is improvised and expresses the sympathetic communication between the musicians. It's always interesting to hear how musicians describe in words what they are doing; we don't get to hear Doyle's voice here, but on the CD sleeve Lee stresses the profundity of their enterprise: "In shakuhachi playing the act of transforming one's breath into a meditative "one Sound" that contains the essence of "Becoming Buddha" requires a special mind-body-spirit that can transcend one's mundane existence." Plenty of listeners are eager for this kind of spiritual coating on the music.

Lee's playing, as ever, is extraordinarily accomplished. His sound is seductive and convincing. Sometimes I wanted Doyle's instrument to come into focus more, but his sound is likewise never less than classy. The two musicians succeed in making the shakuhachi and the didgeridoo seem utterly natural partners.

Clive Bell

ZENSABO UKRAINE

On the 20th February 2023, there was an online meeting of Atsuya Okuda and Kiku Day with shakuhachi players and friends Tamara Rogozina, Roman Gorobets, Sergey Maksymenko from Ukraine. It was a beautiful session!



With a deep bow to my teachers Kiku Day and Okuda Atsuya which kindly agreed to meet online with our Ukrainian Zensabo's community!

It was just a small simple event. We played to each other a piece we chose ourselves.

Okuda sensei listened very attentively everyone's playing, then he gave some explanation and suggestions for each of us. For me, the best part of Okuda's teaching is his playing after us because *suizen* is about playing and listening to the sounds of the bamboo flute.

— Serhii Maksymenko

Sensei listened to us...

I felt he listened to us from the depth of his Heart filled with Light, Sincerity, Kindness and Love. And when he was playing shakuhachi, everything around transformed, and a wonderful feeling of joy came.

The ability to listen and play with a sense of fullness are great qualities of sensei Okuda Atsuya.

I'm grateful to sensei and all my teachers!

— Tamara Rogozina

REPORT OF A SHAKUHACHI BEGINNER

Samarpan David Kent

My Shakuhachi life began at age 68, well into my retirement. The Shakuhachi was the first instrument I attempted to learn to play. I read that the Shakuhachi was related to Zen. I dreamed I could combine music and meditation. It would be perfect... or so I naively thought!

Thinking it was a musical instrument to play, I had no idea the Shakuhachi would teach me many things: how to breathe, to listen, and to recognize my essential emptiness.

The first thing the Shakuhachi taught me, upon my first encounter with the instrument, was humility, patience, and persistence. I tried to blow a note. I would blow and blow until I got light-headed and dizzy and would have to stop. But no audible note happened. Once the dizziness went away I would try again. On the third day I finally found *ro*, but could not make *ro* happen on command. I needed help and decided to go to the Shakuhachi Camp of the Rockies.

At the 2018 Shakuhachi camp I met wonderful teachers from Japan, Australia, Hawaii, etc. I learned just how serious my lack of sound production was, and confirmed my status as an absolute beginner. In a lesson with Kurahashi Yodo II, I was unable to get a single note to sound. Yōdō Kurahashi calmly said: "Don't worry. Enjoy blowing. Sound will come." It was perfectly sage advice for that moment, and he was right.

I left Shakuhachi Camp inspired. What Kurahashi Yodo II said would happen happened. Soon six *otsu* notes that had been hiding inside my Shakuhachi all came out to play. Reliable *kan* notes (upper octave) still remain largely inaccessible and *meri* notes with proper pitch and tone only happen on good days.

To be honest I lacked discipline for daily practice. Having retired from working 45 years in libraries I spent more time researching and reading about the Shakuhachi than trying to play it. So I adapted to the way I am.

Only being able to play *otsu* notes meant I could attempt Kyorei (Fudaiji), a *Honkyoku* all in *otsu*. Listening to YouTube versions of Kyorei was not enough for me to learn. I needed a teacher.

By late 2018 I was 69 years old when I discovered the Empty Bamboo Shakuhachi sangha in Tucson (Arizona, USA). For several months in 2019 I drove six hours roundtrip to attend a one hour class. I met wonderful people, and we blew *ro* together, but I could not continue (physically or financially) that long weekly commute. I decided to shift focus. Instead of learning *honkyoku*, I would focus on doing *robuki* at home as a form of meditation.

I did return to Tucson for a workshop with Alvin Ryūzen Ramos and received further inspiration. With a deep bow to Alvin I share one of the Shakuhachi quotes from his website:

The study of shakuhachi is what you make of it. The world of shakuhachi is deep and broad. You can tread a purely musical, intellectual road or you can dive into the profound realms of meditation and spiritual development or a blend of both. Each student maintains control of their own individual training level. Shakuhachi can be enjoyed by both player and listener; but to understand shakuhachi one must hold and blow the instrument.

So, that is where things stood at the end of 2019. Then came the gift of 2020. Suddenly, the possibility of being in contact with other Shakuhachi lovers blossomed through Zoom. I was able to attend the 2020 Zoom Shakuhachi Summer Camp and the Nowhere 2020 1st European Shakuhachi Society Online Festival. I could be again, virtually, with the Empty Bamboo sangha and teachers who have inspired me.

2020 also saw Ro-Buki Wave as a response from the Shakuhachi community to the Covid-19 pandemic, using *ro* to blow away the virus and promote healing worldwide. All these were positive developments. But the best of 2020 was yet to come.

2020 continued to shower Shakuhachi opportunities and gifts: I discovered H     Seiyu Codjo's online group, "Chakra Meditation with Shakuhachi". This combination of chakras and Shakuhachi was completely new to me. I had never heard anyone doing something like that, and I loved the fusion of Japan and India. In the international online group we do the chakra meditation with Shakuhachi and then we finish with ten minutes of *robuki*. This is an opportunity to pay attention to breathing and to be aware of the energy in each of the chakras, and to create and dedicate vibrational sounds for healing.

It is now five years since discovering the Shakuhachi... I am still a beginner and perhaps always will be (at least in the sense of Shunry  Suzuki's beginner's mind). Now, I am thankful for what the Shakuhachi teaches, being more relaxed and in no hurry, being in the present moment with each note, without expectations of results.

Book Recommendations for Beginners

Abbott, Carl. 2020. *Blowing Zen Honkyoku : One Breath, One Mind*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (May 15, 2020). 168 pages.

"This book is a collection of all 36 Kinko Ryu solo *honkyoku* pieces, 23 *honkyoku* duets, 10 miscellaneous *honkyoku* pieces, and 5 classic Myoan *honkyoku* pieces. There is extra instruction on learning to play *honkyoku* by heart. The playing by heart section includes 10 of the shorter Kinko Ryu solo pieces rewritten in a way to facilitate learning these pieces by heart. Note, learning to play some *honkyoku* by heart can greatly deepen the blowing Zen experience, and give intuitive insight into the other, longer *honkyoku* pieces. I formatted all the sheet music in such a way as to facilitate gluing the notation together to form continuous accordion style sheet music, similar to the traditional style used in Japan. This eliminates the need to turn pages while you are playing the longer pieces." <https://www.amazon.com/Blowing-Zen-Honkyoku-Breath-Mind/dp/1723492639>

Berlin-Grous, Bob; Levenson, Monty H. *The Sound of Bamboo : Blowing Zen & The Spirit of Shakuhachi*. Revised 2nd Edition. 174 pages.

"The Sound of Bamboo provides an expansive overview of the shakuhachi, a traditional Japanese bamboo flute dating back to the 7th Century, and its close association with Zen Buddhism as a vehicle for meditation. ... Encyclopedic in scope, The Sound of Bamboo includes over 100 photos, illustrations, and artwork as well as 400 hyperlinks connecting the reader from the printed page directly to the world of shakuhachi via the Internet.

<https://www.shakuhachi.com/PG-TheSoundofBamboo.html>

Blasdel Christopher Yohmei. 2020. The Single Tone : A Personal Journey into Shakuhachi Music. Single Tone Productions; 2nd edition. December 12, 2020 Kindle edition.

"The E-Book edition has been updated with new photos. Originally published in 2005 as a paperback, "The Single Tone" is a highly perceptive and objective view of Japan's culture and music written by a long-term American expat who lived most of his life in Japan. Christopher Yohmei Blasdel resided over 45 years in Tokyo and writes of his experiences studying, performing and teaching the traditional shakuhachi bamboo flute in Japan and around the world. He discusses the various legends surrounding the shakuhachi, its association with Zen Buddhism and the shakuhachi's place in the Japanese culture. He also relates his personal encounters with various people, from renown artists, wealthy patrons, respected scholars to arrogant Japanese diplomats. His writings provide thoughtful insight into the Japanese mind and, through his world travels and performances in such diverse venues as the jungles of Guatemala, the ancient halls of the Republic of Georgia, and wind-swept Native American reservations in New Mexico, demonstrates the universal appeal of the shakuhachi." <https://www.amazon.com/Single-Tone-Personal-Journey-Shakuhachi-ebook/dp/Bo8QGBDSR1>

Codjo Hélène Seiyu. 2020. Honkyoku for Beginners.

"This booklet is meant for shakuhachi students who are already able to play the basic scale from *ro otsu* (first register) up to *chi kan* (second register). This is NOT an "absolute beginners" guide, as there are no indications about how to make a sound, hold the flute or change octave.

Simplified versions of Kyorei, Yamato Choshi, Honte Choshi, Tamuke with preparatory exercises. 32 pages of breathing exercises, basic techniques and ornaments, fingering charts, explanations about the music and easy versions. 23 private tracks to download and play along with + 4 recordings of the original versions. IMPORTANT: The notations of the original versions are NOT included in this booklet."

<https://hijirishakuhachi.com/2020/10/28/honkyoku-for-beginners/>

Suzuki Shunryū and Trudy Dixon. 2006. Zen Mind Beginner's Mind. Boston Mass:

Weatherhill. <https://archive.org/details/zenmindbeginners00suzu>. Named one of the 100 Best Spiritual Books of the Twentieth Century (Spirituality & Practice)

"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few." So begins this most beloved of all American Zen books. Seldom has such a small handful of words provided a teaching as rich as has this famous opening line. In a single stroke, the simple sentence cuts through the pervasive tendency students have of getting so close to Zen as to completely miss what it's all about. It is an instant teaching on the first page--and that's just the beginning. Suzuki Roshi presents the basics--from the details of posture and breathing in zazen to the perception of nonduality--in a way that is not only remarkably clear, but that also resonates with the joy of insight from the first to the last page. <https://www.holybooks.com/zen-mind-beginners-mind/>

Computer painting
by Julien Richard



Julien Richard
Sankyoku trio, 2023, computer painting

WORLD SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL TEXAS 2025

APRIL 3-6, 2025

We have exciting news to share with the International Shakuhachi community: The next World Shakuhachi Festival is less than two years away! It will be held at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, a 90-minute drive north of Houston, which is famous for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Houston Grand Opera, the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, and numerous other cultural institutions.

WSF2025 follows the path set by previous festivals in London, Kyoto, Sydney, New York, Colorado, and Bisei. It will feature concerts, workshops and master classes, a research symposium, and a marketplace. A special location has been chosen for the final gala concert and buffet, providing participants an opportunity to enjoy local colour and the expansive Texas landscape awash in beautiful bluebonnets, the state flower. Shakuhachi players and enthusiasts of all levels and from all over the world are invited to gather, share their experiences and ideas, and learn new music together.

The shakuhachi has become a global instrument that transcends geographical, historical, national and cultural boundaries. We wish to celebrate the global appeal and diverse, inclusive nature of this magical instrument for four wonderful days together unified by the concept of 一つの音、一つの世界 / One Sound, One World.

We look forward to welcoming you to Texas and sharing true southern hospitality. Start making plans to attend this festival to be part of the historical legacy of the shakuhachi!

For more information visit: wsf2025.com

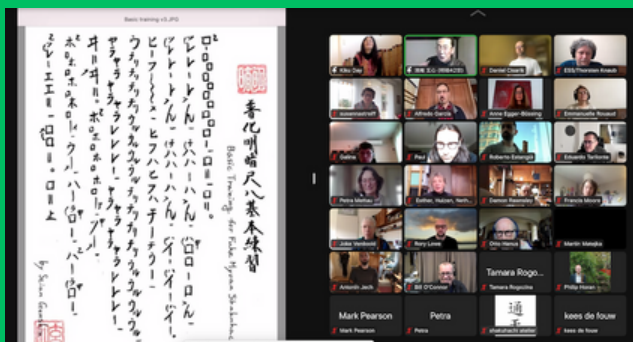
The WSF Texas 2025 planning committee



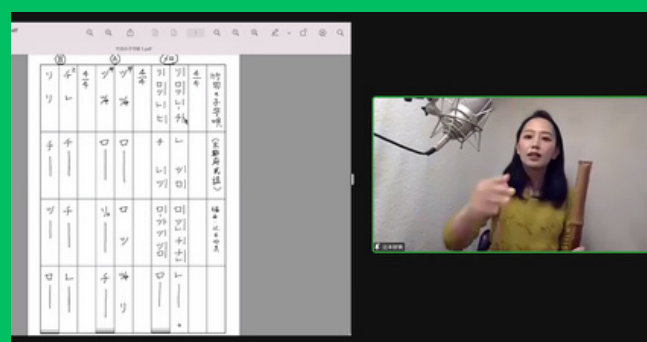
ESS MEMBERS' AREA - WHAT'S NEW?

DUBLIN ONLINE EVENTS 2 & 3 | 5-6 NOVEMBER 2022 & 4-5 MARCH 2023

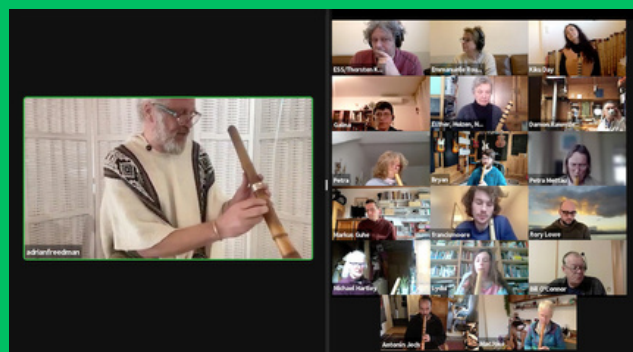
Dublin online events 2 & 3 were an exciting collection of pieces from classical *honkyoku* to modern compositions, as well as tips on technique and an interesting round table. The teachers Seian Genshin, Marco Lienhard, Adrian Freedman, Yoshimi Tsujimoto, Obama Akihito, Christopher Gaston, Sagara Akari, Veronique Piron, César Viana, Kiku Day, Gunnar Linder, Anne Prescott and Andrea Giolai represent a variety of styles / schools. Videos are now uploaded for further study. Enjoy!



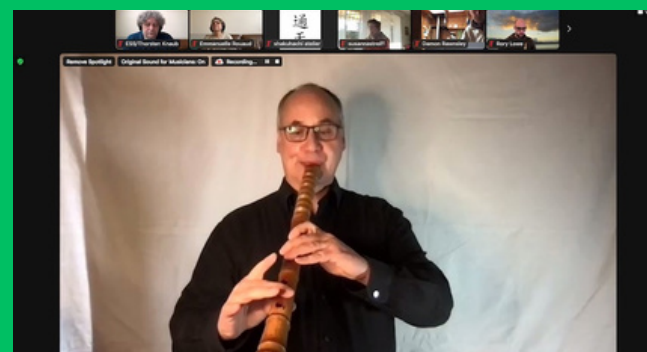
Seian Genshin session



Tsujimoto Yoshimi session (*robuki*/technique)



Adrian Freedman session



Marco Lienhard session

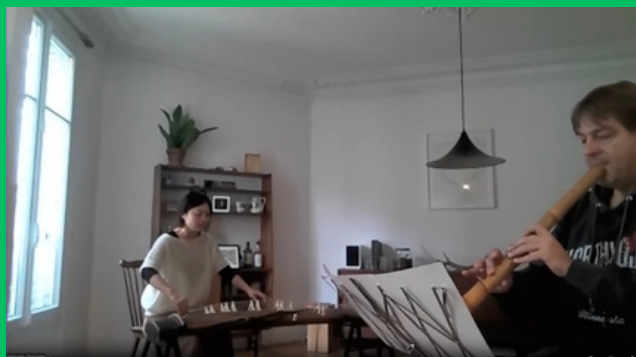
Enjoy the Dublin Online
Event 3 videos here!

4/5 March 2023
Online Event 3

[Dublin Online Event 3 Videos](#)



Obama Akihito session



Chistopher Caston & Sagara Akari session



Veronique Piron session



César Viana session



Round table with Kiku Day, Gunnar Linder, Anne Prescott & Andrea Giolai

Enjoy the Dublin Online Event 2 videos here!

[Dublin Online Event 2 Videos](#)

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 like e.g. 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 of ESS news and re-discover items of the ESS archive or simply to ask a questions or advice on shakuhachi.

ESS FACEBOOK COMMUNITY GROUP

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

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

ESS FORUM

Looked after by Ex-Board members and volunteers, the Forum “Practice, Culture and History of Japanese Bamboo Flute 尺八” is at : www.shakuhachiforum.eu

Visit the forum and take part in discussions with shakuhachi players, teachers and makers from all over Europe and beyond. It is also a great resource for information to get you started on your shakuhachi questions.

ESS NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTOR'S GUIDELINES

The aim of the ESS Newsletter (NL) is to create a platform for members and non-members to further develop an understanding of shakuhachi and place it in a wider context than just their own individual study and experience. It, 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Please avoid self-promotion.

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

Date / Period
Description of your event
Venue
Cost
Contact information
Picture (may be edited to fit the needs of the NL format)

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

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

ESS publications office

The next ESS Newsletter is published on December 1, 2023.

There will be a call for contributions nearer the publication date, but please do not hesitate to contact us in the meantime with any questions or suggestions.

20 – 23 July ESS Summer School Dublin 2023

Irish Institute of Music and Song, Balbriggan/Dublin

dublin2023.shakuhachisociety.eu



Dublin 2023

Honkyoku

Sankyoku

Shinkyoku

Contemporary Music

Irish Music on Shakuhachi

Shakuhachi Making Workshop

Teachers, Gala & Student Concerts

Open Mic Night

All levels: Beginners, Elementary, Intermediate & Advanced

Online Package available


Riley Lee
Araki Kodō VI
Naoko Kikuchi
Kiku Day
Michael Soumei Coxall
Horacio Curti
Suizan Lagrost
José Seizan Vargas
Thorsten Knaub
Emmanuelle Rouaud
Philip Suimei Horan

For more details and registration visit: dublin2023.shakuhachisociety.eu





*European
Shakuhachi
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STAY TUNED !

BAMBOO

THE NEXT EUROPEAN SHAKUHACHI SOCIETY NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED
DECEMBER 1, 2023