

ESS DUBLIN 2023
REPORTS

IGNITION COMMISSION
"KIOKU" (記憶) BY ARAKI KODOVI

THE A SHAKUHACHI NAME
CONFUSION BY KAKIZAKAI KAORU

Autumn / Winter 2023

BAMBOO

Newsletter of the European Shakuhachi Society



PASSING THE BATON FORWARD
RILEY LEE, JIM FRANKLIN AND JOSÉ VARGAS

CD REVIEWS
REAR VIEW MIRROR

ESS ONLINE 2023-24



Credits

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Special collaborators



Araki Kodo VI

Ignition Commission



Kakizakai Kaoru

The A shakuhachi name confusion



Philip Horan

Dublin Summer School report



Daniel Ribble

Dublin experiences and observations



Charles van Kampen

Report on the jinashi making workshop



Francis Moore

Dublin Summer School report



Jim Franklin

Passing The Baton Forward



José Vargas-Zúñiga

Passing The Baton Forward



Laonikos Psimikakis Chalkokondylis
Rear View Mirror

Special thanks also to Kerry King, Damon Rawnsley, Markus Guhe, and the WSMD Team

ESS Newsletter Team



Clive Bell

Editor, CD reviews, style, coordination



Ramon Humet

Editor, design, layout, coordination

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

Dear ESS Members and shakuhachi friends,

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

Our main event this year was of course the ESS Summer School in Balbriggan/Dublin, which took place from 20 to 23 July 2023, and it is great to encounter plenty of dedicated pages in this issue to relive the days we were fortunate to have together in Balbriggan, County Dublin.

And for everybody else, I hope the detailed reports and comprehensive visual documents presented will give a glimpse of the variety of the programme, the intense teaching and the joyous communal moments a Summer School generates in quick succession - or sometimes seemingly all at the same time.

The concert footage of the Dublin concerts is still being edited and a selection will be available to view early next year on our ESS YouTube channel: [<https://www.youtube.com/@europeanshakuhachisociety>.]

Besides all the shakuhachi activities, we also had the chance to meet again in situ for our Annual General Meeting. Acting on some of the items discussed, the ESS Board started to focus on attracting new membership with a special discount offer, and also dedicate a part of its online programming more directly to beginner and elementary level players. We will continue this in the new year with a 'Beginner' focused workshop day in February.

Indeed, this year's ESS Online Season is the most comprehensive yet, spanning eleven events spread out between October 2023 and June 2024, with events open to all levels, a series of contextual workshop/demonstrations (Voice Series) in April/May, and a session on Shakuhachi & Improvisation will bring the 23/24 online event series to a close. Full details of the ESS Online Season: <https://online2023-24.shakuhachisociety.eu/>

We also welcome two new Board members: Clive Bell to our publications team and Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis as our new media/communications person. Both are a great addition to our existing team and are already fully immersed in their new roles. All other Board members were re-elected in their positions and are as follows: Chairperson – Thorsten Knaub; Treasurer – Emmanuelle Rouaud; Secretary – Nina Haarer; Publication Team – Ramón Humet.

Last but not least, as 2024 is approaching, we wanted to welcome the New Year with a special concert. Hence we have moved our end of year concert to a New Year time slot on Sunday 21 January. There will be a mixture of invited performers and ESS members' contributions to make up the concert programme (our "Call for Contributions" was just sent out :-).

For a thematic framework, the concert aims to explore the way the shakuhachi is used to imitate, represent or evoke animals and their routines and characters. The individual pieces will be interspersed with shakuhachi improvisations/ambient pieces to extend the idea of the habitat and environment. This lively scenario should provide us with an auspicious start into 2024.

Take care and hope to see you soon.

Best wishes,
Thorsten Knaub, ESS Chairperson

And Breathe... A Word From Your Editors

Dear ESS Members and shakuhachi people,

A "two by four" is a piece of wood, and if you're building a house frame or a loft space, you will need a lot of two-by-fours (2x4s). That's when you may find the 2x4 is not actually two inches by four inches - in fact the size varies depending on where you buy it.

We've often thought the shakuhachi is like a 2x4. It's named for its size: one shaku and eight sun. But like those pieces of wood, shakuhachi lengths are not always exact. Back in the Edo period flute sizes were maybe more easygoing, but after the arrival of Western music in Japan, ensemble playing and correct tuning became an issue. So how long should a 2.4 shakuhachi be? Kakizakai Kaoru has written a concise article about exactly this. And if you use a free tuning app on your phone (we like Soundcorset), don't take it for granted. Kakizakai reminds us that tuners used to be rare machines, and large.

Welcome to the latest issue of the ESS Newsletter! Your new editorial team is Ramon Humet and Clive Bell. We have a couple of new sections: "Ignition Commission" is a specially commissioned piece of music, targeted particularly at beginners, and intended to be lyrical and beautiful. Our first igniting composer is Araki Kodo VI. Then our "Rear View Mirror" features a look back at an important shakuhachi album from the past. On this occasion we invited Laonikos Psimikakis Chalkokondylis to write about Blends (2002), which started life as a 1977 live collaboration between US composer Richard Teitelbaum and Yokoyama Katsuya.

After many lockdown and online events, at last in July 2023 shakuhachi players met face to face again at the Dublin Summer School. We have a report from tireless organiser Philip Horan, plus colourful and informal accounts from several participants, both players and makers.

"Passing The Baton Forward" is the name we've given to a remarkable pair of interviews. José Vargas-Zúñiga talks to his teacher Jim Franklin, and then Jim talks to his teacher Riley Lee. They both have plenty to say about teaching and being taught.

Then there are several sky-blue pages of information about the ESS Online Season 2023/24. It has already started, and the classes and talks run through to June 2024.

And that's not all. Kerry King tells us about living in a trailer amongst the mountains of Chichibu in Saitama-ken. But enough spoilers - please enjoy your newest newsletter.

The Editors



TODAY IS A GOOD DAY TO START SHAKUHACHI... OR SIMPLY TO PICK UP SOME NEW SKILLS!

We are happy to announce the ESS Online Season 2023-24. Altogether we have 11 individual events spread out between October and June next year. Something for everybody we hope and maybe even everything for everybody—we are certainly very excited about what is coming up.

The season kicked off on the 15 October with a workshop focusing on shakuhachi beginners, aiming to give people who have recently started-up, just want to and people who have been playing for a while, the opportunity to learn or solidify some fundamental shakuhachi principles — holding the flute, posture, embouchure, breathing correctly — as well as give insight into some aspects of the shakuhachi's historical background, notation reading and tackling simple pieces and melodic patterns.

For this we had Riley Lee and Daniel Ryudo on the 15 October, and if you were not able to attend, we will have another of beginner / fundamentals focused workshop, this time lead by Christopher Yohmei Blasdel and Kiku Day, on 11 February 2024. There again we will explore e.g. breathing exercises and shakuhachi within a meditation context.

Continuing our autumn focus on the new shakuhachi generations we also already had a Beginner/Elementary focus workshop on 11+12 November, where we will meet again Riley Lee and Daniel Ryudo, and also welcome Véronique Piron and Elizabeth Reian Bennett. There we encountered several *honkyoku* pieces from *Kinko-ryū*, *Myōan* and *Reibo-kai* styles, *minyō* as well as ideas on oral transmission.

Next year the programme continues with the ESS New Year Concert on 21 January. We moved that annual online gathering to a hopefully quieter moment in the year and we hope it gives us all the energy needed for an auspicious start into 2024. This time we set a concert theme to explore the way the shakuhachi is used to imitate, represent or evoke animals and their routines and characters. We very much looking forward to that event.



As we continue our event series we have a dedicated Intermediate/Advanced workshop lined up for the 2+3 March 2024. Here we have from Japan Akihito Obama, from USA James Nyoraku Schlefer and Elizabeth Brown as well our European guest Gunnar Jinmei Linder. The sessions will feature a mix of traditional *honkyoku*, contemporary music as well as own compositions for shakuhachi as well as a talk. Not to miss, for any level.

April and May 2024 we introduce the 'Voice' a totally new aspect in our online events series. Rather than focusing on shakuhachi playing per se the 'Voice' will explore the cultural context surrounding the shakuhachi and Japanese Musical tradition in general.

For this the 'Voice' season consists out of a series of events using the talk/demonstration/workshop format to give us a taster and introduction to notions of voice as used in the Japanese culture, music and shakuhachi practice.

The ESS Voice series opens with a surely stimulating weekend of *shōmyō* Buddhist chant by Junko Ueda on Saturday 13 April, followed by *honkyoku* singing with Teruo Furuya on Sunday 14 April. We continue on Saturdays with the 'Voice in Sankyoku' with Shino Arisawa (lecture) & Miyama McQueen-Tokita (demonstrations and practical exercises) on 20 April, *minyō* with Abe Kinzaburo (*minyō* singing, shamisen and demonstrations), on 27 April, and finally ending the series with Anne Norman showing shakuhachi and vocalising techniques on 4 May. To be sure you don't miss one event, we offer a 'Voice Season' registration option too.

This brings us to June and our last event, but rather than winding down we turned the dial to 11 and put together a very exciting event to complete the ESS Online Season on the 2. June—Shakuhachi & Improvisation.

This brings a rare opportunity to hear Ned Rothenberg and his take and philosophy of using shakuhachi in the improvising context. We are very happy to have him on board for this event. Equally happy though we are with our other two guests Detta Danford and cellist Natasha Zielazinski who will add their own improvisation flavours to the proceedings.

And if you are like us and want to be part of the whole season there is the 'ESS Season 2023-24' option where you can simply register for everything with the press of a button.

This season option of course offers this at a reduced price and is available for members and non-members alike. See our registration page for all the options and details.)

And remember :) Today is a good day to start shakuhachi...or simply to pick up some new skills.



ESS ONLINE 2023-24
online2023-24.shakuhachisociety.eu

Quick overview of ESS Online Season 2023-24

15 October 2023 | Event #1

StartingUp Shakuhachi/Beginner

Riley Lee

Daniel Ryudo

11+12 November 2023 | Event #2

Beginner/Elementary

Riley Lee

Daniel Ryudo

Véronique Piron

Elizabeth Reian Bennett

21 January 2024 | Event #3

ESS New Year Concert

ESS Members

11 February 2024 | Event #4

StartingUp Shakuhachi/Beginner

Christopher Yohmei Blasdel

Kiku Day



ESS ONLINE 2023-24
online2023-24.shakuhachisociety.eu

2+3 March 2024 | Event #5

Intermediate/Advanced

Akihito Obama

Gunnar Jinmei Linder

James Nyoraku Schlefer

Elizabeth Brown

13, 14, 20, 27 April & 4 May 2024 Event #6.1-#6.5

Voice & Shakuhachi

Junko Ueda

Teruo Furuya

Shino Arisawa/Miyama McQueen-Tokita

Kinzaburo Abe

Anne Norman

2 June 2024 | Event #7

Shakuhachi & Improvisation

Ned Rothenberg

Detta Danford & Natasha Zielazinski

Today is a good day to start shakuhachi ...



ESS ONLINE 2023-24
online2023-24.shakuhachisociety.eu

#1 15 October 2023

STARTING-UP/BEGINNER

Riley Lee • Daniel Ryudo

#2 11+12 November 2023

BEGINNER/ELEMENTARY

Riley Lee • Véronique Piron • Daniel Ryudo • Elizabeth Reian Bennett

#3 21 January 2024

ESS NEW YEAR CONCERT

ESS Members

#4 11 February 2024

STARTING-UP/BEGINNER

Christopher Yohmei Blasdel • Kiku Day

#5 2+3 March 2024

INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED

Akihito Obama • Gunnar Jinmei Linder • James Nyoraku Schlefer • Elizabeth Brown

#6 April/May 2024

VOICE

13.4 Junko Ueda **Shōmyō Chant**

14.4 Teruo Furuya **Singing Honkyoku**

20.4 Shino Arisawa + Miyama McQueen-Tokita **Voice in Sankyoku**

27.4 Kinzaburo Abe **Min'yō**

4. 5 Anne Norman **Vocalising Shakuhachi**

#7 2 June 2024

IMPROVISATION

Ned Rothenberg

Detta Danford

Natasha Zielazinski



...or simply to pick up some new skills!

21 January 2024

ESS MEMBERS

NEW YEAR CONCERT

14H00 - 16H00 (CET)



CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

THIS YEAR THE ESS CONCERT EXPLORES THE WAY THE SHAKUHACHI IS USED TO IMITATE, REPRESENT OR EVOKE ANIMALS AND THEIR ROUTINES AND CHARACTERS. FOR THAT WE IMAGINE A DAY WHERE ANIMAL THEMED SHAKUHACHI PIECES GUIDE US FROM MORNING TO NIGHT FALL.

THE INDIVIDUAL PIECES WILL BE INTERSPERSED WITH SHAKUHACHI IMPROVISATIONS/AMBIENT PIECES TO EXTEND THE IDEA OF THE HABITAT AND ENVIRONMENT.

**OUR INVITED PERFORMERS WILL BE JOINED BY ESS MEMBERS.
INTERESTED TO PERFORM?**

Contact us at: online-events@shakuhachisociety.eu



REPORT ON ESS SUMMER SCHOOL DUBLIN, JULY 2023

by Philip Horan

The ESS Dublin Summer School took place in the Irish Institute of Music and Song, 20-23 July 2023. The Institute is situated in the seaside town of Balbriggan. We welcomed fifty to Dublin, including teachers, composers, students and online participants. The main meeting area, the Square Space, provided an ideal setting for morning *robuki*, workshops, shop and concerts.

We were delighted to welcome Riley Lee and Araki Kodō VI to their first ESS summer school. Both performers presented *honkyoku* from their lineages in workshops and performances. These included a performance of *Sanya* and a workshop on the *Chikuho honkyoku, Ryuhei*, by Riley Lee. Araki Kodō VI taught the *Kodō-kai* solo version of *Shika no Tone* and performed *Dōkyō* by Araki Chikuō II (Araki Kodō V). They both have recorded albums of Irish music so were active performing with Irish musicians in the concerts. Naoko Kikuchi on koto and shamisen accompanied many workshops and performed in all the concerts.

Other styles taught included Suizan Jean-François Lagrost teaching *Tozan*, Kiku Day teaching *Zensabo*, Michael Coxall on *sankyoku* and Horacio Curti on KSK. There were also talks by Kiku Day and José Seizan Vargas. Improvisation workshops were led by Emmanuelle Rouald, Thorsten Knaub and José Seizan Vargas. The jinashi making workshop had seven participants, led by José Seizan Vargas and Thorsten. James Nyoraku Schlefer taught his duos and trios for shakuhachi, which were presented in the concerts.

There were plenty of opportunities to learn or listen to traditional Irish music. I presented four workshops on Irish music for shakuhachi. On Saturday, a group of musicians including Araki Kodō VI, Riley Lee, Pierre Helou, Joke Vervoold and Bryan Fleming joined Irish concertina player, Adrian Scahill in an informal Irish music session. Many participants joined the final workshop of the summer school, a hands-on introduction to the bodhrán by Brian Fleming (not to be confused with shakuhachi player Bryan Fleming).



Bodhrán workshop with Brian Fleming

There were daily concerts in the Square Space. Open Mic night offered the stage to summer school participants who provided a varied and entertaining evening of music. The teachers' concert on day 2 featured all the teachers including Naoko Kikuchi on koto. We were also very lucky to have koto player Yuki Kitagawa attend as a student and perform in the concerts. The students' concert on day 3 contained a selection of the music learnt during the summer school. The final Gala Concert was preceded by the planting of a cherry blossom tree in the Institute garden by the Japanese ambassador to Ireland, Norio Maruyama.

The summer school was enriched by the presence of two composers, Henri Algadafe and Taichi Imanishi. Emmanuelle Rouald performed two premieres by Henri, and Kiku performed a premiere by Taichi. Both composers also performed in the concerts.

The success of this summer school owes a lot to the support of the ESS committee, in particular Thorsten and Emmanuelle. I would like to personally thank the three volunteers: Bryan Fleming in charge of sound and video recording, Ian Skyes who ran the shop and Phillip Messe who worked in the team to support the smooth running of the school. I would also like to acknowledge Kiku Day, Michael Coxall and Horacio Curti, who as well as helping me to organise the cancelled event of 2020, made invaluable contributions to Dublin 2023.

The summer school was bookended by a series of concerts in Dublin city centre and wider afield. On the eve of the school, Riley Lee joined leading Irish harpist Triona Marshall in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. The day after the school, seven of the teachers performed in Saint Ann's Church along with Irish biwa player Charles Ranjo Marshall. A second concert featuring Riley Lee and Araki Kodo VI followed a few days later at the church. The series of concerts finished with a performance in Kildare Cathedral featuring Riley Lee, Araki Kodō VI, Triona Marshall and Charles Marshall. All concerts were well attended and brought various Japanese music genres and the unique sound of Irish music on shakuhachi to a wider Irish audience.



Reception with the Japan ambassador

REPORT ON THE JINASHI MAKING WORKSHOP

ESS SUMMER SCHOOL DUBLIN, JULY 2023

by Charles van Kampen

While searching for some music to listen to, I ran across a second hand shakuhachi yuu. I play a bit of bansuri and thought to give the shakuhachi a try. I ended up playing it every day for the last eight months. During that period I also learned about the ESS and its Summer School. Though I had not travelled in almost fifteen years, this felt like something I had to go for.

Since I love to craft, the jinashi making workshop immediately caught my attention. I was already thinking about making a bigger size flute and – as a left handed person – being able to offset the holes to the left was a very appealing thought to me.

Some days before travelling to Dublin, José Seizan Vargas – our teacher – presented me with two pieces of bamboo. Same length, but one with an average bore and one with a wider bore. Both could make good flutes, his expertise said. The choice was up to me. I went for the wide bore; that was what I was after from the start.



Making and testing a *jinashi* shakuhachi (photo: Charles van Kampen)

Day 1:

After getting acquainted a bit, José handed out some information as well as the madake bamboo poles that each of the seven participants had chosen. We started cutting the root end, opening the nodes and shaping a basic utaguchi to get some tone. Once we got an indication of where the bamboo was leading us, we kept working on this until we established a stable *Ro* for our flutes.

Day 2:

Based on what we had achieved the day before, we started calculating, measuring and drilling all the finger holes. After drilling, we started fine tuning the finger holes using a *kuri* knife and by sanding.

In my case we were not sure yet how drilling the first finger hole would affect the initial pitch. I had to take into consideration that we might have to cut off the lowest node to re-establish *Ro*. As it turned out, we were pretty close. José recommended opening the bell first. That helped to raise the pitch again and fortunately there was no need to shorten the flute.

We encountered some problems during the workshop, which caused some delay. José was really committed to make sure that we would all leave with the best flute possible. He suggested taking extra hours the following day, so we could work on our flutes some more. We all happily agreed.

Day 3:

We continued shaping our flutes. According to the programme, José had classes scheduled on improvisation and repairs. Since we would be doing an improv with our newly made jinashi flutes during the Students Concert that evening, this was a good moment to try out our flutes as well as a great opportunity to learn about improvisation. Together with two other students who had joined the class, we tried out different things and ended with a ten minute improvisation that left me humbled.

As for the next class – since one of us had made a mistake while drilling a fingerhole – José showed us how we can repair that, using bamboo dust and super glue. We also learned how to do bindings.

I decided to skip afternoon classes that I initially had planned for and kept working on my flute for the rest of the day.

That evening during the Students Concert our Jinashi Gang did a short improvisation on our new flutes. Kiku Day joined in as well, which was great fun.



Building a *jinashi* shakuhachi (photo: Charles van Kampen)

Day 4:

During the morning I attended two classes; one by Riley Lee and the other by Horacio Curti. Those gave me some aha! moments, for which I am thankful. I couldn't help noticing that some flute making tools were still there, so during the afternoon I spent some more time working on my flute. In the evening we all enjoyed a BBQ, a drink and some good music. The next day everyone went on their way.

Feedback:

I'd like to ask for attention to the workplace. People were constantly walking through our space, talking loudly. We had to focus, were working with sharp tools and precious bamboo. A lot of people didn't pay attention to this. To me, it felt awkward, especially because other classes and activities were treated carefully and with the utmost respect. For future events, please arrange a dedicated place for the workshop.

Looking back:

To me, the workshop was an experience of a lifetime, with a wonderful teacher. So thank you once more, José, for your generosity and guidance – in the broadest sense. Heartwarming and really appreciated. Also I'd like to thank my fellow participants and everyone who helped making this Summer School a success, including my partner Fred. And of course I have met new people, for which I am grateful too.

I was very happy to be back home, but it was a bit strange also after such an intense experience. Gradually I seem to be finding my way and am building a small workshop where I hope to keep working on making flutes. Finally, I brought back home a very special flute: a beautiful wide bore 2.3 *jinashi*, which I named *Taiho*.

Wishing everyone the best,
Charles van Kampen



José Vargas working on a *jinashi* shakuhachi (photo: Charles van Kampen)

EXPERIENCES AND OBSERVATIONS ON THE ESS SUMMER SCHOOL IN BALBRIGGAN, IRELAND, 2023

by Daniel Ribble

I had only attended one European Shakuhachi Summer School in the past, and that was the first summer school, in London, in 2006, so I was interested in the possibility of getting back to Europe. I love Irish music and had never been to Ireland so this event sounded like a great opportunity. In addition, I was also looking forward to meeting people interested in the bamboo flute and was excited about teachers scheduled for the summer school such as Riley Lee, whom I had the opportunity of learning a few pieces with years back and Araki Kodo VI - whom I had never met in person, but whose father I had met three decades prior in Bisei, Okayama. Coming from Kochi, Japan, I think I may have travelled the longest distance of any participant to get to the seaside town of Balbriggan, just north of Dublin, where the summer school took place at the Irish Institute of Music and Song.

After taking two buses, three flights starting in Osaka, Japan, and then a bus from the Dublin airport I was a bit jet-lagged, not having slept for over thirty hours, and the La-La restaurant connected to the Irish Institute was very welcoming in the early morning with coffee and an offer to let me rest up there until the Music Institute lodging at Bedford Chambers opened up. Philip Horan, the organizer of the ESS event, and the other teachers Thorsten Knaub and Emmanuelle Rouaud happened to come to the restaurant for breakfast and they kindly invited me to accompany them to Dublin by car and then double decker bus to watch a concert featuring Australian shakuhachi grandmaster Riley Lee and Irish harpist Triona Marshall at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. It was wonderful hearing the combination of the two instruments on Irish tunes such as 'She Walked Through the Fair', and also an exquisite rendition of the Hildegard von Bingen composition 'Caritas Abundat.' The harpist mentioned playing with the Chieftains for twenty years, and stated that she had developed some of her harp techniques from watching the flute playing of Irish flautist and long-time Chieftain member Matt Molloy.

Walking back along the Liffey river in central Dublin in the rain together with the koto player Naoko Kikuchi, recently arrived from Germany, and Dutch ESS participant and theatre performer Charles van Kampen, we ended up catching a train back to Balbriggan by which time I was ready to get some shut-eye in my bunk in the Chieftains room in the Bedford Quarters, where I later met my room-mates Marcus, a German player from Edinburgh, and Pierre, a French player and flute maker from Orléans. The Institute had dedicated the Bedford Chambers' dorm style rooms advertised as 'Japanese Style' pods to famous Irish bands such as the Chieftains, Clannad, Planxty, Thin Lizzy, the Cranberries and U2, and there were posters with the bands' histories outside each door; one could listen to their hits on headphones just outside the doors to each room. Though too exhausted to listen to more music that evening seeing the posters brought back happy memories of listening to bands such as the Chieftains, Planxty and Clannad many years back, and seeing U2 on their first American tour in 1981.

The next morning I woke up to the cry of the gulls - often perched on nearby chimney tops over the course of the event - and walked down to the lighthouse to see all the colourful fishing boats sitting with their hulls exposed at the low tide. The summer school took off soon after with morning *robuki* – each day with a different teacher; there was an intensive program of events and classes that specified the level of playing recommended for joining each session. Including the evening concerts, our schedule went from nine in the morning to about nine pm most days, and there were various celebrations after each concert in the La-La restaurant next door, and sometimes in a pub in town which featured live music. A wide range of music was taught at this year's summer school, including *honkyoku* of Tozan, Kinko, Zensabo, Chikuho and KSK schools, *sankyoku*, modern pieces, Irish music, improvisation, *jinashi* shakuhachi making, shakuhachi and electronics, in addition to lectures given on shakuhachi history and bamboo, as well as introductory classes on the Irish tin whistle and bodhran. There were plenty of concerts, with an open mike night the first night, a teachers' concert the second night, a student concert the third night, a gala concert by the teachers on the fourth day, and an Irish music performance. Delicious Irish breakfasts were available in the La-La restaurant next door – I tried all three choices on the menu; participants could take all meals there though a number of shakuhachi summer school folks also took advantage of the kitchen facilities in the guest canteen building and tried out their own cooking skills – there were some yummy curries to be had!

Robuki and other warming up exercises for shakuhachi were taught each morning by different teachers such as Riley Lee, Kiku Day, Horacio Curti, Jean-Francois Lagrost, and Araki Kodo in a recital hall named The Square which had nice acoustics; it was good getting a different perspective on the flute each morning of the event. There were various shakuhachi, shakuhachi cases, CDs, music books for Irish music on shakuhachi, and even tin whistles and bodhran for sale in the recital hall where we gathered each morning before setting out for the day's classes; a grander hall with seating for 400 was still under construction at the Irish Music Institute but for our group of about forty people the facilities we had were a perfect size and were all in a series of music institute buildings on a quiet street in Balbriggan, just a short walk from beautiful views of the Irish Sea. The first day I was in a class learning 'Emu' (Picture Dreams), a contemporary piece with koto taught by Riley Lee, and in the afternoon another group I joined studied Lee's own composition 'Adrift On a Sea of Tranquillity, maybe there were eight or ten other participants. It was fun taking part in the Irish music session taught everyday at lunch time by Philip Horan, who taught Renaissance music, Irish dance tunes, slow airs and other Irish music, and on another day I attended the Irish session on the music of the blind harper Turlough O'Carolan, a legendary Irish composer from three centuries ago. On the first evening there was an interesting presentation on making shakuhachi and the characteristics of bamboo by Jose Vargas. A contingent of German, Dutch, Belgian, and French players usually ended up making meals in the kitchen facilities at evening dinner, with people sharing both dishes they had cooked, and stories of their involvement with shakuhachi.



Kiku Day leading *robuki* (Photo: Daniel Ribble)

On the second full day I practised the *sankyoku* piece 'Sono No Aki' with teacher Michael Coxall and guest koto player Naoko Kikuchi, along with a small group of maybe four participants. *Sankyoku* is not easy, especially in the matter of matching the shamisen or koto rhythm, even for those who have been playing it for many years, like myself. American shakuhachi teacher and composer James Schlefer was in our group and we shared a copy of my *shiroyu* (white cover) notation for the piece; most players were using the more common *aofu* (green cover) notation from the Kawase school of *Kinko*, and so we had two different variations of the shakuhachi part accompanying the koto. In the afternoon I joined others in learning a *Chikuho-ryu honkyoku*, 'Ryuhei', again with the indefatigable Riley Lee sensei, and in the evening got to attend a fascinating talk about the shakuhachi in Japan in the first part of the 20th century up through World War II by Kiku Day; the instrument had been very popular with Japanese soldiers and was associated with Japanese patriotism during the war years; needless to say, it has undergone some major image changes since. The teachers' concert that evening was superb, some highlights for me being Kodo Araki's *Shika No Tone*, a duet of Iso Chidori by Jean-Francois Lagrost and koto player Naoko Kikuchi, and Kiku Day's solo *honkyoku Daiotsu Gaeshi*, which got some of nature's accompaniment as the rain began to patter more and more strongly outside the The Square shortly after Kiku Day began playing.

The only complaint that I could possibly make about the summer school is that there always seemed to be several classes that I wanted to attend at the same time; a situation for which we reserve the phrase 'shikata ga nai' (it can't be helped) in Japan. The third day I attended the improvisation and moving image class with Emmanuelle Rouaud and Thorsten Knaub. There was just one other participant in that class, Marek Kimej Matvija, from the Czech Republic. We did various exercises in improvisation, and later played while following the body movements of a teacher or student, and then switched roles. Luckily I had had some experience in that with a New York dance teacher named Kay Nishikawa who annually visited Kochi, Japan, and does improvisational dance performances with music accompaniment, and that was helpful. Eventually we got into the moving image part of the class, where Marek and I ended up creating a shakuhachi soundtrack for a short clip from a 1962 samurai film titled 'Harakiri'; it was a delight putting in both melodies and atmospheric sounds to match action sequences in the film. After finishing up an improvisation class in the afternoon where we recorded our improvisations with film, I attended a class learning pieces composed by Hildegard von Bingen, the 11th century German Benedictine saint and abbess, and taught by Riley Lee. One piece we studied was 'Caritas Abundat'; it was good practice for me and perhaps for others who may only read the Japanese notation learning to read or re-read Western notation on such a beautiful piece of medieval music.

In the evening Marek and I got to play our improvisation live along with the film clip in front of an audience at the student concert. I had a few butterflies in my stomach as we were suddenly informed that we were first up at the student concert but luckily things went smoothly and I didn't get too nervous. Most participants were busy performing several pieces in the concert and there was a five minute limit for each piece, so each group had to decide how to edit their piece to best showcase the particular music they were playing. To me the five minute rule seemed to work out well as we were able to see what members of each class had been learning over the course of the summer school in a concert that was a reasonable length. I was lucky to get to join several other pieces in the concert: part of the *sankyoku* piece 'Sono No Aki' with Frédérick (France), Joke (Holland), Marek (Czech Republic), and James Schefer (USA); our group ended up performing two slightly different shakuhachi versions of the piece along with the koto. Later in the concert and with a different class I joined in a performance of the *Chikuho-ryu honkyoku* 'Ryuhei' (exile). Finally, the last piece or one of the last pieces featured in the concert was with yet another group of students; we performed the contemporary piece 'Emu,' originally commissioned for Riley Lee, which started slow but then built up to a fast tempo and had a fair amount of syncopation and meri notes. The day before we had had a final practice with koto guest performer Akiharu Kitagawa, who had taken a ferry with his koto from Wales to Ireland, and who replaced our original koto partner Naoko Kikuchi for the student concert. As we were in a class listed as advanced our sensei Riley Lee let us play the piece on our own, with Dutch player Joke Verdoold volunteering to be our group's leader in terms of keeping us shakuhachi players in correct time with the koto, which she did quite well, judging from the enthusiastic response we received from our audience. At the student concert there were performances by other classes of *sankyoku* pieces Kurokami and *Chidori No Kyoku*, an anime piece Naruko – said to be the first anime piece ever played at an ESS event – and a performance of one of teacher James Schlefer's original trios, among other tunes. There were several people fairly new to shakuhachi who had made their jinashi over three days, having taken the jinashi making class every day in both mornings and afternoons. It seems that they were all successful in making their flutes under the tutelage of Jose Vargas, and they got to play some improvisational music on a range of *jinashi* of different lengths at the students' concert.

Earlier in the day we had witnessed an Irish music concert with a talented Irish accordionist who was joined by Pierre Helou, a French participant and silver flute maker, who accompanied the group on several whistles and Irish flute, Kodo Araki on low whistle, our summer school organizer Philip Horan on shakuhachi, with Dutch player Joke Verdoodt joining in on Irish harp. Some of the Turlough O'Carolan pieces we had learned in the lunchtime Irish music sessions were featured. Summer school organizer Philip Horan usually gave explanations in Irish Gaelic before introducing the pieces in English. Tunes played included the melodic 'Si Beag, Si Mor' (Small Fairy Mound, Big Fairy Mound) and 'Tabhair dom do Lamh' (Give Me Your Hand), two pieces which date back several hundred years.

The final day of the ESS Summer School I attended the interesting electronics and shakuhachi class taught by Jose Vargas, an introduction to playing the tin whistle taught by Philip Horan, and an introduction to *bodhran* playing—lots of fun—one player kept dropping his percussion stick!—by a guest Irish bodhran player who said he had once played a session with the world famous Chieftains. In the early afternoon all participants went out to witness the Japanese ambassador to Ireland Maruyama Norio and his wife dedicating a memorial plaque to the ESS event in the guitar garden at the Irish Institute of Music and Song, and planting a cherry tree—at which time we all played 'Sakura, Sakura' out in the rain, luckily a gentle rain. It rained quite a bit over the course of the summer school but it was usually just a light rain - compared to the massive downpours we get here in Japan - and the weather was nice and cool over the course of the summer school, another contrast to the humid and high temperatures which I had to readjust to after returning from the Emerald Isle. The Japanese ambassador and his wife as well as townsfolk from Balbriggan attended the Gala Concert, which featured all the shakuhachi teachers playing a variety of pieces that included several world premieres of original compositions by both Kiku Day and Emmanuelle Rouaud; the composers, Japanese and French, were also present. It appeared that Emmanuelle was both responding to and initiating electronic sounds with her shakuhachi - such a cool avant garde piece that contrasted well with the traditional shakuhachi pieces that had been played earlier. The Japanese composer of Kiku Day's contemporary solo piece 'Byakudo', Taichi Imanishi, performed a vigorous original solo number on

snare drum; overall the event featured many genres of music; each teacher presented something quite different from the others and all the performances were captivating. Having attended shakuhachi events here in Japan where almost all the pieces are of one genre, this event was exceptional in that each of the ESS concerts featured a great mix of styles and there was superb technical playing with feeling. Later I attended the general meeting of the ESS, having joined for the first time this year, and found out that the next shakuhachi summer school is scheduled to be held in Stockholm, Sweden, and the next world shakuhachi festival in Texas in 2025.



Bodhran class (Photo: Daniel Ribble)

There was a real sense of community among those attending in the summer school in Dublin and over the course of the event I was able to talk with participants from France, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Holland, Belgium, Greece, Israel, England, the Czech Republic, Japan (both players currently living in Europe), Australia, the USA and Ireland. The last evening of the summer school we said our farewells over barbecue and pints of Guinness in the La-La restaurant; I tried playing a few Irish pieces at the farewell barbecue after everyone had been getting heavily into the Guinness, and Kodo Araki was kind enough to join me on a couple of tunes. Many readers may know that in addition to being in a very famous shakuhachi lineage Hanz Araki is also a professional player of Irish music and has been carrying on teaching and performing in both of these long-standing musical traditions. Araki noted that he had been to Ireland often to perform Irish music but stated that it was the first time he had come to Ireland to teach Japanese music. The next morning there were more goodbyes at breakfast at the La-La restaurant - such a nice space with its beautiful garden and its giant guitar - four other participants and I took a train into Dublin before all going our separate ways. It was a super ESS event and I'm looking forward to attending another summer school in the future. Thanks so much to organizer Philip Horan and his assistants for putting on a fantastic event, arigatou to all the teachers for their excellent instruction, and thanks to all fellow participants for helping make the summer school such a good time. It was great meeting many people for the first time and also seeing friends I had made at previous shakuhachi related events. Now I need to continue working on those Irish pieces!



Student's concert (Photo: Daniel Ribble)

REPORT ON ESS DUBLIN SUMMER SCHOOL

by Francis Moore

As a relative newbie to the shakuhachi and the ESS, this week in Balbriggan was illuminating. There was a huge programme to choose from in such a short space of time. I finally have an understanding of this culture as living - being preserved and treasured by people from all over the world. I also have more understanding of how shakuhachi is nurtured and developed (sometimes lost) through friends, families, partners, and generations.

Not to forget of course, the lone obsessive! Gatherings like this are so valuable because they offer moments where people can feel validated and energised by a community, when most of the time it's oneself playing shakuhachi at home.

Prior to coming to Ireland, the vast majority of my time playing this instrument has been outside of formal lessons, occupied in realms of improvisation. When I do learn a song here and there, I find it difficult to string them together into a full piece, and always with a constant drive to say something of my own, I end up trailing off into more immediate sonic ideas. Confronting this habit in Balbriggan was a welcome struggle. Going from a few sporadic lessons in three years, to four solid days of lessons by some of the most qualified teachers across the world, was something I will take with me forever. As a teacher in London, Detta Danford, once told me: "There aren't really any easy *honkyoku* pieces." It provided me with a real understanding of the importance of *honkyoku* being an oral tradition, as well as its fragility.



Araki Kodo VI in concert (Photo: Francis Moore)

I came to Ireland with my one and only 尺八 (a Bell shakuhachi by Jon Kypros), and returned to London with nine! I had no plans to acquire any shakuhachis on this trip, but fell in love with a beautiful brown 2.3 by Philip Horan and made an impulse purchase. The others were purchased after I made an Instagram story offering to buy a pvc shakuhachi by Thorsten Knaub that I could take back to London. There are now seven new 尺八 owners in London!

In a gala concert, Araki Kodō VI began by sharing with the audience that after so many years of playing traditional Irish music to Japanese people, this was his first time playing traditional Japanese music to Irish people. Emū, a song from 1979 by Kuribayashi Hideaki, adapted and played by four shakuhachi students with Naoko Kikuchi on koto. All the shakuhachis were playing the same part, creating an incredible richness in tone. And the koto was so energetic and joyful. Kiku Day's presentation of ongoing research of shakuhachi culture in Japan during WW2. Shakuhachi being a common hobby at the time, they were carried by many soldiers, and actively encouraged by the government as a symbol of native romanticism and male strength. This research was really fascinating, and will be included in a collaborative book Kiku is working on. Riley Lee playing "She Moves Through The Fair", slowly joined by various flutes, Irish harp, concertina, and bodhrán. This was part of a session on the last day, blending Irish and Japanese music through reels and jigs.

As I finish writing this, I am on a plane 10,000 metres above Japan! I decided to go by myself for a few months. I'm nervous, but really excited to see what I'll get myself into. Keen to be on a constant shakuhachi hunt. If any readers want to put me in touch with anyone or have any thoughts or tips, then please get in touch! My email is francistcmoore@gmail.com.



Kiku Day in a lecture about shakuhachi culture in Japan during WW2 (Photo: Francis Moore)

ESS SUMMER SCHOOL | BALBRIGGAN 2023

TEACHERS' CONCERT 1

IRISH INSTITUTE OF MUSIC & SONG, 21/7/2023

Horacio Curti – Improvisation

José Seizan Vargas – Improvisation with live electronics

Riley Lee – *San'an* (*honkyoku*)

Suizan Jean-François Lagrost & Philip Suimei Horan – *Tsuidō* by Yamamoto Hōzan

Michael Soumei Coxall & Naoko Kikuchi – *Keshi no hana*

Interval

Araki Kodō VI – *Dōkyō* by Araki Chikuō II (Araki Kodō V)

Emmanuelle Rouaud & Henri Algadafe – *De Vagues et d'Élans* (*Of Waves and Motions*) by Henri Algadafe, 2014 for shakuhachi and electric guitar

Kiku Day – *Dai-otsu gaeshi*

Suizan Jean-François Lagrost & Naoko Kikuchi (shamisen) – *Isochidori*





ESS SUMMER SCHOOL | BALBRIGGAN 2023

GALA CONCERT

IRISH INSTITUTE OF MUSIC & SONG, 23/7/2023

Riley Lee—*Sanya* (Mountain-Valley)

Philip Suimei Horan & Naoko Kikuchi (koto)—*Sakura Gensou kyoku* by Ichiro Seki (1949-)

Kiku Day—*Byakudō* by Taichi Imanishi (2021) **World premiere**

Jean-François Suizan Lagrost & Naoko Kikuchi (koto)—*Korogi* by Miyagi Michio (1894-1956)

Araki Kodō VI—*Shika no Tonē* by Araki Chikuō II (Araki Kodō V)

Interval

Henri Algadafe & Emmanuelle Rouaud (shakuhachi and live electronics)—*Un Long chemin Sinueux* (A long winding path) by Henri Algadafe 2022. **World premiere**

Horacio Curti—*I no nomès el vent* by Josep Maria Guix

Taichi Imanishi (snare drum)—*Meditation No.1* by Casey Cangelosi (2011)

Riley Lee & Naoko Kikuchi (koto)—*Emu* by Kuribayashi Hideaki





ESS SUMMER SCHOOL | BALBRIGGAN 2023

TEACHERS CONCERT 3 ST. ANN'S CHURCH, 24/7/2023

Riley Lee—*Sokkan* (*honkyoku*)

José Seizan Vargas—*Petenera, Aira* (two Spanish airs)

Thorsten Knaub—*Motogaeshi* (modern *honkyoku*/Watazumido)

Charles Marshall—*Satsuma biwa* solo

Kiku Day—*Itchoken Kudariha* (*honkyoku*)

Jean-François Suizan Lagrost & Philip Suimei Horan—*Tsuidō* (Yamamoto Hōzan)



ESS SUMMER SCHOOL | BALBRIGGAN 2023

TEACHERS CONCERT 4 ST. ANN'S CHURCH, 27/7/2023

Riley Lee

- *Tamuke* (honkyoku)
- *Two hymns* by Hildegard von Bingen

Araki Kodō VI

- *Hi fu mi hachigaeshi* (honkyoku)
- *Dōkyō* (Copper Mirror) by Araki Kodō V (modern)
- *Seoladh Na nGamlhna* (Irish traditional)

Riley Lee & Araki Kodō VI — *Shika no Tone* (honkyoku)



ESS SUMMER SCHOOL | BALBRIGGAN 2023

STUDENTS CONCERT IRISH INSTITUTE OF MUSIC & SONG





ESS SUMMER SCHOOL | BALBRIGGAN 2023

SUMMER SCHOOL LIFE





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Ignition commission

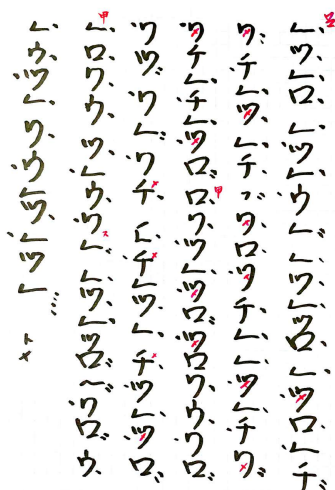
In this issue, we start a new section called *Ignition Commission*, original works for shakuhachi of all styles aimed especially at beginners.

Since each lineage has a specific notation and fingering, we attach a fingering chart as well as a world premiere recording of the piece performed by the same composer that you can download from the members' area.

Along with the score, you will also find a brief explanation of the work by the composer himself.

We would like to especially thank Araki Kodo VI for his collaboration in this first edition of the new "Ignition Commission" section. Thanks!

Enjoy!



"KIOKU" (記憶)

by Araki Kodo VI

Ignition commission #1

I haven't spent a lot of time composing. Mostly this is because I still enjoy playing traditional music, but also because I'm never sure if something I "wrote" is actually something I'm remembering (hence the title of this piece: *Kioku* or *Memory*). When the ESS asked me to compose a piece for beginners, I decided to not overthink it and just play something stream-of-consciousness. But it was also supposed to be something for beginners so I decided to play with more of a folk song idiom. I also wanted to be sure to include some elements that are important to *Kinko-ryū*; for example, that descending notes get accented, but never ascending, except in the case of meri notes.

Note: In *Kinko-ryū*, we say *ryo* (呂) instead of *otsu* (乙).



[Audio link](#)

	ryo	ro	tsu (meri)	tsu (chu-meri)	tsu	re (meri)	re	u	chi (meri)	chi	ri (meri)	hi (meri)	ri	hi	go no hi (meri)	go no hi	ha
五																	
四	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
三	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
二	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
一	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
kan																	
五	○	●	Same Fingering As Above		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
四	●	○			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
三	●	●			○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
二	●	●			○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
一	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
五																	
四	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
三	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
二	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
一	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

○ = open
● = closed

THE A PITCH SHAKUHACHI NAME CONFUSION. SHOULD THAT BE 2.3 OR 2.4?

by Kaoru Kakizakai

I am writing about shakuhachi length: the size, name and pitch.

It has been said that one 'sun' (one tenth of a 'shaku', ie 3.03 cm) of length, changes the flute's pitch by a semitone. This is true when the length change is around 1.8. For example, making the flute one *sun* longer, from 1.8 to 1.9, changes the pitch from D to C#.

But this calculation only works around 1.8. This means that when the shakuhachi size is longer, the additional length to change the pitch by one semitone should be more than one sun.

My teacher's father was Ranpo Yokoyama, who was a player and maker. We know him as Ranpo sensei. He made a 2.3 shakuhachi with a length of exactly 2.3. This should be an A pitch shakuhachi by the traditional calculation. It means *Otsu no Re* on this 2.3 should be the same as *Otsu no Ro* on a 1.8. But *Otsu no Re* on this 2.3 was much sharper than the *Otsu no Ro* on a 1.8.

He really wanted to make an A shakuhachi that would play in good harmony with a 1.8. He contacted YAMAHA, the famous piano company. In the early 1960s they invented a tuning machine. It was not for sale. It was only used within the company, for the investigation of tuning pianos. Ranpo sensei begged YAMAHA many times to sell one to him, and at last he got it, very, very expensively. It was huge.

He tried to make flutes in many sizes, checking their pitch with the tuning machine. At last he made a real A pitch shakuhachi. The length was almost 2.4 (two *shaku*, four *sun*). *Otsu no Re* on this shakuhachi was exactly the same as *Otsu no Ro* on a 1.8.

This achievement created great possibilities for the shakuhachi. It became possible to use this A shakuhachi to play the bass part of shakuhachi trio music. And of course Yokoyama Katsuya sensei used this A shakuhachi in "November Steps" by Takemitsu. I can even say that this success made the shakuhachi very famous all over the world.

Ranpo sensei wanted to call this A pitch shakuhachi a "2.4". Because this was not the same as the previous 2.3. This was a real A pitch shakuhachi. That is why we call the A shakuhachi "2.4", with deep respect to Ranpo sensei who made a huge effort to create a real A pitch shakuhachi. I really hope the A shakuhachi will be called "2.4" across the world because of this story.

PASSING THE BATON FORWARD

Riley Lee, Jim Franklin and José Vargas-Zúñiga

INTERVIEW WITH RILEY LEE

by Jim Franklin

Date: 7th July, 2023

Place: A room in the Community Centre of St Joseph's Church, Stuttgart-Feuerbach, Germany

Situation: Immediately before an evening concert by Riley Lee, Jim Franklin, Nina Haarer and Alexandra Kraus in St Joseph's Church. In the background, the sound of two shakuhachis can be heard (Nina and Alexandra rehearsing *Shika no Tōne* in the next room)

JF: So, I'm now sitting here with Riley Lee, we're about to perform a concert in Feuerbach, Stuttgart, in Germany, as part of his concert tour and my concert tour (which aren't the same) in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, and in other countries in Riley's case. I've been asked to make a short interview with Riley, about several topics which of course are related to shakuhachi, and particularly to Riley's approach. One of them, something that a lot of the ESS people will be familiar with, is Riley's breathing workshops. And so, we'd like to hear from you, Riley, about your approach to the breathing workshops, how you developed them, why you developed them, how they work with the shakuhachi, and how they relate to the way you, and other people, breathe when you play shakuhachi.

RL: They came about after I was asked to give workshops at the big Australian folk music festivals, after I began performing in them regularly. This was in the very early 1990s. The organisers said, 'Well, you know, like guitarists, they do guitar workshops, and so you should do something with your instrument, too.'

So I attempted to do a shakuhachi workshop a couple of times; it just didn't work, because after two hours I'd have some people who could play, and some people who couldn't even make a sound. And of course you need instruments. People have guitars lying around, but at that time, very few people in Australia had shakuhachis. So I said, this isn't going to work.

And then I thought, well, what about 'Breathing'? You don't need an instrument; everyone does it; it's accessible to everyone. So I started doing these breathing workshops, particularly at what is now probably the biggest folk festival in Australia. It was called the Maleny Folk Festival, but it became the Woodford Folk Festival not long after that. My workshops just got more and more popular.

One year, they scheduled me on New Years Day morning. The Festival starts after Christmas and ends on New Years Day. New Years Eve of course is huge. Just to give you an idea of the atmosphere, at that time, one of the main Festival sponsors was Guinness. Anyway, I thought, 'Nine am, New Years Day, after New Years Eve here? No-one's going to come, what is this?'.

But I'd forgotten that the only people there at nine am are the people camping there. The day trippers come in maybe a bit later. It's mid-summer. The campers can't sleep past 5:30 in their tents anyway, because it's already too hot. So on New Year's morning, there are all these, kind of, hung-over, sleep-deprived people wandering around.

The main thing, the main, main thing, I keep saying in the breathing workshops, is awareness.

Anyway, I did the breathing workshop on New Years Morning. And again the following years. And after a while it got bigger and bigger, until finally I had to be put in one of their huge marquees, one for about 2000 people. I was doing my breathing workshops for 2000 people! And it's great, and I said, 'Okay, so why are you folks here so early on New Years morning? Why is it so popular?', and they said, 'Word has gotten out that your breathing exercises are great for hangovers!' (laughter).

JF: That's a far cry from being great for Zen...

RL: Exactly, but it's true, whatever we do, we do better when we breathe well, no matter what we're doing. So, how does my breathing workshops relate to how I play shakuhachi, and why do I think it's particularly good for people who are actually using their lungs and their breath to make music?

The main thing, the main, main thing, I keep saying in the breathing workshops, is awareness. Be aware of your breath, that's the first thing. The second thing is, what are you being aware of? You're aware of how you breathe. And how do you breathe? You use muscles. Are your muscles strong? Can you control your muscles?

So I go through these simple exercises that help us develop an awareness of our breath, and they help us to strengthen the muscles that we use to breathe, and they help us to control that strength. Without control, strength is often dangerous, if not useless, and likewise, without strength, there's nothing to control anyway. So those are the main things.

How, particularly with shakuhachi, do I approach the shakuhachi with breathing? Neither my breathing exercises nor how I approach shakuhachi playing, is at all original. I got them from different sources, and with the shakuhachi, of course, through my teachers.

There's the idea, firstly, that there are four parts to the breath, there's not just one part. The exhalation is what makes the sound, and that, in a sense, is what gets all the credit, that's what everyone thinks of as music. In other wind instruments, from what I know (and I know very little), it's almost as if the, say, flute players, they try to breathe in a way that you don't notice that they're breathing. They seem to think that this is kind of the best way to breathe, and in fact wind instrument players, you could almost say that they're envious of string players, who don't have to breathe. So you have wind instrument players who try to play 'The Flight of the Bumblebee', you know, and they develop other things like circular breathing and whatnot.

So, with the shakuhachi *honkyoku* as taught by my teachers, there are four parts to the breath, exhalation is only one part, yeah, we spend most of the lesson talking about what we do on the exhalation, but, inhalation is just as important. And, the pauses in between are equally important, the turn-around, so there's dusk and there's dawn, and neither are night or day, they're different.

I particularly remember when playing along with Yokoyama. We'd play together, and we'd end a phrase, and I thought I'd paused and inhaled, and he hadn't even taken a breath yet. He was still on the pause, he was still in between, and then he'd take the breath, and I'm meanwhile holding my breath for, you know, it felt quite a long time, and then we'd start playing, and I thought, 'Oh yeah, right, there's more to it.' So it's not just the silence, the silence is important, the *ma*, the silence between the breaths, but it's also how we turn around the breath, the in between bits.

JF: You mentioned awareness of the breath, which of course is a key area in working with various forms of Zen meditation, particularly Soto-school. Do you see a relationship between breathing, and with the pauses and so on with shakuhachi, and the kind of breathing and awareness of breathing used as a meditation form in Zen?

RL: Yes, I do. I haven't immersed myself in Zen Buddhism as you have, but, first of all, awareness is 'it', you know! That's the one thing, and whether it's awareness of your breath or your thoughts, or how you hold your thoughts, or how you don't hold them, or just your emotions; all of that is awareness.

The breath is important. The breath is not only important in Zen Buddhist meditation practices, but in just about every esoteric religious practice in the world, and I think it's because the breath is the one thing that is both automatic (or unconscious), and conscious. We can control it. It's automatic when we can't control it, for example when we're asleep, but also we can control it, if we know how, if we want to.

One of the things that we talk about in my breathing workshops is that as soon as one is aware of one's breath, you don't really have to change it. As soon as you're aware of your breathing, you are now connected to your emotions. It's very difficult to maintain negative emotions. Just by thinking about your breath, it's difficult to stay angry or whatever.

Another thing that I think is important to point out, and I think that in Zen Buddhist practice one kind of touches on this, is that the minute we're aware of something, the minute we observe something like our breath, we're already changing it. We're already in a sense controlling it, we can't not control it once we're aware of it, so that's a paradox.

It's a bit like our thoughts, you know, as soon as you start thinking about what your thoughts are, (laughing) you can't not think about what your thoughts are, right? It's a paradox, and Zen Buddhism is very comfortable with paradoxes.

JF: Yes, the koan structure and so on...

RL: Yes, very comfortable, they use paradox all the time, and I think that's a great thing to be able to do, because life is a paradox, there are just paradoxes that, you know, they're there, you can't ignore them. Breathing is a paradox that we have all the time, we're holding the paradox. It's automatic, but we can control it; we can observe it; it's difficult, if not impossible, to observe it and not control it. And ideally, that's what one wants to do, just to be aware of it yet not control it, and it's similar to our thoughts.



Riley Lee and Jim Franklin playing *Mushu Kuyo* in concert in Stuttgart (7th July, 2023).

This was the concert directly after the interview. (Photo: Detlef Dörner)

JF: Yes, being aware of the thoughts without controlling and without forcing them away.

RL: Exactly, no value judgement.

JF: One interesting thing, that was also discussed when I was interviewed for the ESS Newsletter: the interest in shakuhachi in the West coming a lot of the time in association with people who are practising Zen Buddhism in some direction or other, but that a lot of the teachers in Japan, including teachers of *honkyoku*, say 'We don't care about that stuff.' What do you think about that phenomenon, the disparity in interest in the putative religious background of the *honyoku*, the lack of interest in Japan compared to the fairly deep interest in a lot of cases, in non-Japanese students?

RL: Oh, that's a very interesting question. To answer it, one has to know a little bit about the recent history of the shakuhachi tradition as well as the whole Zen Buddhist phenomenon in Japan. In one of the chapters in my thesis in fact, I interview three people, one person said, 'It's a Zen instrument, that's what it is, and when you add all the musical techniques, you're losing it, you're showing off, that's not what it's about.'

And then another person, who happened to be our teacher, Yokoyama, he was kind of sitting on both sides of the fence, he was hedging his bets, said 'It's music' (I agree with him actually, this is my stance). 'It's music, it can be meditation, it can relate to Zen Buddhism; it doesn't have to, and possibly, frequently it doesn't.' One could say the same thing with the activities that occur in nearly all the Zen Buddhist temples in Japan as well. So it's not just shakuhachi, it's just the way it is. One could say, you know, the really Zen Buddhist stuff that people in the West who are attracted to Zen Buddhism want to know about, is not practised necessarily in Zen Buddhist temples in Japan.

The third person, he was Aoki Reibo. He said, 'All that Zen stuff, it's just publicity. It's good publicity, but it's publicity. What we do is music. Don't kid yourself, we do music. End of story.' And, again, in a way, yes, we do do music.

JF: Or we try to...

RL: Yeah, but there are music traditions that are, and can be, very spiritual. So it's not exclusive; being music, and doing spiritual practice, are not exclusive.

JF: So not mutually exclusive?

RL: They're not mutually exclusive, correct, yes. So that would be my view.

JF: So, a last question: Do you feel that there's a different approach to teaching between Japanese and non-Japanese teachers? When I was asked, in the interview that I gave, I commented that I tend, as a teacher, to give more explanation than I received mostly from the Japanese teachers - with differences, of course, between the different teachers. I was also asked about how it was, working with Yokoyama, and I said, 'Well, he was a really strict teacher, but a very generous teacher,' that was my summary. How do you feel about the differences between the basic groupings of teachers, Japanese as opposed to non-Japanese?

RL: Well, you know, when I first started playing the shakuhachi in 1970, it was very different from how the shakuhachi is being taught today. So, in the last fifty years, things have changed in Japan, and the shakuhachi has become more and more of a musical instrument. Being taught at the University of Fine Arts in Tokyo, and the NHK Hōgaku competition had a lot to do with it. The strength that *Tozan-ryū* has always had, had a lot to do with it, where technique is very important

And practising like European art music musicians practice. You practice scales, you practice pitch, you practice technique, you practice, you don't just do it as a hobby, or you don't just do it as a kind of a meditation. So the way it's taught, in many instances, and probably in most instances in Japan right now, is much closer to the way it's probably taught, in many instances, outside of Japan. I don't think it's so different any more.

When I first started playing the shakuhachi in 1970, it was very different from how the shakuhachi is being taught today. So, in the last fifty years, things have changed in Japan

My own experience, but this is an experience of forty to fifty years ago, was that, you're right, I didn't receive much explanation. How much of that was because I couldn't understand the explanation anyway in the beginning... I think it was more than that, I think, yes, the way that things are taught, and not just shakuhachi, is that if you get it, you get it, if you don't, too bad.

I guess you could say that the tradition was more important than the individual student. Yokoyama said it this way: he's got, say fifty students. And the majority of those students will only receive 50% of his ability and knowledge and playing and everything, the totality of him as a shakuhachi player. Only 50% will be transmitted to most of his students

They become teachers, the same thing happens. Of course, the question is, after three or four generations: one sixteenth of what Yokoyama had; not much left of the tradition. Yokoyama said that what happens, is that now and again, not necessarily every generation, but now and again there will be someone who will get not only 100% from the teacher, but will go to 150%. The student will surpass the teacher.

The teaching, as a whole, is geared toward that one person that comes around every one or two generations. And that one person will get 'it' whatever happens; you don't have to explain much of anything. Once they hear it, they'll just get it. At least, so goes the theory.

So for the rest of the students, it's like, 'Hey, we're going out with the guys, like we're going bowling, you know, it's a social thing. You know, we don't want to make a big deal about mistakes and things. So I'm not going to tell you what's wrong.' Yokoyama knew when there was someone who could accept or was able to receive what he's got. And so he would spend time with that person. And he wouldn't be strict with everybody. So if he was strict with you, that's great!

JF: Yes, I gradually realised that that was a positive characteristic.

RL: Very positive. People who don't know the Japanese tradition don't realise this. You know, the more you're criticised, the better. Like great, I got criticised. This is super! You know, if you're not any good, it's like, 'That's really good, Jim! I'll see you next week. Oh, and put the lesson money over there...' It's like, 'Wonderful! Your playing's super! And see you next week,' that sort of thing.

So I think it's partly to do with the whole, overall way of seeing things, thinking that the tradition is more important than the individual. The teacher is not trying to teach every individual as best they can to fulfil their potential, especially when that potential may not be so high as someone else's. The responsibility for getting things right is more on the student. The overall concern is to continue the tradition.

JF: Do you have anything else you'd like to pass on to the ESS readers, before we close down and go and do our concert? Apart from 'Keep blowing!'...

RL: I think that many people outside of Japan continue to look toward Japan for inspiration - many shakuhachi players, and listeners. And you, also coming from Australia, you and I know this

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phenomenon. In Australia it's called the 'Tall Poppies Syndrome', where if it's Australian, it can't be that great: 'Oh, you mean you made it big-time in London and Vienna, oh, well, you must be good.' But if you make it big only in Australia, yeah, you must not be all that wonderful.

JF: Not important...

RL: And likewise, many people feel the same way about the shakuhachi outside of Japan. Admittedly, there are a lot of good teachers in Japan, and possibly because just numerically, there are more shakuhachi players, possibly there are still more good teachers in Japan. But there are many, many good teachers and performers outside of Japan. And Yokoyama-sensei foresaw this.

And I think many of the Zen Buddhist teachers foresaw this too, starting from DT Suzuki back in the early 20th Century, that the tradition may not be dead, or may not even be dying in Japan, but there's fertile ground elsewhere. And the tradition will become stronger and better if it leaves Japan.

The only way that can happen is not through the Japanese, it's through us, who don't live in Japan. So that would be the one thing that I would say to the readership of this newsletter: 'It's you guys, mate!' (laughs).

JF: So, I'd close off with my slant on that. As one of the people who started the ESS; I would like to see the ESS do for instance a Summer School with entirely non-Japanese teachers.

RL: Yes!

JF: It hasn't happened yet, but I'm hoping that one day, it will...

RL: Uh-huh. And why not!



Riley Lee and Jim Franklin playing *Mushi Kuyo*
(Photo: Tiffany Chow)

JF: ...because the shakuhachi is now an international thing.

RL: On the other hand, of course you don't want to do, what's it called? Reverse discrimination.

JF: No, of course not.

RL: But.., you know, it costs a lot of money to bring people over from Japan... well, it costs a lot of money to bring people over from Australia, too... But when that happens, I think it should be pointed out that, that hey, there weren't any teachers from Japan and, was it any different? Hopefully not! That'd be great, good.

... because the
shakuhachi is now
an international
thing.

JF: OK, so now we have to do a concert. Thank you very much, Riley, and we're glad we were able to talk to you.

RL: Always a pleasure to talk about my own thoughts, and about shakuhachi, so thank you so much.

PASSING THE BATON FORWARD

Riley Lee, Jim Franklin and José Vargas-Zúñiga

INTERVIEW WITH JIM FRANKLIN

by José Vargas-Zúñiga

Dr Jim Franklin, shakuhachi player, composer, ethnomusicologist, was the first chairperson of the ESS. Involved in the organization of several shakuhachi festivals, he was one of the main organizers of the World Shakuhachi Festival 2018 in London. He has released fourteen CDs: from solo *honkyoku* to shakuhachi with live electronics. Originally from Australia, he lived for many years in Germany, before emigrating to Japan in 2021.

JV: Here I am with Jim Franklin, via Zoom, as he is living in Japan and I am in Madrid. Let's start with your musical biography, that began in Australia.

JF: I was born in Sydney. As a child I studied piano, and later moved to other keyboard instruments: organ and other electronic instruments such as early synthesizers. When I finished school, I decided that I wanted to become a professional musician, so I applied to study at Sydney University, firstly as a piano player. As I knew beforehand, my standard really wasn't high enough for that, so I didn't get into the performing course, but I was accepted into a general music arts course, and after that first year, the professors suggested to me to reapply, but as a composer. So I was accepted into the music specialist course to study composition. In Sydney we had to study ethnomusicology, and the lecturer at that time, Allan Marett, was an expert in Japanese flute music. He had just arrived in Sydney from Cambridge, he was about twenty-seven then; I was eighteen or so. He put a lot of focus on Japanese music. Among other things, he played us recordings of shakuhachi, for instance by Yamaguchi Goro, and that was my first experience with shakuhachi. I was very interested, I liked what I heard, but I didn't completely understand it - not surprising...

JV: Not at all, it's a very special music.

JF: After I finished my degree in Sydney, I spent three years in Germany, as a composition postgraduate student, and studied in Holland for a year as well, at the conservatory in Amsterdam. When I returned to Sydney, I had to complete my master's degree at the university as part of my scholarship agreement. That was the time when Riley Lee came to Australia to write his doctorate with Allan Marett, who, as I said, was a specialist in Japanese music at the University of Sydney. I met Riley there, and I started living in Sydney Zen Center, a little Zen community. Riley used to teach in one of the rooms of the Center once a week, so I often heard shakuhachi in the background. I finished my degree and started working as a composer, performing and composing a lot of work with dance companies, but I kept hearing shakuhachi, and eventually I decided that I wanted to learn the instrument. I talked to Riley and he agreed to obtain for me a good shakuhachi from maker Yamaguchi Shugetsu. That was my first instrument, which I still have. I use it now as my teaching instrument.

When I started shakuhachi with Riley, I was working in parallel as a composer. In the meantime I finished my master's degree and began my doctorate and had a lectureship at another university in Sydney in the music department, as senior lecturer in music technology.

In that period I spent time in Japan and worked with Furuya and Yokoyama, and in 1996 I received my title of *shihan* from Yokoyama. After that I decided that I really wanted to play shakuhachi rather than working as a lecturer, so I started setting up the possibility of working as a shakuhachi player - not so much in Australia, because Riley had all the area covered there. I had a lot of European contacts, firstly through my studies in Germany, but also personal contacts. My first wife was German, and we decided to move and live in Germany. For a few years I was spending six months of the year in Germany, setting up contacts to have enough work, with venues where I could play, and students who wanted to learn shakuhachi, so that I knew that it would be possible to live from it. In 2003 I quit my job at the University of Western Sydney, and in 2004 we moved permanently to Germany. Eventually the marriage didn't work and we divorced, but I kept developing my work there and I stayed in Germany.

In 2006, together with Michael Coxall and Kiku Day, we set up the ESS, and from then I started with the festivals, summer schools and so on. I kept performing, teaching and composing in Europe, until the coronavirus hit. I met my current wife, Hiroko, at one of the summer schools, in Barcelona. In 2016 we got married. We were living in Germany, but when corona came along, we decided the time had come to do what we had planned to do eventually, to move to Japan. That meant a change from face to face teaching, which in any case was not possible with the virus, to online teaching, and also changing from working primarily for concerts to working primarily as a composer, releasing CDs and starting my YouTube channel - working more on my composition side, but using the shakuhachi.

JV: Why the shakuhachi? Why this strange instrument? Why is it so fascinating?

JF: There are two things for me. Firstly, the music that I heard when I first listened to those recordings of Yamaguchi Goro around 1978. I found it interesting, and felt something really significant musically going on there, but I really didn't understand it. I bought some LPs that were available at the time, and had the feeling that the shakuhachi had something to do with me, but I didn't really quite know what. For a composer, the instrument has this huge range of dynamics and timbre, and inflection of pitch you can change so fluently, something that no other instrument can do. I found it interesting to have that broad range of material, even though I didn't yet compose for it.

The other thing was that, during my study years in Europe, I became very interested in the concept of 'time', how to work with musical time as a composer, and also the idea of no-time, timelessness. That led me to look at the idea of meditation. I eventually found the most clear form of that in Zen Buddhism, and I started practicing Zen.

Back in Sydney in 1986, I moved into Sydney Zen Center and I was practicing a lot of meditation. That plus the idea of the shakuhachi having had at least part of its background through the Fuke sect, being at least partly a Zen instrument. So, the combination of musical interest, together with philosophical and spiritual values, meant that I felt I had to try to learn it. Soon after I started, really after a couple of weeks, I felt, 'I really want to do this properly, this is the instrument I want to play,' so I did the necessary practice.

JV: So, we meet once again with the non-musical side of shakuhachi. For you, is it more than just a musical instrument?

JF: I consider myself to be a religious person. I'm a practicing Buddhist. The dimension of focus and time, being with the moment of the sound in the shakuhachi, corresponds very closely for me with the spiritual dimension of Zen practice. Being in the moment, when you are meditating, being present, this fits in very closely with the shakuhachi through the moment of the breathing, the moment of the sound. So, for me there is a close tie-in between the act of playing shakuhachi and the process of meditation. For me, these two dimensions still belong together. As a performer, when I'm playing *honkyoku*, I'm trying to present it and to realize the moment for myself and also for the audience. In terms of composition, what interests me is composing my own music which also focuses in a similar way to that in which the shakuhachi is used in its traditional form. It's like working towards extending the tradition. Rather than saying this is where the tradition stops, I want to keep working with it, keep developing it. For me that's part of the meditative process. So, definitely, it's part of the holistic or religious approach to my life.

JV: It's interesting, that feeling is quite common among shakuhachi players, but the subject is outside of the teaching tradition in most of the schools. How was your experience while you were learning, and how is it when you're teaching?

JF: I do talk about it to people who, firstly, wish to know about these dimensions, and secondly, when I feel there is a resonance with this whole area. From Japanese teachers, some of my colleagues within the KSK, they are very surprised with the number of Westerners who are interested in the meditation side. They seem to feel that they are just playing music. I think there is this other dimension, and my students often want to know about it. I'm also trying, even if I'm not being explicit, to hint towards this dimension when I'm talking to people about how to focus on the breathing, focus within the body and in the moment to produce sound.

On the other hand, even if it's not explicitly talked about, for some teachers, there is an awareness of another area in the shakuhachi. Anecdotally, when I was just starting with Yokoyama, in that year there was released a collective CD with Australian composers. A piece of mine on that CD, for shakuhachi, electronics and voice,

was a setting of the Heart Sutra, a central Buddhist text. I chanted the entire text in Japanese, as well as playing the shakuhachi and other instruments. In one of the first lessons I had with Yokoyama, I gave him a copy of the newly released CD. He wanted straight away to play this recording and he was very enthusiastic about it. He kept playing it to the students who came that day. And he said to me that one thing he really liked about it was that it was a combination of the musical and the spiritual dimensions. So, for him, there was this spiritual dimension present, even though he didn't often speak of it specifically. I think it's very much individual or private, perhaps more so than in the West, where they make this association explicitly. It seems that a lot of Japanese teachers don't make this association explicitly, but for some teachers, it's there, even if they don't talk about it.

JV: Maybe, those issues are difficult to talk about...

JF: When I'm teaching, only when students show an attitude in this direction is when I talk about it openly, and of course it's only pointing people in the right direction, hinting, or suggesting: this is how they need to focus, this is how they can think about their instrument and about their playing.

JV: You studied with Riley Lee, that means mainly *Chikuho-ryū*, and also in KSK, with Furuya and Yokoyama. Did you find differences between the schools, between the ways of teaching? Could you tell us about your relations with your teachers, and about the process of learning the shakuhachi?

JF: With Riley, I think he gives more explanation than I found with Japanese teachers. The basic learning method that I experienced, particularly with Furuya and Yokoyama, my two main teachers in Japan, was very much about imitating, you tried to play like the teacher, a typically Japanese teaching process. Both of them, Yokoyama and perhaps more so Furuya, were prepared to explain things, but you had to ask, and you had to ask the right questions. Riley was, and I think still is, more open to giving explanations.

Concerning the differences between the *Chikuho* and the KSK repertoires: for me, the teaching and learning processes were much the same. Riley tended to give more technical explanations. With him, I did learn the KSK repertoire as well, so before I started with Furuya and Yokoyama I had in fact learned all the KSK repertoire with Riley, because he had also learned it, after finishing *Chikuho*.



Jim Franklin and José Vargas-Zúñiga in Prague, 2015

The *Chikuhō* repertoire, I think, has stronger didactic content. Certainly from my feeling, not all of the *Chikuhō* pieces are all that interesting. A lot of them, I think, are pieces that have been included because they are good examples of how to learn a particular technique. But there are also some beautiful, wonderful pieces, that I play as concert pieces. My feeling is that KSK repertoire, that has both easier pieces and harder pieces, is less organized didactically - not so much starting with the easy pieces, and gradually learning new techniques and so on, that's more the way the *Chikuhō* repertoire is laid out. The easier pieces of the KSK are certainly a lot harder than the easy pieces of *Chikuhō*. *Chikuhō* starts at an easier level, and then does get very hard. KSK starts almost in middle level *Chikuhō*, and then goes from there.

JV: You learned from Furuya and Yokoyama in KSK, though they were in the same school, did you find differences in their teaching?

JF: Furuya spent a great deal of time with me, working on detail, playing and replaying, I used to have very long lessons, maybe two hours straight. With Yokoyama, though, the lesson times were sometimes quite short, you played one piece and that was it. If you would stay at his teaching studio for an entire day, you might get two or three lessons. But they were never extended lessons. Yokoyama tended to be very strict, he said, "You play that now", and if you didn't get it right, you had to come back the next week. Sometimes, he was almost very harsh, very hard, not angry, but he could be really forceful, and at times I felt like, 'I didn't play that badly, why have I been so harshly criticised?' He was friendly, he was never actually nasty to people, but he could be very hard in the way he could criticise students. Eventually, I found out that the people he was hard with, were the people that he thought were going to be able to make use of his teachings. So, his harshness was a manner of teaching by trying to push you to go to your limits. If he didn't think you could go to your limits, he didn't push you like that. Actually, that was a positive sign.

JV: Now, let's go to another page, let's talk about the subject of your PhD thesis, that means electronics.

JF: My thesis was a crossover between research and composition, something that was allowed at Sydney University. The research component was the computer programming as a means for sound processing that I played with the shakuhachi, and the composition component was pieces that I created to demonstrate that this worked, technically and artistically. Then there was the question, how can I renew and develop the notion of working with live electronics? Electronics has always been part of my musical life. I was able to buy a synthesizer when I was seventeen, a Roland SH5, which I still have; it's now almost fifty years old, and still works properly. When I finished university I felt frustrated. Having written a lot of compositions for acoustic instruments, I found that it was hard to get good performances. So I decided to work on composing for myself to perform. This meant using the electronic instruments that I was familiar with. Besides working in parallel with the shakuhachi, I wanted to find a way of performing with the electronic instruments, with their richness of timbre, and dynamics and so on, similar to the shakuhachi.

One instrument I discovered and still work with was the theremin, firstly adding live electronics to it, to expand its abilities and its sound world. And then I realized that I could apply the same live electronics to the shakuhachi. That became a meeting point between the two. Some people from the old ESS summer schools may remember pieces that I performed using the two instruments. For me, it's been a rich process, finding the meeting points between the theremin in its extended forms, and then other electronic instruments as well, but also with the shakuhachi, using the same kind of extensions, and finding that they do actually complement one another, that they meet and work together.

Once, it was late 2018, I had the chance to demonstrate this, at a small theremin festival in Germany, in a town called Lippstadt, not a shakuhachi festival. There Hiroko, my wife, who also plays shakuhachi, and I were invited to play a concert for shakuhachi, theremin and live electronics, just over a year before corona hit. It was a combination of the traditional shakuhachi, I played *honkyoku* as a part of it, there is traditional-style theremin, which I also played, but then taking the two into completely different directions using extra electronics on them. For me, that is one of the concerts that I remember fondly.

JV: Let's talk about the gear you use. Though this is a world that changes from day to day, are you still using a computer and Pure Data (PD) program?

JF: I prefer analog hardware, rather than digital - as far as is practical. A lot of the compositions, and then some of the recording work that I've done, combine analog and digital. For instance on my CD, 'Songs from the Lake', I used analog equipment. However, doing a large scale performance using purely analog equipment means that you have to have a truck to carry it all around. For live performance, often I go back to digital. PD on the laptop is one of the possibilities, but I also tried to get to the point of having as little equipment as possible. For this, there are apps that are useful. One that I found that works very well is called Audulus, for Apple iPad and iPod. So I have my tiny live performance system at the moment for the shakuhachi, which is just an iPod Touch. It is powerful enough to program all the processing into it. In the June 2023 ESS newsletter, in the article about my Youtube channel, there is a photograph of an iPod-based live performance system for one of the pieces from 'Song from the Lake'.

JV: Back to your bio, I would like you to talk about the ESS, you were the first chairperson.

JF: Concerning the background to that, I had met Kiku Day previously, in 2002 at a festival in Tokyo. Later, somewhere around 2005, Kiku and Michael Coxall, who was a lecturer at SOAS, where Kiku was studying, thought that it would be a nice idea to have a shakuhachi workshop, a summer school. So they sent out an email to the people they knew who were working with shakuhachi in Europe, which was a very loose group of people at that time. They said that they were intending to organize this event, and so I emailed

back and said, 'Look, it's a great idea, but try to make it as international as possible, not only for the London local people, but try to invite people from other countries to teach and participate' - which they did, including me and various others from what is now the ESS teachers' pool. That workshop in 2006 was successful, there were a lot of participants, a lot of teachers, and we held a meeting. It was not yet the Society, at that time it was just a meeting, talking about the possibilities. But there, we decided to establish the European Shakuhachi Society.

At that meeting, we decided basically who were going to be the first office bearers, and they ended up selecting me to be the first chairperson. I think possibly because I had a very strong academic background and you have to write the academic language that is going to be needed to get the articles of association formulated, and so on. A lot of my task as the chairperson was to create the articles of association, the basis of the ESS, in which we decided that there ought to be annual summer schools, and that we would try to work with publications in various forms. The idea was decided, that the summer schools should focus on one teacher, or group of teachers, but they would try to represent other schools, so that the summer schools should never be just one school, but should provide representation of a broad range. We were trying to be inclusive and to represent, as far as possible, any people in Europe who are interested in shakuhachi.

From there, we went forward, and it was a logical step that I would help organize the next summer school, in 2007. But it wasn't me alone, I did it together with Véronique Piron as the KSK group at the time in Europe. In 2008 we skipped the summer school because that was the year of the Sydney Shakuhachi World Festival. In 2009 Kees Kort organized the summer school in Leiden, and that was the point at which I stepped down as chairperson, because we actually had the idea that we wanted to rotate the positions, so that one person couldn't become a person of power in the process. We had a three year limit. Then we went on to completely ignore that, and Kiku stayed on for a long time as next chairperson, because in 2012 we decided that we were going to run the next world festival. At first we thought we would do it together with the Prague team, but that didn't work out, so we went on as the ESS alone, and we decided that, for continuity, it would be best just to have one focal chairperson. So Kiku stayed as chairperson until after the 2018 world festival.

JV: You have a lot of experience organizing festivals, also Radolfzell in Germany, and you were a main organizer of London WSF in 2018.

JF: In 1998, at the WSF in Boulder, Colorado, I was invited to organize one of the concerts, for contemporary composition, shakuhachi and electronics. In 2008 Riley Lee in Australia asked me to look after the program, and I ended up being coordinator of the program for that World Festival. After all that, the next logical step was that I became one of the key persons in WSF 2018. After that, I decided that I never really want to organize a festival again. It was just too big to do twice in one lifetime!

JV: I believe the 2018 festival had to be a really big step, a huge one. I was there and I felt that organizing such an event had to be quite a nightmare.

JF: Yes, my advice is 'Don't!' Seriously though, I think the most important advice is, try as early as possible to find your financial backing, because the tendency is that you never get enough finances to really cover everything. And so, with all the festivals in the past, some private person has had to put money into it. To try to avoid that, try to get as broad a basis of financial backing as possible. With our one too, in 2018, various people, most of them anonymous, donated money to help cover it. It wasn't a big loss that we made, but people were prepared to give some money to help cover that loss. And start as early as possible in the organizing process, don't leave anything to the last minute, because the last minute will come very very quickly. Even there at the festival, be prepared - and this is probably the big experience for me - be prepared not to enjoy the festival. My experience is a blur.

JV: And how was the experience of dealing with so many people, so many masters from so different schools?

JF: One thing that I think is important in the ESS is the sense of cooperation between different schools. There are lot of people representing a lot of different directions in Europe. I think one of the successes of the ESS is that we manage to maintain good relationships between most of the groups that have been part of it. That's something that doesn't seem to happen in Japan. Things are very hermetic, so separated, and at worst, people say: that person is wrong, that person is not doing real shakuhachi, and so on. I think we've managed to avoid most of that in Europe. At the World Festival, most of the people, including the Japanese, were prepared to accept this attitude. There were a few who made it a bit difficult, but most of the people were very cooperative and supportive, and I think were prepared to communicate with one another in a way which might not usually be possible in Japan, and I think that's one of the important things about the World Shakuhachi Festivals.

JV: I had the feeling that was extremely difficult to organize.

JF: I had nightmares about that festival for a year afterwards.

JV: Let's go to another side. You've recorded around 14 CDs. Which ones are your favorites?

JF: There are a couple which are the highlights for my personal feelings. The two *honkyoku* CDs, very interesting recording situations, so I'm glad I was able to do those. 'Hearing Stillness' was recorded in two beautiful Benedictine monastery churches in Germany, with wonderful acoustics. And 'Zen Garden Meditations' was recorded in a Japanese style garden in Germany. That was an interesting process. For

me, two of the fusion CDs, 'Abundance' and 'Aurora', improvisations with multi-instrumentalist Michael Atherton in Australia, embody really interesting personal musical interactions, and so those stick out for me. And then, my solo studio shakuhachi and live electronics 'Songs from the Lake', which, also for me, was the culmination of all the work that I'd done up to that point, which was 2020.

JV: I've been through your list of publications, and found a paper about Hildegard von Bingen...

JF: In Germany, I lived near Bingen, and had some concerts in one of the churches she had set up, and also had a connection with a Benedictine monk who enabled me to perform and give courses in a couple of Benedictine abbeys. His Benedictine order was the men's version of Hildegard's order for women. What I found was, in terms of breathing and timing, there was a great similarity between working through the notes with breathing for the singers, and working through notes with the shakuhachi. That was an interesting thing to discover.

JV: That leads us to the transcultural aspects of shakuhachi.

JF: And also what constitutes the spirituality of the shakuhachi. About the transcultural notion, I use a particular definition, from a philosopher named Wolfgang Iser, who defined transculturation as not just getting together people from different traditions to play and then go away, but where there is the possibility of some kind of new thing, new approach, developing out of the meeting point between two different cultures. That's something that is happening with shakuhachi in terms of composition, and I think that's an important contribution that the shakuhachi makes to the musical world.

Spirituality: really it comes back to this notion of being focused and aware of the eternal moment, being in the now, the present. That's the focus of Zen, but there are parallels that you can find within Western spiritual disciplines, as in some forms of monastery disciplines where there are very similar formulations, for instance in Meister Eckhart, the medieval German religious philosopher, and the work of Dōgen in Zen. There is a meeting point there, which also applies with the music of Hildegard von Bingen to how the music works as a form of spiritual discipline similar to the possibilities of some forms of shakuhachi music.

JV: Could you tell us about the changes you've seen in the shakuhachi world?

JF: I think the transcultural aspect is the most important thing. In terms of my own work, of course it's important to teach the Japanese material, *honkyoku* and so on, as faithfully as I can, but it's also important that the music and the ways of playing and the approaches develop as well. Otherwise you end up with something that's like in a museum, that doesn't change. So I think that one of the things that the shakuhachi in the West can contribute most is in this process of transculturation, this development of the traditions into something that wasn't there before. Also, I try to help musicians to be the agents of developing the tradition. So the support within the ESS of something like the notion of creation of new music is vitally important.

JV: Could you tell us about your projects nowadays?

JF: Well, the corona crisis basically destroyed my career in Germany, as it did to a lot of people. Suddenly, there was no teaching, no performances, the spaces that I used for teaching were no longer available anywhere, and it looked like it was going to take years to recover. That was when my wife and I decided to move to Japan. But that implied for me that I would have to change my musical approach as well. In Germany, I made my living primarily from performing and teaching, partly also from CD sales. Living in Japan, of course, I'm certainly not expecting to be invited to do a lot of *honkyoku* concerts! Any performing I do now tends to be mainly the modern side of things. So moving to Japan involved a decision to change emphasis from traditional teaching and performing to more modern composing, and performing my new music as opportunity arises - which it does occasionally. So, really my focus has become more on the composition side, firstly the shakuhachi and live electronics, but also I'm interested in working with other acoustic instruments, including Western instruments. I'm planning a set of pieces for shakuhachi and piano, for instance - in a sense, these are opposite instruments, but they can find a meeting point.

I also need an outlet for my own work, and that's why I set up my YouTube channel. The ongoing series of pieces for the YouTube channel is a set of companion pieces developing from the 'Songs from the Lake' CD, using ideas and exploring further, using some things that I didn't include in the CD, but which I think are musically interesting. It's not a financially viable project, because I don't get money from the channel, but it gives me an outlet to present materials to people, so people can hear the music.

JV: And finally?

JF: I think that the most important thing for me is the wish for the ESS in its current format to continue the work done over the past 18 years, and that it will continue to contribute in developing the shakuhachi in the world. And certainly, all the signs seem good that this will happen.

CD REVIEWS

by Clive Bell

Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis

Loess

Slow Tone Collages CD/DL

<https://laonikos.bandcamp.com/album/loess>



In the sleeve notes to his latest release, Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis thanks "all the stewards of the soil, insects, birds, and trees of the River Lea." The type of shakuhachi playing he enjoys is, in his own words, "improvising long, unhurried plays with the more-than-human." Loess offers three extended recordings of him doing just that.

The River Lea is a major London river, rising in the Chiltern Hills and running north-south along the east side of the capital. In the ninth century it even marked the boundary between England and Denmark, or at least the Viking Danelaw territory. Laonikos lives nearby, and has visited a certain quiet spot on the bank repeatedly to observe and play. Hence his title Loess, meaning land where the wind has slowly deposited particles over decades or centuries.

So this is very patient music. On each of these three tracks the musician begins by listening to his environment. We hear the river itself, and a dawn chorus of birds starts at a chilly 5.30 am. Slowly the shakuhachi joins the soundscape. The first piece, from a misty April morning, brings in "Sakura, Sakura" as a theme. The second and third are both from the International Dawn Chorus Day in May 2021 and 2022. These are online events that last 25 hours, tracking the spring dawn chorus as it circles the planet.

Avoiding a straightforward documentary approach, Laonikos layers several shakuhachis and incorporates subtle electronic treatments. The result is calm, as you might expect, and expansive - our ears expand to listen along with and through the musician, as he attempts to adopt the timescale of the creatures that inhabit this environment. Along with musical notes, breath sounds, whistle tones and finger slaps are all brought into this inclusive music. The player's attention is steady and his stamina impressive, in what may be some of the slowest music you've heard.

Key here is dedication to one place: simply revisiting the same spot and paying attention to what goes on there. The artwork in this case is musical, but it can take other forms. One example would be the photography of Jem Southam, repeatedly standing in one place on the river Exe in Devon and trying to show the winter landscape. Southam has kept his project going for eight winters and shows no sign of stopping. The rewards are apparent in his work, and likewise in Laonikos's remarkable album.

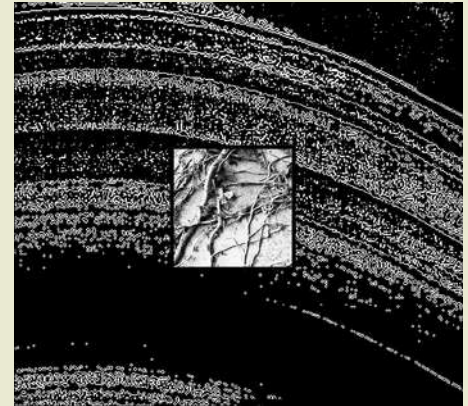
<https://www.1854.photography/2023/02/jem-southam-four-winters/>

Quiet Knot Shakuhachi & Electronics

Mushinnoise CD/DL

www.mushinnoise.com

<https://mikemcinerney.bandcamp.com/album/quietknot>



The theme here is clearly hailstones hitting a roof, both in the domestic and cosmic spheres. Mike McInerney (shakuhachi) and Duncan Chapman (live processing) have created a satisfying album on an epic scale. Via electronic environments, the Japanese flute encounters vast spaces, bringing to mind the recording of Goro Yamaguchi shot into space on a golden LP aboard NASA's Voyager spacecraft in 1977.

Opening track "Rain" is actually based on a recording of hail hitting a Devon kitchen roof. Chapman's processed sound and massive drones are oceanic in scope and constantly in subtle motion. From time to time we hear the granularity of the hail, the spitting percussion contrasting nicely with the geological strata of Chapman's synths. McInerney's shakuhachi is a lone wolf baying at the moon, a slow wail in space.

"Cassini Drone" also has granular textures, but this time they are the sound of tiny particles striking the dish antenna of the Cassini probe as it penetrated the rings of the planet Saturn. According to Cambridge University's Carolin Crawford, scientists in Iowa converted these impacts into audible sounds "that resemble hail hitting a tin roof." McInerney sits patiently singing amidst these vast soundscapes, till eventually he unleashes complex spirals of flute trills, looping into contrails across the sky.

Finally "Echo Lanes", a shorter piece, processes the shakuhachi sound in a web of loops and echoes. McInerney and Chapman have four decades of musical history to draw on, having first collaborated on a Stockhausen piece in Liverpool while still teenagers. McInerney has also built analog synths, including his Humbox. There's a beautiful live recording of him and Chapman both playing synths on their "Purple Sky" from spring 2023, also audible on Bandcamp. McInerney's first shakuhachi was hacked out from furniture bamboo in the Australian outback. Later he studied with Yoshikazu Iwamoto in York, and Véronique Piron in Brittany. He has also written a chapter for Kiku Day and Gunnar Linder's forthcoming book (Shakuhachi Complexities), titled "A Sympathetic Resonance: towards a language for shakuhachi electroacoustic music."

I'm not the first to observe that there's usually something pleasing about flute plus electronics. The shakuhachi's blatant physicality and humanity sit well amongst the humming machines. Quiet Knot, whether sat in the kitchen or traversing space at twenty kilometres a second, have produced a convincing, even mind-expanding set of pieces.

Junko Ueda
Kujô-Shakujô

E-records, Granada CD

<https://www.junkoueda.com/cd/#cd-kujo>



"When I encountered Japanese shomyo Buddhist chanting at the beginning of the 1980s, I experienced an unforgettable sensation: apart from perceiving sound with the ears and the intellect, an intense mass of voices vibrated directly inside my whole body." This is how Junko Ueda describes first hearing the ninth century vocal tradition of shomyo.

Ueda is now based in Spain, one of Japan's leading biwa players. She studied the biwa with Kinshi Tsuruta, who was the first to perform Takemitsu's "November Steps", alongside Katsuya Yokoyama on shakuhachi. Ueda will lead a *shomyo* workshop in spring 2024, as part of the ESS Online Season. Meanwhile Kujô-Shakujô is her latest CD, a nine part sutra from the Tendai tradition.

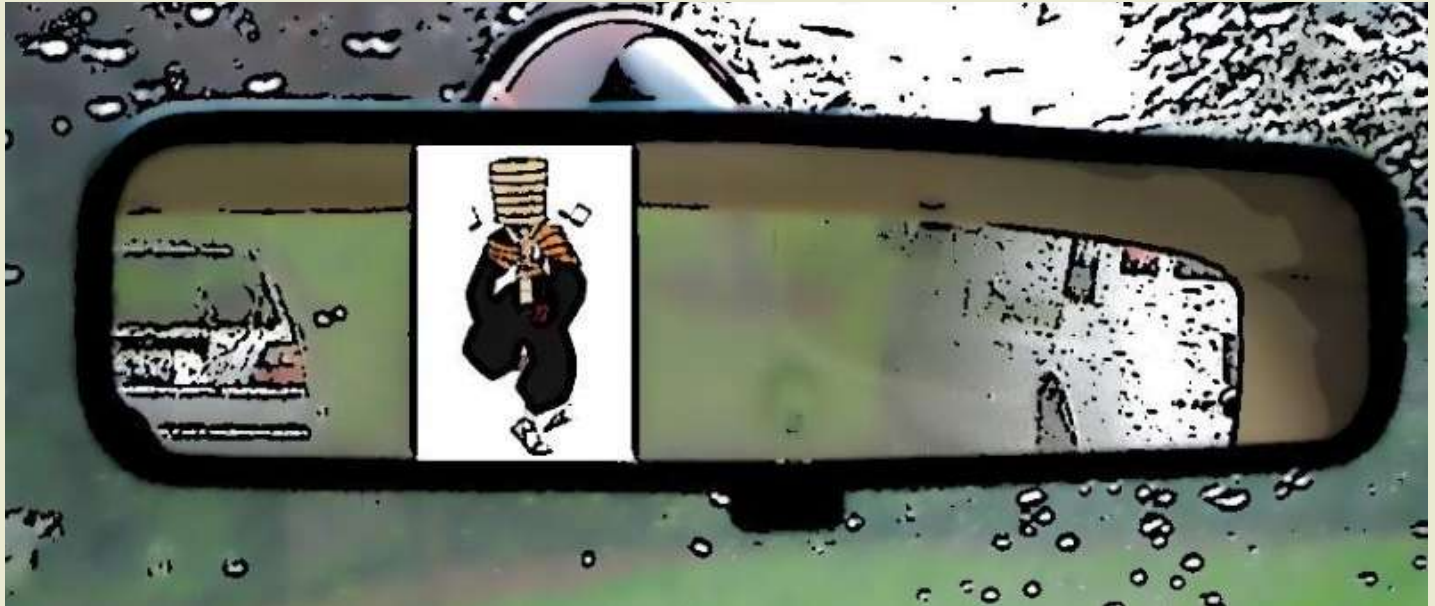
Her performance is strong and focused throughout, and austere. Shomyo is often heard as group ceremonial, but these are solos. By removing the sutra from its temple context, Ueda lets us hear it as art music, but also insists on its physicality. "During practising I realized that breathing is the most essential necessity for human survival," she writes. "The slow melismatic shomyo chanting makes you aware of the considerably extended length of breathing. This resembles a religious act which gazes at breathing as the root of human existence."

Recently Ueda has been touring with a French avant rock band called PoiL - their album PoiL Ueda was released early in 2023, and features versions of the Kujô-Shakujô repertoire. No one was more surprised than Ueda herself to hear shomyo in this high energy context. "It's two worlds together," she told The Wire magazine. "I've always thought that tradition should not happen behind closed doors. The traditional should have the desire to contribute to the society not of the past, not in the museum, but of this moment."

Clive Bell

<https://www.junkoueda.com/shomyo/>

Welcome to a new section of the Newsletter: REAR VIEW MIRROR.
We invite a player to revisit a key shakuhachi recording from the past.



REAR VIEW MIRROR

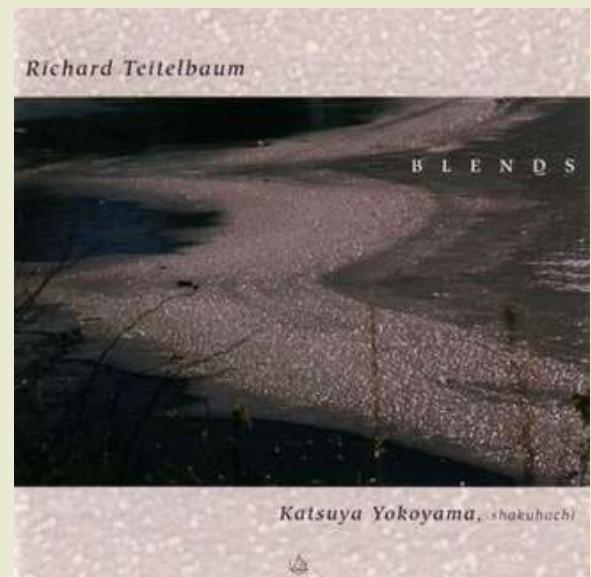
by Laonikos Psimikakis Chalkokondylis

Richard Teitelbaum and Katsuya Yokoyama Blends

New Albion, 2002

<http://www.newalbion.com/blog-richard-teitelbaum-blends-na118cd>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nStiVAXxB4&t>



Richard Teitelbaum (1939-2020) was an American composer, and a member of the group Musica Elettronica Viva with Alvin Curran and Frederic Rzewski. He studied shakuhachi in the US with Kodo Araki V and in Japan with Katsuya Yokoyama. Blends is an early example of placing the flute alongside synthesiser and electronics. The title track was first performed live in Tokyo in 1977.

Sitting down to this album is like opening a bottle of whisky from my father's collection. I know I'm not the first to taste it, yet there's a sense that what I'm about to taste is the result of long processes of fermentation and distillation, at the hands of master blenders many decades ago. It reflects both the time in which the whisky was bottled as well as the tastes of the people who made it.

Blends opens with familiar *honkyoku* phrases, but it quickly transforms as Teitelbaum's Micromoog joins in, shadowing the shakuhachi, coexisting and nudging the tradition at the same time. The interplay between the two feels on equal terms, and they take us on a journey, from a sort of polyphony (think forest canopy), to a mellow and inquisitive duet, which soon builds into a trio when Trilok Gurtu joins with percussion. The density of the piece ebbs and flows, yet over time reliably builds up to a bustling aviary of sounds. Years ago, I remember watching Atsuya Okuda at the World Shakuhachi Festival in London - "He plays like the whole forest," I wrote in my notes. Listening to the track "Blends" I feel I am listening to some future cyberpunk Kyoto where forest and city, tradition and technology meet seamlessly. Ghost In The Shell meets Princess Mononoke. As the track progresses, it weaves wolves' howls, electronic clicks, wailing shakuhachi and emerging shō chords into a mesmerising dance, and just as we're starting to get used to it all, it fades away.

The start of "Kyorei" is sparse - we're at a sonic temple, with the shakuhachi and bells marking the passage of time with solemn, echoing phrases. Yokoyama's playing is unmistakable, it carries such presence. For all the talk of *ma* in *honkyoku* literature and pedagogy, this is a masterclass in spacing and pacing. Halfway through, I suddenly realise I can recognise fragments of the gagaku piece "Etenraku" - but as if glimpsed through reeded glass, never quite in focus.

Teitelbaum describes this and the following tracks as a journey through the history of the shakuhachi, and this clearly feels like the origin story. Next up is "Kichiku's Dream", referring to the famous tale: a monk dreamt he was by a foggy lake and could hear a mysterious flute. Upon waking he wrote down the music, and this became the three San Koten Honkyoku. We too are now in the countryside, we hear water, insects, frogs, birds, and Yokoyama's shakuhachi echoing on the surface of the lake as we eventually start hearing clearer fragments of "Kokū".

If the previous tracks exhibited some form of harmony or symbiosis, "Samurai Combat" is a brief but intense sonic journey. It's like taking a magnifying glass to a *muraiki*: uneven, rough around the edges, and ornamented with samples of *biwa* snaps - you don't want to stick around for too long.

"The Coming Of The West" starts off with Yokoyama, then Teitelbaum's electronics creep in slowly, unsettling the space around the shakuhachi and we can hear that tension in the shakuhachi as it moves into a space of unfamiliar lack of silence. In this track, Yokoyama is at his most extrovert. He jumps around familiar *honkyoku* phrases and starts bringing in more material, we hear some more modern music as he eventually jumps up an octave to break through the increasing density of Teitelbaum's sonic tapestry. In the second half, we are joined by percussion and samples of choral Japanese singing, and the piece keeps building up until it all dissolves, leaving us with just a few shakuhachi phrases. By now the shakuhachi sounds a bit lonely and yearns for the company it has just left behind.

This album is a very refreshing listen: like a good whisky it has aged extremely well. Yokoyama's openness shines throughout the album, as does Teitelbaum's unparalleled sensitivity to the aesthetic and history of the shakuhachi, creating a one-of-a-kind dance between the two. They are both making kin with each other through their instruments in a colourful, respectful, extroverted way.

This is earth jazz.

THE TRAILER

by Kerry King

Dear ESS community,

I pulled a paper bag out from under the sink for recyclables yesterday and it had the name 'Horacio' printed on it. I thought of you. To consider all those who have been here before me - from Europe, Australia and the USA - is humbling. Indeed, it would be easy to feel unworthy, given all the talent that precedes me. Fortunately, Kakizakai-sensei is a generous teacher.

This is my second visit, my first was in May 2019. On both occasions I have had the good fortune to see Kaki-sensei perform. In 2019 it was a concert in Tokyo put on by the Japanese Shakuhachi Professional Players Association. A concert built around 'Tsuru no Sugomori' - the first half of the program was traditional, different schools playing *honkyoku*. The second half was contemporary interpretations. I think about forty players in total, all male, as were most of the audience. For the final piece they were all on stage as a shakuhachi choir with three or four soloists. Kakizakai-sensei was the bass soloist (of course). The composer conducted from his seat at the front of the auditorium. It was great, with lots of syncopated rhythm.

Yesterday's performance was here in Chichibu, organised by a koto teacher. The koto and shamisen players were female and the shakuhachi players both male and female. Kaki-sensei accompanied four of the pieces on the program. I found the music difficult. The pieces were traditional. I am not very familiar with the koto or the shamisen and it was difficult to discern different parts, but observation suggested that among the koto players there were at least two - five koto players on one part, two on another, plus in some pieces four shamisen and shakuhachi. I could of course hear changes in tempo but I had difficulty understanding anything else. The performers were in traditional dress, seated in seiza and did not lift their heads or engage with the audience. It's an intriguing contrast with Western performance. There was some vocalising as well but I don't know if they were singing lyrics. The audience this time was mainly female and over sixty. I enjoyed observing the way the women interacted with each other, their gestures, facial expressions, tone and dress without the distraction of being able to understand what they said.



Performance in Chichibu

Both these experiences have been quite enriching, different from each other and from the Western classical concerts I attend. It is quite a unique experience coming here to Chichibu and staying in the Trailer. The main benefits are of course face to face lessons, playing together and having the freedom to practice whenever without the interruptions and responsibilities of home. However, it is also lovely to settle into this little corner of the world and observe daily life around me. The activities, kids going to school, cars being washed on weekends etc are not so different and yet culturally it is very different. And Belc, the supermarket, is a sweet-shop for grown-ups! I would never have thought when I started trying to play the shakuhachi that such a journey lay ahead.

At the end of my three weeks here I am meeting my husband in Tokyo and we will have another ten days in Japan before flying home to Sydney. Last time we headed north for my husband to try fly-fishing in Japanese waters. This time he's leaving the fly rods at home and hoping to find wood-working tools!

Best Wishes.

Keep Blowing,

Kerry



Kakizakai Kaoru performance in Chichibu

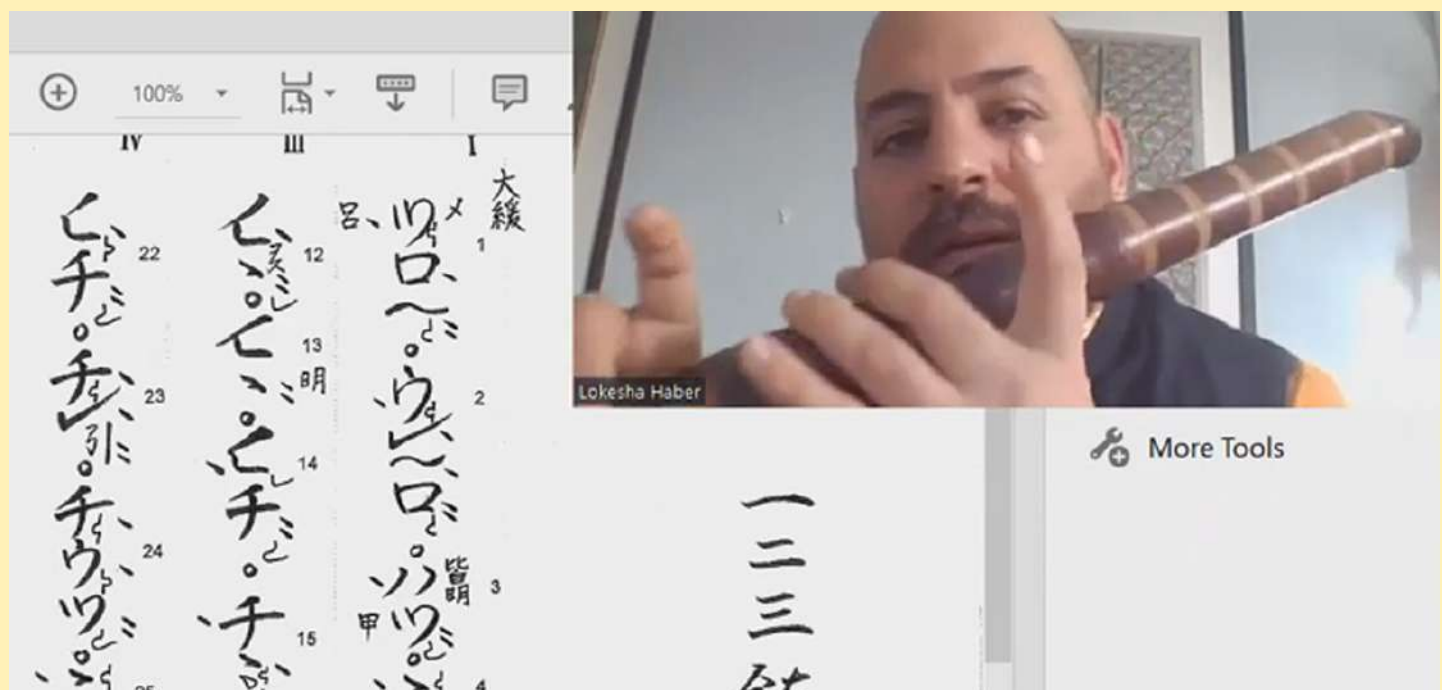
WORLD SHAKUHACHI MENTORING DAY

by WSMD Team

World Shakuhachi Mentoring Day: an event to help advanced students to improve their teaching skills by giving a series of one-day online lessons

The World Shakuhachi Day (WSD) which occurs every 8th October is based on the spirit of sharing our love for this wonderful instrument. One week before this event, this year, inspired by this same 'sharing spirit', a further online event, the World Shakuhachi Mentoring Day (WSMD), took place for the first time on 1st October, 2023, as a kind of spin-off. The details on the event can be found here: <http://worldshakuhachiday.com/wsmd/>

The goal of the WSMD was to provide an opportunity for four advanced students to share their knowledge with others through a series of free one-day online lessons to help them on their way to becoming teachers in the near future, especially in developing remote teaching skills which are so important in a post-pandemic world. The process involved the apprentice teachers designing an online lesson on a piece in collaboration with their main teacher. Each 70-minute teaching session was followed by a 20 minute question/comment time slot during which the attendees could ask questions and also give feedback on the lessons. At the end of the day, a panel of established teachers then gave feedback to all the apprentice teachers. After the event, the main teachers gave more detailed feedback to each of their students.

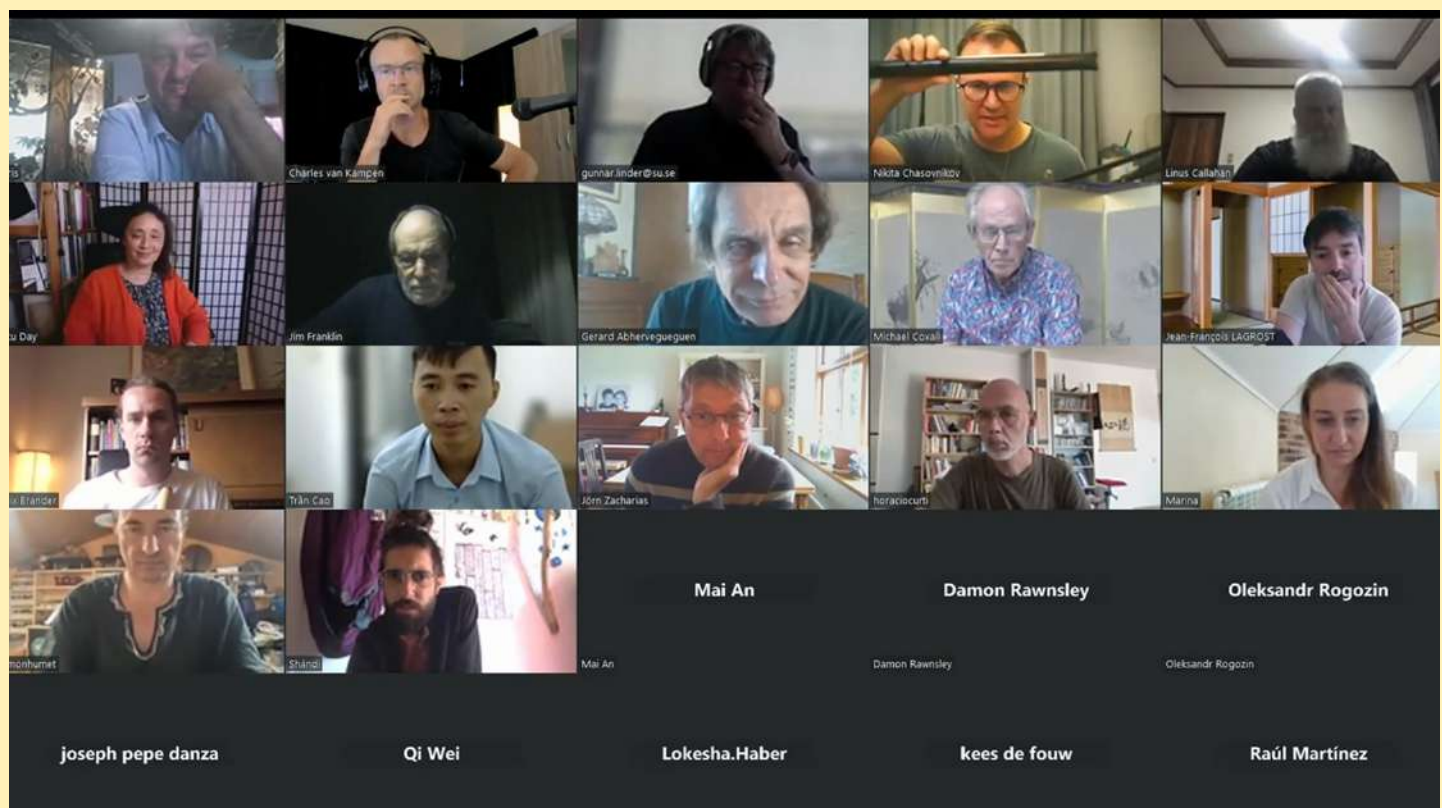


Lokesha Haber teaching Hifumi Hachigaeshi

The presence of a large audience was important in order to make the exercise realistic for the apprentice teachers. The 34 attendees who gathered for this remote event were very responsive in asking questions, and in some cases volunteering to play sections of the pieces taught. The approach was a win-win: the apprentice teachers had the chance to be confronted with an audience and get feedback from them, as well as from the panel, in a caring and sharing environment, while for the attendees, the event was free of charge, and they were able to receive lessons on new pieces, in four different styles and at different levels.

The first apprentice teacher was Tran Cao, a flute player from Vietnam who studied Vietnamese flute for many years and is now a shakuhachi student with Kiku Day. Cao taught 'Daha' (*Zensabo honkyoku* version) which is to some extent a programmatic piece depicting the pounding of the waves on the seashore. It was aimed at an intermediate level but his explanation of the piece made it possible for the participants to follow.

That session was followed by the Russian shakuhachi player and student with Jean-Francois Suizan Lagrost, Nikita Suikan Chasovnikov, who taught the intermediate level *Tozan-ryu honkyoku*, 'Seikaiha', which was written by Nakao Tozan in 1904 depicting the ripple pattern of the waves on the sea's surface and referring to a famous battle in the 1904-5 Russo-Japanese war. For the non-*Tozan-ryu* participants he carefully explained the principles of *Tozan* notation and was able to successfully guide the participants through the piece.



Nikita Suikan Chasovnikov teaching *Seikaiha*

Next up was the Spanish composer, Ramon Humet, who studied shakuhachi with Horacio Curti for over 10 years, and currently studies with Kakizakai Kaoru. He taught his own composition, 'Autumn Wind', which was aimed at beginners using simple KSK notation, and was very well received.

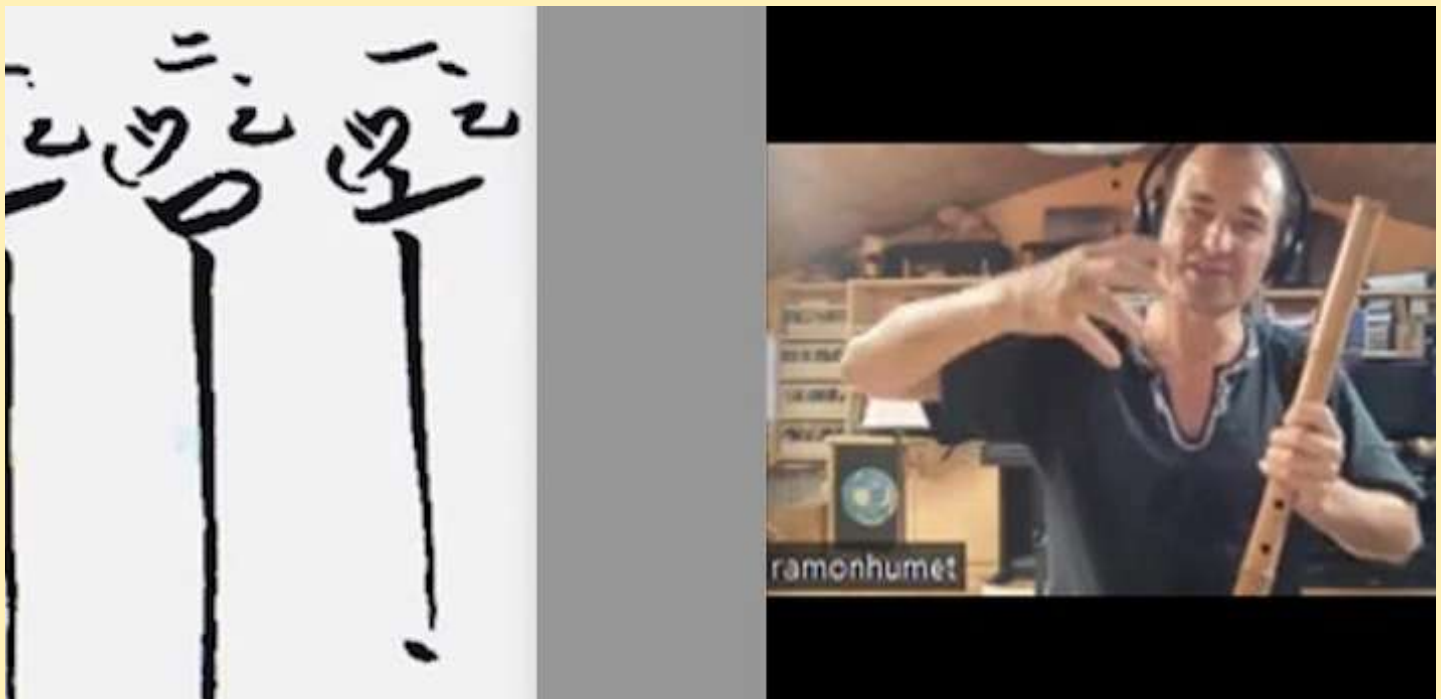
The final session was taught by Lokesha Haber, from Sweden, who has been studying *Chikumeisha* style *Kinko-ryu* with Gunnar Jinmei Linder since 2010. He chose to teach the first and last sections of the *honkyoku* 'Hifumi Hachigaeshi' which is an intermediate level piece but one which he was able to make accessible to more beginner level participants through careful explanation and demonstration.

Teaching, and especially remote-teaching, is not easy, and it can be very challenging to determine how to approach teaching a piece to participants of varied backgrounds, levels and experiences in a short space of time. How to engage, pace, balance explanation with demonstration etc with clarity and assurance are skills which need to be developed but, up to now, there has been no recognised forum in which they can be learned.

All four apprentice teachers rose to those challenges, provided very interesting lessons and learned a lot and feedback showed the participants very much enjoyed their lessons.

This event was a beginning, and we are all excited to see how it can be taken forward so, watch this space!

The WSMD team: Michael Coxall, Kiku Day, Christophe Gaston, Jim Franklin, Jean-François Lagrost, Horacio Curti and Gunnar Linder



Ramon Humet teaching *Autumn Wind*

Some comments from Participants...

'Thank you so much for this unique opportunity ... a great and wonderful experience to listen to the teachers and be inspired with their enthusiasm'. — Marina

'All in all a wonderful day and best of luck to the teachers!'. — Charles

'I feel Ramon's own composition presented no tricky fingerings a beginner may find intimidating. Ramon was attentive to chat and delivered responses clearly'. — Christian

'One session with Ramon was slower pace, which allowed me to concentrate on the quality of my tone. I found the session to be very enjoyable and easy to follow. The session with Lokesha was more challenging, the pace was faster, and the music more complex ... However, the session was a worthwhile exercise and I am really glad I attended'. — Adrian

'This event is a win win situation for everyone. As a prospective teacher it offers space to gain experience and as a participant you get to enjoy good teaching and meet new teachers. An enrichment for all'. — Andrea

...and from the Apprentice Teachers

'For me, it was a great opportunity and challenge to prepare an online lesson. Feedback and comments by highly experienced teachers of shakuhachi are very helpful in further mastering shakuhachi playing and teaching'. — Nikita

'It's a really helpful event for both players and coming teachers so I recommend it to become an annual event. Thank you so much for your time and effort to organize this event'. — Cao

'A huge thank you for the opportunity to have a pedagogical experience with personalized monitoring. It has been extraordinary, and with perfect organization. Thanks!'. — Ramon

HOW MY SHAKUHACHI JOURNEY STARTED

by Markus Guhe

In July 2012 I was in Japan with my taiko dojo (the Mugen Taiko Dojo from Scotland). It was mainly a study trip: we had workshops with many different teachers, visited festivals and spent some time in Fukui with Kurumaya-sensei, where the leaders of the dojo (Neil Mackie and Miyuki Williams) had learnt to play taiko. So Fukui and Fukui-style taiko are the roots of our *dojo*.

In the year before, Teresa, who had played shinobue in the group, had left, and nobody had taken over those duties. We had a one-day shinobue workshop at some point, but I think I was the only one who followed up on that. So when we went to Japan I thought that might be a good idea to get some more information and maybe a lesson or two on shinobue. (And I actually had one at Mejiro in Tokyo.) After the official trip had finished I went up to Sapporo on Hokkaido because of work, but I had a few days before that started. I stayed in a traditional ryokan, and one day I asked the owner if she knew of something in Sapporo related to shinobue, maybe a store selling instruments or somebody offering lessons. I think she was a bit amused that a Westerner would inquire about an obscure traditional Japanese musical instrument and said that she didn't think there was anywhere in Sapporo for that. But she said I should wait, and she would ask around.

By the way, she hardly spoke any English and my Japanese is basically non-existent. So our conversations were a wild mixture of trying to guess what the other person was saying and occasionally somebody in the lobby helping out with translating a few sentences. She made a number of phone calls and talked to the regulars who came by to hang out in the lobby for a while. A few times I tried to say: 'This is really not that important, thank you', but she was on a mission.

So after waiting in the lobby for half an hour, she told me that there was nothing for shinobue, but that she had found a shakuhachi maker. I was not too happy at the news. A few months before I had explicitly decided not to look into shakuhachi, because I was already doing many things including playing taiko and making an attempt at learning shinobue, and I didn't want to spread myself too thin. But she had made quite a big effort, so in a mixture of not wanting to be impolite in a country where politeness is very important and a sudden impulse just to go on this adventure, I said something like: 'Oh great, thank you! How does this work?' After all, I had some free time and how often do you get the chance to do something so random in Japan?

She then told me that the shakuhachi maker actually was not living in Sapporo itself but in a small village a few train stations outside the city. In my head all sorts of alarm bells went off, because in the big metropolitan areas like Tokyo or Osaka you can sort of get by without being able to communicate in Japanese, but one thing I had learned is that in rural areas it's quite difficult to find anybody who speaks English. Maybe even more difficult was that the signs at the train stations were only in Japanese. (Fortunately, this has changed since then – most stations now also show the name in *romaji*.)

If that wasn't enough, she also told me I needed to call the shakuhachi maker from Sapporo train station to let him know which train I would be on, so he would be in his workshop. When I asked if he at least spoke English, she just said: 'Maybe a little ...'

Ah well, it was too late at this point to call this off without being extremely rude. So in addition to his phone number, she also gave me directions to his workshop, which I thought I understood – it was actually not far from the station – but I wasn't completely convinced that I would be able to find it. 'Anyway', I thought, 'if all fails, I'll just find my way back to the train station and return to the *ryokan*!'

So I made my way to the station, found a public phone and dialled the number. After a bit of confusion at both ends on whether I was talking to the right person and who was calling, we surprisingly quickly settled into a conversational mode of very basic English and very, very basic Japanese. In this way I informed him about the time my train would be leaving, and he said 'Okay, understood', but again I was not sure that I had made myself clear. And again I said to myself that I could always just go back to the station and return to Sapporo. That became my mantra – my security blanket!

I had already spent a few weeks in Japan, so buying a ticket and finding the train was not too difficult. During the whole journey I tried to read the signs at the stations (some I could actually make out) and counted the stations I was passing, just to make sure.

And lo and behold I managed to get off at the right station, went through the ticket barrier, downstairs to the street and tried to orient myself, so that I could align my position with the directions on my piece of scrap paper. This was all in the days before your smartphone just told you where to go. I had to navigate the old-fashioned way!

However, one universal aspect of travelling in Japan is that as a Westerner you always stick out. So I wasn't surprised when I was approached by a friendly Japanese man who had just got out of a lonely car that was parked in front of the station. And that is how I met Goto san, the shakuhachi maker!

No need to follow directions, I didn't even have to walk – he just picked me up. 'That', I was thinking, 'is the pinnacle of the already quite extraordinary customer service in Japan.'

However, these days, being a bit more familiar with the Japanese way of thinking, I'm suspecting that he may have been more concerned with me getting lost on the way to him. Which would not only have been embarrassing for him (I'm sure the owner of the *ryokan* would have scolded him), but also would have lost him a potential customer. But maybe it's too cynical to say this, because he was really just a very nice person!

That's the end of the 'exciting adventure' part of this story. Goto san took me to his workshop, really just a small room under the roof in his parents' house. It was, of course, full of tools and materials, but there was also a big space on the floor to sit and chat. In the end, I spent almost three hours with him. He had a big

plastic

plastic box with many shakuhachi wrapped in individual plastic bags. At that point I didn't really understand why that should be necessary (I thought it was just the ubiquitous Japanese need to wrap every little item individually in plastic), but now it's obvious to me that it was to prevent the instruments from cracking while they were stored.

I told him (and if I say 'told him', I mean a 10 minute conversation in very basic English and very, very basic Japanese to get a very basic point across) that actually I was not playing shakuhachi but shinobue and was just here to have a look. He just gave me a friendly smile and suggested that I try one of his flutes. After I tried to produce a tone, he suggested another instrument, and on that I could actually make a sound. Well, more or less. But it was definitely a tone. I think the little practice I had on the shinobue helped a lot. It was all very much hit and miss.

He seemed very surprised that I could make a sound. Many people claim that making a sound on the shakuhachi is terribly difficult. (Which, at best, is only partly true in my experience.) So he was very complimentary about my sound production skills, emphasising how unusual this was and that I must be very talented, but in retrospect I am not sure how much of that was just sales tactics.

I wish I could report more on these three delightful hours I spent with him, but much of it was actually pointing and gesticulating, and trying to understand what the other person was saying. One thing I do remember is that he told me that he took all his instruments to a shakuhachi master who lived in the area and who gave him suggestions on what to improve. And only if this shakuhachi master had approved of the instrument Goto san would sell it.

In the end I asked how much an instrument would cost. This was still really more out of curiosity, because I still did not have any intention of starting to learn shakuhachi. The price he quoted me was just a third of what he would usually charge for the instrument (I saw the price tag later when I unpacked the flute in the ryokan). I am not sure why he did that, but I will be eternally grateful to him, because that was probably the reason that I decided to buy. It was a well made beginner's bamboo flute, and even beginner's instruments are quite expensive. So even at just a third of the price, it was still a lot of money. But my adventurous spirit was still strong, and I thought, 'Well how often does this happen? It's actually quite okay if this just turns out to be a memento of a very nice afternoon, doing something so unexpected in Japan. And if not, I can always try to sell it on.' So I decided to buy it.

The next problem then was that, of course, I did not have enough cash on me, because I hadn't expected to buy anything, and ten years ago, even more than today, Japan was a cash based society. After a bit of back-and-forth and me offering to go to an ATM and get the money, he said: 'Oh, no problem. I'll be in Sapporo tomorrow anyway for a rehearsal, so I'll just come by the *ryokan*, and you can pay me then.'

And if anything this is probably my favourite part of the story. Never up to that point and never since then have I seen that somebody would just give away something worth hundreds of pounds to a stranger he had never met before and just trust that he would get paid the next day. Needless to say, the next day we met and he got his money. He even gave me sheet music and a recording of "Rokudan No Shirabe" on an SD card and suggested this should be the first piece that I learn! Maybe he really thought I was talented, because in fact it took me a couple of years before I was at the point where I could play this piece. But back in his workshop, where I was now the owner of my new shakuhachi, I was wondering how I could learn to play it. My experiences with the shinobue had taught me that once I was back home, it would be extremely hard to find any information or instruction on how to play.

When I asked him what I should do, he said he had a shakuhachi introduction book in English that he could sell me, but it was at his home and not here in his workshop. This, by the way, turned out to be John Kaizan Neptune's book, which I then used for the first few months of playing.

So on the way back to the train station we briefly stopped at his house where he ran in to get the book. His wife smiled and waved from the door, and ten minutes later he dropped me off at the station.

Back in the *ryokan*, the small crowd of regulars in the lobby and the owner of course wanted to know if I managed to find the shakuhachi maker and what had happened.

When I told them that I had actually bought an instrument, they started laughing and trying to explain something to me, which I couldn't understand at all. So they took to the computer in the lobby and after a bit of a searching showed me pictures of strange looking fellows with baskets on their heads playing this flute I just bought, which I now understand were *komuso*, to demonstrate what they associated with shakuhachi. I think I generated quite a bit of entertainment for them on that day!

Back in my Japanese style room I unpacked the instrument, assembled it and tried to make a few notes. And this is when something surprising happened: I really liked how the flute felt on my chin and the activity of trying to make a stable sound was oh so incredibly satisfying! Every time I put down the flute, it felt like something was missing from my lip.

I know this sounds incredibly melodramatic, especially coming from me. These days I am very happy without a shakuhachi pressing against my lip, but in that moment that is how it felt.

And while by now I have developed an appreciation for shakuhachi music, this is still the core of why I am still doing it. More than the music, it is the activity of playing that I find so compelling.

So these first tries in the *ryokan* really are the starting point of my shakuhachi journey. And the date was the 1st of August 2012.

THE SOUND OF MUJO

by Damon Rawnsley

Editor's note: Damon has written this text after studying Soto Zen Buddhism, and reading the book "Mushotoku Mind" by Taisen Deshimaru. 'Mushotoku mind' means an attitude of no profit, no gain. It is the core of Taisen Deshimaru's Zen. Deshimaru emphasizes 'mind-emptiness' (Ku) as the foundation of Zen practice, in contrast to the 'mindfulness' of other Zen approaches.

Mujo = never the same. *Mujo* is impermanence. Everything is *Mujo*.

Important lessons have come to me through playing this amazing instrument, the Shakuhachi. The very act of blowing, each breath relates all aspects of body, mind and feeling with the fleeting present moment. I am invited to be one with the act of playing the Shakuhachi.

Where does the sound come from? *KU* = emptiness. Interdependence, everything depends on something.

The demand is for me that the body, feelings and mind need to work together, for good posture, for right breathing, relaxed just enough to maintain the effort needed; and listening informs the understanding through the years, until the sound improves with more consciousness. Everything is related, so it's important the balance is maintained: the interdependence of body, breath, feelings and mind, working together to produce good sound.

Mujo is the essence of playing the Shakuhachi, because it's never the same, the changing sound, differing embouchure. Staying with the act of playing one piece. Staying power strengthens the will; which helps to unite us within the body. Breath and conscious effort, remember, the one who is playing the sound.

Where does sound come from? It is easy to just concentrate on the act of playing the music, but maintaining the conscious connection with fleeting feelings and body and presence of them together.

We are the world around us. The sound of *Mujo*.

IRON GAIDEN



Julien Richard
Iron Gaiden, 2023

MEMBER'S AREA

HOW TO BECOME AN ESS MEMBER

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

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

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

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

Furthermore there is the ESS Members' Area at members.shakuhachisociety.eu, which consists of exclusive online resources 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 question or advice on shakuhachi.

ESS FACEBOOK COMMUNITY GROUP

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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. Although less frequented than in the past, it is still a great resource for information to get you started on your shakuhachi questions.

ESS NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTOR'S GUIDELINES

The aim of the ESS Newsletter (NL) is to create a platform for members and non-members to further develop an understanding of shakuhachi and place it in a wider context than just their own individual study and experience. It, 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 June 1, 2024.
There will be a call for contributions nearer the publication date.
Please do not hesitate to contact us in the meantime
with any questions or suggestions.



BAMBOO

STAY TUNED!

THE NEXT EUROPEAN SHAKUHACHI SOCIETY NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED JUNE 1, 2024