
AUSTRALIAN SHAKUHACHI SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Nr. 6 June 2001

ASS P.O Box 1137 Leichardt NSW 2040



First! I'm sure all the gang at **ASS** would like to congratulate **Riley Lee Sensei** for:

New Age Musician of the Year (Amazon.com)
and World Music Male Artist of the Year and Instrumentalist of the Year (Australian awards)

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A video of **Australian Shakuhachi Festival 2000** at the Sunshine Coast is available from Cathy Andrews for \$10.00 plus postage. Those who would like a copy should contact her on (02) 94996267.

The video features the public concert at Majimba, has beautiful solo, ensemble and orchestral performances from the Australian and Japanese teachers with backing from the students.



A flute without holes is the most difficult to blow.

## Late breaking news!

The Shakuhachi Summer Camp of the Rockies 2001 workshop ended this morning. It went well; probably the best so far. The people ranged from quite advanced to total beginner. And I mean Total! One person didn't get his flute until 2 days before the festival.

People came from all over the USA: San Francisco, Florida, Texas, Wisconsin, etc. There were quite a few flutes for sale at the summer camp, both new instruments from Japan and used ones being sold by students who had upgraded. There were also flutes made by two of the participants. One was making very cheap bamboo flutes, and the other person had wooden ones (no where near as good as David Brown's flutes).

I think 36 participants attended, including eight from Japan. Of these eight, four came with Kakizakai and four came with Kurahashi. This is the first time people from Japan have attended the festival. As those of us who have attended the shakuhachi festivals in Australia know, having participants from Japan really increases the level of enjoyment for the local participants.

About seventy pieces were taught, including those studied in the 'private lessons'. Each participant had two 45' lessons where they were the main student and others could watch. In some instances, others could play too, like a small group lesson with one person getting most of the attention.

Fortunately the extra people this year didn't mean that much extra work for the teachers. One reason for this was the extra teacher this year (Kakizakai). As has been the case in Australia, he proved to be a very popular teacher.

Weather was cool to hot. Very good, really. Food was also good. The place is much more comfortable than either of the places we have had shakuhachi camps in Australia. But it is much more expensive, I think it comes to over \$300/person for the 4 days, unless one is camping, just for room & board. And that is US\$!

A couple of people at the summer camp said that they want to come to one of the festivals in Australia, so we might see some Yanks joining us in the coming years!

Dr. Riley Lee

**MELBOURNE 2002**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Shakuhachi**  
**Festival**  
8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2002

Get ready. The Festival will soon be upon us. This next Festival promises, in the words of a superior authority, to be the best ever. This is not to fail to appreciate the efforts of the organisers of past Festivals, but if we can't learn from experience....

There is a brochure attached (minus the booking sheet) which describes the event in detail. The booking sheet, with the all-important costs will follow very soon.

Costs this year will be affected by the ever present GST and also the fact that we are offering more ritzy accommodation; mainly single rooms and some doubles. We are endeavouring to keep the costs down.

The venue is very close 10mins walk (short tram ride) from the CBD and Lygon Street, cappuccino capital of Australia.

Teachers will be our friends from Springwood, the three Sensei's: Teruo FURUYA, Kazushi MATAMA, Kaoru KAKIZAKAI, plus our own Riley Lee, Jim Franklin, Anne Norman and Andrew MacGregor.

Koto players are welcome and koto workshops will be held. This will allow us to explore some great ensemble music both in workshops and in concert.

We will be offering a program for accompanying persons and are very happy to see as many as possible. The venue can sleep 150 or so. Bring your friends.

Music is being selected as you read this and rest assured there will be something for everyone. After receipt of your registration, we will send music scores and a practice cassette so you can run through the music with your teacher in the months leading up to the Festival. This will ensure you will get maximum value from the experience.

We encourage all participants to play in the Sunday concert in Melba Hall. In this concert participants will play:

- RO buki
- An ensemble piece with koto; massed koto and shakuhachi; very exciting
- A piece of new music composed by Anne Norman, for all shakuhachi players.

Registration will include the "Farewell Dinner" on the Monday night.

So, send your registrations early and get in as much practice as possible BEFORE the Festival. Registrations can be sent from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2001, and registrations will not be accepted after 1<sup>st</sup> February 2002.

The official Festival web site is at:

[www.japanworldmusic.com/melbourne2002.htm](http://www.japanworldmusic.com/melbourne2002.htm)

You will be able to download a booking form from the site, but we will be posting one to you anyway.

So support the ASS and the Festival organisers by making an indelible mark in your diary and encouraging friends to attend. If you have shakuhachi contacts overseas, let them know too.

Very Best Wishes  
ORGANISING COMMITTEE



'Bamboo' By Zheng Zhaoxia

## ANNUAL ASS AGM

Our AGM was held this time at the **National Folk Festival in Canberra** on Friday 13 April. It was a very auspicious occasion with 12 members from NSW and ACT attending.

Members took time from their busy rehearsing/performing schedules to huddle in the outdoor rest area to hear our president, Wendy Shore's report. Wendy reported that the Society is in good shape financially. A number of events were organised in Sydney to provide opportunities for members to play together. The **Australian Shakuhachi Festival 2000** at the Sunshine coast was a great success. After two years of being in the president's hot seat, Wendy announced that she would not like to stand again. Members moved a motion of thanks to all past office bearers.

The Society election followed with all positions declared vacant. The following officers were elected:

|                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| President:         | Cathy Andrews |
| Secretary:         | Margaret Tung |
| Treasurer:         | John Holmes   |
| Newsletter editor: | Graham Ranft  |

Best wishes were extended to the new team as we close our second AGM for the Society.

## Fund Raising CD Venture

Following the success of **Blowing Zen's** (ASS performance group, see story page 5 ) world premier performance at the National Folk Festival. David Jobst and Cathy Andrews came up with the idea of making a CD to motivate members performing together and to raise funds for ASS. A meeting was held at John Holmes' place at the beginning of May to discuss the idea.

Members at the meeting were enthusiastic, seeing this venture as a way to promote ASS and shakuhachi music. We thought we would raise funds for the production by:

- using fees we earned with Blowing Zen performances
- providing pre-production sale to members
- asking members for contribution which will be refunded fully with CD sales

We would like to hear from members who might:

- have ideas and experience to help us
- like to join in the CD production
- like to contribute funds to it

Please be part of this exciting venture! We are hoping to raise funds for the Society so that we could organise more interesting activities for everyone. The present plan is to produce the CD at

the beginning of 2002 after the Australian Shakuhachi Festival at Melbourne.

Please contact **John Holmes** on tel: 02 4758 7206 or email:John.Holmes@ozemail.com.au with your queries, ideas, enthusiasm and hard cash as soon as possible.

## We'd like to hear from you ! 😊

Member are welcome to contact the new management team of the Society with any queries, suggestions for activities, articles for the newsletter, ideas to promote shakuhachi, etc.

Here's the telephone numbers and email addresses of the team:

### **Cathy Andrews, President:**

ph. (02 9499 6267 email:kevlock@bigpond.com.au

### **Margaret Tung, Secretary:**

ph. (02) 95692934

email:margaret.tung@det.nsw.edu.au

### **John Holmes, Treasurer:**

ph. (02) 4758 7206

email:johnholmes@ozemail.com.au

### **Graham Ranft, Newsletter Editor:**

Ph. (02) 6296 3828

email: ranftg@interact.net.au

## A quotable quote:

There's a strange paradox to the Shakuhachi. If you sell someone a wonderful sounding shak, what are you selling? Some cleverly shaped emptiness--that's about all. Designed nothingness--that moves at the speed of sound.

Nelson Zink <http://www.Navaching.com/shak>

[Used with permission.]



'Shakuhachi' By Zheng Zhaoxia

## Honkyoku at Sacred Music Festival Brisbane 2001

**The Turbine Room at the Brisbane's Powerhouse Performing Arts Centre generated an electric response to our Shakuhachi concert at the Queensland Sacred Music Festival recently.**

Carl Rathus and I presented some *Honkyoku* pieces standing beside the evolving sand mandala of the Gyotoku Monks in this huge industrial lobby. We feared the sound might be lost in this three story block, however the audience of approximately 150 were so respectful and involved that any inadequacies in the venue were minor.

After an introduction and brief explanation of the instrument and its origins, we took turns in playing some basic pieces with Carl sometimes using a 2.4 length to demonstrate the difference that the deeper tones can convey. Towards the end I played *Tamuke*, and then we played selected (easier!) sections of *Shika no Tone* together to finish.

It was heartening to see such a warm response after the concert, as Carl and I were both swamped with interest and requests for information. Our promotion was somewhat lacking as we had left our business cards in the rehearsal room.

This very successful Sacred Music Festival was a great collaborative effort of Pat and Sim Symons who organise the Folkloric Stage at the Woodford Folk Festival, and Chris Bowen, Manager of the Powerhouse. We would like to thank them for the opportunity of playing in the venue and promoting Shakuhachi to a receptive audience.

Stuart Ransom

### Why the Shakuhachi?

My path to the Shakuhachi has been rather long and winding. I played recorder at school and sang in numerous choirs and then took up clarinet. This enabled me to play in the available school groups as well as youth orchestra and various bands. I studied clarinet at Sydney Conservatorium before deciding that this type of music making was far too competitive for me. It just wasn't right and I suffered from crippling performance anxiety every time I had to play somewhere.

A lapse of ten years when I put my clarinet away in the cupboard followed. I still sang in a local choir

and enjoyed that and eventually regained enough confidence to start playing clarinet again. I now teach clarinet at the Riverina Conservatorium.

I attended a performance by Riley Lee and Marshall MacGuire in early 2000 and knew that was the sound I had been searching for.

I finally got up enough courage to phone Riley to ask about lessons and was able to buy a shakuhachi and start trying to play this most beautiful instrument. It is the most frustrating and difficult journey as anyone who has tried playing shakuhachi knows, but the rewards are there ten-fold for the effort involved.

I only wish I had started 20 years ago!!!

Jane Suffield



Study the teachings  
of the pine tree, the bamboo  
and the plum blossom.  
The pine is evergreen,  
firmly rooted, and venerable.  
The bamboo is strong,  
resilient, unbreakable.  
The plum blossom is hardy,  
fragrant and elegant.

- Morihei Ueshiba



### "Spring Sea" - Riley Lee and Marshall McGuire in concert at the National Galley of Australia

It was not only good to sit with 3 of Monet's "Waterlilies 1907 Series" in front of us but to have the very great pleasure of hearing Riley and Marshall making music together in the magnificent acoustic. They presented a program reflecting the theme of this wonderful exhibition - Monet & Japan. They played Debussy and Satie together with unknown solo harp pieces of Marcel Tournier that Marshall had unearthed from a "musty" shelf

in an English bookshop. Riley and Marshall also played 'Haru no umi' (Spring Sea).

Then for "something completely different" Riley played Ross Edwards' 'Raft Song at Sunrise' which combines his modal style of writing with a strong "shakuhachi" style structure and sound. Marshall returned to play with Riley. Franz Schubert's last song in the 'Wintereise' song cycle: the 'Hurdy Gurdy Man'.

Riley then played Ann Boyd's 'Goldfish through Summer Rain' which displayed Ann's fine assimilation of writing for the shakuhachi.

The final piece of this wonderful concert was Katsutoshi Nagasawa's 'Hoshun' - 'First Stirrings of Spring' - a very fitting end as it is late autumn in Canberra and Spring is always welcome here!

If you haven't heard these two play together yet then the next best thing is to acquire their CD "Spring Sea" - available from the ABC CD: **ABC Classics 465 757-2**. Some of the tracks on this CD were also performed at the above concert. I hope that they might release another CD including the Satie 'Gymnopedies', Debussy's 'Chanson Bilitus' and 'Pour invoquer pan, Dieu du vent d'été' and Schubert's 'Der Leirmann' - 'The Hurdy-Gurdy Man'.

Graham Ranft

## National Folk Festival – Canberra – Easter 2001

My partner, Phil, and I rolled up at NFF2001 not knowing what to expect from the festival nor our performance. Having worked out that the name of our group was "Blowing Zen", I was excited to find us listed in the huge program. Wearing a purple "performers" wristband, I felt like a bit of a fraud – but what the heck!

Well, where to start? The festival itself was brilliant – very well organised, great crowd, great choice of performers and heaps of interesting craft & food stalls. We were amazed at the scale of the event. Although nights were very cold, the days were beautiful and it was wonderful to wander around and drop into a venue whenever you heard something interesting.

Of course, Riley's performances were a highlight. I have seen Taikoz and other Japanese drumming groups before and always love the power & excitement, especially as it reminds me of Japanese festivals I have attended. However, I was surprised to find that Phil (not a great fan of things Japanese) was also "blown away". He was also very moved by Riley's solo shakuhachi performances. I was

glad that he was there to see Riley play shakuhachi because now I feel like he understands why I am intrigued by *shakuhachi*. (Since we have returned home, he has even played some of Riley's CDs a few times!). We were also very impressed with Bronwyn's performance on the "real stage".

Of course, our Blowing Zen performances were not quite of Riley's calibre. With only short rehearsals and the inherent problems with pitching amongst a group it was a bit hit & miss. However, for our first "gig" it was not bad. We performed twice at the Festival – once in the Singing Room lead by Riley and once in Building E lead by Bronwyn. On both occasions, there were only a few people in the room to begin with but by the time we began performing we had a full-house! I think people were attracted because it was something different (& Riley is always a drawcard). We opened with *Honte Choshi* with about half group playing *fu*. We had the audience also hum *fu* and it created quite a powerful ambience. With Riley giving some explanation of our instruments and the pieces we were playing, we played *Hifumicho* and then some folk songs. Riley & Bronwyn played a duet (in the second concert Bronwyn & David performed together) before the group finished with a rendition of *Tamuke*. Again, Phil (& some other friends) surprisingly enjoyed both performances. Many audience members told us they were moved – so I think we achieved something even if the musicality was somewhat compromised (you know what I mean!).

The other great plus of attending the festival was the chance it gave for ASS members to reignite and develop friendships. The group had a good time together and we became enthused to perform together again. Hopefully, NFF2001 will not be last time Blowing Zen performs in public!

Wendy Shore

[Ed. Great to meet you all]

禪道

'Zen and Tao' By Zheng Zhaoxia

## BLOWING ZEN AT NFF 2001



**Group blow, second session.**



**The Formal 2001 AGM in an informal setting...**



**Riley and Bronwyn**



**One pointed concentration ..**



**Solo by Bronwyn and David.**

Ed.: Many thanks to Mark Jogst and Margaret Tung for taking these pictures. These are scanned colour photos submitted by Margaret Tung. I simply scanned them at 300 dpi. in colour then reduced them to greyscale.

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"I love bamboo how it looks  
and because men carve it into flutes "  
Ikkyu

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# From Fuke shuu to Uduboo:

By Steve Casano in Hawai'i

## A thesis summary

The following series of articles is a summary of my thesis that was completed at the University of Hawaii in the spring of 2001.

Since this is not an introduction to the shakuhachi tradition, but rather a historical survey of how and by what means the shakuhachi tradition has flowed to the West, this research project will not contain basic information on shakuhachi (i.e., blowing techniques, fingering charts, basic construction, etc.), for there has already been much published concerning this matter.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge many individuals. I would also like to acknowledge the shakuhachi tradition itself, for participating in this traditional Japanese musical tradition has opened up a whole new world for me. Besides meeting many wonderful individuals on my *take no michi* (Bamboo Path), it has reunited me with old friends and has tested me physically, spiritually, and mentally. I am forever grateful.

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The shakuhachi tradition has not been static nor a museum piece, but rather has been continually evolving since its first introduction to Japan during the Nara period (710-794). The evolution of the shakuhachi tradition from the Nara period to the Edo period (1603-1868) was a gradual process. However, beginning with the banning of the Fuke shakuhachi sect in 1871, the shakuhachi rapidly began to transform from a Japanese Buddhist religious tool to a secular musical instrument and eventually to an international musical instrument used in a vast array of non-traditional musics.

The evolution of the shakuhachi tradition from 1871 is not surprising when one takes into consideration the growing importance and influence of Western culture and music on the Japanese during the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the eventual growing participation of non-Japanese in the tradition since the mid-to-late 1960s. Whether changes in the shakuhachi tradition as a whole were due to political, social, philosophical, geographical, technological, or musicological reasons, the boundaries of the modern shakuhachi tradition are ever expanding. Some of the complexities of clear cut boundaries of the modern shakuhachi lie in the fact that when one examines the early history of the shakuhachi there are still, according to Seyama, "...many unsolved mysteries such as its origin, some religious legends, the lineages of transmission, and the process of dissemination/transmission" (Seyama 1998:69). Therefore, this survey will only briefly touch upon

the early history of the shakuhachi, because the modern shakuhachi was developed from the shakuhachi of the Fuke sect during the Edo period.

Seyama describes in more detail eight uses of the shakuhachi in today's Japanese music scene:

- 1) in the solo performance of the classical honkyoku;
- 2) as part of the ensemble of traditional Japanese music;
- 3) as accompaniment to minyou, traditional Japanese folk songs;
- 4) as accompaniment to shigen, the chanting of classical Chinese poems;
- 5) as part of the ensemble accompanying *kayokyoku*, Japanese commercially-orientated popular music;
- 6) as a member of ensembles playing jazz, pop, and rock music;
- 7) in fusion or crossover performances with other instruments including both Western and non-Western musics; and
- 8) in contemporary, experimental, and computer music (Seyama 1998:77-78). Within the recent history of the shakuhachi one could not only see experimentation among Japanese members of the tradition, but also due to the popularity of the shakuhachi among non-Japanese within the last three and a half decades, one could see developments in the use of the shakuhachi outside of Japan. For example, although the shakuhachi is not, to my knowledge, used in the chanting of classical Chinese poems in the West, it is used in the reading of modern English poetry within the West (e.g., the collaboration between the poet Michael Moore and shakuhachi performer Martha Fabrique). Moreover, the shakuhachi has been utilized in accompanying modern dance and, since the 1980s, there has been an increased usage of the shakuhachi among Hollywood film score composers.

Therefore, it is my impression that the following general categories can be used to describe the present international uses of the shakuhachi:

- 1) in the *koten honkyoku* and the *honkyoku* of the Tozan *ryuu* (Tozan sect, style), Chikuho *ryuu*, Ueda *ryuu*, etc.;
- 2) new and traditional music for the traditional Japanese music ensemble (e.g., *shamisen*, *koto*, shakuhachi or just shakuhachi and *koto*);
- 3) folk music (including Japanese folk music and folk music of the West as in Marco Leinhard's recording, for example, of Amazing Grace and Chikuho Ryuu Hawaii's use of the shakuhachi to play Christmas carols during the holiday season);
- 4) world beat/fusion, pop, jazz, rock, and commercial music;
- 5) contemporary, experimental art music and computer music (e.g., Cyber shakuhachi);

- 6) solo compositions or improvisations by shakuhachi performers;
- 7) movie or documentary soundtracks and;
- 8) accompaniment to dance or poetry.

As is evident from the above-mentioned modern uses of the shakuhachi and the fact that most modern shakuhachi performers, Japanese and non-Japanese alike, are active in classical and modern genres of shakuhachi music, this historical survey will not confine the shakuhachi tradition to the boundaries of the classical *honkyoku*... "a piece composed from the beginning for a particular instrument, and usually played only by that instrument..." nor to the development of the shakuhachi in one specific country (Tukitani 93:1992). Rather, this survey will provide a panoramic view of the various manifestations and uses of the shakuhachi over time, to contextualize the transnational flow of the shakuhachi to the West.

[Ed: Many thanks to Steve for his kind permission to use this article and to Bob Herr for sending it. It is hoped we can exchange more articles in the future. I have edited out a several sentences in the introduction.]



Some interesting and useful web sites:

For the technically minded - all about flutes and other western wind instruments:

<http://www.phys.unsw.edu.au/music/flute/>

On the shakuhachi and a photo of ...

<http://www.phys.unsw.edu.au/~jw/ASA.html>

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Nelson Zink's very interesting research into the shakuhachi amongst other flutes.

<http://www.Navaching.com/shak>

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Andrew MacGregor's page on ASF 2002

www.japanworldmusic.com

and

www.japanworldmusic.com/melbourne2002

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Robert A Jonas's Empty Bell site:

<http://www.emptybell.org/ishaku.html>

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The site for the **International Shakuhachi Society**
Has an extensive section on the titles of Honkyoku pieces, lineage and programme notes.

<http://www.komuso.com/>

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Monty Levenson's Wonderful Web Site

<http://www.shakuhachi.com>

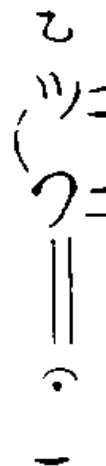
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www.rileylee.net

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"The breath of the fluteplayer,  
does it belong to the flute?"

-Rumi



Brief bio of your new News Editor.

I've been learning the shakuhachi with Riley Lee Sensei about 4 years. Currently working on *Koku* and *Tamuke*. I play a 1.8 and 2.4 - both David Brown shakuhachi. I teach flute/alto flute and recorders. I used to play the double bass in a jazz band - The Pearce-Pickering Jazz Band for many years but gave it away due to arthritis problems in my wrists and hands, rapidly diminishing pub work and other musical interests.





**Join the**

**..... AUSTRALIAN SHAKUHACHI SOCIETY (ASS)**

**Attention existing members** – membership fees are due for all members now (unless you've paid since the last newsletter). Please renew your membership and support ASS!

**Other Shakuhachi enthusiasts** - You are cordially invited to join ASS.

ASS promotes the shakuhachi and its music by:

- ◆ organising **activities** in NSW, Queensland and ACT for people to practice or perform together, and share experiences relating to the shakuhachi.
- ◆ publishing a **newsletter** four times a year to: publicise upcoming events, provide a forum for articles on shakuhachi, listing resources, reviewing shakuhachi CDs and offering flutes for sale, etc.
- ◆ co-ordinating the **Australian Shakuhachi Festival** to celebrate the art of shakuhachi, workshops and performances are offered.

Please join ASS and help promote shakuhachi music.

Fill out the membership form below, enclose your payment and return to:

**The Secretary, Australian Shakuhachi Society, PO Box 1137, LEICHHARDT NSW 2040**

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**Yes, I would like to join the Australian Shakuhachi Society.**

**Enclosed is \$25.00, being dues for one year**

**Enclosed is \$50.00, being dues for two years**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

—

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

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Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

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