
AUSTRALIAN SHAKUHACHI SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Nr. 9 March/April 2002

P.O. Box 63. Woodford, NSW. 2778



Greetings once again. This issue is dedicated to the 3rd Australian Shakuhachi Festival held in Melbourne.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Andrew and Kyoku for their sterling work in organizing, running, and promoting the ASF 2002.

Also many thanks for Riley's translation work and general input into the proceedings. Anne Norman for writing "Heat wave" and not also forgetting all the people who helped organize all those Koto's at the Concert...

The ASS AGM and other material re the ASF is to be found on page 6 following as I wanted to keep all the original formatting which didn't translate into the two column format. I hope that the tables on page 8 print ok for you. This is a big post this time owing to the photos.

This is your news letter so please keep those cards and letters, photos, web links etc etc, rolling in.... You can always reach me at: ranftg@webone.com.au

Graham Ranft News Editor

Bits and Pieces

The ASF have been mentioned in the Japanese Hougaku Monthly:

MONTHLY MUSIC MAGAZINE ● HOUGAKU JOURNAL

邦楽
ジャーナル

2001 VOL.179

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The articles were about the ASF's in The Blue mountains and Queensland.



第1回フェスティバルにて

No guesses...who....

The ASS performance group "Blowing Zen"

Hi all,

This is **OFFICIAL**.....The ASS performance group "Blowing Zen" will be appearing at the "Winter Magic Festival" at Katoomba on 22nd June 2002. We have been given the chance to perform twice.....both probably in the Community Centre (festival art gallery), or if not possible, in the forecourt area (under cover) The exact times of the performances are to be agreed upon yet, but they will fall between noon and 4pm. Each performance will last between 20 minutes and half an hour.

To perform with the group as one of the core performers practice sessions before the festival are compulsory, as we need to give a "professional" performance of the pieces chosen. Other players will be welcome to join the group on the day after consulting with Jim Franklin. Jim has very kindly volunteered to be the performance group artistic director (sounds grand). It is quite a difficult task to work up a core group and extras that can only appear at certain times into a cohesive professional unit, so try to attend the practice sessions if possible.

Magic Festival information coordinator is John Holmes.....(02) 47587206 or contact me at the email addresses below.

johnholmes@ozemail.com.au

Cheers for now.....John

Riley's Moustache.

From The Australian Friday Feb 22 2002. Riley was on his way home boarding a ferry at Circular Key with a number of shakuhachi's under his arm and before he could say "shakuhachi!" the ferry was evacuated and Riley was being questioned by the police..."rattled by the men in blue's confrontational attitude - and refusal to apologise once they discovered his instruments didn't go bang - Lee is considering shaving off his moustache"... Katrina Strickland - The Australian 22 Feb 2002

ASF 2002 Melbourne-some Comments

Jane Suffield

For all those who attended the Melbourne Shakuhachi Festival I sure you will join me in thanking Andrew and Kyoko on a job very well done.

The venue was comfortable and there was adequate room for all activities. Also, it was easy to access the city and meant that any spare time could be enjoyably spent in Melbourne.

The opportunity to meet with the Japanese Masters was wonderful and even though the standard was much higher than I could aspire to, it was very inspirational to be able to participate. I learned a great deal about playing and

also the philosophy behind the music making which I found just as valuable.

I took away with me, encouragement to carry on trying, and renewed commitment to the instrument. I also met some very interesting people and made new friends, always a bonus.

So, thanks for all the hard work to everyone involved and hopefully we will meet again at the next festival.

What the 2002 Festival did for me.

Paul Reynolds

I was actually supposed to be in London and was not sure that I would be attending the festival but I was sure glad fate got me there. I came home charged with energy and motivation and practising flute 3 hours a day. It was certainly a special experience to be so close to great players and like minded peers. As I said at the farewell dinner that it felt like being around a big happy family.

First off full marks to Andrew for lifting the game and putting on a typical Melbourne stylish affair. Whilst the society is still quite fledgling and there is always room for improvement the 2002 festival moved into a different league. Much feedback has already been provided which will ensure the next one is even better.

The shakuhachi is a truly special art-form and as I played over the years since meeting Riley in the early 90's has been a transforming power in my life. I have played several instruments and styles and whilst blues guitar is still a favourite the shakuhachi has a deeper power in it. The ancient masters were far better at controlling their minds than in contemporary times and the connection to the discipline has been a source of inner calm that had previously eluded me. The power of it has bought me to a deeper understanding of myself, despite myself.

The camaraderie that has built up over the years is evident with old acquaintances sharing their lives from the past year after hours. Indeed I laugh more at the festival than anywhere else, and I think it is the general collective energies that bring a 'beyond mundane life perspective'. We can forget about the more mundane stuff and enjoy sojourning in a landscape that is less constricted than typical western social environments.

I went on the bus tour the day after and learnt another side of our Japanese family. I came away smiling as they had the innocence of children about many of the things we take for granted. It bought to me a new perspective of my own understanding about this country and how other nations view us. If we were able to get Aussies to communicate on this level this may not be such a xenophobic country the last election proved it is.

The concert was certainly a big bang affair, it is just as well it was such a large stage otherwise bodies would have been falling off in to the stalls. Stage managing is a buzz to be so close to the action, thanks to the guys that helped me out, we put up a reasonably professional show

for such a quickly arranged team. I wonder should we submit our 100 kotos on stage record to Guinness or maybe it just felt like a hundred getting them on and of the stage.

Special gratitude goes to the teachers for their contribution and once again Andrew for his fine efforts.

The Shakuhachi Festival through the eyes of a novice

Rupert Summerson

I'm not quite sure how long I've been playing the shakuhachi. I started by making one from a piece of bamboo cut from my neighbour's garden but, when that split during a voyage to Antarctica last summer, I made another from a piece of PVC pipe scrounged from the ship. It wasn't until I met Riley Lee at the TaikOz concert at the National Gallery in Canberra in April last year that things started to get serious and I was delighted when he agreed to give me lessons. My first lesson was in May – on a piece of PVC pipe! I visited David Brown at his workshop at Montsalvat in June and ordered a myrtle instrument and had my first lesson on it in July. So which date to say I started? One thing is certain – it doesn't matter! My interest in the shakuhachi is several-fold. I had promised myself that in 2000 I would, at last, take up a musical instrument again and I have both a personal and an academic interest in Japan and I thought that playing a Japanese instrument and Japanese music would provide me with an entrée into Japanese culture.

And so it was that I came to Melbourne for the 3rd Australian Shakuhachi Festival with three lessons from Riley and two from Graham Ranft under my belt and a few months practice and a fascination with all things Japanese. It was wonderful therefore to find so many Japanese people at the Festival.

The first thing that we did of course was the RO-BUKI. It was such mesmerising sound – everyone apparently playing the same note but with so many subtle nuances rising above the background hum. And then we settled into the workshops and the preparation for the concert. I must admit that I found the concert preparations a little tedious – as I know did many others. But short of not having a concert at all, I'm not sure that there is any other solution. The concert itself was a wonderful experience and I hope that the audience enjoyed it at least as much as I did. I particularly enjoyed playing Yabe no Sato with the koto players. I just wished that had been able to practice it for longer!

And then on to two days of workshops and student concerts; each day starting with a RO-BUKI. The pieces we practiced were, for me, pretty challenging and I found myself frequently flicking back to the Chikuho fingering chart to work out what that new symbol meant.

Now, back at home, and six weeks later how does it all seem? Well, first of all, I find my playing generally has

improved enormously, though my meri notes are sharp and my kari notes still flat and my breathing still doesn't happen at the right places (sigh!). I think the best bit was probably just having the opportunity to play music over a sustained period with so many other people and the absolute highlight was playing Yabe no Sato with the koto players in the concert – that was magical!

A bird in a secluded grove
sings like a flute.

Willows sway gracefully
with their golden threads.
The mountain valley grows
quieter as the clouds return.

A breeze brings along the
fragrance of the apricot flowers.
Sitting here a whole day in peace,
till my mind is cleared of all cares,

I would tell you more,
but words fail.

If you come to this grove,
you will see yourself.

- Fa-yen

春の夜を
尺八の音
通る

Haru no yo wo
Shakuhachi fuite
Tori keru

A spring night
Playing the flute
(the sound) passes by

Written by Masaoka Shiki, Calligraphy by Rupert
Summerson, with the assistance of Maki Findlay

Some pictures of ASF 2002

The following are from Ross Allen, Riley Lee, Paul Reynolds



The Masters in Concert.



Anne's rehearsal of "Heat Wave" - one of the groups.



Dwight Dowd slaving over a hot koto!



What were they practicing?



The Master says 'I don't see enough Pain!'



One of the Workshops



Student Concert



Student Concert



Wine tasting!

Hitting the Fifth Hole

Kaoru Kakizakai Sensei

My Shakuhachi Tip for 2/2001 was “you don’t have to cover the holes quickly if you do it precisely.” I would like to speak more about this subject this month.

Some of the fingers used to cover the 5 holes of the shakuhachi are easier to move than others. For example, your index finger is usually fairly dexterous, whereas the thumb is powerful but usually lacks this dexterity. This is particularly true for the thumb on your non-dominant hand. Despite this, it is a fact that most people use the thumb with worse dexterity to cover the 5th hole. Their lack of ability to move the thumb well causes many people problems. However, many people practise moving their thumbs rapidly, and they eventually become able to hit the 5th hole very quickly.

This can lead to two problems. The first problem is precision. People tend to concentrate too much on moving the thumb rapidly, so they are not actually covering the hole fully. It takes time in the beginning to close the hole fully, and yet many people open the hole back up again before it has been fully closed. Please be conscientious about covering the hole fully during practise. Don't worry about speed, only precision. You will have a tendency to get faster and faster, but hold the speed back.

The second problem is speed. You can hit the 5th hole slowly or quickly, but increasing the speed just a little bit is a problem. You may intend to or think you are increasing the speed just a little bit at a time, but in reality many people tend to make drastic jumps in speed. It is as though they can only hit the hole at two speeds, slow and fast. However, if you can practise to the point where you also master all the speeds in between, your sound will improve greatly.

So, practise at many speeds, and practise increasing and decreasing speed gradually and smoothly. If in the middle of this practise you notice your precision suffering, drop down to a slower speed again.

It's very difficult to correct bad habits. Return to the fundamentals and practise precisely.

By Kaoru Kakizakai Sensei
Translated by Zachary Braverman

Used with permission.

Australian Shakuhachi Society Annual General Meeting

5pm Monday 11 February 2002
at University College, University of Melbourne

Present: Paul Reynolds, John Holmes, Riley Lee, Graham Ranft, Bronwyn Kirkpatrick, Peter Neish, Molly Choo, Anne Wyatt, Mark Barnett, Andrew MacGregor, Stuart Ransom, Phil King, Anne Norman, Rupert Summerson, Dave Murray, Terry Wong, Jane Suffield, Janusz Sysak, Carl Rathus, Margaret Tung (minutes) and Cathy Andrews (Chair).

1. Minutes of last AGM

Adopted by members.

2. President's Report

Cathy Andrews spoke of the Society's participation at the National Folk Festival in April 2001. She outlined possibilities of participating in other festivals in 2002-3.

John Holmes reported that he had applied for Blowing Zen to perform in the Winter Magic Festival in Katoomba. Indoor venues are limited, and he is awaiting the organiser's decision.

3. Treasurer's Report

The treasurer, John Holmes, reported that ASS was in the black, and current balance was \$1766.30. Expenses are minimal and our performance at the National Folk Festival raised \$600.

The treasurer's report was adopted by the meeting.

4. Election

All official positions were declared vacant. Paul Reynolds assumed the chair during election. The following people were nominated and re-elected:

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

5. Other Business

Next Australian Shakuhachi Festival (ASF)

▪ *comments re 2002 Festival*

- This festival sets a benchmark and is the most inclusive, ambitious and comprehensive to date. Inclusion of koto players is good, the pre-conference work is exemplary, eg provision of various notations, use of website.
- More workshops are needed to utilise time better, especially at night.
- There should be arrangements for beginners so that they can be active part of the festival too.
- ASF should not be state based. It is an Australian wide festival and the load should be shared between members. Liaison is needed with past organisers to learn from experience.
- We should establish clear aims for ASF. Part of it involves promotion of shakuhachi music to the general public, also establishing connections with the Japanese players.

A vote of thanks was passed to note Andrew MacGregor's hard work in organising the 2002 ASF.

Members were asked to email Margaret Tung (margaret.tung@edu.nsw.edu.au) to provide feedback for this festival and provide suggestions for the next festival.

▪ *Funding*

- ASFs do not make any money. ASS members need to be aware of the responsibility of underwriting ASF if a loss occurred.
- Japanese players have been subsidising the festival as their fees can be pooled to allow the teachers to come.
- The Japanese participation is low this year due to September 11, the

Japanese economy and the fact that the international festival will be in Japan this year.

- Commissioning of a composition for the festival has been a tradition. There is a government grant for new composition. We have been fortunate to obtain it two years running. The grant is small and can not be used for other things. The grant submission should be passed on to the next organiser.
 - Question was raised about investing ASS funds. The Treasurer pointed out that ASS funds are too small to bother.
 - The Happy Hour was a good fund raiser at the last festival. It should be considered for the next festival.
 - The need to keep ASF registration and accommodation fees down was raised so that more members can attend. It was also pointed out that in order to attract the Japanese, accommodation should be comfortable and the whole approach should be business like.
- *Next festival*
There is a suggestion to have the next ASF at the same time as the Sacred Music Festival on the gold coast May 2003. It would save time in organising publicity for the concert. The concert can be part of the Sacred Music Festival.
There were various suggestions re timing. It was resolved that a sub-committee be established to decide on the timing, location and venue of the next festival. Members include: Riley Lee, Stuart Ransom, Andrew McGregor, Margaret Tung and Cathy Andrews.

Membership due date

John Holmes explained that current membership due dates occur all through the year and renewal is administratively difficult. He moved a motion to make all memberships due on 1 July and those members whose memberships run out before 1 July 2002 will pay for 6 months and then pay for the full year from 1 July 2003. Motion adopted.

John Holmes acknowledged Anne Norman's presence and thanked her for her contribution to the festival.

ASF ~ a fun place needing ideas .

Margaret Tung

Have you ever wondered what is an Australian Shakuhachi Festival and what happens there?

There were a lot of discussions about future festivals at the last AGM held in Melbourne at the end of the 3rd Australian Shakuhachi Festival. Discussions cantered around establishing some aims, objectives and guidelines for the future so that we can improve on each festival. The task of starting a process of formulating some thoughts and ideas was given to the organising committee for the next festival, consisting of illustrious past organisers, Riley Lee, Stuart Ransom and Andrew McGregor as well as your hapless President and Secretary.

The majority of the committee members took advantage of Stuart's recent visit to Sydney and met at the end of March to put some thoughts together. These are set out below [See page 9] for your comments and input. Your responses are welcome, please forward to:

kevlock@bigpond.com.au

The Australian Shakuhachi Festival (ASF)

provides an intensive 3-day training in the art of shakuhachi playing, and aims to:

- improve the skills of shakuhachi players in Australia
- increase the number of players
- strengthen their network with fellow players and other musicians

better players	more players	network
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide multi-level tuition, eg rank beginner, beginner, intermediate & advanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide comfortable accommodation and adequate facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide facilities for networking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide different styles of music for workshops, eg honkyoku, folk songs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be mindful of cost implications of decisions, eg when discount airfares are available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ try to provide reasonable food
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide classes on techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ locate ASF at an accessible location (not necessarily capital cities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide a range of social/networking opportunities: greeting/opening dinner, introduction exercises/ice breaker at the start, happy hours, farewell dinner, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide small classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be mindful of when to hold ASF, especially implications for overseas players 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ invite Japanese and other overseas players
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide adequate facilities for workshops, eg sound separation needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ publicise public concert widely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ conduct ASS AGM during the festival
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide master classes and involve all participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ make very good use of time, all day, all night 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ commissioning of new pieces is desirable but not mandatory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ organise both public and student concert – provide opportunities for solo performances in student concerts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ rehearsals for the public concert should be after hour activities and not impinging on lesson time (however workshops can include concert pieces) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide both Australian and Japanese teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide CD/tape and notation of pieces to be workshopped before the festival 	