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**LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**  
NICHOLAS HALL

Greetings all,

I hope you are doing well wherever in the world you may be. The autumn breeze is blowing through Sydney which gives a breath of fresh air and encouragement to practice shakuhachi.

With the new autumn breeze I would like to share some fresh shakuhachi articles that have been submitted by our generous Australian Shakuhachi Society members. Thank you to all of those who submitted an article for this newsletter. I also look forward to future submissions from those who didn't get a chance this time around.

As things slowly seem to return to normal, I hear about people visiting or moving back to Japan, being able to perform for audiences, travelling to take part in/conduct workshops, and it feels good. I think the advances in modern technology have allowed us to string us over this period in time but nothing replaces the benefits of face to face musical and personal interactions.

I understand that the events that have occurred in the past three years have caused many to turn inward and question values, goals, reasons, and life in general. These questions may have changed our perspective, our future plans, our social surroundings, and the way we interact with people and the environment. With these impacts on our lives, I am sure you all have made personal plans for the rest of 2023. Whether it be to perform, to sit and practice more shakuhachi, to sit and listen, or maybe even just to sit! Whatever it may be, I am sure you will know what is most fitting and I wish you all best!

Thank you,  
Nicholas Hall

**MUSIC NOTATION**  
BRONWYN KIRKPATRICK

Are you looking for some new pieces to play? I have two packs of original compositions for the beginner - intermediate shakuhachi player available, Tsuki (2019) and Aki (2021). These compositions came about as a response to my shakuhachi student's needs to have melodious, accessible and light pieces to practise in between the more challenging honkyoku. They have proved to be very popular amongst my students both here in Australia and overseas. The pieces are hand notated in Kinko notation and videos of me performing each piece are on my YouTube channel. The two packs can be purchased from my website [bronwynkirkpatrick.com](http://bronwynkirkpatrick.com).

Enjoy!

Kind regards,  
Bronwyn

秋 AKI

Ten compositions for beginner &  
intermediate shakuhachi players

Composed by Bronwyn Kirkpatrick



© Bronwyn Kirkpatrick, 2021

- Aki (Autumn)
- Dreaming
- Minyo (Folk Song)
- Angels
- Dawn
- Take Bushi (Bamboo Melody)
- Suizen (Blowing Zen)
- Ether
- Sunyata
- Meditation

月 TSUKI

Ten compositions for beginner &  
intermediate shakuhachi players

Composed by Bronwyn Kirkpatrick



- Tsuki (Moon)
- Dusk
- Uta (Song)
- Awakening
- Drifting
- Exile
- Lament
- Yearning
- Journey
- Lullaby

© Bronwyn Kirkpatrick, 2019

**SHAKUHACHI JOURNEY**  
PAUL SHEEHAN

A look back at my Shakuhachi journey.

It's Interesting that when you start learning to play the Shakuhachi with the different schools eg. Kinko, Tozan, Chikuho you don't know what path you might follow or where it might take you depending on circumstance, opportunities, and the people you meet. I was looking back at my Shakuhachi experience recently on my return from Sapporo, Hokkaido in November after attending the Seirinsha Tozan group as I was invited to undertake their Intermediate (Chuden) level exam as I had been learning their syllabus for a few years, and not really thinking when I started out in the beginning how far I would go with the Shakuhachi, as at first I mostly enjoyed playing for the meditative and relaxing sounds.

My interest started in 2013 after first hearing the sounds on the internet when looking for traditional flute music, it sounded nice and thinking this recorder looking instrument might be easy to play I bought a wood one, first attempts failed to get a sound, think most of us have experienced that. In my early days I had tried the Trumpet and that was hard enough but this simple looking bamboo flute was a real challenge.

I soon realised lessons might be needed and had my first lessons with Riley Lee in Sydney and started in Chikuho Ryu. Also around this time I had my first trip to Sapporo Hokkaido for my son's wedding in a traditional Shinto Temple where I heard the sounds of a Shakuhachi and Shamisen being played it was my first experience in a Japanese setting. Now with a Japanese daughter in law I was taking more interest in the Japanese culture.

I had further lessons with Riley and then started learning Kinko syllabus just in time for the Australian Shakuhachi Festival in Brisbane 2015 which was a great experience and an opportunity to meet other players, I was keen in attending a few work shops in Sydney learning some traditional Honkyoku pieces during 2016.

In February 2017 I had an opportunity to return to Sapporo with the Australian snow sculpture team with my son who was the coordinator for our team for the annual Sapporo snow festival and looking for a Shakuhachi group and heard about Seirinsha I made contact and found they taught Tozan. I was invited to come and listen and have a lesson up until then had been learning Kinko Ryu and not having tried Tozan as it does not seem to be taught in Australia. I thought here is an opportunity and have some experience with a local Japanese group which was established by Master Teacher Sei-Zan Nakajima and his assistant teacher Masui Toshiaki. They were very friendly and encouraging with my first lesson which was so surreal in the winter setting at Sei Zan Nakajima's house with the snow falling silently out side and the stillness with only the sounds of the Shakuhachi.

I continued Kinko lessons in Australia and further workshops and the opportunity was still there with the Seirinsha group for lessons on return to Sapporo for the winter snow sculpture festivals in 2018 and 2019. I was fortunate to go back to Sapporo in August summer 2018 for another cultural event the Sapporo Beer Festival a 10 day annual event, a great experience in itself. I had lessons again with Seirinsha and joined in a small workshop and was able to meet with other Japanese members, this happened to be on my birthday so after we finished the group celebrated Mr Paul's Birthday at a restaurant next door owned by one of their players, again a memorable experience with members singing traditional Japanese folk songs with such feeling it was very moving.

Just when I was enjoying my visits and the Japanese culture in 2020 Covid hit then locked down in Japan and Australia for the next two and half years, lesson in Australia and Sapporo were then taken by Skype. I found learning Tozan different with lots emphasis on long tones, scales, western timing and playing mostly duets with the Koto is a big part.

October 2022, Japan opened to International tourists and I was then invited by Seirinsha to attend their November group exam as I had completed their Intermediate syllabus during this time. The recent trip for this to Sapporo event as mentioned at the beginning was successful and has been a good cultural experience and would have to make this a subject for another newsletter.

I have enjoyed the people and places I have met along the way here and in Japan as much as playing the Shakuhachi itself and fortunate to have connected with another westerner a member of Seirinsha living near Niseko, Hokkaido where I can stay as this is a peaceful natural surrounding, for the sounds of the Shakuhachi.

Paul Sheehan ASS Member since 2013.



SEIRINSHA TOZAN GROUP IN SAPPORO



WARATAH CARVED FROM 3M X 3M  
SNOW BLOCK



AUSTRALIAN SNOW SCULPTURE TEAM



WINTER HIDEAWAY NISEKO

**MODERN SHAKUHACHI**  
JIM FRANKLIN

Dear Shakuhachi-friends,

Finally, I've done something which I intended since the start of the Corona-epoch: I've created a YouTube channel to present my modern compositions for shakuhachi.

The links are:

[https://www.youtube.com/@Jim\\_Franklin\\_Shakuhachi\\_Modern/videos](https://www.youtube.com/@Jim_Franklin_Shakuhachi_Modern/videos)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkt9aqmHQIPFD81kdH8dHFA>

So far, I've uploaded mainly older pieces, but my intention is to upload a new piece every few weeks. (One new piece is already there: 'Spectral Palace D', for shakuhachi and live-electronics.)

These are modern pieces, not traditional (with one exception: my recording of the KSK honkyoku, 'Yamagoe').

Some of you, particularly old-timers who know me from when I still lived in Australia (pre-2003), may know that I've been working with the combination of shakuhachi and live electronics for decades, starting with the piece 'Shadows of the Wind', commissioned by Riley Lee in 1992 and performed by him and me in that year; my own performance of that piece is on the YouTube channel, and most of the pieces there will go in this direction. Future pieces are a kind of work-in-progress; in the course of time, they will be further developed from these initial versions, and merged into a large-scale composition. In this way, the channel also offers an insight into my composition process. (Some of you may be aware of my CD, 'Songs from the Lake', for shakuhachi and live-electronics, which was released in 2021 on the NEOS Music label, NEOS 12029. The new pieces continue this direction.)

If you're interested in this contemporary aspect of shakuhachi, please take a look.

Thank you for listening! And keep blowing!

Best regards,

Jim Franklin

## **SOME THOUGHTS ON THE MUSIC OF HILDEGARD PLAYED ON SHAKUHACHI**

RILEY LEE

This article was first published on the music e-zine called Loudmouth.

<https://musictrust.com.au/loudmouth/>

Some Thoughts on the Music of Hildegard Played on the Shakuhachi

Riley Lee 12 October 2023

Hildegard of Bingen was born in 1098 in the small town of Bermersheim, about 80 km southwest of Frankfurt. She became magistra (spiritual teacher) in her first monastery and later founded two convents, the last being near Bingen. Hildegard is remarkable for many things, including her spirituality, her outspoken stand against sexism and bigotry, her knowledge of medicine and natural science, and her music. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about her however, is that we even know about her at all. Nearly all of the other myriad of remarkable women who surely existed in her time, and for centuries before and after her, never made it into history. Hildegard died in 1179. She was recognised, belatedly one could argue, as a Saint in 2012.

I was born in a small town in Texas in 1951, grew up in Oklahoma and Hawai'i and moved to Sydney Australia in 1986. Though strongly influenced by Asian philosophy in general and by Zen Buddhist thought and practice in particular, I've never been a member of a religious organisation since my childhood. My instrument and its traditional repertoire developed in Japan, mostly after the 17th century.

The contrasts are immense. So, why do I feel so connected to Hildegard's music? Why do I think it works so well on my shakuhachi?

I can think of at least three reasons. Two are general musical ones, while the third is shakuhachi-specific.

I don't know much about medieval modes, but I believe that music from this period in Europe frequently revolved around and resolved on two notes or pitches, called the Final and the Co-final. Though somewhat related to the better-known tonic and dominant pitches of much of western music, they differ primarily because the former are more 'equal' than the latter. The music often started with and usually ended on the Final.



Pieces in the traditional shakuhachi repertoire are called the 'honkyoku' ["main", or "original music"]. They work in a similar way. There are typically two 'tonal centres'. One might be a bit stronger or might appear slightly more often a honkyoku than the other, but often they are equal in frequency and duration. Either tonal centre might begin and end a piece. The other notes in the music swirl or dance around, and ultimately resolve on one of these two tonal centres.

Typically, the melodies in both medieval music and shakuhachi honkyoku are constantly returning to these important notes. They allude to a foundation or drone, even if there is no drone. They give the piece a satisfying coherence.

The second reason that Hildegard's music is so well-suited for at least my style of shakuhachi playing has to do with a shared concept of rhythm or duration. The Japanese term for this concept is 'ma'. 'Ma' means space, both physical and temporal. The music of Hildegard and the shakuhachi honkyoku do not have a beat. For example neither of these musical forms can be conducted. When more than one singer or player performs these pieces, they must be aware intuitively of the 'ma' that the other performer/s are using.

The durations or 'ma' of both the notes and also the non-sound between the notes are not random. There is a correct timing or 'ma' for every musical event, every sound and every silence. In both Hildegard's music and the honkyoku, this sense of correct timing or space is intuitive, and not related to a regular beat or a meter.

The final reason why I so thoroughly enjoy playing Hildegard's music on my shakuhachi has to do with how the shakuhachi is constructed and played. There are only five finger holes on the shakuhachi. The basic finger positions produce only five pitches; the top finger hole produces the same pitch as the fundamental (with all holes closed) of the instrument, or rather the octave above that fundamental.

Other pitches, including, but not limited to the rest of the 12-tone chromatic scale, are made by manipulating one's embouchure and sometimes also partially closing one or more of the finger holes.

Producing these 'other' pitches is a basic, though challenging technique for shakuhachi players. These pitches are called 'meri' notes. The 'main' pitches produced with just the open hole fingerings are called 'kari' notes. It's difficult to explain, but the 'meri' notes are softer and often breathier or earthier. The 'meri' notes are considered 'yin' notes, compared with the five louder, more focused 'kari' or yang notes.

In most shakuhachi music, including honkyoku, the performer has to go back and forth between meri/yin and kari/yang. Where the meri and kari notes occur in the music in relation to each other is important. It creates a real, quite strong feeling or sensation in the shakuhachi player. This is distinct, though related to the differences in timbre between them.

Often the feeling is neutral, or it might not feel quite right. But sometimes the yin and yang notes seem to be in just the right place. The physical sensation of oscillating between them exactly in the order that the music dictates, heightens the beauty of the melodic lines for the player. This is nearly always the case with the traditional honkyoku. Occasionally, it does happen with non-traditional pieces, including modern pieces.

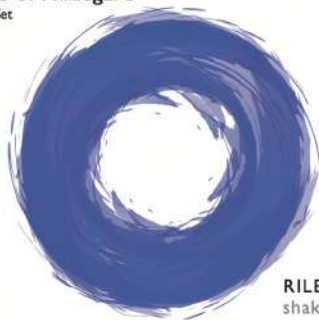
So, here's the interesting thing. The meri/kari or yin/yang pitches in Hildegard's songs seems to always be in just the right order or place in relation to each other. It feels 'right' playing them on the shakuhachi.

Why this is so may be one of the many unknowns that we have to accept, at least for now, as just one of life's little mysteries. I would like to think that Hildegard would appreciate all of this.

The music can be purchased at the link below:

<https://rileylee.com/album-cd>

**BREATH OF THE EARTH**  
Songs of Hildegard  
3 Disc Set



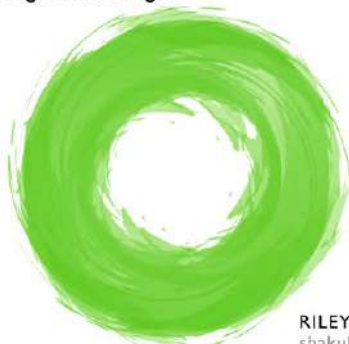
RILEY LEE  
shakuhachi

**DIVINE SECRETS**  
Hildegard von Bingen



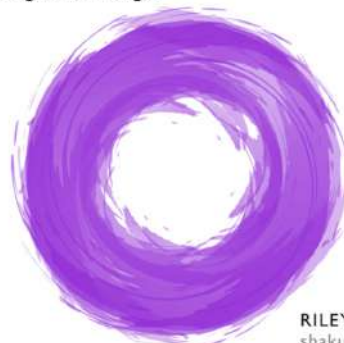
RILEY LEE  
shakuhachi

**NOBLE GREENNESS**  
Hildegard von Bingen



RILEY LEE  
shakuhachi

**WISDOM**  
Hildegard von Bingen



RILEY LEE  
shakuhachi

**MY COWRA EXPERIENCE OF 2022**  
ALKIS MORIATIS

### My Cowra Experience of 2022

In September 2022 the city of Cowra in NSW organised the yearly Cowra Matsuri festival. This time it was a bit special as it was the return to some normality after a two year hiatus due to the pandemic.

Our group of Shakuhachi lovers, also known as “Takenoko”, literally the “Bamboo Shoots” and loosely referred to as “The Young Bamboos” participated putting up two half-hour performances, one in the morning and a repeat in the afternoon.

Among all other events that were happening concurrently we performed under the wisteria pergolas in front of the camellia garden slightly uphill and overlooking the valley below us. We escaped our daily routine and blossomed along the Sakura trees into a suspended reality that was touching, pretty and meaningful. It felt magical.

The Takenoko group started practicing various pieces online with some regularity in the months leading to the event and took some direction from Bronwyn Kirkpatrick in the selection of pieces as to the variety and presentation.

The participation in the event was meticulously organised by Fiona and a few people participated in the group. Fiona, Vicky, Kerry, Liz, Margaret, Rob, Paul and Alkis. We practiced online for a few weeks in the lead up to the event and although Fiona and Paul could not be present on the day the rest of us played for them as well as if they were on our side.

We ended up arranging a repertoire consisting of a few folk pieces, a Fukuda Rando composition, a traditional piece, and a modern one composed by our teacher Bronwyn Kirkpatrick.

After a five-minute public Robuki and a brief presentation for our group and the flute, the pieces were introduced and played in the order below:

1. Robuki (Blowing Ro - Warm-up)
2. Sakura Sakura (Cherry Blossoms) - Folk
3. Kojo No Tsuki (Moon over the Ruined Castle) - Folk
4. Tsubaki Saku Mura (Village of the Camellias) - Fukuda Rando
5. Koinobori (Carp Kites) - Folk
6. Hamachidori (Plover on the Beach) - Folk
7. Tsuki (Moon) - Bronwyn Kirkpatrick
8. Tamuke (Offering) - Traditional

The day prior, we got together to practice for the first time all together face to face, and we got a few of the kinks out of the way. We still had some difficulty in synchronising perfectly and we were also battling the wind and some slight drizzle at times. But we are amateurs, and we took this as our debut learning experience performing in front of audiences. In the end we enjoyed our growth from such an opportunity and marvelled the beauty that surrounded us.

The day after, we witnessed the ceremony that took place in the Japanese cemetery to reflect and pay homage to all the fallen ones from both sides. We were very touched by the experience and at the end of proceedings we performed Tamuke as a small offering for the souls of the perished.

More than an opportunity to play shakuhachi with our friends, that weekend proved quite inspiring to my understanding of the significance of Cowra in the timeline of history. I had a chance to meet and listen to the public figures from Australia and Japan, read about the events that transpired with the Cowra breakout and put things in perspective regarding the destruction of war, the importance of survival, the patriotic perspectives, and the rebirth of hope during the ensuing peaceful period. It was this hope that moved me, changed me, made me realise in an instance the often-forgotten universal truth of all of us being humble humans craving for survival, peace and growth. Just like nature, just like the cherry tree, we aim to become pure and as awesome as the Sakura blossoms. Before too long though, the beauty of the full bloom starts perishing, and the flowers start falling. We should really make the best of it and revel in the beauty while we are up on the tree, still alive, admired before it's too late. Life is just a fleeting instant in the course of time.

Vicky captured and shared this fleeting moment as expressed in a Haiku poem, so beautifully quoted by ambassador Yamagami Shingo at the reception on Saturday night. It is the last Haiku written by the Buddhist monk, Ryokan.

Chirusakura  
nokoru sakura  
mo chirusakura

Falling Sakura.  
Those remaining,  
are destined to fall as well.

Sakura bloom to their fullest for the briefest of moments. If we think of this in terms of the time we spend on this earth, then our time is also brief. (Let's use this time to promote harmony between nations)

I hope you all enjoyed the Sakura Matsuri as much as I did. The ceremony yesterday was very moving as well. Looking forward to the next one, if we are asked again! たのしみにしています

My first Cowra was enlightening more than I hoped for and will endeavour to return in the future.

I wish all our sisters and brothers a peaceful life, cherishing the magic of existence and expressing their passion. One of the ways I have found is the Shakuhachi.

Peace,  
Alkis

**PHOTOS FROM THE COWRA MATSURI FESTIVAL**



THE PERFORMERS



THE CROWD ENJOYING THE PERFORMANCE



THE BEAUTIFUL SAKURA TREE



PERFORMING TAMUKE



PERFORMING TAMUKE



COWRA MEMORIAL STONE



SHAKUHACHI



THE COWRA GARDEN

## **AUSTRALIAN SHAKUHACHI SOCIETY**

The purpose of the Society is to promote the shakuhachi and its music, and to assist others who are doing the same, by:

Organising workshops and other activities for people to practice or perform together, and share experiences related to the shakuhachi.

Publishing a newsletter to publicise upcoming events, provide a forum for articles on the shakuhachi, list resources, review shakuhachi CDs, and offer flutes and other shakuhachi related items for sale.

Coordinating the Australia Shakuhachi Festival, which includes guest teachers and performers from Japan and elsewhere.

If you want to get in contact, you can email us at: info (at) [shakuhachi.org.au](mailto:info@shakuhachi.org.au)

## **AUSTRALIAN SHAKUHACHI SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP**

Membership to the Australian Shakuhachi Society costs \$30 per year. Subscription funds are used to organise the Australian Shakuhachi Festival and other shakuhachi related activities. Your membership is valued!

Joining the Society also offers benefits, such as: Discounts to the Australian Shakuhachi Festival/Discounts to workshops.

To join, please visit the webpage below: <http://www.shakuhachi.org.au/membership.html>



**ASS COMMITTEE 2023**

**President**

Lindsay Dugan

**Vice president**

Rupert Summerson

**Secretary**

Adrian Sherriff

**Treasurer**

Richard Chenhall

**Newsletter editor**

Nicholas Hall

**Publicity and media**

Vacant

Contact the ASS: info [at] shakuhachi.org.au

ASS Committee positions are delegated at an AGM that generally coincides with the Australian Shakuhachi Festival.