

# “Composing for the Shakuhachi and 21-String Koto”

Presented by Marty Regan  
 Asia-Pacific Festival and Composers Conference  
 Saturday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
 9:30 a.m., Conference room 2

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE SHAKUHACHI

1) Name of length and nuclear pitch for each size *shakuhachi*

Length	Nuclear tone
1.1	a
1.2	g#
1.3	g
1.4	f#
1.5	f
1.6	e
1.7	eb
1.8	d
1.9	c#
2.0	C
2.1	B
2.2	Bb
2.3 (actually closer to 2.4)	A
2.5 (actually closer to 2.7)	G

2) Fundamental and derived pitches of a 1.8 *shakuhachi*

乙 Otsu (first octave)      甲 Kan (second octave)      大甲 Dai-kan (third octave)

### 3) Various *shakuhachi* symbols

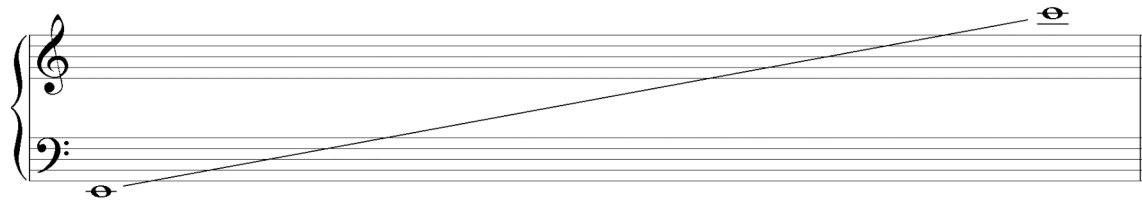


- a) *Muraiki* consists of blowing an explosive charge of air violently into the mouthpiece, emphasizing the sound of the performer's breath.
- b) *Sorane* lacks the intensity of *muraiki* but contains more breath than a normal tone. It is used with pitches of shorter duration and indicated by marking an "X" through the note stem.
- c) *Koro-koro* is a trill that uses a special fingering only for the pitches indicated above. Each note in the pair of grace notes is executed with a different fingering. While both pitches are indicated as a concert C in Western staff notation, their timbres and frequencies slightly differ. When executed correctly, the rapid alternation of these fingerings creates the aural illusion of multiphonics.
- d) *Suri-age*: a portamento produced by slowly covering or uncovering a hole while sliding to a higher pitch. Most common with intervals of a second.
- e) *Suri-sage*: a portamento produced by executed by slowly covering or uncovering a hole while sliding to a pitch below. Most common with intervals of a third or less.
- f) "Ghosting" consists of executing a finger glissando to "ghost" up to an indeterminate pitch, frequently as a final flourish of a passage in the higher range

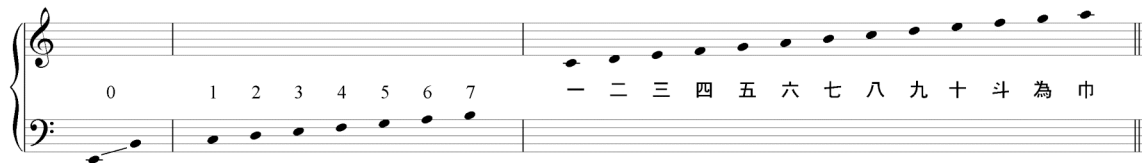
#### TECHNICAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE 21-STRING KOTO

- 4) Excerpt from Minoru Miki's *Tatsuta no Kyoku* ('*The Venus in Autumn*')

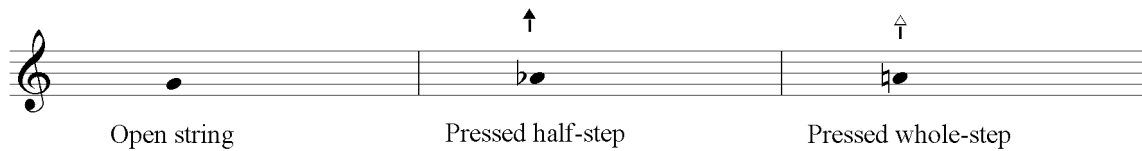
5) General range of the 21-string *koto*



6) Basic tuning of the 21-string *koto*



7) Left hand pressing (*oshide*) symbols



8) Notation for left hand techniques



a) *Oshi-biki* involves plucking with the right hand *before* pressing down on the string with the left hand, and results in an upward glissando-like gesture.

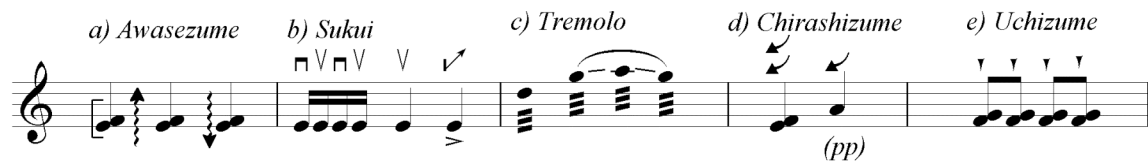
b) A variation on *oshi-biki*, *oshi-hanashi* involves pressing down on the string with the left hand *before* plucking with the right hand and then releasing the string to create a downward glissando-like gesture.

c) *Ato-oshi* consists of plucking with the right hand *before* pressing down on the string with the left hand, but instead of glissing up to a higher pre-determined pitch, a lower-pitched string is immediately plucked. Sometimes this pattern can be repeated on the same string, but it is less common for the plucked string to be higher than the ornament.

d) *Tsuki-iro* involves plucking with the right hand and immediately pressing the string with the left hand in a quick, jab-like motion.

e) *Hiki-iro* involves lowering a pitch by pulling a string towards the right with the left hand from the left side of the bridges after being plucked. This technique is indicated by using a graphic line in combination with the character ヒ or ひきいろ. It is ineffective in the higher register and difficult to execute in the lower register. In the middle register, the pitch can theoretically be lowered about a half-step, but it is better not to consider this technique as a method for lowering a pitch. Rather, *hiki-iro* should be considered as a type of delicate ornamentation.

## 9) Right hand timbral modification techniques



a) *Awasezume* involves plucking two or more strings more or less at the same time with the thumb and middle finger. It can be executed in three distinct ways; at the exact same time (indicated by a bracket), as an upward arpeggio, or as a downward arpeggio.

b) *Sukai* consists of plucking backwards with the backside of the *tsume* attached to the thumb. It is most commonly seen in repeated sixteenth note gestures, where the thumb alternates between downstroke and *sukai* upstrokes, but since *sukai* has a lighter, delicate sound quality it is also used for timbre variation with single pitches. A stronger, more distinctive variation of *sukai* can be produced by scraping the strings in the direction of the bridges while plucking backwards. One should add an accent to give a more accurate visual representation of the resulting sound.

c) Tremolo is produced by placing the *tsume* of the thumb and index finger close together and making a rapid cutting-like gesture over the top of the string. Similar to Western string instruments, it is indicated with an unmeasured tremolo symbol. It is effective to use tremolo in combination with *oshihiki* or *oshi-hanashi*.

d) *Chirashizume* consists of placing the index and middle finger together as if you were making the shape of a pair of scissors and quickly swiping two adjacent strings from right to left in one broad scooping motion. Since this gesture is more for timbral modification than melodic emphasis, it is easier to play and simply sounds more effective and convincing as a gesture when swiping two strings, although one-string *chirashizume* is possible at softer dynamic levels.

e) *Uchizume* involves striking the strings with the part of the plectrum that wraps around the performer's fingers. At soft dynamic levels pitch can be heard quite clearly. It is possible to tap up to three adjacent strings at a time, although tapping two adjacent strings is the most common.

## RECOMMENDED LISTENING LIST

### Boyd, Anne (b. 1951)

Title: *A Feather on the Breath of God* (2002)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi* (or flute) and harp

Title: *Goldfish through Summer Rain* (1980)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi* and harp (arranged by Marshall McGuire)

### Cowell, Henry (b. 1897-1965)

Title: *Concerto No. 1 for Koto and Orchestra* (1961)

Instrumentation: *koto* soloist and orchestra (1+pic.222/2220/timp.2perc/hp/str)

Title: *The Universal Flute* (1946)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi*

### Edwards, Ross (b. 1943)

Title: *Heart of the Night* (2004)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi* and orchestra (2222/2100all double handbells/hp.cel/str)

### Ikebe, Shin-ichiro (b. 1943)

Title: 梢にて, 'On a Treetop' (1995)

Instrumentation: 21-string *koto* solo

### Kudo, Takeo (b. 1942)

Title: *Into the Tranquil Circle* (1986)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi*, string orchestra, piano/harp, and percussion

### Lependorf, Jeffrey (b. 1962)

Title: *A Tree in Foreign Soil* (1989)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi*, violin (I-II), viola (I-II), cello (I-II), vibraphone, marimba, and harp

### Loeb, David (b. 1939)

Title: 夜が舞, 'Nightdances' (1984)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi*, flute, *koto*, and guitar

### Miki, Minoru (b. 1930)

Title: *Paraphrase after Ancient Japanese Music* (1966)

Instrumentation: *shinobue*, *shakuhachi* (I, II), *shamisen*, *biwa*, *koto* (I-II), bass *koto*, and percussion (I-II)

Title: *Figures for Four Groups* (1967)

Instrumentation: *koto* (I, II), bass *koto*, *shinobue* (I, II), *shakuhachi* (I, II), *shamisen* (I, II), *biwa*, percussion (I, II)

Title: 序の曲, 'Prelude for *Shakuhachi, Koto, Shamisen, and Strings* (1969)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi, 21-string koto, shamisen, and strings*

Title: *Tennyō* (1969)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto*

Title: *The Venus in Spring* (1971)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto*

Title: *The Venus in Autumn* (1971)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto*

Title: *Dances Concertantes "Four Seasons"* (1973)  
Instrumentation: *shinobue, shakuhachi (I, II), shamisen, biwa, koto (I, II), bass koto, percussion (I, II)*

Title: *Poem in the Evening* (1973)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi, shamisen, koto*

Title: *Koto Futae* (1973)  
Instrumentation: *koto (I, II)*

Title: 破の曲, *Koto Concerto No. 1* (1974)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto solo and orchestra*

Title: 和, 'Wa' (1976)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi, shamisen, biwa, 21-koto, bass koto, and percussion*

Title: *Ballades for Koto: Vol. II, "Spring"* (1976)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto*

Title: 巨火, 'Hote' (1976)  
Instrumentation: *shinobue (I, II), shakuhachi (I-VI), kokyū, shamisen (I, II), biwa (I, II), 21-string koto (I, II), koto (I, II), bass koto (I, II), percussion (I-IV)*

Title: 東から, 'From the East' (1979)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto (I, II)*

Title: *Dances Concertantes No. 3 "The Tale of Hachiro"* (1980)  
Instrumentation: *shinobue, shakuhachi, shamisen, biwa, 21-string koto, bass koto, percussion, and narrator*

Title: 秋の曲, 'Autumn Fantasy' (1980)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi and 21-string koto*

Title: *Concerto Requiem, Koto Concerto No. 3* (1981)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto* solo, *shinobue* (I, II), *shakuhachi* (I-VI), *kokyū*, *biwa*, *shamisen*, 21-string *koto* (I-II), bass *koto* (I, II), percussion (I-IV)

Title: 急の曲, ‘*Symphony for Two Worlds*’ (1981)  
Instrumentation: *shinobue*, *shakuhachi* (I-IV), *shamisen* (I-II), *biwa*, 21-string *koto* (I-III), bass *koto* (I-III), Japanese percussion (I-IV), and orchestra (3333/4331/3perc/str)

Title: *Cassiopeia* (1982)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto* (I-V)

Title: *Yui II* (1983)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto* and cello

Title: *Ballades for Koto: Vol. 3, “Summer”* (1983)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto*

Title: うたよみざる, ‘*The Monkey Poet*’ (1983)  
Instrumentation: sop, mez, alt, ten, bar, bas, 6 chorus singers, *shinobue/shakuhachi*, percussion, 21-string *koto*, conductor/percussion

Title: *Ballades for Koto: Vol. 4, “Autumn”* (1990)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto*

Title: *Lotus Poem* (1990)  
Instrumentation: solo *shakuhachi* and *shinobue*, *shakuhachi* (I-II), *shamisen*, *biwa*, 21-string *koto* (I-II), bass *koto*, percussion (I, II)

Title: *Origin* (2002)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi*, 21-string *koto*, *morin-khuur*, *pipa*, and *dai-sangen*

Title: *Firefly Suite for Koto Ensemble* (2003)  
Instrumentation: *koto* (I-II) and bass *koto*

Na, Hyo-shin (b. N/A)  
Title: *3 and Piano* (2003)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi*, *shamisen*, bass *koto*, and piano

Nimi, Tokuhide (b. 1947)  
Title: 宇宙樹 – 魂の路, ‘*The Cosmic Tree: Path of the Soul*’ (1996)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto* and orchestra  
2(pic)222/4220/5perc/cel/str

Title: 青の島, ‘*Ou no Shima*’ (1989)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto* (I-II)

Title: 風韻 II, 'Fuin II' (1988)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi* (I-III)

Title: 風を聴く, 'Hearing the Winds' (1990)  
Instrumentation: *shinobue* (I-II), *shakuhachi* (I-II), 21-string *koto* (I-III), bass *koto*

Nishimura, Akira (b. 1953)

Title: 樹海, 'Sea of Trees: Concerto for 21-String Koto' (2002)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto* solo and orchestra

Title: *Taqism* (1982)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto* solo

Title: 炎の幻声独奏二十絃箏と弦楽合奏のための協奏曲 *Voices Phantasma – Flame: Concerto for 21-String Koto and Strings* (1988)  
Instrumentation: 21-string *koto* solo and string orchestra

Title: 火輪, 'Karin' (1989)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi* and percussion soloists

Title: 時の陽炎 'Toki no Kagero' (1997)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi*, *koto* ensemble, and percussion

Title: 歌, 'Kô' (2000)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi* solo

Norman, Anne (b. 1961)

Title: *Ask Not ~ Fear Not* (2005)  
Instrumentation: clarinet, *shakuhachi*, and power pole bells  
Year composed: 2005  
Duration: 7'

Title: *Inner States* (1993)  
Instrumentation: *koto*  
Year composed: 1993  
Duration: 12'

Title: *We Lose Things* (2000)  
Instrumentation: contrabass, *shakuhachi*, and power pole bells

Title: *Hiroshima* (2005)  
Instrumentation: *shakuhachi* (I-VII)

Satô, Somei (b. 1947)

Title: 皎月, 'Kôgetsu' (1990)

Instrumentation: *shakuachi* and 21-string *koto*

Title: 風の曲, ‘*Music of the Wind*’ (1979)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi solo*

Hirose, Ryohei (b. 1930)

Title: 渺, ‘*Byoh*’ (1972)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi*

Takahashi, Yûji (b. 1938)

Title: 時雨、かげろう、葛城, ‘*Shigure, Kagerô, Katsuragi*’ (1993)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi*

Takemitsu, Tôru (1930-1996)

Title: *November Steps* (1969)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi, biwa, and orchestra*

Title: *Autumn* (1973-79)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi, biwa, and orchestra*

Womack, Donald Reid (b. 1966)

Title: *After* (2005)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi, 21-string koto, and orchestra*

Yoshimatsu, Takashi (b. 1953)

Title: *Moyura* op. 41 (1990)

Instrumentation: 21-string *koto*

Title: 鳥夢の舞 (‘*Bird Dream Dance*’) op. 69 (1997)

Instrumentation: 21-string *koto*

Title: 星夢の舞 (‘*Stellar Dream Dances*’) op. 89 (2002)

Instrumentation: *shinobue, shakuhachi, (I, II), shamisen, biwa, shô, hichiriki, 13-string koto, 21-string koto, bass koto, taiko and percussion*

Title: 双魚譜 (‘*Music of Pisces: Two Fish*’) op. 69 (1986)

Instrumentation: *shakuhachi and 21-string koto*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following is a list of bibliographical resources written in English that may be helpful in learning about the *shakuhachi* and 21-string *koto*.

Blasdel, Christopher. *The Shakuhachi: A Manual for Learning*. Tokyo: Ongakunotomoshia, 1988.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Single Tone*. Tokyo: Printed Matter Press, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Shakuhachi: Aesthetics of a Single Tone," *The Japan Quarterly*. Vol. 31, No. 2 (1984).
- Casano, Steven. *From Fuke Shu to Oduboo: Zen and the Transnational Flow of the Shakuhachi Tradition from East to West*. Masters thesis. University of Hawai'i, Manoa, 2001.
- Cronin, Tania. "On Writing for the *Shakuhachi*: A Western Perspective." *Contemporary Music Review* 8, no. 2 (1994): 77-81.
- Falconer, Linda. "Japan: Music in the Period of Westernization: Traditional Music," Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 12 December 2004), <<http://grovemusic.com>>
- Gutzwiller, Andreas B. *Shakuhachi: Aspects of History, Practice, and Teaching*. Ph.D. dissertation. Wesleyan University, 1974.
- Herd, Judith Ann "The Neonationalist Movement: Origins of Contemporary Japanese Music." *Perspectives of New Music* 27, no. 2 (1989): 118-163.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Change and Continuity in Contemporary Japanese Music: A Search for a National Identity*. Ph.D. dissertation. Brown University, 1987.
- Herr, Robert. ed. *Chikuho ryuu Hawai'i: Newsletter*. Honolulu: Chikuho ryuu Hawai'i. 1986-present.
- Juniper, Andrew. *Wabi-Sabi: The Japanese Art of Impermanence*. Boston, Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2003.
- Keister, Jay. "The Shakuhachi as a Spiritual Tool: A Japanese Buddhist Instrument in the West." *Asian Music* 35, no. 2 (2004): 99-131.
- Kishibe, Shigeo. *The Traditional Music of Japan*. Tokyo: Ongakunotomosha, 1984.
- Lee, Riley. *Yearning for the Bell*. Ph.D. dissertation. University of Sydney, 1992.
- Lependorf, Jeffrey. "Contemporary Notation for the Shakuhachi: A Primer for Composers." *Perspectives of New Music* 27, no. 2 (1989): 232-251.
- Malm, William P. *Traditional Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*. Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International, 2000.

Minoru, Miki. "The Role of Traditional Japanese Instruments in Three Recent Operas." *Perspectives of New Music* 27, no. 2 (1989): 164-175.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Ballades for Koto*. Tokyo: Zen-On Music Co., Ltd., 1972.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Poem in the Evening, Koto Futae, Miyabi no Uta*. Tokyo: Zen-On Music Co., Ltd., 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Symphony for Two Worlds: Kyu-no-Kyoku*. Tokyo: Zen-On Music Co. Ltd., 1973.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Three works for twenty-one string koto solo: Tennyo, The Venus in Spring, The Venus in Autumn*. Tokyo: Zen-On Music Co. Ltd., 1973.

Murphy, Brenda. *Japanese artistic aesthetics in a non-Japanese mode: Chanoyu into Western Music*. Ph.D. dissertation. New York University, 1993.

Nakamata, Nobukio. "Ways of the *Shakuhachi*: Exploitation or Creation?" *Contemporary Music Review* 8, no. 2 (1994) 95-101.

Regan, Martin P. *Concerto for Shakuhachi and 21-String Koto: A Composition, Analysis, and Discussion of Issues Encountered in Cross-Cultural Approaches to Composition*. Ph.D. dissertation. University of Hawai'i, Manoa, 2006

Samuelson, Ralph. "Shakuhachi and the American Composer." *Contemporary Music Review* 8, no. 2 (1994): 83-94.

Smaldone, Edward. "Japanese and Western Confluences in Large-Scale Pitch Organization of Tôru Takemitsu's *November Steps* and *Autumn*." *Perspectives of New Music*. 27:2 (1989: Summer): 216-231.

Takemitsu, Tôru. "On *Sawari*," in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*. trans. Hugh DeFerranti. Everett, Yayoi Uno and Frederick Lau. eds. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Contemporary Music in Japan." *Perspectives of New Music* 27, no. 2 (1989), 198-205.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Afterword: Tôru Takemitsu with Tania Cronin and Hillary Tann." *Perspectives of New Music* 27, no. 2 (1989): 206-214.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*. trans. Donald Yoshiko Kakudo and Glenn Glasgow. Berkeley: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995.

Wade, Bonnie. *Music in Japan: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.