

WORLD
SHAKUHACHI
FESTIVAL
2008
SYDNEY



Media Kit

Media interviews and images

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www.worldshakuhachifestival08.com

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MEDIA RELEASE

The World Shakuhachi Festival 2008 will be the largest congregation of shakuhachi players ever amassed on the globe, and an Australian 'first' when the five-day winter festival is staged in Sydney between 4-8 July

An exceptional international festival jam-packed with traditional and contemporary expressions of this Japanese instrument: the bamboo flute, **The World Shakuhachi Festival 2008** (pron. sha-ku-ha-chi) is convened by Grand Master Riley Lee, who is based in Sydney, Australia.

Multiple concerts, workshops, a collection of free performances and up to 20 cross-pollinated shows will be staged by the Australian Shakuhachi Society for the benefit of 400 worldwide enthusiasts visiting Sydney.

Program highlights include a free Celebrity concert at the **Art Gallery of NSW's Art After Hours**, a **Grand Prix Young Performers** mp3 competition and concert and the grande finalé **Masters Concert** at the City Recital Hall, comprised of rarified guests which will include a special haunting requiem played in unison.

Conventional, classical and chamber music styles make up the terrific concert program, with **The Sydney Children's Choir** and **TaikOz** set to attract many first timers and young audiences to the Festival.

Throughout a rich and varied program, everyone from professional players to absolute beginners will have the chance to share techniques, trade tips and enjoy performances by musical virtuosos. Artistic Director and self-declared shakuhachi fanatic Riley Lee, says 2008 is set to 'knock the socks off' previous shakuhachi conventions with its sheer size and scope.

"The passion people feel for the shakuhachi makes amazing things possible. This time round we have the most exciting program we could hope for. Already hundreds of elite performers are coming from Japan to take part, including a national living treasure from Japan Mr. Reibo Aoki," says Artistic Director Riley Lee, who currently performs with the award winning TaikOz ensemble.

The origin of the Festival harks back to 1994 when Japan held the inaugural meeting, followed by the larger and more international incarnation hosted by Boulder, Denver in 1998. This year's program includes a superb collection of world class musicians who will converge in Sydney to celebrate the mystery of this mythical bamboo flute.

The massive congregation of shakuhachi players, teachers and students is guaranteed to send ripples of interest around the world, as Sydney becomes a cultural tourism destination for shakuhachi enthusiasts from Asia, Europe and the US.

Utilising renowned inner-city venues that include City Recital Hall Angel Place, the Art Gallery of NSW and Verbrugghen Hall at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, the World Shakuhachi Festival 2008 promises to touch the public at large with its adventurous program and not-to-be-missed master players.

For more information visit: www.worldshakuhachifestival08.com

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Preliminary World Shakuhachi Festival 2008 Program

Concert 1

Traditional and modern: Japan in the roaring twenties

Art Gallery NSW Art After Hours Celebrity Concert

Wednesday 2 July 6.30-7pm

This free concert accompanies the AGNSW's stunning exhibition *Taisho chic: Japanese modernity, nostalgia and deco*, which shows the embrace and clash of Western modernity with traditional Japan in the roaring twenties. It spotlights a richly textured society under rapid transformation.

Known for its delightful romantic schmalz, music from the Taisho era (1912-1926) is both popular and traditional, and this concert brings the flavour of yesteryear alive. Performers are tutors from the WSF08 Rockies Down Under Camp, including shakuhachi players, Christopher Blasdel, Teruo Furuya, Kaoru Kakizakai, Kazushi Matama, Stan Richardson, David Wheeler and Yoko Hiraoka (koto).

The program also features a mass shakuhachi performance of Tamuke, by the Camp participants.

Concert 2

Energy Serenity: TaikOz and the Shakuhachi

WSF08 Opening Concert

City Recital Hall Angel Place

Friday 4 July 8pm

Described by *The Sydney Morning Herald* as 'bold and original', **TaikOz** is one of Australia's most energetic and exciting drumming groups. Powerful taiko drumming is counter-balanced with the softness and lightness of the ethereal shakuhachi. Featuring performances by three shakuhachi grandmasters from Japan. Percussionist Timothy Constable will join TaikOz's own shakuhachi master Riley Lee, adding to this beguiling synthesis of East and West, old and new.

Concert 3

The Young Players MP3 Competition Finals Concert

Verbrugghen Hall SCM

Saturday 5 July 10am

The stars of tomorrow compete in an international competition for three Young Performer's Prizes. Finalists are all under the age of 40 years (young!) and will perform a six minute shakuhachi piece for a panel of nine judges. Be amongst the first to hear the mastery of what future audiences will experience!

Concert 4

Angelic Voices: a World of Shakuhachi

City Recital Hall Angel Place

Saturday 5 July 7pm

The jewel in the crown of the World Shakuhachi Festival 2008. The angelic voices of Sydney Children's Choir soar upwards with ethereal streams of shakuhachi music. This concert presents the world premiere of Dan Walker's new composition for shakuhachi ensemble, Sydney Children's Choir and special guest soloists. Also performing in this diverse concert will be Matthew Doyle on didgeridu and other shakuhachi masters from Japan.

In this concert, the shakuhachi also gets a popular jazz twist with John Neptune's laid-back rhythms leading the music into a global arc of pure entertainment.

Concerts 5 and 6

The Tibetan Book of the Dead '....in the Between'

Music Workshop Conservatorium of Music
Saturday 5 July 10pm and 12 midnight

The intimate setting of the Conservatorium's Music Workshop lends itself to the austere and meditative presentation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, featuring Trikaya: Michael Askill, percussion; Riley Lee, shakuhachi and drum; Tensin Choegyul, singing, Tibetan instruments and narrator James Coates.

A premiere for Sydney, this concert is more 'experience' than performance. Audiences are invited to close their eyes and allow excerpts from the most influential of all Tibetan Buddhist texts to fully permeate their sensorial awareness.

Concerts 7 and 8

As Australian as a Shakuhachi

Verbrugghen Hall, Conservatorium of Music
Sunday 6 July 3pm and 8pm

Australia's internationally renowned Grainger Quartet and harpist Marshall McGuire appear alongside a stellar line-up of top international shakuhachi players. Ross Edwards' meditative *Tyalgum Mantras* and Anne Boyd's spiritually petitioning *Feather on the Breath of God* evoke higher realms. Works by Elena Kats-Chernin and Stuart Greenbaum will be premiered.

In this concert we see the shakuhachi foregrounding a power to hold its own as a unique ensemble instrument, an integral part of the Australian music tradition.

The afternoon concert is for general public and the evening concert for WSF08 participants.

Concert 9

World Masters Concert

City Recital Hall Angel Place
Monday 7 July 7pm

The world's greatest shakuhachi players perform the most loved shakuhachi masterpieces. Featuring the Festival's top invited performers: AOKI Reibo, Japan's Living National Treasure; KAWASE Junsuke, Iemoto of Chikumeisha lineage; ARAKI Kodo V, proponent of the longest unbroken shakuhachi lineage; and MIYATA Kohachiro, whose seminal recordings in the 1960s introduced a whole generation of listeners to the shakuhachi.

This concert exhilarates with the experience of master performers playing at their best. A rare treat for Australian audiences, classical and modern pieces intertwine in a program for shakuhachi and other traditional instruments (koto and shamisen).

Concert 10

Soulful Shakuhachi

Verbrugghen Hall, Conservatorium of Music
Tuesday 8 July 5pm

The World Shakuhachi Festival 2008 closes with a sensory feast of music, a celebration of the exquisite beauty and power of this refined instrument. With a line-up of elite musicians, this concert completes another instalment of an international musical journey full of soulful, eloquent and exotic harmonies. Concert program to be announced.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The shakuhachi is famous for its soulful sound and its iconic use by the Fuke sect of Zen Buddhists in the traditional practice of blowing meditation or *suizen*.

The Fuke monks have **given the instrument its rare mystique and appeal**. The Fuke monks were traditional champions of this recorder like flute in ancient Japan where they famously wore baskets on their heads while playing as a symbol of detachment from the world.

The first of these festivals was held in Bisei-cho, Okayama-ken in Japan in August 1994. Though called the International Shakuhachi Festival and attended by a number of non-Japanese and Japanese living Abroad, this festival was primarily by Japanese and for Japanese. Nevertheless, it was the first event to include teachers and participants from most of the numerous sects and lineages of shakuhachi.

The event led, to the World Shakuhachi Festival 1998. Held in Boulder and Denver Colorado USA, and co-sponsored by University of Colorado, this Festival was attended by over 300 participants from all over the world. Its approximately 20 public concerts had a combined audience of over 5,000, making it the largest gathering ever to take place in the history of the shakuhachi. The festival, held over seven days, also featured over 50 workshops, lectures and panel discussions.

The third international gathering of shakuhachi players, the Tokyo International Shakuhachi Summit 2002, was held in Tokyo Japan in 2002. Though smaller than the 1998 Festival, it went even further in bringing together performers and students of the numerous and often factious shakuhachi sects and lineages in Japan.

The fourth event, the 2004 New York Shakuhachi Festival, held at New York University, Greenwich Village NYC USA, had approximately fifty classes, lectures, panel discussions, workshops and concerts over a four day period. Though its faculty comprised of nearly as many Japanese as non-Japanese, participants were primarily residents of the USA and Canada, with representation from Japan, Europe, and Australia.

The Australian Shakuhachi Society, in consultation with the Executive Committee of the World Shakuhachi Festival and the International Shakuhachi Study Centre, is producing the fifth international shakuhachi event, to be held in Sydney Australia 4-8 July 2008. The event will be called the Sydney World Shakuhachi Festival 2008, and will be held at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. The purpose of the Australia Shakuhachi Society is to promote the shakuhachi and its music and to assist others who are doing the same.

IMAGE SHEET: Shakuhachi Festival images courtesy of the Australian Shakuhachi Society

