

# EUROPEAN SHAKUHACHI SOCIETY

## Newsletter: Issue 7

January 2008

欧州尺八会



EUROPEAN SHAKUHACHI  
SOCIETY

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Happy New Year everyone! I hope all readers had a relaxing festive season. Let's commit to making 2008 a great year for the Shakuhachi in Europe.

We have a great issue this time - as always ☺, including: a review by Clive Bell of the new CD of Frank Denyer's shakuhachi music, played by Yoshikazu Iwamoto; an article by Graham Ranft on 'The Gentle Art of Meri'; a review of Adrian Freedman's recent concert in Totnes and his new CD 'Music on the Edge of Silence'; an article formed from a series of emails on the subject of 'Shakuhachi and Ecology' between Koji Matsunobu and myself (Stephanie Hiller); plus the usual, occasional shakuhachi-related quote.

As always, we are keen to find new people willing to do some translating for the newsletter, which we currently aim to provide in English, **French** and **German**. Please do contact me if you are able to help out.

Don't forget that the European shakuhachi community is keen to read your shakuhachi tales. To that end, **please** send any articles, photos, clippings, CD/book/concert reviews, etc, etc, for the next issue (Issue 8, April 2008) to me at: [StephanieHiller9@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:StephanieHiller9@yahoo.co.uk). **Please send by end of February at the latest to allow time for translations to be done.** (Unless, of course, you are able to do the translations yourself which would be marvelous! – in which case, please send to me by end of February).

Happy reading!  
Stephanie  
([stephaniehiller9@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stephaniehiller9@yahoo.co.uk))

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## The Gentle Art Of Meri

By Graham Ranft

I have been playing shakuhachi for about a decade and I am still working on meri and dai meri.

Meri and dai [great / deep] meri are hard to do well on long flutes. We can break this down into two parts:

1. Actually playing and getting the pitch and volume of both sorts of meri.
2. Getting from a kari [normal head unbowed note] to meri, or meri to kari note.

Let's take each of these in turn.

1. To make a good meri and dai [great or deep] meri it's essential to:

a) reduce air pressure. b) make embouchure more relaxed. c) push jaw forward.

a) is obvious - often this is made easier as the meri note is often at the end of a phrase. Think of the breath as 'sliding' out of the mouth rather than blowing - think **haaaa** - not blowing out a lot of birthday cake candles. It may help to drop the corners of the mouth a bit - this will help to relax embouchure and with pouting.

In the piece "Hi Fu Mi" you are hit with a Tsu meri right at the start, and it is nice to be able to make this more than just a small feeble 'shy' note!

b) relax the embouchure by pouting slightly and relaxing tension generally. The hole you blow through should be a flattened oval shape. If you don't make this hole large enough, either the note will be too sharp or the airstream is so thin it misses the blowing edge altogether. The pouting also helps to flatten the note, as the hole is the '6<sup>th</sup>' hole and as you know by shading **any** hole on a shakuhachi the pitch will drop or go flat. Both pouting and jaw forward will 'fill' or shade the 6<sup>th</sup> hole more.

In playing meri the usual problem is not flat enough - if you should go too flat this is much easier to fix than not going down far enough in pitch in the first place!

c) if you push the jaw forward you will change the angle of breath stream. So, as you meri down, the breath will go straight down the shakuhachi, hitting the blowing edge on the way. You will have to move

your jaw forward in sympathy with 'head down' so it will take practice to get the two to work exactly together. If you have too small an airstream you may lose the note at some stage of going down – hence don't have too fine an airstream. Long slow meri, then up again to kari position is a good way to do this. For beginners I suggest practicing on CHI or OU, then extend this to Tsu meri, and to Tsu dai meri later as you get more adept.

It's critical to get as close as necessary to the blowing edge in dai meri position. If your embouchure is too tense, or corners of lips pulled back, you won't be able to go down or flat enough in pitch as there is insufficient 'shading' of the top hole. Conversely as you come back up you need to get your face away from the utaguchi, otherwise normal [aka kari] notes will be a bit flat – a very common problem with beginners. They are often quite flat on every note.

After a while, when you get sufficient control at dai meri, you can try a relaxed subtle tightening of embouchure - this will 'tighten' up tone quality of the meri note. It also means that you have some tone colour changes to work with and your meri/dai meri notes will have life and not be too insipid. They are not necessarily loud or beautiful flute-like notes – a little roughness or breathiness/burble is part of the timbre but they are very important to play at the correct pitch.

Paradoxically, I have found that when you get all of the above right the flute will work for you, but you have to be meri enough. Too high and the flute won't work in 'meri mode'. They are subtle instruments...

It also helps a little if your throat is open a bit, as with a slightly more open embouchure there is some 'coupling' into your chest/lungs/throat, which helps with resonance.

When playing Kan tsu meri, you must observe that you need tighter shading of hole 1 otherwise it's hard to get tsu meri flat enough. As you need more breath to make this particular [tricky] note to sound, it generally tends to be harder to control in pitch and volume than the Otsu [low] register tsu meri and more so going to dai meri [1.8 pitch D natural – RO pitch]

A useful exercise is to play tsu meri without any shading of hole 1. For this you will need very deep meri - both otsu and kan. If you can get a stable, in tune tsu meri then you are getting there! Its easy to get a semitone lower than Tsu [in 1.8 pitch F to E natural] but to get it another semitone lower [Eb] to tsu meri is another area all together....

2. Getting from a kari [normal head unbowed note] to meri, or meri to kari note.

For those of us who are crazy [silly?] enough to play long flutes [2.4 or greater] the length of the flutes simply complicates the issue!

We have to do some pretty big head bowing ["Kubi furi san nen..." three years neck waving - literally.]

There's no magic easy fix, it simply takes lots of practice as here we have to change from a relatively static embouchure - playing kari notes - Re Chi Ri Tsu Ro, etc, to the above meri/dai special embouchure, as well as some callisthenics.....

Many players often move their heads in a diagonal path rather than straight up and down, and this has the advantage of lessening neck problems and also spreading the wear and tear on neck joints. It's also easier to be more accurate with the bowing angle.

A good exercise is to play RE then change to OU meri, which is the same pitch - this will give you some idea of how much head bowing you will need. It's also good to play, as it's relatively easy to get a nice Ou meri and great practice for changing embouchure on the way up and down. Do this in both registers.

Note meri change to get each register in tune. [More meri in kan]

On my 2.85 jinashi it's possible to get lower than otsu RE pitch on OU meri so watch you don't go down too far but for practice that's also good.

You can never spend too much time playing around with this area of the shakuhachi. It's not easy but as you get into it, this is 'where the action is' in Honkyoku.

If you get it right you will know, as your dai meri notes will start to get a more solid, centred sound. If they are very quiet and thin or wheezy or sharp then one or more of the above is not quite right. If you haven't got any sound start from the beginning... ☺

Watch you don't squeeze up hole 1 too tight in otsu, in an attempt to get the pitch down - it will only result in a small weak sound. Check with your teacher if the flute is working properly in Tsu meri shade hole 1.

I had a flute which was improved dramatically by having hole 1 opened out a mm or so.

Don't assume it's you - get the flute checked by a teacher if you are a beginner to make sure it **is** the flute and not you.

When meri-ing down follow meri with jaw going out - if you get it right you will get sound until you are in extreme dai meri. It might not be very loud but if you can 'track' the sound down with jaw out [and conversely on the way up] then you are doing well. It will take practice to get the jaw out far enough - at full dai meri the jaw joint may feel a bit stretched or tight. Keep at it. Try to relax everything else [as much as it is possible playing these things...]

On my 2.85 flute, playing Chi in kari position [normal] position, I can get right down to Tsu pitch. In 1.8 pitch A down to F natural. It's not a very wonderful note but it's there.

Finally, if you haven't got some sort of tuner, get one to check pitch until you get stabilised. Eventually you will be able to hear a semitone accurately and if you are at all musical or play another instrument sing the interval.

Very often the meri notes are played a little flatter than tempered western pitch.

Final word: the change of head angle between meri and dai meri is quite small compared to kari position to normal meri, which is quite a large angle.

This may help: <http://www.navaching.com/shaku/utaguchi.html>

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### Die Kunst Meri sanft zu spielen Graham Ranft

Seit etwa zehn Jahren spiele ich Shakuhachi und noch immer arbeite ich an *meri* und *dai meri* Tönen.

*Meri* und *dai* (groß/tief) *meri* Töne sind auf langen Flöten schwer gut zu spielen.

Wir können dies in zwei Abschnitten vereinfacht erklären:

1. Während des Spiels Tonhöhe und Lautstärke beider *meri* Arten treffen.
2. Von einem *kari* Ton (*kari*= normaler Ton ohne Kopfbeugen) zum *meri* Ton kommen oder vom *meri* Ton zum *kari* Ton.

Gehen wir nun beide der Reihe nach durch.

1. Um einen *meri*- und *dai meri* Ton gut zu spielen ist es wichtig auf Folgendes zu achten:

- a) den Druck der Luft verringern.
- b) Lippen und Mund mehr entspannen.
- c) den Unterkiefer nach vorne schieben.

a) Dies ist einleuchtend - es wird erleichtert dadurch, dass *meri* Töne oft am Ende einer Phrase stehen. Stelle dir den Atem vor als mehr aus dem Mund „gleitend“ als blasend - denke haaaa - statt der Vorstellung viele Kerzen auf einem Geburtstagskuchen auszublasen. Es kann helfen, die Mundwinkel etwas hängen zu lassen - dies hilft die Lippen zu entspannen und nach vorne zu bringen.

In *Hi fu mi* triffst du ganz am Anfang auf ein *Tsu meri* und es ist schön, wenn du mehr als gerade einen kleinen, schwachen „scheuen“ Ton aus ihm machen kannst!

b) Entspanne den Mundbereich indem du die Lippen leicht vorschiebst und die Spannung ganz allgemein verminderst. Das Loch das die Lippen bilden, durch das du hindurchbläst, sollte die Form eines flachen Ovals haben. Wenn du dieses Loch nicht groß genug machst, wird der Ton entweder zu scharf sein oder der Luftstrom ist so dünn, dass er die Blaskante vollkommen verfehlt. Die Lippen nach vorne bringen hilft auch den Ton tiefer zu machen. Das Mundloch ist das „sechste“ Loch und wie du weißt, wird beim Schattieren jedes Loches der Shakuhachi die Tonhöhe fallen oder tiefer werden. Beides, Lippen und Unterkiefer nach vorne schieben „füllt“ (schattiert) das sechste Loch mehr.

Das Problem beim *meri* Spielen ist, dass der Ton nicht tief genug ist. Wenn du zu tief werden solltest, ist dies viel leichter in Ordnung zu bringen als den ersten Ton nicht tief genug anzusetzen!

c) Wenn du den Unterkiefer nach vorne schiebst, änderst du den Winkel des Atemstroms so, dass beim Heruntergehen in die *meri* Stellung der Atem direkt die Shakuhachi hinunterströmt. Dabei stößt er auf die Blaskante. Den Unterkiefer nach vorne bewegen und das Kopfbeugen muss gleichzeitig geschehen. Es braucht einige Übung, bis beide Bewegungen exakt zusammenspielen. Wenn dein Luftstrom zu klein ist kannst du in einem bestimmten Abschnitt des Heruntergehens den Ton verlieren. So sollte der Luftstrom nicht zu fein sein. Ein guter Weg ist es, von einem langen, langsamen *meri* Ton wieder zurück in die *kari* Position zu gehen. Für Anfänger schlage ich vor, auf CHI oder OU zu

üben und dies dann später bei größerer Erfahrung auf *Tsu meri* - *Tsu dai meri* zu übertragen.

In der *dai meri* Stellung ist es kritisch, so nahe an die Blaskante zu kommen wie es nötig ist. Wenn dein Mundbereich zu sehr angespannt ist oder die Lippenwinkel zurückgezogen sind, wirst du nicht nach unten gehen oder den Ton tief genug intonieren können. Das obere Loch ist dann ungenügend "schattiert". Umgekehrt musst du beim Hochgehen dein Gesicht vom *utaguchi*, dem "singenden Mund", der Blaskante, entfernen. Denn normale (*aka kari*) Töne werden ein wenig zu tief sein. Ein verbreitetes Anfänger-Problem. Sie spielen oft jeden Ton ziemlich zu tief.

Wenn du nach einiger Zeit *dai meri* genügend unter Kontrolle hast, kannst du ein entspanntes, feines Verengen des Mundbereiches versuchen. Dies wird die Qualität des *meri* Tones verdichten. Du kannst dann auch mit Änderungen der Tonfarbe arbeiten und deine *meri/ dai meri* Töne werden lebendig sein und nicht allzu fade. Sie werden deshalb nicht zu lauten oder schönen flötenähnlichen Tönen. Etwas Rauhes, Verhauchtes, Murrendes ist Teil des Timbre. Aber es ist sehr wichtig, sie in der korrekten Tonhöhe zu spielen.

Ich habe herausgefunden, wenn du alles oben Beschriebene richtig hinbekommst, wird die Flöte paradoxerweise für dich arbeiten. Aber du musst genügend tief in der *meri* Haltung sein. Bist du zu hoch, wird die Flöte nicht in der "*meri* Weise" reagieren. Es sind sensible Instrumente.....

Ein wenig hilft auch, wenn deine Kehle eine Spur geöffnet ist. Mit leicht stärker geöffnetem Mundbereich ergibt das eine Kopplung mit Brust/Lunge/Kehle, die die Resonanz etwas verstärkt.

Spielst du *tsu meri* in der oberen *kan* Oktave, musst du darauf achten, Loch 1 dichter zu schattieren.

Sonst ist es schwierig, *tsu meri* tief genug zu treffen. Weil du mehr Atem brauchst, um diesen speziellen vertrackten Ton zum Klingen zu bringen, ist es gewöhnlich schwieriger, Tonhöhe und Klang zu kontrollieren als *Tsu meri* in der unteren *otsu* Oktave. Er geht so mehr auf *dai meri* zu (bei 1.8 zum D - RO).

Es ist eine nützliche Übung, *tsu meri* zu spielen ohne das Loch 1 überhaupt zu schattieren. Dafür brauchst du eine sehr tiefe *meri* Stellung sowohl in der *otsu* wie in der *kan* Oktave. Wenn du ein stabiles, gut intoniertes *tsu meri* erreichst, dann kommst du dahin! Es ist leicht, einen Halbton tiefer als *Tsu* zu kommen (bei 1.8 vom F zum E). Aber

um einen weiteren Halbton tiefer zu kommen (Es) auf *Tsu dai meri* ist eine vollkommen andere Welt.....

2. Von einem *kari* Ton ( normale, ungebeugte Kopfhaltung) zu *meri* oder von *meri* zum *kari* Ton kommen.

Für die unter uns, die verrückt genug sind, lange Flöten zu spielen (2.4 oder länger), erschwert einfach die Länge der Flöten das Ergebnis!

Wir müssen unseren Kopf ganz hübsch tief beugen. ("*Kubi furi san nen...*", buchstäblich drei Jahre lange den Kopfwackeln. )

Da gibt es kein magisch leichtes Ergebnis. Es braucht einfach sehr sehr viel Übung. Denn - wenn wir *kari* Töne spielen - *Re Chi Ri Tsu Ro* usw. - müssen wir hier von einer relativ gleichbleibenden Lippenstellung sowohl zur oben beschriebenen speziellen *meri/dai meri* Lippenstellung wechseln als auch zu einigen "Körperverrenkungen"....

Viele Spieler bewegen ihren Kopf oft auf diagonalem Weg statt gerade nach oben und unten. Dies hat den Vorteil, Nackenprobleme zu verringern und Abnutzung auf alle Nackengelenke zu verteilen. Es ist auch leichter den Winkel der Beugung genauer zu treffen.

Eine gute Übung ist es, *RE* zu spielen und dann auf *OU meri* zu wechseln, das dieselbe Tonhöhe hat. Dies wird dir eine Vorstellung davon geben, wieviel Kopfbeugen du brauchst. Es ist auch gut, dies zu spielen, weil es relativ leicht ist ein schönes *Ou meri* zu erreichen. Und du gewinnst große Übung im Wechseln der Mundstellung beim nach oben und unten gehen. Übe das in beiden Oktaven. Achte auf den *meri* Wechsel um in jeder Oktave rein zu spielen ( *meri* häufiger in *kan*).

Auf meiner 2.85 *jinashi* ( Flöte ohne Innenbearbeitung mit Ji) ist es möglich, tiefer als *RE* in der *otsu* Oktave zu kommen, wenn ich *OU meri* spiele. So achte darauf, nicht zu tief hinunter zu gehen. Aber zur Übung ist das auch gut.

Du kannst auf diesem Gebiet der Shakuhachi nie zuviel herumprobieren. Es ist nicht einfach. Aber wenn du hineingekommen bist "spielt gerade da die Musik" im *Honkyoko*.

Du wirst es merken, wenn du es richtig machst. Deine *dai meri* Töne beginnen dann einen kräftigeren, mehr zentrierten Klang zu bekommen. Sind sie sehr still und dünn oder krächzend oder scharf, dann stimmt eines oder mehreres vom oben Beschriebenen nicht. Wenn du überhaupt keinen Klang erhältst, fang von vorne an.... Lächle.

Achte darauf das Loch 1 in *otsu* nicht zu dicht zu pressen beim Versuch, die Tonhöhe herunter zu bringen. Das Ergebnis wird ein nur kleiner, schwacher Ton sein. Prüfe mit deinem Lehrer, ob die Flöte richtig funktioniert beim Schattieren von Loch1 *Tsu meri*.

Ich hatte eine Flöte die sich dramatisch verbesserte indem man Loch 1 um einen mm oder so erweiterte.

Nimm nicht an, dass es an dir liegt. Lass die Flöte vom Lehrer überprüfen wenn du Anfänger bist. So bist du sicher, dass es an der Flöte liegt und nicht an dir.

Wenn du hinab in die *meri* Stellung gehst, folge *meri* mit dem Nach-vorne-schieben des Unterkiefers. Wenn du es richtig machst, wird es klingen bis in die extreme *dai meri* Stellung. Möglicherweise ist es nicht sehr laut. Aber wenn du den Klang hinab verfolgen kannst mit dem Nach-vorne-schieben des Unterkiefers, und umgekehrt auf dem Weg aufwärts, dann machst du es gut. Es braucht Übung, den Kiefer weit genug heraus zu schieben. Beim vollständigen *dai meri* kann das Kiefergelenk sich etwas angespannt oder fest anfühlen. Bleib dabei. Versuche alles andere zu entspannen (so gut es möglich ist beim Spielen dieser Dinge.... )

Auf meiner 2.85 Flöte kann ich beim *Chi* in *kari* Stellung (normale Haltung) bis hinunter zur *Tsu* Tonhöhe kommen. Auf der 1.8 vom A zum F. Es ist kein besonders schöner Ton, aber er ist da.

Schließlich, kaufe dir irgendein Stimmgerät wenn du noch keines hast und überprüfe die Tonhöhe bis sie stabil wird. Vielleicht kannst du einen Halbton präzise hören. Und wenn du ein bisschen musikalisch bist oder ein Instrumen spielst, singe das Intervall.

Sehr oft werden *meri* Töne etwas tiefer gespielt als in westlich temperierter Tonhöhe.

Zum Schluss: Die Veränderung des Kopfwinkels von *meri* zu *dai meri* ist ganz gering im Vergleich der *kari* Stellung zur normalen *meri* Haltung. Diese Veränderung ist ein ziemlich großer Winkel.

Weitere Hilfe: <http://www.navaching.com/shaku/utaguchi.html>

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## Le doux art du Meri

Par Graham Ranft

Je joue du Shakuhachi depuis près de dix ans et je suis toujours en train de travailler mes Meri et dai Meri

Meri et dai Meri sont difficiles à jouer correctement sur les longues flûtes. Nous pouvons séparer l'apprentissage de cette technique en deux parties.

1. Jouer en respectant le ton et le volume de chaque sorte de Meri.
2. Passer d'un kari (tête en position normale) à Meri ou de Meri à kari.

Etudions alternativement chacune de ces techniques.

1. Pour faire un bon Meri et dai Meri, il est essentiel de:

a) réduire la pression de l'air. b) relâcher l'embouchure c) avancer la mâchoire.

a) est évident – un Meri est souvent plus facile à faire en fin de phrase. Pensez que l'air doit glisser de la bouche plutôt que de penser à souffler – pensez haaaaa – plutôt qu'à souffler les bougies d'un gâteau d'anniversaire. Baisser un peu la commissure des lèvres, et faire la moue peut également aider.

Dans Hi Fu mi on est confronté à Tsu Meri dès le début et il est bon d'être capable de faire autre chose qu'une faible et timide petite note.

b) détendez l'embouchure en faisant légèrement la moue et en relâchant la tension générale de la bouche. L'ouverture formée par les lèvres devrait avoir une forme ovale aplatie. Si cette ouverture n'est pas suffisamment large, la note sera trop aigüe et le filet d'air sera trop fin et manquera par là même le biseau de l'Utaguchi.

La moue aide également à descendre la note, puisque l'embouchure est en fait le sixième trou, et que vous savez que le fait de masquer n'importe quel trou du Shakuhachi a pour effet de baisser ou d'aplatir le ton.

Faire la moue et avancer en même temps la mâchoire aident à masquer d'avantage le sixième trou.

Lorsqu'on joue Meri, le problème le plus courant est lorsque le ton est insuffisamment plat dès le début, le contraire est plus facile à corriger.

c) si vous avancez la mâchoire, vous changerez l'angle d'attaque du filet d'air également, de telle manière que lorsque vous faites Meri, le souffle va descendre droit vers le Shakuachi et rencontrera l'angle de l'Utachuchi sur son chemin. Vous devez prendre l'habitude de conjointement avancer la mâchoire et baisser la tête, afin que ces mouvements deviennent parfaitement synchrones. Si le filet d'air est trop fin, vous perdrez la note au cours de la descente, par conséquent veillez à avoir un filet d'air assez important.

La pratique des Meri longs et lents suivi d'un retour à la position kari est une bonne manière d'acquérir la technique.

Pour les débutants, je suggère de pratiquer sur CHI ou OU, puis d'étendre à Tsu Meri et Tsu dai Meri lorsque votre technique est plus sûre.

Il est important de se trouver aussi proche que nécessaire de l'embouchure en position dai Meri. Si vos lèvres sont trop tendues ou la commissure des lèvres trop en arrière, vous ne pourrez pas descendre le ton assez bas ou ne serez pas suffisamment plat, parce que vous ne masquerez pas suffisamment l'ouverture.

Réciproquement, lorsque vous repasserez en kari, vous devrez vous éloigner de l'utachuchi car les notes normales seront un peu plates, ce qui est un problème commun chez les débutants qui ont tendance à faire toutes les notes absolument plates.

Après un certain temps, quand vous aurez un contrôle suffisant du dai Meri, vous pourrez essayer un subtil raidissement de l'embouchure, ce qui aura pour effet de relever la qualité de la note Meri.. Cela signifie également que vous devrez également travailler sur les changements de couleur de ton des notes Meri et kari, ce qui leur donnera plus de vie et les rendra moins insipides. Elles ne sont pas nécessairement basses ou merveilleusement flûtées, leur timbre sera sans doute un peu rugueux et du souffle sera sans doute perceptible, il est par contre très important que le timbre soit correct.

J'ai remarqué que lorsque tous ces éléments sont en place, la flute fait le travail à votre place, mais seulement si vous êtes suffisamment en Meri. Si votre position est trop haute, la flute ne fonctionne pas en position Meri. Ces instruments sont très subtils.

Cela peut aider également si votre gorge est ouverte, un peu comme avec l'embouchure, la combinaison poumons gorge peuvent également améliorer la résonance.

Lorsqu'on joue Tsu Meri en kan, on observe qu'il est nécessaire de masquer plus fortement le premier trou, autrement il est difficile d'obtenir un Tsu Meri suffisamment plat. Comme on a besoin de plus d'air pour produire cette note particulière il est généralement plus difficile de tenir cette note en ton et en volume que dans le registre Otsu et encore plus si on descend en dai Meri [1.8 D naturel – son RO]

Un exercice très utile est de jouer Tsu Meri sans masquer le premier trou. Pour cela vous devrez être en très grand Meri, en Otsu comme en kan. Si vous arrivez à tenir un Tsu Meri stable en tonalité, c'est que vous y êtes! Il est aisé d'obtenir un demi ton plus bas que le Tsu [sur un 1.8, F à E naturel] mais descendre d'un autre demi ton [Eb] vers Tsu Meri est une autre affaire.

## 2. Passer d'un kari à Meri ou de Meri à kari

Pour ceux d'entre nous qui sont suffisamment fous [idiots?] pour jouer sur des flutes 2.4 ou plus, la longueur de l'instrument complique singulièrement la chose.

Nous devons faire de grandes inclinaisons de la tête ["Kubi furi san nen..", littéralement faire des vagues avec le cou pendant trois ans]

Il n'y a rien de magique ici, cela demande seulement beaucoup de pratique pour passer d'une embouchure relativement statique lorsqu'on joue les notes en kari aux embouchures spéciales Meri / dai, c'est comme de la gymnastique suédoise.

Beaucoup de joueurs déplacent leur tête en diagonale plutôt que de haut en bas, ce qui a pour effet de diminuer les problèmes de cou et de colonne cervicale. Cela améliore également la précision de l'angle d'inclinaison.

Un bon exercice est de jouer RE puis de passer en OU Meri, qui a le même ton, cela vous donnera une idée de l'inclinaison nécessaire. C'est également une bonne pratique du changement d'embouchure entre Meri et kari. Faites cela dans les deux registres.

Notez les changements dans le Meri pour garder un ton correct dans chaque registre [plus de Meri en kan]

Sur mon jinashi 2.85, il est possible de descendre plus bas que le ton RE Otsu en OU Meri, aussi faites attention à ne pas descendre trop bas, bien que pour la pratique cela soit aussi bon.

Vous ne passerez jamais assez de temps à parfaire cet aspect de la pratique du Shakuhachi. Ce n'est pas facile, mais une fois que vous y serez, sachez que c'est là que se trouve l'action en Honkyoku.

Vous sentirez que vous êtes au point lorsque vos dai Meri commenceront à avoir un son plus solide et plus centré. S'ils sont trop faibles ou asthmatiques, ou encore trop aigus, alors une ou plusieurs des techniques mises en œuvre ne sont pas au point.

Si vous n'obtenez aucun son, recommencez au début☺.

Soyez attentif à ne pas boucher trop fort le premier trou en Otsu, dans une tentative de descendre le ton, il en résultera seulement un petit son faiblard. Vérifiez avec votre professeur que votre flute fonctionne correctement en Tsu Meri trou un masque.

J'ai eu une flute qui a été grandement améliorée en agrandissant le premier trou de plus ou moins 1 mm.

Ne supposez donc pas que c'est nécessairement vous, faites vérifier par un professeur que ce n'est pas de la faute de votre instrument.

Suivez le mouvement de descente en Meri en avançant la mâchoire, si vous faites cela correctement vous garderez un son jusqu'à un dai Meri extrême. Le son ne sera peut être pas très puissant, mais si vous parvenez en descendant à tenir le son en sortant la mâchoire [et réciproquement en remontant] alors votre technique est au point.

Cela demande de la pratique pour arriver à sortir suffisamment la mâchoire, lors du dai Meri le plus bas, la jointure de la mâchoire peut donner l'impression d'être étirée ou tendue. Maintenez la position, Essayez de relaxer tout le reste [pour autant que ce soit possible quand on joue de telles choses]

Sur ma flute 2.85 je peux passer de Chi en position kari à Tsu. Sur un 1.8 du ton A au ton F naturel. Ce n'est pas une note superbe, mais elle est là.

Pour terminer, si vous n'avez pas acheté un tuner, faites le pour contrôler votre tonalité, et ce jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit stabilisée. A la fin vous serez en mesure d'entendre un demi ton et d'éventuellement chanter l'intervalle.

Très souvent les notes Meri sont jouées plus plates que leurs correspondantes en notation occidentale.

Mot de la fin: le changement d'angle de la tête entre Meri et dai Meri est relativement faible en comparaison de celui entre la position kari et le Meri normal, qui lui est assez large.

Un lien qui peut aider: <http://www.navaching.com/shaku/utaguchi.html>

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“Gratitude towards all is at the centre of the shakuhachi soul. The entire purpose of the shakuhachi is to foster a thankful heart”.

YOSHINOBU TANIGUCHI

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### CD Review

Frank Denyer  
Music For Shakuhachi  
ANOTHER TIMBRE CD

<http://www.anothertimbre.com/page9.html>

This record is all about a friendship between Frank Denyer, for many years a teacher at Dartington College Of Arts in Devon, and shakuhachi master Yoshikazu Iwamoto, who also taught at Dartington in the 1980s. The two first met on an ethnomusicology course at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, where they played Japanese music together. Already interested in flute-making and microtonal tunings, Denyer wrote a series of demanding compositions for Iwamoto over the next twenty years.



“On, On – It Must Be So” (1977), as the title suggests, is driven and dynamic. The shakuhachi’s agile gymnastics are egged on by castanets and bass drum. The music sounds tough to play, and there’s a lurking sense of the performer leaping through hoops. By contrast, “Quite White” is a solo built from serene, swooping glissandos. “Wheat” is a suite of six short pieces: Iwamoto’s shifting tone colours and ambiguous pitches are nicely complemented by delicate tapping on stones, bamboo slit drums and an artillery shell. These three compositions were

previously heard on a 1984 LP titled *Wheat*, but the reason the present album has been keenly awaited is the 45 minute monster “Unnamed”, which Iwamoto recorded in 1999 and has never been released. “Unnamed” has legendary status among shakuhachi players, and full

credit to Simon Reynell's new label, Another Timbre, for finally putting it out. Iwamoto retired from playing after a serious illness several years ago, so we are lucky he recorded this when he did.



“Unnamed” may be a pianissimo epic, but it's strongly structured and sustains interest well. Broadly we are in the territory of Morton Feldman's Second String Quartet, but Denyer patiently explores an extraordinary range of

timbral colours, from quavering in-breaths to gasps of sobbing notes. Iwamoto plays with quite magical delicacy. Many of these notes are so spectral that a hypnotic aura of sonic mystery descends like a veil, only to be shoved aside by vocal cries or monk-like growls. Always keen to build from scratch on uncharted land, Denyer has constructed an unusual soundworld here – though some improvisers have also ventured into this territory recently via a different door. Iwamoto dedicated himself wholeheartedly to realising Denyer's challenges, and this record is a crucial part of his testament.



CLIVE BELL

(This review was originally written for The Wire magazine:  
<http://www.thewire.co.uk/>)

Frank Denyer's site is at <http://www.frankdenyer.com/> Here you can read the sleeve notes for *Wheat* – Yoshikazu Iwamoto's own thoughts about playing this music.

Frank Denyer  
Musik für Shakuhachi  
CD ANOTHER TIMBRE

<http://www.anothertimbre.com/page9.html>

Diese Aufnahme ist das Ergebnis einer Freundschaft zwischen Frank Denyer, der seit langem Lehrer am Dartington College Of Arts in Devon ist und dem Shakuhachi-Meister Yoshikazu Iwamoto, der in den 80ern ebenfalls dort unterrichtete. Die beiden trafen sich erstmals bei einem Ethnomusikologiekurs an der Wesleyan University in Connecticut, wo sie zusammen japanische Musik spielten. Denyer, der sich bereits für Flötenbau und Mikrotonalität interessierte, verfasste in den nächsten zwanzig Jahren eine Reihe von Auftragskompositionen für Iwamoto.

„On, On – It Must Be So“ (1977) ist, wie bereits aus dem Titel hervorgeht, getrieben und dynamisch. Die flinken Figuren der Shakuhachi werden von Kastagnetten und Bass Drum angetrieben. Die Musik klingt schwierig zu spielen und ruft den leisen Gedanken an einen Spieler, der durch Zirkusreifen springt, hervor. Im Gegensatz dazu zeichnet sich das Solostück „Quite White“ durch ruhige, plötzlich fallende Glissandi aus. „Wheat“ ist eine Abfolge von sechs kurzen Stücken: Iwamotos wechselnde Klangfarben und mehrdeutige Tonhöhen werden von zarten Schlägen auf Steine, Bambusschlitztrommeln und einer Granatenhülse passend ergänzt. Diese drei Kompositionen sind bereits auf einer 1984 erschienenen LP mit dem Titel *Wheat* zu hören. Der Grund jedoch, warum das neue Album mit Spannung erwartet wurde, ist das unveröffentlichte 45minütige Monsterstück „Unnamed“, das Iwamoto 1999 aufnahm. „Unnamed“ besitzt unter Shakuhachispielern einen legendären Status. Seine letztendliche Produktion ist Simon Reynells neuem Label Another Timbre zu verdanken. Iwamoto zog sich vor einigen Jahren nach einer schweren Krankheit vom Spielen zurück, so dass wir uns über diese Aufnahme glücklich schätzen können.

„Unnamed“ könnte eine pianissimo Epos sein, doch es weist eine feste Struktur auf und hält gleichzeitig das Interesse wach. Grob gesagt befinden wir uns auf dem Gebiet von Morton Feldmans Zweitem Streichquartett, doch Denyer erforscht geduldig vom zitternden Einatmen bis hin zu mühsam hervorgebrachten, schluchzenden Tönen ein ungewöhnliches Spektrum von Klangfarben. Iwamoto spielt mit wahrlich magischem Feingefühl. Viele dieser Töne sind so geisterhaft, dass sich die hypnotische Aura eines klingenden Geheimnisses wie ein Schleier herabsenkt, der lediglich durch Schreie oder affenähnliches Knurren beiseite geschoben wird. Stets erpicht darauf, Neuland zu betreten, hat Denyer hier eine ungewöhnliche Klangwelt geschaffen – obgleich seit neuestem manche Improvisatoren auf anderen Wegen ebenfalls in diese Gefilde vordringen. Iwamoto widmete sich selbst mit ganzem Herzen dafür, Denyers Aufgabe in die Tat umzusetzen und diese Aufnahme ist ein sehr wichtiger Teil seines Testaments.

CLIVE BELL (im Auftrag der Zeitschrift „The Wire“ <http://www.thewire.co.uk/>)

Frank Denyer  
Musique pour le shakuhachi  
ANOTHER TIMBRE CD  
<http://www.anothertimbre.com/page9.html>

Cet enregistrement traite l'amitié de Frank Denyer, qui est depuis longtemps un professeur au Dartington College Of Arts à Devon et le maître de Shakuichi Yoshikazu Iwamoto qui a aussi enseigné au Dartington dans les années 80. Les deux se rencontraient la première fois pendant un cours d'éthnomusicologie à l'Université de Wesley à Connecticut. Ensemble ils y jouaient de la musique japonaise. S'intéressant à faire de flûtes et à la microtonalité, Denyer écrivait une suite de pièces de commande pendant les 20 années suivantes.

La pièce « On, On – It Must Be So » (1977) est, comme le titre propose, chassée et dynamique. Les gymnastiques agiles du Shakuichi sont incitées par des castagnettes et du bass drum. La musique sonne difficile à jouer et il y a l'image du joueur sautant à travers des cerceaux. Par contraste, « Quite White » est un solo construit par des glissandi calmes et tout d'un coup tombants. « Wheat » est une suite de six pièces courtes: Les timbres changeants et les hauteurs du son ambiguës d'Iwamoto sont appropriément complétés par des battements doux des pierres, des tambours à fente de bambou et d'une coquille d'artillerie. On peut écouter ces trois compositions sur le LP *Wheat* de 1984, mais la raison pour laquelle l'album présent a été attendu impatientement, c'est la pièce monstrueuse de 45 minutes « Unnamed » qu' Iwamoto enregistrerait en 1999 et qui n'a jamais été publiée. Parmi les joueurs de shakuichi « Unnamed » a un état légendaire et il est grâce au nouveau label de Simon Reynell, Another Timbre, qu'elle a été finalement publiée. Après une maladie sévère il y a quelques ans Iwamoto a retiré de jouer, donc nous sommes heureux qu'il ait enregistré cette pièce.

« Unnamed » pourrait être une épopée en pianissimo, mais elle est fortement structurée et maintiens bien l'intérêt. Dans un sens plus large nous sommes sur le terrain du Second Quatuor à cordes de Morton Feldman, mais Denyer explore en patience un spectre des timbres extraordinaire, de l'aspiration tremblante jusqu'à l'halètement de notes sanglotantes. Iwamoto joue avec une délicatesse vraiment magique. Beaucoup de ces notes sont tant spectrales qu'une aura hypnotique de mystère de son descend comme une voile, écartée seulement par des cris vocaux ou des grondements simiesques. Toujours avide de défricher du terrain vierge Denyer a construit un monde de son extraordinaire ici – bien que quelques improvisateurs aussi aient récemment avancé dans ce terrain par une autre porte. Iwamoto se consacrait de tout cœur à la réalisation de la tâche de Denyer et cet enregistrement est une partie cruciale de son testament.

CLIVE BELL (commissionné à écrire pour le magazine « The Wire »  
<http://www.thewire.co.uk/>)

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Shakuhachi and Ecology  
- A discussion between Koji Matsunobu and Stephanie Hiller

*Koji Matsunobu and myself have been corresponding via email, for some months, on the subject of Shakuhachi and its connection with nature, use in healing, and related subjects. The resulting dialogue so far has been fascinating and we both thought it would be nice to share some of the discussions with readers of the ESS newsletter. Below are some edited highlights:*

From Koji:

I am looking for shakuhachi players (they don't have to be professional, any level is fine) who embody spiritual ecology.

I think that the shakuhachi, especially hocchiku, is an instrument which enables the player to experience music close to nature. Each hocchiku instrument has different musical qualities that depend on the nature of the bamboo.

I am looking for people who make instruments by themselves, play the shakuhachi outdoors, or perform close to nature. Let me know if you know of anyone.

I am also curious about what you think of the organic side of the shakuhachi (besides its spiritual side).

I know I am in the minority, even in Japan.

.....

*Dear Koji:*

*I received your email regarding your interest in the shakuhachi and nature. This is a very interesting area, though I admit I don't know very much about it. I can only speak from my own personal experience.*

*I don't make my own instruments, but I do play jinashi - mainly a 2.6 by Kodama. I also work as a healer/therapist so am used to working with/connecting with energy.*

*When I play shakuhachi I feel a very strong connection to the earth energy, especially because of the root-end of the bamboo - I feel that the bamboo is still energetically deep in the earth. As I play, I feel the earth energy is being drawn up through the bamboo and sent out through the vibrations of the sound. In this way, I use my shakuhachi for sending healing to those who need it.*

*I feel that the natural sound of the jinashi shakuhachi emulates the sounds of nature far better than any other musical instrument. I am sure this is because it is made by removing only the smallest amount of bamboo necessary. In this way, the bamboo remains in as natural a state as possible, but has gained the added dimension of being transformed into a musical instrument.*

*I would be very interested to hear your thoughts on this fascinating subject.*

.....

Dear Stephanie,

The idea of connecting with earth energy through the shakuhachi is very strong and convincing. I deeply resonate with your remark on the bamboo as energetically rooted in the earth. I do feel that the energy flows in and out of my body through the shakuhachi: As I practice the shakuhachi for a certain amount of time, I sometimes reach the point in which I feel that the earth energy is circulating within me, and breathing becomes so natural.

Do you think this kind of experience may be available only through the jinashi shakuhachi? Personally, I don't know. I also play the shinobue and ryuteki, but I am not good enough to explore the ecology of experience. But I do feel that the longer the bamboo is, the deeper I can feel the energy. Is this part of the reason why you use 2.6?

Your practice of healing through the shakuhachi is fascinating! How do you use the body? Also, would your patients gain healing from the felt sense of being rooted in or feeling close to the earth? The process seems like becoming 'organic' from 'inorganic through the sound.

Is it appropriate to relate your healing practice to Tai-ch'i or Aikido?

Your description of the energy field reminds me of the drum tradition in ancient Japan. Drum was a medium for connecting the earth and the heaven. It symbolized 'turtle' and 'dragon' (if I am not mistaken): Ancient drums had a figure of a turtle on the base and a dragon on the top. By hitting the drum, people experienced a sense of universe, according to the book I read.

.....

*Dear Koji,*

*I definitely feel that, for me, the jinashi provides a stronger connection to the earth energy than jiari. However, I do feel that intention is a very strong factor in this work so, from that point of view, any instrument*

*could be used as a medium for healing and/or connection with nature, so long as you had a pure and strong intention.*

*My Sound Healing work is on a one-to-one basis. Clients lie on a treatment couch (the same as a massage couch) and I work using shakuhachi and other instruments, both around and on the body to balance the client's energy and clear blockages. I often use a 2.2, with the end resting on the lower back - the client can feel the vibration as I play. I usually play my 2.6 towards the end of the session, using a very simple melody like Kyorei to produce a very calm atmosphere.*



*You asked if I could relate my work to Tai Chi or Aikido. Certainly, I do practice Chi Gong - I would say it is the same, in the way that you maintain an awareness of the flow of energy through the body and work to keep the energy pathways clear - my healing work aims to do the same. I also work as a Reiki practitioner and this also works to balance and clear energy in a similar way.*

*One more thing that I wanted to tell you is that, each week, I play in a local shop that sells crystals. The owner is so delighted that I do this as she feels the vibration of the sound cleanses the crystals and purifies their energy after all the customers have come through and handled them. I thought you may like to hear this different aspect of connecting with nature, whilst nevertheless playing indoors.*

.....

Dear Stephanie,  
What's interesting to me is that the jinashi tradition is kind of 'disappearing' in Japan, but its popularity is growing outside of Japan with its reference to a more authentic yet individualized form of spiritual practice (?). I met quite a lot of shakuhachi lovers and players in Japan, but none of them (except my teacher) was a jinashi player [as of spring 2007]. Even komuso-minded people often use jiari instruments. In contrast, the existence of jinashi players somehow stands out in other

countries. There will be a jinashi-making workshop in Vancouver soon. This fascinates me, especially if the jinashi finds its position outside of Japan. [Just a small note: Since this summer, Koji has met many jinashi practitioners in Japan]

You mentioned that any instrument can be as a medium for healing. I have a background as a piano student, and I have felt, at one point, that my piano practice was in line with what I would be seeking through the shakuhachi. So I truly understand that it has to do with one's intention.

I have also been asking myself the same question: why the jinashi gives me a deeper connection to the environment. There may be many factors: One of them may be the depth of breathing. Another element may be its natural sound which resolves into the environment. And of course, the instrument itself is made out of nature. So when playing the jinashi, I often feel as if I am one with nature, as if the energy circulates in and out of my body, as if the sound of the jinashi corroborates with nature... I often use the word, 'self-integration,' as opposed to self-expression because I do feel that I am part of the cosmos through the shakuhachi.

Your description of the healing using the shakuhachi is very interesting! I may try a similar thing with people and see how they feel. The idea of sending the vibration directly to the body is something I have never thought about!

[Ref using the sound of the Shakuhachi to cleanse crystals in the shop] Yes, this is also very interesting! As you pointed out in your article, sound has a purifying power. In Japan, native Shinto practices have traditionally put emphasis on the power of sound. I wrote a little bit about it somewhere, and I got some criticism, saying that people no longer maintain such sensitivity. I am glad to come across an example that captures the use of the purification power of sound. Thanks very much for sharing!

.....

*Dear Koji:*

*You asked to hear more about my feeling that the jinashi provides a strong connection to the earth energy. My understanding is that this happens for several reasons:*

*Firstly, the wider bore means that I can breathe/sigh into the instrument to produce a sound, without feeling that my breath is restricted, or squeezed along its length as with narrow bore flutes.*

*Secondly, I feel that the softer sound emanating from the jinashi integrates with nature's sounds, rather than cutting across them.*

*Thirdly, the longer jinashi allows me to rest the root-end on the earth as I play. I feel then that, as I produce a sound, the energy comes up from deep in the earth, travels through the instrument and then vibrates out through the sound into the surroundings. This feeling is so much stronger when I play outdoors that I feel certain this must be what is happening. My sense is that, because the jinashi is so un-tampered with, energetically it is still linked to the earth. Therefore, when you rest the root-end on the earth the bamboo is still energetically growing from that soil on which it rests. I can extend that too - when I play, I send the sound deep into the earth and, from there, it can extend across the whole planet to encourage balance, harmony and healing.*



*You mentioned that Shinto practices recognise the power of sound. This is something I know nothing about. Can you tell me more - I would love to know if/how they used sound. Sadly, it doesn't surprise me that some people are no longer sensitive enough. My understanding is that many (most?) people now have 'blocked' this sensitivity or 'forgotten' how to use it. Society has taught us only to believe or trust in things we can see with our own eyes, or things that can be scientifically proven. However, this does not stop the sound from having an effect on people's energetic body, or their*

*spiritual body. Also, recently, there has been an upsurge in people who are open to learning about the more spiritual side of life; an increase in interest in healing and similar practices. I live in hope :-)*

*Can I ask you a few questions?:*

- *Do you make all the instruments that you play?*
- *Do you only play outdoors?*

- *Do you play pieces from a particular repertoire/shakuhachi school, or improvise or both?*
- *What length shakuhachi do you play, as a rule?*

.....

Dear Stephanie,

You described three points regarding jinashi experiences - I do feel the same. The first thing I notice when switching to a jiari instrument is its narrow bore and restriction as an instrument. To exaggerate, it is like breathing through a straw. That type of instrument may be suited for the execution of embellished melodies. But for meditation I feel that is a constraint because I cannot take enough air freely in and out of the body.

As you pointed out, the softer sound is also an important aspect to me. The 'U' tone of my jinashi instrument has a very distinctive character, and it is hard to produce the tone. The transition from 'Tsu' to 'U' is so hard because each requires suitable breath pressure and mouth form. This is because the instrument is 'untampered' and unconditioned as you pointed out. As a result, each tone provides a distinctive color, challenge, and intensified moment. Playing just one piece is already like going for a hike, climbing up and down, while observing a variety of scenery.

It seems many people also like the softer sound of the jinashi. It has been said in our tradition, according to my teacher, that the jiari sound reaches people in front of you, and the jinashi sound reaches people far away. In the situation of asking for alms at a house, the jiari appeals to the gate keeper or butler, and the jinashi, to the master. Surprisingly, my friend has heard my shakuhachi sounds, when I was playing in the apartment, from a far distanced place outside, and he could not believe that I was playing inside the apartment. So, the sound of the jinashi vibrates well in nature, whereas that of the jiari may sound better in a concert hall, it seems.

Your third point: the feeling that the jinashi is rooted and linked to the earth, is so real and captivating. I would like to develop this idea more and experience it deeply by myself. Thank you very much for sharing all of these.

[Ref comment that many (most?) people now have 'blocked' this sensitivity or 'forgotten' how to use it] I can relate to these points. Science may be important. But it does not warrant the holistic way of life. It often splits body and mind, thinking and acting, and the material from the spiritual. I would not be surprised to see more people getting

interested in and in search of spirituality in life. I see the same problem in education. The starting point of education is already separation of important aspects of life for the sake of efficiency and productivity. One of my PhD theses is that we can maintain and reinforce this holistic (traditional, indigenous, or whatever the term is) sensitivity in modern life. I want to illustrate some examples. Your activities are very interesting and very important in light of this aspect.

In answer to your questions:

*Do you make all the instruments that you play?*

I don't make all of my instruments.... I brought to the US (1) two jinashi instruments that Myochin Munetoshi made, (2) two jiari instruments (both of them are now gone..), and (3) one jinashi instrument that I made by myself. For my study, I normally use the jinashi from Myochin-sensei because that is the one I used when I learned the myoan repertoire from my teacher. Since my learning is imbedded in the instrument, I try to be cautious about changing the instrument for my basic practices because I want to maintain what I have learned through the same instrument. I often use the jinashi that I made by myself. Changing takes some getting used to because it has very different quality (tone color, pitch, etc.) compared to the ones made by Myochin Munetoshi. (It is almost like 'I' need to be different for the instrument, rather than I change the instrument). But I try to go back to Myochin instrument(s) not to lose my embodied memory of the lessons with my teacher.

*Do you only play outdoors?*



I wish I could play outdoors all the time. But I am not strong enough. I am a child of the 20th century, and I often hesitate going out when the weather is too harsh. (Winter here is awful). I tend to practice outdoors in summer. I don't

mind feeling hot. Luckily, there is a Japan house at the University of Illinois which has some small gardens. It's part of a huge botanic garden. So I often go there and sing together with birds, frogs, and airplanes. (We have an airport nearby and a school of aviation).

*Do you play pieces from a particular repertoire/shakuhachi school, or improvise or both?*

I learned only the repertoire of Myoan-taizan school. Unlike others, I did not start with Tozan or Kinko. My teacher happened to be into Myoan. It is the one that Higuchi Taizan, who used to be the Master at Myoan temple, established by collecting pieces from Komuso temples at his time. I have had only one teacher in my life who is a jinashi practitioner in Myoan (or Meian).

*What length shakuhachi do you play, as a rule?*

I did not bring a longer one to the US. So mostly I use 1.8. I am kind of loyal to the Myochin shakuhachi, with which I learned most of the pieces from my teacher.

[Ref a query thrown up by a third party that nature is more closely connected with a Major key (like skipping lambs), rather than the minor key, more commonly used in Honkyoku pieces]

My default way of playing is probably light and bright, if not jolly and flamboyant. It has less to do with my personality than with the way I perform the myoan pieces: I am not trained to produce tones in accordance to scales. For example, "Tsu no sho-meri" for 1.8 means to me a bit lower tone than regular Tsu, and "Tsu no meri" is definitely lower than regular Tsu. That's the way I learned the myoan pieces and how I have been playing them. As a result, they sound out of tune but also nature-like. But then, I came to notice recently, while listening to others' performances of koten honkyoku, that Tsu no sho-meri is one note flat of Tsu (like E), and Tsu no meri is two notes flat of Tsu (like D#). Realizing this, I tried to perform familiar myoan pieces. Lo and behold, they sound dark, much darker than how they sound when played in our traditional way. I am now self-learning 'Tamuke,' and it sounds very melodic and mournful to my ears. I gather the myoan or koten pieces in the Edo era actually did not sound as dark as they sound in the 21st century.

From a different angle, there have been many definitions of 'nature,' it seems, in the history of philosophy. One of them is the internal rhythm of organism. I guess the idea is that when we are truest to ourselves, we are deeply engaged in how we are: We are thus content and satisfied. It is the state of flow or naturalness. (Perhaps, we cannot achieve this state when we are trying to struggle with too deep meri sounds!). In that moment, we naturally feel more jolly than sad. Somehow, I do not feel like playing Tamuke outdoors because I cannot be natural with the scaling. (But when I am out in nature and find

skipping new-born lambs, I might join them because I have never really seen them! It may be like koro-koro-koro-:)

Seriously speaking, if the shakuhachi originated in England, its music might have been like skipping lambs. The soundscape of the environment seems a very important part for the development of each music. I am fascinated by the relationship between the natural environment and music. The following description of throat singing in Tuva is a perfect example to understand such a relationship (my favorite questions!).

"Ringed by mountains, far from major trade routes and overwhelmingly rural, Tuva is like a musical Olduvai Gorge -- a living record of a protomusical world, where natural and human-made sounds blend. Among the many ways the pastoralists interact with and represent their aural environment, one stands out for its sheer ingenuity: a remarkable singing technique in which a single vocalist produces two distinct tones simultaneously. One tone is a low, sustained fundamental pitch, similar to the drone of a bagpipe. The second is a series of flute like harmonics, which resonate high above the drone and may be musically stylized to represent such sounds as the whistle of a bird, the syncopated rhythms of a mountain stream or the lilt of a cantering horse . According to Tuvan animism, the spirituality of mountains and rivers is manifested not only through their physical shape and location but also through the sounds they produce or can be made to produce by human agency. The echo of a cliff, for example, may be imbued with spiritual significance. Animals, too, are said to express spiritual power sonically. Humans can assimilate this power by imitating their sounds" (Levin, Theodore C. and Michael E. Edgerton. "The Throat Singers of Tuva." Scientific American, September 20, 1999).

.....This discussion is ongoing.

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“Performed with the harmony of yin and yang, illuminated with the brightness of the sun and moon,. The notes could be short or long, soft or hard. While all the modulations are evenly uniform, they are not dominated by stale regularity. They fill every valley and every ravine. Though one might block all openings, and guard the spirit within, they permeate everything. Stop the notes in finitude, let them flow into infinity. Perform with notes that will not weary and that are tuned to the scale of spontaneity. Thus they are born in clusters that come tumbling after each other, a forest of music without form. They are spread around without being dragged out. Subtly somber and soundless. One

might say they are dead, another alive. One will say fruit, another flower. Coursing and flowing, scattering and shifting, the song is not to be dominated by the constant. Do not play again unless the one true way flows through you.”

## MASTER CHAUNG

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### ‘Music on the Edge of Silence’:

A Review of Adrian Freedman’s recent concert in Totnes and new CD  
by Stephanie Hiller

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November saw me journeying back to a place I consider my second home. Totnes, in Devon, is the closest town to Dartington College of Arts, where I first encountered the Shakuhachi 22 years ago. I can never go too long without a visit.

My excuse this time (as if I needed one) was a double treat – to spend an afternoon with fellow Shakuhachi player Mischa, with whom I’ve been corresponding for some months, and also to go to Adrian Freedman’s concert of solo Shakuhachi music in the evening.

Adrian recently moved to Totnes from deepest Cornwall and it is good to welcome him into the UK Shakuhachi fold, now that he is rather more easily ‘within reach’.

Adrian lived in Kyoto for 7 years, before moving to the South West, where he studied with Yokoyama Katsuya. He also works as musical director for the Cornish theatre company Kneehigh/Wildworks, as a composer, performer and workshop leader.

After an indulgent afternoon full of much shakuhachi talk and play, we set off to the concert with great anticipation. A shakuhachi concert is a rare enough event in the UK as a whole, let alone at home in the South West. The scene had been set with sensitivity and skill – a serene atmosphere had been created in St John’s Church, with space at the front for those who preferred to sit or lie on the floor (which many did – this was Totnes, after all). We sat at the front on cushions ourselves and bathed in the beautiful sounds drifting around the room. Adrian’s style is haunting and meditative, yet technically accomplished and it was a treat to hear a live shakuhachi performance of such a standard.

The programme included old favourites such as Hon Shirabe, Tamuke and Sanya, a Fukuda Rando piece, some of Adrian’s own compositions

and, to end, an improvisation for Shakuhachi and Oud, with special guest Iwan Kushka.

Adrian's new CD, 'Music on the Edge of Silence', was on sale. Another feast for the eyes as well as the ears, the first thing that struck me on seeing it was the exquisite ink drawings on the cover. Adrian's writing style is poetic. To quote: "The sound of the shakuhachi comes from the edge of silence, crossing boundaries of time and culture to echo in the soul."

The recording combines ancient and modern, comprising original Honkyoku, some of Adrian's own compositions (including one for Xiao), and a Fukuda Rando piece. It is refreshing to find a shakuhachi recording that is more than simply another rendition of the traditional pieces that we all know so well.

All in all, I had a lovely trip to Totnes, enjoyed a great concert and have come home with a lovely memory of that, in the CD. Thanks Adrian!

(To purchase a copy of the CD 'Music on the Edge of Silence', please contact Adrian directly at [adrianoriko@easynet.co.uk](mailto:adrianoriko@easynet.co.uk))

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