

# *Gagaku Composers Workshop*



Friday, March 25, 2011

5-9 pm

301 Philosophy Hall

Co-sponsored by

The Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies

and

The Weatherhead East Asian Institute

with the cooperation of

The Columbia Music Performance Program and

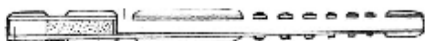
The Department of Music

This evening's Workshop is presented as part of  
Columbia's *Gagaku-Hōgaku* Classical Japanese Music Study  
and  
Performance Initiative  
and with the cooperation of the  
Center for Ethnomusicology  
and the  
Music Performance Program  
of  
the Department of Music  
Columbia University  
and the  
Weatherhead East Asian Institute

For program enrollment and all other inquiries about the  
*Gagaku-Hōgaku* initiative, please contact  
The Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies  
Patricia Slattery (pas2141@columbia.edu)  
or  
medievaljapan@columbia.edu

## An Introduction to Selected *Gagaku* Instruments

The *ryūteki*, literally the “dragon flute,” originated in the western regions of China and Tibet. In Chinese legend a Tibetan



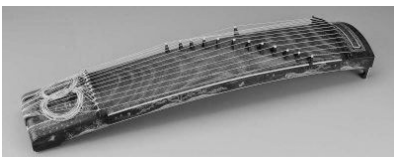
heard a dragon calling as it plunged from the heavens into water below. Trying to reproduce its call, he cut a length of bamboo and blew into it, producing a sound that perfectly resembled the dragon’s voice. Unlike flutes of Korean and Japanese origins, which have six fingerholes, the *ryūteki* has seven large fingerholes which make possible, through varied finger positions and breath pressure, two full octaves, with intervening continuances. The instrument is hollowed-out bamboo with a very large bore. Its surface is stripped off and wrapped in thread-like strips of cherry or wisteria bark and then lacquered inside and out. The *ryūteki* is one of three types of flutes employed in *gagaku* ensembles and is the instrument that most often begins a *gagaku* piece.



The *hichiriki* is a double-reed vertical bamboo pipe with seven fingerholes on the top, and two for the thumbs on the reverse side. Its origins are unknown, but it was used in Tibet and western regions of ancient China before coming to Japan during the reign of Female Emperor Suiko (592-628). Its popularity during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries in Japan is attested to by its mention in such famous literary works as the *Tale of Genji* by Lady Murasaki, and Sei Shōnagon’s *Pillow Book*. Its name implies both feelings of sadness and trembling, or wavering out of awe, or even fear. It has no capacity for soft, pale tones, and indeed its sharp, piercing sound can strike terror, but its

large, loose double reed, which is inserted with a white paper wrap, makes smooth portamento glides one of its characteristics. It has a narrow range of about one octave, and its bore is an inverse cone shape; thus, despite its small size it sounds an octave lower than an oboe, for example.

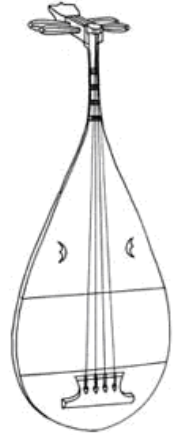
The *shō* is a free-reed, 17-pipe mouth organ, with origins in East and Southeast Asia. It has been found in recent Chinese excavations to date back as early as 433 BCE. Its formal name is *hōshō*, or “phoenix pipe,” because it is shaped like a phoenix bird with its wings closed. The *shō* is said to sound like the call of this legendary bird. In ancient China the dragon and the phoenix were viewed as a powerful chimerical pair, each with the ability to transverse from the highest heavens down to our world and back again. The 17 bamboo pipes of the *shō* are of varied lengths, each set with drops of wax into a bowl-shaped wind chamber with mouthpiece. At the lower end of 15 of the pipes are fastened free-reeds made of metal that sound when both exhaling and inhaling so that the instrument is capable of continuous sound. Fingering is complex and can produce single-tone melody one pipe at a time, but can also create multitudinous chord clusters of up to six tones simultaneously. The *shō* must be heated before and during play to prevent moisture interference on the reeds that can affect its pitch and tone.



The *gaku-sō* is a zither (*koto*) used exclusively for *gagaku* music. Its 13 strings of wound silk supported by movable bridges stretch over a long body of paulownia wood that has two sounding holes on the reverse side. It is plucked with fingernail-like caps on the thumb, index, and

middle fingers of the right hand. The *gaku-sō* is more of a rhythmic percussion instrument than its modern descendents in the *koto* family which carry melodic line.

The *gaku-biwa* is a short-necked lute used specifically for classical Japanese *gagaku* music. Various forms of lute are found throughout ancient Asia and Europe with more strings, but the *gaku-biwa* has four strings of wound silk and four raised frets and is struck by a right-handed plectrum to form a kind of percussion-like drone and is also sounded directly on the strings by the fingers of the left hand. It is an instrument that is employed to punctuate and emphasize the spirit or atmosphere of a piece.



The *kakko*, or double-headed drum, has a small barrel-like body capped on each end by deerskin heads held in place by laces that allow the drum to be suspended horizontally on a wooden stand and struck on each end with sticks in each hand. The entire instrument is elaborately decorated with brightly colored designs.

## PROGRAM

- ◆ *Introduction of Moderator: Barbara Ruch*
- ◆ *Moderator Ralph Samuelson: Gagaku instrumental background*

### *Format:*

- ◆ *First Composition Playthrough*
- ◆ *Composer Directed Playthrough*
- ◆ *Discussion*
  
- ◆ *Second Composition Playthrough*
- ◆ *Composer Directed Playthrough*
- ◆ *Discussion*
  
- ◆ *Third Composition Playthrough*
- ◆ *Composer Directed Playthrough*
- ◆ *Discussion*
  
- ◆ *General Discussion*
- ◆ *Reception*

## MODERATOR PROFILE

**Ralph Samuelson** is the former director of the Asian Cultural Council (ACC), a foundation supporting cultural exchange in the arts between the United States and Asia. He is also a teacher and performer of the Japanese bamboo flute, shakuhachi. Mr. Samuelson pursued M.A. and PhD studies in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University and studied Japanese music in Tokyo in the 1970s under the guidance of distinguished musicologist Fumio Koizumi. He was trained in the classical style and repertoire of the Kinko school of shakuhachi by the late Living National Treasure Goro Yamaguchi and other prominent musicians in Japan. He is a frequent guest lecturer at universities and music schools and a consultant to several American, Japanese, and international arts organizations. He has been an advisor to the Columbia Gagaku-Hōgaku Curriculum and Ensemble Initiative since its launching in 2006.

## THE NEW COMPOSITIONS

### *I. Transfigured Pulse* (In Memory of Stephen Polster)

By Kevin Baldwin

For hichiriki, shō, and biwa

(6 minutes)

### *II. From a Reading of Bashō*

By Edward Green

For hichiriki, biwa, ryūteki, and koto

(approx. 5 minutes)

### *III. Four Poems Set to Music*

“In the Loneliness of Night” (by Kakinomoto Hitomaro)

“With Trepidation” (by Sarumaru Dayu)

“Like Water” (by Sutoku In)

“So Run My Thoughts” (by Minamoto no Muneyuki)

By Alexa Babakhanian

For shō, hichiriki, biwa, piano and voice

(approx. 6 minutes)

## COMPOSERS' PROFILES

**Alexa Babakhanian** holds BA and MA in Piano Performance and Composition from The Juilliard School. In 2006, Ms. Babakhanian was commissioned by Project Espanol and The Mannes School of Music in New York to compose a work celebrating the 400th anniversary of Miguel de Cervantes' classic novel *Don Quijote*, a song-cycle for mezzo-soprano and piano titled *Las Damas de Don Quijote "The Women of Don Quixote."* She was invited in 2007 to compose a piece for the 60th anniversary of the awarding of the Noble Poet Laureate Juan Ramon Gimenez, a setting of two of his unpublished poems for voice and piano titled *La Aurora en Las Montañas*.

Her work *Ruminations* (inspired by 13th-century Persian poet, Jelaluddin Rumi) for Electric Bass, Voice, Piano, Actor, Percussion and Duduk was premiered in August 2009 in New York City. Recent commissions include *LunaTicks* for Cello, Flute, Guitar, Piano, Voice and Percussion (2009) composed for New Music New York, to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the first lunar landing in 1969.

Ms. Babakhanian was one of eight US pianists selected to compete in the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw. Her recording of Debussy's *Des pas sur la neige "Footsteps in the Snow"* was featured in the film *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (1995). Her song *In the Garden* was the most requested song on WNYC's *New Sounds* in 1999 and is regularly featured on the program. Her performance of the original song *Scarlet Rose* was featured on the CBS TV series *Cold Case* and has since built up an international following. She has been a regularly featured guest artist on WKCR's *Som do Brasil* with Jassvan de Lima. Her work entitled *Beat by Beat*, commissioned by NMNY will premiere on June 12th at St. Peters in NY City.



**Kevin Baldwin** is a composer, educator, and saxophonist, originally from Pleasanton, CA. He received his B.M in Music Education and Music Composition from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA, and has recently started his M.M. in Contemporary Performance at Manhattan School of Music.

In composition, Mr. Baldwin has studied extensively with Dr. Francois Rose and Dr. Robert Coburn at the University of the Pacific. In 2009, he received an honorable mention for his piece, "Meditation", for solo bassoon, in the National Alliance of Composers of the USA Young Composers Competition. His music draws from cultures around the world, and incorporates them into the ideas and techniques found in the Western idiom.

In performance, he has studied with Guido Fazio from the Bay Area; James Bunte and Idit Shner from the University of Oregon; Dr. Don DaGrade and David Henderson from the University of the Pacific; and Dr. Paul Cohen at the Manhattan School of Music. Focusing on contemporary music, he performs mainly pieces written during the past 40 years, and has premiered 15 pieces for ensembles which include saxophone; those ensembles include orchestra, quartets and other chamber ensembles, and solo with and without piano. He has performed as a soloist in both France and China and has also had many opportunities to participate in clinics and attend lectures with performers such as Jean Michel-Goury, Claude Delangle, and Jean-Marie Londeix. Recently, Mr. Baldwin has studied Shakuhachi in the Bay Area with Phil Gelb.

Visit [www.kbaldwinmusic.com](http://www.kbaldwinmusic.com) for more recordings, upcoming performances, and more.

**Edward Green** teaches at Manhattan School of Music and the Aesthetic Realism Foundation. His work—as composer and as scholar—is centrally impelled by what he learned from the great poet and educator, Eli Siegel, the founder of Aesthetic Realism: “All beauty is a making one of opposites, and the making one of opposites is what we are going after in ourselves.”

A Fulbright Senior Specialist, Dr. Green last summer gave a doctoral seminar in Buenos Aires on the music of John Cage—a reflection of his long-standing interest in the interplay of Western and Asian music. Among his publications, for example, is a 2007 essay on Duke Ellington for *Ongakugaku*—the journal of the Japanese Musicological Society. He has given conference papers on Chinese and Mongolian Music, and co-authored with anthropologist Arnold Perey a paper outlining the power of Aesthetic Realism to provide a solid foundation for cross-cultural musical analysis, which was given at ESCOM’s “First International Conference on Interdisciplinary Musicology,” held in Graz in 2005. He is also the editor of *China and the West: The Birth of a New Music*, published by Shanghai Conservatory Press, 2009, for which he contributed an essay on the impact of Buddhist thought on the music of Zhou Long.

The recipient of many compositional awards, including a Grammy nomination for his *Piano Concertino*, Dr. Edward Green’s music is represented on Albany Records, North/South Consonance, and Arizona University Recordings, and his *Clarinet Concerto* will appear this year on a Naxos CD. He has written for a diverse range of instruments—from symphony orchestra to Erhu and Pipa. *From a Reading of Basho*, however, is Dr. Green’s first composition for Japanese instruments.

## MUSICIANS' PROFILES



**Mayumi Miyata** (*shō*, 17-pipe, free-reed mouth organ) graduated from Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo as a piano major. While still a student she began study of the *shō* under Tadamaro Ōno of the Imperial Household *Gagaku* Orchestra. Since 1979, as a member of the *gagaku* ensemble Reigakusha, founded by the famed Sukeyasu Shiba, she has appeared in National Theatre of Japan performances. In 1983 Ms. Miyata launched a career as a *shō* soloist with recitals throughout Japan, and since 1986 she has been active as soloist with the world's major orchestras including the NHK Symphony Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, WDR Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic under such conductors as Dutoit, Ozawa, Ashkenazy, Conlon and Previn. She has premiered many works written especially for her by Cage, Takemitsu, Ishii, Eloy, Hosokawa, Méfano, Huber and Lachenmann and can be credited with making the *shō* widely recognized not only in its traditional repertory but as an instrument with a valid place in contemporary music. She has been a pioneering artist-mentor to the Columbia *Gagaku* Instrumental Ensemble from its inception.





**Hitomi Nakamura** (*hichiriki*, double-reed vertical flute) received her M.A. from Tokyo University of the Arts, and has been performing both classical and modern pieces on *Gagaku* instruments for more than 20 years. As a member of the *Gagaku* Reigakusha orchestra, led by her mentor Sukeyasu Shiba, she has performed in the National Theatre of Japan and abroad in the Tanglewood Musical Festival, the Vienna Modern Music Festival, the Ultima Contemporary Music Festival and the Music From Japan (MFJ) Festival. Ms. Nakamura was the leader of the MFJ-sponsored *Gagaku* group, Ensemble Harena, on its successful tour of the USA and Canada in 2002. Active in many performance arenas she has appeared in the premiere performances of many contemporary composers and has played with the Japan Virtuoso Orchestra as well as with the Butō dancer, Semimaru, from the dance group Sankaijuku. She is the creator of the *Ashi no Kaze* (Reed Wind) Recital Series designed to develop the musicality and performance techniques of the *hichiriki*, which is rarely played as a solo instrument. The recitals have generated more than a dozen new pieces for the *hichiriki* repertory, both ensemble and solo pieces. As a founding-mentor, she plays a leading role in Columbia's pioneering Mentor/Protégé Summer *Gagaku* Program in Tokyo.

Website: <http://www.gagaku.jp/hitomi-hichiriki>





**Takeshi Sasamoto** (*ryūteki*, transverse flute) is the grandson of the *iemoto* master of Chikuinsha, head of the Kinko School of the *shakuhachi* bamboo flute, the tradition in which he was raised. He received his M.A. from Tokyo University of the Arts, where he studied *ryūteki* and *Gagaku* performance under the eminent Sukeyasu Shiba. He has performed widely abroad in Tanglewood, Vienna, New York and elsewhere as a member of the *Gagaku* Reigakusha orchestra. Mr. Sasamoto has also been active as a composer and has produced many CDs and published musical scores of his works. His text book for *Gagaku* instrumental beginners is widely used in Japan. He serves as a founding-mentor in Columbia's Mentor/Protégé Summer *Gagaku* Program in Tokyo.



*Music Performance Program*  
*Columbia Department of Music*

Directed by Prof. Deborah Bradley-Kramer, the Music Performance Program of Columbia University seeks to enable students to develop as musicians within the academic setting of Columbia, by providing and facilitating opportunities for musical instruction, participation, and performance. Offerings in the MPP are subdivided into private instrumental lessons and a range of sponsored and affiliated performing ensembles.

One of the main goals of the MPP is to provide high quality music instruction to students within the stimulating intellectual atmosphere of a fine liberal arts college. Many students involved in the MPP major in subjects far removed from music; others double major in music and some other discipline.

***Music V1626 WORLD MUSIC ENSEMBLE***

*Japanese Classical Court Music: Gagaku*

New Course for the Fall 2011 Semester:

***Music V1626 WORLD MUSIC ENSEMBLE***

*Japanese Traditional Chamber Music: Hōgaku*





**INSTITUTE FOR MEDIEVAL JAPANESE STUDIES  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

509 Kent Hall, MC 3906

1140 Amsterdam Avenue

New York, NY 10027

Tel: (212) 854-7403

Fax: (212) 854-1470

Email: [medievaljapan@columbia.edu](mailto:medievaljapan@columbia.edu)