

ANCIENT VOICES IN A CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

SHOMYO

BUDDHIST CHANT WORKSHOP
BY JUNKO UEDA

Shomyo is a Japanese vocal ritual music, usually sung by Buddhist monks, in which breath-control and breath-expression are being practiced. It originated in India and was introduced via Tibet and China to Japan. Each Buddhist sect has its own style of Shomyo singing. The Tendai-shû and Shingon-shû sects became the most musical and important representatives and have a history of about 1200 years.

Shomyo is characterized by its extended pitch-bendings, a slow breathing technique and melismatic melody patterns, where time is imagined as a space in which the recited melody patterns are constantly piled up. Shomyo literally means “voice and wisdom” and is regarded as fundamental for all later Japanese music.

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Shomyo Buddhist Chant - Workshop

This workshop introduces the Japanese Buddhist chant Shomyo, which is originated from the 9th century. Under the guidance of Junko Ueda, the participants will practice how to sing some repertoires of Shomyo chant. Beside working on the musical aspects, a holistic approach is taken towards our universal human sense and spirit. We touch the subject about the essences of Japanese culture: those are *Hara* (the energy centre of the body) and *Ma* (space and timing). Also, some breathing exercises and body exercise (Qi-gong) are introduced and naturally integrated in the workshop. Anyone can join this workshop as no musical knowledge is required.

The aim of the workshop is to:

- enjoy group singing and a variety of voices.
- experience the 1200-year-old Japanese ancient music and to explore its concept.
- train consciousness and control of the breathing.
- learn about *Hara* and to release the stress-level.
- develop vocalization and body control (certainly useful for wind instrument players and vocalists).

Because of its style of slow melismatic Shomyo chanting, the participants will be stimulated to concentrate on their breathing in a quiet manner. While enjoying singing basic Shomyo melodies and meeting this ancient tradition, we will aim to discover the wisdom and the power of the breath. Since 1995, Ueda has been presenting Shomyo workshops. Through promoting these ancient and universal melodies, she supports a global sustainability with thinking about good air as a primary importance to enjoy the breathing.

Junko Ueda

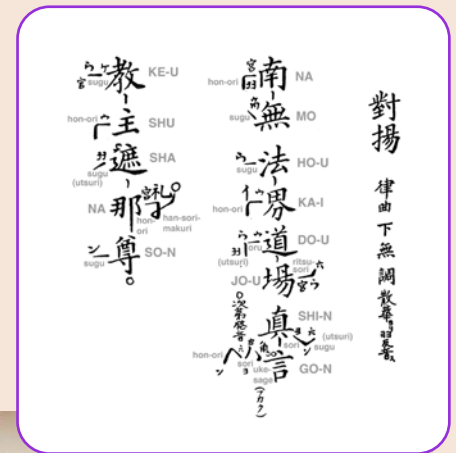
Born in Tokyo, Japan, is Japanese singer and satsuma-biwa (Japanese lute) player, presenting Japanese traditional biwa music (story-telling) and Shomyo Buddhist chant. Ueda studied satsuma-biwa with the famous Kinshi Tsuruta and has been studying Shomyo since 1983 with Kōshin Ebihara (monk of Tendai-shū sect). She studied composition (under Reiko Arima, Jōji Yuasa, Sei Ikeno) at the Tokyo College of Music. Ueda is based in Europe/Japan and has presented her solo concerts, workshops and other collaborations in the world (e.g. with flutist Wil Offermans; cellist Yo-yo Ma; the Dutch Nieuw Ensemble; and composers Jean-Claude Eloy, Keiko Harada, Akemi Naitō, Daryl Jamieson). Ueda is also specialized to perform the works for biwa/voice by Japanese composer Tōru Takemitsu. Her two traditional biwa CDs, 'L'épopée des Heike' (CD650 VDE/AIMP, Geneva) and 'Satsuma Biwa' (ARN64577 Ethnomad/Arion, Geneva/Paris) have received several prizes e.g. the Grand Prix du Disque, Academie Charles Cros, Paris and Choc Le Monde de la Musique, Paris. She has recorded her Shomyo CD 'Meditative Flowers' (CD-E141 E-records, Granada).



"Very organic music. I feel very comfortable and relaxing to sing together." enquête of a Shomyo workshop

"It is amazing that so many different voice qualities can be together and make a music. There is no competition and no stress. You can just produce your voice as you feel like." enquête of a Shomyo workshop

"Standing next to the music with text and musical instructions, she played long ritual only with her voice. For fifty minutes the audience was holding their breath..." Shomyo Concert, De Volkskrant, Holland



Contents of the Workshop

- Warming up: breath and body exercises, focusing on breathing and *Hara*.
- Introduction of Shomyo: learning various Shomyo melody patterns and later singing musical variations using these melody patterns.
- Singing traditional Shomyo pieces: practice 'Sange' and 'Taiyo'.
- Introduction of its history and various concepts of the Japanese culture.

Practical aspects

- The workshop can be held once, like a single event, or as a series of more workshops.
- Proposed duration for a workshop: 3 hours
- Amount of participants: minimum 5
- It is recommended for the participants to wear any style of casual clothes (better avoid high heels and neck-ties).
- A workshop can be held in any quiet place with sufficient space to put chairs for the participants in a half circle. A white-board is needed.
- Language: English, Japanese, Spanish and Dutch.

More Information & Contact

www.junkoueda.com
www.shomyo.com