



The Stearns Newsletter

The Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments
School of Music, The University of Michigan

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Greetings from the Director

Winter 2005 was long and cold. Nevertheless, the Stearns marched on as usual. And three of recent/upcoming activities are particularly fascinating. The first is Mr. Randy Raine-Reusch's work on repairing/maintaining forty-plus Southeast Asian musical instruments in the collection. See his bio-sketch on p. 4. The second is a new version of the collection's database that Mr. Christopher Dempsey has developed. Once it becomes fully operational, the database will render tracking and comparative research on the musical instruments much more effective and comprehensive. The third is the concert that Mr. Randy Raine-Reusch, Ms. Mei Han, and students of Musicology 728 will give on April 15, 2005 (8:00 p.m.) in the Britton Recital Hall of the School of Music, U-M. Featuring a program of traditional and hybrid compositions performed with a variety of Asian and Western musical instruments, the concert makes a statement on music and musical instruments in the globalized world of hybrid expressions. Save the date and come to this unique performance!

A New Director of Docents and Tours

The Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments welcomes Ms. Carol Stepanchuk as the new director of docents and guided tours. A teacher and an author of several popular books on Chinese celebrations and festivals, Carol comes with 25 years of experience of presenting exhibitions and workshops for several museums in California and Michigan, and developing educational programs for primary and high schools that highlight Asian,

... see *Docents*, p. 5

Stearns Activities

On November 21, 2004, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, the Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments, and the School of Music, U-M, cosponsored *Gong Pinoy 2*, a concert of Philippine music and dance, traditional and contemporary. Programmed and directed by Dr. Felicidad A. Prudente, a visitor scholar of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, the concert drew a full audience, many of



Dance with gold fingernails.

whom had to either stand or sit on the floor during the concert. In addition to playing of *kulintang* ensemble and singing of solo and choral



U-M Kulintang Ensemble.

... see *Activities*, p. 5

Virginia Martin Howard Lecturers, Winter 2005

On October 31, 2004, Dr. Felicidad A. Prudente presented a lecture entitled “The Instrumental Ensembles of the Kalinga People of Northern Philippines,” and explained the various types and uses of gong music the natives played. Together with Ms. Kristina Benitez, a doctoral student in the Musicology Department, School of Music and a specialist of Philippine music, Dr. Prudente also demonstrated many performance techniques and rhythms of gong playing in the Philippines.



Dr. Prudente Lectures.

On February 9, 2005, Mr. Randy Raine-Reusch presented a lecture demonstration entitled “Headhunter’s Pipe and Shamam’s Drum.” A lively lecturer, Mr. Raine-Reusch not only explained organological features of more than twenty musical instruments, but also contextualized their performance practices and cultural significances with stories from his personal visits to Australia, Borneo, China, Thailand, and other natural and concrete jungles of the globalized world. A master musician, he demonstrated on all those “exotic” instruments, producing unique tones, melodies, and rhythms. His lecture-demonstration engrossed his audience, adults and children alike.



Mr. Randy Raine-Reusch demonstrates.

... see Lectures, p. 6

The Ichigenkin

By Randy Raine-Reusch

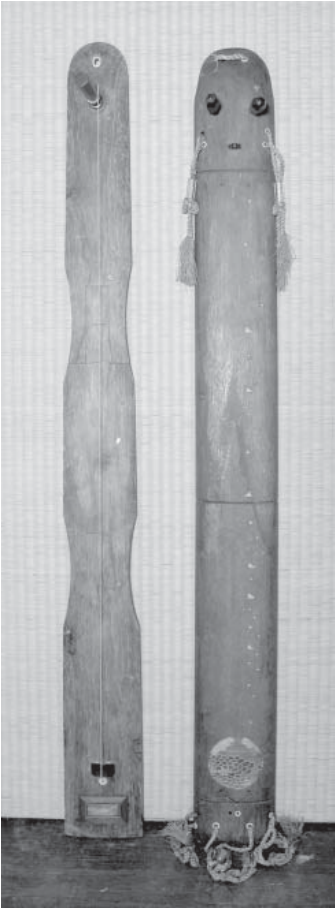
The *ichigenkin* is a one-string board zither unique to Japan, and the parent of a small family of extremely rare Japanese zithers that include the two-string *yakumogoto* and Azumaryu *nigenkin*. In total, there are less than two thousand performers of these three instruments. The *ichigenkin* is constructed of a gently curved plank of palownia wood that is approximately three feet long, five inches wide, and only one inch deep. There is a single vertical tuning peg from which extends a silk string that runs the length of the instrument to pass over a small wooden bridge and then through a small hole to be attached on the underside. The performer usually kneels in front of the instrument placed on a small table and plucks the string with a bamboo or ivory tubular plectrum that fits over the performer’s right index finger. With a slightly longer tube that fits over the left second finger, the instrument is noted by sliding the tube along the string in much the same way as a Hawaiian steel guitar. No musical ornamentation is used in performing *ichigenkin*, although there are a number of types of portamento considered integral to the music.

The origins of the *ichigenkin* are unknown but it is likely that it came from the Chinese seven-string zither, called *qin*. Culturally and historically esteemed, the *qin* was the instrument of the traditional literati, a position that the *ichigenkin* also held in Japan. Like the *qin*, *ichigenkin* has ivory position markers that run beside the string, and scallops on each side of the instrument that form the characteristic double waist. Although the *qin* does not use a noter, as the strings are pressed against the body of the instrument with the fingers, the two instruments sound remarkably similar and share many comparable musical gestures. The *qin* tradition is heavily influenced by Taoist philosophy, which in the Japanese manner of distilling Chinese tradition to extract the essence, was transformed into a Zen aesthetic that is at the heart of the *ichigenkin* tradition, resulting in a depth of expression and a profound connection to nature that is unique. A common adage found in both instrumental

... see *Ichigenkin*, p. 3

Ichigenkin, continued from p. 2

philosophies is: “if a string breaks...no matter; if one is an accomplished performer, then no action is required to play the instrument; if the performer and instrument are present, then so too is the music, although it may take an accomplished listener to hear it.”



Stearns *ichigenkin* and *nigenkin*.

As *ichigenkin* music developed, almost all musical ornaments were stripped away until what was left was a very stark elemental Japanese musical expression. This is a very slow and sparse music that makes full use of *ma*, the Japanese concept of “emptiness that is full”. A complicated concept, *ma* describes an almost endless space that far exceeds its boundaries in multiple dimensions. *Ma* is prominently featured in most Japanese arts: from the white space on a Japanese painting, to a gap in a flower arrangement, to an empty corner of a rock garden, to the recessed area in a traditional Japanese

tatami room for hanging scrolls. In music, *ma* can either be a long held silence between notes that is full of unheard sound, or a heavy silence that is present within a sounded note. To play *ma* a performer must first learn to develop their sense of this sophisticated concept by spending long hours listening and practicing. A performer must also learn to harness the energy of the *hara* (centre of the body) found just below and behind the navel. The energy of the *hara* is commonly used in Japanese martial arts to enable the practitioner to perform feats of strength and agility that are often considered outside the realm of human possibility. In the *ichigenkin* tra-

dition, the *hara* is used to increase the volume and power of the inherently weak sound of the instrument. The *ichigenkin* performer uses the energy sent out by their *hara* to support and propel the sound of the *ichigenkin*, which is then felt as much as heard by the listener. Japanese composer Takahashi Yuji, a recent student of *ichigenkin*, describes this technique as “music traveling from a body to a body, ears are not important” (*Musicworks Magazine* #86, 1997).

What is currently known of the *ichigenkin* history starts in the mid eighteenth century with Kakuho Rinshi a senior monk at the now defunct Kongo Rinji Buddhist temple in Kobe. The interest in *ichigenkin* reached a peak in the early nineteenth century when both the Samurai class and the literati of the time found the deep expression, Zen-like starkness, and rigorous practice of the tradition appealing. The most famous was Japanese folk hero Sakamoto Ryoma who used the performance of *ichigenkin* as a ruse for political intrigue. It was during this period that Manabe Toyohira (1809~1899) took up the *ichigenkin*, touring extensively under the patronage of the Tokugawa court. Manabe became one of the *ichigenkin*’s most prominent and prolific composers, and many of his works are still in the standard repertoire. By the late nineteenth century the *ichigenkin* community had developed three distinct styles of which the most fundamental and traditional was the Seikyodo style in Tokyo. Led by Tokuhiko Taimu (1849~1921), who had an active interest in Zen and who was known to retreat into the mountain caves for long periods of time to fast, meditate and play *ichigenkin*, the Seikyodo style has continued to present day with two Grand Masters being named by the Japanese government as Intangible Cultural Treasures, one of the highest honors available to Japanese artists.

The twentieth century saw a decline in the *ichigenkin* tradition and much of its aesthetics and practices were forgotten. In modernized Japan many of the traditional arts that stressed self-discipline, esoteric philosophy, and attention to subtle details were replaced by the global expressions of fast food and instant gratification. To survive, the traditional arts

... see *Ichigenkin*, p. 4

Ichigenkin, continued from p. 3

in Japan have had to learn to adapt and change with the fast paced lifestyle. Minegishi Issui, the current Grand Master of the Seikyodo *Ichigenkin* has come up with innovative ideas to maintain her tradition. In concert tours and media appearances around the world, she has combined the *ichigenkin* with other Japanese and non-Japanese instruments. She has interested some of Japan's top composers like Takahashi Yuji, and Shiba Sukiyasu to compose contemporary works for *ichigenkin*, and she helped produce a TV soap opera on Japanese National TV about the life of a girl who played *ichigenkin*.



Mr. Randy Raine-Reusch plays the *ichigenkin*.

While it is clear that Minegishi is bringing the *ichigenkin* into the twenty-first century, she has also made a tremendous effort to maintain the *ichigenkin*'s past by reintegrating the traditional philosophy and techniques with her modern approach. As a result, since the 1980s, the instrument's music has started to gain popularity again.

What seems to attract this new generation to the *ichigenkin*? Is it nostalgia, or a longing for a more disciplined life style, or simply the deep expression of the instrument? Perhaps the clues are in the liner notes to a recent *ichigenkin* concert in Tokyo: "The

ichigenkin seems to play the soul, as if it was the voice of the inner self. With a master player, each note contains every aspect of life, every thought, feeling, sound, and experience...everything. If they play a painful note, then the air is laden with sorrow; if they play a happy note, the air seems full of joy. With an accomplished player, the *ichigenkin* is like a knife that cuts to the core; it reveals life in its purity... nothing is hidden. The *ichigenkin* is an instrument of essence."

The Stearns Collection holds both an *ichigenkin* and Azumaryu *nigenkin* and the University of Michigan library has an original score written by Tokuhiko Taimu, the founder of the Seikyodo tradition.

This author studied *ichigenkin* with Yamada Isshi, the most accomplished student of the second Grand Master of Seikyodo. He has performed the *ichigenkin* in over ten countries; and in many concerts in Japan and Canada with the current Grand Master, Minegishi Issui.

Randy Raine-Reusch Bio-Sketch

"The Noah of Musical Instruments," Mr. Randy Raine-Reusch of Vancouver, Canada, is a globe-trotting composer-performer-organologist who makes music with a unique voice. His creative compositions and performances blend not only diverse musical sounds and techniques but also contrasting aesthetics and world views. His studies of musical instruments examines not only their organological features but also their social and cultural meanings. In addition to his busy schedule of music making and lecturing, Mr. Randy Raine-Reusch also writes poetry and does consulting work for a number of international music festivals and governmental agencies. For further information on Randy Raine-Reusch, see <http://www.asza.com/r3hm>.

Docents, continued from p. 1

African, and Latin music and artistic traditions. As a music lover, Carol enjoys Chinese theater, Asian shadow puppets, and chordophones—particularly the *erhu*, the Chinese two-stringed fiddle.

Carol is looking forward to transform Ann Arbor public's engagement with the collection. Drawing on her background in cultural studies, she plans to incorporate hands-on materials, art, and storytelling ideas to make visits to the collection pleasurable and memorable experiences.



Ms. Carol Stepanchuk.

Carol would like to build the docent program utilizing the skills and knowledge of a wide range of participants. She is now working with some of Stearns' past volunteers—a dedicated group with many talents—and looks forward to finding new contributors as well. If you are interested to join

her team of docents, please let her know what instruments you find of interest, and when you would be available for docent training. Training will involve lectures on instruments from the collection, demonstrations, and discussions of world music appreciation led by faculty and other experts.

Carol can be reached by phone at (734) 913-0829 or e-mail cstepanchuk@comcast.net.

Activities, continued from p. 1



Ann Arbor Filipino Chorale sings.

songs, the concert also featured *Singkil* (dances with bamboo poles), *Tawi-tawi Pakiring* (dance with gold fingernails), and *Ifagao* wedding festival dance. The Stearns Collection is proud to be a co-sponsor of this most successful musical and cultural event, one that promotes world music citizenship.



Ifagao wedding festival dance.

Since February 2005, a number of Stearns musical instruments have received tender care from renowned world music composer-performer-organologist: Randy Raine-Reusch of Vancouver, Canada, who is visiting Ann Arbor as a resident artist of the Center for World Performance Studies, U-M. In addition to his busy schedule of giving public lectures and performances, and participating in Musicology 728, a seminar on music as a creative and cultural practice, Mr. Raine-Reusch has generously agreed to help repair and restore some non-western musical instruments for the collection. This heralds a future direction for the Stearns: from now on, it will actively engage musician-organologists to come to Ann Arbor to help repair/restore musical instruments in its holding.

How Do I Get To The Stearns?

The Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments is located in the Margaret Dow Towsley wing at the south end of the Earl V. Moore Building of the School of Music on Baits Drive in the University of Michigan North Campus area. Enter through the doors nearest to the parking lot. The McIntosh Hall is just across the lobby and to the right of the entrance. The Stearns galleries are down the stairs at the end of the lobby to the right.

Admission: Free at all times.

Exhibit Hours: Monday through Friday 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Group Visits and Tours:

To arrange for group visits or guided tours, please call (734) 763-4389.

Parking: Metered parking is available south of the entrance doors.



Lectures, continued from p. 2

On April 9, 2005, Ms. Mei Han, the world renowned *zheng* (Chinese zither) virtuoso from Vancouver, Canada, gave a lecture-demonstration on the Chinese *zheng* and its music. Entitled "Silk Strings and Jade Bridges," the lecture was part of Ms. Han's teaching, lecturing, and performance activities on campus as a resident artist of the Center for World Performance Studies. Ms. Han's explanations were informative and eloquent; her playing mesmerized her audience. For further information on Mei Han, see <http://www.asza.com/mh.shtml>.



Ms. Mei Han.