

### **Christopher Yohmei Blasdel Profile & CV Profile:**

Christopher Yohmei Blasdel began the shakuhachi and studies of Japanese music in 1972 with Goro Yamaguchi. In 1982 he received an MFA in ethnomusicology from Tokyo University of Fine Arts and received his professional name “Yohmei” from Yamaguchi in 1984. Performing in Japan and around the world, Blasdel is one of the foremost world performers and educators in shakuhachi and Japanese music. His playing maintains a balance between traditional shakuhachi music, modern compositions and cross-genre work with musicians, dancers, poets and visual artists.

Blasdel’s discography includes *Striking Light, Striking Dark* (2015), a collaboration with vocalist Sasha Bogdanowitsch of the poetry by Pablo Neruda, Sam Hamill, Ranier Marie Rilke, John Logan and others set to original music, *Navarasa*, a collaboration with shakuhachi and acoustic bass (2010), *Breath Play* (2007), *Visionary Tones* (2005) and several other CDs of traditional and contemporary music. He has composed and performed music for NHK documentaries and various films. He co-organized the Boulder World Shakuhachi Festival ’98, the Sydney Shakuhachi Festival, 2008 and co-founded and directed the yearly Prague Shakuhachi Festival in 2006 and continued as senior advisor until 2016. His writing include the most comprehensive and best-selling English language shakuhachi instruction book, *The Shakuhachi—A Manual for Learning* (Printed Matter Press, 2008) and a semi-autobiographical essay, *The Single Tone—A Personal Journey through Shakuhachi Music* (Printed Matter Press, 2005—originally published in Japanese as *Shakuhachi Odessei* by Kawade Publishers, 2000 and winner of the prestigious Rennyō Award for non-fiction), details his experiences learning and playing the shakuhachi in Japan and around the world. He presently teaches Japanese music at University of Hawai’i at Manoa. Blasdel holds a fourth-degree black belt in Aikido and resides between Honolulu and Tokyo.

## **Curriculum Vitae**

**Christopher Blasdel**, (Performance name: Christopher Yohmei)

E-mail: yohmei@gol.com <http://www.yohmei.com>

Place of birth: Canyon, Texas, USA

DOB: 12/29/1951 Citizenship: USA

Visa status: Permanent resident in Japan

Marital status: married

Language Competence: Native tongue: English. Complete fluency in speaking, reading & writing Japanese. Basic conversational abilities in Spanish, German & Thai.

### **Education:**

- 1974 BA in Japan Studies, Earlham College, Richmond, IN
- 1972-73 Waseda University, International Division
- 1982 MFA, Ethnomusicology (Japanese Music ) Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku (Tokyo University of the Fine Arts)
- 1984 Awarded teaching License (Shihan) and performance name, "Yohmei," from Chikumeisha Shakuhachi Guild

### **Teaching experience**

- 1988, Earlham College / Artist in residence / Japanese music (three months).
- 1989—2013, Asahi Culture Center / Shakuhachi instructor.
- 1991, Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok) / Guest Professor / Japanese music, ethnomusicology (three months, sponsored by the Japan Foundation visiting professorship program).
- 2001—2005, International Christian University / Adjunct Lecturer / Japanese Music
- 1998—2003, Ferris Woman's College / Guest Lecturer / Japanese Music.
- 2002—2015, Temple University, Humanities Department / Adjunct Lecturer / Japanese Music.

- 2016—present. University of Hawai'i at Manoa / Adjunct Lecturer / Japanese Music.

### **Other Professional Experience**

- 1988—2013, Artistic Director, The International House of Japan, Inc. Duties include arts programming and curating the Creative Artists Exchange Fellowship, sponsored jointly by the National Endowment for the Arts, Japan-US Friendship Commission and the Japanese Cultural Affairs Agency (Bunkachou).
- 1997—2001, *The Japan Times* writer of bi-monthly column on traditional Japanese music.
- 1994—1998, World Shakuhachi Festival, '98 Executive Committee / Senior Executive / Organizing and executing the World Shakuhachi Festival held in 1998 in Boulder, Colorado (sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Culture, Japan Foundation, Japan-US Friendship Commission, etc).
- 2002—2003, Artistic Director, Fukuoka Gendai Hogaku Festival.
- 2006—2016, Senior advisor and guest teacher at Prague Shakuhachi Summer School.
- 2003—present, Guest teacher at Rocky Mountain Shakuhachi Summer Camp.
- 2006—2008, Sydney World Shakuhachi Festival, '08 Executive Committee member.
- 2005—2015, Panel member, NEA selection committee for US-Japan Creative Artist Exchange Fellowship Program.

### **Publications: Books (English and Japanese)**

- 2000, *March Shakuhachi Odyssey—Ten no Neiro ni Miserarete* (Winner of 1999 Rennyou-Shou Award for Non-fiction), Kawade Shobo Shinsha.
- 1988 *The Shakuhachi, A Manual for Learning* Ongaku no Tomosha publishers, Tokyo.
- 2005 *Za Shakuhachi; Shakuhachi Ongaku Shutoku no Tebiki* (Japanese version of 1988 publication, *The Shakuhachi*), Ongaku no Tomosha, Tokyo.

- 2005, Feb. *The Single Tone—A Personal Journey into Shakuhachi Music*, Printed Matter Press, Tokyo.
- 2008, June, *The Shakuhachi, A Manual for Learning* (revised and expanded edition), Printed Matter Press, Tokyo.

### **Publications: Theses & Articles (English and Japanese)**

- 1977, Oct. "Kamikara no Izanai--Fue" (The Flute, A Beckoning from the Gods) *Geijutsu Shincho*.
- 1980, Dec. "Hôgaku to Jazu, Fyûshon ni Miru Atarashii Kaiten" (Jazz and Hôgaku, New Development in Fusion), *Jazz Swing Journal*.
- 1981 Spring "Denshi Ongaku no Danshō" (Thoughts on Electronic Music) *Anthropos*.
- 1982 "Shakuhachiwo Kangaeru, Dionyusosu oyobi Apolontekina Hyôgenhō nitsuite" (Dionysian and Appolonian Forms of Expression in Shakuhachi Music) Masters Thesis, Tokyo University of Music and Fine Arts.
- 1983 Spring "Anatomy of a Japanese Festival: The Great Mid-Winter On Matsuri" *Hôgaku* v.1.
- 1984 Autumn "Geijutsu Daigakuwo Kangaeru" (The Role of Art Universities) *Kikkan Hôgaku*.
- 1984 Spring "Hôki kara Gakkihenô Shakuhachi" (The Shakuhachi, From an Instrument of Meditation to an Instrument of Music) *Kikkan Hôgaku*.
- 1984 April/June "The Shakuhachi, Aesthetics of a Single Tone" *The Japan Quarterly*.
- 1985 "Kokyôhe no Ensô Ryokô" (Performing Hôgaku in the United States) *Kikkan Hôgaku*, Spring.
- 1985, July 19th August 9th "Japan's Music and Education" *Asahi Evening News*.
- 1987 "Boku no Hosomichi, Tabi to Taiken no Danshō" (My 'Narrow Road,' Travels and Experiences in Japan) *Tabi to Rekishi*, Jan.--Dec., (Series).
- 1987 July 24 "Japanese Music Performed in Hamburg" *Asahi Evening News*.
- 1988 July 4 "As One Body: A 'Hadaka' Matsuri" *Mainichi Daily News*.
- 1989 May 8 "A View of a Performer--The Secret of Balance" *Mainichi Daily News*.

- 1990 "Shakuhachi" Liner notes for *Shakuhachi, Traditional Japanese Music*, King Records.
- 1990 April 15 "Seven Sound Wonders of Japan" *Mainichi Daily News*.
- 1991 "Geijutsu no Shien to Mushien, Mataku Kojintekina Yotsu no Taikendan" (Support and Non-Support of the Arts: Four Personal Experiences) *Kigyô to Bunka no Taiwa*, Tokai University Press.
- 1992 "Ongaku to Wajutsuno Mah--Bunya Sensei no Jôruri" (The Magic of Narration & Music,

Bunya Sensei's Joruri" Liner notes for *Okamoto Bunya, Shinnai Bushi Originals*, VI IV, Teichiku Records.

- 1992, Aug. "Plagiarism Versus Creative Quotation in the Music of Thailand and Japan" Paper given for the conference "Modern Art in Thailand 1932--1992, Changing Perspectives" Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.
- 1992, July "Bankoku no Mikkatsuki no Gaskushi Tachi" (The Crescent Moon Musicians from Bangkok) *Kodô*.
- 1993, July 4 "Shakuhachi no Isan" (The Legacy of the Shakuhachi) *Kômeitô Shinbun*.
- 1993: "Kakure Meijin--Nishimatsu Bun'ichi" (Nishimatsu Bun'ich--The Hidden Master) Liner notes for *Song of the Soul, The Jiuta of Nishimatsu Bun'ichi*, Teichiku Records.
- 1995, Dec. "Wakanomiya" fiction short story featured in *Wingspan*, ANA inflight magazine.
- 2000 August: "Sound Japan" *The Japan Foundation Newsletter* (Vol. XXVIII/No. 1).
- 2003 August: *Japanese Music Notebook*, written, edited and compiled by Christopher Yohmei Blasdel (self-published booklet for university ethnomusicology class).
- 2004-2005: "Sound Japan," a year-long series of monthly articles for the Japan National Chamber of Commerce and Industry magazine, *Shôkôkaigi Geppô*.

- 2005: “Shakuhachi Ongaku—Ten no neiro ni misserarete—” published in *Surugadai Daigaku Rongi*, (Scholastic Annals of Surugadai University).
- 2007-2010, Wrote a series of articles on traditional Japanese performing art published in the International House of Japan Bulletin (biannual).
- 2012: “An Exchange for Fire—The Final Pilgrimage of Poet Craig Arnold”, non-fiction short story, from *My Postwar Life—New Writings from Japan and Okinawa*, Chicago Quarterly Review.

### **Discography:**

- 1988: WATCHING THE WAVES, Collaboration with Poet Sam Hamill, Rainshadow Tapes.
- 1990: VOICES FROM WITHIN, VOICES FROM AFAR, THE SHAKUHACHI OF CHRISTOPHER YOHMEI (Teichiku records).
- 1992: NIGHT OF THE GARUDA on CD (Teichiku records, originally released as an LP in 1986).
- 1996: ZEN REVERIES for Shakuhachi & Synthesizer (Moonbridge CDs).
- 1999: HEART OF BAMBOO A collaborative CD with poet Sam Hamill reading his own work with original shakuhachi music by Blasdel (Copper Canyon Press).
- 2001: BAMBOO VOICE, HUMAN FLUTE A collaborative CD with vocalist Mika Kimula (Far East Records).
- 2004: VISIONARY TONES Traditional and Contemporary Kinko Style Shakuhachi Music (Bright One Records, Tokyo).
- 2007: BREATHPLAY A collaborative CD of original music by Christopher Yohmei and composer Byron AuYong.
- 2010: NAVARASA A collaborative CD of original music by Christopher Yohmei and bassist Mark Izu.
- 2015: STRIKING LIGHT, STRIKING DARK Poetry by Pablo Neruda, John Logan, Ranier Maria Rilke and Sam Hamill set to music and voice.

### **Grants, Awards & Scholarships:**

- 1978–1980: Japan Ministry of Education Scholarship Award for Graduate Foreign Students (*Mombushô Kokuhi Ryûgakusei Shôgakkin*).
- 1981–1983: Scholarship A ward, T okyû Foundation for Inbound Students.
- 1985: Awarded travel grant from Japan Airlines for concert tour of North American colleges and universities.
- 1985: Chosen by Japan Foundation for series of Japanese government sponsored concerts in China (*Nihon Bunka Kaigai Hakken*).
- 1987, 1989: Awarded travel grant from Lufthansa Airlines for concert tour, "Japanese Music Today" of Germany & Switzerland.
- 1988: Awarded travel grant from The Japan Foundation (*Kaigai kôen Josei*) for concert tour of North American colleges and universities.
- 1991: Awarded Japan Foundation Visiting Professorship (*Nihon Kenkyuka Tanki Hakken Senmonka Hakken*) at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.
- 1992: Awarded travel grant (*Kokusai Kaigi Shusseki Josei*) from The Japan Foundation for participation in seminar "Modern Art in Thailand 1932--1992, Changing Perspectives" Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.
- 1992: Grant awarded for recital (*Jikûshô*) from the Japan Arts Fund (*Geijutsu Bunka Shinkô Kikin*).
- 1995: Travel/performance grant awarded (Japan Foundation: Performing Arts Program) for introducing traditional and contemporary Japanese music at selected Japan-American Societies across the US.
- 1996: Invited participant in Atlantic Center for the Arts Japan/US Exchange Residency Program.
- 1996: Performance Grant from Asahi Breweries.
- 1997: Awarded residency at Centrum Artists' Residency, Port Townsend, Washington.
- 1998: Award Asian Cultural Council grant for five-month research into the traditional music of Thailand.
- 1999: Awarded Ren'nyo Prize for Non Fiction work, *Shakuhachi Odyssey*.
- 2000: Awarded performance grant from Japan Steel Cultural Association.
- 2008, April: Awarded grant from Melburn G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research, Texas A&M University, to give a public lecture entitled: "Seeking

Spirituality in the Performing Arts of Japan: Sound as a Pathway to Self-Knowledge.”

- 2010: Travel/performance grant awarded (Japan Foundation: Performing Arts Program) for Prague/European Shakuhachi Festival.
- 2011: *Jinrai—Christopher Yohmei Shakuhachi Recital* chosen for inclusion in the 2011 Autumn Arts Festival, sponsored by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Japan.
- 2012: Lecture/concert series at Texas A&M University

#### **Membership in Professional Societies**

- Tōyō Ongakugakkai (Society for Research in Asiatic Music)
- Nihon Sankyoku Kyōkai (performer's society for traditional Japanese music)
- Trustee, Chikumeisha (Shakuhachi Guild)
- The International House of Japan, Inc.
- East West Center Alumni Association
- Fourth degree black-belt, Aikido