

# Exotic musical flavours from Japan

BY JOSEPH LAMBERT

Akikazu Nakamura and Michiyo Yagi blended magically with the Upstream Music Association last Sunday night, weaving a tapestry of exotic and traditional tunes that were transformed by their skill.

The guest artists brought with them two unique instruments that had the flavour of their native Japan. Aki wielded the shakuhachi, a traditional Japanese bamboo flute, while Michiyo played the koto, a horizontal harp-like instrument.

The two internationally famed artists began their cross country tour with this concert, held as part of a series celebrating the Year of Asia Pacific.

The concert took place in the Saint Mary's University Art Gallery. The crescent shape of the seats allowed for all to view the two musicians perfectly. The room's acoustics, with the surrounding art, created an atmosphere of total connection and improvisation that heightened the musical talent in the room.

The Upstream ensemble cast

included drums, guitars, a cello, saxophones, a bass clarinet, a piano, a synthesizer, an Irish harp and wind chimes.

With the addition of the Japanese instruments the orchestra was stellar.

The pieces ranged from atonal sounds that rumbled like the belly of a dragon to sad and somewhat cartoon-like scores.

It was interesting that several of the pieces had more meaning than just the sound of the notes.

The second song utilized only the Irish harp, the koto, and the shakuhachi. The song, "Sadako",

was written to commemorate a Japanese girl of the same name. Sadako believed that if she folded 1000 origami peace cranes she would rid herself of cancer caused by the atomic bomb of World War Two. She died peacefully, following the folding of her thousandth crane. The song was fittingly sad, yet it had an eerie, erratic pace.

The seventh song, the hymn "Sanka", was dedicated to Michiyo's teacher who had recently passed away. The speed and empathy she put into the piece moved audience members

from their seats. Her fingers plucked at the strings so quickly and precisely it sounded as if she were creating sonically coloured rain.

Other songs had intellectual intentions.

"Saji" is a sanskrit word for the Buddha. The word, and the music, tell us to practice harder — expressing a Zen buddhist feeling. The tune had only ever been played by Aki's teacher, and wasn't written down. To play the song, Aki had to analyze the frequencies of the recorded piece.

I thought Zen was about sitting peacefully. By the enthusiastic way Aki played his flute, and with maniacal head gyrations, he didn't really put me at rest — but, damn, it was outta sight.

The eighth piece consisted of a collection of haikus put to the music of wind chimes and the bamboo flute. Very beatnik, very introspective, but a tad lengthy.

The orchestral piece that finished off the night was the capper. Each musician solo-ed wildly. The song, at its climax, reached an overture of epic proportions. The artists finished with smiles and laughter.

'Nuff said.

Akikazu and Michiyo were phenomenal. The Upstream Music Ensemble is tight, and has a totally satisfying sound. My musical taste buds were whet with flavours I had not dreamed of before. I hope they'll be back to dish another musical feast in the future.

# Student-run theatre goes cuckoo

BY BRIANNE JOHNSTON

"One flew east, one flew west, one flew over the cuckoo's nest."

These lines, from Ken Kesey's award winning novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, will soon emanate from a stage near you. The King's Theatrical Society (KTS) have adapted Dale Wasserman's script and will be showcasing the play as their mainstage production for the first semester.

But co-director Jeff Margolis is not content to re-hash the script as many have in the past. He has made some changes which audience members who have seen other adaptations may not expect.

"We are staying pretty close to the original themes, but we've added a new opening sequence

which illustrates the routine of the patients. The book is basically about the deconstruction of society, so [the new sequence] focuses on this."

Margolis and cast also felt the script, penned in 1962, needed some updating for today's society.

"The female [characters] aren't really developed and the script is slightly misogynistic ... we've updated the language a bit for audiences of the 1990s."

But Margolis is quick to point out that the changes were not solely brought about by himself.

"[It's] not my job to make it the 'Jeff Margolis Show'. There was a lot of ad-libbing from the cast. And I'm really proud of them. Anyone who has read the book or seen the movie knows the

characters are complex. The actors did all that demanding work in their spare time."

The actors, all members of the KTS, had to juggle classes and homework on top of a rigorous rehearsal schedule. Auditions and preparatory work began in early October, and Margolis had a plan to start with intense rehearsals at the very beginning; knowing that people would have papers to write and exams to study for closer to opening night.

Similar to past King's performances, there is a variety of actors. The cast is an ensemble of King's students and local talent.

"Lot's of people think KTS is insular, but we have students in the cast from first year. Any student can bring in a script to

[the society]. We take the plays and work with the writer and director to make any improvements."

KTS has already produced five student plays this semester, with another six slated for the spring term. Although it may not be theatre in the round, KTS plays are highly anticipated by the college's student body. But Margolis feels the work of KTS deserves a broader audience.

"I hope the Dal community comes out. It's a good break from the tedium of studying."

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* will run from November 26-29 in *The Pit*, with the show starting at 8:00pm. Tickets are available at the door and cost \$6 for students and \$8 for general admission.

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