

June, 2009

The wisteria are starting to leaf out under the canopy covering Princess Chujo's grave. For the second time I will be performing in Taimadera Temple, Naka no bou's Kami Kuyo ceremony. I will be performing the traditional shakuhachi honkyoku "Daha" (Pounding Waves) to start the ceremony off. The pounding of waves reflect life in that there are times when we must be fast moving and energetic as well as times when we should be more reserved. After this solo piece there will be some Buddhist chant and drumming, followed by all of the participants offering a piece of their cut hair at the grave of Princess Chujo in a procession.

Princess Chujo was said to have been the daughter of Emperor Fujiwara ?????. Jealous of Princess Chujo's genius in music and poetry even at the age of 15, her stepmother attempted to assassinate her. The princess is said to have fled the palace and floated down the Chujo River (Takada River) to Abe village in the town of Kouryo, where she visited an ancient tomb in Tsukiyama (築山古墳). After that she became a monk at Taimadera temple, which was forbidden for a woman to do at that time. She prayed for 90 days consecutively and after that, it is said that she wove the entire Taima Mandhala out of lotus threads in a single night. The story of Princess Chujo is one of dedication and strength. I only wish to have her determination in life.

Following the procession Izukawa Hidefumi and I (Kurofune) will perform our piece Rokumeiji, our remake of the traditional piece entitled "Shika no Tone" (Cry of the Wild Deer) to end the ceremony. Following that we will move to the main temple hall and perform 3 songs from our self-titled album "Kurofune."

The dedication Princess Chujo showed in the face of opposition is one that we can all learn from even today. Her story dates from the year 747, but we still hear of the same type of drama that she had to endure. One thing that Japan has shown me is that we should learn from history. The historical

and cultural sites are abundant here and they all have a valuable story to tell. These sites are not unlike the music of the shakuhachi, where every piece tells a story, shows a piece of history, and reveals another piece of you every time you play it. The culture of Nara especially, being the birthplace of Japan as we know it today, is rich in historical stories that all have many life lessons that are still relevant today. If only we would take the time to study and learn from history, rather than letting it repeat itself. We may find a piece of ourselves that we just never knew existed.