

August

Since 1962 my home town of Buffalo, NY's sister city has been Kanazawa. With Kanazawa's help the Japanese garden in Buffalo has been restored in the style of their famous Kenrokuen Park. Kenrokuen is considered one of Japan's top 3 most beautiful gardens. A beautiful relationship of the exchange of arts has taken place with the help of the Buffalo-Kanazawa Sister City Committee's president, Dr. Takako Michii. With her help on my visit home this summer, we organized a great concert of traditional and modern Japanese music at the Burchfield Penney Art Center's wonderful auditorium.

The acoustics of the 200 person hall were great, so without the use of microphones the natural sounds of the Japanese and western instruments could be heard. It was a combination of solo shakuhachi pieces, duets with shakuhachi and a grand finale with all of the performers. Two songs, "Haru no Umi" (Sea of Spring) and "Kaze" (The Wind), by Izukawa Hidefumi (Kurofune), were performed with my father Ron Smith on piano. On clarinet Dr. Ben Christy and I performed "Itsuki no Komoriuta" and he performed "Nanbu Ushi Oiwaake" solo. Joe Small, a fellow native of Buffalo and Japanese taiko drummer, performed a few traditional and modern songs with me as his original solo pieces. Finally, we all performed an arranged version of Izukawa Hidefumi's piece "Sakura".

I also performed 2 traditional pieces called "Takjochi" and "Yamagoe," and my original piece "The Mist of Yamato." In the early mornings I sometimes go running near the Niijo Mountains. From this elevated area you can see the mist slowly rising above the ancient capital of Nara, the Yamato area. This was the beginning of my day, in the Yamato area, the beginning of Japan. I took great pride in telling the story about the inspiration for my song as well as some of the other wonderful encounters I have had in Nara. It was an interesting blend of the cultures of Buffalo, Kanazawa, and Nara.

If you have the chance you should definitely visit Kenrokuen, it really has everything. But while in Nara city I highly recommend visiting Isuien garden and Neiraku Art Museum, which is attached to it. It is a serene garden from the 1670s which is a great place to rest and escape some of the bustle of the city. The use of the borrowed scenery is a great example of the blend of nature and human thought. I believe the Japanese garden, whether it be in Buffalo, Kanazawa, or Nara, is similar to music in that it has come about due to a collaborative effort by many people for many generations. We want to attribute art to a specific person, but in actuality the art has been brought to life by many hands. Across cultures and time periods, I believe it is important to foster an appreciation for this kind of art and music.