

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



TSUGARU combines the 'jazz like' energy of this percussive string instrument with the exotic sounds of the shakuhachi, koto and tabla.

"Of all the Japanese folk styles, Tsugaru shamisen is the most immediately approachable, and Sato is a contemporary master at the peak of his powers" - Alan Cummings, International Music Critic

In August, as part of the 2006 Australia-Japan Year of Exchange celebrations, Michihiro Sato, one of the finest Tsugaru shamisen performers ever, will feature in a series of concerts in Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane in collaboration with shakuhachi, tabla and koto performers from Japan.

Michihiro Sato was born in 1957 in Tokyo, Japan. His mother, a shamisen (an instrument introduced from China during the 16th century from which the Tsugaru shamisen derives) player, was the influence behind him enrolling in a shamisen school in 1970. His sudden expulsion a month later was due to the other students' jealousy of the early talent he exhibited - if he didn't leave, they would. He continued to study the shamisen out of his love for the instrument, but felt too restricted in the world of traditional music in Japan. The turning point for Sato came after he saw a concert by renowned Tsugaru shamisen master Chisato Yamada, and was so overcome by the music, he moved to Tsugaru, the home of Tsugaru shamisen, to become Yamada's student.

Sato began his career by winning the National Tsugaru Shamisen Contest two years running, in 1982 and 1983 - a feat yet to be matched. Based in Tokyo, he has spent the last two decades redefining the Tsugaru shamisen genre, which was previously known as a humble folk instrument performed mostly by blind musicians. He has drawn comparisons to legendary musicians such as Albert King and Jimi Hendrix for his bold reinvention of a traditional musical form into an exciting contemporary style.

Sato's unique and pulsating performance style have led him to collaborations with some of the world's great improvisers such as John Zorn (*Ganryu Island*), Bill Frisell and Kazutoki Umezu. He has worked with Downtown New York avant-garde, Tom Cora, Fred Frith, Elliot Sharp, Steve Coleman and Ned Rothenberg and has given a solo performance at the International New Jazz Festival in Moers, Germany in 1996.

Originating from the Tsugaru region in northern Japan, the Tsugaru shamisen is a style of folk music played using a three-stringed percussive lute. Traditionally played by blind wandering minstrels who went from door to door during the bitterly cold and long winters of northern Japan, the music is said "to have been born out of the depths of emotion felt by a boy who had lost his mother at birth, his sight at eight, and his father at ten". The distinctive style of playing and repertoire, which developed over time, articulates the beautiful spirit of the Tsugaru people as well as their hardships. The 'bluesy' and powerful sounds of Tsugaru shamisen are both bracingly aggressive and exotically subtle, and are notably different to the more traditional types of Japanese music. The Tsugaru shamisen performance style is often likened to jazz, because of the highly refined technique required for speedy playing and the improvisational style, which emphasises the performer's individuality and creativity.

Performing with Sato will be his son **Michiyoshi Sato**, a future Tsugaru shamisen superstar in the making, shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute) virtuoso **Shozan Tanabe**, **Masaki Yoshimi** on tabla and **Sachiko Kaiho** on koto (Japanese harp). Together with Sato, these highly talented performers will combine skill, passion and improvisational ability to create a beautiful harmony of sounds.

Come and experience this delightful fusion of ethnic tradition and contemporary music.

FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT HELEN HUYNH ON 02-8239-0058 or
via email Helen_Huynh@jpf.org.au

SYDNEY

City Recital Hall Angel Place

Friday, 18 August at 7pm

Bookings: City Recital Hall Angel Place 02 8256 2222/ www.cityrecitalhall.com

Tickets*: Adults \$30 / \$25 Conc. \$25 / \$20

CANBERRA

Llewellyn Theatre, Canberra school of Music

Sunday, 20 August at 7pm

Bookings: Canberra Ticketing 02 6275 2700/ www.canberraticketing.com.au

Tickets*: Adults \$30 / \$25 Conc. \$25 / 20

BRISBANE

Brisbane City Hall, Ithaca Auditorium

Friday, 25 August at 7pm

Bookings: Ticketek 132 849/ www.ticketek.com.au

Tickets*: Adults \$30 / \$25 Conc. \$25 / \$20

**Prices include GST. Transaction fees may apply.*

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