

# Newsday

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## Music of Japan

In Brooklyn, another kind of Japanese musicality will have a platform, with upcoming performances by **Ensemble East** and the **Masayo Ishigure Koto Ensemble** at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. James "Nyoraku" Schlefer, 46, a licensed grand master shakuhachi player for Ensemble East, has composed a new work called "Couple Dance" to be paired with his earthy, Zen-influenced standards.

The New York City-based group also features koto player **Masayo Ishigure** on the 13-string Japanese harp, **Mutsumi Takamizu** on shamisen, a three-string lute, and **Dorothy Lawson** playing the cello.

The shakuhachi, a five-hole bamboo flute, has a distinguished history in Japan. It first became a mainstay of 13th century court orchestras, Schlefer explains, before resurfacing with force four centuries later as an instrument favored by wayward samurai (some accounts give an earlier timeline). These unemployed warriors, who turned to the monkhood, which allowed them to perform and beg for money, understood a pure form of artistic inspiration. "They were starving," Schlefer says.

*BAMcafe Live presents Ensemble East Friday at 9:30 p.m., Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave., Fort Greene. The Masayo Ishigure Koto Ensemble performs the following night at 9:30.*

*Both performances are held in conjunction with the Ninagawa Co.'s presentation of "Macbeth" at the BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, Wednesday-Saturday. Call 718-636-4100, or visit [www.bam.org](http://www.bam.org). ■*