

## Anne Norman - shakuhachi short bio – 2022

**Anne Norman** is a passionate shakuhachi performer and composer working as soloist and in collaboration with a diverse range of musicians and artists. She has performed in festivals across Australia and in Europe, Scandinavia, America and Japan. Anne has been invited to give workshops on her vox/shaku music in several countries, sharing her polyphonic and hocketing techniques for vocalising while blowing shakuhachi.

Anne grew up on the coast at Mornington, an avid swimmer, sailor and hiker, majoring on flute at Melbourne Conservatorium before taking up shakuhachi in Kobe with Nakamura Shindo in the 1980s and later in Osaka with Tajima Tadashi, culminating in a Monbusho scholarship to study under Living National Treasure Yamaguchi Goro at Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music. Her studies in Japan of traditional Zen, classical chamber and contemporary shakuhachi genres, combined with her knowledge of Western flute repertoire and her studies in ethnomusicology and cross-cultural music collaborations

have resulted in Anne's unique voice on shakuhachi. She has released many CDs of original music and has directed major creative projects with grants from the Australia Council, Arts Victoria, the Sidney Myer Fund, Japan Foundation & DFAT.



### **Shakuhachi Zeitgeist**

Shakuhachi is a bamboo flute constructed from various lengths of the root-end of a heavy species of bamboo. Used for centuries in Japan as a monk's tool for "Blowing-Zen," its subtle timbres and earthy, airy nature were used to portray the power and fragility of the environments through which these itinerant monks wandered. Shakuhachi was also played to accompany song and in chamber ensembles with plucked strings. Shakuhachi is now performed globally in a wide range of genres and in evocative film music. There are now more people learning and performing shakuhachi outside Japan than in, with the most recent World Shakuhachi Festival hosted in London by the European Shakuhachi Society in 2018, at which Anne was an invited presenter. Anne was also invited to perform at the 2022 World Shakuhachi Festival in Shenzhen – postponed due to covid outbreaks in China. Japan, America and Australia have also hosted world shakuhachi festivals at which Anne has performed. Shakuhachi players are a global community, most recently learning melodies from Ukrainian players posting clips from bunkers in war torn cities.

Anne's performances in schools in every state and territory have introduced hundreds of thousands of Australian children to Japanese music and the shakuhachi in particular. This work in schools has enabled her to collaborate with other musicians and artists while on the road in more eclectic and contemporary performances. Anne has recorded on movie soundtracks and premiered works for shakuhachi by Australian and Japanese composers in ensemble with string quartets, opera singers, percussionists, harpsichord, didjeridu, songmen of various clans in Arnhem land... the list is long. Anne composes for and improvises with a wide range of artists, and her scores are in the Australian Music Centre.

Thanks to a growing number of Australian professional performers, shakuhachi is familiar to audiences of new music, jazz, classical and world music scenes within Australia. Joe Browning, a visiting music scholar from England, wrote a review of the 2017 concert *The Prospect and Bower of Bliss* at the Melbourne Recital Centre - compositions by Johanna Selleck released on Tall Poppies with sopranos Merlyn Quaife and Judith Dodsworth; Arwen Johnston on percussion and Anne Norman on shakuhachi: "As a shakuhachi player and researcher, I've long been fascinated by new music for this instrument... and coming to Australia from the UK has sharpened my sense of the different ways this instrument finds its way into local new music scenes. Here, people are more likely to know the name of the instrument and its entry into contemporary music comes via a wider tradition of Australian composers looking to Asia for musical inspiration."