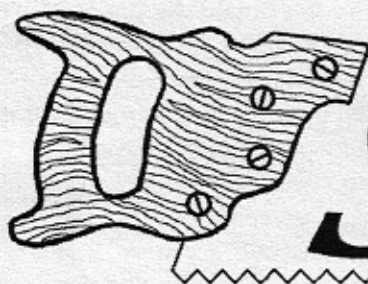


INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL SAW ASSOCIATION



SAW PLAYER NEWS

Vol.12, No.2 www.SawPlayers.org Email: Info@SawPlayers.org (415)331-9661 Designer: Ken Ball Winter 2007/08

The 2007 Saw Festival



2007 Saw Contestants with Saw Contest Judges: (L-R) John Kerr, Kenny Blacklock (Judge), Peter Geissert, Terri Manning, Lars Hedberg, Verlan Jesse, Terry Bergman, Roy Maine, Caroline McCaskey, Warner "Dutch" Kopp, Thomas Spearance (Master of Ceremonies), Stephen Cook, Sarah Holtschlag, Morgan Cowin (Judge), Cynthia Weyuker, and Joe Eding (Judge).

Photo by Ralph McCaskey.

Every year's Saw Festival is different, because different saw players (and their families, band-mates and friends) attend each year. Yes, lots of saw players come back each year, or at least many times, and the energy and social dynamics are different from year to year. It's wonderful to watch people you've met before come back as much better players

as the years go by, and to meet new people with different skills and talents, and to make some new, close musical friends. I love those parts of the Saw Festival!! Even if you never see them again, the inspiration and friendship you shared for just a day or two will stay with you forever! I think that's true for almost all who have attended.



Saw players gather in downtown Santa Cruz. Left to Right: John Kerr, Peter Geissert, Thomas Spearance, Kenny Blacklock (on mandolin), Terry Bergman, & Jodi Golden-White
Photo by Ralph McCaskey.

The 2007 Saw Festival was another exciting, inspiring, and FUN time! No one came this year from Asia or India, but one man came all the way from Sweden, and others came from Canada, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois, Montana, Minnesota, Washington, Oregon, and from all over California.

As usual, most of us met at 1 PM on Saturday in downtown Santa Cruz to play on the street and try to motivate the locals and tourists into coming to the main Saw Festival the next day. We had so much fun that we played for 3½ hours - 90 minutes

longer than usual. Saturday evening we continued the fun at Roaring Camp at the potluck/jam, where we ate and played altogether as well as in smaller groups. It was lots of fun, with ample leisure time to socialize and play.

Thirteen saw players entered the Saw-Off Contest this year, and it seems like many of those who keep coming back to the Saw Festival each year - eventually reap their reward. Twenty year old **Caroline McCaskey** from San Pablo, California (whose father **Ralph McCaskey** does much of the photography at the Festivals) **won First Place**. Caroline has always demonstrated musical talent, and has been coming to the

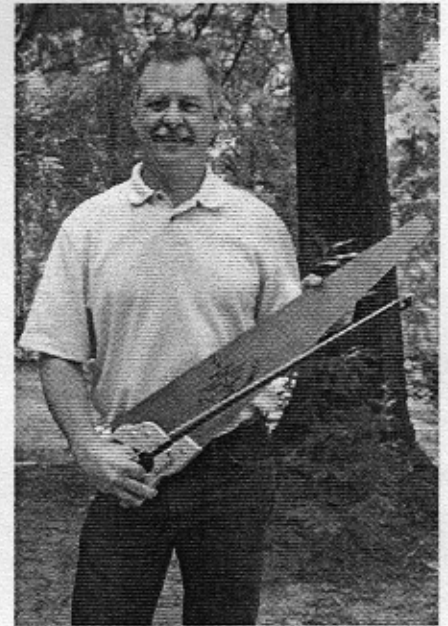
Saw Festival since 2002, when she was 15. At that time she also volunteered to be our IMSA "teen advisor." Her major instruments (besides the saw) include violin (11 years), fiddle (9 years), and viola (1 year) and she's now a Music Composition Major at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. The first year she entered the contest was in 2003, when she tied for 3rd Place, and in both 2005 and 2006 she won 2nd place. This year she told a story and sang, and alternated segments of the story with playing short musical



Caroline McCaskey 2007 1st Place Winner.
Photo by Ralph McCaskey.



Stephen Cook, 2007 2nd Place Winner.
Photo by Ralph McCaskey.



Verlan Jessie - 2007 3rd Place Winner.
Photo by Ralph McCaskey.

selections on her saw that related to the story. It was a nice change and unique presentation! CONGRATULATIONS to Caroline! I'm sure we will all be hearing more about this talented young woman!

Congratulations also go to two Saw Festival first-timers - 2nd Place winner **Stephen Cook** from Minneapolis, Minnesota, and 3rd Place winner **Verlan Jesse** from Drummond, Montana. Stephen is a supervisor at a children's mental health facility, and has played the saw for 30 years, learning from his father. He had never met other saw players before coming to the Festival. Verlan works for the Montana Highway Department, has played the saw for 15 years, also learned from his father. He doesn't play other instruments, and had not met other saw players before either.

Saw players are known around the world as being both flat and sharp (depending on how you view them), as well as unique, eccentric, innovative and interesting - and the contest entrants kept us all entertained. Several in particular stood out: **Cynthia Weyuker** from Alameda, California attached two leads



Cynthia Weyuker uses her foot to control a "loop box." Inset photo shows her placement of the "Twin Spot Classic" transducers.

Photo by Ralph McCaskey.



Dutch Kopp at 2007 Saw-Off Contest.

Photo by Ralph McCaskey.

(called a "Twin Spot Classic transducer") that went into a "loop box" for an interesting sound-on-sound

effect. She started by tapping her saw in a rhythmic, percussive manner for a minute or so, then pressed a button with her foot - which caused that pattern to repeat or "loop." Then she added a melody line to be recorded over the rhythm line with her saw, pressed the button again, and then sing or add a line of harmony, etc. Then each line of sound would drop off, one at a time, in succession. "**Dutch**" **Kopp** from Mendham, New Jersey wore his "Zydeco Washboard Tie", which looks like a wavy-edged metal washboard (played with a pair of thimbles) shaped like a small saw "tie" with the handle of a toy saw attached at the bottom (see his ad in this issue of the Saw Player News).

"**J.J.**" (**Jean-Jacques**) **Plante**

from Laytonville, California didn't really play the saw at all, but used toy saws in a comedy act presentation to cut off his hand, threaten to kill a plastic chicken, etc. He got lots of laughs from the audience, and top points for "Showmanship" - but no points for his saw playing. He promised (threatened?) to learn to play the saw and return to the Saw Festival another year.

There were several other highlights at this year's Saw Festival too. Long-time street entertainer and saw player **Jackie Jones** from San Francisco returned to delight kids of ALL ages with her presentation, which includes her "limberjack" (dancing figure powered by spring-loaded foot pedal) dancing cat.



"The P.T. Wranglers" wore matching bright red "union suits," and were a BIG Hit with the audience. Terri Manning is playing saw on the left, and Rebecca Burgan is playing saw on the right. The lead vocalist/washtub bass player is Michael Lucas.

Photo by Ralph McCaskey.

Twelve members of "The P.T. Wranglers" wore matching (bright) "red union suits," and were a BIG Hit with the audience. Terri Manning and Rebecca Burgan played their musical saws. Lots of people came up close and lots of people were dancing and laughing and cheering with their humorous performance.

For the 2nd year in a row, Bill Heier and Morgan Cowin got on stage (with Austin Graham on guitar) with their 6' long, 2-man crosscut saws (!) and played a blues duet. You risk your life (and everyone within 15 feet!) playing a BIG saw. It's DRAMATIC to see, but it's basically a percussion instrument with a range of only about an



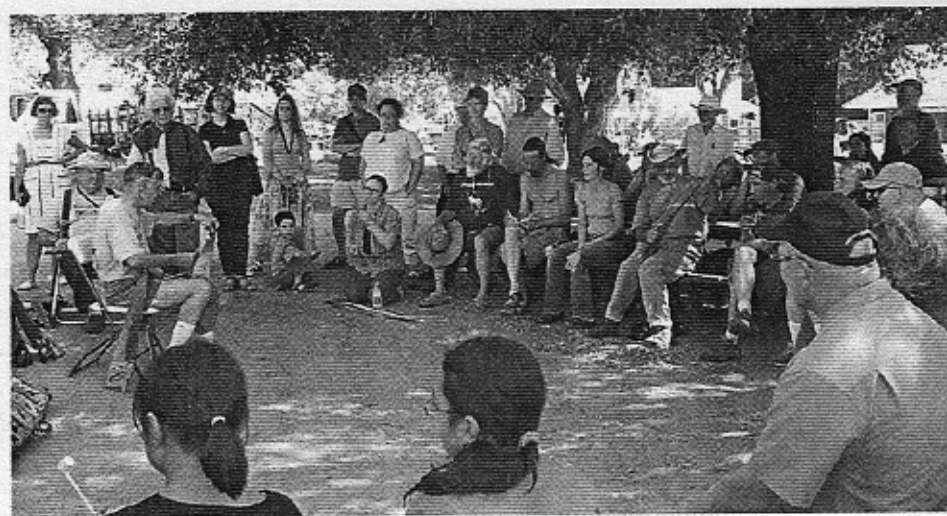
Bill Heier and Morgan Cowin play a 6' long, 2-man crosscut saw duet with Austin Graham on guitar
Photo by Ralph McCaskey.



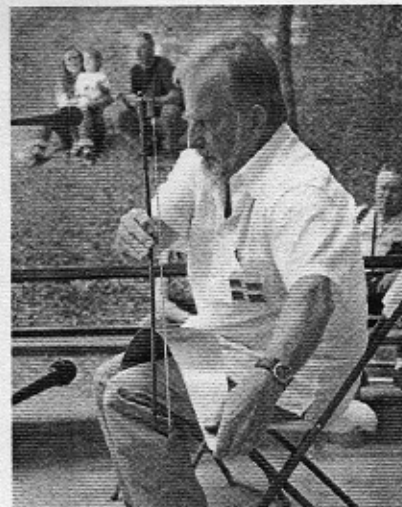
Jackie Jones from San Francisco, with her dancing cat "Timberjack." Photo by Ralph McCaskey.

octave, and it's very physical to play. Long saws like this usually have the teeth along a long arc, and a straight "back" (opposite the teeth edge), but I've found that only saws that have the arc on the teeth side AND a matching arc on the back side - enable you to change the pitch. Yes, it really IS dangerous - both to the player and anyone close by, if it springs out of your hand! Those teeth are BIG!

The free Musical Saw Workshop was VERY popular this year, and I'd estimate there were probably 75 people in attendance (about twice as many as other years). Joe Eding went first, and spent 20 or 30 minutes giving out lots of information. Then I displayed my small collection of seven saws, and after another 25 minutes or so, everyone got a chance to get their hands



Joe Eding leads the musical saw workshop at the 2007 Festival
Photo by Ralph McCaskey.



Lars Hedberg from Sweden at 2007 Saw-Off contest. Photo by Ralph McCaskey.



Peter Getssert (on saw) and his band "1, 2, 3, Not It" at 2007 Saw-Off Contest. Photo by Ralph McCaskey.

on the saws and bows and gave it a try. Joe and myself, plus **Caroline McCaskey, Terry Bergman** and other more knowledgeable saw players gave people some personal attention to get them going.

As you have read, the 2007 Saw Festival was a big success! Most of our new "heathered blue" Saw Festival T-shirts are out of stock, we enlightened, entertained and inspired many new musical saw fans, and everyone seemed to really enjoy themselves! Thank you to ALL the IMSA Members, Advisors and Officers, and the many volunteers who helped us in many ways at the

Saw Festival. Thank you also to our sponsors: **KUSP 88.9, Central Coast Public Radio**, for their promotional contributions, and **Georgiana Clark, C.E.O. of Roaring Camp Railroads**, for the generous use of their facilities as a venue! Everyone who came contributed to making the 2007 Saw Festival a **WONDERFUL** experience!

Thank you to everyone!

The **2008 Saw Festival will be on August 9th and 10th**. We hope that YOU will be able to join us then, and contribute your personality and talent to make next year even more interesting and fun than it was this year! All you have to do is put the date on your calendar and show up! We hope to see you then.



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A Musical Saw Festival is Born



By Natalia 'SawLady' Paruz
www.SawLady.com

It all began 5 years ago when California sawist **David Weiss** called to ask if he could visit me during his trip to New York City. Of course I was happy to meet him, but I suggested that at the same time I would also invite the other saw players in NYC to attend. And so, for the first time in NYC, 5 sawists got together... I continued to invite sawists to my house whenever a sawist from far away was visiting NYC, but when our number grew to 19 saw players, it was just too many people to fit in my house...

And so the 5th annual saw players gathering took place at a small theater, much to the delight of friends and family members of the sawists who could now attend as well.

The now public gathering (we had a full house) continued with the same structure that had evolved at my house - since nobody wanted to be the first to perform, I, as the host, had to break the ice. This time, since we had non-saw playing people with us, I opened with a lecture-demonstration of some different genres of saw music: songs from musicals/movies, classical music, recently composed music for the saw and horror/sci-fi movie soundtracks.

Another tradition which has evolved at the saw gatherings over the years is that the sawist traveling the farthest in order to attend is considered the 'guest of honor'. This year it was **Chen Zhikang** of Shanghai, China. Chen has been playing the saw for over 50 years. He uses an erhu (a Chinese traditional two-string instrument) bow and a musical saw of his own invention, which is known as the 'Chinese Musical Saw': a steel plate supports the wide end of the blade, a belt with a bracket that fits over the leg fixes the saw in place and a plastic tip handle comprise the instrument. His saw has a 3 octave range. Unfortunately today not one of the saw factories in China are willing to produce Chen's musical saw, including Chen's former supplier, the Shanghai Saw Factory. As Chen explained, "the cost of making musical saws is just too high. The steel required for a musical saw is more expensive than regular saw steel, and any tiny flaw in the blade ruins the sound, making scrap rate very high".

Chen first heard the musical saw when he was a teenager. He immediately decided he wanted to learn to play it, but that was in the 1940's when China was in turmoil. With no possibility of communication with the outside world, Chen taught himself to play the saw. In 1949, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chen was able to buy himself a cello, which cost his several month's salary. The reason why he bought a cello was to better his bowing techniques for the saw. After his retirement in 1988 Chen was able to dedicate more time to playing the saw. In 1995 Chen played for China's President Jiang Zemin. Chen has many students, including his son, **Chen Liming**, who is now a renowned musical saw teacher himself. In 2001 Liming received a special award at the Musical Saw Festival in CA, while four of his students swept the children's category, winning first through fourth prizes. At the gathering Chen played the Star Spangled Banner followed by a Beethoven minuet in G. Chen and his son presented 'Edelweiss' as a saw duet, followed by 'the Beautiful Spanish Girl' - a solo by Liming. Father and son, as well as their family and friends were all dressed in a uniform yellow polo shirt with embroidery of a musical saw on it. At the end of the gathering they presented me with a gift of such a shirt and promised to attend next year's gathering in NYC.

Unplanned, sawist **Moses Josiah** stood up and said "folks, we have so many talented saw players here, and a full house of audience - this is not just a gathering, this is a festival!" A discussion followed, in which people (both sawists and audience members) decided that this annual event is a festival. Thus the official name of the event became the 'NYC Musical Saw Festival'.

Pat Graham of CA, who has been playing the saw for 23 years and is known as the 'Saw-C-Lady', played a Japanese love song called 'Pebbles on a Beach'.

Dale Stuckenbruck of NY learned to play the saw from his father who learned to play from a missionary. Dale, a violinist, has been playing saw for 40 years. At the festival he played the 1st movement of Tartini's Violin Concerto in D minor.

Marie Alberti of MO has been playing saw for 40 years. Her 3 sisters all played saw as well. Marie played 'How Great Thou Art' and shared photos of her family playing saws.

Last before Intermission was long time sawist **Moses Josiah**, who started playing saw as a teenager in Guyana and played there for the Queen of England.

Another long time sawist, **Irving Francis** started playing the saw in his native St. Croix. Irving wore a custom made orange musical saw t-shirt and played 'Enchanted Melody'.

Ivan Stiles of PA has been playing saw for 19 years. He is also an autoharpist who was inducted into the Autoharp Hall of Fame in 2000. Ivan conducts musical saw workshops and has a CD titled 'Pennsylvania Sawyer'. He played 'Danny Boy' at the festival.

Bob Heliger of NJ has been playing for 10 years. He brought copies of sawist's **Rene Bogart's** booklet 'How to Play the Musical Saw' for everyone, and he exhibited Rene's musical saw and special walking-cane-bow as part of the musical saw art exhibit at the festival. Bob played 'Diane' a 1927 tune.

Becky Poole of Seattle by way of NY has been playing for 6 years. She played 'Somewhere Out There' at the festival.

Bill Brisotti of NY has been playing for 2 years. He is also a banjo player. He played 'Autumn Leaves'.

Nicki Jaine of PA has been playing saw for a year and a half. Nicki is a wonderful singer and she sang and played saw on the Beatles tune 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps'.

Dutch Kopp of NJ plays bones, spoons and other interesting instruments including the saw. He played 'Clementine' at the festival.

Gregory Newton of NJ is an opera singer who has been playing saw for only 5 months. He did a good job of 'the Olive Tree' on his Stanley saw.

John Kinghorn of NJ is following in his grandfather's footsteps as a sawist. He played Sibelius' Finlandia.

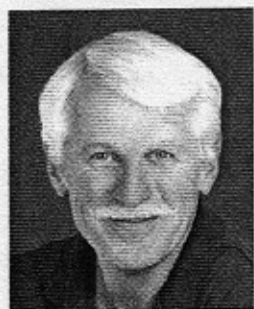
Ending the festival was the 'Chorus of the Saws' - all sawists (including those who didn't want to play solos) played together. You can watch a video of the 'Chorus of the Saws' at <http://sawlady.com/blog/?p=58>

The **6th Annual NYC Musical Saw Festival** is scheduled for **Saturday, July 5th, 2008** - please put a note of it in your calendars and plan to spend the 4th of July weekend in the Big Apple. This festival promises to be even more exciting: guest of honor **Nick Bardach** of Germany will give a presentation spoofing classical music with the saw; a musical saw art exhibit including paintings and an art installation; some musical surprises to be announced. For full details please e-mail me at SawLady@SawLady.com

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Top row (Left to Right): Bill Brisotti, Gregory Newton, Irvin Francis, Art Schultz, Marie Alberti, Dale Stuckenbruck, Bob Heliger **Middle row:** Liming Chen, Zhibang Chen, Pat 'Saw-C-Lady' Graham, Natalia 'Saw Lady' Paruz, Dutch Kopp, Moses Josiah, Ivan Stiles **Front row (on the floor):** Andy Silva, Becky Poole, Nicki Jaine, Christine Suter, John Kinghorn



By Morgan Cowin

Last April I received an email from **Mr. Hajime Sakita**, the incredible young saw player who won 1st Place at the 2004 Saw-Off Competition, and amazed everyone with his ability to play songs on the saw with the handle under his chin - violin style! Hajime was helping to organize the 4th World Musical Saw Festival in Osaka, Japan (held on October 21, 2007), and I was being invited to attend - expenses paid! What a FABULOUS experience it was!

I left San Francisco on Oct. 15th for the 11-hour direct flight, and my musical saw friend **Kazu Kawaguchi** and his wonderful family graciously invited me to spend my first night at their home in Tokyo. Kazu speaks English fluently, and he has escorted many Japanese saw players to the IMSA Saw Festival over the years, and it was great to see him and meet his family.

I played my saw every day I was in Japan, and met and played with approximately 50 saw players altogether (as well as many other musicians), in four cities.

My second night I stayed at a hotel in the Shibuya suburb of Tokyo, and was on my own. While exploring the neighborhood I happened to see a sign that read "Tokyo School of Music" and since I had time, I entered and asked if anyone was interested in jamming with a saw player. **Mr. Hiroshi Chu Okubo** spoke some English, and offered me the opportunity to play with a percussion class he was teaching.



Six saw players practice together before the Tokyo concert

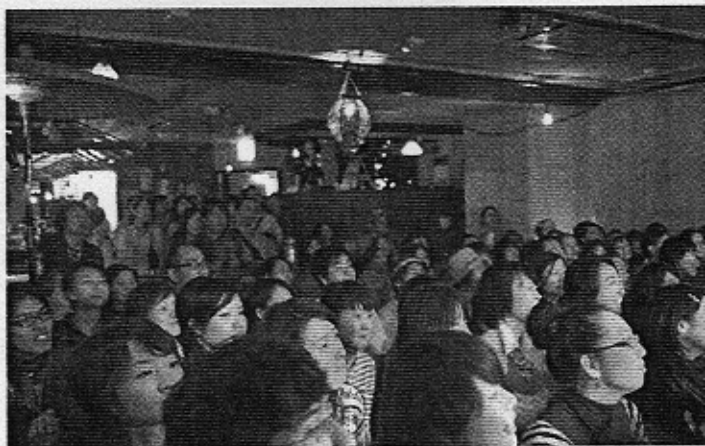
The 2007 World Morgan Cowin's Music



Morgan with Hiroshi Chu Okubo & his percussion class at Tokyo School of Music.

So, though it was awkward for me to play along without a melody or even chords, I did my best to improvise to the rhythms of various drums, tambourines, etc. It was very challenging for me, but we all had fun anyway. I've included a photo of Hiroshi and his class.

The next day I met my friend Hajime and **Mr. Yasufumi Miyaji** from the Kawachinagano City (a suburb of Osaka) Foundation Of Culture, (who actually brought me to play in Japan), and several other associates, and we went to practice and prepare for a small concert in Tokyo that night. The event was in a



Part of the audience at the Tokyo Saw concert.

Musical Saw Festival

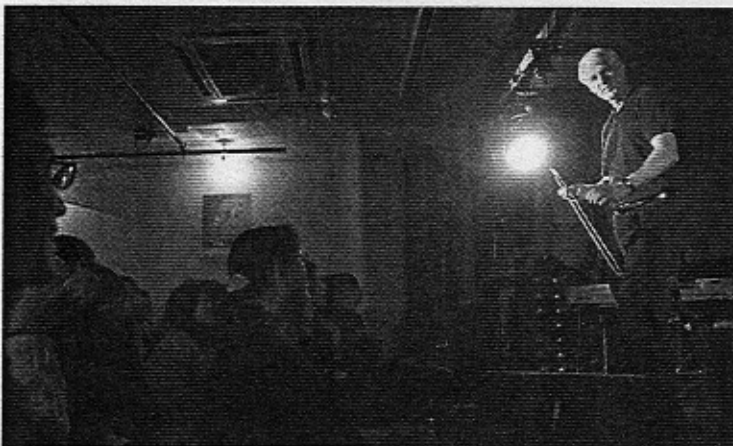
1st Saw Trip to Japan (Part 1)



Utaroku Miyakoya, Hajime Sakita & Morgan Cowin before the first concert in Tokyo.

small night club venue, two stories below the street level, with a nice sound and lighting system and an experienced tech crew. There were about 20 good musicians, divided into seven or eight acts. The event was sold out, and amazingly they crammed in about 140 people to see our little musical saw festival.

We had a wonderful evening at our concert that night, which started with a very avante-garde group of 30-something Japanese young men & women in various costumes, a very good female accordion player, wearing a short skirt and hot pink tights, with funny hats and brightly colored plastic toys



Morgan Cowin plays at the Tokyo concert.

and puppets all over it. The man next to her played a toy piano, musical saw, and about 10 other little instruments. There was another saw player (female), a keyboard player, a fiddler, a full drum set, trombone, and even a TUBA(!), as well as a band leader out in front. They used lots of puppets, colorful accessories and hats and brightly colored things hanging from their clothing and instruments - all adding up to a very interesting (though chaotic) presentation.

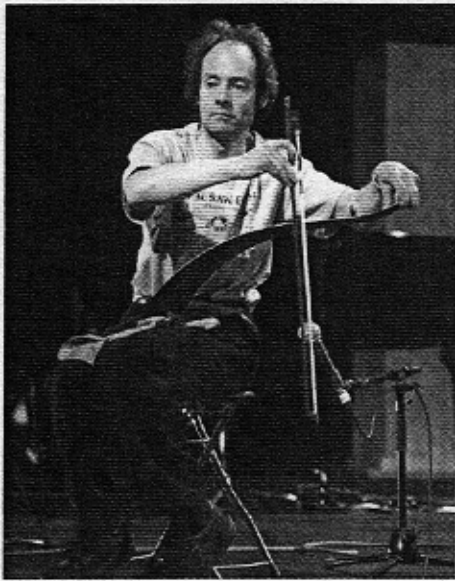
They started out with a sort of Japanese version of Hava Nagilah, then a sort of vaudevillian jazz piece, and each additional piece had a different feel and style. I liked them a lot, really upbeat and fun. I met **Mr. Utaroku Miyakoya**, a 77 year old famous Japanese comedian who is also the president of the saw players in the Tokyo area, dressed in a formal, traditional kimono - he was a sweet man. Two Japanese brothers played their own folk style songs, one a guitar playing vocalist and the other played electric bass and musical saw (not at the same time, of course).

I played *The Entertainer*, by Scott Joplin, then the *Serenade from Haydn's String Quartet in F Major, Opus 3, No. 5*. Then there was a great piano player that accompanied me doing the beautiful *Largo*, from *Winter*, from *The Four Seasons* by Vivaldi. Thankfully, a nice young Japanese man who was born in Chicago, and lived there for 10 years was hired to be my interpreter, so I could introduce my music and myself. The Japanese school system requires young people to take six years of English, but most adults don't really understand or speak much... and it was really nice to have someone there I could actually communicate with.



Hajime Sakita

My friend **Hajime Sakita** and I played his lyrical original composition entitled "*Viola*" - which was dedicated to the memory of the beautiful **Viola Blacklock** - **Charlie Blacklock's** wife, who died at the end of 2005. In addition to his



Henry Dagg rehearses at Lovely Hall.



Hajime Sakita practices his speech in the spotlight at Lovely Hall.

own great musical saw playing, Hajime also acted as Master of Ceremonies, producing tons of laughter from the audience - even I was laughing out loud, and

I couldn't understand anything he was saying!

The big finale involved getting all the musicians on stage at once (not easy on a 14 x 12' stage!) and playing Auld Lang Syne together. The audience sang along, and swayed back and forth in unison. I know that this melody is known around the world, and I just learned that in Japan it's the traditional song at graduations from Junior High, High School, and colleges (in the U.S. it is traditionally sung at New Year's celebrations). There were two encores, and then there were lots of photos taken and was LOTS of socializing. It was a really fun night, and many new musical friendships were made.

The next morning we took the Shinkansen (Bullet Train) to Osaka, and took more subways to Sakai City, a suburb of Osaka to our hotel, where we met **Henry Dagg** from Faversham, England, who won 1st place at the Saw Festival in 2005, and was the

other international guest at the World Musical Saw Festival.

After having lunch together, we took several more subway/train connections down to Kawachinagano-City, and finally got to see "Lovely Hall" - which IS a LOVELY venue. It has several wonderful stages and concert halls, big and small practice rooms, beautiful woodwork all around, and seats about 1,300 people. We rehearsed altogether over two days, and altogether about 50 Japanese saw players attended - both local saw players and others from over a thousand miles north and south of Osaka. **Mrs. Mika "Kapo" Nagata** came from Sapporo (where the Winter Olympics were held), on the northern island of Hokkaido). Kapo plays beautifully, and also sang

"with the voice of an angel" - as Hajime said.

On Saturday there was a "Musical Saw Symposium" - with Hajime, Henry and myself on a panel in front of an audience of about 50 people, mostly saw players. It lasted almost three hours, and was moderated by Mr. Miyagi, and all of us learned something new.

Then we went

(continued on page 12)



Hajime Sakita (foreground) & the Kansai Saw Orchestra on the final note of "Bolero."

Saw Tips

'Tis the Season to be Jolly!



By David Weiss

As a saw player, I really love the Christmas holiday season. There's something about Christmas carols and other holiday songs that lend themselves so well to the saw! Usually these songs are played at a slow tempo, and most have a "compact" note range of just a little

over one octave, which makes them accessible for saw players at nearly all levels of playing ability. Here's a list of some of my favorite holiday songs to play on the saw:

I Sawed Three Ships

I Sawed Mommy Kissing Santa Claus (just kidding! - but I love those skewed titles)

Ok, I'll get serious:

Silent Night

Auld Lang Syne

What Child is This?

White Christmas

Angels We Have Heard On High

The First Noel

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O Christmas Tree (O Tannenbaum)

O Come All Ye Faithful

O Holy Night

Away in a Manger

We Three Kings of Orient Are

The Little Drummer Boy (Using mallets)

Performing these songs as a busker can be lots of fun, and with passers-by in the Christmas spirit, the response is usually much greater than at any other time of the year. You could have a sign saying that 50% (or whatever amount you want to specify) of any tips received would be donated to a particular charity. Sometimes my wife (who is a pianist) and I will donate concerts for worthy causes. All it takes is a red Santa hat to create a bit of ambience, and people love it. Keep your eye on the local newspaper for any free concerts and contact the organizers to see if they'd like a few minutes of musical saw to add to the presentation.

I recently had to get a special permit to play my saw on the boardwalk at Venice Beach (for years no

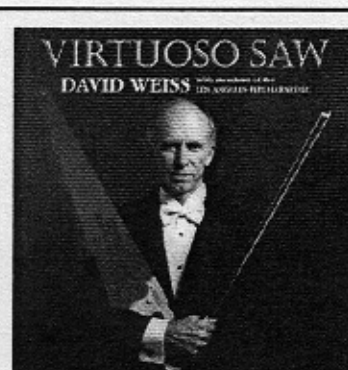
permit was needed). If you want to play in a public place, be sure you inquire first to make sure you won't get thrown out! Usually you can just ask any other street performers in the area, or a local policeman or shop keeper what the rules are. It's definitely worth finding out in advance, before going to all the trouble of setting up, only to be evicted ten minutes later. Shopping malls, and especially streets closed off to vehicular traffic, make good busking areas. Here are some other ideas of places where your saw playing could be fun and appreciated:

Churches, other houses of worship, recreation centers, retirement communities, hospitals, nursing homes, school assemblies, soup kitchens and/or homeless shelters. Put your saw playing to good use, and help cheer up some folks who could surely use it. What better way to celebrate the holidays and usher in a New Year!

Happy Holidays to all,

David Weiss

www.davidweissgallery.com



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He came, he sawed, he conquered." (Los Angeles Times)

Play List:

Misty, Sweet Georgia Brown, Intermezzo from Carmen, Eleanor Rigby, The Swan, Yesterday, Habañera, Scarborough Fair, When I'm 64, Summertime, Gymnopedie, Bach Arioso, The Rainbow Connection

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downstairs into a big rehearsal hall where about 30 saw players and other musicians were rehearsing as Hajime (who is an incredible multi-instrumental musician, composer, conductor, inspiration, and really nice guy), led the Kansai Saw Orchestra. He has been working as an official teacher of culture in the Osaka area for about 10 years. Anyway, the group was serious about the performance, and there were some really good saw players (as well as professional musicians on traditional Japanese instruments, two pianists, an electronic keyboard player, electric guitar and bass, acoustic stand-up bass, and a wonderful percussion player.

The World Musical Saw Festival concert at Lovely Hall was well attended (about 800-900 people in the 1,300 seat theater), and well received, and was FANTASTIC fun for all the saw players and other musicians! The Kansai Musical Saw Orchestra played VERY well, playing the technically difficult "Bolero"



Hajime Sakita leads Henry Dagg & the Kansai Saw Orchestra at a rehearsal.

by Ravel among other things. Kansai is the southern district of Honshu (the main island of Japan), which includes the city of Osaka. There are 30 members of the Kansai Saw Orchestra, which surprisingly has 23 female saw players - about the opposite gender ratio that much of the rest of the world has. I understand this is

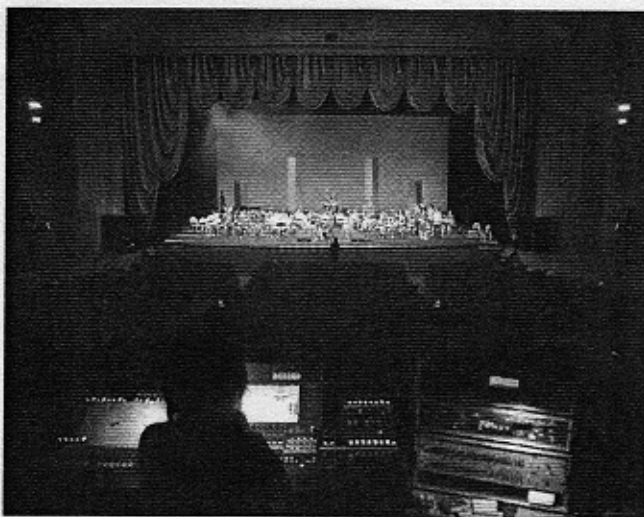
probably because most men are busy working competitively and serving long hours, which leaves the women with more time to pursue personal pursuits and cultural interests like music. They were serious with their learning and playing, and really enjoyed the warm, friendly and humorous "team" approach that **Mr. Hajime Sakita** uses so well.

Henry Dagg played "Claire de Lune" by Debussy, "Chanson de Matin" by Elgar (both accompanied by excellent pianist on Steinway concert grand) and "50 Cycles Per Second" - an original piece by Henry, accompanied by the jazz ensemble.

I played Vivaldi's "Largo from Winter, from the Four Seasons," with a classical pianist, and then "The Entertainer" by Scott Joplin with the pianist and a great percussionist. Later Henry and I joined Hajime and the Kansai Saw Orchestra playing "Viola" and "Tomorrow" - original compositions by Hajime. During "Tomorrow" we were joined by 29 junior high school students on stage with us as a chorus. We all played "Danny Boy" as an encore. Everyone in the audience seemed to enjoy the whole event.



Hajime and band members prepare for a sound check in Lovely Hall.



Hajime leads the Kansai Saw Orchestra in rehearsal, as seen from behind the sound booth.

After the concert, Hajime disappeared to thank everyone for their support and sign the beautifully designed programs and his CD's. The rest of us went to the long hall back stage with the many "Green Rooms" (warm-up rooms where you put your stuff and have some privacy), and congratulated each other, then they started doing a very friendly version of what we in the U.S. might call "running the gauntlet" - but I think they call a "Flower Parade" - where people line up on both sides of the hall with their hands making a sort of clapping bridge overhead, and the musicians are individually applauded as they bow down and run between them. It was a privilege to be a part of this ceremony, and we all had so much fun that we all did it several times back and forth. It was an emotional event, with much enthusiasm and many warm feelings.

Then we packed up our stuff and went upstairs to a large meeting room where we had Party #1. I think there were about 60-75 people in the room when I arrived, and as each musician arrived, we were handed a beer or other drink of our preference, everyone

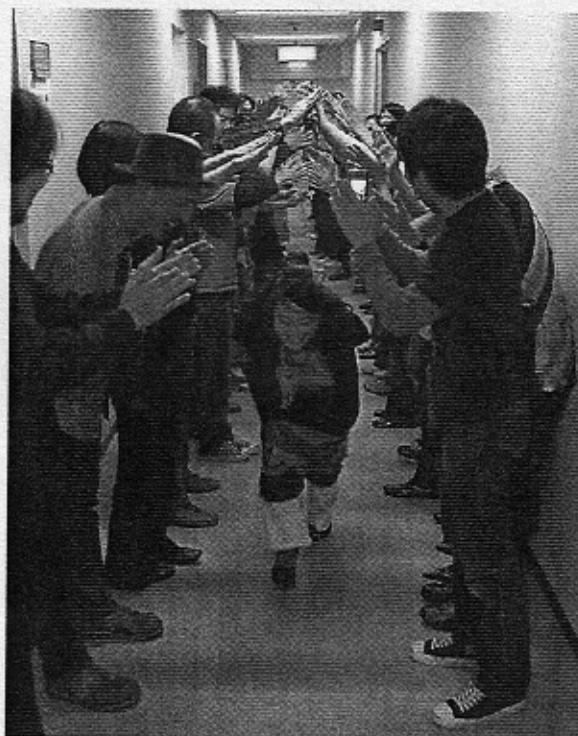


Mika "Kapo" Nagata sings and plays her saw beautifully during rehearsal at Lovely Hall

applauded us and greeted us individually. There was a banquet of beer and food, and we had many toasts with some GREAT Sake (I have tasted the traditional warm sake before, and did not care for it at all, but this particular high-quality

sake was served cold, and was VERY nice)! We stayed and talked and signed each other's programs, and I was kept busy signing my name on probably 25 musical saws, and posing for innumerable photos with local musical saw players and other musicians. I've never had THAT experience before! It gave me a glimpse of what the BIG musical "stars" must experience - but in a respectful, honorific way. It was very nice.

After the party broke up, most people left (it was Sunday night, and people had to go to work the next day), but about 25 of the "stars" and other VIP's went



Michiko Wakabayashi is seen in the "flower parade" after the concert in Lovely Hall.

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