

Japanese ancient instrument “*Koto*”  
reincarnates into Jazz;

The *Koto* fascinating the blue note swings and  
Jazz seducing the ancient reclusive strings.



**Ramses,**

unit of Jazz on Japanese Harps ~ Sou, 17-strings Koto, Guitar



A straight forward authentic style of Jazz by Ramses, a unit with ancient Japanese harp strings *Koto*. Jazz divines descend on the ancient harps and rise again with new wings. Enjoy the universe of Ramses, with their amazing swing notes of no comparison.

<http://ramses-world.com>

Youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxtVeToRX3A>

**About the Ramses**    ~ ~ Ramses, unit of Jazz on Japanese Harps ~ ~

Sou (13-string Koto) , 17-string Bass Koto, Guitar

Japanese ancient instrument “*Koto*” reincarnates into Jazz; The *Koto* fascinating the blue note swings and Jazz seducing the ancient reclusive strings.

In 2010, Yasminn, Yuko and Masashi got together to play jazz with the traditional Japanese string instruments. They had all been to Egypt before by coincidence, and so agreed to name themselves “the Ramses,” after a legendary Pharaoh, out of their shared empathy for the Egyptian Civilization.

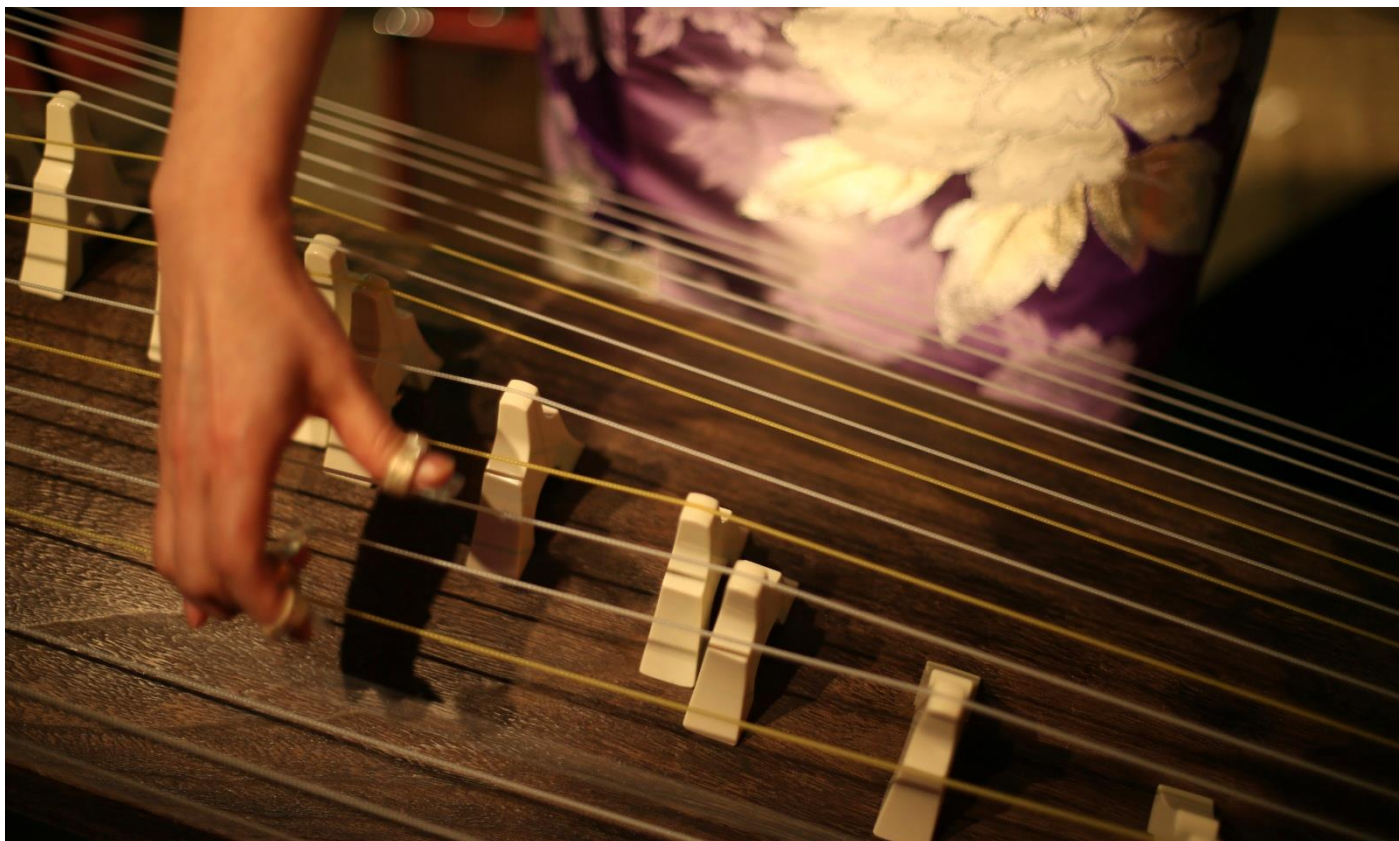
They also shared a strong desire to play jazz with the *Koto* - not just jazz, but a bold, sturdy one. Can we really play that out as it echoes in our hearts? The attempts, long, winding and diverse, have never ceased to date.

As we envisioned recording, we came to an idea of adding a new breed to the trio, not just percussions, nor Japanese drums, but jazz beats. So joined drummer Minoru Senkouji as special support. Rehearsals began in Autumn 2013, running all the way through the recording sessions in 2014. We encountered a physical gap of the volumes between the *Koto* and the drum sounds.



Also a challenge to satisfy a subtle balance of the volumes, while ensuring aggressive but delicate drum beats. Thus came a new vitality to the life of the Ramses. A fruit born was the album's starter, *Yasoukyoku*, a tune embodying real-life straight jazz notes played by the *Koto* and the drums. Fusion of the *Koto* and jazz creates a straight-ahead music landscape like none other - "*Jazz Koto*" Now sets off the soaring journey of the Ramses.

Masashi Miyamoto



## - The *Koto* clad in drapes of Jazz - from static grace of plink-plunk tones to a sparkling zest of *Shoo Bee Doo Wop!*

First, a recount on how we evolved the Japanese traditional instruments to *Jazz Koto*:

We learned Jazz from scratch, translating it into the universe of the *Sou*. We did not rely on five-line notation, but just worked with our ears and voices, like we do in practicing Japanese traditional music. We converted the graceful static melodies into the dynamism of scat and shoo bee doo wop. Sailing off deeper into the heart of Jazz, we enjoyed the special tastes of its "accents" expressed in its rhythms and phrases.



We overcame many theoretical challenges: but playing them out was quite a different thing. So many hardships were after all offset by the overwhelming charm of jazz. That was the source that has guided us and pushed us forward to where we are now.

We were awed by the masterstrokes of Jazz pioneers, inherited here and there in every work we tried to learn. Moving a step forward, then we fell and tried over and over. In our uphill struggles, we felt our Jazz forerunners encouraging us and giving us advice in our hearts.

Wynton Kelly, Barry Harris, Bud Powell, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Charlie Parker, etc...

We started with playing scats on the *Sou*. We tried to “sing” all from our hearts, covering the melodies, phrases, harmonies and the base lines.

In Jazz, moving a half-tone up or down is a key *ad lib* element. That can be marvelously replayed by a traditional *Koto* method of “*Oshide*.”

Single notes are the source of Jazz expressions - we learned that from *Jazz Koto*.

Just play the tune as it is with your whole heart, before trying to play it well.

The sounds you play are all your own voices and words. The pauses in between are your breaths.

They all melt into the charms of Jazz - rhythms; swings; groove and even the feelings of blues.

Jazz caught us with its depth; we responded with all our hearts - at times biting our back teeth in tension; our eyes filled with tears; our lips made smile in the next moment.

That’s how we came to create “*Yasoukyoku*.” And that’s how we met the love of our life Jazz. May our sounds be so natural and life size, that our audience would hardly feel we do something exceptional with archaic instruments.

Our credit goes to our recording engineer Tameo Kawada, whose amazing skills have allowed our ideal *JazzKoto* sounds to remain so lively in the CD.

Without his patient support in the studio, we couldn’t have completed our first-ever *JazzKoto* quartet recording.

Next time, we are looking forward to featuring diverse instruments for each tune, to further develop our *JazzKoto*. Our hearts will never stop throbbing for Jazz!



1st, Album “*Yasoukyoku*”

**RAMSES**  
夜箏曲

**RAMSES**  
夜箏曲

1. Dinner Time
2. 夜箏曲 (yasoukyoku)
3. On Green Dolphin Street
4. Jitterbug Waltz
5. Bitter Sweet
6. Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 2 3rd movement
7. Come Rain or Come Shine
8. Szabor
9. Nuages
10. Pork Pie Blues

Velvet YUKO (13 strings koto) / Yasumi Horigome (17 strings koto)  
Masashi Miyamoto (guitar) / Special Support Minoru Senkoji (drums)

STEREO  
JAZZAN-513  
定価 ¥2500 +税

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JAZZAN-513

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← a traditional *Koto* method of “*Oshide*.”

We are playing the koto in *Takumi-no-Kototsume* made of Gemstone.

<http://koto-mall.com>

## Ramses 1st album [Yasoukyoku] Two JAZZ-KOTO Unit

13 strings Sou : Velvet Yuko / 17 Bass koto : Yasumi Horigome (Yasminn) / Jazz Guitar : Masashi Miyamoto(Compose , Arrangement)

Special Support Drums : Minoru Senkouji



Koto, 17-Bass koto, Yasminn

<http://ramses-world.com/lesson/>

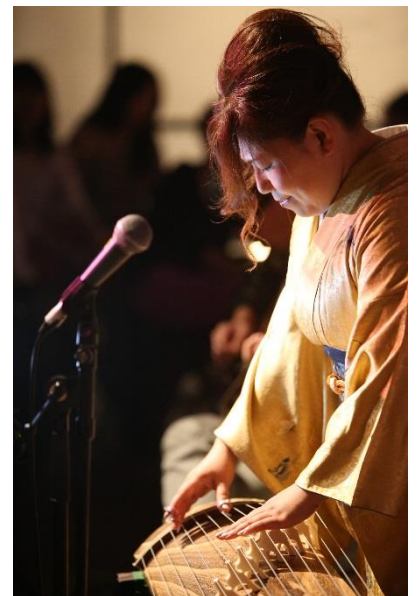
# LESSON



Jazz Guitar, Masashi

<http://jazz-an.com/>

Koto (Sou) , Velvet Yuko



### Short Term lesson / Professional Level

One lesson 60min or 90min.

short terms lesson will be arranged individually.

accepted trial lesson for beginner.



Special Support Drums

Minoru Senkouji

<http://music.geocities.jp/senkoji1/index.htm>