

FBWA Music Project Overview
for BCA FBWA Conference October, 2022
submitted by the BCA FBWA Music Project Task Group

Background: The resolution submitted by the Northwest District BWA in 2021 to the BCA FBWA passed to support the proposed FBWA music project. Initial discussion of the process began through the BCA Music Committee New Buddhist Music subcommittee, including ideas for inspiration of the lyrics for the new gatha which would be suitable to present as a video production at the World Buddhist Women's conference in Kyoto, Japan in May, 2023.

FBWA Music Project Task Group: Donna Sasaki (Tacoma BT), Rene Maruyama (OCBC), Karen Mukai (Fowler BC), Kemi Nakabayashi (Seattle Betsuin), Rev. Cyndi Yasaki (New Buddhist Music subcommittee ministerial advisor, Tacoma BT), and Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Wondra (project ministerial advisor, OCBC)

FBWA Music Project Update and Plans:

We are grateful for the sponsorship from our BCA FBWA which made possible soliciting assistance for Portuguese and Japanese language translation and studio recording and mixing of the final audio track of this new collaborative gatha *With Gassho from the Heart*. In addition, the sponsorship funding allowed us also to create new gatha recordings of the BWA gatha *Asoka no Sono*, translated as *Asoka Garden* with English lyrics by the Hawaii Music Committee. The Cherry Blossomz group of Miko Shudo, Lisa Horikawa Orpilla, and Emily Yoshihara Imazumi have recorded two versions, one with all three Japanese verses and one with the first two verses in Japanese and English. A third recording is planned with all three verses in English. Hawaii Music Committee was offered the opportunity to create this recording of its translated lyrics and chose Naho Umitani to be the vocalist. As Naho chose to come to Seattle for college, she will be recording with Seattle Betsuin technical support. Through the sponsorship, BCA FBWA is acknowledged and will support these new recordings in perpetuity to share with our Jodo Shinshu community. We also plan to create BCA Music logo note cards and gift bags in order to present to the other FBWA kyodans a token gift along with access to the audio and video recordings as well as notated music, lyric lead sheet documents, and translation of the entire lyrics in Portuguese and Japanese.

Description of the Creative Process of *With Gassho from the Heart*

Writing the lyrics for our new gatha *With Gassho from the Heart* was a truly collaborative effort begun through the BCA New Buddhist Music subcommittee. The focus of our lyrics was to reach out to Buddhists everywhere and to pay tribute to Lady Takeko Kujo. Janette Wong-Sing of Parlier helped initiate our efforts by suggesting a reference to one of Lady Kujo's poems, "Gassho from the Heart," from the book Leaves of My Heart. We formed the FBWA Music Project task group and enlisted the assistance of Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Wondra of OCBC, who is not only very knowledgeable about Lady Kujo, but is also acknowledged several times in the book for her assistance in English translation and editing. Rev. Wondra shared a tremendous amount of her time and knowledge assisting us. She also suggested some of her favorite poems, one of which was coincidentally "Gassho from the Heart", reinforcing that this poem could be the inspiration for the new composition. Thus, our deepest gratitude is extended to Rev. Wondra for her support and guidance in composing the gatha, and for kindly agreeing to join our group as an advisor. Rev. Wondra also formally contacted Hoshina Seki, President of American Buddhist Study Center, for permission for usage of the translated poem from the Leaves of My Heart as inspiration for our new composition.

Once the words were drafted, the whole team joined in to make the words flow smoothly and poetically. In order to make the song more inclusive to other participating kyodans for the WBW presentation, we reached out for translation assistance in Japanese and Portuguese, and for advice to include the other languages into the lyrics. With the help of Rev. Cyndi Yasaki, Sandy Cressman and then Rev. Guenyu Katata and Rev. Rui Oikawa from the Brazil kyodan, and Lois Saito, the gatha was translated into Japanese, Portuguese, and even into sign language. The next big challenge was expressing all these words as music. Team member and gatha composer, Donna Sasaki, took on the task to compose a melody blending music and lyrics together. Hopefully, *With Gassho from the Heart* will be a meaningful and enduring gatha for present and future generations of BWA.

FBWA Gatha Project Acknowledgements:

With Gassho from the Heart

Sponsored by the Buddhist Churches of America Federation of Buddhist Women's Associations
Inspired by the poem "Gassho from My Heart" by Lady Takeko Kujo from Leaves of My Heart,
with gratitude to Hoshina Seki, President of American Buddhist Study Center, for permission for usage of
the translated poem.

FBWA Music Project Task Group:

Donna Sasaki (Tacoma Buddhist Temple)
Rene Maruyama (Orange County Buddhist Church)
Karen Mukai (Fowler Buddhist Church)
Kemi Nakabayashi (Seattle Betsuin)
Rev. Cyndi Yasaki (New Buddhist Music subcommittee ministerial advisor, Tacoma Buddhist Temple)
Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Wondra (project ministerial advisor, Orange County Buddhist Church)

Language Translation:

Rev. Cyndi Yasaki (Tacoma Buddhist Temple), Japanese
Sandy Cressman and Rev. Guenyu Katata & Rev. Rui Oikawa from Brazil kyodan, Portuguese
Lois Saito (Idaho-Oregon Buddhist Temple), Sign Language

Recording Artists:

Alice Fukushima (Palo Alto Buddhist Temple), soprano
Karen Mukai (Fowler Buddhist Church), soprano
Elaine Jones (San Jose Betsuin), alto
Naomi Takemura (Seattle Betsuin), alto
Annette Inouye (Vista Buddhist Temple), flute
Donna Sasaki (Tacoma Buddhist Temple), piano

Music Consultant:

Jim Norton (Seattle Betsuin)

Sound Engineers:

David Lange and Benjamin Lange, David Lange Studio (Edgewood, WA), recording and mixing
Ray Settle, Maximus Media (Fresno, CA)
Steve Shields (San Diego, CA)
Duane Takahashi (Santa Clara, CA)

Gatha Teaching video:

Donna Sasaki (Tacoma Buddhist Temple), content director

Elaine Jones (San Jose Betsuin), content director and video editor

Marissa Michiko Wong (Seattle Betsuin), video editor and producer

Rene Maruyama, (Orange County Buddhist Church) Karen Mukai (Fowler Buddhist Church)

Lois Saito, Idaho-Oregon Buddhist Temple), sign language instruction

Kemi Nakabayashi, (Seattle Betsuin), BCA Music Chairperson

With Gassho from the Heart Video Production planned for 2023 World Buddhist Women's conference:

Alex Sakamoto (Seattle Betsuin) and Marissa Michiko Wong (Seattle Betsuin)

Graphic Artist Consultant: Yoko Yanari (Seattle Betsuin)

Asoka no Sono/Asoka Garden

Sponsored by the Buddhist Churches of America Federation of Buddhist Women's Associations
with gratitude to the Hawaii Music Committee for translation of English lyrics

Recording Artists for Japanese only and Japanese/English versions:

Cherry Blossomz - Miko Shudo, Lisa Horikawa Orpilla, Emily Yoshihara Imazumi

Michael Murata, piano

Videography: Khanh Ly

Production assistance: Sam Orpilla

Audio mixing: Miko Shudo

Recording Artists planned for English only version:

Naho Umitani, vocalist

Kemi Nakabayashi, pianist

Videography and production: Seattle Betsuin technical team