



Buddhist Churches of America®
MUSIC

BCA Music Committee

NEWSLETTER • JANUARY 2023



Welcome to the BCA Music Newsletter

By Cynthia S Mee, Midwest Buddhist Temple

“Thank You Gatha”

We “Believe” that in our churches/temples “Everyday People” “Come Together” to “Celebrate” our Jodo Shinshu faith through music and dance. “We’ve Only Just Begun” to explore “What’s Going On”, “Somewhere” in BCA through “The Sound of Music”. Whether we are singing the “Nembutsu”, celebrating “Higan”, or dancing to “Obon Obon it’s Festival Day”, BCA appreciates and welcomes the Dharma through a range of diverse and exciting musical methods.

It is hard for us to “Imagine” all the musical activities in BCA. However, we have “Heard It Through the Grapevine” that “Buddha Loves You” and that exciting music happens every week in our churches/temples. If you would like to announce some of your music events or if you are “Tired of Being Alone” regarding music endeavors and could use some ideas, you can now reach out to the BCA Music Newsletter (BCAMN).

“People Get Ready” to share your “Good Vibrations” and “What’s Going On” using music in your services within dharma talks, singing Gathas, musical events, performances, and social media. It is not an “Impossible Dream” to have a collaborative newsletter to “Lean On”, to guide, to learn from, and to share music whether we are singing, playing instruments, dancing, or listening to a dharma talk with lyrical content. As we learn the “Life of Shinran”, we also appreciate that churches/temples want to expand their music programs. “With a Little Help From our Friends” through the BCAMN, sangha members will “Never Walk Alone” when wanting to explore new music venues.

The beauty of “Seiya” “When We See the Golden Sun” in “Lumbini’s Garden” on a “Beautiful Day” in the “Summertime” “Under the Splendor of an Evening Sky”, or on a “Starry Starry Night”, or if “It’s Raining”, “Come as You Are”, and “Ease on Down the Road”, to recite “Namo Amida Butsu” while sitting in “A Special Place”, under “The Bodhi Tree” in “Amida’s Guiding Light”. We “Respect” your musical “Favorite Things” and honor your churches/temples musical history as you “Try to Remember” the “Long and Winding Road” exploring your music archives.

The BCAMN embraces our Jodo Shinshu Buddhist practices and realizes that the dharma can be expressed through many musical avenues. No matter the year, “We Could Have Danced All Night” at “Obon Odori” or we always enjoy singing on our

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Two Years in the Life of the BCA Music Committee

By Cynthia S Mee, Midwest Buddhist Temple

In garden adorn’d, by Asoka trees abloom

As we all know.... time flies. This saying is evident in the life of BCA’s Music Committee. In summer 2020, Rev. Marvin Harada outlined his vision of music organization in BCA churches/temples and, as bishop, created a BCA Music Committee. Despite all the complications of COVID, since then so much has been achieved by the Music Committee Executive Board and all the Music subcommittee members under the leadership of Kemi Nakabayashi, BCA Music Committee chair. Rev. Katsuya Kusunoki (Seattle Betsuin) and Rev. Yuki Sugahara (Oregon Buddhist Temple) accepted Bishop Harada’s request to supervise this large new BCA Committee. Rev. Tadao Koyama (Tacoma Buddhist Temple) has since been selected to relieve Rev. Sugahara of this official duty.



Kemi Nakabayashi

The BCA Music Committee outlined the purpose and function in its charter:

- To promote Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha as well as to propagate the Jodo Shinshu teachings through music.

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“Thank you Gatha” (from page 1)

“Path of Nembutsu” and know “We are One”. And we know that no one can “Beat It” better than our Taiko drummers.

We embrace our “Happy Little Children” when it is “Time for Dharma School” and applaud the remix of Gathas. We enjoy listening to and watching our sangha members playing in bands during our services, at concerts, and singing along with ukulele groups. “With Grateful Hearts” we celebrate our special music services and relish “The Chanting of the Sutras”. There are so many musical avenues and different musical methodologies to experience the dharma.

“Don’t Walk By” or “Rain on our Parade”. We know that “People Got Rhythm”, so “Try to Remember” and “Get Ready” to unveil in the BCAMN how your sangha embraces music. We are asking you to “Light our Fire” by sharing what you have done with music “Yesterday” or what you are planning to do “Tomorrow”.

We know “We Have to be Carefully Taught” about “Amida’s Golden Chain of Love” and that “We are One” when we “Sing Namu Amida Butsu”. It will be “With Grateful Hearts” to learn about the beautiful possibilities to practice, share, and learn the dharma through music and dance.

The BCAMN will provide a range of columns that support churches/temple’s music history, past musical concerts, conferences, events, ideas, resources, and references to support music integration. Our hearts will be filled when we express “Arigato”.

At the same time, we understand that some churches/temple want to expand their music programs, resources, and references to support and engage music integration.

Ok you get the picture.

BCAMN is inviting each church/temple to share how it embraces music during services, in Dharma School, activities, concerts, church bands, social media, etc. The various columns embrace a range of musical practice. “What a Beautiful Morning” it will be when we hear about how you embrace music in your church/temple and we can celebrate “Gassho ‘Round the World”.

In garden... (from page 1)

- To explore, develop, and enhance all aspects of music in our churches and temples.
- To create a community of harmony within BCA churches and temples, BCA districts, and across the BCA through involvement of BCA ministers and BCA members of all age groups.
- To provide an organizational structure through which formal collaboration, with regard to music, may be undertaken and developed with Kyodans outside the mainland United States (for example Hawaii Music Committee and equivalent members in Canada).

Over the past two and a half years, the Music Committee has laid the groundwork to enhance, highlight and expand the use of music in BCA churches and temples. The committee has already a long list of activities, including producing articles, webinars, a YouTube page, and a music page on the BCA website.

The Music Executive Committee

With sangha members identified from churches/temple across each BCA district, Zoom meetings to organize the committee were held in the fall of 2020. Two months later at the BCA National Board Meeting in December 2020, the Music Committee’s charter was approved. A revised charter to become a BCA Standing Committee was approved at the National Board Meeting in June 2021. The accomplishments of the Music Committee have depended on virtual platforms for meetings and presentations. We are grateful for the support of the BCA Technical Outreach Subcommittee (TOS) and BCA webmaster Alex Tsukahara.

The Music Committee has a variety of subcommittees to address, advance, and promote a wide range of music interests and traditions. Here is the list of updated subcommittees: Sutra (limited to Music Service Sutras), Service Music, Gagaku, New Buddhist Music, Vocal Music, Instrumental Music, Music History, Bon Odori/Taiko, Tech Support,

Copyright & Publications, and Performances & Community Outreach.

BCA Music Webpage

<https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/music>

With the grace of technology, sangha members have access to the BCA music through the BCA website. The webpage has several sections that embrace and share various practices of music within our individual churches/temple.

To find the Music Section on the BCA website look under “News and Media.” Click on “Music” and you will find the BCA Music webpage. Under “News and Media” are various links that connect to BCA YouTube, Chanting, and the separate BCA Music YouTube channel. Under BCA Connect, other music posts can be found under the dropdown Music title.

The Music Committee efforts have added to the original content of the *Obon Gathering of Joy* webpage <https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/obon-gathering-of-joy>. Among the additions are Bon Odori recordings by Isaku Kageyama (April 2022), “Kangie” by Nobuko Miyamoto (June 2022), and the San Jose Chidori Band (July 2022).

The BCA TOS originally created a Chanting and Music webpage with the launch of the updated BCA website in January 2021. In addition to “Ondokusan I”, “Ondokusan II”, and “Shinshu Shuka”, featured Gathas have rotated on the site since April 2021. The separate Chanting

webpage was created with additional sutra chanting recordings by Rev. Kusunoki and Rev. Tadao Koyama offered in



Nobuko Miyamoto

February 2022. The audio recordings are available for free download with the public access.

<https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/music>

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Webinars

Various music webinars presented components of music usage and practices.

- *Bon Odori Online*, presentations by five BCA temples followed by an open forum to share ideas and resources (March 2021).
- *Taiko Online*, presentations by four taiko leaders, (Johnny Mori, Senshin Buddhist Temple; Elise Fujimoto, Mountain View Buddhist Temple; Sydney Shiroyama, Palo Alto Buddhist Temple; and Paul Sakamoto, Puna Hongwanji Mission). An open forum followed the panel discussion sharing various ideas and resources (April 2021).
- *Enhancing Temples Services and Engaging Your Sangha Through Music*, BCA National Council Meeting Music Committee workshop presented how music is used in BCA churches/temples and suggested various ways to further engage members through the use of music (March 2022).
- *Bon Odori Sharing Innovations and Challenges with Bon Odori Online*, moderated by Wynn Kiyama, was a sharing session addressing complications of Bon Odori being online rather than in-person (March 2022).
- *Kinnara Teaches “Ashura”*, Kinnara Taiko presented a three-part webinar series teaching its signature composition “Ashura” (April 2022).
- *With Gassho from the Heart*, a teaching video was presented at the BCA Federation Buddhist Women’s Associations (FBWA) Conference introduction of the newly created Gatha prepared to present at the World Buddhist Women’s Convention in 2023 (October 2022).

BCA Music YouTube Channel

The BCA Music YouTube Channel was created in December 2021 and premiered the first video, *A Tribute to Mrs. Yumiko Hojo: A 100 Year Birthday Celebration of Music and Memories*. This video describes Mrs. Hojo’s

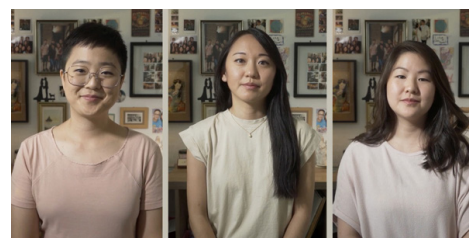


groundbreaking musical contributions and presents some of her compositions.

The *Bon Odori Sharing* video is the archived posted recording of the *Bon Odori Sharing* webinar. The video describes the creative process of the BCA Music Committee commission of artist and activist, Nobuko Miyamoto, to create the new Bon Odori dance, “Kangie (Gathering of Joy)”.

The *Kangie* video on the BCA Music YouTube channel is the instructional video of the completed new re-recorded Bon Odori song and dance along with commentary by Miyamoto and her collaborators, composer/arranger Derek Nakamoto and choreographer/dancer Elaine Fukumoto.

Two recent BCA Music YouTube videos of the Buddhist Women’s Association gatha “Asoka No Sono /Asoka Garden” were sponsored by the BCA FBWA. One version is in Japanese and English with a separate version with Japanese lyrics only. Both are performed by the



Cherry Blossomz singers

Cherry Blossomz singers with Michael Murata, piano.

Wheel of Dharma (WoD)

The Music Committee has written a “Did you know...?” item in the BCA *WoD* for each issue. The question often relates to a pertinent referenced BCA Music program or webpage item. In addition, the Music Committee is grateful to BCA *WoD* editor, Jon Kawamoto, for working with various BCA Music Committee members to publish a variety of interesting Music Committee articles. In such a short time, a number of articles have been published in the *WoD* [https://www.buddhist-](https://www.buddhist-churchesofamerica.org/wheel-of-dharma)

[churchofamerica.org/wheel-of-dharma](https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/wheel-of-dharma) and posted through BCA Connect, located under the Music category “More” as a dropdown option: <https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/bca-connect/categories/music>. They are:

New Buddhist Music Committee Organizing, by Kemi Nakabayashi, announces the Music Committee’s formation and goal to increase and enhance all types of music and events used in our churches/temples in each district (November 2020).

The Remarkable Life and Legacy of Shinobu Matsuura, by Hiro Imamura David (Matsuura’s granddaughter), identifies the music legacy of Shinobu Matsuura’s contributions establishing music as a tradition within BCA and also how she continues to influence music within BCA through the contributions of

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her daughter, Jane Imamura, and granddaughters, Hiro Imamura David, and Rae Imamura (March 2021).

BCA Music Webinars Set, by Kemi Nakabayashi, reveals two upcoming webinars, co-hosted by the BCA Executive Committee, explaining the purpose of the webinars to review challenges and best practices connected to both online Bon Odori and taiko practices (March 2021).

New Music Committee Logo describes the significance of the Music Committee's logo, designed by Yoko Yanari. The logo includes the kanji "gaku" as part of "ongaku" meaning music = 音楽. 音: sound. 楽: joy. "On" is sound and the kanji character for the logo "gaku" means "joy" (June 2021).

The Enduring Legacy of Jane Imamura, by Hiro Imamura David, celebrates Jane Imamura and her husband, Rev. Kanmo Imamura, as pioneers disseminating Buddhism in the United States, especially from the 1940s through the 1970s (October 2021).

Yumiko Hojo's Lifetime Gifts: Gathas, Choirs, and Music, by Reiko Iwanaga with contributions from Tetsu Hojo, provides a tribute to Yumiko Hojo, one of the three dynamic women within BCA music history during pre- and post-World War II eras (November 2021).

Enhancing Temple Services, Engaging Sangha Through Music, by Cynthia S Mee, discusses the presentation given at the National Council Meeting (June 2022).

Celebrate Obon with New Bon Odori "Kangie", by Wynn Kiyama, provided an announcement that Nobuko Miyamoto created a new Bon Odori dance, "Kangie (Gathering of Joy)", for use at temple Obon festivals (June 2022).

Kimi Hisatsune, Lyricist of Notable BCA Gathas, Is Remembered, by Emiko Katsumoto and Kemi Nakabayashi, shares the background of the lyricist of Jane Imamura's classic childrens' Gathas "Buddha Loves You", "Long Ago in India", and "Farewell" (September 2022).

Recalling Chizu Iwanaga, BCA Music Department Pioneer, by Reiko Iwanaga, describes Chizu Iwanaga's musical impact, with her husband Rev. Yoshio Iwanaga, through important events and

projects at various BCA churches/temples (January 2023).

The range of *WoD* articles are interesting and thought-provoking to read as they share the diversity of music within BCA.

Service Music

Sangha members from various churches/temples who are comfortable sharing their musical talents perform during services and activities. Such participation and commitment help to contribute to the growth of the BCA.

The ways churches/temples include music during the service are diverse and comprehensive, as outlined in the BCA National Council Meeting Music Committee webinar:

1. Background music before and after service by church/temple musicians
2. Gathas sung during services by adult and youth musicians, whether live, on-line, or recorded
3. Different formats conducive to singing engagement such as rounds or other active participation
4. Dharma talk music themes
5. Readings with music themes referenced from Buddhist teachings
6. Recorded background music and videos with Gatha lyrics viewed on computer screens to encourage singing along from home and also from video screens in the Hondo

We realize there are multiple customs and roles of music during service. We also recognize there are BCA church/temple sanghas that need music to support services. The online Buddhist Music Library task force has enlisted representatives from a few churches/temples to pilot the repository of Gatha recordings and videos. We hope that the organization of the Buddhist Music Library will be available for wider access in first quarter 2023.

Music Committee Goals and Ideas

After Rev. Harada identified the need for a BCA Music Committee and its inception many exciting things have occurred. The Music Committee and subcommittees have a variety of goals and ideas on their agendas. However,

there are possible other activities for future music endeavors in BCA churches/temples:

1. Identify, create, and fund special music projects for the BCA 125th anniversary celebrations in 2024
2. Collaborate and sharing opportunities between churches/temples using instrumental musicians
3. Identify with the Music Committees their unique music history and interview historical church/temple musical sangha members
4. Share how Dharma Schools are incorporating music in their curricula
5. Recognize sangha members who create or have created Gathas and other music for use by sanghas
6. Create wish lists to identify how to embrace music in churches/temples
7. Engage Dharma School students and other sectors within churches/temples with music
8. Think about how various sangha members, including dharma school students, (who might want to write about their parents' or grandparents' role in music at your church/temple or musical activities they have done) can contribute to BCA history
9. Reach out to our senior sangha members, who can no longer attend services, with music in some way

Conclusion

The Music Committee is the largest committee of the BCA, engaging many active subcommittees and participants. However, we seek new contributors with new ideas to share, suggest, and develop a broader spectrum of music within BCA.

We hope the Music Newsletter can be a platform for writers of all ages across BCA to share how you experience music in your churches/temples. We welcome each of you to consider sharing your Jodo Shin-shu Buddhist music experience by writing an article for the BCA Music Newsletter.

*A smile comes naturally,
as Amida's Name we recall.
Namo Amida Butsu*

BCA Music Donors

The BCA Music Committee is deeply grateful to the following donors who have generously acknowledged our music efforts and presentations. The donations supported our past year's projects and are making current and future projects possible.

2021

Buddhist Temple of Alameda
Wendy Hamai
Eiko Masuyama
Kimberly Nakashima
Ford and Terri Omori
Stefanie Pierce
Stanley Shikuma
Carl and Doris Yanari
BCA Federation of Buddhist
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2022

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Elizabeth Ready
Sharon Sakai
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Mike Shibata
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Linda Uyechi
Junko Yamasaki
Barbara Yasui
Susan Yuen

BCA Music Chairperson's Message

by Kemi Nakabayashi,
Seattle Betsuin

Happy New Year 2023!

With much appreciation to all the BCA Music Committee participants on the many subcommittees, I am very excited to launch the first issue of the BCA Music Newsletter. At our organizing meetings back in 2020 for the BCA Music Committee, Cynthia Mee (Midwest Buddhist Temple) and Amy Peterson (Oregon Buddhist Temple) expressed interest in helping with a newsletter publication. For various technical reasons the newsletter launch was stalled, but the idea remained. We are grateful to Dennis Akizuki (San Jose Betsuin) for editorial guidance and to Pam Matsuoka (Berkeley Buddhist Temple) for actually creating the newsletter for publication.

Much has transpired since 2020. The latest development is preparation of new collaborative gatha videos to present at the opening service of the BCA National Council Meeting and at the BCA Eitaikyo service on Sunday, February 26, the latter presented virtually online for everyone to join. We have recruited musicians across all BCA districts for these new gatha videos with the effort coordinated by Elaine Jones (San Jose Betsuin) and Donna Sasaki (Tacoma Buddhist Temple). The BCA FBWA Music Project task force is finalizing the presentation for our BCA kyodan at the World Buddhist Women's conference in Kyoto, Japan in May, made possible by

the sponsorship donation from the BCA FBWA. We also recently received the full list of donor information to the BCA Music Committee and very much wanted to formally and publicly express our appreciation here in this newsletter.

As the BCA Music Committee looks ahead to the BCA 125th anniversary celebration throughout 2024, we are brainstorming proposed projects and welcome additional volunteers to join the efforts on any subcommittees of interest. Please also note the initial announcement of the BCA Music gatha lyric-writing contest. We are commissioning composers to set the chosen lyrics to music with arrangements, recordings, and performances intended to be presented in 2024. We are grateful for funding support for the youth category from the Bishop's Project Foundation Fund of the Federation of Dharma School Teachers' League. Your participation to submit lyrics or to spread the word about the lyric contest to others for both the youth and adult categories would be wonderful.

Details for the gatha lyric-writing contest will be posted in February on the BCA Music webpage. <https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/music> We are also developing a list of future projects for which directed sponsorship donations can be made. The "Contact Us" button at the bottom of the BCA Music webpage is the easiest way to contact me. If you are not already involved, please join the BCA Music Committee to bolster plans across all BCA districts for the 125th anniversary celebration.

Gassho,
Kemi Nakabayashi

BCA MUSIC NEWSLETTER

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Buddhist Churches of America®

MUSIC



BCA Music Committee



GATHA LYRIC WRITING CONTEST

In commemoration of the
125th Anniversary of Buddhist Churches of America®
the *BCA Music Committee* & the
Federation of Dharma School Teachers' League
are sponsoring a ***Gatha lyric-writing contest***.

- Two categories: youth & adult
- Cash prizes for winning entries
- Deadline for entries is June 4, 2023

For details

<https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/music>