

2026 International Kenjun Koto Competition Application Procedure

The International Kenjun Koto Competition is named for Morota Kenjun, the mid-16th to early 17th-century Jōdo-shū monk and koto player (dates unclear: 1534-1623; 1547-1636) from Zendōji Temple in Kurume City, Fukuoka. Kenjun contributed in a major way to the evolution of the gakusō koto of Gagaku and the Chikuzen-area koto, creating a style of koto playing that changed the history of the instrument dramatically. Yatsushashi Kengyō, the revered kotoist and alleged composer of *Rokudan no Shirabe*, was the *magō-deshi* (or second-generation koto disciple) of Kenjun, whose creative and forward-looking, passionate engagement with the koto is memorialized in the Kenjun Competition as an encouragement to future generations. In its 25th year in 2018 it became international.

Non-Japanese koto performers from around the world are warmly urged to apply. It is our mission to transcend the present isolated state of the koto and its music and to encourage music lovers around the world to enjoy the koto's deeply moving voice.

Qualification

- 1) The competition is now open to all kotoists around the world, irrespective of nationality; country of residence; age; gender; or amateur/professional status.
- 2) Contestants will be judged on their mastery of the classic *Rokudan no Shirabe* and one other piece (classic or otherwise) of their own choice.
- 3) The latter may include a second and/or third instrumentalist if necessary but only the contestant's own koto playing will be judged.

Submission Materials

- 1) Complete all items on the entry form and attach a full-face identity photograph in JPG format.
- 2) Digital files containing:
 - a) First your performance of *Rokudan no Shirabe* (from the very beginning through the end of *Shodan*).
 - b) Second your playing of a piece (or a section of a piece) of your choice (6 minutes or less in length).
 - c) A permission letter from the copyright owner for performance of any abridged version of a piece.
 - d) The files must be labeled with your name and the title of the pieces.
 - e) If your free choice requires a second koto, please send the score of the piece as well, and indicate on it which part you are playing. (You must send a printed original, not a copy machine reproduced score.)
- 3) Application fee (non-refundable) in the amount of 5,000 Japanese yen is to be paid by PayPal. [Please email medievaljapan@columbia.edu to obtain more information.]

Application Period

The application and all supporting materials and fees are accepted Saturday, August 1 through Monday, August 31, 2026.

Selection Process

- 1) 20 finalists will be chosen by the jury from recordings and announced by email by September 30, 2026. (Please refrain from telephone inquiries.)
- 2) Final public judging of the contestants will take place on Sunday, December 13, 2026 at
Kurume-za at Kurume City Plaza
8-1 Mutsumon-machi, Kurume-shi
Fukuoka, Japan 830-0031
- 3) Finalists will play the same piece chosen for the submitted digital file. If it is more than 6 minutes, it should be edited for no more than 6 minutes.
- 4) For those kotoists from abroad chosen as one of the 20 finalists, a grant for round-trip airfare to Japan may be possible this year through the International Liaison Office. Travel in Japan and cost of the stay in Kurume City, however, are the responsibility of the contestant. Koto instruments will be made available for a fee, if necessary.
- 5) Out of the 20 contestants, 6 prizewinners will be chosen.

Jury (in alphabetical order)

CHIKUSHI Junko	Ikuta School Performer
FUJII Chiyoga	Yamada School Performer
MATSUO Masataka	Composer
NOGAWA Mihoko	Musicologist
SUGAWARA Kuniyoshi	Shakuhachi Performer

Prizes

<i>The Kenjun Award</i> (1st Prize) (1 person)	500,000 yen
<i>Silver Award</i> (2nd Prize) (1 person)	200,000 yen
<i>Bronze Award</i> (3rd Prize) (1 person)	100,000 yen
<i>Future Encouragement Award</i> (2 persons)	50,000 yen
<i>Kishibe Shigeo Award</i> (1 person)	50,000 yen

Notes:

- 1) Submitted materials will not be returned.
- 2) You cannot change your free choice piece once the application is submitted.
- 3) Performance order at the final round will be determined by lottery by the organizer.
- 4) Before sending, double-check your digital files to make sure of the best quality of recording.
- 5) You agree that your photo may be used and reproduced for competition-related purposes.

Submission and inquiries should be directed to info@taihm.org

International Liaison Office
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