

# Amida

is not a connection to an  
“other”

Senshinji has had a Gagaku and Bugaku group for the past 30+ years, thanks to Prof. Suenobu Togi, formerly of the Imperial Household Music Department, and Professor of Japanese music at U.C.L.A. In that time, he has taught hundreds of students introducing them to a rarefied world of music.

The Issei, Nisei, and Sansei students at Senshinji have played on many occasions in Kinnara Gagaku, but only in a few instances have we played when everything clicked. These are the very rare moments when we, and the music we are playing, become one. One in the sense that there is a group of players and a piece of music being played, but at the same time, there is only music - effortless, connected, and sheer joy and beauty. And when that magic moment is over we hang on to it remembering what was or hoping to get it again. The moment itself however, is just that, a moment that can be seen and heard and felt but never held on to. That moment takes place in the ever-changing now. Those moments, whether in music, sports, or the many activities of everyday life, are all too few and far between. But those are the ultimately real moments in life, moments we cannot afford to ignore, moments we must learn to recognize. In a normal world of duality, of subject and object, right and wrong, good and bad, above and below, painful and pleasurable, and nauseous, Buddhism asks us to seek a more natural world of non-duality of Oneness.

The Buddhist maxim that "where self is, Truth can not be" points to the culprit that is the cause of our confusion and suffering - my misconception of who I am. The Truth, the ultimate reality, is like music in the moment of Oneness. There is the world of the ego-self, of pleasure and pain, of heaven and hell, and everything in between - the world of Samsara; and, at the same time, there is the world of joy in the Truth, the world of awakening, - the world of Nirvana. Oneness, or Pure Music, is when Samsara and Nirvana are seen as One, and at the same time, different.

When "I" (Namo) and the Truth of life (Amidabutsu Amida Buddha) meet, there is Oneness, there is

Namoamidabutsu, there is Music. It is when we wake up to the true and sincere mind (Shinjin) in us that re-orient us to a life of increasing awareness that we are connected to what is true, real, beautiful, compassionate. It is a growing connecting to what we truly are and truly have been - a uniquely self and other composed human being intimately and inextricably connected to everything in the universe. Namoamidabutsu is Oneness, I and Amida the same and different in one paradoxical package

*Delicate sounds of the jeweled trees of the jeweled forests  
Produce natural music serene and consonant;  
Excellent are the pathos, grace, elegance and resonance  
Take refuge in the Pure Music.  
- Shinran Shonin, Jodo Wasan*

Gassho  
Rev Mas  
Senshinji

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