

## Su Bunjamin

### Tsugaru Shamisen

[www.shamisen-musik.de](http://www.shamisen-musik.de)

Su Bunjamin is an educator and performer of the beautiful Japanese instrument “Shamisen”. She is based in Berlin, Germany, and Santa Cruz, California, US.

Su endeavors to spread her love for Japan’s lively and creative traditional folk music min’yō in her engaging performances and talks. With her academic background as a musicologist and sociologist she aims to give the listeners a deeper understanding of how the music is embedded in socio-cultural context. She encourages her audience to question their subconscious musical stereotypes and expectations, pointing out the social construct of “own” and “other” to help them engage with music in a more open and creative way.

In 2014, Su co-founded [Shamisen Berlin e.V.](#), Europe’s first and only non-profit organization dedicated to promote cultural exchange between Japan and Germany through shamisen music playing. The association allows people to not just learn about the instrument in concerts and cultural events, but to learn playing the instrument in an open and low threshold environment. As chair and musical director, Su organizes performances for her troupe in Germany and Europe, and helps people learn how to play the instrument in workshops and regular group practice sessions.

In 2019, she had the chance to collaborate with young artists in the United States and connect with like-minded musicians and educators, co-teaching at BachiCamp - a novel workshop-series connecting the shamisen and taiko communities in North America.

To eliminate the language barrier for her German-speaking audience, she launched the knowledge and teaching platform [Shamisen-Zentrale](#) in 2020. Today, the platform is bilingual in English and German, using the versatility of digital media to give more people a chance to actively experience shamisen music and connect with fellow enthusiasts online and in person.

Access to reliable and affordable instruments has been the main barrier for people attempting to play shamisen in Europe. She closed this gap with the launch of Europe’s first Shamisen Online Shop [Shami-Shop](#) and a shamisen rental service, making shamisen truly accessible for everyone.

Since fall 2024, Su has been teaching shamisen at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. Since 2025, she has been expanding her performance and teaching activities in the United States together with her husband [Kyle Abbott](#), founder of the International Shamisen Community [Bachido](#).