



MK Fufu

Kyle Abbott & Su Bunjamin · Tsugaru Shamisen Duo · Santa Cruz, California

MK Fufu is Kyle Abbott and Su Bunjamin — a married shamisen duo based in Santa Cruz, California. Their name comes from 夫婦 (fūfu), the Japanese word for married couple, and it's an accurate description of what you see on stage: two people who have spent their lives with this instrument and play as though they're in conversation with each other. They perform Tsugaru shamisen — a powerful, rhythmically driving style from northern Japan — across a repertoire that moves from traditional Japanese folk music to contemporary compositions and cross-genre arrangements. Their sets move between driving rhythm and quiet intensity. Set length is flexible, from a focused 10-minute feature to a full 90-minute program with break. No dedicated technical setup required — fully acoustic or with standard microphones in mic stands.

Kyle Abbott

Kyle Abbott has dedicated himself to the Tsugaru shamisen since the age of 13 — over two decades of playing, teaching, and expanding what the instrument can do and who it can reach. He is the founder of Bachido, the world's first international shamisen community, with over 8,000 members worldwide. He has competed at Japan's Hirosaki Tsugaru Shamisen Tournament in the top division, earned a Judge's Special Award, and performed on stages across the United States, Japan, and Europe. He plays shakuhachi alongside shamisen and has collaborated with over 40 artists across genres internationally. He is currently producing *Waves of Harmony*, an album series of over 50 world fusion compositions featuring more than 50 international collaborators. He builds the shamisen he performs on by hand.

Su Bunjamin

Su Bunjamin has spent over a decade making Tsugaru shamisen accessible to audiences and players who never expected to encounter it. She co-founded Shamisen Berlin e.V. in 2014 — Europe's first nonprofit dedicated to shamisen and Japanese cultural exchange — and built Shamisen-Zentrale, a bilingual education platform reaching learners across Europe and beyond. She holds a lectureship in shamisen at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. Her academic background in musicology and sociology gives her a specific skill that matters in performance: she makes unfamiliar traditions feel immediately relevant to audiences with no prior context. On stage, that translates — her energy is physical and visible, her enjoyment is genuine, and audiences feel it from the first note.