

polyphony and so did the Koto ensembles.

The pieces chosen here (Side 1, Nr. 1), Koto duet, is a representative masterpiece of the polyphonic Koto ensemble. It was composed by Mitsuzaki, a musician who died in 1853. Two Kotos are tuned at different pitches; the main Koto, on the left, is tuned one fifth lower than the second one (on the right). The title of this piece comes from the form of the composition which is in five sections (go-dan). The term Kinuta means the fulling block, since the piece reminds one of the sound of some one making felt. The third, fourth and fifth sections of the piece are recorded here.

The Shakuhachi is a bamboo endblown flute. It first was used in China during the T'ang dynasty (8th century). It was brought to Japan among the instruments of the orchestra. Three Shakuhachis of the period, each with six finger holes, have been preserved in the Imperial Treasury of Shō-sō-in at Nara City, together with other musical instruments, including fragments of ancient Koto. After the disappearance of the ancient Shakuhachi, a new type Shakuhachi with five finger holes, four in front and one on the back, began to be played by Buddhist itinerant priest of the Fuke sect, a sect of Zen buddhism. In the 18th century the instrument became very popular and was added to the Koto-Shamisen ensemble. The particular repertoire of the Fuke Shakuhachi was however preserved and developed into a refined genre of art music. This style is known as the Kinko School.

We have chosen here (Side 1, N 2) one of the most famous pieces of the Kindo Shakuhachi music. The title means "The distant call of Deers". The music is an evocation of two deers answering each other across the valley. The specific blowing technique gives a characteristic sound delicately coloured with various effects. The free rhythm, artificially controlled, represents the beauty of nature, an element always present in the poetic concepts of the older Japanese. The performers in this record are a father and his son, both known as outstanding Kinko Shakuhachi players.