

Harmony in a cup: Japanese tea workshop at Charles B. Wang center invites guests into a living tradition

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The Japanese Tea Workshop, led by master tea instructor Yoshitsugu Nagano, at Stony Brook University's Charles B. Wang Center showed guests chanoyu, a Japanese tea ceremony.

Ed Shin

The [Charles B. Wang Center](#) at SUNY Stony Brook welcomed visitors to *Harmony in a Cup: Japanese Tea Workshop*, led by master tea instructor Yoshitsugu Nagano. Held in two fully attended sessions, the program offered Long Island audiences a rare and intimate encounter with *chanoyu* — the Japanese tea ceremony — guided directly by a practitioner whose precision, presence, and quiet authority transformed the space itself. Rather than a demonstration, the workshop unfolded as a fully immersive experience, where participants became part of a living tradition shaped by philosophy, aesthetics, and ritual.



Master tea instructor Yoshitsugu NaganoEd Shin

What distinguished this experience was Nagano's ability to make the invisible visible. Each gesture — measured, deliberate, and unhurried — invited participants to slow down and recalibrate their attention. The room shifted with him. Silence was not emptiness, but

structure.

Central to the experience was the concept of *wabi-sabi*, the appreciation of imperfection, transience, and quiet simplicity. Participants encountered this sensibility not as theory, but through direct engagement — with the weight of the tea bowl, the irregularities of its surface, and the restrained elegance of each movement. Under Nagano's guidance, imperfection was not corrected but revealed as the very source of beauty.



Yoshitsugu Nagano; Charles B. Wang Center Director of Asian Art and Culture Jinyoung Jin; and Charles B. Wang Center Asian Art and Culture Program Coordinator Eric MurphyEd Shin

Nagano's instruction also illuminated how tea practice is deeply connected to elemental forces. The ceremony unfolded through a subtle orchestration of the five elements: earth, in the clay of the tea bowl; fire, in the heat that brings water to life; water, as both medium and mirror; air, in the steam and breath that animate the space; and, ultimately, emptiness (*ku*), which emerged at the conclusion of the gathering. When the tea was finished and the room returned to stillness, what remained was not absence, but a heightened awareness — shaped as much by Nagano's restraint as by his instruction.

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Yoshitsugu Nagano demonstrating the Japanese tea ceremony Chanoyō with guests Lila Stark and John LizaresEd Shin

Audience engagement was notably reflective. Participants moved from initial curiosity to focused attentiveness, becoming increasingly aware of the relationship between host, guest, and environment. As attendee Mary Fugerson observed, “I came here to learn how to make matcha, but I’m leaving thinking about how I approach my everyday routines. It’s not just about drinking tea—it’s about being present with other people in a very thoughtful way.”



Yoshitsugu Nagano demonstrating Chanoyu, the Japanese tea ceremony, with guests Marco Barone and Wangshu WenEd Shin

Far from being a static tradition, *chanoyu* revealed itself — through Nagano’s teachings as a dynamic and deeply relevant practice. His approach emphasized not performance, but awareness, not instruction alone, but transmission.

In the end, *Harmony in a Cup* offered more than a workshop. It was a rare moment of alignment — between teacher, participants, and space — where even emptiness carried presence, and where the act of sharing tea became a quiet, profound expression of human connection.



Mohit Chandarana and Ankita Nagpal sampling some matcha tea



Sarina Ahmed and Lindsey Persaud sampling some matcha tea



Yoshitsugu Nagano instruction on Chanoyu



The chagama metal pot is used to heat the water, and the chashaku is used to scoop matcha tea. Both are essential tools in Chanoyu, the Japanese tea ceremony.

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About the Author
