

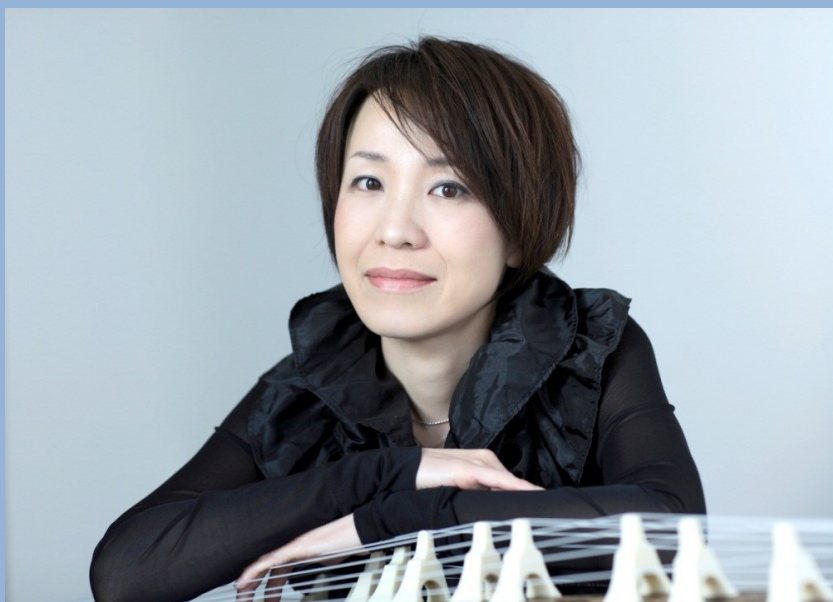
From the Sacred Mountains of Kumano to the sparkling Music Peaks of Tokyo

From Rome to Sao Paulo

Reverberate the Amazing Strings

of

Yoko Nishi, Kotoist



We welcome her in a rare New York appearance on

Friday, October 19, 2012

with guest artist Valerie Naranjo (djembe)

7:30PM

at the

Tenri Cultural Institute

43A West 13th Street (between 5th & 6th Avenue)

New York, NY

Presented by the Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies

DEDICATION

This performance by Yoko Nishi (kotoist) and her guest artist Valerie Naranjo (djembe artist) is part of the 9th Annual Daniel Pearl World Music Days - a global network of concerts held during the month of October, inspired by the life and work of Daniel Pearl (born October 10). Daniel Pearl, the journalist and musician kidnapped and murdered by terrorists in Pakistan was a classically-trained violinist, as well as a fiddler and mandolin player who joined musical groups wherever he traveled. World Music Days commemorates his October birthday and carries on his mission of connecting diverse people through words and music. This month, musicians all over the world are dedicating concerts to our shared belief in Harmony for Humanity - that even though we may have different races, religions or ethnic backgrounds, we can all work together to affirm the ideals of tolerance, friendship, and our shared humanity.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Part I:

Six-Part Exercise

koto solo

Composed by Yatsuhashi Kengyō

Shimmering Apricot Trees (1996)

koto solo

Composed by Rikuya Terashima

Aomori Frog (2000)

koto solo

Lyrics by Sadakazu Fujii

Music by Yūji Takahashi

Voices of Plants (1998)

koto solo

Composed by Mamoru Fujieda

Intermission (15 minutes)

PROGRAM OUTLINE (cont' d)

Part II:

African Air (2002)

koto & djembe

Composed by Yoko Nishi

(with guest artist Valerie Naranjo)

Flight of the Bumblebee

koto solo

Variations on Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

Arranged for koto by Yoko Nishi

Improvisation

koto & djembe

(with guest artist Valerie Naranjo)

Followed by a reception

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Part I:

Six-Part Exercise

koto solo

Composed by Yatsuhashi Kengyō

This work is the oldest of Japan's seventeenth-century koto classics. The composer, Yatsuhashi Kengyō (1614-1685), is considered the founder of modern koto music. He began his career in the old capital of Kyoto, where he was known as a master on the shamisen. After his move to the new capital in Edo (present-day Tokyo) in the mid-1600s he became known as a master of the koto and composed numerous songs for koto accompaniment as well as koto solos. The full *Rokudan no shirabe* (meaning literally six-part piece) has become one of the classics of the koto repertoire. It displays clearly at least six different essential techniques in koto playing. Its six sections flow smoothly into each other but, by the conclusion, the pace has increased three to four times over the starting pace.

Shimmering Apricot Trees (1996)

koto solo

Composed by Rikuya Terashima

The composer writes: The Chinese (Song period) poet/composer Jiang Baishi (ca. 1155 - ca.1221) left a score for a thirteen-song collection. When transcribed into the Western five-line score, it appears to correspond loosely to a four-beat tempo. When I first heard this played by a flutist in Shanghai in 1980, I decided to deal with it differently. By differently, I thought back to a Spanish piece for organ that has been said to resemble the koto classic *Six-Part Exercise*. I felt I wanted to have this score, too, reflect stages: the sunlight on apricot trees from their time of glory in full blossom as well as the rhythm of light and shade in all stages of the trees' bloom down to when all the petals eventually scatter and fall and the shimmer fades away.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Part I (cont'd):

Aomori Frog (2000)

koto solo

Lyrics by Sadakazu Fujii

Music by Yūji Takahashi

This is a work based on the very oldest forms of un-linked songs accompanied by koto music (*kumi-uta*) at which Yatsushashi Kengyō excelled. Modern composer Takahashi here calls up a landscape of the water edge in deep forests upon which the poet Fujii's poem floats. The strings, phrasing, and words form the framework of this piece, but execution is left to the performer.

One solitary male frog, failing to find acceptance by his peers, in lonely exile murmurs over and over the name of his beloved that he was forced to leave behind, "Mutsuko, Mutsuko." From deep in the forests of Aomori the poem weeps with the frog's desolate calls of her name.

Voices of Plants (1998)

koto solo

Composed by Mamoru Fujieda

Premiered in 1998, this work was inspired by recordings made by the artist Mamoru Fujieda of the vibrations that emanate from botanical life. Rearranged by computer, lovely melodies can be woven from these "plant voices." When tuned in the Pythagorean scale of the Gagaku instrument, the shō, pure tones, emerge. From this procedure we are able to hear a new music unlike the usual voice of the koto.

Intermission (15 minutes)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Part II:

African Air (2002)

koto & djembe

Composed by Yoko Nishi

(with guest artist Valerie Naranjo)

Yoko Nishi writes: This is the first time I have tried to tune the koto using clips from ordinary stationary supplies and to transform the sound of the koto so as to resemble the sound of the African instrument, kalimba, which is played predominantly with the thumb.

Flight of the Bumblebee

koto solo

Variations on Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908).

Arranged for koto by Yoko Nishi.

Yoko Nishi writes: In classical koto pieces we often have references to the voice of insects and the sound of wind, but the hum of a bumblebee's wings is mesmerizingly interesting to me and so I decided to create this piece based on Rimsky-Korsakov's famous piece and broaden the usual voice of the koto by bringing the bumblebee to life on its strings. This is the first time I have made this kind of music.

Improvisation

koto & djembe

(with guest artist Valerie Naranjo)

MUSICIANS' PROFILES



Yoko Nishi, (koto) started learning koto at the age of four and formally studied koto under the modernist performer-composers Tadao Sawai and Kazue Sawai. In 1980, Ms. Nishi won a prize at the Sankyoku competition at the age of sixteen. After graduating from Tokyo University of the Arts, she performed in front of the Japanese Emperor and Empress at the Imperial Palace as a representative from the

University at an event organized by the Imperial Household Agency. Her repertory ranges from traditional pieces to contemporary works by John Cage and Yuji Takahashi, collaborations and improvisations with Western instruments, DJs, poets, and artists. She has also become one of the lead performers of ancient musical instruments at the National Theatre, Tokyo.

She has performed for international festivals and venues including the Moers Jazz Festival (Germany), Bang on a Can Festival (USA), Transonic2003 (Germany), and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. In 2008, Ms. Nishi performed at an event organized by the governor of Tokyo at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. She was also invited to the London Chelsea Festival in the UK, and had solo concerts in the USA (Washington, D.C., New York, and Chicago) that same year. In 2009 she gave concerts in Hungary (Budapest) and Germany (Berlin, Cologne, Frankfurt, and Munich), and 2010 she performed at the Shanghai Expo, and at the Carnegie Hall Japan NYC Festival (Artistic Director, Seiji Ozawa). She has released three solo albums *Fantasma* (2002), *Seasons of Kumano* (2010), and *The Sea in a Moonlight Night* (2011). Ms. Nishi has been a visiting professor of Kansai University (2008-2011) and artist-in-residence at Columbia University (2010-2012). She debuted with Yasuka Nambu (flute) in the launching of the NINA Duo at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in December 2011.



Valerie Naranjo, (djembe) from southern Colorado, is known for her pioneering efforts on West African keyboard percussion. In 1988 her playing of the gyl (sacred West African solo marimba) led to the declaration of a chiefly decree in Ghana that women be allowed to play the instrument for the first time.

In 1996 she and Barry Olsen garnered the only to date first place award given to non-West African musicians at a Ghanaian music competition (Kobine). She has held the only percussion chair in NBC's Saturday Night Live Band for 17 years, and arranged the African percussion parts for Broadway's "The Lion King." She has recorded and performed solo, and with such artists as The Philip Glass Ensemble, David Byrne, The Paul Winter Consort, Airtó Moreira, Zakir Hussein, and her group Mandara, which toured Japan in 1993. The 2006 and 2009 reader's poll for "Drum!" magazine named her "World Percussionist of the Year," and the 2011 "Mallet Player of the Year." R. G. Productions' film "Knock on Wood" documenting her activity in Ghana has appeared in film festivals in the U.S. and internationally. She has recorded five CDs of traditional gyl music. Her solo Native American CD, "Orenda," is on the Ellipsis Arts Label. Her solo releases, "Lewaa's Dream" and "Mandara Music Sampler," and a series of sixteen written transcriptions and CD, "West African Music for the Marimba Soloist," are published by Mandara Music. Her series, "Joro - Four West African Concerti for gyl and Orchestra," are published by Bachovich Publications. Ms. Naranjo is a Nichiren Buddhist.

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UPCOMING CONCERT

Friday, March 8, 2013

8 pm

Miller Theatre, Columbia University

“Japanese Sacred Court Music and Ancient Soundscapes Reborn”

Performed by the renowned Japanese Gagaku musicians:

Mayumi Miyata, shō

Hitomi Nakamura, hichiriki

Takeshi Sasamoto, ryūteki

With the Columbia Gagaku Instrumental Ensemble of New York

With additional Hōgaku performers (TBA)

The concert is free and open to the public.

Miller Theatre, Columbia University

2960 Broadway (at 116th Street)

New York, NY 10027

Box Office: 212-854-7799

The Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies
is deeply grateful to the following, whose financial
support has made tonight's concert possible:

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