

JAPAN-USA: Musical Perspectives Series #6



Hanako Nakamura, sho



Blair McMillen, piano

Saturday, March 14, 2015, 4pm
Tenri Cultural Institute of New York

About Our Group, JUMP

We wish to express our gratitude to the Tenri Institute for allowing us to use their space again for the sixth concert in our series and to Globus Washitsu with Tea-Whisk for their hospitality. We also would like to thank all of you for coming.

JUMP (Japan-USA: Musical Perspectives) is a composers' collective, created for the purpose of organizing a series of contemporary music concerts both in the US and in Japan. We present experimental works, collaborating with active contemporary artists and musicians. We seek to expand cultural exchange between Japan and the US through music and arts.

In our past concerts we focused on works that involved computer technology and visual arts as well as Japanese culture, including Japanese traditional instruments. This time, we feature shô, which is one of the traditional instruments in Japanese gagaku ensemble.

Searching for beauty in music is an endlessly fascinating subject for me as a composer. What is *beauty*? *Beauty* is very personal. For me it does not mean 'external beauty', but all of the ugly, fearful, sad, and crazy things that live inside of us. I believe that internal beauty, and not only the outward appearance, attracts people. I very much hope that you will experience this kind of beauty through our music.

It is very important for composers to receive feedback from the audience. Please, feel free to talk to the composers and musicians after the performance.

Miyuki ITO, Founder

Yuki HARADA: *Reimage* (2012/13) for shô with recorded electronics **

Karen TANAKA: *Techno Etudes* (2000) for piano

Tae Hong PARK: *Gugak Study I* (2015) for electroacoustic sounds *

Miyuki ITO: *White Spiral* (2011) for shô and piano **

Intermission

Douglas GEERS: *Sapling* (2015) for piano and live electroacoustic sounds *

Lyudmila GERMAN: *Silent Swallow* (2015) for shô *

Noriyasu TANAKA: *Sparkling in the Space V* (2015)
for shô and piano with recorded electronics *

* World premiere

** US premiere

Hanako Nakamura, shô

Blair McMillen, piano

***Reimage* (2012/13) for shô with recorded electronics by Yuki Harada**

This work was reconstructed by adding electronic sound to "Image" for solo shô, written in 2012. Since its premiere performance in Morelia, Mexico was in collaboration with projected image, the work was performed as an electronic work (often called "tape music"), which comprised of recorded shô sound accompanied by electronic sound. For this performance the piece has been rearranged for live shô and electronics. While composing this piece, I had in mind a certain melodic motif played by shô, enveloped by electronic sound, so I used synthesizer and effector in order to implement my ideas. In addition, I was seeking a sound, which would be unique to electronics, but impossible to realize by just acoustic instruments.

***Techno Etudes* (2000) for piano by Karen Tanaka**

In January 1999, I was asked by Tomoko Mukaiyama to write a new piano piece for her. Originally she requested that the piece should synchronize with techno music chosen by her, which would be pre-recorded on a tape. As we discussed the piece over the following months, we realized that a solo piano work without the tape part would be more substantial. However, the idea of techno remained constantly between us. Finally, I wrote a set of three pieces, titled *Techno Etudes*. The idea of the whole piece can be summarized in three key words: techno, rhythm, and speed.

***Gugak Study I* (2015) for electroacoustic sounds by Tae Hong Park**

Gugak Study I is the first work in a series of studies focusing on Korean traditional instruments. *Gugak Study I* explores idioms of time, space, motion, and musical freedom that often reflect traditional *sanjo* performances, including gayageum solo works. In this work the composer focuses on the gayageum, which is a traditional Korean plucked zither instrument.

***White Spiral* (2011) for shô and piano by Miyuki Ito**

As I had started composing this piece, I remembered the first time I saw shô, at the lecture concert by Mayumi Miyata at Columbia University, when I was a student there. She talked about "Spiral Time Concept" and its difference from western musical timing. She mentioned an image that she had in mind, a sound of shô that spirals up to heaven. In the natural world spirals exist in galaxies, DNA, molecular world and in other places. Spirals symbolize vital energy and are often used in western architecture and arts. Although a spiral has a repetitive structure, it rises endlessly without passing the same position. I tried to express this spiral image with reverberation of a piano pedal, a voice of shô player and the player's breath. They produce subtle timbres, called "colored silence". The "white" in the title derives from the fact that white is the color produced by the combination of all the colors of a visible spectrum.

***Sapling* (2015) for piano and live electroacoustic sounds by Douglas Geer**

This work is a meditation on potential and vulnerability. The title derives from a gift I received years ago from my father. He had traveled to California and returned with tiny saplings of

Sequoiadendron giganteum, the giant sequoia tree; and he gave one sapling to each of his children. This piece is dedicated to his memory.

***Silent Swallow (2015)* for shô by Lyudmila German**

For some time now I have been memorizing poems by the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam. Reading the poems, I felt a certain inexplicable affinity with their mysterious ways and prophetic pronouncements. As I was reciting the memorized poems back to myself, the striking metaphors and the musicality of the verses became even more pronounced. On December 27th, which was an anniversary of his untimely death in a prison camp, someone posted a poem on FaceBook, dedicated to his memory. I read the poem and was moved to compose my own tribute to the poet. There are many recurring and complex images in Mandelstam's poetry. One such image is the swallow. What does this bird represent in his poetry? There is no fixed metaphor that would associate it with a particular image or notion. It could stand for a variety of things, abstract or concrete: flight of imagination, soul, or even the shape of a woman's eyebrows. The swallow could also represent a grey morning or a guide to the underworld. In my piece, the swallow refers to the poet himself. An injured, grounded swallow (suppressed soul, exiled or imprisoned body) is interrupted and can not sing. Unlike the injured swallow in H.C. Andersen's tale "Thumbelina", which recovers and proceeds to the south, Mandelstam is arrested and effectively silenced forever, his song now living as part of his legacy.

***Sparkling in the Space V (2015)* for shô and piano with recorded electronics by Noriyasu Tanaka**

This is my fifth work with electronics. This time, I tried to construct a sound space with an image of transforming shining light by inlaying electronic sound within the instrumental sound of shô and piano, which have different characteristics. The base of the electronic sounds was generated by processing sounds of instruments mainly used in Buddhism as well as various other sounds, which can be heard in the tranquility of a temple garden.

About the Composers

Born in Toyota, Japan, **Yuki Harada** earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at Nagoya University of Arts, Japan. Mr. Harada is the special prize winner of the 1st TIAA Composers Competition in 2006, and his representative works include a sound track of video game "ARC RISE FANTASIA" for the NINTENDO Wii and a sound track of web animation, "GOLDING chapter 1, Slaughter of Invisible Man," etc. Currently, he is a lecturer at Nagoya University of Arts.

Karen Tanaka is an exceptionally versatile composer and pianist. Her works have been performed by distinguished orchestras and ensembles worldwide, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Utah Symphony, Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Kronos Quartet, Brodsky Quartet, BIT20 Ensemble, among many others. Various choreographers and dance companies, including Wayne McGregor and Nederlands Dans Theater, have often featured her music. Born in Tokyo, she started formal piano and composition lessons as a child. After studying composition with Akira Miyoshi at Toho Gakuen School of Music, she moved to Paris in 1986 with the aid of a French Government Scholarship to study with Tristan Murail and work at IRCAM. In 1987 she was awarded the Gaudeamus Prize at the International Music Week in Amsterdam. She studied with Luciano Berio in Florence in 1990-91 with funds from the Nadia Boulanger Foundation and a Japanese Government Scholarship. In 1996, she received the Margaret Lee Crofts

Fellowship at the Tanglewood Music Center. In 1998 she was appointed as Co-Artistic Director of the Yatsugatake Kogen Music Festival, previously directed by Toru Takemitsu. In 2012, she was selected as a fellow of the Sundance Institute's Composers Lab for feature film. Karen Tanaka lives in Los Angeles and teaches composition at California Institute of the Arts.

Tae Hong Park is a composer, bassist, and music technologist. He received his Bachelor of Engineering degree in Electronics from Korea University in 1994 and has worked in the area of digital communication systems and digital musical keyboards at the LG Central Research Laboratory in Seoul, Korea from 1994 to 1998. He also holds degrees from Dartmouth College (M.A. in Electro-Acoustic Music) and Princeton University (M.F.A and Ph.D. in composition). His current interests are primarily in composition of electro-acoustic and acoustic music, machine learning, signal processing, computer-aided music analysis, and new media studies. His music has been heard in various locations, including Austria, Brazil, China, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, South Korea, Slovenia, Sweden, UK, and USA; in venues, conferences and festivals including Aether Fest, Bourges, CEAIT, CYNETart, DIEM, Electric Rainbow Coalition, EarZoom, EMM, EUCUE Series, FEMS, ffmup, High Voltage, ICMC, Into the Soundscape V, ISMEAM, klangprojektionen, LACMA, LITSK, MATA, MAXIS, NWEAMO, Pulse Field, Reflexionen Festival, Santa Fe International Festival of Electro-Acoustic Music, SICMF, SEAMUS, Sonorities Festival, Spark Festival, Third Practice, and Transparent Tape Music Festival. His works have been played by groups and performers such as the Argento Ensemble, Brentano String Quartet, California E.A.R. Unit, Ensemble Surplus, Wayne Dumaine, Edward Carroll, Entropy, Zoe Martlew, Nash Ensemble of London, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and the Tarab Cello Ensemble. Dr. Park is Editor of Journal SEAMUS, Editorial Consultant for Computer Music Journal, the director of NYU's Interactive Arts Series, and has served as chair and organizer of the ICMC 2006 conference as well as president of ICAM from 2010 - 2013. He is the author of "Introduction to DSP: Computer Musically Speaking" published in 2010. He previously taught at Georgia State University and created the undergraduate and graduate Music Science and Technology programs at Tulane University. He is Associate Professor in Music Technology and Director of Composition program at NYU.

Miyuki Ito, a native of Nagoya, Japan, received her B.A. from Aichi University of the Arts, Japan, M.A. from the Manhattan School of Music, and D.M.A. from Columbia University, studying with Tristan Murail. She pursued research at IRCAM (Paris) with an artist grant from the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan. Her works have been performed at festivals and venues across the globe, including Centre Acanthes (France), ISCM, Résonances (IRCAM), ICMC, SMC, Re:New and Visiones Sonoras (Mexico). She has received commissions from Tokyo Opera City (Japan), Music From Japan (NY), Attack Theater (Pittsburgh), Onix Ensemble (Mexico), Aichi Arts Center (Japan), Ensemble Piano Percussion Berlin as well as from individual musicians. Her awards include the Nagoya Cultural Promotion Agency Prize (Japan), Japan Symphony Foundation Prize and Concorso di Composizione Franco Evangelisti 1st Prize (Rome). She had been a fellow at the Djerassi Artist Residency in California with an Oshita Fellowship and at CMMAS in Morelia (Mexico) with a support of the Japan Foundation. She currently teaches at Nagoya University of Arts, Chiba Commerce University and Aichi University of the Arts in Japan. Ito is a co-founder and producer of the composer collectives *NymphéArt* and *JUMP*. She released *The Sands of Time*, focused on works with electronics, on ALCD80. *Réminiscence d'un ancien esprit* is published by Edizioni Suvini Zerboni (Italy). www.miyuki-ito.com

Douglas Geers has used digital technology in nearly all of his works, whether in the compositional process, as part of their sonic realization, or both. He has created concert music, installations, and several large multimedia theater works. Reviewers have described his music as "...glitchy... keening... scrabbling... contemplative" (*New York Times*), "kaleidoscopic" (*Washington Post*), "...Powerful..." (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*), and have praised its "shimmering electronic textures" (*Village Voice*.) Geers completed his doctorate at Columbia University, where he studied with Fred Lerdahl, Tristan Murail, Brad Garton, and Jonathan D. Kramer. Geers is an Associate Professor of Music at Brooklyn College, a campus of the City

University of New York (CUNY), where he is also Director of the Center for Computer Music. www.dgeers.com

Lyudmila German holds degrees from Brooklyn College, CUNY and the Manhattan School of Music. Lyudmila is a recipient of *Meet the Composer Grant*, *Ivar Mikhaschoff Grant for New Music*, *Cantate Chamber Singers* award, and *Robert Helps Prize*. Lyudmila's choral music was premiered at Dundaga festival in Latvia. She was a featured guest at Robert Helps Festival in Tampa, Florida. Performances include *Gone* for tenor saxophone and electronics at Yamaha Hall, Nagoya, Japan, *Reflections on Time and Being* for clarinet, viola, and piano by *Juventas* new music ensemble in Boston, MA, and Piano Sonata at Robert Helps Festival, Tampa, FL, as well as many others. In recent years several solo works received performances in Ukraine and France, and *Four Seasons* for chamber orchestra was premiered in Ulianovsk, Russia. Currently, Lyudmila is working on a one-act chamber opera, as well as on piano and piano-vocal music. She is an organist and music director at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Georgetown, CT, and a full-time mother of two.

Born in Tokyo, **Noriyasu Tanaka** graduated from Kunitachi College of Music, majoring in composition and instrumental performance. His works have been heard on NHK-FM radio broadcasting in the United States and Korea. Furthermore, they have been presented in Japan and throughout the world, including music festivals in Germany, Austria, France, Scandinavia, Korea, and Belgium. In 2006, he was invited to Musik & Museum Aspekte Salzburg, an international music festival, where four of his chamber works, including two premiers, were performed to high acclaim. Tanaka's work "Ballade," commissioned by Masan Philharmonic Orchestra, was premiered at the Asia International Contemporary Music Festival in Masan, Korea, and was favorably received. In February 2013, his work "The Tri-Mode I" was premiered by *Ensemble United Berlin* in their Berlin concert. In October 2013 he was invited as a main guest composer to the 9th International Festival of Music and Technology (Audible Visions) in Morelia, Mexico, where his latest work, "Sparkling in the Space III" for guitar and electronics was premiered, and he was also invited to give a lecture on a topic "Electronics and Music," at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Collections of his chamber works can be heard on CDs titled "Noriyasu Tanaka Chamber Music Vol. 1", released in 1996, and "Noriyasu Tanaka Chamber Music Vol. 2", released in 2002, on VMM label (Vienna Modern Masters), Austria. His latest CD, with representative chamber works, composed in 2001-2009, was released on ALM Record label in 2011. His music is published by Mother Earth Co. Ltd., Japan. Currently, Mr. Tanaka is a professor at the School of Music, Nagoya University of Arts, and a member of Japan Society for Contemporary Music and Japan Federation of Composers, Inc.

About the Performers

Hanako Nakamura graduated from Kunitachi College of Music, Japan (musicology), and studied gagaku, sho, and gakubiwa under Mayumi Miyata and Sukeyasu Shiba. She is a member of the "Reigakusha" Gagaku Ensemble, and has been performing both classical and modern pieces on gagaku instruments. She has received grants from Artistic Internship of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. She has performed at National Theatre of Japan, in the Music From Japan, SAITO KINEN FESTIVAL, the Ultima Contemporary Music Festival, and others. Ms. Nakamura is the founder of shō trio "Shogirls" that established its own recital series.

Blair McMillen has established himself as one of the most versatile and sought-after pianists today. The New York Times has described him as "riveting," "prodigiously accomplished and exciting," and as one of the piano's "brilliant stars." McMillen has made numerous appearances at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall; and with such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, American Symphony Orchestra, and the Albany Symphony. McMillen is pianist for the Naumburg Award-winning Da Capo Chamber Players, the American Modern Ensemble, and the six-piano Grand Band, among others. He is the co-founder and co-director of the Rite of Summer Music Festival on Governors Island. Blair McMillen lives in New York City, and has served on the music faculty at Bard College and Conservatory since 2005.