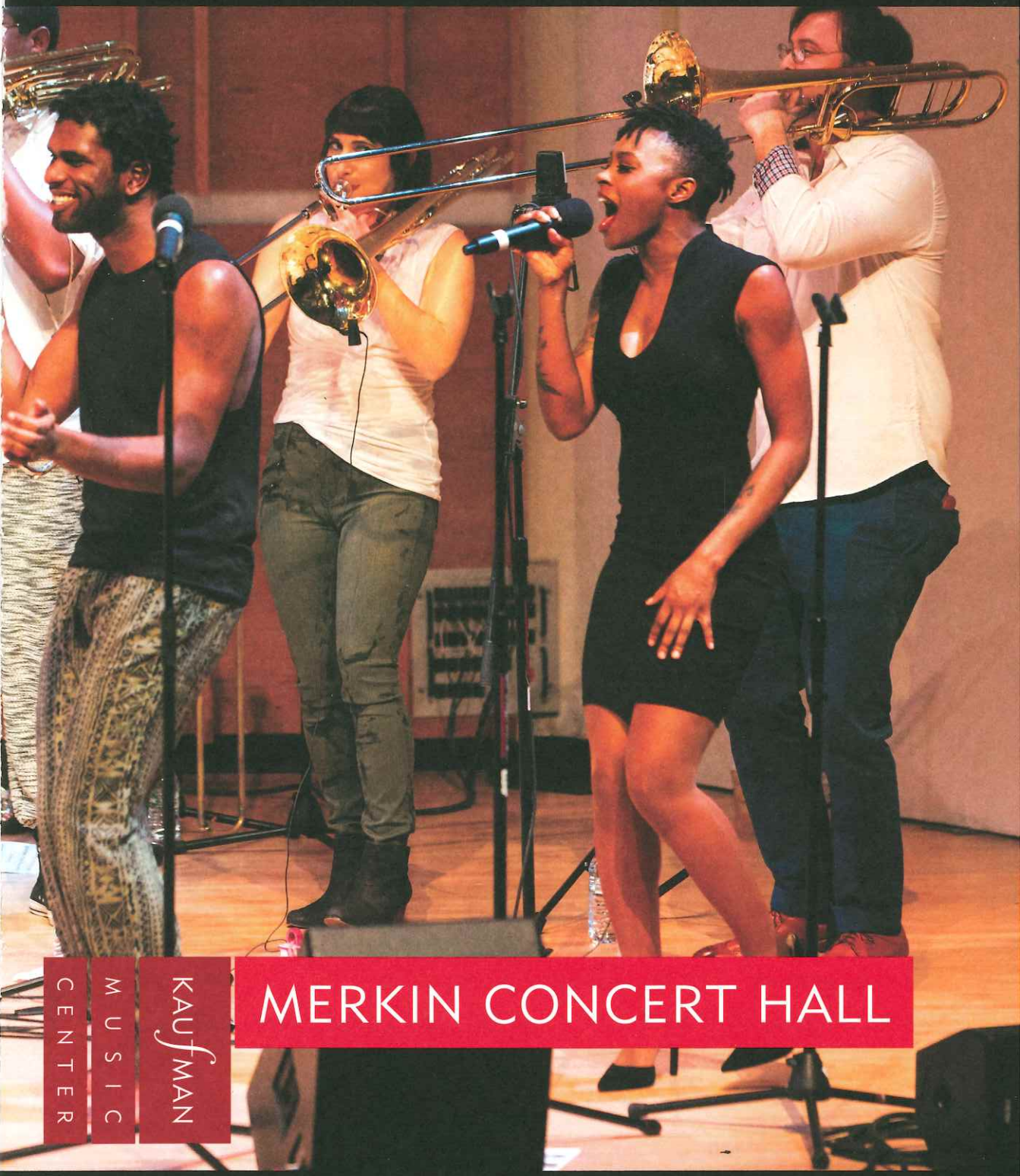

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This Week's Celebration of Michio Miyagi

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Wednesday, October 5, 2016 at 7:30 pm

IMJS: Japanese Cultural Heritage Initiatives
at Columbia University

presents

Celebrating the Genius of Michio Miyagi
(1894-1956)

Program

MICHIO MIYAGI

Rondon no yoru no ame (A Night of Rain in London) (1953)
SATOMI FUKAMI, *koto*

MICHIO MIYAGI

Sashisou hikari (Confluent Rays of Light) (1934)
SATOMI FUKAMI, *koto* (Ikuta school)
YOKO REIKANO KIMURA, *koto* (Yamada school)

MICHIO MIYAGI

Ochiba no odori (Dance of the Fallen Leaves) (1921)
SUMIE KANEKO, *koto*
YUMI KUROSAWA, *bass koto*
YOKO REIKANO KIMURA, *shamisen*

MICHIO MIYAGI

Seoto (Rippling Stream) (1923)
SATOMI FUKAMI, *koto*
YUMI KUROSAWA, *bass koto*

Intermission

MINORU MIKI

Hanayagi (The Greening) (1976)
YUMI KUROSAWA, *21-string koto*

TADAO SAWAI

Tori no yōni (Like a Bird) (1985)
MASAYO ISHIGURE, *koto*

DAI FUJIKURA

Cutting Sky (2006)
SUMIE KANEKO, *koto*
STEPHANIE GRIFFIN, *viola*

MICHIO MIYAGI

Haru no umi (The Sea in Spring) (1929)
SATOMI FUKAMI, *koto*
JAMES NYORAKU SCHLEFER, *shakuhachi*
STEPHANIE GRIFFIN, *viola*

About the Program
by Barbara Ruch

Rondon no yoru no ame
(A Night of Rain in London) (1953)
Michio Miyagi
Satomi Fukami, koto

Miyagi was sent to Europe in the summer of 1953 with a well-known Japanese *buyō* dance master as Japan's representative to the Second International Festival of Native Music held that summer at two sites, in France and Spain. At the conclusion of the Festival he then stopped in London for a two-week visit.

Miyagi composed *A Night of Rain in London* on the night of his arrival in London. Famous for its fog and drizzle, London was experiencing a downpour of the once-in-decades variety. Miyagi later wrote:

> "... it rained in torrents the whole night, and the sound of that rain was deeply moving to me. In my mind's eye I could imagine rain sheening down steep roofs of tall buildings like curtains of silver jewels descending to the ground. Travel-weary as I was, I felt somehow comforted by the low murmur of cars hurrying through the rain-drenched streets below. I composed this work throughout that whole night, re-imagining the many thoughts of all those British poets of old who must have known just such nights."

Written in his mature years, this work is among Miyagi's great solo masterpieces. It is not only a work of great beauty, but its moments of silence are also superb. Shortly after composing it, he premiered it at a reception given for him at the Japan Embassy in London, and he was immediately asked to broadcast it on BBC radio.

Sashisou hikari
(Confluent Rays of Light) (1934)
Michio Miyagi
for two kotos of diverse heritages and voice
Satomi Fukami, koto (Ikuta school)
Yoko Reikano Kimura, koto (Yamada school)

On March 17, 1934, a rare concert was presented before the then Empress to celebrate the recent birth on December 23, 1933 of the crown prince (the present Emperor). At the same time it celebrated the tenth anniversary of her marriage to Emperor Showa. In those days it was virtually unheard of for the rival schools of Ikuta school and Yamada school koto players to perform together on the same stage.

Miyagi at that time was professor in practice of the Ikuta school koto at the Tokyo School of Music (predecessor of the present Tokyo University of the Arts) as was his colleague Kin'ichi Nakanoshima, who taught Yamada style there. In unprecedented collaboration Miyagi wrote music for two 13-string kotos, incorporating into it certain techniques characteristic of the two schools, and he recruited professor of Japanese literature, Tatsuyuki Takano, to write the lyrics for the shared vocal portions.

The title given to this work embraces many celebratory meanings: the Empress and Emperor's ten-year marriage (two shafts of light) merging radiantly as one; the birth of the crown prince as a new ray of light that has emerged and will light the future of Japan; and the two separate shafts of koto heritage music joining in splendor with collaborative lyrics – all three confluent rays lighting the way for the future of the art of the modern koto.

Structured as a traditional koto solo (sectioned into instrumental prelude, initial song, second instrumental section, and closing song) the work equally shares the two heritages throughout. Musically, dawn breaks, then as the sun rises, it is welcomed with increased tempo and great joy. The initial song quotes from the melody of what had by then become Japan's national anthem, *Kimi ga yo*. This is then followed by a display of various koto techniques woven into a spectacular duet. In the closing song the koto technique resonates with a timbre reminiscent of the ancient gakusō type of koto played traditionally in sacred Gagaku court music.

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Ochiba no odori
(Dance of the Fallen Leaves) (1921)
Michio Miyagi
for koto, bass koto (17-string) and shamisen
Sumie Kaneko, koto
Yumi Kurosawa, bass koto
Yoko Reikano Kimura, shamisen

Miyagi premiered his new innovation, the 17-string bass koto, with a new work *Dance of the Fallen Leaves*. This increase in the number of strings was designed to expand the voice of the koto into lower frequencies of bass tones. The new instrument was about two feet longer than the six-foot standard 13-string koto, and slightly thicker, which also allowed for more pitches to be produced from each string. This premiere composition also demanded new staccato playing from both the koto and the shamisen.

At the turn of the century, music was being recorded commercially for the first time. Miyagi stated that he was greatly inspired by hearing a record of the then young violin prodigy Jascha Heifetz playing Antonio Bazzini's virtuosic showpiece *La Ronde des Lutins* (Dance of the Goblins). In *Dance of the Fallen Leaves* Miyagi took up the challenge tossed to him by the violin. European goblins he did not know. But in his blindness his ears heard sounds most of us could not. He knew the sounds of the whole ecosystem of nature around him as we never could. In autumn and winter he could hear the world of leaves in many stages, as their pigments burned with dryness, curled, and fell to winter beds for their winter sleep. This work, when premiered at the Tokyo School of Music's concert hall (the current "Old Concert Hall"), caused a sensation both due to the new Miyagi 17-string instrument and to the dramatic new techniques he introduced in performance. His musical representation of fallen leaves stirred into motion by random wiles of autumn wind, demonstrates astounding techniques and demonic powers that reportedly left members of the audience shivering.

Miyagi's contemporary, the traditional Japanese dance specialist, Seiju Fujikage (1880-1966), who was one day to become the founder of Japan's New Dance (*Shin-buyō*) movement, was in the audience. She was so electrified by Miyagi's *Dance of the Fallen Leaves* that even before she got home she had already composed in her mind music and choreography for a new dance performance.

Seoto
(Rippling Stream) (1923)
Michio Miyagi
for koto and bass koto
Satomi Fukami, koto
Yumi Kurosawa, bass koto

Inspired by a trip he took to Niigata Prefecture, through which flows the great Tonegawa River, Miyagi here creates the sounds of river waters in multiple configurations, from the light murmuring of shallow headwater rapids in the first movement, to smooth flowing river depths in the second movement, where the water swells and accommodates logger rafts floating down from upstream mountains. He even incorporated melodic quotes from local logger's folk songs. The last movement returns to the fast pace of the beginning, and revisits the melodies of boatmen's songs. In Miyagi's essays he writes that he was inspired to write in this style by Maurice Ravel's 1901 piano piece called *Jeux d'eau* (Water at Play), a work that in turn had been inspired by Liszt's *Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este* (1877), where the piano played musical sounds that Liszt said he heard in water sprays and cascades.

Seoto requires the highest possible level of technique and demonstrates brilliantly the low tones made possible by Miyagi's addition of the four strings that created the bass 17-string koto. Whereas his first 17-string koto innovation, which premiered with *Dance of the Fallen Leaves*, had a larger eight-foot body, he then strove to shrink the size down to about seven feet. There was a period, therefore, during which there existed simultaneously a "large" and a "small" 17-string koto. *Seoto* was written for the smaller one, and ultimately the 17-string koto was standardized at about seven feet. While his innovations in instrument and technique made greater speed and accuracy of performance possible, some critics lamented these developments saying that some younger-generation performers who are less brilliant than Miyagi strive just for a virtuosity of speed and end up sacrificing quality and substance of timbre.

Hanayagi
(The Greening) (1976)
No. 5 from Volume II (Spring) in the collection *Ballades for Koto Solo* (1969-1990)
Minoru Miki
Yumi Kurosawa, 21-string koto

Composer Minoru Miki was deeply influenced, not just by Miyagi's creative power as a composer, but by his pushing the limits of tones and timbres through innovations on the koto instrument itself. Miki, together with the virtuoso performer Sōju Nosaka (then Keiko Nosaka), created the modern 21-string koto. The present work was composed by Miki for that instrument.

He conceived *Ballades for Koto Solo* as a series of movements, each as a melodic expression inspired by a seasonal moment and written down as if making a music diary of passing seasons. Beginning with Volume One (Winter) he structured each seasonal volume to consist of five short pieces which can stand alone as solos, yet when played sequentially as one, create a powerful sense of nature's clearly perceivable, but subtle shifts in time.

The Greening has become famous in and of itself, acclaimed as a masterpiece not only by 21-string kotoists but players of the full range of modern kotos. Although it belongs to the "Spring" section of Miki's *Ballades* collection, its musical power is felt to speak to the vitality of all Nature.

Miki, like Miyagi, believed the koto and its companion Japan-born instruments belonged as full citizens in the present music world, and he foresaw a vital future for them. His path-breaking book *Nihon gakki hō* (1996) is available in English as *Composing for Japanese Instruments* (2008), translated by composer Marty Regan.

Tori no yōni
(Like a Bird) (1985)
Tadao Sawai (1937-1997)
Masayo Ishigure, koto

The hugely influential koto performer and composer, Tadao Sawai, rose to prominence and great popularity in the 1970s and 1980s. A great admirer of Miyagi, Sawai lamented what he considered a vacuum in the years between Miyagi and the avant-garde composers of modern Japanese heritage instrumental music of his own day. It was his intent to help fill that gap by composing new works he hoped would be accessible to new generations of listeners.

Invited to perform at the Paris Music Festival of 1978 by Tōru Takemitsu, the Festival Director, Sawai stated his mission in life was to inspire among music lovers around the world a deep appreciation for koto music. He and his wife, the brilliant kotoist Kazue Sawai, founded the Sawai Koto Academy in 1979 with branches around Japan and in Sidney, Hawaii, and New York.

Tori no yōni, which combines a wide variety of modern and traditional playing techniques, is one of Sawai's most acclaimed works. He describes his inspiration for this work as follows:

> "If only I could fly like a bird in the big open sky ...! Everyone has had a dream like this. Usually we have this dream only when we are deep asleep submerged beyond conscious thought. But sometimes something breaks through and we open our eyes – for instance, when we long for something or when we feel joy that fills our hearts – and then we feel what it's like to fly in the sky. Like a bird."

Cutting Sky (2006)
Dai Fujikura (b. 1977)
for koto and viola
Sumie Kaneko, koto
Stephanie Griffin, viola

Dai Fujikura, born in Japan but trained musically in the United Kingdom since age 15, has long been a favored composer for the London ensemble of new music, Okeanos, which is comprised of both Western and Japanese instruments.

One of his series of works is entitled the *Okeanos Cycle*, of which *Cutting Sky* is the third of five independent pieces released on CD as a whole in 2012. Fujikura explains that whereas the other four pieces (*Touch of Breeze, Breathing Tides, Sakana,* and *Okeanos Breeze*) have a fluid feel and structure, in *Cutting Sky* he wanted to express a tautness and precision as if the sharpest of swords was cutting through the air.

In a spirit in sync with Miyagi's constant striving to expand the potential range and timbre of the koto, Fujikura says that he wrote *Cutting Sky* for

an "imaginary instrument," – a kind of "super-koto" created by marrying the koto with a plucked viola.

Haru no umi
(The Sea in Spring) (1929)
Michio Miyagi
(Originally composed for koto and shakuhachi; the shakuhachi part was later arranged for violin by violinist Renée Chemet in 1932. Tonight we premiere an arrangement for viola.)
Satomi Fukami, koto
James Nyoraku Schlefer, shakuhachi
Stephanie Griffin, viola

The Sea in Spring is perhaps Miyagi's most famous work both in Japan and abroad. The French violinist, Madame Renée Chemet (1887-1977), on a performing tour in Japan heard Miyagi play a concert and was so enthralled by this particular piece that in one night she arranged the shakuhachi part for violin and played it for him the next day. He was stunned and wrote, "With one try she expressed exactly what I was attempting to express. We could not understand a word we said to each other, but our feeling in playing this piece matched perfectly." They played it together in concert in Tokyo and then recorded it together before she left Japan. This launched its fame with violinists, not only abroad but in Japan as well. It was later played by Josef Lampkin and others, and became a favorite of Isaac Stern (1920-2001). Tonight we premiere the work substituting the viola for the violin.

The origins of *The Sea in Spring* are significant. As is still the annual custom in Japan, Emperor Showa, in 1928, announced the theme for the coming New Year's Imperial Poetry Reading (*Utakai hajime*) for January 1929, on which occasion the imperial family members would introduce their own traditional *waka* poems on that theme. Poets nationwide could also submit *waka* for consideration at that upcoming January event. The theme announced that year was *Kaihen no iwao* (Sturdy Rock at Ocean Edge), words which themselves comprise a syllable cluster useable, as is, for a line in a 31-syllable *waka* poem. In December, 1928, just before that New Year's event, Miyagi began to compose an instrumental work for koto and shakuhachi with this ocean theme in mind. It stirred aural memories of a trip he had taken along Japan's Seto Inland Sea where he was struck by a sense of great beauty of the sea as it embraced its many islands and inlets. As in many of his works, it is in three movements. He begins gently with the sound of small waves lapping the shore, stirred by the wake of passing fishing boats. The music incorporates the calls of gulls as they soar back and forth overhead. The pace picks up in the second movement with the manly rhythmic thrust of a fisherman's pole-oar and concludes with a suggestion of an accompanying song. The third movement returns to a tranquil seacoast scene on a glorious spring day. He has reversed the traditional three part *jo-ha-kyū* pattern of traditional Japanese music and created a serene, bright and open work that became a beloved fixture played annually nationwide, a spring promise at the start of the year.

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About the Composer
by Barbara Ruch

Michio Miyagi (1894-1956) was one of Japan's most outstanding early 20th-century musical geniuses, not only as a koto performer, but as an innovator of the structure of the koto instrument itself, and also as a composer for the koto in solo and ensembles in ways that for the first time launched the koto as a musical instrument of international acclaim.

Born in Kobe, Japan, in 1894, by which time the koto and other Japan-born instruments had been banned from the schools in favor of Western instruments, and long after the official system of status and ranks in support of koto artists had been abolished in 1871, Miyagi lived in a culturally unsettling time for music but one in which traditionalists clung desperately and thoroughly to their traditions in order to save them from extinction in a swiftly Westernizing world.

Two circumstances had a profound impact on the course of Miyagi's musical life. First, shortly after birth he suffered from an eye disease that eventually led to total blindness by the time he was eight years old. Blind instrumentalists of the

traditional Japanese biwa and koto had a long history in Japan, and so it seemed natural that he be apprenticed to a traditional music master. Fortunately he studied under the great master Kengyō Nakajima II. While still very young he learned to play the shakuhachi, shamisen, kokyū and koto.

The word "genius" used above is employed in the sense of Schopenhauer's famous words: "Talent hits a target no one else can hit. Genius hits a target no one else can see." A superbly talented prodigy performer, Miyagi debuted as a koto soloist by age nine, was certified as a master teacher of koto and shakuhachi by age eleven, and by age fifteen began a career as a composer that was to transform the history of koto music and broadly influence the future path of modern Japan-born music.

His extraordinary creativity and vision led him to dream of instrument innovations that would expand the voice of the traditional 13-string koto by adding strings. He designed several sizes of 17-string kotos and even an 80-string koto, all of which laid the groundwork for the creation of the profoundly effective 21-string koto later developed by composer Minoru Miki and performer Sōju Nosaka, and since then played superbly by Nanae Yoshimura and Yumi Kurosawa.

In his forties, Miyagi also became a prolific essayist on his braille typewriter. He described how his world became a whole universe of sound. He no longer saw color images in his dreams, but dreamed only in soundscapes that would enfold him throughout his sleep. Moreover, in his waking hours he heard what sighted people unconsciously dismiss. He could tell minute differences in the time of day, and in the seasonal vocabulary of various insects, types of wind, tree leaves, flower blooms, all manner of transformations of water and sea sounds. Yet he "heard" a great deal with his hands. He would touch the irises in his garden when they were in bloom, following the stages from bud to atrophy; he touched the faces of his visitors; he said he could tell if a person was beautiful or good, not by touch, but by the sound of their movements and voice.

The second circumstance that greatly impacted his music was that Miyagi was born when discography was about to become commercial. He himself was sought out by fledgling NHK Radio and Victor Records, where he became a Japanese pioneer broadcaster and recorder of traditional koto musical classics as well as his own compositions. He was also the first to teach the koto to Japanese children via the radio. His passion for all music led him to acquire more than 1000 music recordings from around the world by the time he died in 1956.

He describes how he, with his record player, would burrow under bed covers to muffle the sound so as not to disturb others in their sleep, and one-by-one change the records all night listening to the music of great performers of all kinds of classical music.

Miyagi also composed, in his head, many compositions for solo koto, for ensemble, and for full orchestra, with no need for an instrument at hand. If only there were a way, he lamented, for his compositions to flow directly from his head, since they were fully formed there, without having to bother tapping them out laboriously on his braille typewriter into his self-invented braille scores and then essentially have them translated into traditional koto notation for other performers. Then one day, too, they would be needed in five-line scores for Western trained musicians.

Miyagi was not a fusion composer. He was instead a thoroughly tradition-revering artist, but he envisioned, and was the inventor of, a new musical grammar where Western and Japanese musical traditions could meet in mutually understandable dialogue. His music was not like the fusion of Esperanto, designed to meet in the middle for people of several different language cultures. Esperanto was an artificial mixture that had no culture of its own behind it to nourish it, whereas Miyagi's music, inspired by techniques and patterns he selected from non-Japanese music as well, was deeply rooted and informed by Japanese cultural heritage music, which at his hand flowered in ways wholly new to koto tradition. One thing is clear, however, and that is that he could never have struck so deeply into the heart of Japanese audiences had he been a rebel in the avant-garde – had he not built his music firmly on the cultural traditions of the Japanese koto itself.

When he wanted to write variations on traditional Japanese musical themes, to elaborate on them and let them bloom, however, he could find no precedents to study. And so, for example, he describes how he listened all through the night to his braille-labeled records of the Swiss-German pianist Edwin Fischer playing Beethoven's *33 Variations on a Waltz by Anton Diabelli* to seek inspiration. Then too, in many Western works he could hear the Western three-movement pattern as a dialect, as it were, a cousin to, the *jo, ha, kyū* of Japanese traditional performing arts. He wanted to enrich both.

Miyagi may have been the first koto master to view his music as pure music and not as an accompaniment to song or dance or meditation, or part of a collective performing art designed for designated venues only. After all there had never been a concept in Japanese or a word that encompassed all music – in Japanese there were only discrete names to designate each genre, until his day in the 19th century when the import of Western music necessitated an overall label – a coinage: *ongaku*. The eminent novelist Yasunari Kawabata speaking of the music of Miyagi's *The Sea in Spring* called it "purity" itself.

Miyagi, whose ears, and head and heart were filled all the time with the highest levels of professional music, East and West, once said that in comparison with Western musical instruments, Japanese instruments clearly are crafted with a more limited range – inhabit a smaller universe – but, he said, I have no complaints. Japanese instruments, he felt, are much like haiku poetry, which has an extreme limitation of seventeen syllables, but, within that given, each word has resonant meaning that reverberates and echoes even when the "sound" has passed.

Koto performers in the U.S. represent several different schools (Ikuta, Miyagi, Yamada, Sawai, etc.) All, however, have come together, this sixtieth year after Miyagi's death, to collaborate on creating a program to honor him, inspired by Miyagi's own openness of spirit that bridged different styles, as is vividly demonstrated by his 1934 composition presented here tonight – *Confluent Rays of Light* – where Ikuta and Yamada share the stage.

Tomorrow, inspired, too, by Miyagi's love for and his life-long search to liberate the greatest potential of the koto's voice, a handpicked few of sound arts specialists will meet in workshop format to dig deeper and press forward toward a koto fully comfortable, comforting and thrilling for 21st-century listeners. There are challenges of endangered silk, ivory, and wood components, modern issues of air transport, incompatible concert halls, new-generation media beyond even Miyagi's wildest dreams that confront the future of the koto. Already there is much joyful excitement in taking on these challenges.

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About the Artists

Satomi Fukami, the illustrious koto performer, educator, composer and professor in practice of koto performance at Tokyo University of the Arts, is a direct successor of the Michio Miyagi line, having studied under both Kiyoko Miyagi (Living Cultural Treasure) and Kazue Miyagi, his two nieces who lived with him and his wife, studied the koto under him since childhood, and became his star disciples.

By the 1980s Fukami was receiving Japan's highest awards as koto performer, and in the 1990s, in addition to her post at the university, she began celebrated performing tours of the U.S., France, Switzerland and Canada. During the past two decades she has issued CDs preserving collections of classical koto pieces, *jiuta*, shamisen works, and her own compositions.

A dynamic mentor, she raised the question, "Why have there been no practice studies composed so as to aid koto protégés in their strength, agility, speed, and precision such as the famous Hanon and Beyer exercises for the piano?" In response to her own challenge over the past several years, working with students in workshops, she has developed 50 practice pieces and recently published them (*The Koto Etudes of Satomi Fukami*). At the same time her mantra has always been that you do not play the koto with your fingers alone, but with body (relaxed and centered), breath, pulse, and of course deep cultural memory.

For the past ten years her guiding principle has

been *koten o gendai ni*. "With the classics as a base new present-day works arise," she asserts. The search must always be an exploration of all the tones and timbres of the living wood and strings of the koto. "And as a woman," she adds, "I want to discover what new and deeper revelations a woman of my age can reveal through the koto that differ from what my 20-year-old self once expressed. "

Stephanie Griffin was born in Canada and is now based in New York City. She studied viola with William Gordon in Vancouver, Paul DeClerck in Brussels, and Wayne Brooks at Rice University in Houston. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from The Juilliard School where she studied with Juilliard Quartet violist Samuel Rhodes. She is now in her tenth year as principal violist of the Princeton Symphony, and she teaches viola at Brooklyn and Hunter Colleges.

Griffin performs regularly with the New York contemporary music institution, Continuum, now in its 48th year, and has given American premieres of major works by leading European composers, among them Georg Friedrich Haas and Michael Jarrell, as a member of the Argento Chamber Ensemble. From 1998 through 2002, she was Executive Director of the contemporary music series at Galapagos Art and Performance Space, and she currently curates new music for the Immersive Gallery in Brooklyn.

A founding member of the Momenta Quartet, she has given over 200 chamber concerts at such esteemed venues as the Library of Congress and the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. and led residencies at major American institutions of higher education, among them Cornell, New York Universities and Eastman School of Music.

Musical adventures have taken her to Indonesia, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, England, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, Mexico and Mongolia as a soloist and chamber musician in classical, contemporary and improvisational contexts. As a soloist, she has worked closely with numerous composers, among them Salvatore Sciarrino, Tristan Murail, Tony Prabowo, Kee Yong Chong, Ursula Mamlok, Matthew Greenbaum and Arthur Kampela.

As an improviser, she was a 2014 fellow at Music Omi, and is a member of Carl Maguire's Floriculture, Gordon Beeferman's Other Life Forms, Hans Tammen's Third Eye Orchestra, Adam Rudolph's Go: Organic Orchestra and the composer/improviser collective, the Brooklyn Infinity Orchestra. She has collaborated with the Composers' Workshops at Columbia University's Japanese Heritage Music Initiatives.

Masayo Ishigure began playing the koto and *jiuta* shamisen at the age of five in Gifu, Japan. After initial studies with Tadao and Kazue Sawai, Ishigure became a special research student in 1986 at the Sawai Koto Academy of Music in Tokyo, which incorporates many influences from classical to jazz and aims to change the perception of the koto from solely a traditional Japanese instrument to an instrument of universal expressiveness. As a virtuoso disciple of the Sawais she also successfully completed the 33rd Ikusei-kai program sponsored by the NHK Broadcasting Company to foster and train aspiring artists in Japanese music. In 1988, she received a degree in Japanese Traditional Music from Takasaki Junior Arts College with a concentration on koto and shamisen.

Since moving to New York City in 1992, she has headed the New York branch of the Sawai Koto Academy, and has performed at Lincoln Center, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, BAM, Merkin Concert Hall, Asia Society, Japan Society, the Metropolitan Museum, and Symphony Space as well as at universities and institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and the Smithsonian Institute. She has also performed as guest artist with the San Diego Symphony, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, and Hartford Symphony Orchestra. As an educator, she has taught koto and shamisen at Wesleyan University and since 2010 teaches the koto at Columbia University.

Ishigure has been featured in CBS Master Works used during the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics, and in 2005, she was a recording artist, alongside Yitzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, and others on the Grammy Award-winning soundtrack from the movie *Memoirs of a Geisha* by John Williams. She recorded *Tori no Yōni* (Like a Bird) on the CD entitled *The World of Tadao Sawai*, and recorded

Hayao Miyazaki's animation songs, arranged for koto and shakuhachi, on the album *East Wind Ensemble*. In 2001, she released her own solo CD entitled *Grace*.

In 2016 Masayo Ishigure was honored by the Japanese Government in a ceremony at the New York residence of the Japan Consul General for her long career in bringing the culture of koto music to American audiences.

Sumie (Sumi-é) Kaneko, a prodigy of the koto, appeared at age six on NHK TV/FM in Tokyo. By age 15 she received her qualification as a koto/shamisen master/teacher. During the 1990s she received many awards, even before her graduation from Tokyo University of the Arts in 2000, where she excelled at koto, shamisen, and where her voice was exceptional.

She moved to Boston in 2002 in order to continue her musical education in jazz and voice at Berklee College of Music, from which she graduated magna cum laude in 2006. Already, during those Boston years, she played in Berklee professor and percussionist Jamey Haddad's band, and composed, arranged, and performed shamisen for Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paula Vogel's *Long Christmas Ride Home*. Additionally, she recorded *J-Trad & More*, a CD which pioneered her uniquely chromatic use of instruments and embellished her Japanese roots with the color of jazz and avant-garde freedom in well-received appearances around the world. She also recently released the CD *Dead of the Night*.

Prior to her move to New York in 2012 she had already played in the duo project *Infinity* with Yoko Reikano Kimura, which then toured Brazil. In New York she began a regular collaboration with shinobue and percussion artist Kaoru Watanabe.

An avid advocate for the koto and shamisen and voice, she has given workshops at many academic institutions such as Harvard, Princeton, Wellesley College and Berklee College of Music. She has collaborated with a rich array of artists including painters, dancers and calligraphers as well as such musicians as Kenny Endo, Yumiko Tanaka, the On Ensemble, and others.

Yoko Reikano Kimura, born and raised in Japan, began to study the piano at age four, but soon took an interest in Japanese music. She began to study Yamada-style koto with Yukano Inoue at age 10, and at age 14 with the foremost Yamada-style performer in Japan, Kono Kameyama. She graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts and was awarded the top prize for her graduation recital. In 2000 she received her professional koto artist name "Reikano" from Hiroko Nakanoshima VI, daughter of the legendary koto and shamisen performer/composer Kin'ichi Nakanoshima.

While advancing her studies in the classical repertory of Japanese heritage music, she became deeply interested in new music written for Japanese instruments and studied at the NHK Broadcasting Company's School for Young Professionals. At the Institute of Japanese Traditional Music at Senzoku Gakuen College of Music she studied contemporary music with Akiko Nishigata, who pioneered the performance of a new musical repertoire for the shamisen. In 2004 she was chosen by the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan as an intern trainee to research and perform classical and contemporary koto/shamisen music. In the Kato-style shamisen genre, which is closely related to Yamada-style koto music, she studied with Senko Yamabiko, a Living National Treasure, and received the name "Reiko Yamabiko." She became a faculty member at Senzoku Gakuen College of Music and a koto instructor at Kiryu University. As a Japanese instrumentalist, she continues to perform in Japan and to hold a teaching position at the Institute of Traditional Japanese Music.

Kimura has won numerous awards and her solo koto and shamisen performances have been broadcasted nationally in Japan. She has also performed at the Kabuki-za in Tokyo in *Sukeroku* starring Danjuro Ichikawa XII and accompanied famous Kabuki actor-dancers.

Since 2004, Kimura has toured widely in Europe and Asia, South America and the Near East. In 2008 she and her husband, Hikaru Tamaki, cellist, launched their "Duo YUMENO," offering a unique collaboration of instrumental sound that explores both traditional Japanese music and Western classical music, with newly commissioned works and their own arrangements.

Since moving to the U.S. in 2010, her mission has been to promote Japanese music to

American audiences. She has given concerts and workshops, both as an outstanding shamisen and koto soloist, at a wide variety of venues in New York and around the U.S. She has collaborated with many well-known ensembles, both Japanese and Western, as well as with dancers, fashion designers, and composers.

Yumi Kurosawa was born and raised in Japan, and began studying the 13-stringed koto at the age of three with her musician parents, Kazuo and Chikako Kurosawa. At the age of 15, she began studying the 21-stringed koto with Nanae Yoshimura. Kurosawa received first prize at the National Japanese Koto Competition for students in 1989 and 1992, and a scholarship from the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan in 1998. Kurosawa also studied computer music while attending Keio University from which she received a B.A. in International Relations.

Kurosawa moved to New York City in 2002 and made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2006 at Weill Recital Hall. She continues to work not only within traditional Japanese and contemporary classical music genres, but also collaborates with a range of musicians, dancers and visual designers. In 2011 she was principal soloist in the New York premiere of Daron Hagen's *Koto Concerto Genji*, which she also performed at Stratford-upon-Avon in the UK with the Orchestra of the Swan, and with the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Naoto Otomo. In 2013, Kurosawa was principal soloist for the premiere of *The Memory Stone* at Houston Grand Opera. In 2015, she appeared in *Ballet: Tsuru* commissioned by the Houston Ballet and the Asia Society of Texas as both soloist and composer. In addition to collaborating with major artists in Kyoto, Dalian (China), and Tokyo, she has had two of her original songs selected for the Yomiuri TV station commercials of the Jakuchū Itō and the Magritte exhibitions in Japan. She continues to perform in New York City venues such as Joe's Pub, the Highline Ballroom, Blue Note and other concert halls as well as abroad, and to compose for the koto, building on her traditional training with modern jazz and electronic elements.

James Nyoraku Schlefer first heard the shakuhachi in 1979, while working towards his Master's degree in Western flute and musicology at Queens College. After that life-changing encounter, Ronnie Nyogetsu Seldin became his first shakuhachi teacher. Later in Japan, Schlefer worked with Reibo Aoki, Katsuya Yokoyama, Yoshio Kurahashi, Yoshinobu Taniguchi, and Kifu Mitsuhashi. He received the Dai-Shi-Han (Grand Master) certificate in 2001, and in 2008 his second Shi-Han certificate from Mujuan Dojo, in Kyoto. He currently teaches shakuhachi at Columbia University and music history courses at the City University of New York. He has performed throughout the U.S. and toured in Japan, Indonesia, Brazil and countries in Europe.

An exceptional performer, he has been a soloist in several orchestral settings including the New York City Opera, Karl Jenkins' *Requiem*, and others. He has performed and lectured about the origin, history, and development of Japanese music at Duke University (in two, week-long artist residencies), and at The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, Eastman School of Music, Vassar, Haverford, Brown, Moravian, Colby, Colby-Sawyer, Williams and Hunter Colleges, and at music festivals in the U.S., South America, Asia and Europe.

Schlefer is founder and head of the Kyo-Shin-An teaching studio in New York City. He has published books of traditional notation and written two etude books for shakuhachi dexterity development. As a composer, Schlefer has written many pieces for Japanese instruments including a shakuhachi concerto, a quintet for shakuhachi and string quartet, and numerous pieces for traditional Japanese instruments.

James Schlefer has four solo recordings, *Wind Heart* (which travelled 120,000,000 miles aboard the Space Station MIR), *Solstice Spirit* (1998), *Flare Up* (2002), and *In The Moment* (2008). His music has been featured on NPR's *All Things Considered*. Schlefer's latest recording *Spring Sounds, Spring Seas* was released in June 2012 and features his original music for shakuhachi and orchestra.

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