



INSTITUTE FOR MEDIEVAL  
JAPANESE STUDIES

*A Gagaku Concert*

In Honor of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
the Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies

*Ancient Soundscapes*  
New Echoes from Japan's Musical Past  
Concert III

Monday, March 3, 2008

Concert: 6:00~7:30 PM

Reception: 7:30~8:30 PM

Low Library Rotunda, Columbia University  
(116<sup>th</sup> Street between Broadway & Amsterdam Ave.)

Columbia University's exciting new *Gagaku-Hōgaku* Classical Japanese Music Curriculum and Performance Program was launched September of 2006 in the University's Music Department and is open to all students of Columbia University and affiliated schools. This program is jointly administered by the Center for Ethnomusicology and the Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies, and with the cooperation of *gagaku* masters in New York and Japan, who have joined forces to establish the first permanent training program outside Japan, in New York City, the music center of America. This American effort aims to make it possible for young student musicians to experience the Japanese music tradition deeply and to master one or more of its classical instruments. It is also our hope that these magnificent instruments will be used to inspire the commissioning of new compositions by and for these young musicians, thereby greatly influencing the future direction of world music. *Gagaku* belongs in the global music world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the summer of 2007 the first Japanese Gagaku Classical Music Annual Mentor/Protégé Summer Initiative was launched in Tokyo. Four of Columbia's most promising *gagaku* musicians were selected for six weeks of intensive instrumental training in Tokyo, the aim of which is the formation of the pioneering *Columbia Gagaku Instrumental Ensemble of New York*, looking forward to performances in New York, Tokyo, and elsewhere.

## Gagaku in Brief

Japanese court music (*gagaku*) is the oldest continuous orchestral music in the world today, with a history in Japan of more than 1300 years. The term *gagaku* itself, which means elegant or ethereal music, refers to a body of music that includes both dance (*bugaku*) and orchestral music (*kangengaku*) handed down over the centuries by professional court musicians and preserved today by musicians belonging to the Imperial Household Agency in Tokyo. It can be divided into three categories according to origin. The first type is indigenous vocal and dance genres, accompanied by instruments and employed in court and Shinto ceremonies. The second is instrumental music and dance imported from the Asian continent during the 5th to the 9th century and is divided into *Tōgaku* of Chinese and continental origin and *Komagaku* of Korean origin. The third is vocalized poetry in Chinese or Japanese set to music from the 9th to the 12th century. It is the second category with Chinese and Korean origins that is best known and most frequently performed. Classic *Tōgaku* pieces are performed by large instrumental ensembles of up to thirty musicians, consisting of *ryūteki* (transverse flute); *hichiriki* (double-reed pipe); *shō* (mouth organ); *biwa* (pear-shaped lute); *gaku-sō*, or *koto* (long zither); *taiko* (large drum); *kakko* (cylindrical, double-headed drum); and *shōko* (bronze chime). When accompanying *bugaku* dance, however, the *Tōgaku* ensemble consists only of winds and percussions.

*Gagaku* is comprised of many musical traditions and influences that traveled the Silk Road from the Middle East through Central Asia and Tibet. It bloomed gloriously during the T'ang Dynasty (618-907) in China, and also sent out unique flowering branches in Korea, where ancient Chinese

Confucian ceremonial music is still performed. But in China itself, though ancient strains can be found in provincial folk music, court music remains in name only. Today, although ancient *gagaku* instruments have been excavated in Southern China and elsewhere, and musical scores have been discovered in the Dunhuang caves, these ancient orchestral traditions have all but become extinct there. They are preserved today in the protected cultural cul-de-sac at the eastern end of Asia – Japan – where foreign cultural imports were readily absorbed and where aspects of ancient high culture were revered and rarely abandoned.

Without a doubt, *gagaku*, in tempo and even in certain melodies, is not today what it was in ancient Japan or on the continent – much as Noh plays performed today differ from what they must have been like in the middle ages. Yet in many ways, today's *gagaku* may be the only living evidence we now have of those ancient musical ensembles, their musical instruments, musical sounds, and the musical cosmology of the Asian continent and of ancient Japan.

In Japan the continuities are amazing. It is recorded that at the funeral of Japanese Emperor Ingyō in the year 453, court musicians originating from Korea offered solemn dance and music as a sacred requiem. That tradition was never lost in Japan. In 1989, at the demise of Emperor Shōwa, professional Japanese court musicians from the Imperial Household Ceremonial Division offered *gagaku* music as an essential traditional funeral rite.

Musicians did not become actual imperial officers of the Nara court until the 8<sup>th</sup> century when clearly they were made responsible for the regal music and dance spectacles addressed to the native gods and imported Buddhist deities whose powers were believed to move the heavens and the earth and who needed to be placated or entreated. Later *gagaku* musicians



also played essential roles at ceremonial state banquets in the new capital of Kyoto, and eventually *gagaku* instruments found their way into the private musical salons of courtiers. The popularity of such chamber music swelled as did the use of these instruments for their personal diversion and pleasure.

Undeniably, many instruments and scores were lost during the 15<sup>th</sup>-century civil wars when the Kyoto capital burned and numerous musicians scattered from the capital. Displaced Kyoto musicians, along with musicians at Kasuga Shrine in Nara, Shitennōji Temple in Osaka, and elsewhere, then played important roles in reorganizing post-15<sup>th</sup>-century *gagaku* traditions in the three regions.

The Meiji Restoration in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century moved the emperor to a new capital, Tokyo. Its oppressive plans for centralization forced select first-class *gagaku* musicians to Tokyo, uniting them in the Tokyo court. Attempts were then made to rectify medieval differences among the regional sets of musicians and to standardize their ancient texts. Japanese court musicians prior to Emperor Meiji's time had been limited exclusively to preserving the ancient *gagaku* court music repertory, but they now became one of the earliest groups to train as well in Western music. Today, the Music Department of the Board of Ceremonies of the Imperial Household Agency (*Kunaichō shikibushoku gakubu*) now carries on the 1300-year-old court traditions of Japanese *gagaku* music while simultaneously providing Western music for court banquets and other official occasions.

In 1887 Ryōdo Ono, chief priest of the Ono Terusaki Shrine in Tokyo was granted permission to form a *gagaku* troupe for the general public outside the Japanese court. The Ono Gagaku Society is the oldest public Japanese *gagaku* orchestra and dance group in Japan. It is one of the very few public

troupes of musician-dancers to be trained in the traditions of all *gagaku* instruments and dance pieces exclusively by retired masters of the Music Department of the Imperial Household Agency.

Historically, Ono Gagaku Society performances have taken place at shrine ceremonies and public venues throughout Japan, but since their 1972 visit to America, they have also appeared abroad. They maintain a training school for *gagaku* musicians in Tokyo.

Until at least the 1960s it was considered heresy even to think of composing new pieces for a repertory that had become sacrosanct. Indeed, one of the missions of the Imperial Household Agency is to preserve permanently the precious heritage of musical forms that go back more than a millennium. But some of the imperially-trained *gagaku* musicians became increasingly aware that preservation alone is not enough to keep an art alive. Its beauty faces the fate of a pinned butterfly. To live, *gagaku* also needs its instruments to be liberated, freeing them to explore their full musical potential and to venture into new avenues beyond the classic repertoire.

Among the pioneers is Sukeyasu Shiba, a former member of the Music Department of the Imperial Household Agency, who in 1985 created the *gagaku* ensemble called Reigakusha outside of the court, and who has had a huge impact in training many artists, including those now mentoring Columbia University's new Gagaku Instrumental Ensemble. The Reigakusha ensemble and others like it now performing both classic and new pieces worldwide are creating a renaissance for *gagaku* musicians and are impacting the present-day musical scene, even in New York.

The Western listener's first encounter with classic *gagaku* music is often a challenge. Our ears are not trained to hear, as

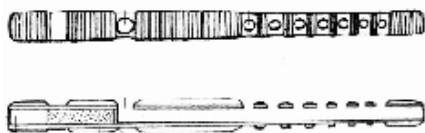
was the case in some early Chinese music, a mind-boggling theoretical 84 scales in *Tōgaku*. We are used to linear music and the harmony of a few notes at once, but not clusters of many sounds simultaneously. Then there is the deliberate avoidance of romanticism or personal emotions. It may not be far wrong to say that there are similarities to the centuries later tea ceremony where what is critical is control of formal design, mesmerizing mastery of sequenced patterns, and delight in awareness of the repeat of subtle forms. It is choreographed sound that never stoops to theatricality.

In the classic repertory of *Tōgaku* origin, all pieces begin with the *ryūteki* flute, which is central, yet the *hichiriki* is so powerful as to seem to take over and the *shō* fills the ears with a brocade of sound. Though the instruments play in unison and do not seek Western harmonies, they seem to undulate within that unison like separate streams within a single flow of water. Not viewed as “entertainment,” the classic repertory finds virtue in repeated phrasing, elegance of control, and the ability of the musical sounds to reverberate back and forth between the spiritual world and the natural world where we reside.



## An Introduction to Selected *Gagaku* Instruments

The *ryūteki*, literally the “dragon flute,” originated in the western regions of China and Tibet. In Chinese legend a Tibetan



heard a dragon calling as it plunged from the heavens into water below. Trying to reproduce its call, he cut a length of bamboo and blew into it, producing a sound that perfectly resembled the dragon’s voice. Unlike flutes of Korean and Japanese origins, which have six fingerholes, the *ryūteki* has seven large fingerholes which make possible, through varied finger positions and breath pressure, two full octaves, with intervening continuances. The instrument is hollowed-out bamboo with a very large bore. Its surface is stripped off and wrapped in thread-like strips of cherry or wisteria bark and then lacquered inside and out. The *ryūteki* is one of three types of flutes employed in *gagaku* ensembles and is the instrument that most often begins a *gagaku* piece.



The *hichiriki* is a double-reed vertical bamboo pipe with seven fingerholes on the top, and two for the thumbs on the reverse side. Its origins are unknown, but it was used in Tibet and western regions of ancient China before coming to Japan during the reign of Female Emperor Suiko (592-628). Its popularity during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries in Ja-

pan is attested to by its mention in such famous literary works as the *Tale of Genji* by Lady Murasaki, and Sei Shōnagon’s *Pillow Book*. Its name implies both feelings of sadness and trembling, or wavering out of awe, or even fear. It has no capacity for soft, pale tones, and indeed its sharp, piercing sound can strike terror, but its large, loose

a white paper wrap, makes smooth portamento glides one of its characteristics. It has a narrow range of about one octave, and its bore is an inverse cone shape; thus, despite its small size it sounds an octave lower than an oboe, for example.

The *shō* is a free-reed, 17-pipe mouth organ, with origins in East and Southeast Asia. It has been found in recent Chinese excavations to date back as early as 433 BCE. Its formal name is *hōshō*, or “phoenix pipe,” because it is shaped like a phoenix bird with its wings closed. The *shō* is said to sound like the call of this legendary bird. In ancient China the dragon and the phoenix were viewed as a powerful chimerical pair, each with the ability to transverse from the highest heavens down to our world and back again. The 17 bamboo pipes of the *shō* are of varied lengths, each set with drops of wax into a bowl-shaped wind chamber with mouthpiece. At the lower end of 15 of the pipes are fastened free-reeds made of metal that sound when both exhaling and inhaling so that the instrument is capable of continuous sound. Fingering is complex and can produce single-tone melody one pipe at a time, but can also create multitudinous chord clusters of up to six tones simultaneously. The *shō* must be heated before and during play to prevent moisture interference on the reeds that can affect its pitch and tone.



-Program notes by Barbara Ruch

## MUSICIANS' PROFILES

(in alphabetical order)



**Mayumi Miyata** (*shō*, 17-pipe, free-reed mouth organ) graduated from Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo as a piano major. While still a student she began study of the *shō* under Tadamaro Ōno of the Imperial Household *Gagaku* Orchestra. Since 1979, as a member of the *gagaku* ensemble *Reigakusha*, founded by the famed Sukeyasu Shiba, she has appeared in National Theatre of Japan performances. In 1983 Ms. Miyata launched a career as a *shō* soloist with recitals throughout Japan, and since 1986 she has been active as soloist with the world's major orchestras including the NHK Symphony Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, WDR Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic under such conductors as Dutoit, Ozawa, Ashkenazy, Conlon and Previn. She has premiered many works written especially for her by Cage, Takemitsu, Ishii, Eloy, Hosokawa, Méfano, Huber and Lachenmann and can be credited with making the *shō* widely recognized not only in its traditional repertory but as an instrument with a valid place in contemporary music. She has been a pioneering artist-advisor to the Columbia *Gagaku* Instrumental Ensemble from its inception.



**Hitomi Nakamura** (*hichiriki*, double-reed vertical flute) received her M.A. from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, and has been performing both classical and modern pieces on *gagaku* instruments for the past 20 years. As a member of the *gagaku* *Reigakusha* orchestra, led by her mentor Sukeyasu Shiba, she has performed in the National Theatre of Japan and abroad in the Tanglewood Musical Festival, the Vienna Modern Music Festival, the Ultima Contemporary Music Festival and the Music from Japan (MFJ) Festival. Ms. Nakamura was the leader of the MFJ-sponsored *gagaku* ensemble, Ensemble Harena, on its successful tour of the USA and Canada in 2002. Active in many performance arenas she has appeared in the premiere performances of many contemporary composers and has played with the Japan Virtuoso



Orchestra as well as with the Butō dancer, Semimaru, from the dance group Sankaijuku. She is the creator of the *Ashi no Kaze* (Reed Wind) Recital Series designed to develop the musicality and performance techniques of the *hichiriki*, which is rarely played as a solo instrument. The recitals have generated fourteen new pieces for the *hichiriki* repertory, both ensemble and solo pieces. As a founding-mentor, she plays a leading role in Columbia's pioneering Mentor/Protégé Summer Gagaku Program in Tokyo.



**Takeshi Sasamoto** (*ryūteki*, transverse flute; *kakko*, double-headed drum) is the grandson of the *iemoto* master of Chikuiinsha, head of the Kinko School of the *shakuhachi* bamboo flute, the tradition in which he was raised. He received his M.A. from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, where he studied *ryūteki* and *gagaku* performance under the eminent Sukeyasu Shiba. He has performed widely abroad in Tanglewood, Vienna, New York and elsewhere as a member of the *gagaku* Reigaku-sha orchestra. Mr. Sasamoto has also been active as a composer and has produced many CDs and published musical scores of his works. His text book for *Gagaku* instrumental beginners is widely used in Japan. He serves as a founding-mentor in Columbia's Mentor/Protégé Summer Gagaku Program in Tokyo.



## The Columbia Gagaku Instrumental Ensemble of New York

*Ryūteki:* Ruth Rosenberg  
Patricia Slattery  
Teresa Wojtasiewicz  
Raquel Solomon

*Hichiriki:* Sasha Bogdanowitsch  
Shannon Garland

*Shō:* Jeff Arkenberg  
Michael Dames  
Casey Diaz  
Harrison Hsu  
Todd M. Spitz





## *The Columbia Gagaku Instrumental Ensemble of New York*



*Columbia Gagaku Ensemble with Ono Gagaku Society  
Riverside Theatre, New York (November 2006)*



*Columbia Gagaku Ensemble  
Casa Italiana, Columbia University (December 2006)*

## **The *Gagaku-Hōgaku* Curriculum and Performance Program at Columbia University**

In our ever-continuing effort to build and develop this new program, there are still instruments to acquire, artists to recruit, recitals to hold, and a host of other concerns that require the generous financial support of donors. Below is a list of items that we believe will best serve to build and nurture the *Gagaku* Program and for which we are currently seeking financial support.

Will you join us and add your name as pioneer of this new music initiative by lending us your corporate or individual support, small or large?

*Instrument purchase*  
*Mentor/Protégé Summer Program*  
*Visiting professorship*  
*Instrument storage*  
*Musicians' workshops*  
*Composition commissions*

*Adjunct teachers*  
*Master classes*  
*Visiting artists*  
*Gagaku concerts*  
*Composition prize*  
*CD series*

***Contributions are tax-deductible under New York State and  
Federal Law***

## PROGRAM

~In Celebration~

All of the works on tonight's program, both classical and modern, were chosen by the visiting artists to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary milestone of the Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies. From the earliest 6<sup>th</sup>-century piece to the most contemporary 2007 work, each in its own way rejoices at long life and wise rule; or celebrates the positive qualities of "light"; the serenity and permanent flow of the great river of time; or revelatory and empowering ties to the deities that hover just beyond our sight in the spiritual world and inspire us. Each piece is deemed to be music of celebration that expresses gratitude for the present and foretells future successes.

May the music celebrate those same qualities in each and every member of the audience and allow its purifying flow to inspire in each listener a transcendent and serene tomorrow. As we open ourselves to the oldest orchestral music on earth and to the newest music played on these same astounding instruments, may tonight be a renewing milestone for us all.

### **Part I: The Classical Sounds of *Gagaku* Music**

Presented in an abbreviated ensemble of three wind instruments, *ryūteki*, *hichiriki*, and *shō*.

### ***Hyōjō no chōshi (bongen)***

A *chōshi* is similar to a *netori*, or tuning, a short, free-rhythm prelude which sets the pitch and tonal relationships for all the instruments and establishes the atmosphere for the piece that is to follow. The *hichiriki* and *shō* players call such preludes or tunings, *chōshi*, whereas *ryūteki* players refer to these tunings as *bongen*. In this warm-up each instrument can be heard clearly playing the given canonic piece in a free-rhythm style but they slowly create a time-lag from each other's playing so that in the end what one hears seems a chaos of sound. Japanese *gagaku* music of continental origin (*Tōgaku*) had six modes, one of which is the *hyōjō* mode, the basic tone of which is the key of E. *Hyōjō no chōshi* serves here as a musical tuning overture to introduce the two pieces that follow, *Manzairaku* and *Etenraku*, in their *hyōjō* mode versions.

### ***Manzairaku (Music for an Age Everlasting)***

The original composer of this ancient classic is unknown. Its origins lie in the Chinese legend that during the reign of a wise ruler of the Sui Dynasty (519-618), a phoenix flew down and gave a long cry that sounded like "Long Live the Wise Ruler." This orchestral and dance piece is said to have been composed to replicate the song and the dance of this phoenix. It is unclear when or by whom it was first brought to the Japanese court, but there it was revised and became associated with Emperor Yōmei (r. 585-587), father of the great patron of Buddhism, Prince Shōtoku Taishi.

of the great patron of Buddhism, Prince Shōtoku Taishi. In the Japanese court in fullest form its performance includes four *bugaku* dancers in layered silk robes with long train wearing headpieces suggestive of the phoenix. This famous piece is performed at the enthronement ceremonies of Japanese emperors and on congratulatory occasions. Its elegant and sedate music seems to reverberate with the dignity and peace that comes with wisdom. “We offer our performance here in celebration of the Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies – may it long prosper.”

### ***Etenraku* (Music of Heaven)**

*With students from the Columbia Gagaku Ensemble of New York*

*Etenraku* has been described as “music of the divine heavens.” Possibly its current melody evolved in the Japanese court as late as the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century, but its title, which refers to the “Music of Heaven” or “Music from the Palace on the Moon,” could date back at least to the T’ang dynasty (618-907) in China. The ethereal nature of its melody becomes addictive and it spread widely in Japan beyond the court, attracting lyrics as if it were folk music. For most Japanese today it is probably the most familiar piece from the *gagaku* repertory due to the fact that since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it has become a tradition to play it at weddings and special formal celebratory cultural events at schools, temples, and shrines.

*Etenraku* survives in two other modes, *ōshikichō* in the key of A and *banshikicho* in B, but the *hyōjō* version in the key of E played tonight is by far the most familiar. It may be the only traditional *gagaku* piece known abroad, since it has been transcribed for Western orchestra and performed widely in Europe and America. The melody consists of three sections, each of which is repeated twice. If we identify each section as

a, b, c, the most common performance of this work would be: aabbcc aabb. A shorter version: abcab will be presented here in this evening's concert.

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 楽 拍 子  
 鼓 三

Modern-day *ryūteki* notation for the piece, *Etenraku*.

Sōjō no chōshi

This *chōshi* or short, non-metrical prelude which serves the same function as the *Hyōjō no chōshi* earlier in the program, is by contrast in the key of G. It established the atmospheric setting of the two pieces that follow. Whereas the earlier *Hyōjō no chōshi* is associated with autumn, according to the Yin Yang System, *Sōjō no chōshi* is a spring mode, its “color” is pale blue-green and its direction is East. Tonight the solo *ryūteki*, will set the atmosphere for the pieces that follow.

## ***Katen no kyū* (Finale from Soaring Mansions)**

This work is believed to have been first learned on the *biwa* from the Chinese master Lian Chengwu by the Japanese envoy Fujiwara no Sadatoshi who was on the continent sometime around 834-848. It is performed in celebration of the completion of new architectural structures. In the *Kohon kōmon shū* collection of *setsuwa* narratives (1254), it is recorded that it was performed instead of the usual celebratory *Manzairaku* (Music for an Age Everlasting) for Retired Emperor Shirakawa to celebrate the completion of a new building he had had built.

This selection is especially appropriate to celebrate the architectural restoration work recently completed at several Imperial Buddhist Convent buildings in Kyoto and Nara conducted by the Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies together with Japanese and American funding partners. This Institute project continues in future to give new life to the remainder of the still extant thirteen convents.

*Katen* is in two parts, *ha* a kind of unfolding, and *kyū*, the more rapid finale. It is comprised of both dance and instrumental performance. Originally a work in the *Ichikotsuchō* or the key of D, it is frequently played in the *Sōjō* or key of G arrangement, as it is tonight.



## *Konju no ha* (Ah, Cheers)

According to the *Kyōkunshō* (1233), the ten volume collection of musical histories, scores, and play instructions by the *gagaku* master Koma Chikazane (1177-1242), this dance piece, *Konju no ha*, was composed by Ban Li of Western China who was inspired to compose and play this when in his cups and thus likewise danced to it in tipsy euphoria. The single dancer carries a saké ladel and dances as if dipping out and then drinking saké in a relaxed and joyful manner. It is music for when there will be celebratory toasts.

It is sometimes choreographed by the performer to include deliberate mistakes or missteps as if conveying a bit of the enthusiastic befuddlement of drink. As a purely instrumental piece it is often played in the revised *Sōjō* mode in the key of G.

Although *gagaku* pieces are commonly in three parts: *jo* (introduction), *ha* (unfolding), and *kyū* (finale), *Konju* has come down to us in only *jo* and *ha*, where the *ha* section is lighter and less sedate than usual.

The artists will be joined in performance by the two protégés who won the Columbia *Gagaku* Summer Grants for *ryūteki* for 2007, Ruth Rosenberg and Teresa Wojtasiewicz.

Cheers!

**INTERMISSION** (15 minutes)



## Part II: Contemporary Music for *Gagaku* Instruments

### *Hikari ni michita iki no yō ni – shō no tame no...*

(Breath infused with light) (2002)

by Toshio Hosokawa

*Shō* solo      Mayumi Miyata

Mr. Hosokawa was born in 1955 in Hiroshima. He studied piano and composition in Tokyo before continuing his study as a composer in West Berlin under Isang Yun in 1976 and from 1983 to 1986 with Klaus Huber at the Staalichen Hochschule fur Musik in Freiburg. His work has been performed since the 1980s in Europe and Japan, gaining an international reputation and winning numerous awards and prizes, beginning with the First Prize for Composition on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Berlin Philharmonic (1982). He has since 2000 been invited as composer in residence to various acclaimed music festivals in Europe. In 2001 Mr. Hosokawa was elected a member of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, and since 2001 has been Artistic Director of the Takefu International Music Festival. This work was premiered on February 28, 2002 in Dornach, Switzerland where the Rudolph Steiner Institute is located.

Mr. Hosokawa comments: “I composed this work, inspired by the words “Wie ein Atmen im Lichte,” written within a sketch made on a blackboard by Rudolph Steiner, who had intended them to explain his thinking as he lectured on November 24, 1923. He had said: “The reason Man feels melancholic amidst the mists that rise around him is because he sees that luminous sea flowing and engulfing him like Lucifer. Emotion and thought merge and he began to gasp, breathless, in a state that is a kind of superhuman exemption. But it is at that moment that Man is then able to think just as he breathes. He feels as if he breathes in light.”

## *Licht* (Light) (1977)

by Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007)

### *Ryūteki* solo Takeshi Sasamoto

One of the most important yet controversial of German composers, Mr. Stockhausen is known for his ground-breaking work in electronic music and aleatory (controlled chance) in serial composition, and has been called one of the great visionaries of 20<sup>th</sup>-century music. His mother had played the piano and sung but after a mental breakdown had been hospitalized in 1932, where she became a victim of the Nazi policy of euthanasia “for the useless.” Stockhausen years later dramatized her death in a scene of his opera *Donnerstag aus Licht*. A student first of the piano, Stockhausen also studied oboe and violin. He began serious study of composition with the Swiss composer Frank Martin in Cologne in 1950 and Olivier Messiaen and Darius Milhaud in Paris in 1952. From 1953 he began work at the Electronic Music Studio of NWDR in Cologne. In the 1960s he was guest professor of composition at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of California, Davis, returning to the Natural Conservatory of Music, Cologne, as Professor in the 1970s.

*Licht*, from which the *ryūteki* solo on tonight’s program is taken, was commissioned by the National Theater of Japan for its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1977, with the condition he compose it solely for *gagaku* instruments. The work takes historic time as its theme showing the passage of all the earth’s time from zero to 1977 on a digital clock as part of the stage set. The work stops the flow of time at three junctures, first with the *ryūteki* solo; second with a duet for *koto* and *biwa*, and the third time with a *hichiriki* solo.

*Licht* has subsequently been performed in Europe with piccolo instead of *ryūteki* and soprano saxophone instead of *hichiriki*.

Deeply interested in ceremony and ritual Stockhausen was influenced by Japanese Noh dramas and his formula composition techniques show the influence of religious texts, as in his works, *Mantra* and *Inori*.

### ***Communion VI: Sen no yuragi***

(Communion VI: Undulation of a strand) (2007)

by Hirofumi Takahara

*Shō* and *hichiriki* duet

Mayumi Miyata

Hitomi Nakamura

Born in Tottori, Japan in 1934, Mr. Takahara was a prize-winning chamber music composer while still a graduate student at Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo, where he studied under Saburo Takada and Yuzura Shimaoka. He is now Professor Emeritus at that eminent college. His major works include a piano sonata as well as works for various percussions, marimbas, flutes and the human voice. He is perhaps best known for his *Communion* series, begun in 1978, the most recent of which is on tonight's program.

Communion I (for contrabass and percussion, 1978)

Communion II (for two marimbas, 1979)

Communion III (for two flutes, 1985)

Communion IV (for voice and *shō*, 2001) based on the sacred Shinto text, the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters)

Communion V (for violin and violoncello, 2004)

(II, IV and V are available on JFC CDs; scores are available for II~V)

*Communion VI* on the program tonight is the only one in the series that has a subtitle. It begins with the *shō* sending out the strand-like note D. The *hichiriki* then joins it, and slowly the strand begins to waver, with the undulation gradually widening and thickening. The energy of the undulation then causes the melody to vibrate free, and multiple melodies emerge into multiple strands blooming into various free clusters. Toward the end, the undulation slows and it gradually thins. In the end all returns to the original strand-like note in D.

The composer comments: "In the most ancient of religions and folk beliefs, mankind has always performed various acts so as to establish a spiritual "communion" with the gods. It seems to me that it is in such acts that we can transcend time and diverse cultures and find the essentials in human existence that are rapidly vanishing from society today. Every piece in the *Communion* series is written as a duet. *Communion II* (for two marimbas) was written out of my sympathy for the impulse to tap on trees as a means for spiritual exchange or communion with the gods as seen in rituals of Gilyak. *Communion IV* (for voice and *shō*) is based on excerpts from the ancient text of the *Kojiki*, which contains lyrics of love songs sung through the primordial darkness by Goddess Nunakawa in response to the God Yachihoko."



## *Koe-tachi*

(Voices) (2002) for *ryūteki*, *shō*, and *hichiriki*

by Satoshi Tanaka

Born in 1956 in Hokkaidō, Mr. Tanaka is a graduate in composition of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, where he then entered their graduate research division and was mentored by Jōji Yuasa, Kenjirō Urada and Shinjirō Watanabe. In 1984 his work, *The Hour of Silence*, was premiered on NOS Broadcasting Co. during International Gaudeamus Modern Music Week conducted by Richard Dufallo. This work was published by the Japan Federation of Composers with the support of the Suntory Music Foundation. In 1988 his work *Iris Field* (The Color of an Eye) was premiered by the New Japan Philharmonic under the baton of Kazuhiro Koizumi and won the Ninth Irino Prize. It was released on CD by the Trio Aperto of Romania in 2000. The Asian Cultural Council (New York) awarded him a performing arts grant for a year of composing in the USA in 2004.

The composer comments: “*Voices* was premiered at the Tachikawa Performing Arts Festival in Tokyo in 2002. In performance the work is about 10 minutes, but as if we are watching the horizon of time, it is intended to depict the endless flow of the river of eternity. Perhaps it is precisely the characteristic sound of *gagaku* instruments that creates this impression. The work is designed so that instruments merge together at times, while at other points each speaks independently yet the melodic line remains the central flow. The title, *Voices*, reflects this intent. Further I have employed the vocal “trill” effect, which is not part of the original *gagaku* instrumental tradition.”

Program notes by Barbara Ruch

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