

# CARNEGIE HALL

1975-76 SEASON

Wednesday Evening, February 25, 1976 at 8:00

## PERFORMING ARTS OF ASIA

The Carnegie Hall Corporation  
by arrangement with  
The Asia Society, Performing Arts Program

presents

# The Soloists Of The Ensemble Nipponia (Nihon Ongaku Shudan)

*Musicians:* KEIKO NOSAKA, *koto, sangen*  
SACHIKO MIYAMOTO, *koto*  
KINUKO SHIRANE, *koto*  
AYAKO HANDA, *biwa*  
HIROKAZU SUGIURA, *sangen*  
KOHACHIRO MIYATA, *shakuhachi*

*Artistic*

*Director:* MINORU MIKI

### TSURU-NO-SUGOMORI (*The Tendernesses of the Crane*)

KOHACHIRO MIYATA, *shakubachi*

Shakuhachi-Honkyoku

The identity of the composer of this work is not known; nor is there any definite indication of when it was composed. Consensus places it sometime during the Edo period, a time when Japan was almost totally isolated from outside influence. During this time the shakuhachi was played primarily by wandering warriors, and by monks.

The piece expresses the tenderness and love of mother and child cranes ( a bird with symbolic references ). The use of unusually high notes makes it a very difficult piece, but one that is most effective. Due to uncertain origins of the piece, performances vary considerably in length, and in the degree of agitation of the playing. Nevertheless, it is included in a rather small number of works called *honkyoku*, which might be translated as the ancient standard repertoire.

### GODAN-GINUTA (*Five variations on the Sounds of the Kinuta*)

KEIKO NOSAKA, *1st koto*  
SACHIKO MIYAMOTO, *2nd koto*

Kengyo Mitsuzaki

This work was composed during the Tempo period (1830-1843) by Kengyo Mitsuzaki, one of the most important koto musicians of the nineteenth century and a significant figure in the revitalization of koto music. *Godan-ginuta* is an excellent model of idiomatic writing for the instruments, although its form is unusual. As part of Mitsuzaki's strong interest in the older classics, the work is organized as a *danmono* (*godan* indicates five variations), but the severity of the form is mitigated by sharply articulated rhythmic patterns derived from the sound of the *kinuta*, a set of wooden implements traditionally used to prepare silk. In a manner that closely resembles the parody technique of Renaissance music in Europe, the fifth variation of the seventeenth century classic solo work *Rokudan* is quoted in its entirety in the fifth variation of *Godan-ginuta*. However, as the scope of the later work is much larger, this quotation comprises barely a third of the final variation of *Godan-ginuta*.

### OGI-NO-MATO (*The Folding Fan as a Target*)

AYAKO HANDA, *biwa*

Satsuma-type biwa music

Nearly all of the traditional biwa music is based on episodes from a series of narrative epics that describe (with considerable historical accuracy) the series of civil wars arising out of the power struggle between the Heike and Genji clans in the twelfth century. The melodic line can readily be compared with the recitative in Western music. The accompaniment is sparse and chordal. For the sake of variety, as well as to rest the voice and to display the instrumentalist's technique, there are occasional passages for the biwa alone, which tend to be quite rhythmic and dramatic, often virtuosic in their technical demands.

Both of the two main schools of biwa playing, the Satsuma and Chikuzen have representation in the Ensemble Nipponia. During this tour the Satsuma style, which is characterized by vigorous strokes and somewhat greater use of special effects, will be heard in performance of *Ogi-no-mato*.

AYAKO HANDA, *vocal*  
HIROKAZU SUGIURA or KEIKO NOSAKA, *sangen*  
KEIKO NOSAKA or SACHIKO MIYAMOTO, *koto*  
KOHACHIRO MIYATA, *shakubachi*

This work was composed in the late eighteenth century by Koto Minezaki, who was one of the leading musicians of that time, and the first notable composer of *jiuta*, the most important traditional genre of vocal chamber music. In such pieces there are two outer sections in which the vocal chamber and instrumental parts are rather similar, with a central section in which the instruments play without the voice. In that section, the instrumental writing tends to become more lively and virtuosic. Although the basic melodic line of the parts is still much the same, the decoration varies considerably, according to the nature of the participating instruments. In this performance, the standard trio combination of koto, *sangen*, and *shakuhachi* (in the nineteenth century sometimes replaced by the *kokyū*) is employed. The text of the vocal sections expresses the tender sentiments which drew many men to the Yoshiwara section (the "pleasure quarter") of Edo (Tokyo), and thus contrasts with the instrumental section which has ostinato rhythms drawn from the *kinuta* sounds.

## INTERMISSION

HOSHUN (*Ode to Spring*)

Katsutoshi Nagasawa

KOHACHIRO MIYATA, *shakubachi*  
KINUKO SHIRANE, *koto*

About one hundred years ago, Japan's era of isolation was abruptly ended by a sudden massive influx of European culture. Japanese musicians were left adrift; their traditional type of composition and performance ceased to command interest and attention from a populace that turned more and more to European musical thinking and styles. Certain composers in the early twentieth century began the necessary effort to blend the traditional and European styles. This type of hybrid writing still has many adherents, especially among the older generation.

Mr. Nagasawa (b. 1923) is one of the most distinguished representatives of that tradition and his music offers contrast to the more modern approaches of other Japanese composers. At present, Mr. Nagasawa serves as the Ensemble Nipponia's president. *Hoshun* can be translated as 'Ode to Spring', and much of the music is concerned with description of the resurgence of life in Spring. Since its creation in 1971, *Hoshun* has been performed frequently in Japan by many different performers.

HONJU (*The Escaping Hand*) - 1974-shorter version

Minoru Miki

HIROKAZU SUGIURA, *sangen*

The *sangen* is found in many genres of Japanese music, and the diverse requirements of these genres have tended to produce different forms of the instrument, adapted to special needs. The most frequent classification recognizes three types according to the thickness of the neck: thin, thick, and medium. The thick-neck instruments have a rich deep sound, while the thin-neck instruments are more brilliant, and are more-suited for technical virtuosity. *Honju* was composed by Mr. Miki in 1974 for this latter type of instrument. In style, the piece takes as a point of departure the *nagauta* (the main musical element in the *kabuki* theatre) style of playing. The dynamics and articulation are left largely to the discretion of the performer, in keeping with the spirit of the title, which is intended to convey the sense of a technique that is simultaneously wild, free, extravagant, and disciplined. The work was written at the request of Mr. Sugiura.

TATSUTANO KYOKU (*The Venus in Autumn*) - 1971-shorter version

Minoru Miki

KEIKO NOSAKA, *20-string koto*

For over a thousand years the koto had thirteen strings, and music for it was subject to that limitation. In modern times various experiments to increase the number of strings were tried. It was not until as recently as 1969 that a truly durable result was achieved; in that year the collaboration of Minoru Miki and Keiko Nosaka resulted in the twenty-string instrument. After the inevitable skepticism, the new koto has won favor with composers, who have now produced more than thirty works for it. It should be added that the entire traditional repertoire is also playable on the new instrument.

The first work written for the 20-string koto was Miki's *Tennyō* (1969), a large solo work of a meditational character. Two more solo works followed in 1971, *Sao-no-kyōku* (The Venus in Spring) and *Tatsuta-no-kyōku* (The Venus in Autumn). The former is an expansive adaptation of traditional form, but the latter is much more provincial in its approach. From its start, energetic figures and sharp rhythms dominate the texture. A somewhat quieter middle section explores different articulations of sonorities built on fourths and sevenths, and is followed by an altered restatement of the opening. The work is dedicated to Keiko Nosaka.

## WA - New York Premiere

Minoru Miki

KOHACHIRO MIYATA, *shakubachi*  
HIROKAZU SUGIURA, *sangen*  
AYAKO HANDA, *biwa*  
KEIKO NOSAKA, *20-string koto*  
SACHIKO MIYAMOTO, *17-string bass koto*  
MINORU MIKI, *percussion*

This composition was written in 1975 especially for the current tour of the Soloists of the Ensemble Nipponia, and is receiving its first performances.

Each sound in the Japanese language has many possible meanings, according to the context and the Chinese characters (ideograms) used in writing. Miki has indicated that the idea behind *Wa* is the agglomeration of the meanings associated with that sound in Japanese. These include: 1. peace, harmony, totality; 2. a circle, a ring, a link, a wheel; 3. (as an interjection) Oh! (with the sense of being surprised); 4. Japan.

Program notes by David Loeb, Member of the Faculty, Curtis Institute of Music (Philadelphia) and The Mannes College (New York City).

Flower arrangement by Fumiko Allinder.

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