

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC



*Stagebill*  
Oct. 1994

LINCOLN CENTER

# NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

FOUNDED IN 1842

KURT MASUR, *Music Director*

AVERY FISHER HALL  
HOME OF THE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

LINCOLN CENTER FOR  
THE PERFORMING ARTS

Thursday Evening, October 6, 1994, at 8:00  
(Prelude Concert at 7:00)

12,235th, 12,236th,  
and 12,238th Concerts

Friday Evening, October 7, 1994, at 8:00  
(Prelude Concert at 7:00)

Saturday Evening, October 8, 1994, at 8:00  
(Prelude Concert at 7:00)

Kurt Masur, *Conductor*

PRO MUSICA NIPPONIA  
(New York Philharmonic Debut)

MIKI *Symphony for Two Worlds (Kyu-No-Kyoku)*  
(U.S. Premiere)  
Introduction: Allegro molto  
Allegro molto  
Adagio  
Scherzando  
Lento; Presto

## *Intermission*

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV *Scheherazade, Symphonic Suite, Op. 35\**  
The Sea and Sinbad's Ship (Largo e maestoso;  
Lento; Allegro non troppo)  
The Story of the Kalender Prince (Lento)  
The Young Prince and the Young Princess  
(Andantino quasi allegretto)  
Festival at Baghdad (Allegro molto; Allegro  
molto e frenetico); The Sea (Vivo); The  
Ship is Dashed Against a Rock Surmounted by  
a Bronze Warrior (Allegro non troppo e  
maestoso)  
GLENN DICTEROW, *Violin*

\*Recorded by the New York Philharmonic and currently available

## Notes on the Program

DAVID WRIGHT, PROGRAM ANNOTATOR

## Encounters with the Unknown

To a citizen of Japan, the year 1868 has the same sort of historical resonance as 1776 does to an American. Each of those years was a turning point, the moment that shaped the nation's future. In Japan's case, there were no bullets flying and no tyrants overthrown, but there was a revolution all the same—arguably a more fundamental one than the one that created the United States. Restored to the throne in 1868, Japan's Emperor Meiji declared his tradition-bound country open to the ideas, customs, commerce, and arts of the wider world—particularly the European and American interests that had been knocking on Japan's door for years. This bold step resulted in the vital, influential nation that is modern Japan.

Like so many other things Western, classical music fell on fertile ground in Japan. For several decades around the turn of the twentieth century, the most talented Japanese musicians (like their American counterparts) went to Germany to complete their studies. In 1912, not long after the German-trained Edward MacDowell founded the music department of Columbia University, the composer Kosaku Yamada began writing large orchestral works and operas in a German Romantic style. The Japanese music scene caught up fast after World War I; French impressionism, *musique concrète*, and the twelve-tone method all had their adherents. The Tokyo University of Fine Arts, founded as the Tokyo Music School in 1887, was joined by newer colleges of music such as the Kunitachi, the Musashino, and the Toho Gakuen, all of them as devoted to the Western classical tradition as any European or American conservatory.

With the advent of jet travel, this cultural exchange accelerated. Not only did the leading Western musicians include Asia on their itineraries, but artists from that continent showed the world how profoundly they had understood and mastered this musical language. German training was no longer required; a degree from the Tokyo University or the Toho School was qualification enough to perform from Leipzig to Lisbon to Los Angeles. Composers such as Toru Takemitsu and Yuji Takahashi began to use Western instruments and methods toward distinctly Japanese aesthetic ends.

As of today, the other side of the exchange has not developed so much. The traditional music of pre-1868 Japan, so intimately linked to that country's language, theater, and dance, has not found a mass audience in the West. No Japanese Ravi Shankar has come along to make the koto as popular as the sitar of Indian music. There is no Japanese equivalent of the master drummers from Ghana who have shaped the music of rock bands and Steve Reich. Cinema buffs know the sound of the shamisen and the shakuhachi from the soundtracks of classic Japanese films, but only a few adventurous Western composers, such as Igor Stravinsky and Henry Cowell, have echoed Japanese scales and melodic gestures in their works.

This is where Minoru Miki comes in. Raised in a home that included several proficient performers on Japanese instruments, the Tokyo University-trained Mr. Miki has devised an unusual way to preserve and propagate Japan's ancient musical traditions: Instead of reproducing what a musicologist would call the "historical performance practice" of the old music—there are others in Japan who are doing that—Mr. Miki has transferred Japanese

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instruments and musical idioms to the living, ever-changing environment of the symphony orchestra. The result is not only a cross-fertilization of musical styles, but (as Mr. Miki has said) a bridge between cultures, a tool for mutual understanding in a world that sorely needs it.

The musical encounter of East and West can also foster a single nation's understanding of itself—especially if that nation's territory spans eleven time zones. The concert music of Russia truly came into its own when Russian composers recognized not only their culture's European aspirations but its Asiatic roots. Here again, 1868 is a watershed year—the year that Modest Mussorgsky, formerly the composer of French-style salon pieces for piano, conceived his greatest monument to Russianness in music, the opera *Boris Godunov*. Mussorgsky's colleagues among "The Five"—the leading group of Russian nationalist composers—looked still farther East in such works as Balakirev's piano fantasy *Islamey*, Borodin's opera *Prince Igor* (whose exotic "Polovtsian Dances" will be heard on a Philharmonic program later this season), and Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic suite *Scheherazade*.

For a century or more, the Russian sound has illuminated concert stages around the world, and especially so in the U.S.A. By contrast, only a handful of Americans have experienced Japanese traditional music, usually in the drafty confines of an art-cinema theater. Let us remember, then, after we have heard the unfamiliar sounds of Minoru Miki's *Symphony for Two Worlds*, that the familiar *Scheherazade*, long before Hollywood borrowed its fragrant idiom as musical shorthand for hours and harems, was once also an encounter with the unknown.

### Symphony for Two Worlds

MINORU MIKI

Born March 16, 1930,

in Tokushima, Shikoku, Japan

Although Minoru Miki grew up surrounded by traditional Japanese arts, his formal musical training was entirely in Western instruments and methods, and it was with these that he made a living early

in his career, composing orchestral works and film scores. The Japanese traditionalist remained alive within him, however, and at age 32 he turned back to his country's native instruments, at first perhaps as much to bridge the gulf within his own nature as to make any overt political statement. Since then, however, he has often said that creating music in which performers from East and West can work together is a way of contributing to world peace.

Besides his operas, Mr. Miki's magnum opus of cross-cultural music is the three-some of orchestral works that he calls *Ho-o Sanren* in Japanese, and *Eurasian Trilogy* in English. The three component works, all combining Japanese solo instruments with a Western orchestra, are a *Prelude for Shakuhachi, Koto, Shamisen, and Strings*; a *Concerto for Koto and Orchestra*; and the *Symphony for Two Worlds* for Japanese ensemble and orchestra. Their Japanese titles—*Jo no Kyoku*, *Ha no Kyoku*, and *Kyu no Kyoku*—reflect the traditional Japanese artistic idea of *jo-ha-kyu*, in which a work is structured as a "beginning" (*jo*), a "broaching" (*ha*), and a "rushing" (*kyu*) to a conclusion. Those familiar with the films of Akira Kurosawa will recognize this concept of acceleration as the source of those works' climactic power. In musical terms, this does not necessarily mean that the actual tempo gets faster and faster, but rather that there is a sensation of matters "coming to a head" as the cycle nears its close.

This is quite a burden to lay on the last work of a group of three, and in fact Mr. Miki waited several years until the circumstances were right to add a third work to the *Prelude* and the *Concerto*, composed in 1969 and 1974 respectively. He found those circumstances in 1978, while performing in Leipzig with his ensemble Pro Musica Nipponia. The Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, then as now under the direction of Kurt Masur, asked Mr. Miki to compose a piece for orchestra and Japanese instruments, to be performed during the celebration of that orchestra's 200th anniversary. It was an irresistible opportunity to bring his trilogy to a triumphant conclusion, not just with another work bridging the two streams of Japanese musical life, but with a performance by

Japanese and European musicians amid the streets where Bach, Mendelssohn, and Schumann had once walked.

Mr. Miki responded to the challenge with a spectacular work in the tradition of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, a show-piece for the virtuoso players of (in this case) not one but two superb orchestras. In Leipzig on November 12, 1981, to enthusiastic applause, Mr. Masur conducted the Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Pro Musica Nipponia in the premiere of *Symphony for Two Worlds*.

Mr. Miki has said that he was aware, while writing this work, that the word "symphony" derives from Greek roots meaning "sounding together," and that a feeling of international comradeship among musicians was his goal. In terms of form, however, he has also adhered closely to the musical definition of a symphony, as developed by Haydn, the father of the genre: an introduction leading to a substantial first movement, a slow movement and scherzo, and finally a fast closing movement.

The work begins with a splendid rush of sound, but soon settles into the more customary slow introduction, in which various instruments take their solo bows. Mr. Miki also introduces the piece's fundamental thematic idea, itself an East-West construct: the notes B flat, A, C, and B (B-A-C-H in German notation, a thematic touchstone of Western composers since the days when J.S. Bach used it in his own works), followed by D, E, E flat, G, which outline a characteristically Japanese melodic gesture. The first movement proper begins with a reiteration of the symphony's opening phrase; it is an active, enterprising movement, as befits a symphonic sonata-allegro, propelled forward by Western and Japanese percussion. Along the way, it is interesting to note how not only the melodies of East and West but the very concept of pitch itself—endlessly mutable and mysterious in Japanese music, neatly organized by Westerners in twelve "well-tempered" tones to the octave—interpenetrate the music of each player, forcing him or her to come to terms with the "other" system.

This goes double for the richly expressive *Adagio*, exquisitely compounded of

Western-style lyricism and the ghostly, evocative meditations of the solo Japanese instruments. The chromatic pathos of the B-A-C-H motive, so irresistible to generations of Western composers, adds its own counterpoint of meaning to this multilayered sound painting. Again, phrases first heard in the symphony's introduction now unfold at greater length. At last a burst of high-pitched percussion reasserts the element of rhythm, and a bracing scherzo in ever-shifting meters follows without a break. This capricious piece is interrupted by slower treatments of the symphony's underlying theme, often in dizzying round-and-round canons, and yes, that is a Gershwin-esque dance band that comes along to wrap up the brief movement.

That jazzy rhythm and scoring lingers in the dramatic introduction to the last movement, pulsing with syncopations and rich in brass and percussion. From this emerges a series of variations on a brief theme, whose exotic instrumental colors, modal scale, and drone harmonies recall many moments in the music of Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov. Gradually, however, Japanese timbres and melody reassert themselves, and even the customary fast coda for the orchestral *tutti* (literally, "everybody") must acknowledge the fundamental solitude of the Japanese artist up to its very last bar.

The Japanese ensemble of *Symphony for Two Worlds* consists of the side-blown flutes, nohkan and shinabue; 2 parts for the vertical flute, shakuhachi, with 2 players on each part; 2 types of the light-bodied lute, shamisen, distinguished by the thickness of their necks; the robust lute, biwa; 2 types of the large zither, koto, one with 20 strings and the larger bass koto with 17 strings, 2 players on each part; and a wide variety of drums, wood blocks, slapsticks, gongs, and other percussion, 4 players in all. The Western orchestra includes 3 flutes (all alternating with piccolo), 3 oboes (1 alternating with English horn), 3 clarinets (1 alternating with small clarinet in E flat, 1 alternating with bass clarinet), 3 bassoons (1 alternating with contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets (all alternating with piccolo trumpets), 3 trombones (1 alternating with bass trombone), tuba, timpani,