

Wednesday, November 4, 2015 @ 19:00, Yokohama Minato Mirai Hall

Rodney Gehrke, Kaori Goto, Mineko Kojima, Naki Sung Kripfgans

PROGRAM

MINEKO KOJIMA

Fanfare pour précéder “La Péri”

Paul Dukas (1865 – 1935)

RODNEY GEHRKE

Die Kunst der Fuge, Contrapunctus I, BWV 1080

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

Variations on “Onder een Linde Groen”

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562 – 1621)

KAORI GOTO

Improvisations on Japanese Songs

Kaori Goto [後藤 香織] (B 1978)

Spring

さくら Sakura (Cherry Blossom)

Summer

盆踊り Bon-Odori (Bon Festival Dance)

七夕 Tanabata (Star Festival)

Autumn

うさぎ Usagi (Rabbit)

ふるさと Furusato (Hometown)

赤とんぼ Akatombo (Red Dragonfly)

Winter

からたちの花 Karatachi no Hana (Karatachi's Flower)

MINEKO KOJIMA

Fantasia in G Major “Piece d’Orgue,” BWV 572

Johann Sebastian Bach

RODNEY GEHRKE

Six Variations on “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”

Takeshi Kondo [近藤岳] (B 1973)

Prelude, Largo and Fugue in C major, BWV 545

Johann Sebastian Bach

Trio super: Allein Gott in der Höh’ sei Ehr, BWV 664

NAKI SUNG KRIPFGANS

Toccatà from Symphony No. 5, Opus 42, No. 1

Charles-Marie Widor (1844 – 1937)

Please silence all electronic devices.

マナーモードにして頂きますようお願い致します。

Program Notes

The French composer Paul Dukas is best known for his orchestral piece “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” made particularly famous in Walt Disney’s classic animated film from 1940, *Fantasia*. Dukas was among a number of famous composers (including Brahms) who were intensely self-critical, even destroying some of his own music. His ballet “La Péri” includes this evening’s Fanfare, with its brilliant rhythms and spiky harmonies alternating with moments of lyrical beauty. His style is a fine amalgam of traditional and progressive, with hints of composers such as Berlioz and Debussy. Two of his most famous pupils were Maurice Duruflé and Olivier Messiaen.

One of the great works of musical art ever composed is Bach’s *Art of Fugue*, compiled in the last decade of his life, preserved in two primary sources emanating from Bach himself—an early manuscript version and a posthumous print. Much controversy and confusion has accompanied the work over the centuries, mainly due to two issues: the printed form of the work is in “open score” (individual staves for each voice part), meaning the performing forces are not clearly indicated. Also, a massive *Fuga a 3 soggetti* (fugue with three subjects, none of which is the main theme of the set) was left incomplete. Scholar Davitt Moroney has published a definitive edition, asserting that the harpsichord is the ideal instrument, and he includes a compelling conclusion of the great final fugue incorporating the main subject of the collection. Today’s movement, the first in the collection, while displaying Bach’s characteristic didactic intensity, is also extremely beautiful and includes two unexpected, dramatic silences before the end. A final pedal point begs the question: Did Bach perhaps see the organ as the ideal instrument for the collection?

Sweelinck was called the “Father of German Organists.” Numerous German city-states and churches sent their organists to Amsterdam to study with him. Sweelinck composed fine examples of organ works in numerous styles, including highly sophisticated imitative works, brilliant toccatas, echo fantasies, and chorale-based pieces. Today’s work is one of numerous delightful variation sets on secular tunes, perfect for showing off the Fisk organ’s many “chamber-music” registrations.

Originally written as brief improvised pieces for recitals in Europe, and rewritten as teaching materials for organ students, this collection of famous Japanese songs explores traditional improvisation styles and techniques including North German chorale settings, duo, trio, fughetta, variations in modern and contemporary French harmony, counterpoint, and the use of the organ pedals to carry the melody. Kaori Goto performs her own arrangement.

The word “unique” is overused, but it is hard not to call BWV 572 unique in Bach’s oeuvre. The work’s title, as well as its three movement titles, are in French: *Très vite*, *Gravement*, and *Lentement*. An extended *passagio* (single voice) opening movement leads into a massive French-style Grand *plein jeu* movement in which counterpoint is virtually absent. Bach is simply exulting in gorgeous harmonies. A famous moment is a low B in the pedal, unplayable except on contemporaneous French instruments with “revalement” (several extra notes in the pedal below low C). Perhaps Bach composed this for a French organist. Another extended *passagio* movement, with added pulsing pedal notes, concludes this unusual and powerful work.

The Japanese concert organist and composer Takeshi Kondo (born 1973) teaches at Tokyo University of the Arts and is the organist of the Muza Kawasaki Symphony Hall. He studied organ with Philippe Lefebvre in Paris with funding from the Japanese government. “Variations on Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” was commissioned by Yokohama Minato Mirai Hall in 2003 and is a delightful and captivating set of variations based on the popular nursery rhyme. Each variation is purposely written to showcase the wide spectrum of colors of the 87 ranks in the hall’s Fisk organ. Naki Sung Kripfgans has recorded this piece on the Kimball/Reuter organ at First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor, Michigan, see <http://www.nakikripfgans.com>

Bach composed several C Major prelude-and-fugue sets. BWV 545 went through a particularly rich development process. To the original prelude, Bach added several opening and concluding toccata measures. In another source the piece is found in B-flat Major. He also in one source added the slow *largo* movement from his fifth trio sonata (BWV 529), the version heard today in the form prelude-trio-fugue, though it is possible he intended the trio to follow the fugue. The fugue itself is a concise *alla breve* movement of great power.

Bach spent a good portion of the last decade of his life gathering earlier works into cohesive collections, usually expanding them and improving them. From the so-called *Leipzig Collection* of organ chorales, we hear “Allein Gott in der Höh’ sei Ehr.” Since we have copies of early versions of these pieces as well as Bach’s improvements, we are offered an unusual peek into Bach’s compositional workshop. “Allein Gott” is one of two chorale settings in the collection in which Bach only uses the hint of the chorale melody to form a brilliant trio setting (similar to the fast movements of his six trio sonatas, BWV 525–530). Toward the end, Bach presents the first two phrases of the chorale melody in longer notes in the pedal to conclude the work.

The famous toccata concludes Widor’s Fifth Organ Symphony. Perpetual motion in the manuals on full organ, with brilliant arpeggios and sharply repeated chords, is answered by a pedal melody in long notes, in its first iteration separated by two octaves beginning with the highest note in the pedal. After the opening section, the volume is reduced to just the *Swell* division with the box closed. A wonderful build up, full of anticipation, leads to a recapitulation of the opening idea, this time with the melody in octaves in the pedal. A *coda* section brings this brilliant piece to a close.