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Final Doctoral Recital

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Manaka Matsumoto, violin

with

Kevin Kyaw, piano
Muli Yu, piano
Agata Sorotokin, piano

Tuesday, May 2, 2023, 5:30 PM
Recital Hall | Staller Center for the Arts

Distance de Fée for Violin and Piano

T. Takemitsu (1930-1996)

Kevin Kyaw, piano

Violin Sonata in A major, D 574 "Duo"

F. Schubert (1797-1828)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Scherzo: presto
- III. Andantino
- IV. Allegro vivace

Muli Yu, piano

~ INTERMISSION ~

Nocturne for Solo Violin

K. Saariaho (b. 1952)

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 19

S. Prokofiev (1891-1953)

- I. Andantino
- II. Scherzo: Vivacissimo
- III. Moderato – Allegro moderato

Agata Sorotokin, piano

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Musical Arts degree.



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Notes

Tōru Takemitsu (1930-1996): *Distance de Fée* for Violin and Piano

Takemitsu is often credited as being the first Japanese composer to receive international recognition in the Western classical music canon, as well as the first to unite elements of Japanese traditional music with the Western European style. His early music was inspired primarily by Western composers, due to his aversion to Japanese traditional music during his youth, as it reminded him too much of his bitter memories of World War II.

Distance de Fée is a piece from his early period and is his first chamber composition, composed in 1951 when he was 21 years old. The music is dreamlike yet mesmerizing, with the violin's hypnotic melody creeping above the piano's otherworldly harmonies, floating gently to the tempo of *Lentement mystérieux*. *Distance de Fée* is based on a poem of the same name: *Yōsei no Kyori** ("Fairy's Distance", 1937) written by Shūzō Takiguchi, an artist, art critic, and avant-garde surrealist poet. *Yōsei no Kyori* is one of Takemitsu's favorite poems by Takiguchi; he has described it as having a "very transparent feel", and that it was "the closest thing to what I wanted to illustrate through sound and music."

(*English translation included on last page)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828): Violin Sonata in A major, D 574 "Duo"

Schubert lived a brief life, having died in 1828 at the age of 31. Yet he left behind a considerably extraordinary oeuvre of 9 symphonies, 22 piano sonatas, over 600 lieder, and more, both surviving and lost. One may wonder exactly how and when he had the time or freedom to make so much music. Schubert found his voice in small and intimate means of expressivity: the Lied and the song cycle, which he is perhaps most remembered for, presented in the comfort and vicinity of the salon. His style is lyrical and poignant, seemingly simple yet emotionally intense in a personal way.

The Violin Sonata in A Major was composed in 1817 when Schubert was 20 years old. The nickname for this sonata "Duo" is most likely due to the equal roles of both instruments, as opposed to having the piano simply accompany the violin. With all four movements being based in major keys, the overall disposition of the sonata is pleasant, sunny and lively, interspersed with tender and sentimental moments. The first movement, "Allegro moderato," opens with the piano playing a lilting, rhythmic motif with the violin's melody entering above, much like an art song. The second movement is a playful and animated "Scherzo," followed by the gentle third movement "Andantino." The sonata ends with the fourth and final movement, "Allegro Vivace," on a dramatic and joyous note.

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Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952): *Nocturne* for solo violin

Saariaho has the distinction of being not just the only woman composer on this recital, but also the only living one, having celebrated her 70th birthday in October 2022. She has a unique relationship with sound, as evidenced through her compositional method; she creates textures and harmonic tension that elaborate on the subtle details of one pitch slowly transforming into another over time, based on her core theory of “sound” vs. “noise.”

While most of Saariaho’s compositions incorporate electronics, *Nocturne* for solo violin was written exclusively for a purely acoustic instrument. A nocturne is any musical work that is evocative of the night, and is usually of a calm and quiet character, slow in tempo, and relatively short in duration. This haunting piece combines Saariaho’s method with all of the acoustic possibilities of the unaccompanied violin to execute an expansive yet intricately fragile polyphony of overtones, incorporating extended techniques such as harmonics, variations in the bow’s contact point creating scratch sounds, and pitch transformations by sliding, or *glissandi*.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953): Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 19

Prokofiev’s first violin concerto was completed in 1917, the year of the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. A distinctive quality of the concerto would be its “fairy tale”-like, magical and adventurous character; Hungarian violinist Joseph Szigeti even directly refers to this characteristic when describing his being dazzled by the concerto’s “mixture of fairy-tale naïveté and daring savagery in layout and texture.” Prokofiev takes full advantage of the violin soloist’s potential as the “protagonist”; the soloist is almost like a sorcerer, conjuring up spells and commanding the magic of the entire orchestration. The sheer volume of the music’s technical and expressive demands span from electrifying virtuosity to intense passion, making it perhaps one of the most colorful and exciting violin concertos from the 20th Century.

The first movement, “Andantino,” opens with a quiet solo violin line, immediately creating an ethereal and mystical atmosphere. As the trajectory increases in activity and intensity, the soloist plays a second theme in a completely new character; violinist David Oistrakh recalls how the composer specifically instructed him to play this “as though you’re trying to convince someone of something.” The famously acrobatic second movement, a blistering scherzo in “Vivacissimo,” is the shortest of the three movements, yet is easily the highlight of virtuosity in the entire piece, with the solo violin bursting into flying chromatic scales, left-hand pizzicatos, menacing octaves, fleeting harmonics and scorching *sul ponticello* passages. The third and final movement, “Moderato – Allegro Moderato,” is an unusually slow and romantic conclusion to what is overall an energetic and vibrant piece, culminating with the complete return of the opening theme from the first movement in an atmosphere of nostalgia.

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Original Text (Shūzō Takiguchi) 妖精の距離 (<i>Yōsei no Kyori</i>)	English translation (Noriko Ohtake) <i>Distance de Fée</i>	English translation (Mary Jo Bang, Yuki Tanaka) Fairy Distance
うつくしい歯は樹がくれに 歌った	Beautiful teeth sung behind the trees	There behind the tree beautiful saw-teeth were singing unseen
形のいい耳は雲間にあった	Finely shaped ears were between the clouds	In the space between clouds there were shapely ears
玉虫色の爪は水にまじった	Iridescent nails blended with water	Iridescent painted nails dissolved in water
脱ぎすてた小石	Kicked off a pebble	The tiny discarded stones
すべてが足跡のように	All like footsteps	Like footprints everything even
そよ風さえ	Even zephyrs were	The wind was getting lost
傾いた椅子の中に失われた	Lost in the tilted chair	In a leaned-back over-turned chair
麦畑の中の扉の発狂	Door-in-the-cornfield's insanity	The crazed ingress to a wheat field
空気のラビリンス	Air's labyrinth	The labyrinth made of air
そこには一枚のカードもな い	Not even one card is there	There is not a single card
そこには一つのコップもな い	Not even one glass is there	There is not a single glass
欲望の楽曲のように	Like an instrument of desire	Like in a stringed instrument of desire
ひとすじの奇妙な線で貫か れていた	Penetrated with a peculiar line	The strange line pierced it
それは辛うじて小鳥の表情 に似ていた	That barely resembled the expression of a small bird	It just barely looked like the innocent expression of a little finch
それは死の浮標のように	Like a buoy of death	It will live like a death buoy
春の風に棲まるだろう	It lives in the spring breeze	In the spring wind
それは辛うじて小鳥の均衡 に似ていた	That barely resembled the balance of a small bird	It just barely looked like the equilibrium of the English sparrow

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