

74TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

APRIL 3, 2016 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



PROGRAM

3:30 • West Building, West Garden Court

Washington Toho Koto Society

Presented in conjunction with the National Cherry Blossom Festival

Arr. Masaaki Kikushiro

Sakura ni Yoseru Genso (Fantasia on Cherry Blossoms)

Masaaki Kikushiro

Hikari to Kaze to (Lightening and Wind and...)

Arr. Yoshihisa Sato

Nihon Min'yōshū (Medley of Japanese Folk Songs)

Koka Sassa; Arr. Shofu Kikusawa

Gion Kouta (Gion Song)

Arr. Seiho Nomura

Haru no Uta (Songs of Spring)

Kimio Eto

Omoide no Utagoe (The Voice I Remember)

Tadao Sawai

Raden (Mother-of-Pearl Artwork)

The Musicians

The Washington Toho Koto Society was organized by Kyoko Okamoto in 1971 to promote the enjoyment of Japanese koto music. The society has earned wide acclaim and has participated in numerous national events, including presidential inaugurations, Japanese Embassy events, and National Cherry Blossom Festivals. In October 2003, the society was honored with a special award from the Foreign Minister of Japan, Yoriko Kawaguchi, in recognition of more than thirty years of sharing Japanese koto music throughout the United States and promoting mutual understanding and friendship between the two countries. In 2015, the society had the honor of receiving the 2014 Marshall Green Award from the Japan-American Society of Washington, DC, for “significant and sustained contribution to strengthening the relationship between the United States and Japan for more than forty years by bringing Americans and Japanese closer through hundreds of performances of traditional Japanese music.”

Kyoko Okamoto

Kyoko Okamoto, director of the Washington Toho Koto Society, and a native of Japan, graduated from Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. She is a certified koto teacher of the Ikuta School of Koto in Japan, where she studied with Kazue Ehara of Ashiya. She teaches privately and holds a faculty position at the University of Maryland, College Park. Okamoto’s lecture-demonstrations and recitals have delighted college and community audiences nationwide. She has recorded for film productions by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Symphony Orchestra.

Yoshiko Carlton

Yoshiko Carlton started playing koto at the age of nine and has studied with Kyoko Okamoto for twenty-three years. She teaches and performs at the Ikuta School of Koto in Florida. She is a member of the Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, chapter of the Washington Toho Koto Society.

Stefanie Davis

Stefanie Davis lived in Iwate, Japan, from 2007 to 2009, and studied koto with Hideko Yusa of the Miyagi School from 2008 to 2009. Since returning to the United States, she has studied with Kyoko Okamoto and performed with the society.

Yuriko Gandolfo

Yuriko Gandolfo, assistant music director, has studied koto since 1988 with Kyoko Okamoto and has performed for the Koto Society in such venues as the Embassy of Japan, the Kennedy Center, and the Smithsonian Institution. She also plays flute and seventeen-string bass koto.

Colin Khem

Colin Khem started taking koto classes with Kyoko Okamoto at the University of Maryland in 2008. He has performed for the Koto Society ever since.

Tommy Hisako Klinsky

Tommy Hisako Klinsky has studied koto under Ryuko Mizutani in New York. She has also studied with Yoshiko Carlton.

Emiko Koto

Emiko Koto has studied koto with Yoshiko Carlton since 2001 and has participated in recitals jointly with the Koto Society under Kyoko Okamoto.

Leina Maeda

Leina Maeda is a high school freshman in Ellicott City, Maryland. She has studied koto since 2013 with Kyoko Okamoto and also plays violin.

Sachiko Smith

Sachiko Smith has studied koto since 1985 with Kyoko Okamoto and has performed with the Koto Society since then. She received the art name of Kitagawa Yukiji for shamisen in 1988 from the Kitagawa School in Tokyo, Japan. She also obtained her teacher's certificate for shamisen in 2001.

Izumi Tamanaha

Izumi Tamanaha has studied koto since 2003 with Kyoko Okamoto and has performed with the Koto Society since then.

Program Notes

Koto

Koto, or the thirteen-string zither, produces an evocative sound recognized in Japanese surveys as the most distinctively Japanese voice in Japan's spectrum of musical instruments. The six-foot zither is made of paulonia wood with movable bridges supporting the strings, which are plucked with three ivory picks worn on the right hand. The left hand also manipulates the strings to create more varied sounds. A Japanese precursor to the koto was found in prehistoric times in Japan, but this more elaborate zither was introduced from China through Korea in the eighth century. By the mid-seventeenth century, the koto — traditionally used by the courtier, priest, and scholar — had become a popular instrument for the common people.

Shamisen

Shamisen, sometimes called Sangen, is a three-string lute with the greatest variety of uses. The shamisen repertoire includes the backbone for kabuki music, music for geisha parties, and a host of folk music. When it came from the Ryukyu Islands in the sixteenth century as the jamisen, it was a square, banjo-like instrument with a snakeskin covering played with a pick. It was a toy novelty until biwa players discovered that using their large biwa plectrum greatly improved the tone. The snakeskin, however, would not hold up under the blows of the plectrum. The search for a new skin led to the discovery of catskin, which was not only more durable but also led to a new world of sound.

***Sakura ni Yoseru Genso* (Fantasia on Cherry Blossoms)**

This is a contemporary arrangement of a well-known and ancient Japanese song, *Sakura* (cherry blossoms).

***Hikari to Kaze to ...* (Lightening and Wind and ...)**

The composer depicts the contrast between two forces of nature: beauty found in the straight line of lightening and the curvature of wind.

***Nihon Min'yoshu* (Medley of Japanese Folk Songs)**

This collection includes five popular regional folk songs — *Kisobushi* from Nagano (Central Honshu), *Otemoyan* from Kumamoto (Kyushu), *Hietsukibushi* from Miyazaki (Kyushu), *Yosakoibushi* from Kochi (Shikoku), and *Yagibushi* from Gunma (North of Tokyo). Some of the songs were most likely working songs that kept laborers company; others are comical with plenty of jokes.

***Gion Kouta* (Gion Song)**

This famous lyric was written by a Tokyo-born author, Mikihiko Nagata, in 1928. Kyoto was his favorite place, and he particularly loved Gion, where there are a number of teahouses and geisha entertainers. All four verses focus on vivid images of each season. Try to picture cherry blossoms in evenings as the moon rises over a mountain, or snow falling outside a window lit by a lantern. Each verse ends with a profession of love for Gion and *darari obi* (a long sash worn with kimono) — symbols of life in Gion.

Haru no Uta (Songs of Spring)

This is a medley of well-known children's songs about spring: "Waiting for Spring," "Spring has Come," "Spring Brook," and "Butterfly."

Omoide no Utagoe (The Voice I Remember)

This song describes the composer's sentimental emotions as he reminisces about his past. While it is not a long piece, it explores a variety of challenging koto techniques.

Raden (Mother-of-Pearl Artwork)

The first section of this song depicts the unique nature of mother-of-pearl inlaid artwork by using varied tempo and a rondo form. The second part focuses on the beauty of pearls as they reflect light and change characteristics.

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fourth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

Rose Ensemble

American Roots: A Journey through Our Country's Folk, Old-Time, and Gospel Traditions

Presented in honor of *Three Centuries of American Prints from the National Gallery of Art*

April 10, Sunday, 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

Tamagawa University Taiko Group

Japanese Taiko drum and dance

Presented in honor of the

National Cherry Blossom Festival

April 15, Friday, 11:00

East Building Atrium

PostClassical Ensemble

Music by Bernard Herrmann

Presented in honor of *Three Centuries of American Prints from the National Gallery of Art*

April 17, Sunday, 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

Prague - New York Effects

A transatlantic collaboration of music and dance. Cosponsored by the Embassy of the Czech Republic

April 23, Saturday, 2:00

West Building, West Garden Court

Inscape

Music by Asian composers

April 24, Sunday, 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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