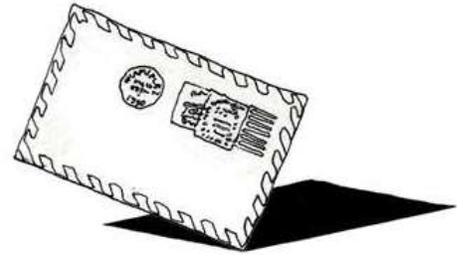


Letter from Mari



December 2007

Happy Holidays! I hope that the season is filled with joy, amidst the flurry of activity. With my 'job' as an artist, I get to experience both sides on a daily basis - both the pressure of preparation and the stillness and bliss of the presentation. In this letter, I wanted to relay a little of the news in our lives since last summer and our visit to San Francisco.

Prokofiev - a 20-year relationship

This musical season began in Germany with a tour playing Prokofiev Concerto No. 3. After having played the Beethoven Cycle four times over the last few years, I am slowly re-introducing other repertoires, such as Prokofiev. This one, in particular, is one of my favorite and most sentimental, as I met my husband while recording this piece.

This time around, it was also a memorable experience, but for different reasons. First, since it has been along time since I recorded it, it was a challenge to find the right touch. Luckily, I achieved my vision of the piece in working with a very capable young German conductor, Hermann Bäumer. However, this time there was a problem on stage. I had never experienced this before, but, it seems that the piano tuner had not placed the lid correctly on the piano. As the orchestra was playing the introduction, I looked into the piano and saw all the hammers were not positioned the way they usually are: they were just missing the strings.

It was strange, but there was nothing I could do. I began to play, but there was no sound, so, after about 15 seconds I simply stopped. The conductor pushed and pulled the lid until the hammers fell back into place, and we started the concert over again. The audience was very supportive and happy with the end-result. I was relieved that all ended well.

Karin - my 'day-job', the last 10 years

This fall was also memorable for our daughter, Karin, who had her Saint Petersburg debut. The invitation was a result of her having won first prize at the international piano competition in Berlin. She played several pieces by Peter Tchaikovsky. The audience gave her an uproarious applause. On a personal note, we loved observing the level of perception and appreciation of the audience members themselves. Even the children

were remarkable quiet and attentive during the performance. They came dressed formerly in long dresses and ties and attended with their 'Babushka' (grandmothers who really do, by the way, wear babushka scarves around their heads). Note, they were not the Russian grandmas you might have seen in old movies. No, these babushkas were poised and elegant.)

Karin turned nine in September. This is an important year, as it is her last year as a single digit. We celebrated by inviting 17 of her friends to see the Opera 'Monkey Travels West,' one of the 'Monkey King' adventures of Chinese. The production was a thrilling one and included Chinese acrobats. The children were magnetized during the two-hour performance.

From our other 'home,' Munich

Kent conducted his first opera of the season, Eugene Onegin at the The State Opera in Munich, so we enjoyed a few weeks in one of our favorite cities. This opera was staged by a young, eccentric Polish director, Krzysztof Warlikowski. While the original story is set in 19th century Russia, he set his version in the early 1970's in the United States. It was a fascinating interpretation that has received as much criticism as it has acclaim. However people took it, it was a must-see, with sold-out shows daily.

Touching history

We've already had a chance to enjoy snow this season, both in Munich and in Garmisch Partenkirchen, the home of Richard Strauss*. While we were there, we had the opportunity to meet Christian and Susann Strauss, the Strauss grandchildren, and visit their grandfather's home. We saw the amazing music that he composed at the age of seven, and the hand-print that he left on his leather desk (a 'print' made by laying his hand in the same position day after day, leaving a spot that was shaded from the sun). I was given the opportunity to play on Richard Strauss's Ibach piano. As you can imagine, it was a great honor to be touch this instrument.

I am so happy to be able to share a bit of news and look forward to the next time we meet.

Mari

* Richard Georg Strauss (June 11, 1864 - September 8, 1949) was a German composer of the late Romantic era and early modern era, particularly noted for his tone poems and operas. Strauss was also a noted conductor.

