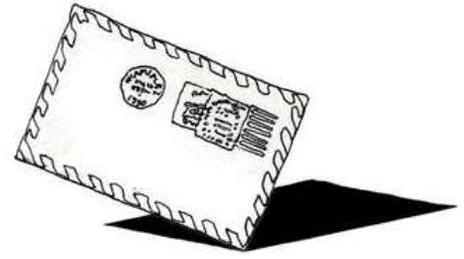


# Letter from Mari



June 2012

*Dear Friends,*

*As always, I enjoy touching base with friends from around the world via this short letter, including vivid memories during my travels, as well as some updates on my work and family.*

## *Summer and the arrival of scooters in Munich*

*Summer seems to have arrived everywhere - even in Munich. One principal change in our lives, once there is no longer now on the streets, is our mode of transportation: we get out our scooters. Each of us has our own scooter, and we keep a few spare ones for visitors. Kent uses his to get back and forth to the Opera for rehearsals, as well as for jaunts to the English Garden for a quick break during the day. I use mine for all purposes as well, even for getting to dinner parties in high heels. It seems to work for so many who live and work in Munich. Still, it always makes us smile as we imagine how impossible it would be for people in hilly San Francisco.*



*Brigade of Kodama-Nagano family scooters, ready for family and guests to use around Munich*

## *A Return to Russian Repertoire*

*I have a soft spot for the Prokofiev Concerto No. 3 in my heart. This was my debut piece in London when I was 19 years old. This led to an offer to make a recording, which led me to my future husband, Kent, who was proposed as the conductor for that recording.*

*Later, during the decade after Karin's birth, I turned my attention away from Russian repertoires and focused my time and energy on studying, performing, and recording all 32 Beethoven Sonatas and five Concerti.*

*It was thanks to the week I spent in Moscow in 1987 that I grew so close to Russian composers. I had been invited to study for the week with the great professor, Vera Gornostaeva. We worked intensively on the Tchaikovsky First Concerto, and she helped me discover that it is not a flashy piece, as it is often performed. Rather, it is a down-to-earth piece, with folkloric roots. She explained that it has a greatness "stemming from Mother Earth." These earthy elements include Russian dance and fairytales, including their iconic characters, such as a Russian witch, called Baba Yaga, as well as a young, naive Russian girl.*

*I'll never forget Christmas Eve that year. Since Russians are orthodox, they celebrate Christmas using a different religious calendar. That night, Vera Gornostaveva called me at around midnight and told me to put on warm clothes and go out into the snowstorm, even for just a few minutes. "If you do, you will understand precisely the sound of the second theme," she said. She was referencing the sound, speed and the color of the wind and snowflakes that were very different from that of Western Europe. She was right: the sound was permanently etched in my ear and in my soul that night.*

*While I prepared this piece in Tokyo this summer, I enjoyed the experience of re-working it after so many years of focusing on Beethoven. I was also lucky to have a talented young conductor who had exactly the same concept of the piece that I did. Mr. Poga from Lithuania also had a nice mixture of Russian culture and German structure. Of course, I was also inspired by memories of the Russian snowstorm on Christmas Eve.*

### *The most stressful concert of the year*

*After performing all 32 Beethoven Sonatas at Hamarikyū Hall in Tokyo over the years, I returned for a more casual concert with a Bach/Chopin program. It was a lunchtime concert, so there was a request for me to give a short talk during the concert.*

*This simple request became a source of stress. The issue is that, while I grew up speaking Japanese at home, my family is from Osaka, Japan, which speaks with an entirely different accent from those in Tokyo. In fact, there are many different and distinct accents across Japan. For people in Japan, our Osaka accent is quite unusual, and, in fact, it is often used in comedy shows because it is so distinctive. To my ear, it is a softer sound than the Tokyo accent and reminds me more of French than of Tokyo style Japanese. The prospect of having to speak Japanese on stage in an unusual accent to a crowd in Tokyo felt daunting to me.*

*In fact, it was much more stressful than playing the Bach English Suite. Beforehand, however, I got wonderful advice from a dear friend, who is a pianist and who is a great public speaker. She said, "Just be yourself and improvise on stage. People want to know who you are and how you feel." To my relief, she was right. The audience enjoyed my talk, where I had decided to be 100% authentic, sharing my experiencing with Bach and Chopin, even while I spoke with an Osaka accent.*

### *Searching for a beer in Canada*

*For most of the musicians I know, having a glass of beer (or wine or champagne) after a long day is routine.*

*I was in British Canada for the first time and was performing in Barrie, near Toronto. During the rehearsals, I realized I had not had my routine glass of wine or beer after work. Once the concert was over, I was determined to find a glass to enjoy after the show. To my surprise, even after dashing from one supermarket to the next, I could not find beer. In fact, in some parts of the country, you must go specifically to a liquor shop to buy beer. In all my experience, I have never had such a difficult time finding a beer.*

### *Les Folles Journee*

*In May each year, it is the time of Les Folles Journees in Tokyo. It was wonderful to see the energy and optimism that had returned to Tokyo since the earthquake just over a year ago. While, last year, many artists had canceled, this year, they all attended. Unlike last year, where a Russian friend brought his Geiger counter, and used it on our sushi, this year, we all ate sushi without hesitation. The halls were full and the audience was in great spirits. Rene Marin, the genius artistic director, closed the festival with a big party, playing the role of DJ, mixing music and pumping up the volume, just like at a real disco.*



*Rene Martin as DJ for the post-festival party of Folles Journees. Here with Momo and Masa Kajimoto.*



*Funny sign in the restrooms at the Bavarian State Opera. How to use the Toilet brush: From left: Totally wrong, Wrong, Almost Correct, Correct*

### *Update on the family*

*Kent had a busy but exciting six months conducting the new production of Wagner's "Ring" in Munich. He and the stage director, Andreas Kriegenburg, share the same concert for art, music and work. Therefore, the collaboration was exceptionally pleasant and fruitful. The orchestra, in my opinion, is probably the best ensemble to play this repertoire. The audience, the musicians and the press alike all showed their deep appreciation.*

*Karin has been broadening her repertoire. She studied a great deal of the Romantic repertoire, including Schumann, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schubert, and French Impressionism (Debussy), which she presented in her first full recital in Munich in early July.*

*I hope you are having a restful and enjoyable summer, wherever you are.*

*Mari*



*Light streaming through trees of the Bois de Boulogne, woods in front of our Parisian apartment.*



*In Ginza, holding bouquet given by my 1st and 2nd grade classmates from the Japanese school I attended Dueseldorf, Germany, when my family was living there.*



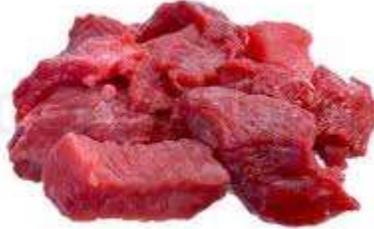
*Fantastic Yamaha Showroom in the middle of Ginza with their extraordinary new model concert grand pianos CFX, where they generously allowed me to use to practice*



*At a celebration after the Duo concert with my sister.*

## *"After Concert" Steak*

### *Recipe*



*I added this recipe for steak, which makes a great accompaniment to beer. I call it my "After Concert Steak" because it something you can make in the morning, and it is ready-to-go by the time you return home from a concert at night.*

#### *Ingredients*

*Beef Filet Cut into 3 cm. thick and 2 cm. wide - one kilogram*

#### *Sauce:*

*Soy sauce - 1/3 cup*

*Sake or white wine - 1/3 cup*

*Sugar - 5 Tablespoons*

*Sesame oil - 1/4 cup*

*Ginger, grated - 1/4 cup*

*Garlic Powder - 1 teaspoon*

#### *Method*

*Fry the Beef Filet with little oil for about 3 minutes over high heat.*

*Dip immediately in sauce.*

*Let marinate for at least 6 hours.*

#### *Enjoy!*

*Serve cold with watercress or (Arugula "roquette" in French)*

*Goes well with red Bordeaux.*

