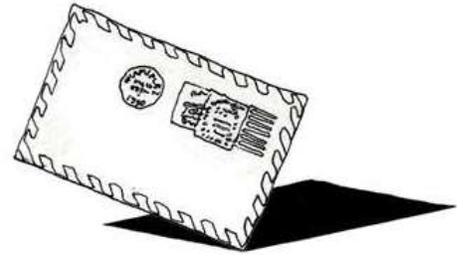


# Letter from Mari



December 2012

*Dear Friends,*

*Greetings from a very festive Paris! The streets are filled with fairy lights and shop windows are decorated with care for the season of giving and light.*

*There have been many storms lately, but this does not seem to discourage the good humor and joy among people this holiday season.*

## *Musical Days in Forest Hill, San Francisco*



*This year, during Musical Days in Forest Hill, we were very fortunate to have several musicians who have a significant following around the world. Augustin Dumay is a legendary violinist representing the French style of violin playing. Matt Haimovitz is a child prodigy cellist who started his career as a teenager by recording for Deutsche Gramophone, the most respected company in the classical music industry. Paul Meyer is known as one of the most skilled clarinet players in the world. Heiichiro Oyama is known for playing a viola like a violin: that is to say, with incredible speed and energy. Joining this extraordinary line-up of musicians, we pianists included Alexander Palei, Momo Kodama, Karin Nagano (13 years old), and myself.*

*It was a great mixture of culture and elegance in all regards...even in the perfumes which adorned these fine musicians. This is a fact that did not go unnoticed by one of our neighbor hosts, who happens to be allergic to perfume. Since we musicians love tales, I was eager to share this one with you here:*

*Can you imagine how we musicians felt seeing not one, but two, Hamburg Steinways in a private home, and just across the street from our concert venue? All the musicians were amazed by the luxury of having access to such nice pianos nearby. Then, we were also impressed by the spectacular home and music collection of our hosts, Carl and Martha, who also radiate a special elegance and world-class beauty all their own.*

How does fragrance relate to this story? In Europe, fragrance is a part of one's "look." As an impeccable French gentleman, Augustin, always dresses elegantly and wears a delicate French cologne. The same is true of Alexander Palei, who follows the Russian tradition that has the same sensibility.

The problem for our hostess, Martha, was that she is allergic to perfume. This allergy manifests itself as a migraine. She ended up suffering in silence, but generously let us fill her home with the musicians (and their fragrances) as they did their preparations for the festival in her home. As much as we tried, we realized that fragrance is so much a part of our lives – it rests on our clothes and even in our hair (we have to wear hair spray), that we couldn't separate fragrance from music in the European tradition. Luckily, for us, Martha was very gracious about it and let us continue to share her home, despite her migraines. As they say in San Francisco, "We owe her one!"

A very special guest this year was the Ikebana Master Shogo Kariyazaki. As Kent described, in Japan, there is a tradition of living national treasures. There are very few that ever achieve this status, but Kariyazaki was given this honor by the Japanese government due to the level he achieved in his mastery of Japanese flower arranging. We were honored that he came to create original floral arrangements for our concert. He came from Japan and took time away from TV interviews and other work surrounding a one-week show that would host for over 50,000 people the following week. How lucky we were to have his arrangement for the entire festival just for ourselves to enjoy. The beauty of these arrangements was breathtaking. More than that, the arrangements interacted with the sublime architecture of this Maybeck-designed clubhouse, bringing it to life and helping us perceive its grandeur in a new way.



## *La Jolla, California*

When Kent and I were married 21 years ago, we decided to perform together only for special occasions. Such an occasion arose when we were asked to perform at The La Jolla Festival. Jimmy Lin, a great violinist for whom we have tremendous respect, personally called us to ask us to join his group. He gathered a group of exceptional musicians, ranging from up-and-coming young players to well-established professionals to perform as a super orchestra.

Can you imagine Jimmy, a world-class soloist, playing in the back of first violin section? Though we were a large group, playing the Beethoven Concerto No. 2 felt like making chamber music, so much were we having fun working together at this level.

*Since we were in La Jolla, right on the ocean, Kent enjoyed surfing on a beach next to the concert hall after the rehearsals. He was very pleased that he was able to catch 20 waves, despite the fact that he hasn't had much time to surf in recent years.*



### *21<sup>st</sup> century Club in Old Town Kyoto*

*My sister, Momo, is running a concert cycle for The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Club in Tokyo and Kyoto.*

*In Japan, unlike Europe or the U.S., there are few programs that make music accessible to youth. Therefore, young audiences are under-developed in Japan.*

*The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Club was created to organize concerts for the future audiences. Not only is the mission to build future young audience, but to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century musical repertoire, written by living composers.*



*I was Momo's guest for the piano duo concerts. She designed a program for children around fairy tales, including *The Nutcracker Suite* and *Mother Goose*, in addition to a new piece by the young composer Kenji Sakai. It was based on "hope." The message was that, eventually, the world could find the life that was destroyed in an instant. This was the strongest wish from the children in Tohoku, victims of Tsunami, as they lost family and friends that they miss so desperately. The composer made it his goal to express this lament and this wish through music. He wrote a dramatic and profound piece that touched many people's hearts.*

*The concerts were sold out with many enthusiastic and responsive young audience members.*

*We enjoyed beautiful Kyoto, where I had my first experience using a tatami mat dressing room.*

### *Monte Carlo, Monaco*

*"A cove of illusion." This was my impression of Monaco 25 years ago when I came on a concert tour with the late Mstislav Rostropovich. It was a hot summer with strong sunshine and lots of seafood and champagne. Somehow, I never got the sense that my feet really touched the ground there, so much was I surrounded by luxury and style.*

*This time, I returned with Kent and Momo to give the European premiere of Jean Pascal Beintkus's Double Concerto "Cinema Rhapsody." (We had given which the world premiere last year in Osaka.)*

*It was raining cats and dogs and Monte Carlo looked rather empty and quiet.*

*Yet, to me, it was still the same "cove of illusion." White Christmas trees were juxtaposed with palms, Ferraris rentals were ubiquitous and there were fancy stores that would make Paris' top fashion row, Rue St Honore, look rather simple. Despite some of the values that may have been discordant, the three of us enjoyed playing the Cinema Rhapsody in the town of Grace Kelly. The Cinema Rhapsody is a piece about the history of film music. Camille St. Saens, who wrote Carnival of the Animals, was one of the first composers of film music. Monte Carlo seemed to be a perfect setting for us to perform this fascinating work and the audience really loved it.*

### *Update on the family*

*Kent has signed a contract with The Hamburg Opera, an opera house with a great tradition of legendary music directors, including George Friedrich Haendel and Telemann, and the legendary managing director Rolf Liebermann.*

*Karin and I joined him for his performances with the North German Radio Symphony and enjoyed the beautiful sky (known for a blue glow even in the blackest night) and the raw energy of this town - after all, it this is where the Beatles got their start!*

*Karin is preparing an important concert for the Sawallisch Foundation Festival in Grassau, Germany. It will be her debut with the Bavarian State Orchestra. Despite the rehearsal schedule, she will take a few days off around Christmas to do our traditional holiday baking and decorate the tree.*

*My best wishes for the season,*

*Mari*