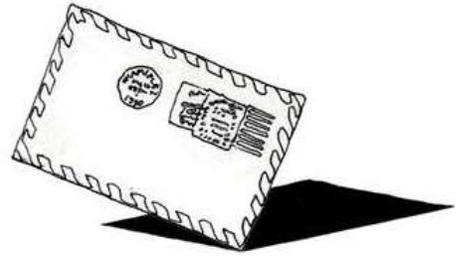


# Letter from Mari



July 2013

*Dear Friends and Family,*

*It has been a long time since my last letter. After a very extended winter season in Europe, we are happy to experience some real summer weather. The following provides a few updates on my work and family since I last wrote.*

*Travel nightmare brings out my best work!*

*The New Year started with an invitation to my first "Les Folles Journees de Nantes." Having heard about this exciting event over the years, and having been a part of "Les Folles Journees" in Tokyo and Kyoto, I was very curious to experience it in person. Because of scheduling complications, I opted to arrange a trip that would allow me to arrive within just two hours of the start time of the concert. I had never scheduled a concert so tight. There was no other choice, so I reassured myself that it should work out all right...*

*As luck would have it, however, my transit flight was canceled, so I had to scramble. I ended up jumping onto a train to catch a flight from a different city, arriving at the airport only two minutes (instead of two hours) before the concert start time. My sister, Momo, graciously gave a talk and played alone until I arrived, only 15 minutes after my touch down to play piano duo repertoire. The reason I was able to arrive and be on stage within minutes of the touch down was that I was supported by each person I encountered: a flight attendant who let me switch seats to the front of the plane, as well as a driver who ignored all the red lights en route to the venue.*

*Somehow, this combination of events resulted in our playing what we consider one of our best concerts to date. (Not that I would want to experience another James Bond style travel itinerary again in my life!)*

*Completing recordings of two Beethoven Cycles (32 Sonatas and 5 Concerti)*

*During beautiful February snows, I recorded the final CD to complete the cycle of 32 Beethoven Sonatas. This last work included Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata, considered one of the most challenging pieces in piano repertoires.*

Then, in March, I recorded Beethoven's Concerti Four and Five, to complete the cycle of five that I have recorded over the last five years. Five is specifically called "The Emperor," and four is simply called "Four" because it was given no name. We recorded it in Jesus Christus Kirche in Berlin. This is the church where the legendary conductor Herbert von Karajan made his recordings during the Cold War. It was an honor to record within these walls, which have heard so much great music.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my stellar recording team, including Wilhelm Hellweg (producer), Jean-Marie Geijsen (sound engineer) and Michel Brandjes (piano technician). The sonatas took me eight years to complete, and I was privileged to work with this team throughout this entire time. This is one of the best teams in the world. They are all legendary in their own right, and came together to create a team that will not be forgotten.

When people ask, "Will you play the cycle of sonatas again, now that I have done it four times in concerts and one time in CD's?" my answer is, "Yes, there is always room to develop these sonatas throughout my entire life."

Aside from my professional team, I am thankful for my husband, Kent, who continually supports me during important moments in my life, and this was one.

Japan Tour: swimming to restore myself during a busy month



Special lunch on island near Hiroshima

My spring Japan tour was filled with a variety of programs, starting with Les Folles Journées in Otsu and Tokyo where I played an all-French program that I performed in multiple ways. That is to say, I played using different combinations of people and pianos. Specifically, I did these in the form of solo recitals, playing with my sister on a single piano, as well as together on two separate pianos. I also played chamber music, with other instruments. These two, Japan-based Folles

Journées festivals were held over a period of five days. I have enjoyed playing here over the last five years.

After that, my music tour took me to the Western island of Shikoku, near Osaka, where I played in an all Beethoven program. I continued on to play in Nagoya, playing a Mozart program. Then, we moved on to a beautiful island next to Hiroshima where I played a Bach/Benjamin program. This Japan tour was one of the heaviest three weeks in my life. I attribute my ability to thrive, despite the grueling schedule, to my daily

swimming routine. My daughter, Karin, was traveling with me, so I had scheduled daily swim classes for her. During her evening lesson, I also arranged one for myself. Swimming seems to be an instant cure-all for physical and mental stress.

*Dresden: the most beautiful castle of my life*

I had the privilege of visiting the great Dresden Festival, run by the German cellist Jan Vogler. He is one of the very few artists who can both run a large festival and perform wonderfully at concerts as well.



Dresden is a beautiful old city, with a long tradition of music appreciation: many great composers have visited this town, ranging from Robert Schumann to Richard Strauss.

*Dresden Castle - my favorite castle to date!*

Despite the fact that I was aware of the cultural richness of this city, my visit to the treasure collection of the royal family of Saxony was eye opening. Precious stones were used to create masterpieces (sculptures, toys, lamps, vases and other decorative items) that rivaled those of Italy and Austria. This level of craftsmanship is typically not achieved in Germany. The region is located near Berlin, but, culturally, they are closer in culture to the Habsburg tradition than the Prussian one, so the art there achieves a different standard.

The festival had several venues, but my concerts in took place in a castle just along the Elbe River. It was a simple, medium-sized palace with a lightness in style and beauty and was truly the most beautiful palace I have ever seen.

To align with the theme of the festival for this year, "Britain," I chose a program alternating Bach with pieces by the most wonderful living British composer, George Benjamin. Benjamin's pieces were new to the audience, which was rather conservative. I was pleased because it seems that this composer found many new fans that evening.

*Bad Kissingen, Germany*



*Everyone in good mood after standing ovation - Bad Kissingen*

*Klangwerkstatt, or "Factory of Sounds," is a gathering of very young and strong music professionals. They are selected because they are considered to be those that will carry the future of our classical music world. This series is always the most exciting one in the year for me. This time, we had a colorful group of musicians from all cultures, including Russia, Poland, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, the US, China and Japan. As part of the program, we played pieces for eight hands, working among four pianists. In the photo, you can see the backs of the four pianists, three of whom are young winners of the Piano Olympics International Competition, in addition to myself. We were playing in the spectacular Rossini Hall. We had a week to rehearse until we sounded like one person playing a big piano, and got standing ovations from a very enthusiastic audience.*

*My daughter, Karin, had a busy concert season. She played with Kent at the Bayerische Staatsorchester for the Sawallisch Foundation. It sadly became the last concert the great conductor, Wolfgang Sawallisch, attended. (He created this foundation for young musicians.)*



*Karin with Christian Strauss, the grandson of Richard Strauss*

*Karin also had her first concert tour playing every day in different halls and on different instruments, and I made my debut as a driver for an artist. It was a wonderful experience for her to perform with other young musicians her age who asked to meet "without any moms" for ice cream after the concert parties were over. Her concert in Prinzregententheater in Munich in July, playing St. Saens Piano Concerto No. 2, was very well received both by the audience and reviewers.*

*Kent is finishing his work at the Bavarian State Opera this month, conducting almost entirely Operas by Wagner including the Ring Cycle. We will miss the friends we made in Bavaria, but also look forward to moving to Hamburg in 2015 when he will start his new position as Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera.*



*Lanaudiere - Kent, James Ehnes, Jan Vogler*

*I hope you are all having a relaxing summer.*

*Mari*