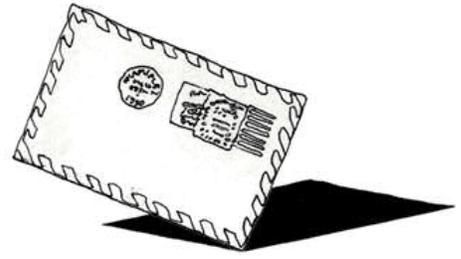


Letter from Mari



November 2013

Dear Friends and Family,

Happy Holidays!

Autumn came and went quickly this year, bringing winter weather and a great frame for the holidays as they unfold here in Paris. Just as predictable as the changing seasons, the Champs Elysees has its beautiful Christmas decorations and Gallerie Lafayette`s show windows are more spectacular than ever.

As is my friends have requested, I am sharing some highlights over the past few months.....

This fall, I met the Marseille Symphony Orchestra and the Helsinki Philharmonic.

Marseille, the land of individualists

My last visit to Marseille was over 30 years ago with my parents. I remember seeing the terrifying chateau d'If, the equivalent of Alcatraz in San Francisco. It was especially "dark" to me because, at the time, I was reading the Count of Monte Cristo. My memory of Marseille was influenced by the book, so I still imagined it as a dark, dangerous and uncivilized port town.

Today, Marseille is a city of culture with a brand new museum, lots of elegant, modern restaurants and a beautiful Opera House with 1,800 seats.

My sister Momo and I played the concerto for two pianos by Francis Poulenc, which we probably have performed more than 40 times together.

We didn't realize what a pleasant experience it would be to play this piece in this city. The orchestra impressed us with their natural musicality, virtuosity and, remarkable to us, their emphasis on group work.



Christmas display at
Galleries Lafayette in Paris

This focus on group expression is not considered a common cultural element in a land of individualists, as they reminded us with a big smile!

The concert was followed by a monologue opera, "La Voix Humaine," where the soprano speaks/sings into a phone for 45 minutes. It was performed beautifully with lots of freedom, elegance and tension under the baton of Larry Foster.

My first visit to Helsinki

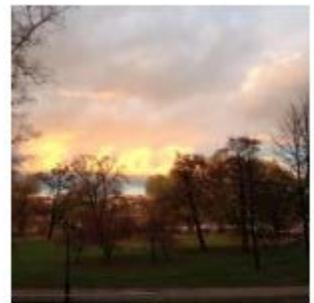
Helsinki - promenade between the hotel and concert hall

In Helsinki, Momo and I were presented as...the M&M sisters! (Why hadn't we thought of this before?)

The beautiful new concert Hall, with 2000 seats, was completely sold out.

One of the experiences that struck us was the sound of the Finnish language. Though Finns and Japanese look completely different, and though, obviously, the languages have no common roots, we felt that our languages sounded very much alike. We felt a natural affinity to the Finns because of their warmth and simple, welcoming personality.

After playing one of the most beautiful repertoires of all time, the Double Concerto by Mozart, we enjoyed rein deer steak and Finnish Vodka.



Helsinki - promenade between the hotel and concert hall

Completing recording all 32 Sonatas

I can now report that I've finished recording the 32 Beethoven Sonatas and 5 Concerti. Now I am enjoying pondering "what's next." It is an inspiring period for me with lots of thinking and soul-searching.

Karin worked hard throughout the summer on her first recording project with the Canadian Label Analekta. She recorded two Mozart Concerti with the Cecilia Quartet, the most popular young Canadian Quartet today. She had a great time rehearsing in Toronto, playing with them at the Ottawa Chamber Festival, followed by recording at MMR recording studio at McGill University in Montreal.

Karin during her recording session



Karin during her recording session

Since it was her first recording project, I wondered if she would be able to pace herself to be able to record for the entire session, which would last 10 hours. Even for experienced, adult musicians, this is a daunting task. She and I made a plan, which included going for a long walk the night before, and then relaxing while watching old movies. She got a good night's sleep, had a healthy breakfast, and also took a short nap during her lunch break. To my amazement, she was able to pace herself played at her best for the entire day. What did I learn? Kids are very resilient and resourceful.



Karin and her Godfather George Benjamin after a performance of George's Opera "Written on Skin" in Paris

Karin and her Godfather George Benjamin after a performance of George's Opera "Written on Skin" in Paris

After all the excitement of performances and recordings this fall, getting back to life-as-usual at school wasn't easy at first. On the other hand, at school, she gets to focus on her favorite subjects, math and science, since she chose to prepare for the Science Baccalaureate. This put a spring in her step and she has re-adjusted to the new schedule seamlessly.

In July, Kent closed his music directorship in Munich after seven years. He finished up by conducting six Wagner Operas, a Russian Opera and couple of contemporary Operas, all within a four-week period.

On his last night, he was honored by a full house, not willing to stop applauding for almost 30 minutes. Throughout the month, we said goodbye- not farewell - to many wonderful people who became our close friends. We will look forward to crossing paths with them, as the world continually becomes smaller, thanks to the friends we make along the way.

Kent has extended his commitment to the Montreal Symphony until 2020 and looks forward to many wonderful projects for the music world and the broader community there.

He spent the last few months of the fall enjoying being a guest conductor at of some the Orchestras where he hasn't had a chance to conduct over the past seven years while in Munich.

We wish you happy holiday season!

Mari

(Homage to concerto for two pianos by Francis Poulenc)