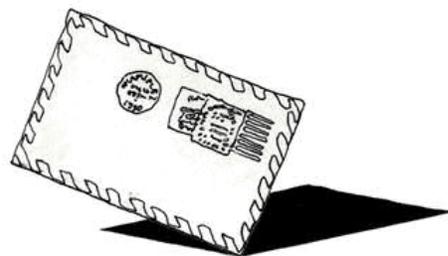


Letter from Mari

March 2015



As spring unfolds, I wanted to send an update to friends and family from around the world.

Finland

In the beautiful small town in Jyväskylä in Finland, with the German violinist Viviane Hagner, we discovered the Berg Chamberconcerto.

In this idyllic setting, it was still only September, and, yet, one could already sense that the long winter season had set in. The air was fresh and crisp and the light in the sky nostalgic and the restaurants and homes had candles lit in the evenings.

Although a Scandinavian country, Finnish culture appears to be greatly influenced by Russian culture – both from a culinary and an esthetic respect. I love their sense of style and found myself bringing home a set of Mari Mekko coffee mugs as a souvenir. They are a part of how we greet a new day in our home!

Mexico

My first visit to Mexico: where classical music receives the attention and excitement of a rock festival

Momo and I visited Mexico for the first time to participate in the 40th International Guanajuato Festival and Mayan Festival in Merida. Immediately upon arriving at our hotel lobby in Mexico City, we started seeing colleagues from all over the world. Together, we all were driven to the beautiful and colorful city of Guanajuato.

We had been told that this is the "Salzburg Festival" of Mexico. But this description was almost an understatement: the degree to which the entire town was involved with music was beyond our wildest imagination. There were concerts in all locations and at all times. The halls were full

and the audience was as excited about Messiaen and Boulez as they would have been at a rock concert. I loved seeing traditional Mexican mariachi musicians included everywhere as well. It was a real joyous festival, with the streets full of people.



We spent our last day visiting Merida, a city with incredible Mayan history. We had the opportunity to visit a Mayan archeological site and discover the incredible culture that has existed there for thousands of years. I enjoyed putting our musical experience into this cultural context.

Berlin

It always is a special pleasure to perform with the Deutsche Symphony Orchestra in Berlin. This time, the repertoire was the Berg Chamber Concerto with Viviane Hagner and the 13 wonderful woodwind soloists of the Deutsche Symphony Orchestra.

This piece is extremely demanding, not only in terms of technique but also as an ensemble piece. For such pieces, a special technique is required: musicians are each considered soloists, playing independently. On the other hand, everyone needs to be aware of the other players' parts. In



essence, they need to know precisely when to play and when to listen in order for the piece to work. It is very difficult master this skill. Since it is not tonal music, it is crucial to have a good leader to guide the players. In this case, we had Kent conducting the concert, providing a clear sense of how it should sound. This sense emanates from his preparation of knowing every note and every phrase perfectly from his own standpoint. Due to his vision and high standards, the team dedicated twice as much rehearsal time (and probably ten times more individual preparation time) as they would normally dedicate to an orchestral repertoire. I think I speak for us all when I say that we found it an exhilarating experience to perform at this level. It seemed that the audience at the Philharmonic in Berlin enjoyed it as much as we did on stage.

Japan: Narrated Text for Carnival of the animals

Originally, *Carnival of the Animals* was written for the composer Saint Saen's friends for a home concert and no narration was included in the composition. On the other hand, since it was originally composed in 1886, narrators have often accompanied the musical score, though San Saens never approved a particular text. Over years several accompanying texts have been written in many different countries.



It is within this context that my sister, Momo, thought of asking the great Japanese poet Shuntaro Tanizaki to write a new text for *Carnival of the Animals*. Mr. Tanizaki has a great



musical sense and has also worked closely with the late Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu, who has influenced his approach.

For the piece, Tanizaki drew upon original children's poems that were superficially funny but which, in fact, contained philosophical reflections upon life. His text reflects upon our society today - a

state of living in a relatively heightened state of anxiety. As his piece concludes, Tanizaki's poetry gently returned us towards optimism for the future. It is a deeply moving piece.

Momo and I presented this new version of *Carnival of the Animals* with our colleagues in Japan, including both masters and some up-and-coming young talent from a popular TV series (Called "Concert without a Title"). Several children, ages five to 12, performed the narration.

Beethoven Sonatas and Concerti Launch

A milestone of 2015 was the release of the recording of 32 Beethoven Sonatas and five Beethoven Concerti. It took me ten years to complete this milestone. It was truly a life journey for me, making me feel, in some ways, grown up.

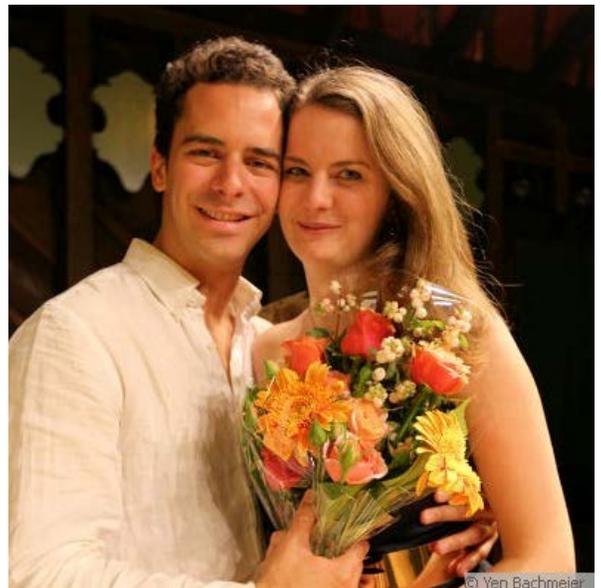
I could not have done this without the support of many people, including Wilhelm Hellweg, the producer, who was my guide and mirror, Jean Marie Gejisen, the sound engineer, who captured the ideal sound, Michel Brandjes, the piano technician who can make any instrument sensitive and alive. Additionally, I thank Dirk Van Dijk and Giel Bessels of Pentatone, my recording company. They had the courage to enter this great adventure. Additionally, my husband Kent encouraged and advised me every step of the way, and my parents helped me both musically and personally. Without the support of my community of family and friends, I could not have completed this life-project.

San Francisco - Forest Hill Musical Days, 2014

I have enjoyed being the musical director of Forest Hill Musical Days since 2003. A few years ago, we profiled the piano, also known as the "queen" of instruments. Therefore this year, it seemed fitting that we profile the "king" of instruments, the violin.

Our time together included many wonderful surprises. We were honored to be joined by the talented German Violinist, Veronika Eberle, who agreed to participate with only 24 hours' notice, stepping in for Augustin Dumay. She was accompanied by her partner, Edicon Ruiz, considered the most well-known bass player of our times.

The first evening started with a program centered on German Music. Veronika Eberle and the German pianist Markus Pawlik contributed the somber and profound German sound that transformed us in time and space. It was as if we were delivered to a German Chamber music salon of the 19th century, complete with a marble fireplace and velvet curtains. Everyone agreed it would have been impossible to have experienced a more remarkable evening than this.



The opening evening was a tough act to follow. But the young Russian violinist who opened the second night, rose to the occasion, and did so in an entirely different way from what we had experienced the night before. Andrei Baranov, winner of the Reine Elizabeth competition in Brussels, was the center of the second night. With a totally different sound - rich with Russian color and song. When I refer to

"Russian" color, I am referencing deep, earth tones, and different shades of darkness. Baranov's opening left an immediate impact on the audience. The evening closed with a powerful Dvorak Piano Quintet and was joined by Yukiko Kamei, Igor Budinstein, Matt Haimovitz and Momo Kodama.

On the third day, the master violinist Cho Liang Lin arrived and delivered an evening of Mozart and Ravel Sonatas. His remarkable mastery of classical music enabled him to play with a sense of freedom that appeared improvisational, though, of course, he was playing a strict classical piece of written music from a score.

Of particular interest and amazement to all, his performance demonstrated how classical music could be highly flexible. This was showcased in the way in which he played in perfect harmony with Momo Kodama. It was a moment of intense realization for all levels of music lovers in the audience.



Kenneth Renshaw, a teenage violinist from San Francisco, opened the evening. This young talent has already received several international competition awards and is the pride of our community. His mature playing provided a stellar counterpart to the violin masters.

The German viola player Igor Budinstein, who contributed a truly German sound and demonstrated the virtuoso piece by Paganini, joined the violinists each evening.

The legendary cellist, Matt Haimovitz, with us for the second time, played a range of tunes from Boccherini to Poulenc, using his own unique style. Once again, he charmed the entire Forest Hill Musical Days audience with his approach, always supported by the amazing texture of his sound.

Another violinist we were able to welcome this year was Yukiko Kamei, a Japanese violinist and former assistant to Jasha Haimovitz, an experienced chamber musician. We were also extremely lucky to have Edison Ruiz, who agreed to perform in the festival. He taught us what a bass could do! On Sunday morning, children of all ages enjoyed our popular children's program, which, this year, consisted of Ferdinand the Bull and Babar's Story. Yukiko Kamei and Markus Pawlik played the musical portions, and the master Kirke Mechem, and the young and charming singer Lauren Libaw performed narration.



The children of the neighborhood sat on a carpet, just a few feet away from the performers. Adults and children alike were entranced by the morning concert.



During the closing evening, for the first time, we had a small ensemble, which was led by Kent. The evening opened with a Duo for Two Violins by Kirke Mechem played by Yukiko Kamei and Kenneth Renshaw. In the presence of the composer, they received great applause for this beautiful piece. Next, Matt Haimovitz played Boccherini Cello Concerto with

his own Cadenza, followed by Bach Double Concerto played by Jimmy Lin and Veronika Eberle. Karin played Mozart Concerto KV 415 with Veronika, Kenneth, Igor and Matt, a dream team to play the concerto in Quintet version.



The festival closed with the Concerto for Four Violins by Vivaldi. As every violinist played on Stradivarius. Of delight to all, the players each shared the story of their instrument, in addition to fascinating (and amusing) stories about how the instrument came into their lives. The Festival ended with an enthusiastic standing ovation and lots of good cheer and laughter.

I am especially grateful to all my pianist colleagues whom I can count on to support me in Forest Hill with their highest level playing in every sense - musically, technically and stylistically. Thank you, Markus, Momo and Karin!

Family news

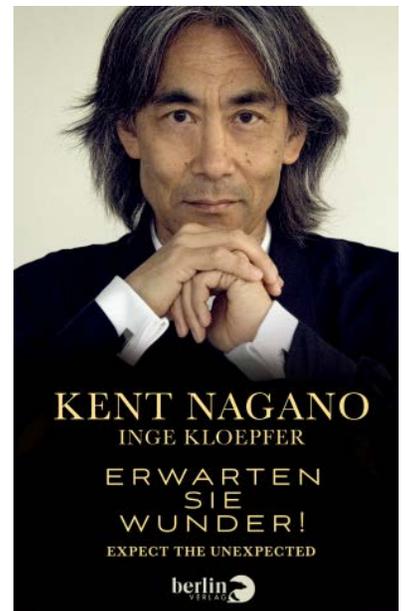
Karin had a busy summer season playing in festivals across the world, including Weiden, Tokyo, Montreal, San Francisco, and Mont Tremblant. She also started the International Baccalaureate program and works on balancing her busy school life while preparing concerts and a new recording.



Kent completed a book recently called "Expect the

Unexpected," sold only in Germany. It's a rich treatment of his reflections on classical music and its future. Since it was released last fall, it has received strong reviews and it is continually covered in the press, even to this day.

For those who might not get a chance to read it in its original German, I wanted to provide a very brief description here. He opens the book, which he co-authored with Inge Kloepfer, with a scene his own hometown, Morro Bay. He notes the impact of a primary school music teacher on the entire community and its implications on the world of music, in some ways. This person's vision was that classical music should be available to everyone at a deep level. Kent's profession stems from that experience, and so does that of others in the community. Kent also covers his concern regarding the future of the classical music industry. He believes that there is a very real risk it will disappear in the not-so-distant future. He also weaves in politics, the economy, the brain, his appreciation of several compositures, and more. I enjoyed watching this book come to life and



hope that those in my circles get the chance to read it one day.

Wishing you moments when cares and anxieties melt away, and when you therefore have a chance to experience life's wonders fully.

Mari