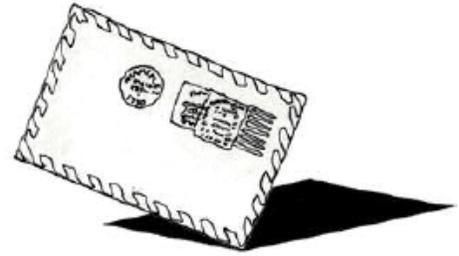


Letter from Mari



December 2015

Happy Holidays!

The cold of winter has finally arrived in Europe after an unusually long warm spell. At last, the weather is cooperating with the calendar and signaling the season of fireplaces, candles and stolen moments to reflect on the year past and those dear to us.

This year, however, Paris, the City of Lights, felt darker than usual. Parisians are still mourning the terrorist attack in November. Despite the sadness, however, there is an overall stubborn air of “vive la France,” where the French don’t want to succumb to fear. In fact, only a few days after the tragedy, the café terraces were filled with people out in the autumn sun, showing that French culture can’t be intimidated so easily – “Chapeau!” (Another way of saying “Bravo!”)

Autumn

My autumn season started with a concert tour in former East Germany with Ravel Concerto in G Major – one of the masterpieces by Ravel full of French flair, and inspired by American jazz culture. Having been playing more Austrian/German pieces for the past decade, it was refreshing to return to the repertoire of my childhood. This style of music can be described as exhibiting a lightness in color and texture. It is also known for its unpronounced notes (as in the French language where you don't pronounce the “e” and “t” at the end of a word but pretend that you have said). Further, it has stitch-less texture, where the notes melt together – as in the colors of Impressionistic painting. All of these techniques were once as natural as breathing for me. It took a while to feel comfortable with this musical language, after 10 years “away.” This journey back in time was a big treat.

During this East German concert tour I had the pleasure of being accompanied by the talented young German conductor Sebastian Tewinkel of the Neubrandenberger Philharmonic. They are based at Konzertkirche Neubrandenburg, a beautiful concert hall that was formerly a church. It is a renowned architectural site, visited daily by architectural aficionados from all over the world.



Concert hall in Neubrandenburg

Kassel

Have you heard of the German town Kassel? It is a place with an interesting intellectual history. Points of interest include the fact that Napoleon's brother, who reigned here, invited Beethoven to be his music director. Further, The Grimm Brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm, whose Grimm's Fairy Tales were published in 1812, come from this town. Today, Kassel is known as a center of modern art, as it hosts an annual arts event called Documenta.

We musicians also all know the Bärenreiter Edition, one of the most respected musical publishing companies, which is based here.

The town is also the home of The Kasseler Musiktage, one of the most interesting music festivals in Germany, featuring forward-looking programs.



Kassel, town of culture

I last performed here exactly 10 years ago

when the great musicologist Dieter Rexroth first became the artistic director. The program he proposed for his 10th anniversary was fascinating – “Gleaming Fever, Apollonian landscapes”

A large program starting with C minor and ending with C Major, the hall was packed with highly sophisticated audience members, ranging from teenagers to seniors. This diverse audience listened to the heavy all-Beethoven program without any coughing in spite of the fact that it was cold season.

Kassel is a town of culture.

Dancing summer

Swan Lake with a Twist. My sister Momo and I came across a wonderful unknown transcription of Nutcracker, Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake.

On a whim, and while sharing a grand Bordeaux, we were inspired to try to read through the entire transcript. We were immediately astonished by the richness of these musical scores for ballet. We decided then and there to build a program using these pieces and to perform them the following summer in Gifu and Tokyo. We ended up rehearsing during the typhoon season in Japan, which only added to our challenge. We also realized that what had at first sounded so beautiful and easy was quite complex. As we are sisters, we ended up openly blaming the other for the fact that it does not sound exactly like an orchestra.

But all's well that ends well! By the day of the concerts the pieces sounded melodic, colorful, and lilting. We had a good chuckle over everything that had been said along the path to completion, but enjoyed our happy ending.

We plan to record those pieces next spring under the Pentatone label.

Karin

Karin had a summer with full of new experiences. It started with her Tokyo debut playing Mozart Double Concerto with Momo at Orchard Hall. This was her second performance with her aunt Momo and she cherished the experience. The Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra was lead by Maestro Otaka.



Karin's Tokyo Debut with Maestro Otaka and Momo



After the concert in Tokyo, with Karin's friends from all over the world

She was also invited to participate in a one-week master class by Oxford PhiloMusica to study with great masters Menahem Pressler, Andras Schiff, Marios Papadopoulos and Rita Wagner.

It was cold and raining when we arrived in Oxford. About 15 young pianists, chosen from all over the world, gathered in the beautiful dining room of St Hilda's College for the welcome luncheon where the dining room staff prepared meals from different parts of the world, ranging from English Breakfast to Chinese, Italian and Indian Food.

For Karin it was exciting to be fully immersed in piano studies and surrounded by other young competitive pianists. Everyone stayed on the campus and spent all day moving from practice rooms to concert halls.

They had the opportunity to listen to other pianists taking classes and to attend concerts every night.



Karin in Oxford



Karin in Oxford, with Menahem Pressler

All the pianists were

generous in sharing their skills and advise. Mr. Pressler, 91 years old, taught Karin about the secrets of playing that he inherited from Eduard Steuermann. Andras Schiff taught about how to read beyond Bach's notes. Rita Wagner, a specialized teacher for gifted children, taught how to approach music without losing spontaneity.

The last day of this intensive week ended in tears of "à bientôt" among the young pianists.

Kent

Kent opened the Season of the Hamburg Opera as music director in September.

The Opera chosen for the opening was “Les Troyens” by Hector Berlioz.

This gigantic Opera sometimes performed over two nights was edited by the French Composer Pascal Dusapin to create a new, shortened version for Hamburg Opera.

The opening week received a positive response from multiple perspectives, including the Opera team, the orchestra as well as from the members of the Hamburg Community.



Hamburg Opera with its lighting show for the opening

The festive event ended with a light show on the Opera building and a floating screen on the Lake Alster showing “Les Troyens” for everyone.

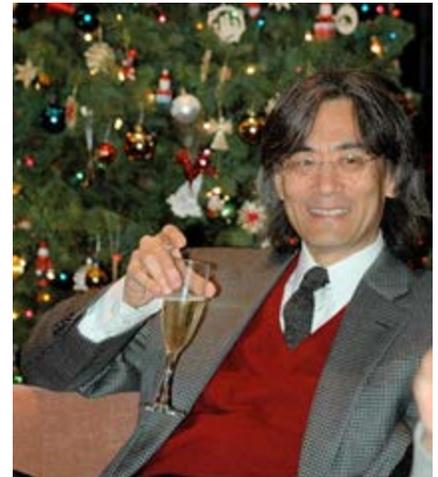
Thank you, all, for your support throughout 2015. Sharing a love for music and precious life-experiences with those whose paths we cross brings incredible meaning to our lives.

Wishing you a magical holiday season, in whichever way it presents itself to you.

Mari



Our Christmas tower in Paris



Merry Christmas!



Family photo 2012