

Letter from Mari



July 2016

Dear Friends
Rainy season has started in Japan. This year, Paris also had an unusual rainy season which left us worrying about the flooding of the Seine. The artwork stored in the basement of Louvre was moved to a higher floor. Parisians watched their iconic bridges slowly changing shape but never lost their optimism. The spirit in this beautiful city remained full of hope in spite of the fear.

Nature and Creation

Les Folles Journées Festival in Nantes began the New Year in January. This year, the theme chosen by the creative festival director René Martin was "Nature". For this occasion Momo and I chose to share

with the audience of Nantes the "Rite of Spring" by the renowned 20th century Russian composer, Igor Stravinsky, surely the greatest ballet music celebrating the Earth.



**Momo and Mari with Pierre Laurent Aimard
at Folles Journées in Tokyo 2016**



**Mari With Composer
Rodolphe Bruneau Boulmier**

The piece, full of provocative, complex and almost violent rhythm and harmony, created a huge scandal when it was premiered in 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. The arrangement was written by Stravinsky himself so that the dancers can work on this complex piece accompanied by two pianists before rehearsing with a full orchestra. Although premiered over a century ago, the piece remains extremely modern and exciting. We paired this extraordinary work with a more classical ballet piece, Tchaikovsky's "Suite from Swan Lake".

Another important event for me during the same month was the opportunity to premiere a new piece by a wonderfully talented young French composer, Rodolphe Bruneau Boulmier. The piece was written as a bridge between two great sonatas by Ludwig van Beethoven: "Tempest" and "Moonlight".

"Tempest" (Storm Sonata) leaves us with a melancholy feeling after a turbulent beginning. "Moonlight after a Storm" allows us to reflect on what we have heard before guiding us into the calm of the "Moonlight" sonata. It is not an easy task for a composer of 21st century to complement and compete with as great a composer as Beethoven, but Bruneau Boulmier's new work was so inspiring that many of the audience members felt they can no longer think of the "Moonlight" and "Tempest" sonatas without remembering "Moonlight after a Storm". A wonderful triumph for Rodolphe.

First Duo Recording with Momo

My sister Momo and I have been performing duo repertoire from time to time since our childhood, but this was our first recording together. Tchaikovsky, without doubt, composed some of the world's greatest ballet music such as Nutcracker, Swan Lake and Sleeping Beauty. He was obviously admired by his contemporary composers including contemporaries such as Arenski, Debussy, Rachmaninoff and Langer who all wrote interesting transcriptions of his music.

Momo and I decided to record some of these pieces which so clearly reflect the personality of the composer who wrote the transcriptions. We spent a few spring days in Holland, where the tulips were beginning



Recording Studio in Holland

to bloom, for the recording session. For the first time, we worked in the new recording studio at the Dutch Radio in Hilversum with its excellent acoustic. The Hall had some interesting creative acoustical solutions such as wooden stairs glued on the walls and old KLM large business class airplane seats that you could move around.

The project is for my recording company Pentatone with support from some of my previous team members such as Jean Marie Gejisen, one of the greatest sound engineers today. It was my first collaboration with the producer Hein Dekker, who recorded much of the piano duo repertoire for the Phillips label. We had lots of fun and an inspiring time together. The CD will be released in November worldwide.



Dutch Radio Recording Studio in Hilversum with KLM Business Class chairs

Rhythm and Dance

This was the theme of my recitals in Berlin and Munich. Rhythm and Dance are probably the most ancient and universal ways to express human emotions. The program started with music by the 17th century French composers Jean Philippe Rameau and François Couperin. Both wrote dance music for the Court, but Rameau had a particularly important role in music history as someone who established a new complex harmonic method of composition, which became the base for the French school. After opening the concert "à la française", the program moved to German composers: J S Bach's "English Suite" was followed by Beethoven's "Sonata No 18". The program closed with 20th century French



Entrance to Munich Concert Hall

composer Maurice Ravel's "Tombeau de Couperin". For me, it was interesting to see how different composers can create different worlds using the same type of rhythm and dance.

St. Petersburg

It has been 10 years since my last visit to St Petersburg, which in spite of the dramatic changes in Russia, still remains one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

I had the great pleasure of performing Beethoven's "Triple Concerto" at the legendary Philharmonic Hall with the amazing St. Petersburg Philharmonic under the baton of Kent Nagano.

A few years ago, I met the young Russian violinist Andrey Baranov in Bad Kissingen who quickly impressed me by his beautiful musicality and amazing sound. We invited him immediately to perform in San Francisco at Forest Hill Musical Days. Andrey's sound is like Mother Russia Earth.

The sound of a concert grand piano is obviously many times larger than that of a string instrument and usually, we must adjust our volume to maintain a balance with our partners but this time, it was as though we were playing on the same sized instrument.

I had lots of fun performing with Andrey and the talented young cellist Alexei Zhilin.

Our stay in Russia finished, appropriately, with an evening of Vodka and Borscht.



Dressing Room - June Concert with St. Petersburg Philharmonic



Mari with Andrey and Alexey in St. Petersburg

Beethoven Cycle in Tokyo

For me the summer season began with a 3-year cycle of concerts in Tokyo around the Beethoven "Sonatas". It is a joint program of music/talk with our living treasure Ikebana master Shogo Kariyazaki who also is a very good pianist and connoisseur of classical music.

Beethoven is a popular composer in Japan but is considered serious and intellectual, not necessarily as accessible as



Beethoven Cycle - Osaka Japan



Mari with Ikebana Master Kariyazaki following the concert in Tokyo

composers from romantic era, such as Chopin. For me, he is one of the most human composers and one to whom we all can relate through his sense of humor, compassion, emotion and romanticism.

My goal is always to introduce audiences to a "different" side of Beethoven than the one we tend to think about. The first edition of this series finished successfully, leaving the audience with a new feeling of closeness to the composer. Mr. Kariyazaki and I closed the concert playing a March by Beethoven for four hands.



Karin with David Benoit

Karin

Karin had an interesting academic year, finishing her International Baccalaureate Program in May. She graduated from Ecole Jeannine Manuel High School and will start Yale University in September, to which she is looking forward very enthusiastically.

Immediately following graduation, Karin resumed her concert activities. She had lots of fun at her Los Angeles debut playing Beethoven's "Concerto No 1" at Zipper Hall under the baton of David Benoit, conductor, composer and wonderful Jazz pianist.

She now is preparing for her next recording for Analekta featuring music by J S Bach: Invention and Sinfonia.

Kent

Kent had a successful U.S. Tour with Montreal Symphony Orchestra. They began the tour in New York and finished in the Bay Area, receiving rave reviews. His first year in Hamburg was full of exciting projects, such as J S Bach's "St Mathew Passion" and Messiaen's "Turangalilla Symphony" with John Neumaier.

All three of us are now looking forward to the upcoming Festival Season.

I wish you all a fun Summer Season



Kent and John Neumaier during Turangalilla rehearsal Hamburg © Kiran West

Mari



Playing on a Steinway-Cristal Lalioue Piano



Beautiful Valentine's Day Bouquet from Kent