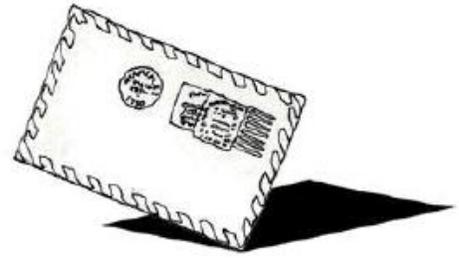


Letter from Mari



December 2019

Dear Friends,

I can't believe the New Year is already around the corner! 2020 will be a very special year for me, as the entire world will celebrate the 250th birthday anniversary of our hero, Mr. Ludwig van Beethoven!

As I look back on 2019, I'm thankful for the good news the year delivered, like new vaccines and a new emperor in Japan. But it also brought us some sad surprises and social instability. Every day, I wake up feeling how lucky we are to have music in our lives. It enables us to overcome cultural difference and transcend barriers of distance, space and even time.

This past year was full of memorable moments, from inspiring conversations and musical encounters to wonderful landscapes and lighting, to exciting discoveries of different cultures. I would like to share some of these very special experiences with you.

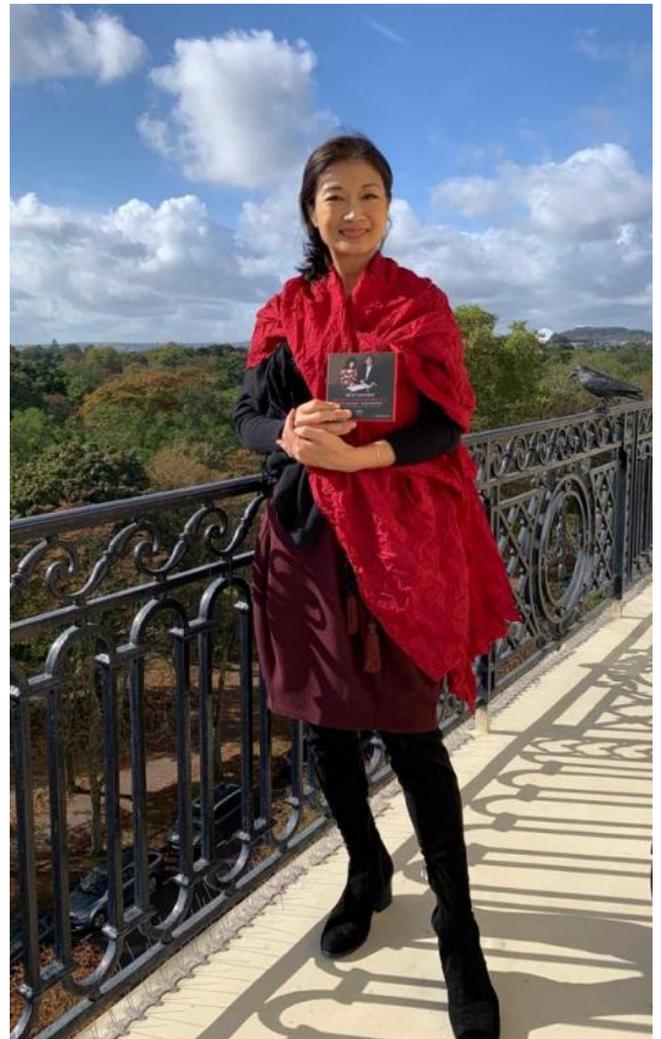
A TRIO OF RECORDINGS

I had three unusual recording projects in 2019. Two of them were in celebration of Beethoven's birthday anniversary in 2020.

The five piano concerti Beethoven wrote are absolute masterpieces. They are all unique and very different from one another. Exploring and performing them is like stepping back into Beethoven's time and secretly sharing his life.

He wrote one concerto that is much less known than Nos. 1 – 5: It is called "Nullte," or No. 0, and he composed it around age 13. The piece is a bit like a diamond that has not yet been polished: It is not as perfect as the other more well-known concerti, yet it already shows signs of his compositional mastery. And what freshness, determination and enthusiasm this piece overflows with! I went to the Berlin State Library to spend some time with the manuscript. Seeing the flow of the ink (so full of vitality!) and the ideas he explored, some of which he later abandoned, and trying to guess what was going through his mind was a humbling and deeply touching experience.

I performed the piece with my longtime partners Kent and the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin. In our interpretation, we tried to bring out a feeling of intimacy and flexibility in the spirit of chamber music.



I would describe the second recording as a kind of "Beethoven seen through a kaleidoscope." Many composers wrote transcriptions of Beethoven's music. For this album, I chose ones by French composer Camille Saint-Saëns and Russian composers Modest Mussorgsky and Mily Balakirev. All three of them transcribed Beethoven's various string quartets for solo piano.



As you can imagine, it's not at all easy to try and play this complex music written for four string instruments with only 10 fingers! But the even greater challenge was understanding the ideas. Saint-Saëns, Mussorgsky and Balakirev all possess their own strong musical language, and their transcriptions are interpretations of Beethoven's music that maintain his original spirit but color it with their own individual expression. For me, performing these works has been like learning a new language without a teacher!

To conclude the recording, I played a transcription of Mozart's Clarinet Quintet by Beethoven himself. I can assure you that Beethoven was not only a great composer but also a superb arranger. His transcription was entirely pianistic while keeping the original character of Mozart.

The third project was my first chamber music recording with the fantastic cellist and my dear friend Matt Haimovitz. We've been working together on various projects over the past few years, and we finally recorded an all-French program around Claude Debussy, Francis Poulenc, Gabriel Faure, Darius Milhaud, Lili Boulanger and Nadia Boulanger. We made the recording at beautiful Lucas Ranch in California, where we were surrounded by wild nature, which allowed us to deeply explore this repertoire.

It is impossible to make a recording unless you have a production team that is on the same wavelength. I was very fortunate to collaborate with the most wonderful producers working today. Without them, these projects could not have been completed successfully. I am so grateful for: Erdo Groot, who has my full trust and has already produced several CDs of mine in addition to this year's Beethoven transcriptions album; Wolfram Nehls, a wonderful young producer who brought his amazing ears to Concerto No. 0; and legendary David Frost, who captured a truly special cello-piano relationship in sound.

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG'S WORLD

Kent and I met during a recording project in 1987 and making music together has been a fun experience ever since. One of our joint performances this past year was Arnold Schoenberg's Piano Concerto in Stuttgart and Freiburg with the SWR Symphonieorchester. Schoenberg created a groundbreaking musical system called 12-tone music. In contrast to traditional compositions, in which the melody is based on a central tonality and related harmonies, Schoenberg gave the same importance to all 12 individual scale tones. This was a radical break in aesthetic. And although at first it may seem intellectual, there is actually a lot of Viennese flair and emotion behind it. Together with SWR, we brought an image of Schoenberg's world to life.

INSPIRING CHAMBER MUSIC

Playing chamber music with nice colleagues is like having an enjoyable musical conversation, and 2019 had quite a few of those moments. My recital with Vadim Repin in Montreal, where we performed Grieg and Debussy sonatas, was very natural and lots of fun, and it increased my already great admiration for him.

I consider Veronika Eberle to be one of today's most exciting young violinists. We worked intensively on Schubert's Fantasy in C major and Bartok's Rhapsody No. 2 and created electric/energized performances in which we were able to catch each other's inspiration live onstage.



KARIN

Karin has started her senior year at Yale University, where she is majoring in architecture. She spent part of the summer interning at the Paris firm of the great architect Kengo Kuma. This was followed by a concert tour and a recording of Schubert's sonata D. 960. Her cat, Candy, splits her time between Paris (when Karin is there) and Brittany, where her foster mother lives.

KENT

Kent has started his last season with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. The ensemble is in wonderful shape and toured South America with great success. The audience in Montreal is very unique, with 40% under the age of 38. It is truly a great example of how diverse and young classical concertgoers can be! The Quebec community is full of creativity, enthusiasm and energy. We will miss it very much.

Kent's "other home," the Hamburg State Opera, held several impressive premieres, including a new production of Dmitri Shostakovich's "The Nose," staged by Karin Beier. It was quite inventive and highly enjoyable! The Hamburg State Orchestra also toured Japan, where it was enthusiastically received in halls where barely a seat went unfilled.



I wish you all a peaceful, joyous Holiday Season!