

Michael Kieran Harvey Collection

Crystal Vision

move

the piano music of Kanako Okamoto



Japanese music for piano has long intrigued me – a country with such rich influences and contradictions has music of great stylisation, sophistication, beauty and uncompromising power. These qualities have had a profound influence on art music of the West, to say nothing of other cultural areas. To find a Japanese composer whose ideas are readily accessible to our ears is very rare however – I think Kanako Okamoto is one such musician.

I first became aware of her work through the 2001 Federation Music Week in Melbourne, where I was performing many new piano works from Asia, among them Okamoto's *Crystal Vision*. What immediately impressed me apart from the intricate writing and intelligent formal construction was the cumulative power of the work, delivered in a very straightforward and honest manner. Since this time I have encouraged Ms Okamoto to explore as many musical terrains as possible, and this solo piano CD is the result. One hopes this taster will result in the listener further exploring Okamoto's other musical output, which is similarly lyrical and powerful, but equally difficult to define in mere words.

The symbol of the frog became central to the collaboration – more than once people have commented on my face resembling a frog, or, memorably, a toad – but I figured what the hell, as long as it inspires the creative process. Of course, frogs act as miner's canaries in the increasingly impoverished natural world, a sobering thought. I need hardly draw comparisons with classical pianists.

Michael Kieran Harvey



Petite Suite

My *Petite Suite* was written in 2007 at the request of Michael Kieran Harvey, who asked me to compose a 15 minute work for piano solo, inspired by some exotic material such as Japanese haiku. I chose the most famous haiku by Basho Matsuo (1644-1694).

Old pond
A frog jumping in
Sounds of water

I can picture the scene and almost hear the sounds.



Crystal Vision

The strength of the piano is its capacity to produce a profusion of discrete sounds in rapid succession. Its weakness is that each of those sounds is unsustainable and thus ephemeral. These qualities are balanced in the high-speed motions of the upper register in a work reminiscent of the shimmering rock crystal of the title.



La Nuit

Hommage à Gustave Moreau

At the time of the composition of this piece I was fascinated by the painting of Gustave Moreau, the famous French 19th century symbolist. Although his main motives are from classical mythology his style is unique and imbued with fantasy. His sensuous works remind me of *La nuit*. Highly romantic in its harmony, *La nuit* borrows heavily from 19th century composers such as Berlioz and Chopin and ends in a manner approaching the mysticism of Scriabin.



Sparkle

The huge modern piano is more convenient to write for than other instruments because it has fewer limitations. But I sometimes feel that this large material body lacks musical sensitivity. Therefore I have constructed this composition out of a tiny and limited repeated motive, beginning very quietly. I gave the piece the title after its completion – a sequence of the same notes welling up to explore the hard timbres of the piano reminds me of sparkling diamonds.



Suite

This work was commissioned by Michael Kieran Harvey to be premiered at the Port Fairy Music Festival in 2006. Some subject materials for the work were suggested by Michael. The most inspirational of these for me was the Hindu word “Kaliyuga”, meaning the fourth age of the world (which includes the present). Because of the large scale of the work, I decided to compose a suite of 5 pieces, representing different stages in the evolution of the world. In the first piece, *Einführung*, the music evolves very gradually, expressing the creation of the world, whilst in the second piece, *Harmonie*, I imagined



an age in the remote past when the world was peaceful. The third piece, *Passus* and the fourth piece, *Verschwommenheit*, represent a passing to a dark age from which the final piece, *Leidenschaft*, explodes with a feeling of struggle and great energy.



Kanako Okamoto studied at Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music where she received a Masters Degree in Composition under Keiki Okasaka.

She became a member of the Japan Federation of Composers' (JFC) in 1999 and the International Alliance for Women in Music (IAWM) in 2003. Her piano solo piece *Crystal Vision* was published in 2000 (JFC-0015).

Her works have been performed at the 20th Asian Composers' League Festival in 1999, Federation Music Week in Melbourne in 2001, The 7th Evening of ACL/ISCM in Tokyo 2002, 2002 ACL Forum in Seoul, 2003 International Festival of Women in Music Today Seoul, 14th International New Music Week in Bucharest Romania 2004, live broadcast by ABC Classic FM production in Hobart 2005, Menin Gate concert in 2005 Australia, music promoting live performance in University of Glasgow 2005, Japan-Australia Exchange Concert in Melbourne 2006, Port Fairy Spring Music Festival 2006, Kawai Keyboard Series 2007 Brisbane.

www2.ocn.ne.jp/~composer



Australian-based pianist Michael Kieran Harvey was born in Sydney and studied piano in Canberra with Alan Jenkins, at the Sydney Conservatorium under Gordon Watson, and at the Liszt Academy, Budapest, under the Director, Professor Sándor Falvai.

His career has been notable for its diversity and wide repertoire. He regularly appears as soloist with all Australian Symphony orchestras.

Renowned for his performances of new music, Harvey has especially promoted the works of Australian composers, internationally and within Australia. He has premiered many new Australian concertos by composers such as Vine, Westlake, Grabowsky, Joseph and Conyngham. He has performed and recorded most of Messiaen's works involving piano to high critical acclaim, in 2005 releasing a live 3-CD recording of the Australian premiere of the entire *Catalogue d'oiseaux* on Move featuring Peter Cundall as narrator.

Michael Kieran Harvey's distinctive pianism has been recognised by numerous national and international awards, including the Grand Prix in the Ivo Pogorelich Piano Competition (Pasadena), the Debussy Medal (Paris), four consecutive Australian 'Mo' awards for best classical artist, the Australian government's Centenary Medal for services to Australian music, and most recently he has been twice nominated for the Helpmann Award.

His CDs appear, not only on the Move label, but also on Tall Poppies, ABC and New World Records.

In 2005 the estate of the late Susan Remington established the Michael Kieran Harvey Scholarship in honour of his contribution to Australian music, and to encourage future directions in keyboard art music.

He is currently Adjunct Professor at the Tasmanian Conservatorium, Visiting artist at the Victorian College of the Arts and Fellow of the Faculty of Music, Melbourne University.

Michael Kieran Harvey
plays the piano works of
Kanako Okamoto

- Petite Suite** (15'38")
- 1 The Forgotten Pond 4'58"
 - 2 The Frog 4'18"
 - 3 Mists and Statues 6'22"
- Crystal Vision** (7'14")
- 4 **La Nuit** (7'13")
 - 5 **Sparkle** (10'07")
- Suite** (25'47")
- 7 Einführung 3'11"
 - 8 Harmonie 6'15"
 - 9 Passus 6'11"
 - 10 Verschwommenheit 4'37"
 - 11 Leidenschaft 5'33"

Recorded at Move Records studio in
2006 by Martin Wright and Vaughan
McAlley except Petite Suite recorded
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Brisbane at Griffith University.
Photographs (except portraits) by Kanako
Okamoto

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