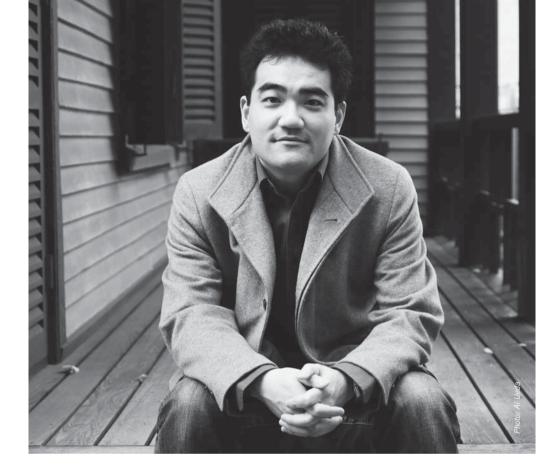


Dai Fujikura

1 Secret Forest Art Respirant Ken Takaseki conductor	17'31
2 Rubi(co)n Kate Romano <i>clarinet</i>	1'08
3 Phantom Pulse Lucerne Percussion Group Michel Cerutti conductor	20'48
4 Eternal Escape Adrian Bradbury <i>cello</i>	3'50
Okeanos	27'29
5 Touch of Breeze for viola, clarinet and sho	1'40
6 Breathing Tides for sho and oboe	5'26
7 Cutting Sky for viola and koto	4'31
8 Sakana for clarinet	6'46
Okeanos Breeze for sho, koto, oboe, clarinet and Okeanos	9'06 viola
Total timing	70'51

Okeanos

Melissa Holding koto Robin Thompson sho Kate Romano clarinets Jinny Shaw oboe Bridget Carey viola



Dai Fujikura

by David Toop

As if moving slowly through a dark forest whose knotted density enforces its own unwelcome map, composers must find their own way. We may think ourselves too sophisticated to be subject to crude stereotypes, yet the true complexity of cultural conditions in the present often evades us. The notion of a characteristically French, German. English or Japanese composer is no longer easy to pin down in an era when national identity is contested and complex, when the dissemination of culture is instantly international, and when artists may be obliged to shed any signs of local in favour of global.

Even in this context, Dai Fujikura is a singular case. Born in Osaka in 1977, he was aware as a child that his mother read biographies of great composers:

Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Bach and Brahms. At the age of 8 he realised that all of these biographical subjects were from German-speaking countries, so in an exercise of magical thinking he concluded that the mere act of moving to Germany would ensure his own status as a great composer.

This is an early glimpse of Fujikura's sense of humour, of course, but also the measure of his desire to enter a world for which he was only partially prepared. On his parents' insistence he learned English rather than German, then at the age of 15 moved from Japan to Kent to study as a music scholarship student at Dover College. This uprooting at such a young age was clearly a shock to his system – his limited English meant that homework was difficult and classwork

was sometimes incomprehensible – but the alienation came with its own advantages. As a music scholar he was asked to play piano by the school, to play his own compositions in college concerts, local festivals and fund raising dinners. From the day he played the piano in school, students extended kindnesses to him and he was allowed freedoms denied to others. Out of this experience emerged a realisation, even the beginnings of a philosophy. 'I immediately felt music has no language barrier', he says. 'It even has manipulative power.' At the age of 18 his dream of becoming the 'German' composer of his childhood became possible. He visited German music colleges and met German professors, but even though he was writing romantic tonal music at that time he

decided to stay in the UK and study at Trinity College of Music in London.

Two spectres inhabit his music: German romanticism and a Japanese musical history that ranges from the ancient court music of Gagaku to the post-war avant-garde of composers such as Toru Takemitsu, Toshiro Mayazumi, Maki Ishii, Joji Yuasa and Toshi Ichiyanagi. Both presences (to call them influences would be misleading) are close to being absences, yet they exist: out of one, this first love of romanticism, emanates a subtle quality of emotion that colours all of his composing; the other, a belated acquaintance with the unique musical timbres and attenuated time of Japanese music, has increasingly been absorbed into his thinking. Perhaps as a consequence of dislocation, the music

of this collection, works dating from 2001 to 2010, suggests a feeling of distance, as if the materials and emotional character of the music were consciously drawn in or held at bay. They search for ways to invoke or channel inchoate forces of life – Okeanos is, after all, the encircling mythological river, the source of all the world's fresh water – yet at the same time they negotiate those boundaries of culture and memory that define and restrict every human being.

As a young teenager in Japan, Fujikura's experience of music, his musical environment, seems broad yet curiously incomplete according to his account. As a pianist he was studying Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy and Ravel and at the same time listening to the refined pop music of David Sylvian and Ryuichi Sakamoto. Nobody at his school listened to this kind of pop — it was, after all, more typical of the 1980s. Later, at school in

the UK, he was also inspired by film music of the time, particularly horror film soundtracks such as Elliot Goldenthal's scores for *Alien 3* and *Interview With the Vampire*, and perhaps some of their vivid colouration, dark atmosphere and contained intensity has affected his own work. 'I think I was already into, or looking into extended techniques, experimental sound and orchestra', he says. 'Horror movie soundtracks often have these kinds of noise and sound.'

Then in music college he plunged into studies of Ligeti, Berio, Stockhausen and Boulez. What was entirely absent was any deep knowledge of Japanese composition. 'I didn't know any composing scene in Japan up until I was 15 years old', he says. 'Nobody was composing around me, nobody was doing anything cultural around me.'

The first awareness of a Japanese composing scene came by accident.

Knowing he would be travelling to England to live and study, he began private lessons in English with a woman living below his apartment. She happened to be a contemporary music fan and loaned him a CD of music by Toru Takemitsu. Then at the age of 20 he took the Darmstadt summer course and heard Japanese traditional music for the first time. 'It was Gagaku music.' he says. 'It shocked me how the 'time' flows in a completely different way from western music which I was familiar with. I didn't know whether I was feeling this as a western person, or whether a touch of being Japanese was bubbling inside me. I couldn't tell.'

Although his circumstances are unusual, the story is an echo of other stories from the past, whereby Japanese post-war composition attempted to come to terms almost simultaneously with modernism, the international avantgarde, Japanese musical traditions and the poisonous legacy of extreme

nationalism. Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996) exemplified this struggle. Drafted into the Japanese armed forces in the latter stages of World War II, Takemitsu felt the momentary thrill of epiphany when he heard a recording of a French chanson. This song pierced the bitter experience of conscription, convincing him to believe in the idea of being a composer. In practice, the beginning point of composing in Japan at that moment, its source, was problematic. During the war, Takemitsu lived with an aunt who played the koto, yet traditional instruments such as the koto, biwa, shakuhachi, sho and futozao shamisen were almost as obscure and mysterious to him as they were to foreigners. Takemitsu and his close contemporaries initially shared a distaste for the music of such instruments before discovering their potentiality. 'Because of World War II', Takemitsu wrote, 'the dislike of things Japanese continued for some time and was not easily wiped out.

Indeed, I started as a composer by denying any 'Japaneseness'.'

From a different perspective, Fujikura expresses a similar view. 'Every time I see some 'Japanesenesses' in my own score when I am composing', he says, 'I delete them'. This is not simply an expression of the natural desire to be integrated into an international community of composers, but a warv avoidance of exoticism, of Japonisme and the risk of creating decorative museum pieces. His predecessors, particularly Takemitsu, Toshiro Mavazumi, Fumio Havasaka and Masaru Sato, embraced hybrid forms which combined Hawaiian slide guitar and Kabuki flutes, pastiches of Gagaku and 19th century European opera, biwa and electronic distortion. This was a struggle to rebuild a language based on the unique capacities of Japanese instruments, detached from the militaristic nationalism that valued such traditions so highly, yet at the same time engage with new ideas from the rest of the world, whether from composers as diverse as John Cage and Henry Mancini, or from unusual instruments.

For most composers of the immediate post-war generation, their struggles were conducted in relative isolation within the Japanese context, For Fujikura, however, his background places him in a very different world in which the desire to be free of national stereotypes may be countered by pressures to assume a recognisable identity. 'I want my works to be neutral, without borders', he says, 'Composing is about creating the world I want to live in. which is my utopia. In the UK I am a British composer because I studied music here and grew up here in my crucial teenage years, but in Europe I am called a Japanese composer. I am probably expected to write slow, gongringing sort of meditative works which are totally against my nature. I'd like to avoid this at all costs.'

Despite this understandable resistance, he has grown toward what may seem inevitable: a mixture of Japanese traditional instruments and Western instruments. Takemitsu's gesture of combing a Western orchestra with biwa and shakuhachi for November Steps. first premiered in 1967 under the direction of Seiji Osawa, was groundbreaking for its time. For a more connected world (both physically and virtually) in which so many musical traditions are disappearing, the rationale for combining instruments in this way demands more rigour, or at least a deeper reason for bringing sounds and techniques together.

For Fujikura, his motivation flows from a personal sense of space and a way of listening. He has described *Secret Forest* (2008), for example, as the creation of a forest of the imagination in which birds and insects sing only in the musical way he likes. This is another private utopia, of course, but its

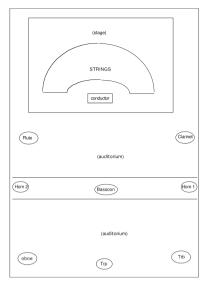
methodology springs from close listening to electronic sounds in the studio extrapolated out into the acoustic world of string players. Physically, the strings are grouped together on stage but wind instruments are placed throughout the auditorium (see diagram on p10). This is not a new idea but it illustrates Fuiikura's conception of instrumental sound as the outflow of a single imaginary instrument which can occupy the entire space of the concert hall. From this point of view, instruments are not separate entities but fused with each other as part of a larger organism. In his notes on Secret Forest, he describes the image of lines connecting the conductor's baton to the bows of the string players, like a puppeteer. For the Okeanos cycle, composed between 2001 and 2010, he speaks about building an imaginary instrument which combines oboe, viola and clarinet with koto and sho (the free reed mouth organ used in Gagaku ensembles). This is not a simple

composite, however, because instruments mirror each other, with viola harmonics, along with clarinet and oboe multiphonics, imitating the sound of a ghostly unseen sho alongside the sho itself.

This reconciliation of the two very different musical worlds which exist as presences in his being, can be understood as a movement towards the construction of an ideal. The prospect of being bounded by roots or traditions plays no part in this ideal. 'I like to get rid of such thinking', he says, 'especially in music. I only compose so that I can live in the utopia I create. The music I create should have no borders.'

@ David Toop, 2012

David Toop is an author, composer and curator. His books include *Ocean of Sound*, *Haunted Weather* and *Sinister Resonance*.



Floor plan for Secret Forest

Dai Fujikura

Although Dai Fujikura was born in Osaka, he has now spent more than 20 years in the UK where he studied composition with Edwin Roxburgh, Daryl Runswick and George Benjamin. During the last decade he has been the recipient of numerous prizes, including the Huddersfield Festival Young Composers Award and a Royal Philharmonic Society Award in the UK, Internationaler Wiener Composition Prize, the Paul Hindemith Prize in Austria and Germany respectively, and both the OTAKA and Akutagawa awards in 2009.

A quick glance at his list of commissions and performances reveals he is fast becoming a truly international composer. His music is not only performed in the country of his birth and his adopted home, but in venues as geographically diverse as Caracas and Oslo, Venice and Schleswig-Holstein, Lucerne and Paris. Conductors with whom he has worked include Pierre Boulez, Peter Eötvös, Jonathan Nott and Gustavo Dudamel.

In his native Japan he has been accorded the special honour of a portrait concert in Suntory Hall in October 2012. In London, where he lives with his wife and family, he has now

received two BBC Proms commissions, his Double Bass Concerto was recently premiered by the London Sinfonietta, and in 2013 the BBC Symphony Orchestra will give the UK premiere of *Atom* as part of the Total Immersion: Sounds from Japan.

His compositions are increasingly the product of international co-commissions: in 2012/13 the Seattle and Bamberg Symphony will each give continental premieres of Mina for wind and percussion soloists and orchestra. His opera, which is based on Stanislaw Lem's novel Solaris, will be co-produced in both France and Switzerland. Recent commissions include Tocar v Luchar, given its world premiere in Venezuela by Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra and its European premiere at Berlin's Ultraschall Festival. In 2011-12 the Arditti Quartet performed *flare* in London. Edinburgh and Tokyo. His next German commission, Grasping, for the Munich Chamber Orchestra, will be premiered in Korea before being brought back to Munich. Switzerland has featured his music at the Lucerne Festival, Austria at the Klangspuren Festival and Norway both at the Punkt Festival and with a commission in 2013 from the Oslo Sinfonietta.

11

THERE ARE FOUR LEVELS OF SUPPORT:

Friend £50 (£20 concession) (12 months)

- Advance notice to purchase new releases
- Quarterly newsletter by post or email
 Invitations to events including CD launches

Benefactor £100 (12 months)

- As above plus...
- Up to 25% discount on all NMC CDs*
- Free P&P on all NMC purchases *
- Name credit in CD booklets for releases during your membership
- Invitations to recording sessions

Principal Benefactor £250 (12 months)

- As above plus...
- Invitation to annual composer gathering

Corporate Friend £500 + VAT (12 months) NMC's unique position in the contemporary music landscape offers businesses the chance to mingle with the best of Britain's classical composers and align with our values of quality, creativity and innovation. Please contact us to explore the options: 020 7759 1826 or development@nmcrec.co.uk

All NMC Friends are added to our mailing list to receive monthly e-bulletins outlining news, releases and special offers.

* Up to 25% of your donation due to gift aid regulations

JOIN US

Please contact us for more details at: NMC Friends, NMC Recordings Ltd, Somerset House, 3rd Floor, South Wing, Strand, London WC2R 1LA Tel: 020 7759 1827 Email: nmc@nmcrec.co.uk

Web: www.nmcrec.co.uk

NMC FRIENDS

Set up as a registered charity in 1989, NMC Recordings is devoted to the promotion and preservation of Britain's musical heritage through acclaimed recordings of music by the best of today's composers, performed and recorded to the highest standards.

With our major core grant from the Holst Foundation coming to an end in the next few years we rely more than ever on our Friends' support to underpin our work and to help secure a future for this important cultural force. Please join us and take this opportunity to support our continuing and central role in the future of British contemporary music.

CORPORATE FRIENDS

BASCA, Faber Music, The Music Sales Group, RSK Entertainment Ltd, Schott Music

PRINCIPAL BENEFACTORS

Anonymous, Peter Baldwin, Robert D. Bielecki (fastorbit.com), Tony Bolton, Diana Burrell, Brian Elias, Richard Fries, Luke Gardiner, Anthony Gilbert, Edmund Hewson, Terry Holmes, Jeremy Marchant, Belinda Matthews, Colin Matthews, Kieron O'Hara, Richard Moylekov, Duncan Tebbet, Christoph & Marion Trestler, Peter Wakefield, Hugh Wood, John M Woods

BENEFACTORS

Anonymous, Robin Chapman, Anton Cox, Graham Elliott, Steven Foster, Matthew Frost, Alexander Goehr, Jonathan Goldstein, Jennifer Goodwin, Adam Gorb, Elaine Gould, Michael Greenwald, Paul Griffiths, David Gutman, Barry Guy, Matthew Harris, William Hind, Robin Holloway, Vic Hoyland, Neil King QC, Bertie Leigh, Andrew Lockyer, Stuart MacRae, Joanna Marsh, Cecilia McDowall, Robert McFarland, Prof Stephen McHanwell, Dominic Nudd, Stephen Plaistow, Chris Potts, Ronald Powell, Julian Rushton, Kenneth Smith, Martin Staniforth, Owen Toller, Judith Weir

Cover artwork created by Natalie Braune, a student from the BA (Hons) Graphic Design course at Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design. Students were briefed to create cover artwork for the series and winning students selected to have their work used in NMC's Debut Discs series; the judging panel included NMC's Executive Producer Colin Matthews, AAD designer Vaughan Oliver and journalist and broadcaster Tom Service.

Natalie Braune has lived and studied in Geneva and Bangkok. Her interest in art and design flourished in Bangkok while being influenced by the fusion of Asian and Western art: she was a finalist in the Young Artist of Thailand competition for two consecutive years. Natalie is currently studying for a BA in Graphic Design at Central Saint Martins, London. Her fanzine was selected for the British Library collection and her logo was used for the Human Writes Awards, and she has recently had her work selected to be shown in the OXO Gallery by the Belgium Tourism Office.

Natalie Braune writes:

Dai Fujikura explained that music should be an experience that appeals to all your senses. He tries to imagine what a composition would feel like, look like, and taste like. I decided to focus on the idea of what music would taste like. When I listened



to the music I found it to be quite elusive and abstract. Therefore I photographed details of food, yet kept the images abstract to reflect the music. Contemporary classical music can also be about contradicting and integrating. I photographed the detailed sections of vegetables in a way that the patterns would contradict each other, yet also harmonise to create one image.

NMC's Debut Discs Series includes releases by Huw Watkins, Sam Hayden and Dai Fujikura. For more information visit our website at www.nmcrec.co.uk/debutdiscs

With thanks to the trusts, foundations and individuals who have invested in NMC's Debut Discs series:

The Astor Foundation
The John S Cohen Foundation
The Fenton Arts Trust
Nicholas and Judith Goodison
Mercers' Charitable Foundation
The Stanley Picker Charitable Trust
The Radcliffe Trust
RVW Trust
Jennifer Roslyn Wingate

The individuals who donated through The Big Give Christmas Challenge December 2011 (see www.nmcrec.co.uk/debutdiscs)





With thanks to the Guildhall School of Music & Drama for their generous support for this disc.



Okeanos, Eternal Escape and Rubi(co)n were recorded at Coombehrurst Studio, University of Kingston, London on 15-16 January 2011.

DAI FUIKURA Recording Producer
ANDREW POST Recording Engineer

Secret Forest was recorded live at Kioi Hall, Tokyo, Japan on 5 November 2008.

Phantom Pulse was recorded live at its premiere on 11 September 2006 by the Lucerne Percussion Group, conducted by Michel Cerutti, at KKL Lucerne, Lucerne Hall, Switzerland as part of LUCERNE FESTIVAL in Summer.

DAI FUJIKURA Digital Editing
DAVID LEFEBER Mastering
COLIN MATTHEWS Executive Producer for NMC

NATALIE BRAUNE Cover image FRANCOIS HALL Graphic design

Dai Fujikura's music is published by G. Ricordi & Co. (London) Ltd, part of the Universal Music Publishing Group.

NMC Recordings is a charitable company (reg. no. 328052) established for the recording of contemporary music by the Holst Foundation; it is grateful for funding from Arts Council England.

HANNAH VLČEK Label Manager
ELEANOR WILSON Sales and Marketing Manager
ANNE RUSHTON Executive Director

DISTRIBUTION

NMC recordings are distributed in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, and are also available through our website

NMC recordings are available to download in MP3 and FLAC format from our website.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT:

NMC Recordings Ltd, Somerset House, Third Floor, South Wing, Strand, London, WC2R 1LA

Tel. +44 (0)20 7759 1827/8 Fax. +44 (0)20 7759 1829 E-mail: nmc@nmcrec.co.uk Website: www.nmcrec.co.uk

All rights of the manufacturer and owner of the recorded material reserved. Unauthorised public performance, broadcasting and copying of this recording prohibited.

© 2012 NMC Recordings Ltd © 2012 NMC Recordings Ltd NMC D172



