

TOSHIO HOSOKAWA

Orchestral Works • 1

Moment of Blossoming • Lotus under the moonlight • Chant

Stefan Dohr, French horn • Momo Kodama, Piano • Anssi Karttunen, Cello
Royal Scottish National Orchestra • Jun Märkl



Toshio Hosokawa (b. 1955)

Moment of Blossoming • Lotus under the moonlight • Chant

My *Horn Concerto 'Moment of Blossoming'*, was commissioned jointly by the Berlin Philharmonic, the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, and the Barbican Centre of London. It is dedicated to the horn player Stefan Dohr, who first performed it.

Thus far I have composed several works on the theme of "lotus" or "blossoming": the piano concerto *Lotus under the moonlight*, *Stunden-Blumen* for clarinet, violin, cello and piano, and *Blossoming* for string quartet, all treat similar themes. The lotus blossom is a mysterious flower of the East. Its roots take nourishment from deep beneath the mud, and its stalk passes straight up through the water, receives sunlight from the sky at the water's surface, and brings forth its beautiful jewel-like blossoms. Without the chaotic world of the mud, the blossom could not open towards the sky. The physical form of the blossoming resembles that of a human being at prayer. The closed bud of the lotus flower suggests the shape of human hands pressed together in prayer. Eastern people compare the blossoming of the lotus with the blossoming of the human being from within, and have continued to think of it in this way. They have felt in this blossoming the power of, and rapport with, the cosmos.

Japanese artists have traditionally taken the connection between man and nature as a theme. I feel that they are seeking in art the ultimate dissolution of man into nature and the ecstasy of becoming one with it.

As in many of my other concertos, in this horn concerto I am imagining the solo horn as the "flower" or "human being", while the orchestra in the background is nature, the cosmos, the place where the flower blossoms (in this case, I imagine a lotus and its pond). At the beginning, one long sustained sound is taken to be the water surface, and from that water surface the lotus flower quickens, begins to squirm, and aims at blossoming. Nature throws back various echoes at it. Before long, a low note begins to squirm on the water surface as if to indicate the water's depths. Further, the quickening and longing towards the violent blossoming

evoke a small storm, and a conflict occurs between the flower and nature. Deep within the quiet blossom is a quickening towards a violent opening up. Eventually, the pond recovers its deep silence, and the flower welcomes its hour of blossoming in peace.

I have arranged the brass instruments in a space, and imagined the concert hall itself as the pond spreading out widely towards the sky.

The piano concerto *Lotus under the moonlight* was commissioned by Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR). I was asked by Mr Richard Armbruster of NDR to choose one of Mozart's piano concertos and to compose something with the same instrumentation, in commemoration of Mozart Year, 2006. I selected the *Piano Concerto in A major, KV 488*, and wrote this piece using its second movement in F sharp minor as the theme.

The music of Mozart has been one of my favourites among European music since I was a boy. Music which has integrated such great dignity and refinement, and the sorrow and comfort overflowing from it is a musical world which we orientals had previously never known. For the past 130 years or so, we Japanese have accepted western music in a variety of forms and tried to learn it. Mozart's music embodies the highest sphere of such western music.

For the next few years I plan to continue to write works on the theme of "flower". There are several reasons for my interest in this flower theme: my grandfather was an *ikebana* ¹ master; for Zeami ², originator of my favourite traditional Japanese theatre form Noh, the best performer was considered a "flower"; in traditional Japanese poetry "flower" is the most important theme. For me to attempt to become the flower and sing of its blossoming and death – that is a very traditional attitude for those of us who are Japanese artists.

The lotus is the most highly valued flower in the oriental Buddhist world. Most images of the Buddha depict Him standing on a lotus blossom. The blossoming of the lotus represents the opening of the mind

(awakening to the Self) and the deep longing for *satori* ³ and beatitude. The lotus sends its roots deep into the mud beneath the surface of the pond; the stem passes through the water; the buds dream of just barely breaking the surface and opening towards the sky. The shape of the lotus bud resembles the shape of human hands when pressed together in prayer.

The lotus flower is symbolized by the piano, the water and nature by the orchestra. In this music, the sustained note centered on F sharp represents vibrations on the water's surface; the lower notes represent under the water; the lowest register represents the darkness of the mud at the bottom of the pond. The high notes, having passed beyond the surface, suggest the boundless sky.

As I composed this piano concerto, I imagined a scene something like the following:

It is a quiet moonlit night. The lotus flower, still in its budding stage, is bathed in moonlight, and turning towards its blossoming falls into a dreamy doze. In the dream, a longing for Mozart's music (or the longing for western music) is faintly expressed.

This work is dedicated to its first performer, pianist Momo Kodama.

Chant for cello and orchestra was commissioned by Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR). The solo cello part of this concerto is influenced by the way of singing *Shōmyō*, the ceremonial music of Japanese Buddhism. The characteristic singing of *Shōmyō* of the Tendai sect and the Shingon sect handed down since 1200 years ago in Japan shaped the gentle curving line like the stroke of the

oriental calligraphy brush. In 1986 I composed *Seeds of Contemplation* for *Shōmyō* (a singer Buddhist priest) and *gagaku* ⁴ ensemble and I encountered *Shōmyō*, since then it has had various musical influences on me. It has effects not only on forms of "song" in my *Lieder*, choruses and opera, but also on the manner of melody in my instrumental works.

As with most of my concertos, in this work the soloist symbolizes a human being and the orchestra in the background signifies the nature and universe that extend inside and outside him. He starts singing, going through the process that the universe sometimes harmonizes with his song and at other times repels it, and then he deepens his own song. In the end, the song dissolves into the energy of nature.

A few years ago I had a chance to talk with Rohan de Saram and he was interested in the sphere of the spiritual. This work occurred to me through the experience that we discussed of life after death (Tibetan *Book of the Dead*) and the spiritual. The soloist who keeps singing a prayerful song inside the world with the cello was composed with Rohan in mind. This work is dedicated to Rohan de Saram.

Toshio Hosokawa

¹ The Japanese art of flower arranging.

² Japanese actor and playwright (c.1363-1443).

³ Buddhist enlightenment.

⁴ Ancient Japanese imperial court music.

Stefan Dohr



Photo: Monika Rittershaus

a recording of Schumann's *Konzertstück*. For further information please visit www.stefandohr.com.

Stefan Dohr is a sought after soloist and chamber musician throughout the world. Since 1993 he has been the principal horn of the Berlin Philharmonic as well as a permanent member of the Berlin Philharmonic Octet and the Ensemble Wien-Berlin. Besides the solo repertoire of the classical and romantic periods, Stefan Dohr's interest lies in works by contemporary composers. He has had a number of pieces composed for him, such as the *Montafon* concerto by Herbert Willi, Toshio Hosokawa's *Moment of Blossoming* and a concerto dedicated to him by Wolfgang Rihm. Among his recordings are *Opera!* and *Four Corners!*, made with the Berlin Philharmonic horn section, a solo recording of all of Mozart's horn concertos, which also includes arrangements and completions of Mozart's unfinished *K 412/514 (386b)* and

Momo Kodama



Photo: Marco Borggreve

Born in Osaka, Momo Kodama studied piano at the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique in Paris, continuing her education with Murray Perahia, András Schiff and Tatiana Nikolayeva. In 1991 she became the youngest prize-winner of the Munich ARD competition. She performs regularly with leading orchestras in Japan, Europe and the United States, and is equally in demand as a recitalist and chamber musician. A large part of her repertoire is dedicated to contemporary music. In 2002, on the tenth anniversary of Messiaen's death, she performed his *Turangalila Symphony*, *Les Visions de l'Amen* with her sister Mari, and *Les Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jésus* in a series of highly successful concerts. She is also the dedicatee of works such as *Lichtstudie 3* by Jörg Widmann, of which she gave the première at the Lucerne Festival, and *Echo* by Ichiro Nodaira, composed for Momo and Mari Kodama. In 2009, Momo Kodama was honoured by the Kenzo Nakajima Memorial Fund for her work to advance contemporary music.

Anssi Karttunen



Photo: Irmeli Jung

chosen as best contemporary recording of the year 2013. Anssi Karttunen plays a Francesco Ruggeri cello.

The Finnish cellist Anssi Karttunen studied with Erkki Rautio, William Pleeth, Jacqueline du Pré, and Tibor de Machula, among others. Between 1994 and 1998 he was the artistic director of the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra. He directed the Helsinki Biennale in 1995 and the Suvisoitto Festival in Porvoo, Finland, from 1994 until 1997. From 1999 until 2005 he was principal cellist with the London Sinfonietta. He has also appeared as a conductor with various ensembles. He plays modern, classical, and baroque cellos, as well as the violoncello piccolo, and is a passionate advocate of contemporary music, having given over 125 world premières. He has collaborated with leading contemporary composers and has had 24 concertos written for him. Two of Anssi Karttunen's recent recordings were nominated for a Gramophone Award 2013: Magnus Lindberg's chamber music, and Henri Dutilleux's *Tout un monde lointain*, which was

Royal Scottish National Orchestra



Photo: Tom Finnie

two new Leaders, James Clark and Maya Iwabuchi. The RSNO has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings, receiving two Diapason d'Or de l'année awards for Symphonic Music (Denève/Roussel 2007; Denève/Debussy 2012) and eight GRAMMY® Awards nominations over the last decade. Over 200 releases are available, including the complete symphonies of Sibelius (Gibson), Prokofiev (Järvi), Glazunov (Serebrier), Nielsen and Martinů (Thomson), Roussel (Denève) and the major orchestral works of Debussy (Denève). The RSNO is one of Scotland's National Performing Companies, supported by the Scottish Government. For more information, please see www.rsno.org.uk.

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra was formed in 1891 as the Scottish Orchestra and became the Scottish National Orchestra in 1950. It was awarded Royal Patronage in 1991. Throughout its history the orchestra has played an integral part in Scotland's musical life, including performing at the opening ceremony of the Scottish Parliament building in 2004. Many renowned conductors have contributed to its success, including George Szell, Sir John Barbirolli, Walter Susskind, Sir Alexander Gibson, Neeme Järvi, Walter Weller, Alexander Lazarev and Stéphane Denève. In 2012 the RSNO welcomed British-Canadian musician and conductor Peter Oundjian as its latest Music Director and Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård as Principal Guest Conductor. 2012 also saw the appointments of

Jun Märkl



Photo: Christiane Höhne

Jun Märkl was Music Director of the Orchestre National de Lyon from 2005 to 2011 and Principal Conductor/Artistic Advisor of the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony until 2012. In recognition of his tenure in Lyon and his very successful nine-disc Debussy cycle with the orchestra on Naxos [8.509002], in 2012 he was honoured by the French Ministry of Culture with the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. He also toured with the orchestra to Japan and major European halls and festivals. He has appeared as a guest conductor with leading orchestras in the United States, Europe and Japan, and at the Met, Covent Garden, Vienna State and Dresden Semper Operas. He also enjoys a close relationship with the NHK Symphony

with which he conducted the first Japanese Ring cycle in Tokyo, and has performed and given premières of many of Hosakawa's works, including *Lotus under the moonlight* with Momo Kodama in 2006. Born in Munich to a German father, a distinguished concertmaster, and a Japanese mother, a solo pianist, Märkl studied violin, piano and conducting at the Musikhochschule in Hanover, going on to study with Sergiu Celibidache in Munich and with Gustav Meier in Michigan. In 1986 he won the conducting competition of the Deutsche Musikrat and a year later won a scholarship from the Boston Symphony Orchestra to study at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. Soon afterwards he had a string of appointments in European opera houses followed by his first music directorships at the Staatstheater in Saarbrücken (1991-94) and at the Mannheim Nationaltheater (1994-2000). Jun Märkl has long been a highly respected interpreter of the core Germanic repertoire from both the symphonic and operatic traditions, and more recently for his refined and idiomatic Debussy, Ravel and Messiaen. He is Invited Professor at the Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo.

Japanese musicians have often taken the connection between man and nature as their theme and award-winning composer Toshio Hosokawa stands strongly in that artistic lineage. His *Horn Concerto 'Moment of Blossoming'* imagines the solo instrument as a lotus flower and the orchestra as the cosmos. The theme of the blossoming lotus continues in the piano concerto *Lotus under the moonlight* and in the songful *Chant* for cello and orchestra, influenced by Shômyô singing (the ceremonial music of Japanese Buddhism). The *Horn Concerto* was co-commissioned by the Berlin Philharmonic, the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam and London's Barbican Centre.



Toshio
HOSOKAWA
(b. 1955)

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- ❶ **Horn Concerto 'Moment of Blossoming' (2010) 19:21**
- ❷ **Lotus under the moonlight (hommage à Mozart)
– Piano Concerto (2006) 20:52**
- ❸ **Chant (2009) 19:13**

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

Stefan Dohr, French horn ❶ • Momo Kodama, Piano ❷
Anssi Karttunen, Cello ❸

Royal Scottish National Orchestra • Jun Märkl

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