

Akio  
YASHIRO

Piano Concerto • Symphony

Hiromi Okada, Piano • Ulster Orchestra • Takuo Yuasa



## Akio Yashiro (1929-1976)

### Piano Concerto • Symphony

“Turning their backs on the future, they invariably looked to the past for models. Yet, never content with past models, they endeavoured to put them in order and to unify them from the present-day viewpoint, with the result that their efforts crystalized into a number of works, thoroughly refined, flawless and, to an unequalled degree of perfection”, wrote Akio Yashiro in paying tribute to Glazunov and Dukas. What he wrote, however, is to a certain extent, true of Yashiro himself. He was unmistakably a composer who, highly sceptical of the tendency of composers after the Second World War to look to the future in avant-garde experimentation, sought to learn more from the past. It may safely be assumed that what he did accept was the style of the immediate post-war period, up to Messiaen. His position was simply reflected in an episode in 1962, when John Cage visited Japan, and he kept on heckling Cage’s ‘performance’, saying “This is no music”.

Akio Yashiro was born in Tokyo on 10th September, 1929. His father Yukio Yashiro was a leading historian of European fine arts in Japan. He had studied in Italy in the 1920s, and his work on Botticelli had won high esteem, even among European scholars. His mother was a pianist. Brought up in the artistic environment provided by his parents, Yashiro began his piano lessons at the age of five, and, soon turning to composition, became a pupil of Saburo Moroi when he was ten. Moroi had studied in Berlin, and was composing works of absolute music in the form of symphonies, concertos, sonatas, and similar established forms. A great admirer of Beethoven, Moroi believed that the organic and strict development of a motif was all in all in music. From 1943 on Yashiro studied under Qunihico Hashimoto. The modernist Hashimoto introduced his young pupil to Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky. On the other hand, at Gyosci High School, run by French Catholic monks, where Yashiro had his secondary education, he was trained in the French language.

In April, 1945, towards the end of World War II, Yashiro entered the Tokyo music school, the present Faculty of Music, the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, and continued to study under Hashimoto. Under the same teacher was Toshiro Mayuzumi, who was later to become the champion of avant-garde music in Japan. Yashiro also joined the Kamakura Symphony Orchestra that Hashimoto conducted, and played the timpani.

In 1946, after Hashimoto had resigned from the Academy as a result of his war-time activities, he and Mayuzumi studied under Tomojiro Ikenouchi and Akira Ifukube, who replaced Hashimoto. Ikenouchi, who had studied under Busser in Paris and respected Ravel, taught his pupils to compose thoroughly polished music with perfect finish, while Ifukube, a pupil of Alexander Tcherepnin, who had particular attachment to ostinato and refrain, taught them precise and powerful orchestration using Stravinsky and Prokofiev for models, as well as inspiring them with a certain conciseness of expression. At the same time Yashiro became a pupil of the pianist Leonid Kreutzer, who had been living in Japan since the 1930s.

In 1951, Yashiro graduated from the Tokyo Academy of Music, and went on to study at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris. Mayuzumi was with him also at the Conservatoire, but deciding that there was nothing further to learn from French academicism, returned home after a year. To Yashiro, however, who had a kind of perfectionist orientation drilled into him by Moroi, Ikenouchi and Ifukube, and had been inspired with longing for France by Hashimoto, Ikenouchi and his early schooling, study in France proved highly beneficial. He studied under Nadia Boulanger, Tony Aubin, Henri Challan, Noël-Gallon, and Olivier Messiaen, and in 1955, he submitted as his graduation work, which happened to be his only composition from this period, a string quartet in the manner of Bartók. This work was praised by Florent

Schmitt, Henri Barraud, and others, and was given its first performance by the Quatuor Parrenin.

After returning to Japan in 1956, Yashiro wrote for documentary films and drama, in this connection in a highly important collaboration with Yukio Mishima in a series of works, while at the same time helping such young composers as Teruyuki Noda, Shin'ichiro Ikebe, Akira Nishimura and many others to develop their talents at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. Yet, because of his perfectionism and his belief in less prolific activity as a composer, he was able to write relatively few concert works, as Dukas and Lyadov had done. The only works of this kind he wrote after his return home were a cello concerto, a sonata for two flutes and piano, a piano sonata, and the two works recorded on this disc, a total of five works in all of absolute music. Every one of them, however, was a fine work of art, and together with the string quartet from his French period and some works before that, a violin sonata, a piano trio, and other works, remains in concert repertoire. Yashiro died suddenly of a heart attack on 9th April, 1976.

Yashiro's *Piano Concerto* was commissioned by NHK, Nippon Hoso Kyokai, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, and was composed between 1964 and 1967. It was first heard in a broadcast performance on 5th November, 1967, with Hiroko Nakamura as the soloist and the NHK Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Hiroshi Wakasugi, and was awarded the Odaka Award of the Year. Instituted in commemoration of the composer Hisatada Odaka, the award is the most important prize in Japan given to orchestral works. This work has ever since enjoyed particular favour in Japan among works written by Japanese composers, and has been played several times in the West. Among those who have conducted the concerto are Jean Martinon, Jean Fournet, and Michael Gielen.

The *Piano Concerto* consists of three movements, and there one can recognize the influence of Bartók, Prokofiev, Jolivet and others, as well as that of a Japanese composer who also studied in France and whom Yashiro regarded as his rival, Akira Miyoshi,

notably his *Piano Concerto* of 1962 and *Concerto for Orchestra* written two years later. The first movement is marked *Allegro animato* and is in free sonata form. The piano abruptly starts playing the first theme like an incantation in irregular time, supported by the vibraphone and the strings, with characteristic interjections of two chromatically descending notes on the brass repeatedly thrown in. This is followed by a vigorous quasi-cadenza passage for the piano. Then the flute takes up the meditative first part of the second theme, which is followed by the piano playing the lament-like second part, in cadenza style. The development mainly takes up the first theme but only briefly as if it merely serves as an introduction to the recapitulation. The first half of the recapitulation, taking over from the development, treats the first theme, but with an increasing intensity, until it reaches the climax, which is highly reminiscent of Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 2*. The second part of the recapitulation recalls the vigorous quasi-cadenza passage and the second subject group. The second movement is marked *Adagio misterioso*. The rhythmic pattern of seven notes in three bars in C only is repeated 43 times with a persistence that would overshadow Ifukube and Ravel's *Boléro*. The motif of the second part of the secondary theme of the first movement joins in and the movement is brought to a climax, after which the music gradually fades away and is brought to an end. The composer describes his rhythmic pattern as a reproduction of the sound he continuously heard in a childhood nightmare while he lay in bed with a fever. The third movement, *Allegro - Andante - Vivace molto capriccioso*, is in free rondo form. An eloquent motif characterized by very vigorous ascending motion and a humorous motif played on the muted brass are first presented, but the main character of this movement is the vigorous cadenza-style passage for the piano which follows these motifs. The concerto is brought to a brilliant end, with these motifs, together with reminiscences of the motivic material of the preceding movements.

Yashiro's *Symphony* was commissioned by the Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra and was

written between January and May, 1958. It was first performed in June of the same year by this orchestra, under the direction of Akeo Watanabe. In 1963, it was given its European première by the Orchestre National de l'O.R.T.F., under the baton of Charles Brück.

The *Symphony* consists of four movements, which are organically co-ordinated into a close-knit unit, more so than his *Piano Concerto*, by several recurrent motifs. Of these the most notable are the three-note motif descending from B to F and then rising by an augmented octave, or augmented prime interval to F sharp; a three-note motif ascending from C to E and descending from there by an augmented seventh to F, and a chordal motif composed of the chords B - D - F sharp and B flat - D flat - F - D flat. The central note of the whole work is B, and the perfect fifth interval of B flat - F, and B - F sharp forms the core of the whole work both in melody and harmony. The first movement is a *Prelude*, marked *Adagio - Moderato*. It is believed that an unfinished orchestral work the composer started to write inspired by Oscar Wilde's *Salome* while studying in Paris, has been put to use here. It has a mystical and splendid ring to it, reminiscent of Florent Schmitt and early Stravinsky. The mesmeric introduction on the strings is immediately followed by the first motif played on the brass and the lower strings, and the second on the clarinet, both of which are developed for some time, before the third motif is presented on the brass. The second movement, *Scherzo*, is marked *Vivace*. In a humorous novel entitled *Jiyu Gakko* (School of Freedom) by Bunroku Shinshi, the pseudonym of the writer Toyowo Iwata, who studied in France and was regarded as an authority on French theatre, there is a scene in which some of the characters rehearse Kagura-bayashi or the ritual music of Shintoism, the indigenous Japanese religion, beating time with the onomatopoeic syllables *ten'ya ten'ya tenten'ya ten'ya*. From this the composer devised the irregular time of  $6/8 + 2/8 + 6/8$ , using this rhythm

throughout the movement, just as in the middle movement of his *Piano Concerto* one rhythmic pattern is persistently followed. Here the second motif also joins in. The third movement, marked *Lento*, is a sonata form variation movement with two themes. The English horn and the bass flute play in simple form the first theme, which is derived from the first and third motifs. The theme is accompanied by the vibraphone and is developed into a variation by the woodwind group. Then the celesta and the strings present the mystical second theme, which is combined with the variation of the first theme, and then is followed by the brass with fragments of the third thematic element. The extended variation of the second theme, with frequent interjections on the percussion, rises to a climax, and then fades away, a variation that recalls the style of Messiaen. Finally the third motif and the first theme of this movement, and the interjections on the percussion accompanying the second theme are recalled, and the variation serve as the recapitulation and the coda of the sonata form. The fourth movement, marked *Adagio - Allegro energico*, is in sonata form with an introduction. The lower woodwind plays the first motif, two piccolos play repeatedly the tune suggesting the traditional Japanese Kagura-bayashi, and then the piccolos and the bassoons announce the theme of the main part. In the following *Allegro*, the first theme is immediately presented on the strings. The melody is a development of the first and second motifs. The second theme on the piccolo and the double bassoon adapts the material in semitone, fifth and seventh intervals, and is closely related to the three motifs. After this, the two themes of this movement and the main motifs that run through the whole work appear in splendid combination, and bring the symphony to a brilliant end.

Morihide Katayama

Translation: Yuriko Ohtsuka

## Hiromi Okada

The Japanese pianist Hiroi Okada enjoys a considerable reputation at home and increasingly in the rest of the world, with his recordings winning acclaim in Japan and on both sides of the Atlantic. Hiromi Okada was born in Obihiro in Japan and studied at the Toho Gakuen School of Music in Tokyo, where he graduated with the highest honours. He won the first prize in three international competitions in 1984, Barcelona, Tokyo and Pretoria, before moving to London to study with Maria Curcio and making his very successful Wigmore Hall recital début there in 1985. He continues to divide his time between Japan and Europe, and has appeared as a soloist with the Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra and major Japanese orchestras with a repertoire ranging from Beethoven to the contemporary, including the world première of the Israeli composer Ari Ben-Shabetai's *Piano Concerto*.



Hiromi Okada  
Photo: Clive Barda

## Ulster Orchestra

Based in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the Ulster Orchestra was formed in 1966 and has established itself as one of the major symphony orchestras in the United Kingdom. In addition to the main concert season, which runs from October to May each year in the Ulster Hall and the Waterfront Hall, the orchestra's varied home-based activities include participation in the Belfast Festival at Queen's and the Belfast Proms, accompaniment to opera and ballet productions as well as educational work and concerts throughout Ireland.

In August 2001, the Swiss conductor, Thierry Fischer, began his tenure as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor. He followed the acclaimed violinist and conductor, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, who became Conductor Laureate. The Ulster Orchestra's distinguished past conductors include the late Bryden Thomson, Vernon Handley and Yan Pascal Tortelier. The Principal Guest Conductor is Takuo Yuasa. Since their first recording of the music of Hamilton Harty in 1979, the Ulster Orchestra has made over sixty recordings on a number of major commercial labels, and for Naxos the orchestra has recorded the music of Schoenberg, Webern, Arvo Pärt and Philip Glass as well as a series of Japanese discs with Takuo Yuasa. The orchestra has a broad-ranging relationship with the BBC and records twelve weeks of output each year for broadcast on Radio 3 and Radio Ulster, including several televised performances. Through the European Broadcasting Union and other broadcasting agreements, these recordings of the Ulster Orchestra can be heard across the world. Appearances in Europe, Asia and America have added to the growing international reputation of the orchestra, with a tour to Spain in 1998, and in 1999 tours to Germany, the Netherlands and Hong Kong.

## Takuo Yuasa

The Japanese conductor Takuo Yuasa has become increasingly well known throughout the world. He has held positions as Principal Conductor of the Gumma Symphony Orchestra in Japan and Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Scottish Orchestra and is Principal Guest Conductor of the Ulster Orchestra in Belfast. Born in Osaka, where he studied piano, cello, flute and clarinet as a child, he continued his education at the University of Cincinnati, going on to a study of conducting under Hans Swarowsky and Igor Markevich at the Vienna Musikhochschule and with Franco Ferrara in Siena. Since winning a Special Award at the Fitchberg International Competition in Katowice, Takuo Yuasa has regularly conducted the major orchestras there, while continuing his association with the principal orchestras in Japan. Recent engagements have brought appearances from Hong Kong to Trondheim, concerts with the London Philharmonic and Hallé Orchestras, with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and many others throughout Europe.



**Takuo Yuasa**

## Akio Yashiro (1929-1976)

### Klavierkonzert • Sinfonie

„Indem sie der Zukunft den Rücken kehrten, suchten sie immer wieder in der Vergangenheit nach Modellen. Da sie jedoch mit den alten Mustern nie zufrieden waren, bemühten sie sich, diese zu ordnen und sie nach den Gesichtspunkten der Gegenwart zu vereinheitlichen – mit dem Ergebnis, dass ihre Arbeit sich zu einer Reihe von Werken kristallisierte, die von großer Kultiviertheit und unübertroffener Perfektion waren“, schrieb Akio Yashiro über Glasunow und Dukas. In gewisser Hinsicht trifft dies auch auf ihn selbst zu. Er war ein Komponist, der die nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg aufkommende Tendenz, mit avantgardistischen Experimenten in die Zukunft zu blicken, strikt ablehnte und es stattdessen vorzog, aus der Vergangenheit zu lernen. Was er hingegen gelten ließ, war der Stil der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit bis hin zu Messiaen. Nichts beschreibt seine Position anschaulicher als eine Episode aus dem Jahr 1962, als John Cage Japan besuchte und Yashiro dessen 'performance' mehrmals mit Zwischenrufen wie „Das ist keine Musik!“ kommentierte.

Akio Yashiro wurde am 10. September 1929 in Tokio geboren. Sein Vater war Kunsthistoriker, die Mutter Pianistin. Yashiro erhielt seinen ersten Klavierunterricht im Alter von fünf Jahren; als Zehnjähriger studierte er bereits Komposition bei Saburo Mori. Ab 1943 war der Modernist Quinshiko Hashimoto sein Lehrer, der ihn mit den Werken Debussys, Ravels und Strawinskys vertraut machte. 1945 ging Yashiro an die Tokioter Musikschule, wo er sein Studium bei Hashimoto fortsetzte. 1946, nachdem dieser wegen seiner Kriegsakktivitäten von seinem Posten enthoben worden war, wurden Tomojiro Ikenouchi und Akira Ifukube seine Professoren. Daneben nahm er Unterricht bei dem Pianisten Leonid Kreutzer. Nach dem Examen setzte er seine Studien am Pariser Conservatoire fort, wo Nadia Boulanger, Tony Aubin, Henri Chailan, Noël-Gallon und Olivier Messiaen zu seinen Lehrern gehörten. Seine dortige

Abschlussarbeit war ein Streichquartett, die einzige Komposition aus dieser Zeit.

1956 kehrte Yashiro nach Japan zurück, wo er hauptsächlich Musik für Dokumentar- und Spielfilme schrieb, während er sich gleichzeitig an der Musikfakultät der Universität für Schöne Künste und Musik (der früheren Musikschule) um junge Kompositionstalente des Landes kümmerte. Die beiden hier eingespielten Werke waren neben einem Cellokonzert, einer Sonate für Flöte und Klavier und einer Klavier-sonate die einzigen Kompositionen, die er nach seiner Rückkehr nach Japan komponierte. Zusammen mit Werken aus seiner frühen Periode, dem Streichquartett, einer Violinsonate, einem Klaviertrio und anderen Stücken sind sie nach wie vor fester Bestandteil des japanischen Konzertrepertoires. Akio Yashiro starb am 9. April 1976 an einem Herzschlag.

Yashiros *Klavierkonzert* ist ein Auftragswerk für den japanischen Rundfunk- und Fernsehsender NHK. Komponiert zwischen 1964 und 1967, wurde es am 5. November 1967 mit dem Solisten Hiroko Nakamura und dem NHK Symphony Orchestra unter Hiroshi Wakasugi uraufgeführt. Seither gehört das Werk zu den bekanntesten japanischen Kompositionen und wurde mehrfach auch im Westen aufgeführt, u.a. von Jean Martinon, Jean Fournet und Michael Gielen.

Das *Klavierkonzert* besteht aus drei Sätzen, deren erster die Bezeichnung *Allegro animato* trägt und in freier Sonatensatzform angelegt ist. Gleich einer Beschwörung beginnt das Klavier abrupt mit dem Hauptthema in unregelmäßigem Zeitmaß, begleitet von Vibraphon und Streichern und wiederholt unterbrochen von chromatisch absteigenden Noten der Blechbläser. Es folgt eine kraftvolle, kadenzartige Passage des Klaviers; danach stellt die Flöte den meditativen ersten Teil des zweiten Themas vor, gefolgt vom zweiten, klageähnlichen Teil, das vom Soloinstrument im Stil einer Kadenz gespielt wird. In der Durchführung wird in erster Linie das Hauptthema verarbeitet; dies



geschieht jedoch nur flüchtig, sodass der Eindruck entsteht, als diene dieser Abschnitt lediglich als Introduktion der Reprise. Der erste Teil dieser Reprise verarbeitet das Hauptthema mit zunehmender Intensität, bis es einen Höhepunkt erreicht. Im zweiten Teil der Reprise erscheinen als Reminiszenz die kraftvolle, kadenzartige Passage sowie die zweite Themengruppe. Der zweite Satz ist *Allegro misterioso* überschrieben. Das rhythmische Muster von sieben Noten in drei C-Dur-Takten wird 43mal mit einer an Ravels *Bolero* gemahnenden Hartnäckigkeit wiederholt. Nun erscheint das Motiv des zweiten Teils des Nebenthemas aus dem ersten Satz und treibt die Musik zu einem Höhepunkt, bevor sie allmählich an Intensität verliert und langsam verklingt. Der dritte Satz, *Allegro - Andante - Vivace molto capriccioso*, ist in freier Rondoform gestaltet. Ein eloquentes, äußerst kraftvoll vorangetriebenes Motiv und eine humorvolle, vom gedämpften Blech gespielte, aufsteigende Passage werden zuerst vorgestellt, aber das Hauptmerkmal des Satzes ist die kernige, kadenzähnliche Klavierpassage, die darauf folgt. Das Konzert wird mit diesen Motiven sowie mit Anklängen an das Material der vorangegangenen Sätze zu einem brillanten Schluss geführt.

Yashiros *Sinfonie* entstand zwischen Januar und Mai 1958 als Auftragswerk für das Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, das im Juni desselben Jahres unter Akeo Watanabe auch die Uraufführung spielte. Bei der europäischen Erstaufführung im Jahre 1963 dirigierte Charles Brück das Orchestre de l'O.R.T.F.

Die *Sinfonie* besteht aus vier Sätzen, die mittels wiederkehrender Motive zu einem organisch gefügten Ganzen verschmelzen. Der erste Satz, *Adagio - Moderato*, ist ein mit seinem mystischen Gestus an Florent Schmitt und den frühen Strawinsky erinnerndes *Prélude*. Einer hypnotisierenden Introduktion in den Streichern folgen unmittelbar das von den Blechbläsern und tiefen Streichern vorgestellte erste und das von der Klarinette gespielte zweite Motiv. Beide werden einer Entwicklung unterzogen, bevor in den Blechbläsern das dritte Motiv erklingt. Der zweite Satz, *Scherzo*, mit der

Tempobezeichnung *Vivace*, wird im gesamten Verlauf durch ein einheitliches, unregelmäßiges rhythmisches Muster (6/8 + 2/8 + 6/8) charakterisiert. Der dritte, *Lento* überschriebene Satz ist eine Sonatensatz-Variation mit zwei Themen. Englisch-Horn und Bassflöte stellen das vom ersten und dritten Motiv abgeleitete Hauptthema vor. Das Thema wird vom Vibraphon begleitet und von den Holzbläsern zu einer Variation entwickelt. Danach spielen Celesta und Streicher das mystische zweite Thema, das mit der Variation des ersten Themas kombiniert wird. Es folgen in den Blechbläsern Fragmente des dritten thematischen Elements. Die von häufigen Schlagzeugwürfen unterbrochene, erweiterte Variation des zweiten Themas erreicht einen Höhepunkt und sinkt danach zurück. Es ist eine Variation, die an den Stil eines Messiasen denken lässt. Schließlich werden das dritte Motiv und das erste Thema dieses Satzes sowie die das zweite Thema begleitenden Einwüfe des Schlagzeugs in Erinnerung gerufen. Die Variation dient als Reprise und Coda der Sonatenform. Der vierte Satz, *Adagio - Allegro energico*, ist in Sonatensatzform mit Introduktion gestaltet. Die tieferen Holzbläser stellen das erste Motiv vor; zwei Piccoloflöten spielen wiederholt eine Melodie, die das traditionelle japanische *Kagura-bayashi* suggeriert; anschließend kündigen Piccoloflöten und Fagotte das Thema des Hauptabschnitts an. Im folgenden *Allegro* wird das erste Thema sofort in den Streichern vorgestellt; die Melodie ist vom ersten und zweiten Motiv abgeleitet. Das zweite Thema in Piccoloflöte und Kontrafagott adaptiert das Material in Halbton-, Quint- und Septim-Intervallen und ist mit den drei Motiven eng verwandt. Danach erscheinen die beiden Themen des Satzes mit den sich durch das ganze Werk ziehenden Hauptmotiven in Kombination und bringen die Sinfonie zu einem glänzenden Abschluss.

Morihide Katayama

Deutsche Fassung: Bernd Delfs

## Akio Yashiro (1929-1976)

### Concerto pour piano • Symphonie

« Tournant le dos à l'avenir, ils regardaient invariablement vers le passé pour y trouver des modèles. Et pourtant, sans se satisfaire des modèles du passé, ils cherchèrent à les ordonner et à les unifier du point de vue du présent, si bien que leurs efforts se cristallisèrent en un certain nombre d'œuvres profondément raffinées, exemptes de défauts, atteignant un degré de perfection inégalé », écrivait Akio Yashiro dans un hommage à Glazounov et Dukas. Et dans une certaine mesure, cela est vrai de Yashiro lui-même. Lui aussi, se méfiant de la tendance des compositeurs d'après la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, cherchait à tirer leçon du passé. On peut supposer qu'il acceptait le style de l'immédiat après-guerre, jusqu'à Messiaen, mais en 1962, lorsque John Cage se rendit au Japon, il le critiqua en affirmant : « Ce n'est pas de la musique ».

Akio Yashiro naquit à Tokyo le 10 septembre 1929. Son père, Yukio Yashiro, était historien, spécialiste japonais des beaux-arts européens et auteur d'un ouvrage reconnu sur Botticelli. Sa mère était pianiste. Dans cet environnement artistique, Yashiro commença le piano à cinq ans et se tournant vite vers la composition, il devint à dix ans l'élève de Saburo Mori, grand admirateur de Beethoven qui avait étudié à Berlin. A partir de 1943, Yashiro étudia avec Qunihico Hashimoto. Ce moderniste lui fit connaître Debussy, Ravel et Stravinsky. Dans un même temps, Yashiro étudiait le français au collège Gyosei, tenu par des moines catholiques français.

En avril, 1945, Yashiro entra à l'école de musique de Tokyo, aujourd'hui devenue la faculté nationale des beaux-arts et de la musique, et continua à étudier avec Hashimoto, qui avait aussi pour élève Toshiro Mayuzumi ; celui-ci allait devenir le champion de la musique d'avant-garde japonaise. Yashiro intégra également l'Orchestre symphonique Kamakura, dirigé par Hashimoto ; il y jouait des timbales.

En 1946, Hashimoto ayant dû démissionner à

cause de ses activités durant la guerre, Mayuzumi et Yashiro étudièrent avec Tomojiro Ikenouchi et Akira Ifukube, qui remplacèrent Hashimoto. Le premier utilisait beaucoup Ravel comme modèle, le second Stravinsky et Prokofiev. A la même époque, Yashiro devint l'élève du pianiste Leonid Kreutzer, qui vivait au Japon depuis les années 1930.

En 1951, Yashiro se diplômâ de l'Académie de musique de Tokyo et partit étudier au Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris. Mayuzumi était aussi avec lui au Conservatoire, mais renonça au bout d'un an. En revanche, ces études françaises furent très bénéfiques à Yashiro. Il étudia avec Nadia Boulanger, Tony Aubin, Henri Challan, Noël-Gallon et Olivier Messiaen, et en 1955, son morceau de diplôme, qui se trouvait être son unique composition de l'époque, fut un quatuor à cordes à la manière de Bartók. Il reçut entre autres les compliments de Florent Schmitt et de Henri Barraud, et son œuvre fut créée par le Quatuor Parrenin.

Après son retour au Japon en 1956, Yashiro composa pour des documentaires et pour le théâtre, collaborant notamment avec Yukio Mishima, tout en soutenant de jeunes compositeurs comme Teruyuki Noda, Shin'ichiro Ikebe, Akira Nishimura à l'Université nationale des beaux-arts et de la musique de Tokyo. A cause de son perfectionnisme et à l'instar de Dukas et de Lyadov, il ne composa que peu d'œuvres de concert : un concerto pour violoncelle, une sonate pour deux flûtes et piano, une sonate pour piano et les deux morceaux figurant sur ce disque, en tout cinq œuvres de musique absolue. Chacune d'elles, constituant une belle réussite, ainsi que le quatuor à cordes de sa période française et quelques œuvres antérieures, une sonate pour violon, un trio pour piano et d'autres pièces, a encore sa place au répertoire de concert. Yashiro mourut subitement d'une crise cardiaque le 9 avril 1976.

Le *Concerto pour piano* de Yashiro lui fut

commandé par la NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai), la corporation japonaise de radiodiffusion, et fut composé entre 1964 et 1967. Il fut créé le 5 novembre 1967, avec Hiroko Nakamura au piano et l'Orchestre symphonique de la NHK sous la direction de Hiroshi Wakasugi, et reçut le prestigieux prix Odaka 1967. Ce concerto est demeuré très populaire au Japon et a été exécuté plusieurs fois en Occident, notamment par Jean Martinon, Jean Fournet et Michael Gielen.

Le *Concerto pour piano* comporte trois mouvements et on peut y déceler les influences de Bartók, Prokofiev, Jolivet et d'autres, ainsi que celle d'un compositeur japonais qui avait lui aussi étudié en France et que Yashiro considérait comme son rival, Akira Miyoshi. Le premier mouvement est marqué *Allegro animato* et est en forme sonate libre. Le deuxième mouvement est marqué *Adagio misterioso*. Son schéma rythmique de sept notes sur trois mesures en ut est répété quarante-trois fois avec une insistance qui ferait pâlir Ifukube et le *Boléro* de Ravel. Le troisième mouvement, *Allegro - Andante - Vivace molto capriccioso*, est en forme rondo libre. Son trait le plus caractéristique est son passage pour le piano dans le style d'une cadence. Le concerto s'achève brillamment.

La *Symphonie* de Yashiro lui fut commandée par l'Orchestre symphonique philharmonique du Japon et fut composée entre janvier et mai 1958. Elle fut créée en juin de cette même année par cet orchestre sous la direction d'Akeo Watanabe. En 1963, elle connut sa création européenne avec l'Orchestre National de l'O.R.T.F. sous la baguette de Charles Brück.

La *Symphonie* comporte quatre mouvements coordonnés organiquement pour former un bloc

compact, et ce grâce à plusieurs motifs récurrents. Les plus remarquables d'entre eux sont le motif de trois notes descendant de si à fa puis s'élevant d'une octave augmentée vers fa dièse ; un motif de trois notes s'élevant d'ut à mi et de là descendant d'une septième augmentée jusqu'à fa, puis un motif en accords composé des accords si - ré - fa dièse et si bémol - ré bémol - fa. La note centrale de tout l'ouvrage est si, et l'intervalle de quinte juste de si bémol - fa et si - fa dièse constitue le noyau de toute l'œuvre, tant d'un point de vue mélodique que d'un point de vue harmonique. Le premier mouvement est un *Prélude*, marqué *Adagio - Moderato*, et s'appuierait sur des esquisses inspirées au compositeur par la pièce d'Oscar Wilde *Salomé*. Il évoque les œuvres de Florent Schmitt et du Stravinsky première période. Le deuxième mouvement, *Scherzo*, est marqué *Vivace* et tout comme le mouvement central du *Concerto pour piano*, il utilise le même schéma rythmique (ici  $6/8 + 2/8 + 6/8$ , dérivé de la musique rituelle du shintoïsme) du début jusqu'à la fin. Le troisième mouvement, marqué *Lento*, est un mouvement en forme sonate avec des variations sur deux thèmes. Le premier thème est dérivé des premier et troisième motifs. Le second thème est mystique et sa variation rappelle le style de Messiaen. Le quatrième mouvement, marqué *Adagio-Allegro energico*, est en forme sonate avec une introduction. Comme le *Concerto pour piano*, la *Symphonie* s'achève avec beaucoup d'éclat.

Morihide Katayama

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Akio Yashiro, a close friend of the famous writer Yukio Mishima and the composer Toshiro Mayuzumi, was born in 1929 in Tokyo, where he studied, before a period at the Paris Conservatoire under Nadia Boulanger and Olivier Messiaen. He returned to Tokyo in 1956, later teaching at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, where he had himself studied. He died in 1976, leaving a relatively small number of completed compositions, all of which show perfection and sophistication. His *Symphony* of 1958 and later *Piano Concerto* are both written in cyclic form. The former has a first movement originally inspired by Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, and a second that suggests Messiaen in its melodic material. The *Scherzo* and *Finale* quote Japanese festival music and material derived from Noh plays. The first movement of the *Piano Concerto* is oriental in feeling, with a central movement dominated by a repeated ostinato and a *Finale* that suggests toccatas in the style of Prokofiev and Bartók.

## Akio YASHIRO

(1929-1976)

	<b>Piano Concerto</b>	<b>26:39</b>
1	Allegro animato	12:24
2	Adagio misterioso	7:28
3	Allegro - Andante - Vivace molto capriccioso	6:38
	<b>Symphony</b>	<b>32:55</b>
4	Prelude: Adagio - Moderato	7:24
5	Scherzo: Vivace	3:50
6	Lento	12:38
7	Adagio - Allegro energico	8:53

**Hiromi Okada, Piano**  
**Ulster Orchestra • Takuo Yuasa**

Recorded at the Ulster Hall, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 4th-7th September 2000 (4-7)  
and 1st-3rd June 2001 (1-3)

Producer: Andrew Walton (K&A Productions Ltd.) • Engineer: Eleanor Thomason

Post-Production: Emma Stocker, Andrew Walton

Artistic Advisor & Booklet Notes: Morihide Katayama

Cover Image: *Nosime inner robe* (18th century), The Tokugawa Art Museum

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Playing Time  
59:34



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