

NAXOS

**Japanese
Guitar Music • 2**

**Toru
TAKEMITSU**

**Hiroshi
HARA**

**Akira
MIYOSHI**

**Shin-ichiro
IKEBE**

**Toshio
HOSOKAWA**

**Shin-ichi
Fukuda**



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Toru Takemitsu (1930–1996): A Song of Early Spring (original song by Akira Nakada, 1886–1931)

Hiroshi Hara (1933–2002): Canto funèbre

Akira Miyoshi (1933–2013): Epitase • Cinq Poèmes pour la guitare

Shin-ichiro Ikebe (b. 1943): A Guitar Bears and She Keeps Hoping • Theme of Katja

Toshio Hosokawa (b. 1955): Serenade • Two Japanese Folk Songs

Japan has for decades enjoyed a flourishing culture of the classical guitar including excellent performers, composers for the instrument, and makers of guitars, as well as leading periodicals and publishers willing to invest in compositions. Many westerners are aware of the achievements of Toru Takemitsu, one of the world's leading twentieth-century composers for guitar. But this selection by Shin-ichi Fukuda, one of Japan's most eminent concert guitarists, reveals the amazing flair for the instrument demonstrated by other distinguished composers.

Modern Japanese history originated in the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when a constitutional monarchy was founded after centuries of feudalism. Western influences became welcome and in this context interest in the guitar gradually increased. The pioneering guitarists were Morishige Takei (1890-1949), Yoshie Okawara (1903-1935), and Takayuki Oguri (1909-1944), who composed their own music and gave recitals. Their work was helped by Segovia's concert tours of Japan from 1929.

After the Second World War the classical guitar gained ever more popularity from the 1950s onwards. The great luthier, Masaru Kohno (1926-1998) established an international reputation and was rewarded with huge demand for his guitars while Akinobu Matsuda (b. 1933) studied with Segovia and gave recitals in Europe. From the 1960s guitarists such as Julian Bream, John Williams, and Narciso Yepes regularly performed in Tokyo and other leading cities.

This recording reveals the sheer variety of the guitar in the creativity of Japanese composers. Some compositions represent one way or another the principles of *Ma*, an everyday word from Japanese indicating space and time. Composers within Japanese culture instinctively use silence between sounds to communicate a sense of structure and significant meaning. Often their economy with notes achieves

intensity by concentrated sound clusters and fragments with pauses of silence in between the phrases. The guitar is the ideal instrument for such a blend of quietness and sonority.

Akira Nakada, composer and organist, was for several years professor of theory at the Tokyo Music School, the country's first academy (founded 1887), renowned for its teaching of compositional styles in Western music. Nakada composed a number of songs but *A Song of Early Spring* has acquired a truly international popularity.

Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996) arranged this theme for guitar for his anthology of *12 Songs for Guitar* (published 1977). Takemitsu's unique harmonic ingenuity enriched Nakada's exquisite melody with a truly contemporary setting.

Hiroshi Hara graduated in 1957 from Tokyo University of the Arts (formed in 1949 by the merger of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and the Tokyo Music School). Moving to France in 1961, Hara studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique, Paris, returning to Japan in 1964. Between 1990 and 1998 he was professor at Nagasaki National University.

In 1968 the Seikei University Guitar Society requested Hiroshi Hara to write a trio for them, and it was at this point that the composer's involvement in guitar composition began. He did not play the guitar but as the commission was for a trio Hara undertook the work, writing in a monophonic style using the guitar for both melody and harmony. The piece was premiered as a Suite with four movements, *Canto funèbre* being the third movement. The following year In 1969 *Canto funèbre* was published as a solo work arranged by the composer, dedicated to Seiko Obara (1969).

Hiroshi Hara described the composition as a song in three parts sung as a funeral prayer. The first part is in B minor, followed by a middle episode in D major, developing into A major for the ending. During the recapitulation *'the motion stops as if one is jerked back into reality, then begins again to take steps forward'*. This follows the emotional sequence

of immediate sadness, the recalling of happy memories, and then back to the present sorrow, the established structure of a funeral piece.

Akira Miyoshi, born in Tokyo, had piano and composition lessons from an early age, and on entering primary school studied the violin with Kozaburo Hirai. In 1951 he entered the Department of French Literature at Tokyo University. As a student he was awarded First Prize in the 22nd Japan Music Competition in 1953 for *Sonata* and won several other awards at this time. Miyoshi went to France in 1955 to study composition at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique, Paris, studying with Henri Challan and Raymond Gallois Montblanc. He was strongly influenced during these years by the work of Henri Dutilleux.

Following his return to Tokyo in 1957, he continued studies at Tokyo University, graduating in 1960. In the next few years he composed symphonic and orchestral works, songs and choral music. From 1974 to 1995 he was president of Toho Gakuen University, becoming a member of the Japanese Academy of Arts in 1999, the same year as he presented his first opera. In November 2001, Akira Miyoshi was honoured with the Cultural Merits Award.

Epitase, dedicated to Mikio Hoshido (1947-1996), who gave the first performance in 1975, was the companion to a composition for guitar duo entitled *Protase*, meaning continuation (*Epitase* being 'continuation with change'). In his dissertation, *Guitar Music by Japanese Composers* (Indiana University, 2003), Daniel Quinn comments that in *Epitase* 'change is symbolic for crisis', and emphasises the sheer compactness of Miyoshi's style with its eleven tempo changes on the first page alone ranging from *molto vivo* to *lento*. Harmonically the work creates ingenious chordal sonorities due to the tuning of the lowest string of the guitar to E flat (instead of the customary E).

Cinq poèmes pour la guitare, written some ten years later than *Epitase*, are in a very different style, providing lyrical melodies influenced by the French school. The five pieces are based on the original Haiku pattern of Japanese verse with each phrase synchronized to the Haiku syllabic measure of 5-7-5.

Shin-ichiro Ikebe, born in Mito City, Japan, has written scores for many films as well as a considerable output of orchestral works, some thirty operas, cantatas and musicals, and a number of Japanese instrumental pieces. He studied

at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, obtaining a master's degree in 1971 and is a professor at the Tokyo College of Music. Throughout his career he has been the recipient of many honours and awards including the Purple Ribbon Medal. The Yokohama Cultural Prize, International Emmy Awards, and the 38th and 47th Otaka Prize.

A Guitar Bears and She Keeps Hoping was the result of visits to the site of the concentration camps at Auschwitz and Terezin. In Terezin the composer discovered a handmade violin which brought home to him how even in unimaginably cruel situations people long for music. This work was commissioned by Tokorozawa Civic Cultural Centre MUSE and first performed by Daisuke Suzuki in December 2007.

The work begins marked 'slow, tempo rubato', with a reflective, emotional episode which gives way to a middle section, a little faster (tempo rubato). The composition returns to its first tempo with a brief recapitulation of some of the opening theme. But this progresses into a dramatic section with repeated pedal notes and accompanying fragments of melody. The texture steadily becomes more complex with passages of two part harmony in quasi-fugal style. The coda includes elements of the opening theme though constantly moving away from it after a few phrases. A panoply of loud triplet chords concludes the work.

The music for the film *Spy Sorge*, directed by Masahiro Shinoda, was composed in 2003, the solo guitar being entrusted with two pieces, an arrangement of *L'Internationale*, and the original composition *Theme of Katja* for Sorge's tragic wife, Katja. The guitar part in the film was played by Daisuke Suzuki, a former pupil of Shin-ichi Fukuda.

The film is about Richard Sorge, a Soviet spy during the Second World War, working undercover in Germany and Japan. In September 1941 he informed the Soviet military that Japan did not intend to attack Russia thus enabling the Soviet Union to transfer tanks and aircraft to the German front during the battle for Moscow. A month later Sorge was arrested by the Japanese for espionage, tortured, and eventually executed in November 1944.

Theme of Katja opens with a poignant theme, played with great freedom and expressiveness. After this statement of the melody a slightly faster episode in gentle arpeggios is heard, to be repeated once more after further repetitions of the main tune.

Toshio Hosokawa studied composition with Isang Yun in Berlin (1976-82) and in Freiburg (1983-6) with Klaus Huber and Brian Fernyhough. From the 1980s onwards he has been awarded a number of prestigious composition prizes including the Otaka Prize (1987) and the 39th Suntory Music Award (2007). Hosokawa has served as composer-in-residence at the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra since 1998 and in 2004 became guest professor at Tokyo College of Music. He was elected as a member of the Academy of Arts, Berlin in 2001.

His works include orchestral, chamber, and vocal music, as well as film scores, solo instrumental pieces and compositions for Japanese instruments. In 2007, Hosokawa wrote a new concerto, *Voyage IX, Awakening*, for guitar and strings, with percussion.

Serenade (2003) was commissioned by the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation and Timo Korhonen, the dedicatee who gave the first performance at Musica Nova Helsinki on 7th March 2003. (In the original score normal tuning is used. But Shin-ichi Fukuda has, with the composer's permission, introduced his own tuning (E-A-D flat-G-e) for this recording.)

The first movement, *In the Moonlight*, owes much to concepts of traditional Japanese music, including the echoing sonorities of plucked chordophones such as the *biwa* and *shamisen* (types of lute), and the *koto* (long zither).

Shin-ichi Fukuda

Born in 1955 in Osaka, Shin-ichi Fukuda started playing the classical guitar at the age of eleven under Tatsuya Saitoh (1942-2006). In 1977 he moved to Paris and continued his music training at the Ecole Normale de la Musique, under Alberto Ponce, continuing his studies at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena with a scholarship, under Oscar Ghiglia during 1980-1984. After his diplomas in Paris and Siena, Fukuda was awarded many important competition prizes, including First Prize in the 23rd Paris International Guitar Competition, organized by Radio France. Since then, for more than thirty years, he has pursued a brilliant concert career as a leading guitarist, performing solo recitals, concertos with orchestra, and chamber music in major cities around the world. Fukuda is also a highly gifted and enthusiastic teacher and has trained many pupils who have gone on to gain the highest honours; these include the young Japanese guitarists, Kaori Muraji, Daisuke Suzuki and Yasuji Ohagi, among others. He is a guest professor at Shanghai Conservatory (China), Osaka College of Music and Hiroshima's Elisabeth University of Music and the Showa Music University. The distinguished Cuban composer Leo Brouwer dedicated to him his *Concerto de Requiem – In memoriam Takemitsu II* for guitar and orchestra. Fukuda was awarded the Japanese government 2011 Art Encouragement Music Prize and has more than eighty recordings to his credit.

Shin-ichi Fukuda wishes to extend special thanks to Mr Masaki Sakurai of Kohno Guitar Manufacturing, Mr Yoshi Hayashi of String Instrument Expert Co, Ltd. and Mr Bernard Maillot of Savarez.

Thus we hear instances of microtonal intonation with the string being inflected to create unexpected colours. The composer also employs delicate harmonics to suggest the ethereal effects of moonlight. In the second half of the piece repeated scale fragments are to be played '*freely, like the murmur of a stream*'.

Dream Path uses sequences of isolated chords very slowly arpeggiated, with occasional harmonics, to build up an atmosphere of dreaming and sleeping, perhaps bringing to mind the gentle intensity of Britten's *Nocturnal after John Dowland*.

Finally we have settings of two Japanese songs, *Komoriuta* (Lullaby) and *Sakura* (Cherry Blossom). Both songs were dedicated to the Finnish guitarist, Markus Hochuli, who gave the first performance at the Takefu International Music Festival, Japan in 2004. Once more traditional aesthetic aspects of the music of Japan are brought into the sphere of the classical guitar with subtlety and perfect appropriateness.

Graham Wade

Grateful acknowledgement is due to Maestro Shin-ichi Fukuda for invaluable information, advice, and comments and to Daniel Quinn's dissertation, *Guitar Music by Japanese Composers* (May, 2003).

The second volume in this series reveals once again the amazing flair that Japanese composers have for the guitar. It also explores the ways in which the more traditional aspects of the country's music are brought into the sphere of the classical guitar with variety, subtlety and richness. From Toru Takemitsu's popular arrangement of Nakada's *A Song of Early Spring* through Akira Miyoshi's lyrical *Cinq Poèmes pour la guitare* to Toshio Hosokawa's evocative *Serenade* the listener encounters unexpected colours and textures as well as evocations of the *biwa* and *shamisen* (types of lute) and the *koto*, a long zither.

Japanese Guitar Music • 2

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|--|-------------|--|--------------|
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Shin-ichi Fukuda, Guitar

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