

For Immediate Release



Contact: Mari Ono, (212) 529-1888 mfjrc@msn.com
Elaine Merguerian, (212) 327-9313 elainem@asiasociety.org

**MUSIC FROM JAPAN 40TH ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL SHOWCASES
THREE TRADITIONAL EAST ASIAN INSTRUMENTS AND PRESENTS
WORLD PREMIERES OF THREE NEW COMMISSIONS**



L to R: Mayumi Miyata, Wu Man, Jin Hi Kim, Fred Sherry

**Two Performances to be held at Asia Society
725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), New York City
February 7-8, 2015**

Music From Japan (MFJ) and **Asia Society** are pleased to announce MFJ's **40th Anniversary Festival**, which will feature cross-cultural collaborations between musicians from Japan, China, Korea and the United States in two concerts at Asia Society, in New York, followed by a tour to Washington, D.C., Fukushima City and Tokyo. MFJ is the leading presenter of Japanese contemporary and traditional music in the United States and around the world.

Two unique programs will be presented during the New York chapter of the festival. The first—**East Asian Vibrancy** on Saturday, February 7, at 8:00 p.m.—will introduce audience members to traditional and contemporary repertoire for three East Asian instruments: the Japanese sho, the Korean komungo, and the Chinese pipa. The performers are each known worldwide for their versatility and virtuosity as soloists and ensemble players: **Mayumi Miyata** will perform on sho, **Jin Hi Kim** on komungo and electric komungo, and **Wu Man** on pipa.

The second program—**Highlights of Music From Japan Commissions III** on Sunday, February 8, at 2:00 p.m.—will feature two world premieres by Japanese composers **Michio Kitazume** and **Yoichi Sugiyama** presented alongside three compositions commissioned by MFJ in previous years. **Richard Stoltzman** (clarinet) and **Fred Sherry** (cello) will be joined by other world class musicians in their performance of these MFJ-commissioned works. Details about each of the concerts follow.

Concert 1: East Asian Vibrancy

Saturday, February 7, at 8:00 p.m.

Asia Society, New York

*A pre-concert lecture-demonstration by **Ralph Samuelson**, “Exploring the Music of East Asia,” will be held at 7:00 p.m. with each performer demonstrating on their instruments.*

Three internationally acclaimed traditional instrumentalists from Japan, Korea, and China, will perform contemporary and classical repertoire on their respective instruments as soloists and as a trio. A series of solo works will be followed by a group improvisation and the world premiere of *Unkai (Sea of Clouds)* written by MFJ-commissioned composer **Ned Rothenberg**. **Mayumi Miyata** will perform on Japanese sho, a reedy sounding mouth organ traditionally used in gagaku, the ancient court music of Japan; Chinese-American **Wu Man** will perform on the pipa, a Chinese lute; and Korean-American **Jin Hi Kim** will perform on a Korean zither called the komungo.

The musicians performing in **East Asian Vibrancy** will perform in similar programs in Washington, D.C. (February 10), in Fukushima City (March 6), and in Tokyo (March 8).

Concert 2: Highlights of Music From Japan Commissions III

Sunday, February 8, at 2:00 p.m.

Asia Society, New York

*An open forum moderated by **Fred Sherry** with composers **Ned Rothenberg**, **Yoichi Sugiyama**, and **Michio Kitazume**, will follow the concert.*

To celebrate MFJ’s long history of commissioning Japanese and American composers to create new work, two new MFJ commissions will be presented alongside a retrospective of compositions from prior years. The three previous MFJ commissions are: *Oyasuminasai* (Good night), for mezzo soprano and piano, by **Joji Yuasa**, (US premiere); *Full Moon*, for violin and electronics, composed by **Mari Takano** and performed by **Mari Kimura**, a specialist in the performance of pieces with virtuosic extended techniques and computer interactivity; and *Quatuor en hiver* (Quartet in Winter), for violin, viola, cello, and piano by **Ichiro Nodaira**.

The program also includes the world premiere of two newly commissioned works: Two verses by Du Fu for female voice and instruments by Milan-based Japanese composer, conductor and educator **Yoichi Sugiyama**, and *Distances III* for clarinet and cello by Tokyo-based composer **Michio Kitazume**.

These works will be performed by New York’s finest interpreters of contemporary repertoire—stalwarts of the city’s contemporary music scene. The ensemble includes world renowned cellist

Fred Sherry, violist **Ah Ling Neu**, pianist **Stephen Gosling**, vocalist **Wonjung Kim**, violinists **Eriko Sato** and **Mari Kimura**, and the two-time Grammy Award winning clarinetist **Richard Stoltzman**.

Asia Society is located at 725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), in New York City. Tickets for Saturday's East Asian Vibrancy Concert on Saturday evening, February 7, are \$25 for Asia Society members; \$30 students/seniors; \$40 non-members. Tickets for the Sunday afternoon concert on February 8 are \$20 members; \$22 students/seniors; \$25 nonmembers. To purchase tickets, please visit AsiaSociety.org/nyc or call the Asia Society Box Office at 212-517-2742 between the hours of 1 pm and 5 pm EST Monday through Friday. A combined ticket price for both concerts is also available, via PHONE ONLY: \$40 for members and \$55 for nonmembers.

Sho

The sho is a Japanese mouth organ, traditionally known for its role as one of the three primary woodwind instruments in gagaku, Japan's imperial court music. It consists of 17 bamboo pipes with metal free reeds fitted into a wooden base. Its origins are in the 8th century AD when the sheng, its ancestor from China, was introduced to Japan. Mayumi Miyata, who is known for introducing the instrument into contemporary music, uses a modified sho that allows her to play certain pitches that are unavailable on the traditional instrument.

Pipa

The pipa is a lute-like instrument that has been an important part of Chinese music for two thousand years. The name is onomatopoeic and alludes to the sound of the forwards and backwards plucking motion. Although the instrument began its development in the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 B.C.-220 A.D.), the introduction of crooked-necked, pear-shaped lutes from Central Asia during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) contributed to the instrument's modern form. Over the course of its long history, the pipa has been used in many musical contexts like narrative song, court music, and religious music.

Komungo

The Komungo is a six-stringed traditional Korean musical instrument with origins in the 4th century. It is part of a larger family of zithers from East Asia and is closely related to the Chinese guqin. The instrument was traditionally performed by male Confucian scholars for their meditation and was a major feature of court music and kagok ensemble music, a type of Korean vocal music. Although traditionally used only as an ensemble instrument, beginning in the early twentieth century a solo repertoire has been developed.

About Music From Japan

Founded in 1975 by its current Artistic Director, Naoyuki Miura, Music From Japan continues to preside as the leading presenter of Japanese contemporary and traditional music in the United States and the world. Music From Japan has presented concerts on three continents: in North and South America, Central Asia, and Japan. The concerts themselves have represented an enormous range of settings and ensembles, from solo concerts to large orchestral works and the Japanese grand opera *Kinkakuji*. The repertoire has ranged from traditional Japanese music to modern

classical, electronic, and improvised music by both Japanese and American composers and performers.

Music From Japan's annual festivals, symposia and other educational events have helped broaden the audience for Japanese music and encourage the dialogue among composers and musicians in Japan and the United States. Its Resource Center for Japanese Music, founded in 1994, has provided information in English to people from all over the world on Japanese composers and their music for 20 years.

In 1993, Music From Japan began its series of Featured Composers' Concerts with Akira Miyoshi. This series has presented works by such renowned representatives of Japanese music as Shin-ichiro Ikebe, Toshi Ichinyanagi, Joji Yuasa, and Ichiro Nodaira.

As Music From Japan enters its 40th year, its commitment to its founding mission remains the same, even as it expands its reach in presenting musicians representing Japan's neighboring nations.

Music From Japan 40th Anniversary Festival has been made possible in part with public funds from: the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, the Japan Foundation, and Arts Council Tokyo.

"Thus while the 40-year mission of Music From Japan has remained focused on music, its role in the wake of the Fukushima disaster reveals a broader goal: to help heal the planet, above all through the power of the arts to engender cross-cultural sympathy and awareness."

-John Rockwell

www.musicfromjapan.org

www.facebook.com/musicfromjapan

About Asia Society

Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Asia Society is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational institution. Through exhibitions and public programs, Asia Society provides a forum for the issues and viewpoints reflected in both traditional and contemporary Asian art, and in Asia today. Asia Society is located at 725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), New York City. Find out more at AsiaSociety.org/nyc

###