

STRING
THEATER
MARI
KIMURA

VILČEK FOUNDATION

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BY
THE
VILCEK
FOUNDATION

STRING
THEATER
**MARI
KIMURA**

**MAY 20TH
2011**
BOHEMIAN
NATIONAL
HALL

CONCERT PROGRAM

**PARTITA NO. 3 IN E MAJOR BWV 1006,
PRELUDIO
[1720]**
Johann Sebastian Bach
Solo violin

**SUBHARMONIC PARTITA
[2004]**
Mari Kimura
Solo violin

**SIX CAPRICES FOR SUBHARMONICS
[1997-1998]**
Mari Kimura
Solo violin

**JANMARICANA FOR SUBHARMONICS
[2011] WORLD PREMIERE**
Mari Kimura
Solo violin

**VOYAGE APOLLONIAN FOR VIOLIN
AND INTERACTIVE COMPUTER
[2011]**
Mari Kimura
Violin and interactive animation

**DUET X2 FOR VIOLIN, CELLO
AND INTERACTIVE COMPUTER
[2011] WORLD PREMIERE**
Mari Kimura (*composer*)
Dave Eggar
Violin, cello, and augmented bows

**THE OLD ROSE READER FOR VIOLIN
AND ELECTRONICS
[2004]**
Frances White
Violin and electronics, with projection

**TOCCATA FOR VIOLIN
AND PLAYER PIANO
[1935]**
Conlon Nancarrow
*Solo violin and player piano
(original recording by Nancarrow)*

PROGRAM NOTES

**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH:
PRELUDIO FROM PARTITA NO. 3
IN E MAJOR, BWV 1006
[1720]**

The Preludio, the first movement of the E Major Partita, BWV 1006, Bach also arranged for lute (BWV 1006a) and for full orchestra with solo organ obligato. Eugène Ysaÿe (1858–1931), a Belgian virtuoso violinist, who taught my first teacher Armand Weisbord at the Conservatoire in Bruxelles, directly quotes the beginning of the Preludio in his Sonata No. 2, entitled Obsession, which was dedicated to the French violinist Jacques Thibaud.

**SUBHARMONIC PARTITA
[2005]**

Subharmonic Partita is my dedication to the first movement of J. S. Bach's E major Partita, Preludio. I use the key motives from the Preludio, as well as some structural progressions, adding extreme leaps and Subharmonics as embellishment. The Preludio has been used as a theme before by violinists/composers such as Eugène Ysaÿe in his Six Sonatas, and this was something I wanted to do as a violinist/composer, following the tradition. Subharmonic Partita includes the most extreme violin techniques, such as very fast five-octave arpeggios from Subharmonic pitches and up; it also searches for the new sonority — to use the low notes as a base of a harmony, supporting the upper sounds of the violin. I enjoyed composing Subharmonic Partita, as well as practicing it, though it is extremely challenging to play.

BY MARI KIMURA

SIX CAPRICES FOR SUBHARMONICS

[1997–1998]

Subharmonics are created with precise control of bow pressure and speed. This allows me to expand the range of the violin down a full octave, below the normal lowest note – an open G – without changing the tuning of the instrument. During 1997 and 1998, I compiled a set of Caprices for Subharmonics. Each of these short pieces focuses on a different technique and the musical language incorporating them. No. 1 focuses on the Subharmonic octave; Subharmonics leap in and out to extreme intervals, and they are also used melodically, featuring idiosyncrasies of the sound. No. 2 focuses on playing the Subharmonic second, a half step lower than open G; thus, F#. The drone of these two pieces (G and F#) continues as the melody sings freely, played on the D string. There are many never-heard doublestop intervals on the violin without *scordatura* (cross-tuning). One must control the bow very carefully in order to play Subharmonics on the G string, while playing normally on the D string at the same time. No. 3 focuses on playing the Subharmonic third. In No. 4, I explore multiphonics, as well as Subharmonics, playing two notes on one string by drawing the bow in a specific way. As a result, playing also on the D string simultaneously, one could play chords such as triads with two strings. No. 5 features fast-moving Subharmonics such as trills and arpeggios. Since the location of the bow on the string has direct effects on the pitches, it is quite difficult to play fast arpeggios, making it necessary to slide the bow to or from the fingerboard while maintaining the same bow pressure, fast. No. 6 is the summary of the previous five pieces. In Caprices No. 1 and No. 6, one might find a slight suggestion of the traditional “melody borrowing” – for example, from Maria, from *West Side Story*, and Take the A Train.

JANMARICANA FOR SUBHARMONICS

[2011, WORLD PREMIERE]

In 1994, I introduced the Subharmonic octave to the public. Since then, I have been interested in expanding my technique. The Subharmonic third and Subharmonic second followed a few years later, but the Subharmonic fifth eluded me for several years. Finally, last year, I had a breakthrough; and just a few months ago, I produced this elusive new Subharmonic interval, which for me is by far the most difficult among this extended technique. To celebrate the “arrival” of the Subharmonic fifth, and in honor of Jan and Marica Vilcek, who recognized my work on these new sounds for the violin, I dedicate this new work, JanMaricana for Subharmonics.

VOYAGE APOLLONIAN FOR VIOLIN

AND INTERACTIVE COMPUTER

[2011]

When I saw a beautiful animation Ken Perlin posted on his blog (<http://blog.kenperlin.com>), I had an intuitive reaction that I wanted to make the music for it. His creation looked so musical that I could almost hear the sounds coming from it, which was a new experience for me. Ken acknowledges that his video was inspired by the work of “mathe-musician” Vi Hart.

DUET ×2 FOR VIOLIN, CELLO

AND AUGMENTED BOWS

[2011, WORLD PREMIERE]

Duet ×2 is my first interactive composition using two bowing motion sensors called “mini-MO,” created by the Real-Time Musical Interactions Team at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM). The family of MO, modular musical objects, (the mini-MO is the latest and the smallest) won the Margaret Guthman Musical Instrument Competition. In July, it will be featured at the Talk to Me exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. I am very grateful and honored to work with Dave Eggar, with whom I created a new form of duo for Augmented Bows. I would like to thank my formidable collaborators on IRCAM’s Real-Time Musical Interactions Team: Frédéric Bevilacqua, Norbert Schnell, Emmanuel Flety, Nicolas Rasamimanana, and Bruno Zamborlin.

FRANCES WHITE: THE OLD ROSE READER

[2004]

[NOTE BY FRANCES WHITE]

The Old Rose Reader was inspired by my love of old garden roses. Old roses are either species roses that have been grown for many hundreds of years, or else hybrids that were developed mostly before 1900. Many of them are famous for having been grown in Empress Josephine’s garden at Malmaison. I love them not only for their exceptional beauty and fragrance, but also for their wonderful, romantic names. All the names that appear in the text of *The Old Rose Reader* belong to actual roses, some of which I grow in my own garden. *The Old Rose Reader* was commissioned by, and is dedicated to, Mari Kimura. The text was written by my husband, James Pritchett, who also created the video part. The text was read by Mari’s husband, Hervé Brönnimann.

CONLON NANCARROW:

TOCCATA FOR VIOLIN AND PLAYER PIANO

[TAPE CREATED BY CONLON NANCARROW]

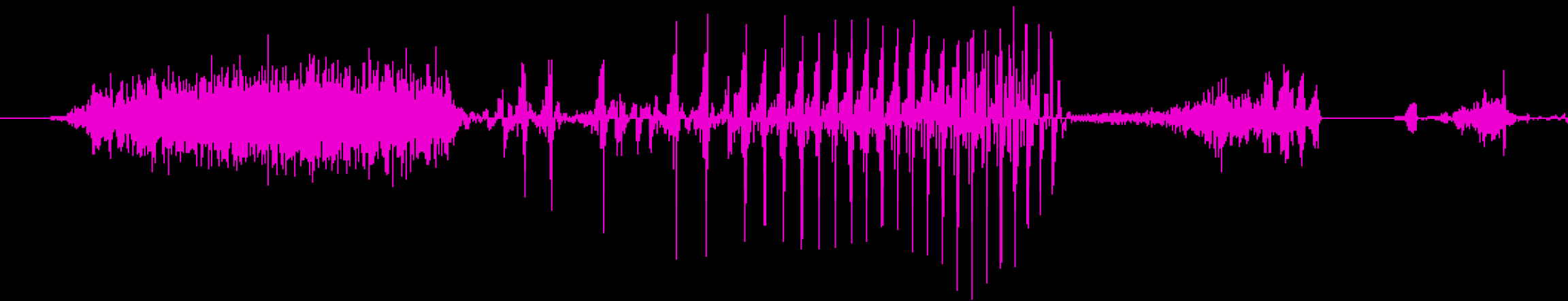
[1935]

[NOTE ADAPTED FROM KYLE GANN]

Conlon Nancarrow’s Toccata for violin and player piano is a more conventional work than many of his player piano studies, works for which he is best known, although nonetheless extremely difficult. It is particularly successful because of its unrelenting rhythmic energy. For Nancarrow, however, the piano part became impossible to play at the tempo he wanted, so in response to requests for live music, in the 1980s, he punched a roll of the piano part. In today’s performance, the player piano is heard on a prerecorded tape.

Nancarrow was born in the United States in 1912, and lived from 1940 until his death in 1997 in Mexico City. In 1937, he fought as a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. Due to his relationship with the Communist Party, the United States government refused to renew his passport, so Nancarrow decided to emigrate to Mexico. He lived there in relative obscurity for a number of years, finding international acclaim toward the end of his career. Late in life, he was recognized by awards from the Guggenheim and MacArthur Foundations.

RICK
KINSEL
IN
CONVERSATION
WITH
MARI
KIMURA



RICK KINSEL,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
THE VILCEK FOUNDATION

RICK KINSEL: WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN STORE FOR US, MARI?

MARI KIMURA: In my program for the Vilcek Foundation, I will present a sampling from a wide variety of activities, all of which exemplify my pursuits as a creative classical violinist in a contemporary way. I will present myself as an interpreter of classical music and as a performer/composer, in addition to demonstrating my own new techniques and the use of the latest technology. I will explore my interests as a performer who is also a programmer of digital technology, pursuing the mastery of new kinds of performance practice into the realm of the public sphere.

In my role as a classical violinist, I will perform a short movement of Johann Sebastian Bach; and to demonstrate the technique of a composer using Subharmonics, I will offer my own homage to Bach, called Subharmonic Partita. I will also introduce a new duo work, which I wrote for cellist Dave Eggar and myself using the latest technology developed by the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique in Paris—bowing motion sensors—known as “Augmented Bows.” This technology tracks bowing motions and extracts musical expression from our two bows as they interact with one another. We will both be wearing a special motion sensor glove, custom-fit by New York-based designer Mark Salinas. Dave Eggar is a cellist I have always wanted to work with; he was nominated for a Grammy this year for his new record, *Kingston Morning*, and has gathered international praise for his wide-ranging approach to musical genres. I will also present an audiovisual work entitled *Voyage Apollonian*, commissioned by the American Festival of Microtonal Music here in New York, which is held annually in May. In this piece, I will interact with a beautiful animation created by Ken Perlin, an Oscar-winning computer graphics professor at New York University. Ken designed this imaginative animation based on the fractal ideas called the “Apollonian Gasket.” I will be controlling the visuals interactively from my violin.

To express my gratitude to the Vilcek Foundation for presenting this concert—and especially to Jan and Marica Vilcek for recognizing the significance of my discovery and development of Subharmonics as a musical element—I am composing a new work entitled *JanMaricana* for Subharmonics. In the course of this piece I will introduce a new Subharmonic I have just developed.

PLEASE EXPLAIN TO US, IN LAYMAN'S TERMS, WHAT “SUBHARMONICS” IS.

Subharmonics is an “extended” bowing technique, for playing the violin in a very special way. By controlling the speed and the pressure of the bow very, very precisely, a violinist can play notes *below* the open G, normally the lowest note on the violin, without changing the tuning. Through the use of Subharmonics, it's possible to play cello notes on the violin!

IS SUBHARMONICS SOMETHING WHOLLY NEW, OR IS IT A TECHNIQUE YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO USE WITH A VIOLIN?

I first started to develop the technique on my own in 1992; my first piece utilizing Subharmonics was called *ALT* in *Three Movements for Violin Solo*. In this work, I introduced Subharmonics in the third movement. At the time, I was studying composition privately with Mario Davidovsky at Columbia University. I played this piece to him and he said, “I have never heard Anything Like This,” and so I used the capital letters “A-L-T” in titling the piece!

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RICK
KINSEL
IN
CONVERSATION
WITH
MARI
KIMURA



WEARING THE MOTION SENSOR GLOVE THAT LETS MS. KIMURA'S BOW INTERACT WITH ANOTHER.

ASSIMILATING INTO AMERICA... MADE IT EASIER FOR ME TO EXPLORE THE CREATIVE OPTIONS THAT WERE OPEN TO ME AS AN ARTIST.

WHAT IS NEW ABOUT THE TECHNIQUE OF SUBHARMONICS? COULD YOU FILL US IN AS TO SOME OF THE PRACTICAL METHODS IMPLEMENTED IN PRODUCING THE TECHNIQUE?

I have continued to develop my technique throughout the years, and I have discovered that there are many Subharmonics that an expert player can produce. At this concert I will present for the first time the Subharmonic fifth, which is very difficult to control. In producing a Subharmonic fifth, if you play middle C, you can play the fifth below – thus F – without moving the left finger on the fingerboard, controlling the speed and the pressure of the bow very carefully. The discovery of the Subharmonic fifth, I feel personally, is one of my major achievements in recent years.

CAN YOU HELP ME TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBHARMONICS? IT SEEMS THAT YOU ARE FIDDLING WITH THE WRITTEN SCORE – EXPANDING IT TO FIT YOUR OWN ARTISTIC IDEA.

ARE COMPOSERS ALLOWED TO DO THAT? Well, the violin has been around for centuries, and wind players have long known how to extend the range of their instruments – in some cases, only slightly – through the use of Subharmonics. But Subharmonics is not viewed as being inherent to the capabilities of the violin; and, indeed, some might challenge the idea that the violin can produce them at all. Through my work and research in Subharmonics, it is becoming pretty clear to me that there is not only capability, but quite a bit of capability. And this opens up new possibilities for both performers and composers in the twenty-first century.

To answer the second part of your question, there is a well-established tradition of expanded scoring, which stems from the middle of the twentieth-century: Bela Bartók, Krzysztof Penderecki, John Cage, and Karlheinz Stockhausen are all noted for their tweaking of notation to allow for new performance techniques. These can be made up of graphical elements that you have to study hard to understand and prepare for. However, my approach to modifying notation to suit my own needs is fairly direct; often, I simply write Subharmonic notes where they are sounded, as in a conventional score. But you have to have the key, which I have also created, to understand how to produce them.

One thing I value very greatly as a composer is recording technology; it's an underrated tool, I feel, by many who believe that a musical work is simply not a composition without a conventional score. You might not be able to re-create what I am playing just by watching my video of it, but a recording documents what I want to convey exactly as I desire it to be heard, in real time and without the added burden of having to write it down. Of course, I still write some music down, but the capability to make recordings is something I wouldn't want to be without.

COMING FROM A NON-WESTERN MUSICAL TRADITION, WHAT LED YOU TO STUDY AND MASTER CLASSICAL EUROPEAN MUSIC?

My mother was an aspiring pianist, and my parents gave me piano and violin lessons, instead of Japanese traditional instrument lessons. It's simple as that.

IF YOU ARE STRIVING FOR INNOVATION IN YOUR WORK, WHY DO YOU STILL PLAY TRADITIONAL CLASSICS? WHAT CONNECTION DO YOU STILL FEEL TO WESTERN TRADITION?

I include traditional repertoire in my recitals and teaching because I view myself as continuing the tradition of the violin itself. Almost all major violinists throughout the ages, starting with Corelli, Vivaldi, and others like them, revolutionized violin technique and the Western repertoire through composing themselves. It is just in the last century that the division of labor between composer and performer became more distinct, and almost a norm. In my opinion, performers can learn a lot about performance techniques by being creative themselves. I would say that a composer who is able to perform at the highest level has a tremendous advantage in real-life elements of music making, rather than just manipulating black dots and lines on paper as a kind of intellectual exercise. My development of Subharmonics, and my use of interactive computer programs, is not much different to me from performing Bach and Brahms.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE?

I first came to the United States on my own in 1985, through an invitation from Professor Roman Totenberg at Boston University; I had a full scholarship. My father is a pioneer in the field of solar energy in Japan, and that brought me to North America a few times before. My father was a Fulbright scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the late 1950s, and my mother was also a Fulbright scholar at Radcliffe; they got married at the MIT Chapel. When I was four years old, my father came to work at the National Research Council in Ottawa, Canada, and we lived there for two years.

I was very fortunate in that I knew a wonderful family who had known my parents from that time, namely the family of the late Professor Lawrence B. Anderson, my father's advisor at MIT. Thanks to the Andersons – and their friends in Lincoln, Massachusetts – all their children and grandchildren have adopted me into their own families, as well, becoming my extended American family. We still are very close, and I can say that I have a second family here in the USA. Through their initial support, my immigration experience has been a wonderful one; I have experienced American hospitality on the most personal level. I am grateful to have inherited this personal connection from my parents.

...ART IS LIVING
AND FLUID....
WE CONTINUE TO
EVOLVE WITH
THE TIMES AND
TECHNOLOGIES
THAT ARE
AVAILABLE TO US
WHILE WE LIVE.

**DO YOU FEEL THAT THIS EXPERIENCE
HAS INFORMED YOUR CREATIVE CHOICES
AS AN ARTIST?**

Assimilating into America — through both my personal history and contacts with Americans — made it easier for me to explore the creative options that were open to me as an artist. My husband, Dr. Hervé Brönnimann, is himself an immigrant from Paris. Educated there at the École Normale Supérieure, he later received his doctorate in computer science from Princeton University. Hervé and I often discuss whether Americans truly understand what advantages they have here, compared to our native countries — Japan and France. The United States is a place where scientists and artists are free to explore interests outside of their so-called expertise, and are permitted to move horizontally in their work. Here in the United States, you can be a violinist and composer, or a computer scientist and Flamenco guitarist, or even move around within these areas of expertise. In other countries, such horizontal career moves aren't encouraged, and are relatively hard to do. My husband and I both appreciate the intellectual freedom and opportunities this country has to offer, and we hope that the American people continue to work in order to protect it.

**IN A 2009 INTERVIEW WITH
ARTS ELECTRIC, YOU MENTION THAT
IT TOOK COMING TO THE UNITED STATES
TO OPEN UP THE PATH TO MUSIC
COMPOSITION FOR YOU, SOMETHING
THAT PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE
HAPPENED IF YOU HAD STAYED IN JAPAN.
DID YOU HAVE A SENSE OF THIS
POSSIBILITY — THIS WIDENING OF YOUR
MUSICAL HORIZON — WHEN YOU DECIDED
TO EMIGRATE?**

No, I didn't know about it until I lived here.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO
A NEW IMMIGRANT TO THE UNITED
STATES WHO HAS MUSICAL / ARTISTIC
ASPIRATIONS?**

I would say to try to make American friends; and if you don't speak the language — like most Japanese students who first come here — try not to stick to your own kind while you are in this country.

**HOW SHOULD I THINK OF YOU, MARI:
AS A MUSICIAN AND COMPOSER IN THE
CLASSICAL OR ELECTRONIC MUSIC
GENRES? IF A PERFORMANCE REQUIRES
ELECTRONICS AND EXTENSION CORDS,
IS IT SAFE TO SAY THAT WE HAVE
CROSSED OVER INTO THE WORLD OF
ELECTRONIC MUSIC?**

To me, art is living and fluid; nothing is cast in stone. We have never "crossed over" anything in history. We continue to evolve with the times and technologies that are available to us while we live. So to declare myself as belonging to one camp or another would be a little counterintuitive; no single discipline in my work tends to take precedence over the other.

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