

University of Maryland School of Music Presents
ANNUAL SPRING KOTO RECITAL
CELEBRATING THE 51ST YEAR OF KOTO AT UMD
UMD Japanese Koto Ensemble and Washington Toho Koto Society



Sunday, April 23, 2023 • 2PM

DEKELBOUM CONCERT HALL

AT THE CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



**SCHOOL OF
MUSIC**

University of Maryland School of Music Presents

ANNUAL SPRING KOTO RECITAL

**UMD Japanese Koto Ensemble
and Washington Toho Koto Society**

Kyoko Okamoto, *Music Director*

Yuriko Gandolfo, *Assistant Director*

CELEBRATING THE 51ST YEAR OF KOTO AT UMD

Xiaoshan Ilsa Yin, *emcee*

Ph.D. Candidate in Ethnomusicology

Welcome Remarks.....Gregory Miller
Director, UMD School of Music

Introduction and Welcome J. Lawrence Witzleben
Professor of Ethnomusicology

Greetings from the Embassy of Japan.....Koichi Ai
Head of Chancery & Minister of Public Affairs

Hakone Hachiri Hensokyoku (Variations of Hakone Mountains)..... Taki Rentaro
composed 1901
Arr. Nomura Seiho

George Mabile, Changxu Pang, Sachiko Smith and Noriko Wills, *first koto*
Mayuko Chida, Kumiko Gale, Yuriko Gandolfo, Sabrina Sanchez,
Priscilla Seah and Xiaoshan Ying, *second koto*
Alexis Ayuketah, Indy Dorman, Michiko Masutani, Kyoko Okamoto,
Megha Tummalapalli, Cecilia Vu, Chang Wen and Christine Zhou, *third koto*
Dennis Minoru Erickson and Colin Khem, *bass koto*
Eli Kohlenberg, *shakuhachi*
Mary Josie Blanchard, *flute*

Chidori no Kyoku (Song of the Plover) Yoshizawa Kengyo
composed 1855

Noriko Willis, *honte koto and vocals*
Yuriko Gandolfo, *kaete koto*
Eli Kohlenberg, *shakuhachi*

Wakaba (Young Leaves) Kikushiro Masaaki
composed 1970

Alexis Ayuketah, Megha Tummalapalli, Cecilia Vu,
Chang Wen and Christine Zhou, *first koto*
Kyoko Okamoto, *second koto*

Gion Kouta (Song of Gion) Sassa Kohka
 composed 1930
 Arr. Kikusawa Shofu

Mayuko Chida, Indy Dorman, Dennis Minoru Erickson, Kumiko Gale,
 Yuriko Gandolfo, Michiko Masutani, Kyoko Osamoto, Sabrina Sanchez,
 Noriko Willis and Xiaoshan Ying, *koto and vocals*
 George Mobbille, *sangen*
 Eli Kohlenberg, *shakuhachi*

INTERMISSION

Tsuki no Sabaku (Moon over the Desert) Sakaki Suguru
 composed 1923
 Arr. Nomura Seiho

Mori no Kobito (Festival of the Elves in the Woods) Yamamoto Masayuki
 composed 1940
 Arr. Nomura Seiho

Mayuko Chica, Lydia Danen, Indy Dorman, Kumiko Gale,
 Michiko Masutani, Kyoko Okamoto, Changxu Pang, Sabrina Sanchez,
 Priscilla Seah and Xiaoshan Yin, *first koto*
 Yuriko Gandolfo, George Mobbille, Sachiko Smith, Noriko Willis, *second koto*
 Dennis Minoru Erickson and Collin Khem, *bass koto*
 Eli Kohlenberg, *shakuhachi*
 Mary Josie Blanchard, *flute*

Kagaribi (Torch) Nomura Seiho
 composed 1970

Changxu Pang, *first koto*
 George Mobbille, *second koto*
 Mary Josie Blanchard, *flute*

Ochiba no Odori (The Dance of Falling Leaves) Michio Miyagi
 composed 1921

Yuriko Gandolfo, *koto*
 Colin Khem, *bass koto*
 George Mobbille, *sangen*

Midori no Asa (Bright Morning) Eto Kimio
 composed 1943

Kyoko Okamoto, Priscilla Seah and Noriko Willis, *first koto*
 Sachiko Smith and Mayuko Chida, *second koto*
 George Mobbille, Changxu Pang and Yuriko Gandolfo, *third koto*
 Colin Khem, *bass koto*



Ambassador of Japan Washington, D. C.

I am honored to have this opportunity once again to send my greetings on the occasion of the 51st Annual Japanese Spring Koto Recital presented by the University of Maryland Japanese Koto Ensemble and the Washington Toho Koto Society. Today we celebrate both the beauty of spring and the treasured Japanese zither, the *koto*.

The *koto* is a traditional instrument with a more than 1,300 year history in Japan. Over the years, the musical styles performed on the *koto* has greatly expanded to include a variety of genres. It is classical *koto* music, however, that is closely tied to spring and the *sakura* trees.

Over a century ago, the city of Tokyo gifted more than 3,000 cherry blossom trees to Washington, D.C. Each year without fail, these beautiful flowers bloom bringing people from far and wide to the nation's capital. They remain an emblem of the deep-rooted friendship between Japan and the U.S., and this annual spring concert likewise plays its own part in the strengthening of the connection our two countries share.

I thank all the performers for their passion for the *koto* and the promotion of Japanese culture. As ever, a special thank you to Mrs. Kyoko Okamoto, music director of the Washington Toho Koto Society, who plays an integral part in bringing the art of *koto* to the greater Washington, D.C. area. I extend my congratulations to her as one of the 2022 recipients of the Foreign Minister's Commendation, awarded for her achievements in strengthening the Japan-U.S. friendship through her enthusiasm and love of teaching the art of *koto*.

For everyone in attendance, I hope this afternoon will be a special treat as you are immersed in the beautiful and evocative melodies of the *koto*.

Koji Tomita
TOMITA Koji
Ambassador of Japan

KYOKO OKAMOTO is the director of the University of Maryland Japanese Koto Ensemble and the Washington Toho Koto Society. A native of Japan, Okamoto is a certified koto teacher of the Ikuta School of Koto, which she studied under Kazue Ehara of Ashiya, Japan. She organized the Washington Toho Koto Society, a nonprofit organization, in 1971 to promote the enjoyment of Japanese koto music. In August 2022, she received the Foreign Minister's award from the Japanese Government for teaching and performing koto music over 50 years in the U.S., contributing greatly to the promotion of Japanese music and culture in the United States and working to promote friendly relations between the two countries.

YURIKO GANDOLFO is the assistant music director at Washington Toho Koto Society and has performed at the Kennedy Center, Embassy of Japan, various museums including National Gallery of Art, and schools in the area. She has been a student of Okamoto Sensei, a founder of the Washington Toho Koto Society and lecturer at the University of Maryland School of Music since 1988.

MARY-JOSIE BLANCHARD, flute, was selected for the Texas All-State Orchestra. She studied flute with Byron Hester, the first chair flute for Houston Symphony, and performed as a soloist in Stephens College Orchestra. Blanchard has been teaching the flute for years, and her students have won many honors including the National Symphony Orchestra Fellowship.

ELI MINARD KOHLENBERG is a shakuhachi player from Washington, D.C. He has had the honor of studying in the Kinko-ryu tradition with Ralph Samuelson, Elizabeth Reian Bennett, Ronnie Nyogetsu Reishin Seldin and Kurahashi Yodo II, and currently studies with James Nyoraku Schlefer.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND JAPANESE KOTO ENSEMBLE, sponsored by the Ethnomusicology Graduate Studies Program, is made up of undergraduate, graduate and alumni students of the University of Maryland who are studying or have studied the koto in classes MUSC129K/L or MUSC629K/L, taught by Kyoko Okamoto each semester. Okamoto has been teaching koto at the University since 1972.

Okamoto Sensei's lectures and concerts have delighted universities and community audiences nationwide. She has recorded for film productions by the Smithsonian Institution and performed for the film *The Art of the Hyogushi*. Okamoto Sensei also played for the educational film *Pacific Bridge* in 1977. In the same year, she appeared on public television as part of the music series *Music in Harmony*, produced by the National Symphony Orchestra. In addition, Okamoto Sensei has played for Prime Minister Nakasone and the former Emperor of Japan at the Japanese Embassy in 1987 in Washington, D.C..

The **WASHINGTON TOHO KOTO SOCIETY** was organized by Kyoko Okamoto in 1971 to promote the enjoyment of Japanese koto music. The Society has earned wide acclaim and has participated in many national events. These have included Presidential Inaugurations, Japanese Embassy events (including the then Crown Prince and Princess Akihito and Vice President Bush) and National Cherry Blossom Festivals.

In October 2003, the Washington Toho Koto Society was honored with a Special Award from the Foreign Minister of Japan, Yoriko Kawaguchi, in recognition of more than 30 years of contributing excellent performance in spreading Japanese koto music in the United States and promoting mutual understanding and friendship between the two Countries.

In December 2022, Kyoko Okamoto received the Foreign Minister's Commendation from the Japanese Government in recognition of her contribution to the promotion of Japanese culture in the United States.

ABOUT THE INSTRUMENTS

The *koto*, or “so,” produces an evocative sound recognized in Japanese cultural surveys as the most distinctively Japanese voice in Japan’s spectrum of musical instruments. The six foot long board zither is made of paulownia (*kiri*) wood with movable bridges supporting the 13 strings that are plucked with three ivory picks worn on the right hand. The left hand also manipulates the strings to create more varied sounds. A Japanese precursor to the koto was produced in prehistoric times, but this more elaborate zither was introduced from China and Korea by the eighth century. In the mid-17th century, the koto moved beyond exclusive use by the courtier, priest and scholar to become a popular instrument.

The *shakuhachi* is a Japanese vertical flute with five holes, traditionally made of bamboo. Descending from the smaller *hitoyogiri* and earlier Chinese instruments, the shakuhachi was developed as a meditation tool during the Edo period (1603–1867) by monks of the Fuke Zen sect. Since at least the 19th century, it has also been used for secular music, most notably with koto and sangen in the three-part sankyoku ensemble.

The *Sangen* or *Shamisen* was brought to Okinawa (the southernmost islands of Japan) in the 16th century. An integral part of Kabuki music, Sangen’s popularity moved beyond theater to teahouses where geisha entertained guests and local communities. Today, there are a number of trio pieces for koto, sangen and shakuhachi called sankyoku.

Hakone Hachiri Hensokyoku (Variations of Hakone Mountains)

Taki Rentaro, composed 1901

Nomura Seiho, arranged 1967

This is an arrangement of Taki Rentaro’s famous children’s song for multiple koto parts and bass koto. The hike up and down Mount Hakone in Japan totals eight (*hachi*) *ri*, a unit of distance equaling 3.2 kilometers. The five variations include rhythmic and up-tempo parts, a melodic dance-like section and a classical style with a twist of modern harmony.

Chidori no Kyoku (*Song of the Plover*)

Yoshizawa Kengyo, composed 1855

This piece observes the classic instrumental/vocal structure: an instrumental introduction followed by a vocal section and followed by an instrumental duet. Today’s rendition omits the latter part of the vocal prelude. The lyrics say: The plovers which live/ Out on the shore/ Will chirp/ Forever the Court. This *waka* (poem) was taken from the famous collection titled *Kokinshu* (905 AD).

Wakaba (Young Leaves)

Kikushiro Masaaki, composed 1970

This song expresses the long-anticipated arrival of spring — buds on the trees and bushes appearing, birds chirping happily, and other signs of spring.

Gion Kouta (Song of Gion)

Sassa Kohka, composed 1930

Kikusawa Shofu, arranged 1964

This famous lyric was written by Tokyo-born author Nagata Mikihiro in 1928. Kyoto was his favorite place, and he particularly loved Gion, where there are a number of teahouses and Geisha entertainers. All four verses focus on vivid images of each season. Try to picture cherry blossoms in evenings as the moon rises over a mountain, or snowfalls through a window lit by a lantern. Each verse ends with a profession of love for Gion and *Darari Obi* (a long sash worn with kimono)—symbols of Gion life.

Tsuki no Sabaku (Moon over the Desert)

Sakaki Suguru, composed 1923

Nomura Seiho, arranged 1966

Tsuki no Sabaku depicts a long journey of the prince and princess through the vast desert under the moon. One can picture the convoy of the wedding party, camels laden with the young couple's belongings. Despite the wedding being a happy occasion, it is a melancholy song.

Mori no Kobito (Festival of the Elves in the Woods)

Yamamoto Masayuki, composed 1940

Nomura Seiho, arranged 1966

In contrast with the preceding selection, *Mori no Kobito* is much more carefree and filled with images of elves dancing, singing and laughing in a deep forest.

Kagaribi (Torch)

Nomura Seiho, composed 1970

This trio piece with high register and low register koto accompanied by a flute was composed to commemorate the 1970 World Expo held in Osaka, Japan. "Torch" alludes to an eternal flame of hope and harmony for mankind and its future.

Ochiba no Odori (The Dance of Falling Leaves)

Michio Miyagi, composed 1921

This piece was performed for the first time with a bass koto which was created by Miyagi. The impression of falling leaves dancing in the autumn wind is sensuously transmitted by the novel combination of the instruments—koto, bass koto and shamisen.

Midori no Asa (Bright Morning)

Eto Kimio, composed 1943

This piece is comprised of eight separate koto parts including bass koto. It is our hope that the audience feels the energy of the refreshing morning through this lively music.

Kyoko Okamoto, *Music Director*
Yuriko Gandolfo, *Assistant Director*

Alexis Ayuketah
Indy Dorman
Dennis Erickson
Sabrina Sanchez
Megha Tummalapalli
Cecilia Vu
Chang Wen
Xiaoshan Yin
Christine Zhou

Kyoko Okamoto, *President*

Colin Khem, *Vice-President*

Mary Josie Blanchard

Mayuko Chida

Lydia Danen

Kumiko Gale

Yuriko Gandolfo

Colin Khem*

Eli Kohlenberg

Michiko Masutanni

George Mobbille*

Kyoko Okamoto

Changxu Pang*

Priscilla Seah*

Sachiko Smith

Noriko Wills

Treasurer

Jackie Lee

Recording and Corresponding Secretary

Colin Khem*

*indicates UMD alumni

The Washington Toho Koto Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit cultural and educational organization incorporated in Maryland to promote goodwill and enjoyment of koto music.

Director

Kyoko Okamoto

Assistant Director

Yuriko Gandolfo

Stage Manager

Margaret Kaii-Ziegler

Stage Crew

Michelle Amano, Joy Aso, Robert Brose, Bo Conner, Soichiro Conner,
Lee Crumbaugh, Grace Kaii, Keiko Miller, Andy McCann, Jake McCann,
Donald Romberger, Seori Stephens and Melvin Ware

Kimono Dressers

Wanda Butler Hardie, Yoshiko Hirota, Eriko Murray,
Kazumi Oiki and Hideko Uchiyama

Mekuri

Keiko O'Rourke

Photographer

Douglas Bolt

Videographer

Antonio d'Urzo

Stage Calligraphy

Keiko O'Rourke

Stage Logo and Screens

Kimie Bond, Gerald King and Paul Okamoto

Technical Assistance

Yoshiko Jaeggi



22-23 SEASON >

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PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

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