

Michiko Otaki NEWSLETTER

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Fall, 2005

Many people in recent years have asked Michiko and our office about the “floating head” photo on the front page of Michiko’s annual newsletter. “Why, Michiko hasn’t had long hair like that for years! How old is that photo anyway?” We have decided that we should update the photo before people start asking us “whose head is floating on Michiko’s newsletter?” We hope you like the new, updated version!

The 2004-2005 season turned out to be a very fruitful season for Michiko, and she is now preparing for an extremely busy fall, as you will read below.



THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE PAST season for Michiko was her tour with British violist **ROGER CHASE**. Michiko and Roger have known each other ever since RWAM first toured the Esterhazy Baryton Trio, in which Roger was the violist, more than 20 years ago. Even though they had known and respected each other’s work over the years, this past January’s tour fol-

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(on violist Roger Chase)**

lowing Roger’s relocation to the U.S. was the very first time they actually performed together. The results were extraordinary for us, the artists, and especially for the audiences wherever they performed. The two of them developed into an highly compatible duo during their limited tour, and in May they recorded the pieces which they performed on tour (Clara Schumann’s *Three Romances*, Brahms’ *Sonata in F minor*, Schubert’s *Arpeggione Sonata*, and Paganini’s virtuosic *Sonata for Grande Viola*). The CD is scheduled for release later this year.

“Roger is an incredible violist. Not only is he a first-rate,

world-class player, but he is also among the finest artists performing today—a true soloist in the best tradition of the legendary violist Lionel Tertis [1876-1975; incidentally, Roger is playing on Professor Tertis’ famous 17-1/8 inch *Montagnana* viola]. The expressiveness, warmth, passion, varieties of tonal color, subtlest nuances of phrasing, and above all, the imagination with which he performs—I am in awe every time I hear him play. I have learned,

and am still learning, so much from this phenomenal musician. It is truly an honor to be working with him.” The duo’s second tour is in the planning stages for the 2006-07 season.

“ANOTHER ENCOUNTER, ANOTHER MOZART”

IN MARCH AND APRIL MICHIKO HAD a chance to work with another old friend, the very



Listening to a suggestion from the master artist

fine Czech cellist **JAN ŠKRDLÍK**, when Jan was in the U.S. with the **GIDEON STRING TRIO**. “I worked with Jan and Pavel [Wallinger, the violinist of the Trio] before as members of the Wallinger String Quartet in 1995, and it was fun working with these fine musicians again in a different configuration.” Michiko joined the Trio performing Mozart’s Piano Quartet in G minor (K. 478) at Spivey Hall. “Because I worked with Jan last summer in the Czech Republic performing and recording the Mozart F major concerto (K. 413), Jan’s remark when we first sat down to rehearse was ‘another encounter, another Mozart!’ And it was a very fine but very different Mozart, indeed. Whereas the F major concerto is full of classical, Viennese elegance, the Piano Quartet



“Yes, that’s it!” Michiko and Roger Chase in rehearsal



A tall viola for a tall man.
Roger with his teacher's favorite,
unique instrument

is full of passion, and very emotional.”

SUMMER FESTIVAL IN A HISTORIC TOWN

MICHIKO AND JAN ENCOUNTERED each other again with yet another Mozart work this summer in the Czech Republic when the **BRNO CHAMBER SOLOISTS** invited Michiko to perform with them at the “Landscape of Music” Festival in Telč in July.

“Telč? Even though I had traveled through Moravia many times over the past 15 years, the name did not ring a bell with me. My Czech colleagues seemed surprised when I mentioned it, and would tell me just how popular a tourist destination it is, and how beautiful and interesting Telč is. Located about midway between Brno and Prague, it is said to be the best preserved Renaissance town north of the Alps.

“When we arrived in a bus (and yes, this time it was a bus, rather than personal cars that could break down because of the heat; many of you probably remember the story of the car problem and the consequent delayed arrival of some of the musicians to the Janáček Festival in the last newsletter), I immediately fell in love with the town. As always, I only had but a very short period of time to walk and look around, but I could see the town was truly charming. I have seen many European old town squares, but there was something about this one which made it very special. It instantly joined my ‘re-visit someday’ list.” The town of Telč is a historical Re-

naissance town, protected by UNESCO as one of the International Heritage sights; the square is said to be one of the best kept and largest of its kind in Central Europe.

The performance took place in a large room of the castle, which is exceptionally well preserved. Michiko was pleased to find a good quality piano there, and she found the acoustics and ambience of the room to be perfect. “But actually, what I really enjoyed above all was the view from the window. While the orchestra rehearsed, I looked out the window; the beautiful landscape, the lake underneath, charming houses, the rolling hills, with the beautiful music played by a very fine orchestra in the background. What a special moment it was!”

When the concert began, Michiko was pleasantly surprised to see the size of the audience. “I never know what to expect in the way of the audience until the performance time, but the hall was filled to capacity, and the audience was very welcoming and responsive. Even with so many people, the atmosphere was intimate enough for Mozart’s scaled-down version of this concerto. The setting could not have been better for a concert.” The review of the concert in *Vysočina*, headlined “**SUPERB JAPANESE OPENED THE FESTIVAL LANDSCAPE OF MUSIC**” reflects the success of the concert: “*The excellent pianist Michiko Otaki, who was born in Japan and now lives in USA, opened the tenth*

**“She [Michiko] and the
Brno Chamber Soloists
received thunderous
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Concerto for piano and
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Mozart.”**

Vysočina, 7/19/2005

year of the Landscape of Music. In the fully booked Castle Theatre Auditorium she and the Brno Chamber Soloists received thunderous applause for their interpretation of the Concerto for piano and orchestra by W.A. Mozart.”

Michiko has performed this C major concerto, K. 415, for a number of years and had recorded it on a CD with a different Moravian orchestra, the Brno Chamber Orchestra, over 10 years ago, which is still available for purchase on Michiko’s website and at her concerts. “It is always fascinating to come back and reconsider an old favorite. I conceive the piece in an entirely new light, and I see many things I had not seen before. The interpretation I might have been convinced about in the past sometimes no longer seems valid, and I get to explore different ways to make the



With Jan Škrdlík in the beautiful historic town square in Telč before the concert

performance more beautiful. Furthermore, this time around, I decided to create my own cadenzas. In the past I would use Mozart's cadenzas whenever available, and improvise my own only when there was none left by him. K. 415 does have Mozart cadenzas, which I played before. After all, he was the master, and it seemed contemptuous to push them aside and to create my own to replace his. But now I look at it differently. It is, after all, a cadenza, and in Mozart's day a performer was expected to improvise his or her own; that was a vital part of the performance. Mozart most likely did not expect other performers to copy him. I heard from various artists that the process of creating a cadenza establishes a stronger, closer connection with a concerto, and as a result, not just the cadenza but the entire concerto becomes more like a part of the performer, and I found that to be very true. And I also found that process



Giving a final touch: Michiko and the Brno Chamber Soloists in dress rehearsal at the Telč Castle

for this very enchanting concerto to be great fun, and an entirely new learning experience of the already familiar piece. It sure took a lot of study time though, since there are altogether seven places where cadenzas should or could be inserted into this three movement concerto!"

THE BRNO CHAMBER SOLOISTS and Michiko will start their tour on September 29, and they will travel together for seven weeks. "It is a good thing the orchestra members are either energetic young people or seasoned, mature professionals. They should be able to survive this grueling schedule. In fact, when I was in Brno this summer a few of the members asked specifically about certain cities and states we would be traveling to, and told me how excited they were to visit all these places." Arriving and departing from Atlanta, the group will travel through 19 states, as far south as Florida, as far west as Colorado, Wyoming and Montana, and across the northern border states through the Dakotas, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Please see the complete tour itinerary on the last page of this newsletter, and do come

and hear Michiko and these fine Czech musicians if they are in your vicinity, or invite any friends



Musicians' expressions are always brighter after a concert. Michiko with cellist Škrdlík and violinist Besperát, the Director of the Brno Chamber Soloists

you might have along the path of the tour.

A NEW AND IMPROVED NAME FOR MICHIKO'S UNIVERSITY

YES, IT IS NO LONGER that very long, confusing and mysterious "College and University" name anymore. The school where Michiko teaches now has a simpler, easier name to remember: *Clayton State University*. "I am very happy with this new name. The one we had (Clayton College & State University) was so confusing; not

only did many outside people get it wrong ('Clayton State & College University?' 'Clayton University & State College?'), but even those of us who should know it would get it wrong sometimes. The new one is so much easier for everyone to say and remember correctly."

Michiko enjoyed her two recitals with her colleague, tenor Dr. Kurt-Alexander Zeller, last fall at Clayton State's Spivey Hall, and she will be heard there with him again on Thursday, April 27, performing Ralph Vaughan Williams' *On Wenlock Edge* with the **DEGAS STRING QUARTET**, an excellent, young international quartet which has been repeatedly featured at the Aspen Festival. That piece will be played again with the same performers in Hickory, NC, on Saturday, April 22, on the Quartet's own *Chamber Classics* series.

Please contact our office if you would like further information about any of Michiko's upcoming performances or tours, or for materials on any of the other artists mentioned in this newsletter.



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BRNO CHAMBER SOLOISTS

with MICHIKO OTAKI as piano soloist

USA Debut Tour, Fall, 2005

<u>DATE/TIME</u>	<u>CITY</u>	<u>PRESENTER/VENUE</u>
SEPTEMBER		
29 7:30 pm	AMERICUS, GA	Georgia Southwestern State University/Jackson Performance Hall
30 7:30 pm	LAKE CITY, FL	First Presbyterian Church/697 SW Baya Drive
OCTOBER		
1 7:30 pm	TAMPA, FL [<i>Tarpon Springs</i>]	Tarpon Springs Performing Arts Center/324 Pine Street
<u>2</u> 8:00 pm	MIAMI, FL	Festival Miami/U. of Miami, Gusman Hall, 1314 Miller Dr.
4 7:30 pm	TROY, AL	Troy Arts Council/Claudia Crosby Theater, Smith Hall, Troy U.
6 8:00 pm	GREENVILLE, SC	International Chamber Music Series/ Daniel Hall, Furman University
10 TBA am	JACKSON, MS	St. Andrews' Episcopal School Workshop
10 7:30 pm	JACKSON, MS	Millsaps College Bell Concert Series/Academic Center Recital Hall
11 7:30 pm	MEMPHIS, TN	Concerts International/Harris Auditorium, U. Of Memphis
13 7:30 pm	JOPLIN, MO	Allied Concerts/High School Auditorium
15 7:00 pm	LA JUNTA, CO	Allied Concerts/Otero Jr. College Ed Stafford Theatre
<u>16</u> 7:00 pm	GLENWOOD SPRINGS, CO	Allied Concerts/High School Auditorium
18 7:30 pm	BUTTE, MT	Allied Concerts/Mother Lode Theatre
19 7:30 pm	BILLINGS, MT	Allied Concerts/Alberta Bair Theatre
20 7:30 pm	RAPID CITY, SD	Allied Concerts/Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Theatre
21 7:30 pm	DICKINSON, ND	Allied Concerts/Stickney Aud. in May Hall, Dickinson State University
22 7:30 pm	DEVILS LAKE, ND	Allied Concerts/Lake Region CCA/UND Lake Region Auditorium
<u>23</u> 2:00 pm	BOTTINEAU, ND	Allied Concerts/James Howell High School Auditorium
24 8:00 pm	MOORHEAD, MN	Allied Concerts/Concordia College Memorial Auditorium
25 7:30 pm	NEW ULM, MN	Allied Concerts/Middle School Auditorium
27 7:30 pm	FREMONT, NE	Allied Concerts/High School Auditorium
28 7:30 pm	SIOUX CITY, IA	Allied Concerts/Eppley Auditorium, Morningside College
<u>30</u> 7:00 pm	MERRILL, WI	Allied Concerts/Prairie River Middle School Auditorium
31 7:30 pm	STURGEON BAY, WI	Allied Concerts/United Methodist Church
NOVEMBER		
1 7:30 pm	BURLINGTON, IA	Allied Concerts/Memorial Auditorium
3 12:00 noon	ALLENDALE, MI	Grand Valley State University/Cook-Dewitt Hall
5 8:00 pm	PORT CLINTON, OH	Firelands Presbyterian Church/2626 E. Harbor Rd.
7 11:00 am	CHICAGO, IL	Chicago Chamber Music Society/Women's Club, 626 N. Michigan Ave.
9	Johnson City, TN?	
10 7:30 pm	SPINDALE, NC	Isothermal Community College/Performing Arts and Conference Center
11 7:30 pm	VALDESE, NC	Old Rock School/Auditorium
12 8:00 pm	CULLOWHEE, NC	Western Carolina University/Fine & Performing Arts Center

NOTE: Sundays are underlined

The Brno Chamber Soloists are also playing in Augusta, GA (10/7) and Macon, GA (10/8) with cello soloist Jan Škrdlík.