

27 November 2006 7.30pm
St. John's, Smith Square

cello
**Yoko
Ara**



"A cellist of radiance and vibrancy"
"Simply heartwarming"

Ongaku no Tomo



"consistent musicality" Sunday Times

**Motoki
Hirai**
piano

Cello and Piano

Beethoven: 12 Variations on the theme of 'Judas Maccabeus'
by Handel, WoO.45

Beethoven: Cello Sonata No.3 in A major, op.69

Piano Solo

Motoki Hirai: a) Canto Amoroso
b) Valse Pathétique (1993)
c) Hommage à Grieg (World Première)

Grieg: Arietta op.12 no.1; Dance-Caprice op.28 no.3;
Little Bird op.43 no.4; Watchman's Song op.12 no.3;
Scherzo op.54 no.5; Solitary Traveller op.43 no.2;
Wedding-day at Trolldhaugen op.65 no.6

Cello & Piano

Vivaldi (arr. Motoki Hirai): Largo

Saint-Saëns: The Swan

Kozaburo Y. Hirai: Paraphrase on a Japanese Folk-tune
'Sakura, Sakura' (1953)

Popper: Hungarian Rhapsody

As part of the 2006/07 season this concert not only marks the UK debut of the acclaimed Japanese cellist, Yoko Ara joined by London-based pianist Motoki Hirai, but also commemorates the centenary of Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) celebrating his life and works by including a selection of the composer's pieces for solo piano as well as the world première of Motoki's "Homage to Grieg". The duo performers will present a varied programme featuring masterpieces for cello and piano by Beethoven, Saint-Saëns and Popper as well as "Paraphrase on a Japanese Folk-tune, Sakura, Sakura", written by Kozaburo Y. Hirai (1910-2002), praising the national flower of the composer's homeland. A new arrangement of Vivaldi's Largo for cello and piano (from Concerto Grosso No.11) by Motoki will also be performed. Earlier this year in Japan, the duo performers captivated audiences and critics alike; "sheer delight! ... spellbinding!" (Ongaku no Tomo).

Yoko Ara cellist

Regarded as one of Japan's most popular cellists, Yoko Ara was born in Tokyo and moved to Australia with her family at the age of eight where she started playing the cello. After studying at the Toho School of Music in Tokyo, she went to the U.S.A. in 1986 to join the music department of Illinois State University on a full scholarship, before transferring to Rutgers University in New Jersey where she studied cello under Bernard Greenhouse. In 1989 Yoko won the third prize in the Graham Stahl Music Competition and went on to study at The Juilliard School of Music in New York where she was the principal cellist of The Juilliard Orchestra. Yoko's other cello teachers over the years include Juro Aoki, Ko Iwasaki, Kenichiro Tokunaga and Harvey Shapiro.

After making a successful debut recital at the prestigious Lincoln Center in New York in 1992, Yoko has been performing frequently as a soloist and has appeared at many of the festivals in the U.S. and various music venues such as Ginza Oji Hall, Tokyo and Carnegie Well Recital Hall, NY. In 2002 Yoko gave a decennial recital titled 'New York Memories' at the Toppan Hall in Tokyo which was received enthusiastically from both critics and the public. At the Commemoration Lecture held in Fukuoka, Japan the following year, she played for the former US president Bill Clinton. Yoko Ara has also been performing regularly as a member of the Saito Kinen Orchestra, the Saito Cello Ensemble, the string ensemble Vega, the Mito Chamber Orchestra and the Tokyo Opera no Mori Orchestra under Seiji Ozawa.

In 2003, she released a CD titled 'The Cinema of Reminiscence-Plein Soleil', which has added considerably to her popularity and helped introduce her to a wider audience. Yoko is also passionately committed to chamber music and has recently formed a piano trio named the 'Tiara' which gave a highly successful debut performance at the Hamarikyu Asahi Hall, Tokyo in July 2006. Over the years, she has received a number of music awards including The Music Festival Award at Tateshina Heights. Yoko Ara is currently on the teaching faculty of the Senzoku School of Music, Tokyo.

Motoki Hirai pianist

Widely acknowledged as one of the most imaginative pianists of his generation, Motoki Hirai has made a number of successful appearances on concert platforms throughout the Far East, America and Europe including prestigious venues in the UK such as St George's, Bristol, Duke's Hall, St James, Piccadilly, St John's, Smith Square, St Martin-in-the-Fields and the South Bank Centre.

Born into a highly gifted musical family, Motoki studied piano, harmony and counterpoint with his grandfather, the eminent composer Kozaburo Hirai, and violin with his grandmother. Since his first professional appearance at the age of 13 playing his own piano compositions to great acclaim, Motoki has been highly active in both performance and composition. After reading philosophy and aesthetics at Keio University in Tokyo, Motoki came to London in 1996 to study at the Royal Academy of Music and later at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, whilst taking an MA at City University.

As part of 2005 EU-Japan Year of People-to-People Exchanges, Motoki Hirai gave a highly successful solo piano recital at St. John's, Smith Square in London, where he included the world première of his own composition 'Scenes from a Native Land'. Between 1994-98, Motoki visited Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Portugal as an artistic emissary of the Japanese government. Over the years Motoki has given freely of his time to perform in a number of charity concerts for international organizations such as the British Red Cross, the Motor Neurone Disease Association and UNESCO.

Since 1991, Motoki has collaborated with renowned artists such as Kalman Berkes, Michael Cox and Barry Craft, whilst giving solo recitals as well as appearing as a soloist with numerous orchestras internationally. Motoki has also given numerous duo-recitals with his father, Takeichiro Hirai, the celebrated cellist whom Pablo Casals designated as his natural successor. In March 2006, Motoki was invited to give a joint recital with the violinist, John Pearce at St Cyprian's, London under the auspices of London Business School, followed by a successful concert appearance at St George's, Bristol.

This artist has, over the last few years, broadcast internationally on radio and television such as Classic FM, BBC and NHK and has also made a number of recordings on CD, the latest of which is a collection of his own compositions for solo piano 'Canto Amoroso' which has been well-received and several of these pieces have been used in recent films. Forthcoming performing engagements for 2007 will include extensive concert tours of Europe and Japan as well as a recital at London's Wigmore Hall (1st June).

www.motokihirai.com

"His emotional range, versatility and imagination is simply outstanding" Ongaku no Tomo

"the most brilliant and sensitive musical talent" The Guardian



St. John's, Smith Square General Manager: Paul Davies
Tickets £20, £15, £10 (concessions £5 discount on each price)

Box Office: 020 7222 1061 Online Booking: www.sjss.org.uk

Box Office, St. John's, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HA, Tel: 020 7222 1061. Mastercard, Visa and Maestro accepted.

Advance Booking: The Box Office is open from 10am-5pm (until 6pm on concert days) Monday to Friday.

Advance bookings cannot be made after 6pm or at weekends/bank holidays.

Tickets may also be booked by fax: 020 7233 1618 or online at: www.sjss.org.uk

The Footstool Restaurant in the Crypt is open from 5.30pm for a la carte dining and a light supper menu. Tel. 020 7222 2779.
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