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Report for the Japan-US Creative Arts Fellowship

The past three months have been an extraordinary cultural and travel experience. I arrived in Tokyo on May 9th and returned to Boston on August 8th 2014. The intensity of impressions, encounters, discoveries, and personal contacts with students, fellow composers, musicians, priests, and people in the streets obviously can't be described in a few pages. Right from the beginning I maintained a daily photo blog, which contains over 500 images and a couple of videos and sound recordings. It was a means to share impressions with family and friends, as well as with people I met throughout my journey¹.

In 2013 I contacted two Japanese composers, Professor Kiyoshi Furukawa from Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku Bijutsu Gakubu Faculty of Inter-Media Art, and Professor Shintaro Imai from Kunitachi College of Music. I had met both in Europe about 15 years ago. They kindly offered invitations to give lectures and concerts at their institutions.

Contrary to other places, the contact network between institutions and interested musicians seems to be very strong in Japan and many composers are members of the *Japanese Society for Sonic Arts*. As soon as the two first lectures were planned and other colleagues knew that I would come to Japan I received many more invitations to their institutions. Many could be realized; others did not fit into my schedule and will hopefully happen in the future.

I had several objectives for the three months: researching rituals in a broad sense, connecting with individual musicians and educational institutions, and collecting soundscapes. Recorded sounds are the backbone for my research and compositional work. Besides becoming the source for sound treatments and being integrated into my compositions, they provide models for atmospheres, sonic polyphony and the archetypical of a given place. In that sense, I can only work with sounds I recorded myself, as the recording process is part of the needed experience. While later working with them in the studio, the memory of emotions gathered at the original moment becomes crucial in order to make them valuable building blocks in new works. Those sound materials are never neutral. They are sonic testimonies of individuals and charged with their histories. Some aspects of ritual are purely visual and not captured by a sound recording device. It is crucial for me to witness those details in order to develop a personal relationship. Those details are obvious in temple ceremonies, but also present in every day life, e.g. train personnel bowing every time they enter or leave a car, or details of food preparation, and serving.

¹ <http://www.tutschku.com/content/Japan2014-blog.php>

The breadth of sound recordings I was able to make during the three months exceeded my expectations by far. I'm just listing a couple of highlights here. Through Professor Alison Tokita, head of musicology at Kyoto City University for Arts, I was introduced to the priest Rev. Takawaki at the private Ryūzenji Temple in Kyoto. He invited me to a special Shomyo Ceremony, which I was allowed to record. He also explained history, musical notation, and other relevant aspects prior to the service and prepared excerpts of the Shomyo Chant in form of a score to follow along.

With the help of Professor Takeyoshi Mori from Senzoku Gakuen College of Music, I got into contact with the priest of Yogen-ji Temple in Tokyo and was allowed to record the temple instruments: gong, woodblock, and bell.

My interest in traditional Japanese instruments and their use in contemporary music brought me into contact with several local musicians. I was able to improvise and record with the Shamisen player Yumiko Tanaka and the Shakuhachi player Akihito Obama. The musicologist Professor Toshie Kakinuma from Kyoto City University of Arts introduced me to the composer and Koto performer Professor Noriko Nakamura. With her, I could record 13- and 17-string Kotos. I also recorded a 30-string Koto with Aya Asakura at the Seihou-ji Temple. Both performed Japanese repertoire, but also gave me the occasion to try the instruments myself and to record my improvisations and sound experimentations.

In addition, without special arrangements, I recorded countless moments of celebration and ritual. The Shunki Reitaisai spring festival in Nikko with horse archery and the One Thousand Samurai Procession; the Gion Matsuri in Kyoto; the Bon Odori Matsuri at Tsukiji-Hongwanji Temple Tokyo; the Nebuta Matsuri in Aomori; the Sansha Taisai Matsuri in Hachinohe and the Kanto Matsuri in Akita offered typical environments with dancing and singing people, accompanied by drums, flutes, and gongs. The Tuna Auction at Tokyo Tsukiji fish market; the blessing of a new car by a Buddhist priest; the Tokyo Metro system; children playgrounds; yelling sales persons at the Ameyoko market in Ueno; Kagura dance performance and drumming at Gojo Shrine in Ueno Park; Patchinko slot halls; the Shingon Goma fire ritual at Fukagawafudodo Temple in Tokyo; flea markets; the summer purification ceremony at Kitano Tenmangu Shrine in Kyoto; street musicians; the spinning wheels of sutra at Daisho-in Temple in Miyajima; the Tokyo Sumida River Fireworks Festival and the Aomori Nebuta Matsuri fireworks were all testimonies of this lively ritualistic culture.

Sonic landscapes of nature were also inviting: parks and gardens with bird song, crickets, and frogs; suikinkutsu, the Japanese water harp at Taiso-in Temple; seagulls at Kubushima Shrine in Hachinohe; as well as rivers and waterfalls in the Oirase Gorge near Aomori captured my interest.

Sugamo, a Tokyo district where elder people gather was an interesting location, as it revealed some aspects of rituals, which are more hidden in the modern city and maybe not as much practiced among the younger people.

The first month I remained in Tokyo, rented a small room at Azabu Court in Roppongi and gave lectures and concerts at several Tokyo area universities². The very well organized Artist's Forum at the International House of Japan gave me the occasion to premiere the new work *Issho ni*, which I had specially composed for the occasion. When I first saw the room and its glass wall to the garden, I decided to orient the audience to face the trees. This played out extremely well and added a magic component with the changing lights at nightfall. The concert received very warm reactions and interesting questions during the Q&A³. It was also the occasion to meet two other fellows of the JUSFC program, the performance artist Akim Ndlovu and the writer Patrick Donnelly.

I could attend Akim's Artist's Forum the following week and be inspired by his ability to connect with communities and to integrate them into his performance. With Patrick, I met again several times during my time in Kyoto and we visited temples in Ohara together.

Attending the Fuji Acousmatic Music Festival as an audience member gave me the opportunity to listen to many sonic arts creations of younger composers. My lecture-concerts were occasions to share my work with students and audience members. The concert at Senzoku Gakuen College of Music, meticulously organized by Professor Takeyoshi Mori, included, besides my own compositions, three works by advanced students from the masters and doctoral programs, and I was invited to provide individual comments on their works and performances. Also the other lectures and concerts at Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku Bijutsu Gakubu, organized by Professor Kiyoshi Furukawa; Tokyo University of the Arts Music department, organized by Professor Takeyoshi Mori; Keio University Faculty of Environmental Information organized by Professor Toru Iwatake; and Kunitachi College of Music, organized by Professor Shintaro Imai offered great occasions to exchange ideas with students and introduce aspects of American and European compositional traditions.

At the Japanese Society for Sonic Arts Conference on July 26th in Tokyo I delivered my paper 'The use of iOS devices in recent compositions of mixed music' and attended their conference concert the next day. The paper will also be published in their journal.

Before arriving in Japan, I had been in email contact with Professor Reiko Takahashi Irino, the wife of late Yoshirō Vladimir Irino, a very important Japanese composer. She attended my Artist's Forum at the International House of Japan and gave me very positive feedback. She organized a gathering at her home and invited three other composers, Professor Hiroyuku Itoh, Professor Satoshi Tanaka, and Professor Joji Yuasa. All of them have shaped the musical landscape of contemporary music in Japan and abroad. Professor Irino has been an incredible source of information and connected me with many musicians in Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka. Among others, she introduced me to Reiko Manabe, an excellent flutist who had studied at UCSD California and performed many compositions of my colleagues. I met with Reiko Manabe several times and we

² please refer to annex 1 for a list of professional activities

³ please refer to annex 2 for audience comments about the Artist's Forum

decided to improvise together. She invited the percussionist Mizuki Aita to join us. It was a wonderful afternoon, and our musical sensibilities connected amazingly. Our experience was so positive, that we decided to organize a concert on July 27th at Monten Hall in Tokyo, where we performed together.

After our first improvisation session, I got interested in the musical use of the Buddhist Temple Bell *Rin*. Mizuki had used one and its combination with my live-electronics was very interesting. In the following weeks I visited flea markets and many Buddhist shops to build a collection of them, which together would sound harmonious. As they are normally not chosen with a particular pitch but rather by size, I earned some reactions of surprise when I compared many to pick the right tones. I assembled 20 in total, which together form a unique instrument. During a weekend recess with other musicians and dancers at Miyama Mountains north of Kyoto, I used the set of *Rin* with my live-electronics in an improvisation. The Japanese artists were enchanted by the *Rin* and discovered an aspect of their own culture; they had not heard in such a context.

Besides the many recordings I collected, those sounding physical objects will remain an important memory of my three months in Japan and will surely play a role in future compositions.

With many composers I could exchange CDs of our works and some also provided their scores, not easily to obtain in the US. I will integrate them into the Harvard University Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library to make them accessible to our students and the broader community.

In Tokyo I attended several performances of Kabuki, Gagaku, and Shomyo at the National Theatre and visited many museums. The Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography with an exhibit about Works by Sato Tokihiro was particularly striking. Also, the *21_21 design sight* offered two excellent exhibitions: one about rice and its impact on Japanese culture; the other, entitled *Image-Makers*, presented works by artists like Jean-Paul Goude, Noritaka Tatehana and Robert Wilson.

My spouse Omar Alvarez could join me for three weeks towards the middle of my trip. He came during my last week in Tokyo and could attend the lecture-concert at Kunitachi College of Music. We then explored together Kamakura, the Izu peninsula, Mt. Fuji and traveled to Kyoto. This was a welcome break from the many professional activities I had during my first month in Tokyo. After he left, I spent another month in Kyoto to further explore the rich cultural sources in and around the city.

Peter Grilli from the Japan Society of Boston provided me with many interesting contacts, among others to the businessman Masataka Hata. He is the president of Shoyeido Incense Company in Kyoto and member of the float neighborhood for the first *hoko* float in the parade. He invited me to a rehearsal of the typical *Gion-bayashi* music, explained its notation, and other details and arranged for a tour in his incense factory, where very high quality products are handmade following the old traditions.

In Kyoto I had rented a small apartment near to Yasaka Shrine, the spiritual center of the Gion Matsuri. Walking through the shrine grounds almost every day taught me many details about the Matsuri preparations. In and around the shrine I could observe

rehearsals, a wedding, the building of the floats, and smaller processions leading to the main float procession on June 17.

I had two work sessions with the *Ensemble for Intuitive Music Kyoto*, directed by Masatsune Nakaji. Similarly to my own *Ensemble für Intuitive Musik Weimar* in Germany, this group specializes in the interpretation of the intuitive compositions by German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen. As we all have been involved with this particular music for more than 30 years, it was invaluable to not only exchange experiences and CDs, but also to play together.

From Kyoto I made day trips to explore Nara and Koyasan, where I stayed at a temple overnight and experienced the morning prayers and the Shingon Goma fire ritual. I also attended a meditation session and copied the heart sutra. Japans largest stone garden at Kongobuji Temple in Koyasan, left a strong impression as well.

In Tenri city I attended an evening service at Tenrikyo Temple, which was a very different experience from other temples. The monotheistic 'new' religion from the 19th century seems to attract many young people.

I went to Osaka to meet musicians and to Nagoya to give lecture-concerts at Nagoya City University and Nagoya University of Arts and Sciences (NUAS). The lecture-concert at NUAS, organized by Professor Mikako Mizuno was a special moment. The hall was packed with students from sonic arts and film departments. They are not necessarily composers and use sound in more applied forms to support visual media. Many of them had never experienced a concert with electroacoustic compositions without visual components and came afterwards to ask questions and shared their very positive experience.

Students from NUAS accompanied me on a day trip to the Grand Ise Shrine. As field-recording is also part of their studies, we shared our experiences and recorded sounds together. During my lecture the following day I made examples on how I use those sounds during my compositional process.

As I stayed four weeks in Kyoto, I could also explore another interest and take three one-on-one pottery classes with the tea ceremony master and potter Shigeru Hirayama. I had been taking pottery classes in Boston over the past years and produced many pieces, but I wanted to learn how to create a traditional Japanese tea bowl. He not only demonstrated the process, but also showed how the tea ceremony is celebrated. He further gave me historical background, particularly about the Korean influence on Japanese pottery and the evolution of the tea bowl and ceremony over the centuries. I was able to create five nice bowls and will hopefully put the skills into more practice in Boston.

After Kyoto I visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to better understand Japanese history before and after the atomic bombs. Both cities left a strong impression with their well-designed museums and memorials. The Hiroshima Peace Bell was of particular interest, and I could record it in very good sound quality.

The days in Nagasaki were also very particular. Through the introduction of Professor Toru Iwatake from Keio University Tokyo, I met Mrs. Naoko Yamaura, a

pianist from Nagasaki University and Mr. Kouichi Kirino, a local business man who is very active in the promotion of culture in the Nagasaki area and runs several nonprofit organizations to support choirs and festivals. Before I arrived, they had arranged permissions to record bells of Christianity at five important churches in the Nagasaki area: the Catholic Shitsu Church, the Uramaki Cathedral Nagasaki, the Oura Catholic Church, the St. Francis Xavier Memorial Church in Hirado and the Tabira Catholic Church. Some of those bells are National Treasures, and I had been given permission to climb the bell towers in order to record them from close-up. Professor Iwatake came especially from Tokyo to join me on those recordings. They all took three days out of their busy schedules to drive me to those churches and to show me other interesting sites along the way.

Many Buddhist temples across the country provided great opportunities to record their bells. The Shunko-in Temple in Kyoto hosts a particularly interesting cultural hybrid: the Bell of Nanban-ji. The bell was cast in 1577 in Portugal. During persecution of Christianity in Japan, it was hidden in the temple and during World War II the priest had buried the bell at the temple grounds to protect it from destruction. The current Vice-Abbott Rev. Takafumi Kawakami was welcoming and struck the bell for my recording.

All those bell recordings, together with the Hiroshima Peace Bell will be featured in a new version of my open-air sound installation *The invisible bell tower*, to be presented from November 2014 in Cologne, Germany.

My travel plans for the last weeks were guided by the summer Matsuri in the Tohoku area. I always spent a couple of days in each city to not only see the large parades, but to witness also preparations, afternoon presentations, and competitions.

Leaving the big cities and spending time in the northeast, added a different experience to my journey. I sensed that the cities of Aomori and Akita would like to attract more international tourists. But, little is actually in place to help non-Japanese travelers. Museums often don't even have an English summary about their exhibitions, let alone English title cards for the paintings and objects. Hotel and restaurant staff only speaks Japanese, and even the tourist information center at the train station could not answer basic questions. But, all this was recompensed by an overabundant friendliness and sign language with big smiles.

The Japanese course I took in preparation for the trip had only given me very basic skills but did not really enable me to communicate. The language barrier sharpened other senses. Spending many days alone, walking with open ears to discover interesting sonic landscapes and communicating with Japanese people through other means than spoken words, was a unique learning experience. One becomes very sensitive to voice melodies, sonic colors, and face expressions. I also spent many hours in quiet places, temples, parks and gardens as a contrasting reclusion from the buzzing areas.

There were also some surprise encounters along the way. I met Richard Dudas, an American composer who used to be my colleague at Ircam in Paris in the 1990th who spent time in Tokyo this year. The Austrian poet Karl Lubomirski gave readings of his work at several Tokyo Universities and happened to stay at the International House of

Japan. I had been in contact with him since 1995 and written several compositions based on his poems. It was a wonderful re-encounter, as we had not seen each other in almost ten years.

The organization of the fellowship has been wonderful. Communications with the office in Washington and the International House of Japan in Tokyo have been very swift and efficient. The *Japan-US Creative Arts Fellowship Online Guidebook for Living in Japan* with many practical tips was extremely helpful while preparing the travel. I would like to thank specifically Christopher Blasdel, Sawako Nakayasu and Manami Maeda from the International House of Japan. Christopher Blasdel had retired from his position as Artistic Director in January 2014 but was very much involved in the earlier planning phase of my trip and made time to meet in Tokyo. His successor, Sawako Nakayasu and the coordinator of the Arts programs Manami Maeda were very helpful in preparing the Artist's Forum. Mrs. Maeda also translated a short letter to introduce my recording activities. This document helped tremendously and opened doors to hidden sonic treasures throughout my journey.

And I would like to thank the musicians, composers, students, and priests I was able to meet and who all went out of their way to help and guide me, and to exchange ideas.

In closing I would like to share some practical details, which could be useful for the experience of future fellows. I had read that Japan is still mainly a cash oriented society and found good advice online on how to retrieve money with international bankcards. I opened two debit accounts, one with Charles Schwab Bank and one with CapitalOne360 Online Bank, and had only good experiences with it. Both banks issued debit cards and don't charge international transaction fees for ATM's. During the three months, I transferred money online from my regular bank account onto those cards and was able to use them in Seven-Eleven stores throughout the country. ATM's at post offices did work as well, but had more restricted operation hours and usually didn't work on weekends.

I was glad that I obtained an international drivers license beforehand. That allowed me to rent cars several times and explore more rural areas, where public transportation was not easily available.

Thank you very much again for providing me with this extraordinary opportunity, which opened many doors and laid foundations for future projects. I truly hope that this fellowship will continue for years to come and enable many other artists to get similar intense experiences with Japanese culture and life.

Sincerely,



Hans Tutschku
Fanny P. Mason Professor of Music
Director of Harvard Studios for Electroacoustic Composition

Annex 1
Professional activities

May 19, 2014	Senzoku Gakuen College of Music Meeting with vice president Professor Kawachi and Professor Takeyoshi Mori
May 20, 2014 2:40 p.m.	Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku Bijutsu Gakubu, Faculty of Inter-Media Art Lecture Organized by Professor Kiyoshi Furukawa
May 21, 2014 7:00 p.m.	International House of Japan Artist's Forum with lecture-concert
May 27, 2014 1:30 p.m.	Tokyo University of the Arts, Music department Lecture-concert Organized by Professor Takeyoshi Mori
May 28, 2014 1:00 p.m.	Keio University, Faculty of Environmental Information Lecture Organized by Professor Toru Iwatake
May 31, 2014 3:00 p.m.	Senzoku Gakuen College of Music, Big Mouth Hall Lecture-concert Organized by Professor Takeyoshi Mori
June 5, 2014 6 p.m.	Kunitachi College of Music, Media Centre 110 Studio Lecture-concert Organized by Professor Shintaro Imai
June 6, 2014	Improvisation session with Shamisen player Yumiko Tanaka
June 11, 2014	Improvisation session with Reiko Manabe - flute, Mizuki Aita - percussion
June 14, 2014	Recording Koto sounds with Professor Nakamura at Kyoto City University of Arts
June 15, 2014	Recording a 30-string Koto with Aya Asakura at the Seihou-ji Temple
June 16, 2014	Recording a special Shomyo Ceremony with the priest Rev. Takawaki at the private Ryūzenji Temple Recording the Jesuit Bell of Nanban-ji at Shunko-in Temple
July 1, 2014 5 p.m.	Nagoya Shiritsu Daigaku NCU, school of design and architecture Lecture-concert Organized by Professor Mikako Mizuno
July 3, 2014 5:15 p.m.	Nagoya Gakugei Daigaku NUAS Lecture-concert Organized by Professor Mikako Mizuno
July 4, 2014	Meetings with musicologists Professor Toshi Kakinuma and Professor Alison Tokita, and with the composer Professor Noriko Nakamura at Kyoto University of the Arts Visiting their instruments collection
July 22 – 24, 2014	Recording bells at catholic churches in the Nagasaki area Organized by Professor Toru Iwatake, Mrs. Naoko Yamaura, Mr. Kouichi Kirino
July 26, 2014 3 p.m.	Japanese Society for Sonic Arts Conference Delivering my paper ‘The use of iOS devices in recent compositions of mixed music’
July 27, 2014 8 p.m.	Tokyo Ryogoku Monten Hall Improvisation concert with Reiko Manabe, flute, Mizuki Aita, percussion, H.T. live electronics

Annex 2

Some of the comments received on the questionnaire after the Artist's Forum⁴

- I came without much knowledge of contemporary music, but enjoyed it. The music in conjunction with the wind blowing in the garden made it seem like a movie. The first song reminded me of a Shomyo concert I heard here in 2011.
- It was wonderful. Most of the time I only listen to classical music, now I regret having been trapped in a narrow world of music.
- It was nice to have the space set up in a different orientation from the usual. The interpretation was unnecessary.
- I really enjoyed the programming. The scenery with the garden seemed to match the music well, and seemed calculated that way.
- It was excellent. I also do electroacoustic music, so it was very inspiring and stimulating.
- After the Q and A, I was able to think variously about this experience. It was actually the first song that felt more abstract to me - where the sound seemed to be coming from both the past and the future. The second song may have been abstract musically, but in my mind I was able to imagine specific images - myself growing small and being swallowed up by water, walking across a glacier, and finally becoming a particle of light...
- I enjoyed it. I had wanted to ask about what kinds of requirements or parameters you set for yourself regarding what sounds to collect, and when a work is complete, but I felt like I understood, after your response to the last question - saying that the music offers a suggestion, and that the listener adds their imagination to it as they listen. Thank you.
- I hadn't heard such abstract music in a concert hall before. Before I came, I figured it would make little difference whether it was live or played at home, since it was pre-recorded anyway. But, when I saw the ways that the sound traveled through space, and the garden scene was in front of us; I felt glad that I came to hear it here.
- I had never heard electronic music before. I had never heard such three-dimensional music before. I was also very interested in how the experience varies for each individual.
- It sounds like an acoustic planetarium, with different colorful sounds. Very interesting, new experience to be embraced by ritualistic, strange combination of sounds.
- I was very interested in the difference between the first and second pieces. The source materials may have been similar, and while they both had compositional elements of music, the structures of the songs had a very different brilliance compared to other composers. I hope to hear it again somewhere.
- Very interesting! Especially to listen to music with no performers and no other visual imagery imposed on the audience—very freeing. As soon as the music started, I was blown away to a different world. It's been a long time since my ears have been excited like this. It fit that windy evening perfectly, and I can still recall the swaying trees. It was very enjoyable.

⁴ translated by Sawako Nakayasu