

## **Returning from the Dream Country**

It was around midnight when I called Japan from France with the news that I had won the Besançon competition. It was on September 15<sup>th</sup>, a holiday in Japan. Mass media, such as television and newspapers, ran the news with great excitement. I did not know about it, since I was still in Besançon at that time.

In France, only local newspapers and television had reported the news. I had been staying in a hotel during the competition in Besançon. When I returned to my friend's house in Paris, I was hoping to take a nice bath and relax. That did not happen because I got an international call from Japan. It was from Ms. Takako Abe, a reporter from a newspaper in Nagoya, my home town.

She took the trouble to call me in Paris so that she could make a detailed report on the competition. Actually I had met her long before studying abroad, but she did not seem to remember me, because I was not even a conductor back then.

Ms. Abe told me that the news about my winning the competition had been reported with excitement in Japan, which was a surprise to me. I think I asked her back if it was something novel to win a competition. It was right before my returning home. My brain had been full and in confusion. I wanted to enjoy the rest of my stay in France, so I went shopping in Paris and so on.

By the way, I had been so preoccupied with music during my study abroad that I had no interest in boutiques and fashion in Paris. I did not go to a beauty salon but cut my hair by myself, with scissors. My hair was messy. When I called my home in Japan, my mother gave me lots of advice. She said, "There will be television reporters waiting for you at Narita Airport, so make sure to put on some make-up." I wondered what was happening and why. I felt as if, living away from Japan for a year, my life time had been paused like *Urashima Taro*, a Japanese legend.

## **My Debut Concert**

I finished my season of studying abroad in France for one year and three months. Hard life waiting for me when I returned to Japan. While teaching as a part-time instructor at the Department of Conducting at the Tokyo University of the Arts, I needed to respond to various interviews from media reporters. They asked me the same questions over and over based on the fact that I was a female conductor. Their questions were like, “What are the handicaps as a woman?” “Why did you become a conductor?” “What are the merits of being a female conductor?” I received countless interviews and was given a big headline for being the 2nd Japanese winner of the International Besançon Competition, since Mr. Seiji Ozawa.

In the midst of a great whirlpool, it was all I could do not to lose myself. I was desperate to remember what I had learned in Europe. Having read the news reports about me, some friends even avoided me, suspecting unnecessarily that I had changed. But I had not changed at all. I had just been to Europe for a while.

Shortly after my return to Japan, a concert was held in Nagoya, my birth place, to commemorate my winning of the competition. For the concert I received the cordial support of the Chunichi Shimbun, a daily newspaper company, the Chunichi Gekijo, a performing arts theater, and the Nagoya Philharmonic Orchestra. I performed Ravel and Tchaikovsky, the same program as when I had won the Besançon Competition. I was bewildered during the performance, because I had not performed in Japan for a while. But I finished the concert safely, thanks to warm support from many people.

I had my debut concert in Tokyo in March of the following year, with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra. Like the concert in Nagoya, I put together the program with only French compositions that I liked. I conducted Ravel’s *Ma mère l’Oye* (Mother Goose), and Saint-Saëns’ *Symphony No.3*. The audience might not have been familiar with these pieces, since not many French compositions had been performed in Japan, but I was committed to play more French compositions.

I was under a lot of pressure for this debut concert. People asked me how I

would put my eagerness into this concert, how I would demonstrate my personality, and so on. Nothing had changed in my own attitude toward a concert. I valued this concert just as any of the other concerts I had conducted, except that I had had the competition between them. I contacted Professor Dervaux, and he advised me, "Keep conducting, no matter what happens."

What impressed me after the competition was that in Japan, people tend to make conclusions hastily. People come to the concert of a conductor who has won a competition to determine how good the conductor really is. And they try to make a quick conclusion whether the conductor is good or bad. Why don't they look at the conductor's promising future instead?

A conductor has to be able to handle any composition and he or she cannot have any taste over one song or another. I was taught that. But naturally the conductor is good at one composition but not good at another one. And the conductor's personality comes out through such differences. I like French music and songs with their bright melodies and rhythm. And I love operas and often conduct operas.

I would say, I do not really care for German music, like Beethoven and Brahms, which require strong and heavy sounds. I love to listen to the music, but it does not work well if I perform them. That is because I have love motivation within me to create such sounds.

Somehow, I am connected to bright melodies, delicate sounds, and music with light rhythms. Perhaps, that was because I have been thoroughly inspired by the national characters of France, Italy and Spain. I will continue to pursue sounds and tones with brightness and color.

## **Mediterranean Concert on the Sea**

One time I participated in Yamaha's Junior Original Concert on the Mediterranean Ocean with young musicians. We spent one week touring around several cities on the Mediterranean ocean on a large cruise ship, and having concerts both on the ship as well as at the ports of call.

Ms. Yuzuko Horigome, a violinist, had played in this cruise concert tour before, and she told me that the ocean was very still like a mirror, and the ship would not swing, and I would not have any trouble. So I accepted the invitation without worry. The cruise ship would leave at Toulon, a city in southern France, and head for its 1<sup>st</sup> destination, Tunisia. We left Toulon in the evening and had a gorgeous dinner on the ship.

A chamber orchestra from Côte d'Azur was also on the cruise tour, and the orchestra and we decided to have a concert together. Grigory Sokolov, a young pianist, another violinist, and the members of the Hagen Quartet were also on board. There was a swimming pool on the cruise ship, and most of the passengers were there to enjoy their free time after spending the seasons of busyness.

On the evening of the 1<sup>st</sup> day, somehow the cruise ship started rolling and pitching. The swing got worse at night, and even though I was lying on the bed, I could not sleep. I could hear the waves crashing against the ship with loud booms. I even saw my clothing hung in the guest room swinging like a seesaw. I thought this wasn't what I had been told.

What happened to the quiet ocean? I ended up welcoming the next morning without much sleep. The staff said that strong winds must have caused such rough waves, which was groundless. We felt betrayed because we had believed that the ship would be completely smooth once it was on the ocean. The swings continued every night.

We had to rehearse on the ship, so we began in the midst of swinging. I made a joke that I could not cast the baton straight. A violin player said that he could play a vibrato without moving his hand, and he showed it to us. What we had

seen was nothing but the sea. In the middle of the rehearsal, a viola player suddenly stood up and shouted loudly, "I see an island!" Everybody stood up and looked at the island, interrupting the rehearsal. This made me think that they were French. We merrily took group photos together on the deck, and at each port of call. But when we were stopped in Sicily, we were advised to watch our belongings, just in case the mafia were around. How unsafe it was!

Combining sightseeing at several cities and music performance, it was quite a fun tour. But we had hard time with the swing on the cruise ship. As I look back, it was the beginning of the unusual weather of the summer of 1983.

## Salzburg, Brussels and Vienna

The summer of Europe in 1983 was abnormal. In France, the temperature rose close to 40 degrees. There was a thunderstorm every day, and lightning caused much damage. I was spending my summer vacation in the suburb of Paris, but the extreme heat exhausted me and I did not desire to do anything. They said that the heat waves from the African Continent were hitting France.

This year I set out for Salzburg to tour Europe with the Ochanomizu Orchestra. We had an outdoor concert on the eve of the Salzburg Festival. Because the sun does not go down much in Europe, we had a hard time performing outside. In Vienna, we had to go inside a church to avoid the heat and to rest. But we livened up our performance by wearing *matsuri hanten*, traditional Japanese festival dress, and received applause from a large audience. After I finished the summer tour with the orchestra, I left for Belgium to perform another concert in September.

Brussels was a city very similar to Paris. I came to this city to conduct the Brussels Radio Symphony Orchestra on the French side. Both French and Flemish languages were spoken in this area. When I first arrived, I met a lady at a restaurant who said to me, "The orchestra here is terrible."

I did not understand what she meant. The first day of our rehearsal ended with no problem. The next morning, I went to the hall early to prepare for the next rehearsal which was to start on 9 A.M. only to be surprised that no one was there. Orchestra members in Japan would have arrived early already and been playing their instruments. About 5 minutes passed after 9 A.M., and the members of the orchestra started arriving to the rehearsal, without showing any sense of guilt on their faces for being late.

I wondered what in the world this orchestra was. I desperately used the rest of the rehearsal fully. Then I heard that several conductors had even cancelled their contracts to perform with this orchestra.

One of the orchestra members said to me, "If you stayed with us for six more months, how much better this orchestra would become!" I left Belgium behind

after the concert. I had had enough. I understood why the lady at the restaurant had said, "Terrible." This orchestra does not exist anymore today.

I had visited Vienna before. I had visited this city for a short time when I was studying abroad. I could not do much but visit some architectures and watch opera then. This time I visited this city to see my school fellow, Hiroyuki Odano, who was studying there. I spent two weeks watching operas and orchestras. Surely this city was a music city. But it did not have as much energy as Paris, which was too bad.

I also tried to visit the museum in the Belvedere Palace several times because I wanted to see the paintings of Gustav Klimt, who was active at the end of the last century. The museum had been always closed wherever I visited the museum. I was thrilled with joy when I was finally able to see his paintings.

Klimt's paintings had powerful impact, compared to the works by French painters. I felt that the art works at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were very different from the ones at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in terms of their esthetic senses. It was as if they had tried to lock up the decadent beauty forever in their dreams. Vienna seemed to be at sleep in quietness.

## Opera, the Performing Art

Because the “Opera” performance at the university festival led me to pursue my career as a conductor, I might have had some kind of interest in opera.

But I did not have many opportunities to watch operas at Tokyo University of the Arts, and it did not happen to me then that the scene of an opera would appear in my mind when I just looked at the score. I was rather more interested in orchestral works like symphony music, and I did not even think about studying opera.

My interest in opera grew when I went to study abroad in France and encountered many opera performances there. I not only watched many opera performances in Paris, but made sure to watch opera whenever I visited another European country as well.

One day, I went to Théâtre du Châtelet to see an operetta, *Gaité Parisienne*, composed by Jacques Offenbach. I had rarely seen an operetta before. Operetta is a form of performing arts. It was a predecessor to a musical, which had both singing and dancing. The lines of the play were in French, of course.

I was able to see the operetta from the very front seat. It was then that I saw the *cancan* right in front of my eyes. I had seen pictures, but did not know how they would dance. It was gorgeous to see the female dancers in costumes with long skirts and colorful petticoats, running and high kicking.

Since I came back to Japan, I have been blessed with opportunities to conduct operas. I had my opera debut in 1984 with the Nikikai, and conducted *The Merry Widow*, composed by Franz Lehár. I did not expect to conduct the cancan that I had seen in Paris.

I reminisced the operetta that I had seen in Paris as I conducted the operetta in Japan. I was honored to work with Mr. Sumito Tachikawa and Ms. Yuko Shimada. I could not help watching these two singers acting and singing with admiration. Being fascinated with their lines, I almost forgot where to start the music.

When there was a stage tour of *The Merry Widow*, I conducted the operetta several times. When Melanie Holliday, one of Vienna's celebrated opera singers, came to Japan, I conducted several operettas with her.

Later I visited Vienna and saw Melanie. She was singing at the Vienna Volksoper. The memory in the past came back to me. It made me envious that different operas were performed daily in Vienna and Berlin. I wished this performing art could become more familiar in Japan.

## **Ashiya Symphony Orchestra**

Encounter is a mystery. I was invited to conduct Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony for the Ashiya Symphony Orchestra's concert, in place of Mr. Tadashi Mori, a conductor, who had suddenly passed away.

I had conducted various amateur orchestras, but this orchestra is something else, because the members of the orchestra are unique. Over a hundred members gather together in Ashiya. Each of them has a career and comes to the city for rehearsal on weekends. Many of them open their instrument cases just on that weekend. Some of them have been transferred to the Osaka area for their jobs.

Many members have played with their college orchestras. They still remember their happy memories of those college days, and have not stopped some of their wild customs. They drink in the evening, wherever they go to a training camp. And just as other amateur orchestras, they have more fun drinking than practicing.

People often think of orchestra as gloomy. But this orchestra is cheerful with no limit. I have been attracted to their cheerfulness, and the unity shown at their parties. Surely they are musically good. This year we had a performing tour in Europe.

We had a concert at the same hall where I had seen Professor Ken-Ichiro Kobayashi's concert in East Berlin. This visit to Berlin was 10 years after my first visit. It brought back lots of memories from my study abroad, but I saw how Germany had been changing drastically since the fall of the Berlin Wall. I especially noticed the heavy and dark atmosphere of the old Berlin was nowhere to be seen. Who could ever have imagined the changes that European nations have gone through in the last 10 years? I regarded this trip as the most joyful trip that I had ever had in my life.

The members of the Ashiya Symphony Orchestra drink at a drinking place in Ashiya, "A-Ru-Chu (alcoholic)," after their weekend rehearsal. As they drink together, they talk over their own lives and sometimes over music. Some people have given me good advice. I have a good time with them, and enjoy our time together. I want to perform with this orchestra for a very long time, even when I

3<sup>rd</sup> movement  
Ashiya Symphony Orchestra

become old with my shaking hands.

## Woman of Passion on the Conductor Stand

August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1993

Newspaper report by Werner Schöne of *Neue Zeit*

Last year, many Japanese orchestras performed in Berlin and other cities in Germany. This time as well, an ambassador of music from the Far East visited Berlin and held a concert. The ambassador was the Ashiya Symphony Orchestra. It is not among the top ranked professional organizations, because this organization is made up of amateur musicians. Ashiya City, the orchestra's home ground, is a city with a population of about 87, 000, located between Osaka and Kobe. There are many female members in this orchestra, and Ms. Yoko Matsuo, also a woman, stands on the podium as the conductor of the orchestra. She was trained under Mr. Ken-Ichiro Kobayashi, whom we know well, and then studied music at a conservatory in Paris. In addition, she won an international competition for conductors in 1982 (as the first woman ever). As for her career so far, she conducted celebrated orchestras in Japan, and also performed *Carmen*, composed by Bizet, and *La Traviata* by Verdi in Osaka and Tokyo.

Yasushi Akudagawa, a composer (1925-1989), is greatly contributed to raising the Ashiya Symphony Orchestra to the top class among amateur organizations. When he became its Music Director in 1977, the orchestra received its first formal "training" from him. This organization, which started in 1967 with only 7 members as a civic organization, kept striving for many years and became successful, holding regular performances. It invited Mr. Toru Inaniwa of the Century Orchestra Osaka as its trainer for string instruments, and Mr. Nozomu Machinaga for wind instruments. They have also contributed to the growth of the orchestra.

In Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*, the elegant sounds that the wind instruments created, especially the solo clarinet and the brass instruments, were superb. The string instruments stood out in their pleasant resonance, especially the bass sounds. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, the *Tutti* performance of the string instruments had the sense of intensity and was impressive. The orchestra was highly elevated at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, and at the last movement was filled with sorrow, and many in the audience were moved to tears. The orchestra

performed Mozart's *Ave Maria* as an encore, but it was not as impressive because it was right after the Tchaikovsky piece.

In Liszt's *Les Préludes*, performed at the very beginning, the brass instruments' *einsatz* with extraordinary powerful *tutti*, after following moments of reflective pause. This was also impressive. Then, this work was followed by a Japanese composition of this century, *Triptyque for String Orchestra* by Akutagawa, its Music Director. The orchestra performed this composition with dedication to Akutagawa, who had taught the members as his students, "Amateur music is the right path of music." It was performed with the sincerity of music that Akutagawa had imagined in this piece. This piece lively began with a serenade *allegro*, and its *finale* was dynamic and colorful. The *pizzicatos* were effective as well.

The orchestra's exciting and enthusiastic concert will continue to Vienna, and the Haydnsaal at Schloss Esterházy in Eisenstadt.

## Japanese Woman Who Is Exceptionally “European”

April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1993

Newspaper report by Wolfgang Schulze of *Berliner Morgenpost*

We had a pleasant group of guests from the Far East, the Ashiya Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra, which was on its concert tour of Europe, had a concert at the Schauspielhaus Berlin. It was named after the city of Ashiya, its home ground, which is located between Osaka and Kobe. And this orchestra is not a professional orchestra. These 80 members are young amateur people, devoted to music with demonstration of their control, technique, and musical sense so much so that they might make us wonder if they are pursuing to be an orchestra here in Berlin.

These young people were conducted by a lady. The lady, Yoko Matsuo gave the impression of, in a good way, a pack of energy. It did not impress something masculine, nor something to appeal equal rights for both men and women, either. Filled with confidence, she went to stand on the conductor stand, and demonstrated her perfect control to direct with her baton. Such control fully fitted with its first program, Franz Liszt's symphonic poem, *Les Préludes*, which was performed appropriately as it should be. This musical ode of life toward death was performed smoothly and pleasantly in a way that was free from a morass of *pathos*.

When Japanese orchestras come on tour, most of them include contemporary works of their homeland in their performance programs. This orchestra is not the exception. If you listen to the first passage of Yasushi Akutagawa's *Triptyque for String Orchestra*, you would notice something and bend your ears more carefully. It is not using any Oriental modes, and it is not contemporary, nor experiential, either. Unless the name of this Japanese was written on the cover page of the music score, this composition with three movements would be mistaken as a work by a European composer.

Obviously in the first movement *Allegro*, Yasuhi Akutagawa is aware of the work by Bartók, which was composed with the same format. And the short and slightly sentimental *Andante* has the feeling of Rachmaninoff's music. Then, the

nimble *Presto* sounds like tracing Shostakovich's footprints. It may not sound up-to-date, but you can listen to this music composition of three movements with full comfort. Without doubt it is a work for a string orchestra powerfully expressing the joy of music.

After the intermission, the orchestra performed the Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, *Pathétique*, which terrified us at first. Did this organization take its effort to travel thousands of kilometers from the Far East just to give us an opportunity to listen to our daily bread (western music)? However, if you listen to these young people performing this musical bread of ours, a hard piece to play even today as well, with such excellence and with no effort, you may understand and even be more astounded. In their performance, they not only showed their "good will" but also demonstrated their goodness of functionality in every part of the orchestra. And their conductor, with her thoroughly refined interpretation which was also well constructed, drew out how skillfully they performed Tchaikovsky, or how correctly they interpreted him.

## **Wine and I**

I wonder when I became fond of wine. Perhaps I learned the taste while studying abroad in Paris. That was because, when I was in Paris, I had wine virtually every night. A friend of mine, who visited me in Paris back then, was surprised to see a line of empty wine bottles in my apartment.

Many French foods go well with wine. Cheese is an example, and wine is indispensable with any cooking. The habit I learned in France has not changed since returning to Japan. In my house, we drink wine even when we eat Japanese food. And we drink nothing but red wine. Whenever I make a trip for a concert, I always look for wine.

The other day, a French couple who were visiting my house were surprised. They had looked after me when I was studying in Paris, but they didn't even dream about having French wine at a Japanese table every day.

Sure, they enjoyed drinking Japanese sake, but after it all, we came back to wine. And they ended up drinking wine in my house every night.

My French friends have taught me various family French recipes. Formal foods with delicious sauces are not the only French foods. At home, people cook a variety of food like stewing beef with vegetables, and cooking beef in the oven.

French people talk very much during meal time. And they take a long time enjoying the food. When I cannot keep up with their conversations in French, I would eat or drink. So I end up quickly getting drunk alone. Perhaps talking loud is helpful for quick digestion. I don't know when they eat while talking, but they do eat skillfully.

I once visited a wine brewery in France. I was amazed at how large-scale it was. At another time I helped my friend at the friend's house to fill bottles with wines bought by several liters. I had thought that wine was something to drink, so I did not dream that it was something to fill in bottles. I had to cork each bottle well so that no air might be in the bottle. I enjoyed filling the bottles with wine. They said that they would let the wine sit for several years to take time to enjoy it. For

3<sup>rd</sup> movement  
Wine and I

me, a wine lover, that was a pleasant work.

## Concert for Mutual Touch

When summer vacation starts, orchestras in Japan have family concerts for children and their parents in various locations. A variety of fun events are planned for the purpose of letting children experience classical music. I have conducted countless family concerts in Tokyo and around the city. Among them, the *Fureai* (mutual touch) *Concert*, sponsored by the Kyushu Electric Power Company, has impressed me. This year will be the 8<sup>th</sup> concert since they started it.

Every summer, the Kyushu Symphony Orchestra and I tour all the prefectures in Kyushu. We avoid big cities. Instead, we visit towns where there aren't many chances to have an orchestra concert. Because the Kyushu Electric Company is its sponsor, we issue numbered tickets, and each attendant will pay 300 yen as donation to the Counsel of Social Welfare. The concerts have been very successful, even with standees. Though they are held in the midst of the summer heat, the musicians are quite serious about meeting such an expectation.

Children, who have never seen an orchestra performance in their lives, gaze at the stage with their eyes wide open. I hear that many mothers try to control their crying children, but are reluctant to leave their seats, despite the trouble that they are making to other seats. That is because the program of the concert is not planned for children. With thoughtfulness, the program has been selected from a wide range of music motives, instead of just educational.

We perform a piece by a 20<sup>th</sup> century composer, as well as Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony, *Fate*. So even adults can enjoy our program filled with variation. That is why the adults do not want to leave their seats. There is a story about a farmer, who came to the concert by bicycle after working in the fields, during the intermission called his family members on the phone and invited them, "This concert is very fun, so why don't you come now?"

We have also been to Amami Oshima, Hime Jima (in Oita), and Amakusa. In some towns in these islands, a fine concert hall is built on the path between rice fields. We visited Shimabara twice, but I was deeply distressed at the sight of volcanic ashes piled up around the hall.

After finishing our program, we perform a folk song from the region, or a piece tied to the region, with the orchestra. Those songs are sometimes *ondo* (work song) or songs sung in the local area, and other times we play songs that have existed in Kyushu for centuries, such as *Otemoyan* and *Koroda-Bushi*.

And as a finale, we end with the *Radetzky March* by Strauss, while clapping hands together throughout the hall. And at every concert, I found myself stepping down from the stage and clapping hands together with the audience. Some of the audience hold my hand tightly and never let me go, with an expression of thankfulness in their faces.

Truly, this is the mutual touch. When I see the smile in each person's face, all of the discomfort of the heat and the labor of rehearsals are blown away. As I bow on the stage at the end, I am truly thankful that I decided to become a conductor.

## **Dress to Wear**

People often ask me, “Is there any reason that you do not wear a skirt when you conduct?” It is not that I don’t like to wear skirts. I do wear skirts in my daily life, but I prefer to conduct with pants because these are easier to move around in.

When I am conducting, I keep my legs wide for balance and strength. High heeled shoes are not good, because they wobble. And if I wore a long skirt and moved around on the conductor stand, I would not be able to see my steps and it would make me nervous. It would be fine if I moved less, but I cannot keep still when I conduct an orchestra. And, at the worst, if I conducted a fast temp piece with a long skirt, the skirt would be swinging slowly, while my baton was moving differently.

I have great trouble with concert dress. A man can just wear a tailcoat, but a woman cannot wear the male clothes. I am always at a loss how to make a functional and yet elegant dress. My mother has been sewing dresses by hand for me. Many times, I have requested her to make a new dress right before a concert, and she would finish making it just an hour before the concert started.

It gets really hot during a concert, so we have to use materials for the dress that absorb sweat well. And the arm area needs to be loose so that I can move freely. I make lots of concert tours and carry my dress along, so we cannot use materials that wrinkle easily.

On many occasions I wear a black dress to match those in the orchestra, but depending on the concert program, I also wear blue or green. Especially when I conduct a French composition, I intentionally wear a dress with a lighter color, because a black dress would be too heavy and thick.

When I conduct for several days in a row, I wear various dresses, which, I heard, makes the members of the orchestra wonder what color of dress I will wear each time. And, it is hard work to keep thinking of new styles. I often talk with my mother about this, but it seems there is a huge gap between our ideal and the reality. Nevertheless, my mother and I enjoy the time of talking and planning

3<sup>rd</sup> movement  
Dress to Wear

together what style and color of dress we should prepare for the next concert.

## **Rain Chases After Me**

People joke about a woman, called *Ame Onna*, or a man, called *Ame Otoko*, who always causes it to rain. To me, this is not a joke, because this directly affects my own concerts.

It has rained many times on the dates of my concerts, making me wish I had checked the statistics for rain on those dates. During rehearsals we have been blessed with good weather. Then, on the very day of the performance, about the time when I am leaving home, it gets cloudy. Before long, it starts raining in drops. So, I consider myself *Ame Onna*.

The audience who comes to my concerts gets the most trouble. I go to the concert hall, feeling sorry for those who have come in formal dress. If the rain is light with a few drops, that is fine. But there have been times of severe conditions.

When I had my debut concert in Tokyo after returning from France, it was raining from the morning on that day. I had no time to appreciate the spring rain as a haiku poet. By the time the concert had finished with great success, the rain outside the concert hall had turned into a heavy storm.

The next storm happened in Paris. I had my concert at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées which extends from the Arc of Triumph). It was at the end of November, which is usually mild weather in Paris. But by the time I left for the theater, it had begun raining, as I had expected. Back then I just thought the weather was a little bit strange. The concert was supposed to begin after 8:30 P.M. Around 8 P.M., the rain had turned into snow, and there was heavy traffic, especially around the Arc of Triumph. We had to delay the concert for 20 minutes late. When the concert was over, the sky was clear with stars. There was no sign of storm.

So, I have experienced all of thunder, snow, and windstorms during my stormy concerts. I have given up wanting good luck for weather. Typhoon storms have even hit my concerts two or three times every summer while I have been in Kyushu.

3<sup>rd</sup> movement  
Rain Comes After Me

I apologize to the audience that the bad weather on the concert day is thoroughly my fault.

So, ladies and gentlemen, you may forget flowers for my concert, but please remember to bring your umbrellas with you.

## **My Relationship with Beethoven's *Choral***

How many conductors have refused to conduct Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, *the Choral*? *The Choral* is performed in various places all over Japan as a tradition at the end of each year.

Both conductors and orchestras in Japan have no choice but to perform this symphony. It requires quite a lot of mental and physical strength. Especially in the 4<sup>th</sup> movement, when soloist singers and the chorus join the orchestra. In addition to all this, Beethoven persistently demands powerful sounds throughout the movement.

After I conducted *the Choral* several times, I felt that I could not create the sounds that Beethoven demands in this piece. I even thought about not accepting another offer to conduct *the Choral* again. But the chorus part on the 4<sup>th</sup> movement literally saved me. I love operas and it has been a joy for me to perform with the chorus together. Thanks to the mutual touch that I have with the people in the chorus at the concert, I have conducted *the Choral* many time up to today.

I have moments when I am musically touched, regardless of the skills of the chorus. In the chorus part of *the Choral*, lyrics that mean, "All people become brothers and sisters" appear many times. As I conduct, while watching each face of the chorus, I often fail to see the faces because of the tears in my eyes. The chorus part of this composition moves me in such an extent.

I always face each concert of *the Choral*, thinking that it would be my last performance. But I cannot get rid of the deep impression this symphony has on me, and I end up accepting another opportunity to perform *the Choral*.

*The Choral* and I have unusual relationship with one another.

## Teaching

Currently I am a part-time instructor at the Department of Conducting at the Tokyo University of the Arts. I have been doing this since 1982 when I returned from France. It has already been 10 years.

When I returned to Japan, I had many chances to conduct student orchestras. Then the number of my students of the Department of Conducting gradually grew. I wanted to value the way of free expression that I had learned from France, because each student has a distinct character, and there should be conducting methods suitable for each of them.

I have witnessed in France how music becomes distorted when a conductor conforms himself or herself into one conventional form to be well-shaped and functional. Instead, I regard un-skilled ways of conducting, thinking first what I want to express, over techniques.

Sometimes my students and I gather together to drink. They really help me with operas and other works. I believe the best lesson is learned together on the actual field, so they are blessed with these opportunities to work. One student said to me once, "It is the beginning of a tragedy that you are a woman, isn't it, Sensei?" He made the joke when he saw me wearing an apron, sweating to make lots of dishes that I was not used to cooking. I wanted to bless these students of mine.

Some of them are close to 30 years old, and they often think of marriage. When two students of mine decided to be married with one another, they asked me, "Would you kindly arrange a wedding for us?" I found myself answering with a smile, "Sure." These students pursue to be conductors at much younger ages than when I decided to become a conductor. Time has changed and today it is far more difficult to become a conductor. They may feel worried about less opportunities to conduct orchestras, as well. I sincerely desire that they may keep their passion for music, and take their time studying.

## Painting

During my study abroad in France, I frequently visited art museums. This must have influenced me, because I am an ardent fan of visual arts now. Especially, I am fascinated by the paintings of French impressionists.

I have visited many places in order to look at Monet's paintings. In his series of the Water Lilies at the Impressionist Museum as well as at the Musée de l'Orangerie, Monet expresses lights of innocence through faint color changes. I am amazed by it.

Though I looked at paintings, I never thought about picking up a brush and paint. My parents often painted pictures, so I had many opportunities to give critiques to their paintings. But I had no desire to paint one. No matter how impressive a scene might look, I never tried keeping the scene on a canvas. I was not interested in painting at all.

Then one day, out of the blue, I drew a watercolor painting. I did it to display at an art exhibition. Without knowing any technique, I just faced a canvas (910 cm x 727 cm) and painted by following the examples of others. I painted a still-life painting titled, *Curtain Call*. I only had a strong image of what I wanted to paint in my mind. Colors and techniques were secondary. How fearlessly did I paint it! Amazingly, the painting was prized with a recognition (public exhibition by *Daichokai*), which I never thought would be possible.

Music is such a temporary thing. It is an art that does not last as an object. Of course we could record it on a tape or in a video. But we cannot enjoy the musical experience unless we are present at the moment when the music was performed. Having pondered that for a long while, I had a desire to make something that would last for a long time. And painting made me envious of paintings. On a white canvas we could create everything by ourselves. This inspired me. I thought it was wonderful to express my heart on the canvas, however poor the painting may be. That was why I began thinking of painting just as a hobby.

## **Katsuzo Entsuba, Master Sculptor**

One day I got a phone call from a friend of mine, who said that a sculptor wanted me to be a model for his sculpture. And he was going to display it at a public exhibition.

I found out that Mr. Entsuba wanted to make a sculpture based on a female conductor. So I did not waste any time meeting him. I was conducting a joint concert by the student glee clubs of Waseda, Keio, Kansei Gakuin and Doshisha Universities, and Mr. Entsuba took time to come to the rehearsal to meet me.

I knew that a sculpture was a three-dimensional art, but I did not realize that a sculptor needed to make a 360 degrees model of the figure, not just the front picture of the figure.

Once I visited Mr. Entsuba's art studio. That was my first time to see the studio of a sculptor, and I was amazed at how big the studio was. Surely the sculptor needed a large studio in order to work on such a large 7 meter long sculpture. His works were lined up in groups in his studio. Mr. Entsuba took time to explain each of them to me one by one, such as what made him to create this work, and where that work was displayed. He remembered every work of art.

All of his sculptures involved motion and his ideas were unique. Among his works on dreams, I was especially touched by *Dream, Dream, Dream* (1978), and *Tune in the Morning* (1983). Once, he had received the Order of Culture. He was 88 years old, yet his drive for creativity had not changed, and his passion for his sculpture work was unbelievable. My age was less than half of his. After meeting with him, I regretted that I had felt difficulty over concerts.

I saw what an artist was supposed to be in Mr. Entsuba, whose life work was to leave good works to generations to come, while moving forward. He gave me his autograph with a note, "Live while appreciating taste and nuance." His continuous activity is my motivation to keep striving as a conductor.

## **Warmhearted Encouragement**

Shortly after returning from France, I was granted an award titled *The Tokai Television Award* from the Tokai Television and Broadcasting Company in Nagoya. The company gave me the award as an encouragement for my win at the International Besançon Competition for Young Conductors.

In the following year of 1983, I received another award, *The Avon Awards to Women* as artists. Those awards are given to women who are active in various fields such as art culture, sports and nature, and they encourage women to continue to be active. Ms. Fusae Ichikawa was the very first recipient of the Grand Award of the Avon awards. Since then, I have been in a close relationship with the Ichikawa Fusae Memorial Center and receive words of warmhearted encouragement from them. I feel very encouraged by the support of many women.

A woman of great experience in the society gave me a word, "Career is power." I have been burdened by what it means to keep following the path of my choice since then.

## Fun Friends

One time I organized an orchestra to perform an opera, and I asked the alumni of the Tokyo University of the Arts to come.

I had known them since they were studying at the university. I used to conduct their student orchestra. I think we had performed Verdi's opera, *La Traviata* back then. When the alumni got together, they became a very pleasant orchestra. We had a fun time performing the opera. We also performed *Hamlet* composed by Thomas, and Rossini's *L'occasione fa il ladro* (the very first performance in Japan).

In addition, we performed as *Yoko Matsuo and Her Friends* at the grand opening concert of the Hamarikyū Asahi Hall in 1992. Because the ages of the members are close to each other, we cannot stop once we get excited. One of the members once said to me, "Next time, we want you to name the orchestra, "Yoko Matsuo and Her *Fun* Friends."

I want to keep playing music with such friends.

## **Nerima, My City**

It has been 13 years since I began residing in Shakujii in Nerima Ward. Shakujii Park is just around the corner from my house. Lots of green and some fields still remain in this area. It is a quiet residential area in the midst of a big city.

There is a civic orchestra in Nerima Ward. The Nerima Symphony Orchestra was founded in the year when I returned from France. Having the Nerima Culture Center as its base, the orchestra practices diligently to be an important part of the culture in Nerima Ward and I am granted the title of Music Advisor for this orchestra. Since this is the orchestra of the city where I live, I am hoping this orchestra to become active.

This year, as a part of the Nerima Culture Center's 10th year anniversary, we are planning to perform an opera, *Carmen*. Whenever I conduct this opera, my memories of France pass before my eyes.

Living in such a gigantic city like Tokyo, it is hard work not to lose sight of ourselves in the midst of overwhelming information. I also see it is important to pay more attention to the culture of the city where I live.

## **Mademoiselle is the Chef**

People often ask me, “It is difficult for you, a woman, to be an orchestral conductor, isn’t it?” Sure, I live under unfavorable conditions in today’s male-oriented society, and many things do not go as I want. But the reason that I wanted to become a conductor was not to gain authority. I decided to pursue conducting, because I wanted to express orchestral music.

My mentor, the late Professor Akeo Watanabe left me a beautiful word. “When a scary conductor or a stubborn conductor performs with an orchestra, the orchestra becomes nervous and tries hard to perform. But a great conductor makes each member of the orchestra desire to play warmhearted and wonderful music, simply by coming to stand on the podium.”

I always desire to be told, “I was glad to come to your concert,” rather than, “It was a wonderful concert.”

Music is not a fight. Surely it is not something fretful, either. I want to be a conductor to tell people how wonderful music is. I want to be *CHEF D’ORCHESTRE*, who is considerate and kind in delicacy. I want to keep my own tones, and perform music that is always bright and radiant.

Why do I want to do it? Because *Mademoiselle is the Chef*.