

## The Art of Paul Klee

One day I was asked to write a newspaper article. There would be an exhibition for Paul Klee's art works and I was asked to select and write on one of his works to advertise the exhibition. I had little knowledge about the artist. So, in order to know him better, I began reading books about his art work and his life. I was surprised to discover that he was a musician. Both of his parents were musicians and he began learning to play the violin in such an environment. He was even a member of a symphony orchestra in Bern, Switzerland. He grew up pursuing both music and visual arts, until he had to choose one of the two. Then, he chose the visual arts. His reason for choosing visual arts was interesting. He wrote, "There have already been several eras when music was at the pinnacle, but the visual arts should move forward to their coming epoch."

Musical notations often appear in Klee's art works, such as *fermata* ♯, *treble clef* ♪, and *various time signatures*. Titles of his art works clearly show his background as a musician. Titles such as *Fugue in Rot, Three/Four Time, Chorale and Scenery*, and *The Bavarian Don Giovanni*, provoke our imaginations. Klee loved Mozart's music, especially his opera, *Don Giovanni*. He had been thriving both as painter and artist. What a luxurious choice he had to make!

I liked his coloring and the inner themes hidden in his paintings. Actually, it was the writing about Klee that led me to start painting.

## **Granada and Manuel de Falla**

My interest in Spain grew as I conducted the opera, *Carmen*, and was exposed to the music of Manuel de Falla. The great movie, *Carmen*, directed by Carlos Saura, was filled with flamenco dancing throughout the show. Antonio Gades, the flamenco dancer in the movie, showed sharpness and dynamics that no one else could have done.

I decided to visit the Alhambra located in Granada, Spain, since I was scheduled to conduct Falla's *The Three-Cornered Hat*, and Rodrigo's *Fantasia for a Gentleman* with a guest guitarist.

In the middle of February 2003, I was planning to enter Madrid through Paris. But because Air France was on strike, I arrived in Madrid way behind schedule. It was rainy and cold in the city. I went to *the Museo del Prado*, which I had visited several times before. I also visited *Palacio Real de Madrid* for the first time. It snowed the following day, which was unusual for the season. The snow was falling from the sky over the fountains on the street corners and the historic buildings. It was like a vision. However the snow also caused heavy traffic in the city of Madrid. The next morning the media kept reporting traffic jams. A big city was like any other city in any country.

Despite the snow, I set out for Granada. Visiting the Alhambra had been my dream for many years. This historic site was the last fortress for the Muslim rule of Spain. The ceilings and walls of the palace were covered with detail. Views of the scenery varied and were completely different from one another, depending on the location. The buildings reflecting in the large pond of the patio were artistic. The palace, with beautiful gardens, was located on a large site. Many tourists visit this place from all over the world.

There was a splendid building right near the hotel where I stayed in Granada. It was the house where the composer Manuel de Falla had lived, and was now his museum. I did not expect to find the museum of Falla there, perhaps because I had had little knowledge of him. Inside the museum were not only his photos but also the handwritten sketches of his compositions and the miniature of a ballet stage setting. The music of his works were played in the

museum, including his best known *The Three-Cornered Hat* and *Love, the Magician*. When I introduced myself, “I have been conducting his compositions in Japan,” the museum curator let me in graciously, saying, “We would love for you to come in.” Because the people in Europe pay great respect to musicians and artists, it made me feel honored and glad. I encountered Falla in such an unexpected place.

I have played *The Three-Cornered Hat* and *Love, the Magician* many times. Spanish dance rhythms are powerfully present in these compositions. But, I also know that he studied in Paris. He wrote compositions rich in color, and I sense the colors in his compositions are more like the primary colors, perhaps because, for me, Spain has an image of being “the nation of passions,” or “flamboyant red.”

Falla met and was influenced by French masters of composition such as Debussy and Ravel. When he was forty-four, he moved to Granada and became active as a composer at his house, which has become his museum today.

Falla never married, and it was said that he was introverted and could not make himself known. Interestingly, he wrote in his will, “Please do not perform my works much. If you perform my works in an inevitable situation, make sure that the works may be performed with ethical, artistic and spiritual manners based on the Christian faith.” I had thought composers wanted to leave their works when they die, so that as many people could perform or listen to their works as possible. I did not know that there were people like Falla.

Visiting Granada led me feel closer to Falla and his music.

## **Rain Woman Is a Friend of Typhoon, Too**

I often wonder why it rains or snows so often on the days I conduct concerts. This legacy began with my debut concerts in Nagoya, Tokyo and Paris with rain or heavy snow. In addition, the typhoon is a friend of mine, too.

When it comes to snow, I remember one particular concert with which I had great trouble. In 1996, the year after the Great Hanshin Earthquake, we had a concert of the Ashiya Symphony Orchestra. Due to the earthquake, the freeways in the area had been damaged and there had been heavy traffic every day. It was in the middle of February and there had been heavy rain on the rehearsal day before the concert date. The next day when I woke up, I sensed it unusually bright outside. It was snowing. Before long, the snow piled up. We attempted to start the rehearsal at the hall, but then found out that the truck with the instruments had not arrived yet. Because the orchestra was an amateur orchestra, it was impossible for the orchestra to perform its concert without a dress rehearsal on the stage. It was way behind schedule when the dress rehearsal began, and it was past the concert time when we finished the rehearsal. Meanwhile we had to have the audience wait in the lobby.

It happened to be my birthday, February seventeenth, when we had the concert. The members of the orchestra had been secretly planning to play the "Happy Birthday" song on the stage. But they had absolutely no time to do it on that day. It was a crazy performance but everyone was satisfied. During the time of the party after the concert, they sang the song for me and I was given a birthday cake. Since the concert in the snow, I have always worried about snow whenever I am invited to conduct during the winter season.

These weather stories remind me of another incident. In September of the year when I became a first grade elementary school student, the Isewan typhoon landed in Nagoya and caused great damage to the region. The river overflowed its banks near my house and many people were killed. I happened to start my piano lesson that same year. In other words, I began my life as a musician that year. Since then, rain has come beside me in various occasions. With no exception, it has either rained or snowed on very important days: the day I was admitted to the Department of Conducting at the Tokyo University of the

Arts; the day I won the International Besançon Competition for Young Conductors; the day of my debut concert in Paris; and on countless other important concerts. I became the resident conductor at the Central Aichi Symphony Orchestra in the year of 1999, which was the fortieth anniversary since the Isewan typhoon hit Nagoya. And it was in the same year that I visited the elementary school that I had attended in Nagoya to appear in an NHK television program, Extracurricular Activity: Yōkoso Senpai (Welcome, Alumni). Soon I came to believe that these rains were great supporters for me to continue my music career as a conductor. I also began believing that those who suffered from the typhoon have been supporting me as well. No matter how bad the weather may be, I have never had even one day when my concert was cancelled due to the weather. And, by the time the concert is over, the sky has always been clear. That is why the typhoon is my friend.

On October 2007, the Ashia Symphony Orchestra was going to have its first concert in Tokyo. This was its fortieth anniversary concert. The orchestra planned to perform the symphony by Tchaikovsky at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. We had been informed that a large audience would rush to the concert, so we were preparing for this big event.

The members of the orchestra arrived in Tokyo from the Kansai area on the very day of the concert. But we could not believe what was happening. The day before the concert, a typhoon had formed out of nowhere and was going to hit Tokyo. Having a typhoon in this season was unthinkable. And for sure I did not see any trait of it on the weather map two days ago. I could not believe it when I heard the weather forecast. So I prayed that the Shinkansen which carried the orchestra members might not be cancelled. Unfortunately, the weather in Tokyo that day was unfavorable with occasional gusts. Nevertheless a large audience rushed to the concert hall, which moved me very much. I was thankful they came to see our concert despite the bad weather. A member of the Ashiya Symphony Orchestra told me, "You should not have invited the typhoon." Another member could not believe that I had brought the typhoon even to this concert. As for me, I was giggling because it was another rainy day on the concert day. I was sure that the typhoon, my friend, wanted to listen to my concert, too. As long as I continue my music career with vigor, rain will follow me and support me.

## Mobile Concerts Filled with Touching Moments

Sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, professional orchestras often go to regional places and hold concerts. They even go to rural towns where residents have few opportunities to experience an orchestral concert. In 2007, I led a concert tour with the Central Aichi Symphony Orchestra for the first time in several years. At the end of September, we went to the Kyushu region. The summer was still in the peak there and the temperature was over thirty degrees every day. One of the concerts was held at a school gym with no air conditioner. In addition, all the doors of the gym were shut during the concert to block the noise from outside. So, there was no ventilation. As a result it was awfully hot inside the gym. It was especially difficult for the orchestra members who had to wear formal dress.

There were streets near the elementary school, but they were too narrow for our bus to go through. So, the members of the orchestra had to walk to the gym carrying their large instruments, working up a sweat. The children looked at the orchestra and watched its performance right before them with their eyes wide open. Especially the first and second graders watched us with their mouths open. Some children energetically responded when we explained the program, saying, "I know that song!" While the temperature did not go down, we still went to Kagoshima, Amami Ōshima and as far as Okinawa.

Not many people knew about these events sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. The members of the orchestra and us adults were revitalized by the simple and pure energy of these children. At a small fishing village, the people treated us with a gorgeous meal full of fresh fish that they had just caught that morning. The local people gave their best to support the children in their area. We even performed at an elementary school which had in total only four first graders. I still remember them listening to our performance while sitting closely to one another on the floor.

Everyone in the orchestra told me that we needed to do something about the typhoon since I, the woman who always brings rain, was coming along. And we were planning to fly to several places known for typhoons, such as Amami Ōshima and Okinawa. So they gave me a small present. It was *teruteru bozu*,

Encore

a small doll made of the seven treasures (gold, silver, pearl, agate, crystal, coral, and lapis lazuli) to wish for fine weather. Thanks to this doll, we had a sunny day every day, though it became intensely hot.

## **Visiting Northern Europe of Grieg and Sibelius**

In July 2007, I made a bold decision to visit the Northern European countries. This year was the fiftieth anniversary since the death of a Northern European composer, Sibelius. I had visited European countries many times but not Northern Europe. I began to be interested in seeing the nations where Sibelius and Grieg had been born and raised. I especially had a strong interest in Finland. This nation had often come up in music education. I was also interested in this nation, which was said to have the best academics for children in the world. And I wanted to see the fjords. So within my short schedule, I went to visit Bergen in Norway and Helsinki in Finland as well as Copenhagen and Odense in Denmark.

I felt a little bit nervous, since I was going to Northern Europe alone, but when I arrived at the Narita Airport, I found that my flight with Scandinavian Airlines had been cancelled. I did not know the reason. So I exchanged my tickets for another flight to Munich, and then from Munich to Bergen in Norway. I was excited to stop by Munich so that I could have tasty beer and sausage at the airport. Then I was informed that the flight to Munich was also cancelled. I had no clue what was happening. Everyone who was planning to get flights was confused. Since I was not able to arrive in Bergen that day, I would be staying at Copenhagen. I ran to the designated terminal and found that the destination of the flight was the Berlin Tegel Airport. Wondering why I was taking this flight to Berlin though I was going to Copenhagen, I got on the airplane. I looked at the flight schedule inside the airplane for the first time. It seemed that I was going to Berlin first and then change to another flight to Copenhagen. I thought this was a long detour but then gave up trying to understand.

When I arrived in Berlin, I looked for the connecting flight to Copenhagen but there was no information on the board. I was afraid the flight had been cancelled again and went to the counter. I found that the flight to Copenhagen would depart at a gate located at the far end of the airport terminal. I went to the gate and found a propeller plane there. I was afraid to fly in such a small air plane which could carry only a few people. But after all the happenings, I was ready to give it a try and see what would happen. Besides I had to enter Northern Europe first. It was after 9 P.M. but was still bright in the sky. I saw a

beautiful sunset. The airplane flew at a low altitude so I saw the gorgeous coastlines of Denmark. As I enjoyed looking outside the window, I began to like flying with the propeller plane.

Finally I arrived at the airport of Copenhagen. I only had my carry on since all the other luggage had been checked in at Narita and had been delivered to Bergen. I was informed that I would stay at an inexpensive hotel by the airport that evening. I experienced the night under the midnight sun in Northern Europe at 11 P.M. The hotel staff kindly lent me the battery charger for my cellular phone, so I was able to contact my family in Japan. My long, long day after leaving Japan ended at last.

By the way, what makes the airplane nice is that it eventually takes me to my final destination. By train, if I take a wrong train or get off at a wrong station by accident, I have to go back and start again.

The next day in the early morning I arrived in Bergen, Norway, which was originally my final destination. My checked in luggage had been missing due to the cancellation of several flights. I had never had such light traveling overseas with just one small suitcase. But, since I had come there, I wanted to visit sites as I had planned. Bergen was a city by the bay with markets on the streets. Despite the heavy rain, I headed for the house of Grieg. I had brought the rain with me again. Soon, I saw a pretty house on the top of a hill where I could see lakes below. That was the house where Grieg had lived, which filled me with emotions. Having experienced such troubles to come to Norway, I was deeply inspired all the more. On the property of his house, I found a nice concert hall.

## **The Nation of Sibelius**

The following day, I set out to sightsee a fjord, which I had been wanting to do. It was a cold and drizzling day and I did not bring any warm clothes for the weather, so I wore many layers of clothing to keep myself warm. My suitcase had still not arrived. The fjord was beautiful, and even though it was very cold on that day, many tourists were present, moving about. My impression might have been different if the weather had been nicer. My luggage finally came on the last day of my stay in Bergen.

Two days later, I flew to Helsinki in Finland with excitement. When I looked at the country of Finland from the airplane, I spotted various lakes and islands surrounded by deep forests, as I had heard. This was Finland. As I remembered Sibelius' music, I thought that, unlike the summer nights in the midnight sun, the country would have dark and long nights in the winter.

Helsinki was a beautiful city with modern architecture. The Helsinki Cathedral was distinct with its brilliant white color, making my eyes smart. The Helsinki Station reminded me of Russia. It was busy with people walking around, but the atmosphere was somewhat dark. I saw a Russian Orthodox Church as well. Perhaps the atmosphere must have been influenced by its history. Pretty flowers were everywhere in the park, as if they were enjoying the short summer. The sun was intense since it was summer time. But the dryness of the air made me feel comfortable as I walked. I visited the Sibelius Park early in the morning, but saw no one. The sculpture face of Sibelius sat there, showing that he was the composer representing the nation. There were many lakes near the park. Wherever I went around the town, it spread out before my eyes with the open sky. Various well-designed sculptures were seen here and there.

I joined a tour to visit the house where Sibelius had lived. Walking for a while in the forest, we arrived at the house, *Ainola*, named after his wife. It seemed that every morning Sibelius would walk to the lake close to the house to elaborate his musical ideas. The house was divided into various rooms such as a room with a piano, and the room where he made the final copies of his compositions. He liked the color green and each brick of the fireplace in the dining room was colored green. He must have enjoyed being in the forest all

the time. He always wore his hat with his jacket even when he went fishing, so he seemed to dress nicely. His grave was also on the house property.

I was glad to come as far as to Finland. Especially it made me glad to feel its cultural air. The people in Norway and Finland spoke English fluently, and they all kindly gave me information in English. These nations must have principles on education that are different from those of Japan.

The trouble that I had experienced due to flight cancelation made my trip to the Northern European countries special. Most of all, I can relate myself to Sibelius more closely as a composer. Immediately after coming back to Japan, I conducted his Symphony with the Central Aichi Symphony Orchestra, while remembering those green lakes and forests and the fresh breeze.

By the way, I often saw watermelons in Northern Europe. Every morning there was a plate of watermelon on the table. This put me in a good mood, because watermelon is my favorite fruit.

## **Rafael Nadal**

Rafael Nadal is a twenty-two year old tennis player. He won his first Wimbledon title for the men's singles in England, in July 2008. My journey as his big fan began while I was staying in Paris in 2004. Back then, he was not known to the world. I saw the tennis tournament between the teams of France and Spain on TV. Nadal, who was eighteen years old at that time, was shining. To me at least, he was. He was not just hitting the balls hard but, as he returned the ball, he was watching his opponent very closely. His world ranking went up rapidly. He kept defeating Roger Federer in the French Open games, but always lost to him in Wimbledon.

On July 6<sup>th</sup>, I finished conducting a concert, went back home and waited to see the final match in Wimbledon on TV. The game was delayed due to rain. There was an orchestra rehearsal in the morning the next day. But I had to watch the game until the end. The two players did not give up the game and it was almost dawn when the game finally ended. I was thrilled with joy when Nadal won the Wimbledon title.

Rafael Nadal's attitude toward tennis is straight forward, which has something in common with us who engage in music. During his interview whenever he won a championship, he always thanked his family, his fans who supported him, and his great opponents. I also say to my students, "Keep moving straightforward, always!"

In August that year, Rafael Nadal earned the highest ranking in the world. I gave my applause to this tennis player who had pursued the ball everywhere on the tennis court.