

Christa Rakich
A Commemoration of the Life of Yuko Hayashi
Rikkyo University, Tokyo
May 26, 2018
Organ by C.B. Fisk, Opus 141

Prelude & Fugue in f minor, BWV 534	J.S. Bach (1685-1750)	9:37
Variations on <i>Ontwaak, gij die Slaapt</i>	Klaas Bolt (1927-1990)	13:26
Nocturne (1977)	Germaine Tailleferre (1892-1983)	2:38
Trois Pièces (1911) Prélude Petit Canon Improvisation	Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)	6:20 2:40 3:38
Fantasia on Salve Regina (2016)	Margaretha Christina de Jong (* 1961)	11:45
An Extravagance of Toccatas (2012) pro Organo pleno pro Organo aetherio pro Organo flagrante	James Woodman (* 1957)	12:00
Total time		62:04

A Personal Note

I have been very fortunate in my study of the organ. I was lucky to have attended Oberlin College, where I was inspired by fine teachers and excellent fellow students. From there, thanks to a Fulbright Grant, I had the good fortune to study the works of J.S. Bach with one of the world's greatest interpreters, Anton Heiller of Vienna, Austria. After 2 years there, I came to Boston to study with Yuko Hayashi. Heiller taught me Bach, and then Yuko taught me Christa, how to get what was in my heart out into the room. She taught me how touch could shape a phrase, how variety in attack and release could make the organ "speak," how to manage wind, how to make a room seem larger and more reverberant than it really is, and a mountain of "secrets," as her students would smilingly refer to her subtle tips and techniques.

The F minor Prelude and Fugue was one of the first pieces I played for her. It was immediately apparent she adored Heiller as much as I did. Yuko had connected with him in Haarlem and at various masterclasses around the world. Making connections was a particular skill of hers. She would bring the latest hot talent from Europe or Japan to perform on the Fisk organ at Old West Church, and fully exploit the artist's presence to benefit her students at New England Conservatory. One of those artists was the genial, kind Klaas Bolt, brilliant improviser and professor at the Sweelinck Conservatory. What a treasure for him to be in residence at the NEC organ department! After a week of regular group lessons from him, many students stopped planning preludes and postludes at their various church jobs, so skilled had they become at improvising. His *Variations on Ontwaak, gij die Slaapt (Awake, all who Sleep)* is an improvisation that was recorded and later transcribed.

It is important to understand how *difficult* many of Yuko's undertakings were. They might not seem so in 2018, but back in the 1950's, for a young Japanese woman living in an America with fresh scars from World War II, they surely were. She was a woman in a male-dominated field. On the other side of the world, Germaine Tailleferre, a native of France, faced similar difficulties. Born Marcelle Tailleferre, she changed her last name to Tailleferre to distance herself from her father, who refused to support her musical studies. She was the only female member of *Les Six*, a group of early 20th-century French composers, friends who presented concerts together and found inspiration in the work and eccentric personality of Eric Satie.

But it was as a teacher that Yuko won her highest accolades. I will not attempt to list her most famous students, for fear of omitting some organ luminary. Her success as an inspiration surely ranks with that of Nadia Boulanger, also a teacher of stars too numerous to list. Her student Quincy Jones says Boulanger told him "Your music can never be more or less than you are as a human being."

Yuko was also a great promoter of new music. She premiered Gunther Schuller's fiendishly difficult *Triptych* at the AGO National Convention in Boston in 1976. The last 2 pieces on this program are new. I commissioned de Jong's *Salve Regina* after playing several other organ works by her. It is neo-romantic, with gentle hints of jazz. I think of it as "Duruflé meets Gershwin."

The Woodman piece was commissioned by my wife, Janis Milroy, in celebration of my 60th birthday. James Woodman began his NEC career as a Yuko student, but finished as one of mine. It was a special delight to "share" him, and to move with him and Yuko through the changing relationships of student – teacher – colleague – friend.

American concert and recording artist **Christa Rakich** maintains two Artist-in-Residencies in Connecticut: at Somers Congregational Church in Somers, where she plays Richards-Fowkes Opus 21 (2014) and at St. John's Episcopal Church in West Hartford, home to the 64-stop Austin Opus 2761. She has served on the faculties of Westminster Choir College, Brandeis University, New England Conservatory, and the University of Connecticut, and as Assistant University Organist at Harvard. Previous Artist-in-Residencies have included the University of Pennsylvania and First Lutheran Church in Boston.

As a Fulbright Scholar, Christa Rakich studied for two years with Anton Heiller at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna, Austria. She holds Bachelor's degrees in Organ and German from Oberlin College, where she was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. After receipt of her Master's degree with honors from New England Conservatory, she was asked to join the faculty there, serving ultimately as department co-chair.

A prizewinner at international organ competitions (notably Bruges 1976), Rakich has received particular acclaim for her interpretations of the music of J.S. Bach. With keyboardist Peter Sykes, she performed a complete cycle of Bach's keyboard works in a series of 34 concerts aptly named *Tuesdays With Sebastian*. The concerts raised a total of \$20,000 for Boston area charities.

With keyboardist Susan Ferré, Rakich is a founding performer of the *Big Moose Bach Festival* in Berlin, New Hampshire. The festival presents cantatas, chamber music and keyboard music of J.S. Bach in rural New Hampshire each summer. As Vice-President of the Boston Clavichord Society, Rakich also pursues an active interest in the clavichord.

Information about recordings can be found at:

www.bachtrios.com

www.bachleipzigchorales.com

www.fromtheashescd.com