

Dai Fujikura



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AMPERE

CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA (LIVE)

performed by: Nagoya Philharmonic Orchestra

piano: Noriko Ogawa

conductor: Thierry Fischer

FLUID CALLIGRAPHY

FOR VIOLIN

performed by: Barbara Lüneburg

STREAM STATE (LIVE)

FOR ORCHESTRA

performed by: Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra

conductor: Pierre Boulez

POYOPOYO

FOR SOLO HORN

performed by: Nobuaki Fukukawa

PERLA

FOR BASS RECORDER

performed by: Inbar Solomon

MY BUTTERFLIES

FOR WIND ORCHESTRA

performed by: DePaul University Ensemble 20+

conductor: Michael Lewanski

TRANSFIGURED SONORITIES

*The natural world to the naked eye is nowhere near as precise as it can appear under a powerful microscope. The visual images, which form part of Dai Fujikura's inspiration, are not necessarily what every listener hears in his music. In “**Poyopoyo**” (2012) he offers us a baby's cheek with the texture of velvet, the bow of the violin embodies the calligrapher's brush in “**Fluid Calligraphy**” (2010) and macro photographs of seeds were the visual images behind “my butterflies.” A composer's inspiration is of course a deeply personal matter and Fujikura isn't writing descriptive programme music, but what this discrepancy highlights for me is the fact that this composer sees the world in an unusual and compelling way.*

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*At the opening of “**my butterflies**” (2012)*

I visualise a meadow of thickly-woven flowers and grasses above which a white noise of unseen buzzing insects floats like a heat haze.

Gradually brass sforzandi break through the surface of chirruping woodwind like Strombolian eruptions, short-lived explosive outbursts which break the surface at apparently random intervals. This is illusive.

The music of Dai Fujikura is never random; it is tightly controlled.

Patterns borrowed from the natural world are re-programmed, carefully ordered, offering something close to the geometric perfection of a snowflake.

Do you remember Anglia Television’s “Tales of the Unexpected,” with its rotating silhouette dancing to the tune of a carousel?

This iconic series, made more than thirty years’ ago, featured Roald Dahl sitting by his fireside, offering a languid introduction to his short stories, predicated on mystery and suspense. Now it’s your turn to sit in your favourite armchair by a roaring log fire and listen to this album.

Prepare to expect the unexpected.



***“Ampere”** – concerto for piano and orchestra (2008)*
is Dai Fujikura’s first concerto for piano, written for Noriko Ogawa.
She too is a Japanese expatriot who has made the UK her home.
Call a composition a concerto and we have come to expect a process of
dialectics between a solo instrument and a body of orchestral players.
Pianist and orchestra lunge and parry like duellists until the soloist
asserts dominance with a bravura cadenza. This is not so in “Ampere”.
The composer chooses to integrate piano and orchestra as if they were
“one big piano.” It is as if the music emanates from the pianist’s
fingertips and floats like smoke across the orchestra. Fujikura’s
description is of a giant computer, into which he feeds the data
produced by the pianist, in order to process and reflect back the
broad spectrum of sonorities and articulation, which are
second nature to the concert pianist.



Where you might expect a flourish of a cadenza, Fujikura showcases the subtlety of Noriko Ogawa's touch in a barely audible passage, accompanied by ethereal glissandi. In the second section, the orchestra picks up some aspects of the piano's attack which are echoed by the percussion section and as pizzicati, whilst the use of the sustaining pedal is echoed by solo strings. In the last section, the composer, who likes nothing better than to create music to match an individual's personality, rather than writing for an anonymous body of players, zooms in like a photographer on a handful of individuals who play chamber music as if in a glass cube, seemingly oblivious to the backdrop of a full symphony orchestra. Where one might expect a surge to a grand finale, the music is counter-intuitively delicate, featuring the crystalline tones of glass harmonica and the tinkling of a Kinderklavier, in which the original sounding pieces were also made of glass.



In “Fluid Calligraphy” for solo violin, the composer purports to offer us an acoustic exploration of calligraphy, employing the violinist’s bow as if it were the calligrapher’s brush. In the Buddhist art of Hitzusendo, the ultimate aspiration is for the mind to liberate the body to create while in a state of harmony and beauty. To achieve this state of mind, many years of striving must be endured, but the calligrapher will be ultimately rewarded with a sense of release when the pen finally moves across the surface with a purity and fluidity.

In this work for solo violin, the phrasing and accents don’t follow the arc of the melodic line, perhaps conveying the hesitant friction of brush against paper, or more profoundly the shackles of being human, which all too often obstruct spiritual transcendence. My thesis of the mismatch between the composer’s vision and that of the individual listener is underlined by the accompanying video, created by Tomoya Yamaguchi, Fujikura’s compatriot. Instead of fluid brushstrokes, he hears wavelengths, the sound of an early radio, sometimes flowing, sometimes fractured.



*“**Stream State**” (2005) was commissioned by the melting pot known as the Lucerne Festival Academy, founded by Maestro Pierre Boulez to enable more than a hundred young players to get under the skin of contemporary music. Although commissioned to write for orchestra, Fujikura, who finds he is inspired by the artistry of specific performers, decided to reorganise what to him presented as an anonymous entity into three distinct groups, each with its own specific character. Standard orchestral convention is thrown to the winds. The central group becomes the spine of the orchestra, sustaining a form of high-pitched harmonic chord progression. Pizzicati pass from one side of the stage to the other, like a localised shower of hail clattering across a courtyard. Harmonic material leaches to the left and the right from that central group, like the water which erupts silently in a Venetian acqua alta. As if he were a film director, the composer cuts and inserts processed material from later in the piece further back in the composition – the opposite of flashback technique.*



In “Poyopoyo” for solo horn the listener, expecting the clarion call of “Ein Heldenleben”, will discover instead something akin to the soft, pliant, velvety texture of a 4-month-old’s cheek. The horn’s sonority is modulated by a harmon mute, transforming this heroic instrument into the flexible, casual essence of a jazz trombone. We transition from Hölderlin to Kerouac without drawing breath.

“Perla” (2003/2008) for bass recorder has nothing to say about soft-edged flute tones of Carl Dolmetsch: instead it explores the flickering modernist flames of flutter-tonguing. When his recorder player overblows a flutter-tongued note, it reminds the composer of a steam whistle.

A gentler attack produces an air column, which floats above the instrument like smoke leaving a chimney, fracturing in the still air.

“my butterfiles” for wind orchestra was inspired by Dai’s wife, talking of the sensation she experienced in the first weeks of pregnancy. He also held in his mind’s eye macro photos of seeds he had seen in a science magazine. He creates a sonic picture of seeds in close-up by employing twittering flutes and clarinets. Then soft, muted brass notes enter, enveloping the seeds with a protective layer. These two very different sonorities begin to merge into one another until the brass play sforzandi and the seeds are catapulted into the air, as if ejected by a ripe seed pod.

As Robert Hugill wrote of the first release on the Minabel label, “In each of these works Fujikura explores his chosen forces to their limits, taking his players to the edge. And all respond brilliantly giving a series of fascinating performances. Fujikura does not write easy music, each piece on the disc requires care and attention from both performers and listeners. But the results can be magical.” This second disc is about transformation, starting with one texture and transmuting it into another. To fully appreciate the artistry one must allow one’s imagination to run freely and respond on an instinctive level, to accommodate the unpredictable, understanding that nothing is ever quite what it seems.

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"FLUID CALLIGRAPHY"

Recording producer: Moritz Bergfeld

Producer: Alexander Schubert / ahornfelder <http://ahornfelder.de/>

Co-production with Deutschlandfunk

Violin: Barbara Lüneburg

STREAM STATE

was recorded live at its premiere on 9 September 2005

by the LUCERNE FESTIVAL ACADEMY Orchestra

conducted by Pierre Boulez at KKL Lucerne,

Lucerne Hall as part of the 2005 LUCERNE FESTIVAL in Summer.

Pierre Boulez appears courtesy of Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft mbH.

<http://www.deutschegrammophon.com/gb/artist/boulez/biography>

(P) 2005 courtesy of SRF Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen

PERLA

Sound engineer: Toni Hinterholzinger.



MY BUTTERFLIES

Co-commissioned by the DePaul University School of Music

(in honour of its centennial)

and Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra

Recording engineer: Thomas Miller

All tracks composed, produced, edited, mixed and mastered by Dai Fujikura



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1. AMPERE — CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA

2. FLUID CALLIGRAPHY

3. STREAM STATE

4. POYOPOYO

5. PERLA

6. MY BUTTERFLIES

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