

"This work consists of twelve songs inspired by Japanese haiku, waka, and other poetry from the ancient era to the twentieth century. Starting from the early spring's sparkle, the twelve songs circle around the seasons and return with the first introduction of the next spring's sparkle. I would like to acknowledge the instrumentation—violin, clarinet, piano—which is so inspiring, talkative without words, and dynamic enough to tell the story of a whole year !!"

—Akane Tsuji-Nakanishi

## Songs

- |                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. It is spring                | 7. As I wait for you               |
| 2. My heart at fifteen         | 8. The moon alone                  |
| 3. If I did not exist          | 9. In five hundred million years   |
| 4. White bird                  | 10. I send you home in the morning |
| 5. The first breeze of summer! | 11. Home is                        |
| 6. In the sea of heaven        | 12. One plum blossom               |

1. *The waterfall rushes down over rocks and nearby the small bracken have put forth their shoots—It is spring!*

Prince Shiki

This famous poem about spring has long been loved. Winter is gone, spring is here; let's go out to the fields. Prince Shiki was the son of Emperor Tenji.

2. *Sprawled out on the grass at Kozukata Castle, sucked up into the sky—my heart at fifteen.*

Ishikawa Takuboku

From *Ichiaku no Suna (A Handful of Sand, 1910)*, this is a nostalgic self-portrait of Takuboku as a young man still full of dreams. Kozukata was the ruins of the castle of the 200,000-*koku* fief of Nambu Han; today it is Iwate Park in Morioka City.

3. *If I did not exist, my world would not exist, he would not exist—and then there would be no passion to burn my soul.*

Yanagihara Byakuren

From *Fumie (Treading Pictures, 1915)*. Byakuren was the daughter of a count who married twice but then fell in love with someone else and ran away with him. She became the target of malicious gossip and was imprisoned by her family in their home. Later she finally succeeded in marrying her lover. This poem dates from her youth. Her life was a continuing battle to honor her own feelings and for a woman's right to live freely in spite of society's strictures.

4. *White bird, are you not sad? You drift, never dyed by the blue of the sea or the sky's azure.*

Wakayama Bokusui

From *Umi no Koe (Sea Voices, 1908)*, Bokusui's first volume of tanka. The famous poem *How Many Mountains and*

*Rivers* is in the same volume. Contrasting the white of the bird (a seagull) with the blue of the sea and sky, the poet grieves over the bird, alive in the midst of nature's vastness and over his own youthful loneliness.

5. *Let me become the breeze! Let me become the first breeze of summer!*

Kawakami Sumio

From *Kawakami Sumio Zenshu*, Vol. I, 1979. This is the beginning of a poem he wrote and carved into his woodblock print *The First Breeze of Summer: I'd stand in front and block her way/I'd blow from behind/Oh let me be summer's first, first breeze!* The woodblock shows a fresh and lively scene with an embarrassed young woman at the center, her skirt being blown up by a mischievous green breeze. This was the work which inspired Manakata Shiko to become a woodblock print artist.

6. *In the sea of heaven cloud waves rise and the moon boat sails into a forest of stars, then is seen no more.*

Kakinomoto no Hitomaro

From *Book VII, Miscellaneous Poems of the Man'yōshū*. The vast sea of heaven and the clouds floating in it are high, foaming waves. The moon, a boat, crosses them and disappears into a forest of stars.

7. *As I wait for you full of yearning the bamboo blind on my front door swings in a puff of autumn breeze.*

Princess Nukata

*Man'yōshū*, Scroll 4, *Love*—a poem Princess Nukata wrote in longing for Emperor Tenji. Princess Nukata is one of the most famous of the women poets of the *Man'yōshū*. Originally the consort of Prince Oama, she later became a consort of the Prince's brother, Emperor Tenji.

8. *It walks the sky cloudless, clear: the moon alone.*

Ogiwara Seisensui

From *Gensen (The Wellspring)*, 1960). Seisensui, a haiku poet, with his teacher began the magazine *Soun (Stratus Clouds)* for publishing "new tendency" haiku. Later he shifted to "free-form haiku" and nurtured the talent of other poets. *The moon is alone. So am I. We walk together, one above and one below, each alone in freedom, bright and clear.* The poem dates from 1920.

9. *Say I'm out. Say no one's here. In five hundred million years I'll come home.*

Takahashi Shinkichi

From *Takahashi Shinkichi no Shihū*, 1949. At the age of twenty-two, Shinkichi became the first Dadaist poet in Japan with the publication of *The Poems of Dadaist Shinkichi*. When young he was a monk in a Shingon Buddhist temple, but later turned passionately to Zen

Buddhism. Many of his poems seize a Zen moment and fly to the heart of the object. This three-line poem is one of his most famous.

10. *I send you home in the morning, the snowy path crunches under your feet. Oh snow, fall with the scent of apples!*

Kitahara Hakushu

From *Kiri no Hana (Paulownia Flowers, 1913)*. In the late Meiji period, Hakushu defined a new era in modern poetry; with *Kiri no Hanna* he also became a central figure in tanka. *A snowy night/we draw near the red hearth, another's wife and I—where can we go from here?*

11. *Home is what you think of when you're far away. And what you sadly sing of.*

Muro Saisei

The beginning of the ten-line verse *Shokei ijo 2*, part of the poems which open *Short Lyrics, 1918*. These are famous lines but sometimes misunderstood for the poem is not about longing for home when far away. Saisei had come to Tokyo to fulfill his ambitions but unable to make his way, went back and forth to his hometown of Kanazawa. For a young man with no one to rely on for help, attachment of home is hard to forget, but by the same token, cold treatment there hurts all the more.

12. *One plum blossom—one blossom's worth of warmth.*

Hattori Ransetsu

From *Genposhu*. A famous haiku—only one plum flower has blossomed, but you feel the warmth of that flower, the early herald of spring, almost more than if there were many.

The world premiere of *Songs* was on October 9, 2005 in the Music Building, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

Tsuji-Nakanishi began studying piano at the age of four, the violin at seven, and composition at eleven. She specialized in composition at the National Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music. After five years of working experience as a composer, arranger, choir director, teacher, and pianist, she moved to London in 1992 to complete a master's degree at Goldsmith's College, London. She was awarded a Ph.D. in composition in 1999 from King's College, London, where she studied with Sir Harrison Birtwistle. She also studied vocal accompaniment with Geoffrey Parsons, Iain Ledingham in London, and Hartmut Höll in Salzburg.

She has won prizes at the Franz Schubert International Composition Competition and the sixty-sixth Japan Music Competition (first prize and the Yasuda Prize). She also received the Suita Music Prize. Her music has been performed and broadcast in Japan, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Austria, Germany, and the United States. It has been recorded and broadcast both in Europe and Japan.

Tsuji-Nakanishi is active as a vocal accompanist and pianist and has performed widely in Japan and Europe with her husband, tenor Hirohisa Tsuji. Since 2000, she has been an assistant professor of Miyagi Gakuin Women's University in Japan. She was chosen for the Japanese government research-abroad program for artists in 2005–2006.