

A Conversation with Eriko Daimo

By Nathan Daughtrey

After winning the Belgium Marimba Competition, Eriko Daimo graced us in Nashville at PASIC 2004 with her artistry, impeccable technique, and musicianship. She returns this year with a fresh new program of all Japanese music for the marimba.

Nathan Daughtrey: *You started out in music playing the piano. How long did you continue your piano studies once you started studying marimba? Do you still play piano?*

Eriko Daimo: I started learning piano, music theory, and aural skills training when I was five years old. I continued taking weekly lessons until I moved to the U.S. when I was 23. I still play piano occasionally, but I am not as in shape technically as I used to be. However, my career as a pianist is actually much longer than my career as a marimbist.

ND: *How do you feel your piano study has affected your approach to the marimba? Technique? Musicianship? Literature selection?*



PHOTO BY GIAN ANDREA DI STEFANO

ERIKO DAIMO
Keyboard Showcase Concert
Friday 1:00 P.M.

ED: I think my piano background contributes greatly to my approach to the marimba. As a pianist, especially through studies of the Beethoven sonatas, I was trained to orchestrate the score in my mind and constantly try to *sing* each voice as if it was an instrument in the orchestra. That approach to music has transferred to my marimba playing, and I am always aiming towards a specific sound when I play every note on the marimba. Therefore, my primary objective in marimba technique is to produce the sounds I envision in my mind.

In regards to literature selection, I actually have more knowledge of the piano repertoire than I do of the marimba repertoire. When I play marimba “just for fun” in my studio, I usually end up playing piano music such as Chopin, Debussy, Bach, etc.

ND: *You have a nice balance in your repertoire of traditional marimba pieces, transcriptions/adaptations of classical works, and arrangements of popular and folk music. How do you make decisions about literature selection?*

ED: My repertoire selection process is very simple: I play the music that I love. That is the approach I took when I decided the repertoire for my debut CD, which I titled *Origin* for a reason. The CD includes some of my favorite music by Japanese composers. On the surface, the title simply connotes music from my own origin of Japan, but I think the word “origin” has a deeper meaning in the context of art. Art is born from culture, and culture is born from humans’ innate instinct to feed the mind. In a way, art is a gateway for us to get in touch with the origin of our human spirits.

I do not have the definitive answer to what art music is, but I personally believe that it is the sense of sincere human communication that turns sound into art. As evident in my repertoire, which ranges from contemporary concert music to film music and folk song, I believe that art is regardless of compositional language or complexity. Of course, I take into consideration, in recitals or recordings, things like musical flow, stylistic variety, and thematic schemes. However, the most important deciding factor is that it has to be music that resonates with my heart.

To see a video of Eriko Daimo playing “The Source” by Toshi Ichiyanagi, access the digital edition of this issue at www.pas.org/publications/percussivenotes/notesonline_copy1.aspx

Video

ND: Your last solo appearance at PASIC was nine years ago in Nashville. You have since traveled the world several times as a soloist, adjudicator, and clinician. How do you feel you have grown as a musician during this time?

ED: Artistically and musically, I am not sure how or if I have grown as a musician. At times, I try to self-reflect and see where I am at compared to the past, but I find that less productive than simply focusing on the “now” and following the flow of wherever music and life take me. I have probably changed in the past nine years, but I don’t think of it as better or worse. I am simply at a different stage of my musical journey.

In terms of career, since my last recital at PASIC 2004, I moved to the U.S. and began to play more concerts. I have had many wonderful opportunities to meet, play with, and learn from many outstanding musicians along the way. In that regard, I hope I’ve grown in a good way.

ND: How will your program in Indianapolis compare to your 2004 showcase concert?

ED: My 2004 showcase concert was a result of winning the Belgium Marimba Competition. Therefore, the repertoire was all music from the competition set list. This time, I am planning to play music exclusively from Japan, including the U.S. premiere of Dai Fujikura’s solo marimba work “repetition/recollection.” He is very well respected and has been commissioned by such great conductors and orchestras as Gustavo Dudamel, the Berlin Philharmonic, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Much of the other concert repertoire will come from my new CD, *Origin*.

Read a review of *Origin* by Eriko Daimo on page 82 of this issue.

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