

Festival 2021

Fukushima City

Festival 2021 Fukushima originally scheduled for January 24 had to be postponed to March 3 due to COVID restrictions. Additionally, many of the choral pieces in connection with commemorating the 10th year of Great East Japan Earthquake had to be either cancelled or modified to make the performances safe. Nonetheless, six commissioned pieces were premiered for the occasion.

New York City Sixth Artist Residency

Watch the archive of the livestreams at the link below:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3wxllrqcm0Zp4KiY41YIUg>

Live-streamed from Volvo Hall, Scandinavia House

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Music From Japan was able to present Festival 2021 New York as a live stream. The Festival featured conceptual artist-composer Tomoko Hojo and sound artist-composer Kazuya Ishigami in two experimental programs, both of which reflected on the current state of the world.

The Works of Tomoko Hojo: Saturday

The Works of Tomoko Hojo on March 6 featured two MFJ commissions. *Distance*, for string quartet, asked the musicians to engage in a deep listening practice by closing their eyes, and moving about the room blind as they played the piece, which was structured around their open A strings. Abby Swidler (violin), Aimee Niemann (violin), Joanna Mattrey (viola), and Aliya Ultan



Distance (MFJ Commission)

(cello) navigated the physical and sonic space beautifully, as the sounds moved from the consonance of the open strings into more dissonant harmonies and extended techniques. The piece was completed when the performers attempted to assemble in the form of a 6' by 6'



I am Listening to You

square, using only their ears as a guide. *touch* is a trio for electronics, cello and amplified paper. The performers followed a video score which contained footage of text and ephemera by Yoko Ono, rather than a conventional score. The combination of tearing sounds (produced by the composer), noisy cello (played by Aliya Ultan), and Sergey Kasich's FingerRing System made for an engaging and dynamic spectacle. The final work, *I am Listening To You*, was inspired by Yoko Ono. This piece was performed by Hojo together with pre-recorded four channel sound. She muttered softly into a lavalier microphone, walked around the space, and manipulated several sound and light-emitting objects placed throughout the room. The concert opened with *Hover Over Man and Woman*. The composer and Sergey Kasich manipulated two portable speakers connected to two cassette players installed on the wall. The performers filtered and spatialized the sound by moving the speakers around the room and covering them with their hands and other resonant objects. The cassettes contained the sound of the first recording of a Japanese woman, Kawakami Sadayakko, recorded in 1901. Among the most avant-garde programs MFJ has ever presented, Hojo's concert was a kaleidoscopic presentation that involved far more than just music and drew on feminist themes, particularly how women have been silenced both in their lifetimes and through the lens of history.

The Works of Kazuya Ishigami: Sunday

The second day of the festival on March 7 was *The Works of Kazuya Ishigami*. Due to the pandemic and the birth of his first child in September, the composer participated from his home in Osaka. The program was diverse and engaging, high-



True Sound performed by Ned Rothenberg (MFJ Commission)