

In This Ancient House

Music by Ruth Morris Gray (b. 1961)

Japanese text Japanese text: Poem number 100 from 100 poems by 100 poets (Ogura Hyakunin Isshu) attributed to Emperor Juntuko. This particular English translation which is used as part of the song text is found in several places on the internet, but most significantly at the University of Virginia Library.

IPA and Text

/mo-mo-fi-ki ja/
Momoshiki ya

/fu-ru-ki no-ki-ba no/
Furuki nokiba no

/fi-no-bu ni mo/
Shinobu ni mo

/na-o a-ma-ri a-ru/
Nao amari aru

/mu-ka-fi na-ri ke-ri/
Mukashi nari keru

Translation

Momoshiki ya Furuki nokiba no Shinobu ni mo Nao amari aru Mukashi nari keru	順徳院 百敷や 古き軒端の しのぶにも なほあまりある むかしなりけり	In this ancient house, Paved with a hundred stones, Ferns grow in the eaves; But numerous as they are, My old memories are more. ¹
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¹ University of Virginia Library Japanese Text Initiative "Ogura Hyakunin Isshu". <http://etext.virginia.edu/japanese/hyakunin/intro.html>. (accessed May 26, 2009).

Background

The Japanese text is a poem in the "tanka" form – a five line poem of 31 syllables (5, 7, 5, 7, 7). More information about the source of the poetry is included below. There is a pun using the word "Shinobu" which means both "a fern called shinobu" and "to look upon the past".²

Recordings

Full recording available at https://youtu.be/Bw9vo_Cl0tw. I believe that this is the promotional studio recording. All parts are very easy to hear.

Parts

Soprano: <https://youtu.be/vo0ASFIONJQ>

Alto: <https://youtu.be/S0wDBBvTzr4>

Bass: <https://youtu.be/Z3m6QUcDhH8>

² "Interpretation of Ogura Hyakunin Isshu in English (91-100)". <http://pureoffice.net/kyomi/database/h1/h1-e100.htm>. (accessed May 26, 2009).

Analysis

Key: Home tone of D, with a D minor feel. This is a gapped scale, but not pentatonic (d, e, f, g, a, c). Bb is occasionally used in the accompaniment.

Meter: 4/4

Overall Structure: AA'BA''B''

SECTION	MEASURE	EVENT AND SCORING
Introduction	1-4	piano only
A	5-16	<i>A</i> theme melody is established – melody in upper voice, alto harmonizes, no men; Much of the harmony consists of open 5ths. Melodic structure: AABB' – Japanese text is alternated with the English version of the text
A'	17-27	<i>A</i> theme repeated – sopranos and altos sing exactly as before, but a baritone is added to harmonize
B	28-41	<i>B</i> theme introduced – sopranos have melody, altos harmonize in homophonic texture, baritones enter canonically one measure later, but not a strict canon; 38-41 is homophonic and homorhythmic in all voices
interlude	42-45	piano only – identical to introduction
A'	47-56	identical to 17-26
B'	57-67	identical to 28-41, except final note is not sustained as long
coda	67-74	3 part homophonic homorhythmic, changing meters, resolves on d/a open 5 th

About 100 poems by 100 poets (Ogura Hyakunin Isshu)

"Ogura Hyakunin Isshu, also called Hyakunin Isshu, is an anthology of 100 poems by 100 different poets. The poems are all "waka" (now called "tanka"). Waka are five-line poems of 31 syllables, arranged as 5, 7, 5, 7, 7. The waka represented in Hyakunin Isshu were court poetry, which

almost exclusively used the waka format from the earliest days of Japanese poetry until the seventeen-syllable haiku came into prominence in the seventeenth century.

"Hyakunin Isshu is said to have been compiled by the famous thirteenth-century critic and poet Fujiwara no Sadaie (also known as Teika), though his son Fujiwara no Tameie may have had a hand in revising the collection. Teika also compiled a waka anthology called Hyakunin Shuka (Superior Poems of Our Time), which shares many of the same poems as Hyakunin Isshu.

"The 100 poems of Hyakunin Isshu are in rough chronological order from the seventh through the thirteenth centuries. The most famous poets through the late Heian period in Japan are represented.

"Hyakunin Isshu has had immense influence in Japan. In Donald Keene's phrase, the poems have "constituted the basic knowledge of Japanese poetry for most people from the early Tokugawa period until very recent times....This meant, in a real sense, that Teika was the arbiter of the poetic tastes of most Japanese even as late as the twentieth century." (Seeds in the Heart, p. 674; see Sources for full citation.) The influence of Hyakunin Isshu was particularly extended through the card game based on the collection, called uta karuta, played especially at New Year's.

"Among foreign critics and translators there have been differing opinions about the value of Hyakunin Isshu. Arthur Waley thought that the collection "is so selected as to display the least pleasing features of Japanese poetry. Artificialities of every kind abound." (Japanese Poetry, The 'Uta' [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919], p. 7.) Kenneth Rexroth is more temperate: "[It] is a very uneven collection. It contains some of the most mannered poetry of classical Japan, but it also contains some of the best." (One Hundred Poems, p. xviii.) Donald Keene offers this summary: "It can hardly be pretended that all the poems deserve the immortality Teika bestowed on them, but many are fine poems, and his choices do no harm to his reputation as a critic." (Seeds, p. 674.)"³

³ University of Virginia Library Japanese Text Initiative "Ogura Hyakunin Isshu". <http://etext.virginia.edu/japanese/hyakunin/intro.html>. (accessed May 26, 2009).