

MICHIYO YAGI

(21-string koto, 17- and 18-string bass kotos, electronics, voice)

Michiyo Yagi is one of the premier virtuosos of the Japanese transverse harp known as the koto. Apprenticed to Tadao Sawai, the leading koto player and composer in post-war Japan, Yagi was trained in the traditional and contemporary koto repertoires, and from early on exhibited a natural flair for improvisation. During a tenure as Visiting Professor of Music at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, U.S.A. she premiered numerous compositions for koto and became influenced by maverick American composers such as John Cage, Christian Wolff, Conlon Nancarrow and John Zorn. Not long after Yagi began writing her own compositions, Zorn released Yagi's debut CD *Shizuku* (1999) on his Tzadik label.



Yagi has since released numerous albums including *Yural* (2001) with her own koto ensemble; *Seventeen* (2005), entirely performed on the giant 17-string bass koto; *Live! at SuperDeluxe* (2006), a trio performance with Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and Paal Nilssen-Love; *Head On* (2008) and *Volda* (2010) with Peter Brötzmann and Nilssen-Love; *Reflexions* (2010) with Elliott Sharp; *Soul Stream* (2015) with Joe McPhee, Lasse Marhaug and Nilssen-Love; and *Angular Mass* (2015), a trio with Marhaug and Nilssen-Love. Dōjō, Yagi's "power duo" with drummer Tamaya Honda, has released *Ichi No Maki [Vol. 1]* (2014), featuring guests Nils Peter Molvaer and Nilssen-Love, and *Ni No Maki [Vol. 2]* (2017) with guests Akira Sakata and Keisuke Ōta. *Chrome Hill Duo Meets Dōjō* (2023) was a collaboration with Norwegians Roger Arntzen and Asbjørn Lerheim.

Into The Forest (2019), featuring both solo tracks and quartet performances propelled by two drummers, showcases Yagi's vocals in addition to her instrumental work. In February 2023 Yagi released *Bibi*, a duo recording featuring composer Dai Fujikura on synthesizer. *Hyperborea*, an ambient album co-produced by guitarist Eivind Aarset, is scheduled for a 2024 release.

An eclectic performer who continually challenges conventions, Yagi has appeared at the Moers, Born Creative, Kongsberg Jazz, Punkt, Újbuda Jazz, Musique Actuel Victoriaville, Archipel, Bang on a Can, Vision, Instal, Jazztopad, Fuji Rock, Musique Action, Music Unlimited, Météo-Mulhouse, and Sons d'hiver festivals. In 2023 she presented an evening of her music at the Pierre Boulez Saal, and was named "Featured Artist" at Cologne Jazzweek and "Artist in Residence" at Jazzfestival Saalfelden.

Whether performing solo, with the duo Dōjō, the Michiyo Yagi Trio, the Michiyo Yagi Double Trio or the multi-koto ensemble Talon – all with an emphasis on her original compositions, extended techniques, and unique vocals based on the traditional *jiuta* style – Yagi continues to be active as the leading improviser on her instrument.

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