

* A description of *Stringraphy*

Stringraphy refers to both the original instrument invented and named by composer MIZUSHIMA Kazue in 1992 and to the style of playing it.

This original instrument applies the principles of the string telephone. It is extremely simple, consisting of silk strings with paper cups attached to both ends. The players produce sound by rubbing or plucking the strings. The silk strings are stretched tightly between supports in sets of 15 to 25, and all are tuned like stringed instruments. There are three basic sets of strings: soprano, alto and bass. They are tuned to the major or minor scale according to the piece being played. For some pieces there is an additional set of chromatic strings. The strings range in length from about 1 meter to approximately 15 meters. Once the *Stringraphy* is installed, it is as if the hall were transformed into a giant harp.

* Locations and looks

The *Stringraphy* can be set up basically any place indoors where there is enough room: theaters, the entrances of museums, gymnasiums, concert halls, temples, churches or old Japanese homes. For acoustics, the live sound is better in places with many wooden, stone or concrete walls. If so desired, the audience can sit in the middle of strings as they listen to the performance. The dozens of paper cups act as tiny speakers, and the shower of sound flowing from all directions gives the listener the impression of actually being inside the instrument.

The many strings are stretched around the hall in different lengths according to their scale, and their flowing appearance in itself creates an astonishing sight, beautiful and balanced like a work of art. The performers use their entire bodies as they playing the strings in a unison movement, performing as such a graceful dance. The effect is especially impressive when pieces are performed by an ensemble.

MIZUSHIMA Kazue and her ensemble perform an extremely wide variety of pieces. The repertoire includes original compositions, the ancient Japanese music of *gagaku*, classical music, pops, contemporary music, children's songs, folk songs and ethnic music. People of all ages appreciate *Stringraphy*.

* An educational tool

Because *Stringraphy* is based on the theory of the string telephone that is taught in science classes in Japanese schools, it is a comprehensive blend of science (what is sound?), music, manual arts (installation of the instrument) and physical education (corporeal expression). As such it has drawn the attention of many educators.

The instrument must be set up for each performance. Students are able to touch and play it themselves. Even if a string is broken or a cup crushed, it can be repaired easily. In contrast to computer music, *Stringraphy* has an extremely primitive structure. People - children in particular - are often surprisingly impressed when they experience this original acoustic instrument. *Stringraphy* is seen as a pioneer in the field of comprehensive learning, and many *Stringraphy* concerts have been organized by schools and education boards for elementary and middle school children.

Stringraphy has been extremely well received in the United States, Canada, Denmark, India and Nepal, and this "new Japanese musical art" has been extensively covered in newspapers and on TV. Though not intended to be particular Japanese by nature, many say the extremely primitive yet subtle sound and the static/dynamic movement of the performers resembles the classic Japanese art of *noh*. Encouraged by the positive response in so many countries, MIZUSHIMA Kazue and her ensemble plan to continue a wide range of performances with the entire world in view.

* The origin of the name *Stringraphy*

Stringraphy was born as composer MIZUSHIMA Kazue stood in a mountain forest of Japan in 1992. She came up with the idea that she could transform the entire forest into a vast instrument by stretching strings between the trees. At the time the instrument was still referred to simply as a "string telephone instrument". After improving it repeatedly, composing pieces specifically for it and developing different ways to play it, Mizushima felt the need to give the instrument a unique name. Since the strings stretching through space are like a work of visual art, Mizushima put the word "string" together with "graphics" and named the instrument *Stringraphy*.

* Studio Eve

Studio Eve was established in 1992 by contemporary music composer MIZUSHIMA Kazue and theater/dance producer YAEGASHI Midori. At the beginning the studio was involved mostly experimental music. Later it began concentrating its activities on music with a strong social involvement, with focus on performances of Mizushima's *Stringraphy*.

Profile of MIZUSHIMA Kazue (musician)

Born in Tokyo in 1964. Graduated from Toho Gakuen University with a major in composition. Moved to the United States in 1989 to study computer music. Completed her Masters in Composition at University of California in 1992. Upon returning to Japan, composed and performed many works of experimental acoustic contemporary music. Invented the *Stringraphy* and formed Studio Eve together with YAEGASHI Midori in 1992. At first created stage pieces for the *Stringraphy*, then formed a *Stringraphy Ensemble* in 1996. Currently conducts performances with multiple players. *Stringraphy* was awarded in the installation category at the ISCM "World Music Days '96".

Studio Eve web address

<http://www.stringraphy.com/>

Please visit the site for information on recent activities, etc..

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