

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents



Thursday, October 14, 2021 1:15 pm

The Church of the Transfiguration in NYC

Live Streamed to MidtownConcerts.org, OurConcerts.live, [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com), and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com)

Eurasia Consort

Tomoko Sugawara ~ Kugo (ancient angular harp)

Rex Benincasa ~ Percussion

gamin ~ Piri (bamboo oboe), Seanghwang (mouth-organ)

James Nyoraku Schlefer ~ Shakuhachi and Ryuteki (bamboo flutes)

Silk Road Journey to the East

Singing of Spring Warblers, Jo and Satto (Adagio and Animato)

Shui Guzi

Tomoko Sugawara, Kugo solo

Butterfly Dance, ha and kyu (Allegretto and Allegro)

Funan

gamin, Seangwang solo

A Jade Tree's Rear-Court Blossom

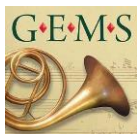
James Nyoraku Schlefer, Shakuhachi solo

Kalavinka, jo, ha and kyu (Adagio and Allegretto and Allegro)

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www.gemsny.org

About the Program

Eurasia Consort presents music from the Silk Road during the 6th through 10th centuries. Buddhism traveled from India and Central Asia to China and brought music and musical instruments from those areas to the East. East Asian courts were filled with international music. Japan became a cul-de-sac of music and instruments, where one of its emperors, Shomu, built a Treasure House, the Shōsōin, housing a collection of harps, flutes, pipes, drums and a metallophone – all included in this afternoon's concert.

The Tang Dynasty manuscripts survived mainly in Japan, in manuscripts imported from China. Eurasia Consort plays music from the Tang Court, relying on transcriptions made by musicologists.

The hokyo was just made based on drawings in the Shōsōin, as was Tomoko's kugo. gamin uses a Korean piri-pipe and James Nyoraku Schlefer plays a Japanese instrument.

Program Notes

Singing of Spring Warblers. When the Gaozong Emperor (649–683) heard the songs of the Bush Warbler he was struck by their melodiousness. He ordered the Kuchean composer Bo (or Bai) Mingda to copy the tune. Since that time it has been part of the Tang repertoire.

Sui Guzi. At the beginning of the 20th century, late Tang Dynasty music manuscripts were found at the cave of Dunhuang in North West China and were transcribed by Chinese scholars. Dunhuang was one of the most important cities on the Silk Road.

Butterfly Dance was originally Korean music, which survived only in Japan, and was played, accompanied by dancers on instruments including flutes, pipes, harp and percussion.

Funan. During the Sui Dynasty this song was given by the country of India to the City of Turfan, Central Asia. Later, Wang Wei set a poem to this song, working with Emperor Xuanzong of Tang.

A Jade Tree's Rear-court Blossoms was composed by Emperor Chen Shubao, the last Emperor of the Chen Dynasty (583–589). It is a story of his beautiful wife and her garden.

Kalavinka. The title refers to a bird commonly found in East Asia. It has a large mythological following in Buddhism. Famously, the tune was played at the Eye-Opening ceremony of the Great Buddha statue in the Tōdaiji temple in 752. It also marked the foundation of the Shōsōin Treasure House in Japan.

About the Artists

Tomoko Sugawara

Born in Tokyo, Japan, Tomoko Sugawara studied harp at Tokyo University of the Arts and studied cultural history at Seijo University in Tokyo. Since 1991 she has played the kugo harp as well. After moving to New York City, Tomoko learned figured bass and the baroque harp, a mainstay of the European Baroque period. She has given solo recitals on the kugo at major international venues, including The World Music Institute, and World Harp Congresses in Amsterdam and Vancouver, The Early Music Guild of Seattle, The British Museum, Central China Conservatory of Music (Beijing), the Symposium on Historical Harps in Berlin, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, and at many Universities: Columbia, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Princeton, Illinois and Indiana. She also led her ensemble, the Eurasia Consort, at The World Music Institute concert. Tomoko worked at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music as a visiting researcher during the 2018 and 2019 Spring for three months, researching Tang Dynasty music and teaching the kugo. <https://www.kugoharp.com>

Rex Benincasa

Rex Benincasa has been a freelancing drummer and world music percussionist in New York since 1978. Along with hundreds of television/radio soundtracks and commercial recordings, he has performed with Apollo's Fire, Ensemble Caprice, Alba Consort, Concordia Chamber Players, Eurasia Consort, The Bishop's Band, Seraphic Fire, Flamenco Latino, Carlota Santana Spanish Dance, Andrea Delconte Danza Espana, Zorongo Flamenco Dance, Pilar Rioja, Amanecer Flamenco Progressivo, Washington Ballet, and Ba Ban Chinese Music Society. He has recorded CDs and/or movie soundtracks for Marty Balin, Karen Mason, Andrea Marcovicci, Jamie deRoy, Stephanie Pope, Foday Musa Suso, Douglas Cuomo, Philip Glass, Sesame Street, NFL Films, the Sons of Sepharad, and the Ivory Consort to name but a few. Benincasa has played many show scores for all kinds of productions. A partial list of Broadway and special show appearances include Fosse, Elaine Stritch, The Full Monty, Flower Drum Song, Man Of LaMancha, Little Shop of Horrors, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, Hairspray, The Drowsy Chaperone, The Color Purple, In The Heights, Billy Elliot, Peter And The Starcatcher, Motown The Musical, and The Play Of Daniel.

gamin

gamin is a distinguished soloist who tours the world performing traditional and contemporary Korean music. She is also an active participant in numerous cross-disciplinary collaborations. Classically trained in piri (a double reed instrument), gamin also performs on the taepyeongso (a shawm) and the saenghwang (free-reed mouth organ). What sets her apart from others is her interest in contemporary music and improvisation; in South Korea, she is an innovative pioneer. gamin is constantly moving forward and pushing boundaries to explore new sonorities with her wind instruments. She has appeared at ISIM (International Society of Improvised Music), the 2014 Vision Festival, and the Silk Road's Global Musician Workshop. gamin was selected as an Artist-in-Residence sponsored by the South Korean government (2011 and 2012), as well as the Asian Cultural Council in 2014. In Seoul, she was a member of the National Gugak Center's contemporary Korean music orchestra for over ten years. She has a doctoral degree in piri performance from Seoul National University. <https://www.facebook.com/gamin.musician>

James Nyoraku Schlefer

James Nyoraku Schlefer holds advanced degrees, and has years of performing experience, in two musical traditions. His original compositions bring the musical worlds of Japan and the West together. Of particular interest is combining Japanese and Western instruments in new compositions that explore two sound worlds in a way that is exciting but not derivative, beautiful yet deeply respectful of both classic traditions. James has been composing music that combines Japanese instruments with Western classical ensembles for over a decade. Merging two different musical traditions presents unique challenges, not the least of which is the reconciliation of two often opposing musical philosophies. For example, while Western classical music often emphasizes evenness of tone, the less mechanized Japanese musical language accommodates natural differences in timbre. Likewise, rhythm in traditional Japanese music makes use of "MA" (space or emptiness), a noticeable lack of sound, which contrasts with the impulse in Western tradition to fill the void. In his music he strives to transcend these disparities, bringing a different technical rigor to Japanese instruments and a sense of breath and silence to the Western instruments.

NEXT WEEK: Musica Magnorum

Resonance: Double Reed Music from the Holy Roman Empire



Musicians & Dancers perform the Kalavinka during the Tang Dynasty (7- 10), China



Musicians during the Heian period (8 - 12 c), Japan