

a distance, intertwined



Kojiro Umezaki

Hub New Music

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This album of five works marks the passage of nearly seven years from when the majority were premiered at the Peabody Essex Museum (Salem, MA) with Hub New Music, Kojiro Umezaki, and composers of the Asia-America New Music Institute. The vision for this concert was to bridge geographic and cultural divides through new compositions shared in both Asia and America. The pieces were subsequently performed in a two-week tour across Japan in June 2018, with performances in Kyoto, Fukuoka, Oita, Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, and Tokyo.



Storytelling from both traditional and modern perspectives is at the core of these quintets for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and shakuhachi. In naming this album, we turned to a major work from the Noh repertoire, *Takasago* (高砂), as a way to bring these quintets together. *Takasago* begins at the slopes of volcanic Mount Aso, a mere 20 miles/30 kilometers from one of our concert stops in Hita City (日田市). The legend tells us of a priest who departed from Mount Aso by land, river, and sea on a trip to the capital city.

Upon his arrival, he encounters a pair of evergreen trees in human form—a married couple—who share a fantastical connection. Their roots are impossibly intertwined, despite being planted a full day's journey apart from one another. Inseparable, though, they supernaturally collapse time and space to be together, and under moonlight offer a celebration of life that traverses human generations. From this, we arrive at the title of the record: *a distance, intertwined*.





a distance, intertwined begins with *Faded Aura* by Takuma Itoh, a work with gentle reference to the supernatural that captures the ethos of this project. Throughout the work, the four instruments of Hub New Music amplify and refract the sounds of Umezaki's shakuhachi to create what the composer describes as a "super-shakuhachi." In doing so, Itoh explores the emergent musical possibilities of this unlikely quintet, with its historical distances here and now intertwined.

We then drift toward the funeral with Chad Cannon's *Death Masks*. This piece recalls the burial tradition wherein plaster masks recreate the faces of the dead, so that the deceased can be reanimated in the memories of their descendants. Beginning in stillness, the ensemble forms a sonic mold around the shakuhachi, which then departs on a wild journey into the spirit realm. At the piece's climax, the flute and shakuhachi create a ghastly spectacle of improvised flourishes. Finally, a reprise of the opening material returns us to the grave in a somber conclusion.



At the heart of *a distance, intertwined* is Kojiro Umezaki's *Tied Together by Twilight*, which reflects on dialectical tensions in Japan: modern vs. traditional life, urban vs. rural, female vs. male, younger vs. older generations, divinity vs. humanity, and linear vs. non-linear time. In writing the piece, Umezaki drew inspiration from the period of rapid economic expansion and cultural transformation in the 1960's when these tensions were especially prevalent. He was also influenced by Makoto Shinkai's (新海誠) 2016 film *Your Name*. (君の名は。), one of the highest grossing films in Japan's rich history of cinema, which also addressed these themes.



In SunYoung Park's *Moonlight*, we are immersed in an ancient conflict between worlds terrestrial and celestial. This work draws inspiration from another piece of Japanese folklore, *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* (竹取物語), a story more widely known from the Studio Ghibli film adaptation, *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* (かぐや姫の物語). The work is structured as a series of episodes in which Princess Kaguya (represented by the shakuhachi), although grateful to her adopted parents, yearns for the return to her people in the heavens. Her pleas are met with interjections from the angry denizens of earth (represented by the quartet) trying to confine her.





Concluding a distance, intertwined is Angel Lam's *Whispers of Sea Rivers*. Through music, spoken text, and soundscape, the piece recounts a journey by land, river, and sea to a forgotten place the narrator calls home, the *fragrant harbour*. Songful melodies ferry us back in time to the place's halcyon days when "rumbling waves whisper their stories, roaring their ancient glories." These whispered stories embrace the well-being of community, the eternity of nature, and the necessity in each of us to find a place to both plant and preserve our roots.

—Kojiro Umezaki, Hub New Music, and AANMI

Thank You From Hub & Ko:

To **Chad and Sunny** for including us in the story of AANMI; to **Takuma, Angel, Sunny, and Chad** for years of beautiful friendship, and for celebrating that friendship through music; to **Mike** for your studio wizardry; to **The Peabody Essex Museum & Caryn Boehm** for presenting the world premiere of this project; to **Kyo-Shin Arts, Meg, and James** for helping us continue to share this music with your commission support; and to **AANMI & The United States-Japan Foundation** for making our remarkable journey across Japan possible. It was an experience we will forever cherish.



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1. **Faded Aura** 8:13
Takuma Itoh
 2. **Death Masks** 6:56
Chad Cannon
 3. **Tied Together by Twilight** 4:40
Kojiro Umezaki
 4. **Moonlight** 11:14
SunYoung Park
 5. **Whispers of Sea Rivers**
Angel Lam
narration by Angel Lam
 - i. **City and the Sea** 3:35
 - ii. **Nostalgia** 6:44
 - iii. **Time's Passage** 2:43

Musicians

Kojiro Umezaki, Shakuhachi
Hub New Music
Michael Avitabile, Flute
Gleb Kanasevich, Clarinet
Meg Rohrer, Violin
Jesse Christeson, Cello

Producer

Matt Snyder, Chad Cannon

Recording Engineer

Matt Snyder

Editing, Mixing, & Mastering

Mike Tierney

Cover Art

Uri Romano

Design

Greystudio

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