

Hisato
OHZAWA

Piano Concerto No. 3 'Kamikaze'
Symphony No. 3 'Symphony of the Founding of Japan'

Ekaterina Saranceva, Piano

Russian Philharmonic Orchestra • Dmitry Yablonsky



Hisato Ohzawa (1907-1953)

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Hisato Ohzawa was long forgotten as a composer. Although he was certainly one of the foremost composers in Japan, his works were completely neglected after his sudden death in 1953, mainly because he was basically a self-reliant man, independent of the Japanese music world. This neglect is a great injustice which, half a century later, is to some extent reversed by the present recording of works carefully preserved by his family.

Ohzawa was born on 1st August 1907 in Kobe, one of the biggest port cities in the western part of Japan. His father was an engineer and entrepreneur, who had studied steel manufacturing in England and became a founding member of Kobe Seiko (Kobe Steel Ltd.), one of the leading companies in the Japanese steel industry. His Christian mother played a primary rôle in introducing young Ohzawa to organ and choral music. He studied the piano with a White Russian and a Spaniard living in Kobe and after entering the department of commercial science of Kansei Gakuen, became an active member of the choral and orchestral clubs and as a choral conductor, as well as continuing his piano studies and teaching himself music theory. Already in adolescence he was well known in Kobe as a student almost of professional standard. On his graduation in 1930 he went to the United States to study composition, harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, piano and conducting under Frederick Converse, Roger Sessions, and others, at Boston University and the New England Conservatory of Music. He also took lessons with Schoenberg, who had just settled in Boston, taking refuge from the Nazis.

Ohzawa's American teachers thought highly of his talent and he received considerable assistance from scholarships, enabling him to give recitals of his own chamber works and songs in Boston. He also maintained a friendly relationship with the Boston

Symphony and became the first Japanese musician to conduct the orchestra, performing his *Little Symphony*. In 1933 he graduated with his *Piano Concerto No.1*. His other works during his time in America include the large-scale *Symphony No.1*, which requires nearly an hour for performance, and a *Double Bass Concerto* dedicated to Sergei Koussevitzky.

After completing his studies in America in 1934, Ohzawa moved to Paris and studied with Nadia Boulanger at the Ecole Normale de Musique. He also took several lessons with Paul Dukas in his final years and made friends with Roussel, Florent Schmitt, Ibert and Tansman. In the following year, he gave the first performances of his *Symphony No. 2* and *Piano Concerto No. 2*, both written in Paris, conducting the Pasedeloup Orchestra with the soloist Henri Gil-Marchex. Praised and encouraged by Ibert, Honegger, Ferroud and Grechaninov, he returned to Japan in high spirits in February 1936, for the first time in six years.

The years in Boston and Paris marked Ohzawa's formative period. In fact his music had already shown early maturity, influenced by the music of leading contemporaries, American popular music and the traditional music of Japan, and drawing on impressionism, expressionism, futurism and neo-classicism, and sometimes even on microtonality and atonality. Immediately after his return to Japan in 1936, he held concerts in the two biggest cities, Tokyo and Osaka, and performed his *Symphony No. 2* and *Piano Concerto No. 2*, the latter with the soloist Leo Sirota, under his own direction. From the audience there was a mixed reaction. His works were technically too difficult for Japanese orchestras of the time, written, as they were, for ensembles in Boston and Paris with virtuoso skills. In addition to that, the audience found his music somewhat too modern and alien, sometimes too difficult to understand. Ohzawa's abilities and aesthetics failed

to find a place in the relatively immature Japanese musical environment. Nevertheless Ohzawa was obliged to live in Japan, as the gradually deteriorating international situation made travel to America and Europe impossible, and he made his home in the Kansai area (which includes Kobe, Osaka and Kyoto), where people were more conservative and less open to new music than in Tokyo. Under such circumstances, he was forced to make tremendous efforts to continue his activities as a composer.

Piano Concerto No. 3 was written between February and May 1938 and first performed in Osaka on 24th June by the Takarazuka Symphony Orchestra, under Ohzawa, with the pianist Maxim Shapiro, a pupil of Medtner then living in Japan. The work, while using a radical vocabulary, seeks to find some ties with the Japanese audience by adopting popular jazz elements in the middle movement and making the most of late romantic virtuosity in the solo part of the outer. The work had the fashionable title *Kamikaze* (the wind of God), the name of a civil aeroplane well known in those days and to which Ohzawa dedicated the concerto. The name of the aircraft had no connection with the wartime use of the name, but represented an important feat in Japanese aeronautical engineering.

The first movement opens with a *Larghetto maestoso* introduction. The three-note motif (A flat - E flat - F) presented by trombone and strings in the opening is, as it were, the “motto of the engine”, which propels the *Kamikaze Concerto* forward. The motto is followed by the solo piano, sometimes slow and sometimes fast, until a scherzo-like marching motif, which is closely related to the motto, in terms of intervals, on trumpet and trombone joins it. The interwoven texture of the motto and the marching motif starts the engine and the plane takes off into the *Allegro assai* main part of the movement, written in free sonata form, where trumpet and trombone introduce another scherzo-like marching motif in 6/8. This reaches a scale-like descending figure on the horn (E flat - A flat), suggesting clouds or mist descending from on high.

Over these two motifs forming the first theme the piano starts a vigorous *perpetuum mobile*. Now the plane is in the air and a brilliant ascending figure from the soloist propels it through clouds, until a high-spirited, bouncing motif is played by the whole orchestra and the plane is flying high in the sky. This ‘flying motif’ is the equivalent of the second theme, including the same pattern (E flat - B flat - C) as the motto of the engine. In the development all the materials are treated elaborately. The piano makes acrobatic use of these motifs, with trills, tremolos, glissandos and hints of Prokofiev, and the plane continues its powerful flight. The recapitulation is first introduced by the second theme, after a flowing cadenza by the piano, and is followed by the first theme. Then, with the shrill sound of the piccolo, the plane flies far off and passes out of sight.

The second movement, *Andante cantabile*, is in tripartite form. It is music of a night flight or nocturnal jazz. In the first section, the blues-like mellifluous introduction leads to a nostalgic theme from the piano. The middle section is a brisk dance, punctuated by syncopation and staccato, and is filled with jazzy feelings. In the final section, the solo part of the opening is decorated with many arpeggios. The motifs in this movement are all related to the ‘blue notes’ and the pentatonic scales of Japanese folk-music.

The third movement, *Allegro moderato - Allegro vivace*, consists of an introduction, rondo and coda. The three-note motto, which ruled over the first movement, is also actively used in this movement from the beginning of the introduction. It first appears in the third bar at the trumpet’s *sforzando*, and a new march-like motif is presented by horn, then oboe and clarinet. The motto and the motif, which are to be interrelated later on, form the framework of the movement. After the introduction comes the rondo. The first section is a jazz toccata led by the piano. It is joined by the march-like motif, which gradually agitates the music. The *second* section in B flat minor, mainly played by the wind, is a scherzando, but is not so vivid. The third section, led by

cheerful sounds evoking the atmosphere of music-halls and cabarets in Europe, tells us that Kamikaze is approaching Paris and London. The final entry of the main theme grows in excitement, ending like a gust of wind with the *Vivacissamente* coda.

Ohzawa's desire of reconciling his creativity with the actualities of Japan is also to be found in his *Symphony No. 3* that preceded the concerto. The symphony was written between the end of 1936 and February of the following year and was first performed on 7th April in Tokyo by the New Symphony Orchestra (today's NHK Symphony Orchestra) under the composer. It carries the subtitle *Symphony of the Founding of Japan*, and was dedicated to the 2600th anniversary of the Imperial year in 1940. The Imperial year system was officially used by the Japanese government in those days. In this system, which was set up by referring to Japanese myths, the year 1 is when the first Emperor Jimmu was enthroned. The government thought that the year 2600 (1940 in the Western system) would be the best opportunity to boost national prestige and planned large-scale celebrations. In fact many composers, including Richard Strauss, Britten, Ibert, and Pizzetti, wrote pieces for the occasion, voluntarily or by commission. Ohzawa was quick to dedicate this major work to the Emperor, of his own accord. By this work he tried to consider his standpoint as a Japanese and seek for common ground between himself and the Japanese musical world. If *Symphony No. 2* is on the lines of Stravinsky or Hindemith, *No. 3* looks back at Roussel and Myaskovsky and leans towards late romanticism. The instrumentation is rather simplified. The four-movement symphony is written for orchestra with triple wind.

The first movement in D is in free sonata form. The *Allegretto risoluto* introduction, which opens with tremolos on timpani and lower strings, suggests the basic conception of the movement and the whole symphony. Various instruments restlessly play many brief motifs, which are basically dominated by minor or

major thirds. The contrast and tension between light and shade created by these two intervals underlie the symphony. Soon after the beginning, the restless development of motifs is momentarily interrupted by a meditative canon from the strings, which briefly anticipates the second movement. Sustained harmony in soft tremolo on the violin introduces the main *Allegro* section, where the flute and then the clarinet play an undulating figure derived from the major third, followed by the oboe and flute playing a D minor melody, like a call from far away. This amounts to the first theme, which dramatically develops and then fades, when the solo timpani wildly prepares the second theme, in which the first violin plays an ascending and descending figure mainly in minor thirds and then the wind play a tender melody which seems to be consciously based on a Japanese traditional pentatonic scale. Needless to say, the second theme with the minor third and the pentatonic scale is contrasted with the first theme consisting of the major third and the Western seven-note scale. These two themes, combined in a variety of ways, grow in intensity and finally transform themselves into a violent march. In this Ohzawa tried to reflect Japanese history after the nineteenth century, when Japan was wavering between Orient and Occident, pre-modern and modern, sadness and joy.

The second movement, *Adagio grazioso*, is written in a kind of ternary form, with a coda. In the first section, the flute plays a melody characterized by the minor third and the major third, over a canon-like texture by the divided strings, where the second and third intervals are interwoven. The music harmonically becomes excited, inspired by Gagaku, the over 1500-year-old Japanese Imperial music. In the middle section, the pentatonic theme presented by the clarinet appears in a couple of forms: sometimes accompanied by Roussel-like figurations, and sometimes sounding like Japanese Kabuki or Geisha music from the eighteenth century. This section thus looks back on Japan's history from Gagaku to Kabuki. The return of the modified first section is a simplified reminiscence.

The coda is a slow, mysterious funeral march, where the materials from the first section are effectively used. It is a Requiem dedicated to those who made Japan's long history.

The *Moderato* third movement is subtitled *Menuet con fantasia*, but this is not a simple ternary-form minuet, rather the structure of a rondo. *Menuet I* is a kind of sound game, using the second and the seventh intervals, accompanied by quick but obscure arpeggios on the strings. *Menuet II* uses a bouncing rhythm pattern, called *Pynkobushi*, typically found in Japanese old children's songs, and is more melodious than the first *Menuet*. The flute occasionally inserts a three-note brief figure (F - F - G), drawn from the opening of *Sakura* (Cherry Blossoms), an old and much loved tune. Ohzawa took *Sakura* as the symbol of Japan. The next section corresponds to the unmistakably Western trio in G major. The second half of the section is imbued with the minor mode through its use of a Japanese pentatonic scale. This movement, where *Sakura* and the minuet meet, amounts to a scherzo game played between Japan and the West.

The fourth movement in D, *Allegro non troppo, con fuoco*, is written in free sonata form. It opens with an explosive tutti, followed by a torrent of scale-like runs, where fragmented patterns anticipate the first theme. The shattering *stretta* by the brass introduces the main part of the movement, where the first violin plays the D minor-like first theme made up of the seven-note scale, over march rhythms. The theme is expanded for a while, when suddenly the wildly violent second theme emerges, based on the *Pynkobushi* rhythm and the pentatonic scale, made up of many minor thirds and an ascending sub-motif. If the first theme is a regular Western march, the second is a very irregular Asian march. The movement's design of contrasting the two themes is similar to that of the first, but the treatment of the themes is different; while the two themes of the first movement tend to remain on different tracks, the themes of the finale are closely related to each other. After the exposition and the rhapsodic development, the

music, led by violin tremolos, reaches a serene hymn filled with the sound of the major third both melodically and harmonically. From this point on, the two themes and the materials from the introduction are to be synchronized and connected with each other, fused in harmony. Japan and the West thus join hands, and the symphony reaches an optimistic *dénouement*.

These two works written immediately after Ohzawa's return to Japan, were the product of friction and compromise between the composer and the circumstances of the day, yet they possess exceptional qualities, making them masterworks in modern Japanese music, a quality found in several of Ohzawa's works written in America and Europe. His effort, however, was never to be rewarded by his contemporaries. He realised that he had to wait before writing full-scale instrumental works that would show him at his best, until the standards of musicians and audiences were raised. From then on he kept to himself and lived through the days of the war as a craftsman, who produced music that would meet current social requirements. In 1940 he wrote two large, yet plain cantatas for the 2600th year of the Emperor. He also wrote musicals for the theatre, orchestral music with narrator for radio, light entertainment music and music for films.

After the war, Ohzawa started to work vigorously to realise his ambition to raise contemporary standards. He turned to light music and wrote jazzy concertos for saxophone and trumpet, as well as many popular songs. He also organized his own orchestra, modelled on the Boston Pops and Kostelanetz Orchestras in the United States, appearing with them in his own weekly radio programme. Taking charge of programming, arrangements and conducting, he never failed to introduce music by Debussy, Ravel, Falla, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Poulenc, Hindemith and Shostakovich, along with classical and romantic popular pieces and songs from around the world. He also taught music at Kobe Jogakuin (Kobe College) and continued to write pieces for the theatre and films.

These hectic post-war days kept him from writing his *Symphony No. 4*, of which only the title page was written, without a single note, and from having opportunities for performing his main large-scale works from pre-war days. On 28th October 1953 he died suddenly of a cerebral haemorrhage, at the age of 46.

His music has since then remained unknown to the world, until the present recording.

Morihide Katayama

Translation: SOREL

Ekaterina Saranceva

Ekaterina Saranceva was born in 1962. She began to study music at the age of five at the Central Musical School, subsequently entering the Moscow State Conservatory to study with Professor V. Kastelsky. She took first prize in the 1984 Montreal International Piano Competition and in the International Radio Recording Competition in Bratislava. Her career has brought distinguished appearances in Russia and the United States, as well as in other countries

Russian Philharmonic Orchestra

The Russian Philharmonic Orchestra is firmly rooted in Russia's rich musical traditions, and has achieved an impressive and outstanding musical quality by drawing its musicians from the highest ranks of Russia's most famous orchestras such as the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Russian National Orchestra and the State Symphony Orchestra. Like the London Philharmonia Orchestra, the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra was originally formed as a recording ensemble and has gone on to receive high acclaim for its concert performances. In addition to regular recordings for leading international companies, the orchestra has also undertaken tours to Turkey, Austria, Germany, China, Taiwan, Finland and elsewhere.

Dmitry Yablonsky

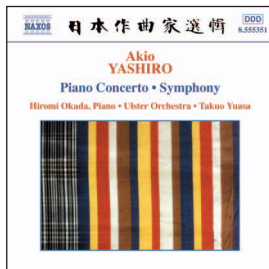
Dmitry Yablonsky was born in 1962 into a musical family. His mother, Oxana Yablonskaya, is a highly regarded concert pianist, and his father is a principal oboist with the Moscow Radio and Television Orchestra. He entered the Central School of Music for Gifted Children in Moscow at the age of six, and at the age of nine made his orchestral debut with Haydn's *Cello Concerto in C major*. In 1977, he and his mother emigrated to the United States, where he studied at the Juilliard School of Music, the Curtis Institute, and Yale University. His principal cello teachers have been Isaak Buravsky, Stefan Kalianov, Aldo Parisot and Zara Nelsova.

Dmitry Yablonsky has performed in many prestigious venues throughout the world, including La Scala, Milan, the Concertgebouw in the Netherlands, the Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory, and St Petersburg Philharmonic Hall, in addition to numerous appearances in the United States, including concerts at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. He has appeared in collaboration with major orchestras and conductors, and together with chamber music partners of distinction. His interest in conducting began at Yale, when he studied with Otto-Werner Müller and also with Yuri Simonov. He made his debut as a conductor in 1990 with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra of Rome. In 1999 he was named Principal Guest Conductor of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, and has appeared as guest conductor with orchestras in Europe and in the Far East. He was for three years Principal Guest Conductor of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. In 1998 he founded the summer Puigcerda Festival on the French-Spanish border, and in 2002 became Principal Conductor of the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra. His many recordings, both as a cellist and as a conductor, include a number of releases for Naxos and Marco Polo.

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Hisato Ohzawa, one of the foremost Japanese composers of the first half of the twentieth century, studied in the 1930s in Boston and Paris. He had an excellent command of diverse styles derived from his extensive knowledge of jazz, late Romanticism, Debussy, Ravel, Bartók, Hindemith and other contemporary composers. *The Piano Concerto No. 3 'Kamikaze'* (a Japanese-made civil aircraft of that time, which set a new record for the shortest flight from Tokyo to London in 1937) shares something of the motoric dynamism of Honegger and Prokofiev. *Symphony No. 3*, written in 1937 to celebrate the 2600th Anniversary of the Founding of Japan, leans towards late Romanticism, Myaskovsky and Roussel.

**Hisato
OHZAWA**
(1907-1953)

Piano Concerto No. 3 'Kamikaze' (1938) *

26:19

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Larghetto maestoso | 10:22 |
| 2 | Andante cantabile | 8:00 |
| 3 | Allegro moderato - Allegro - Vivace | 7:57 |

Symphony No. 3 'Symphony of the Founding of Japan' (1937)

37:51

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|-------|
| 4 | Allegretto risoluto | 12:39 |
| 5 | Adagio grazioso | 5:16 |
| 6 | Moderato (Menuet con fantasia) | 8:54 |
| 7 | Allegro non troppo con fuoco | 11:03 |

Ekaterina Saranceva, Piano*

Russian Philharmonic Orchestra • Dmitry Yablonsky

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Editor: Pavel Lavrenenkov • Artistic Advisor & Booklet Notes: Morihide Katayama

Cover Photo: *A Kamikaze aircraft arriving at Croydon Aerodrome, England by Asahi Shimbun*

This recording has been recorded and edited at 24 bit resolution.