



JAPAN
SOCIETY

Performing Arts

Fall Season 2021



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Performing Arts Season.



Japan Society presents

SHEEP #1

PROGRAM A, with Emile Blondel on piano:

Thurs., Nov. 4 at 7:30 pm

— Followed by a *MetLife Meet-the-Artist Reception*

Sun., Nov. 7 at 2:30 pm

PROGRAM B, with Kato Hideki on bass guitar:

Fri., Nov. 5 at 7:30 pm

Sat., Nov. 6 at 7:30 pm

SHEEP #1 is supported, in part, by Doug and Teresa Peterson. The U.S. premiere in 2018 was co-produced with The Tank, NYC, and supported, in part, by The Jim Henson Foundation Presenter Grant. The world premiere, in Vancouver, Canada, was presented in collaboration with Blim.



2021—2022 Performing Arts Season Support

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The season is made possible, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



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Additional support is provided by Helen and Kenneth A. Cowin, Dr. Jeanette C. Takamura, Dr. and Mrs. Carl F. Taesch II, Mr. Alan M. Suhonen*, Sarah Billingham Solomon and Howard Solomon, Paula S. Lawrence, Dr. Stephen and Mrs. Michiko Levine, Marjorie Neuwirth, Hiroko Onoyama, Lyndley and Samuel Schwab, and Nancy and Joe Walker. Transportation assistance is provided by All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd. Yamaha is the official piano provider of Japan Society. *MetLife Meet-the-Artists Reception* is provided by MetLife Foundation.

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* In memoriam.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S NOTE

SHEEP #1 is the third program of our ongoing season, focusing on NYC-based women theater-makers. I saw the premiere of *SHEEP #1* three years ago at The Tank, a small but essential experimental theater on the Westside. The piece had poetic texts, unique visuals, a conceptual story, electronic sound and beautiful live music by pianist Emile Blondel—but it did not have any overt elements of Japanese culture. For example, the protagonist is a plastic sheep, an animal with no role in Japan's history. (According to Japanese Wikipedia, rearing sheep in Japan started only in the late 19th century.) Nevertheless, I felt a subtle and certain Japanese esthetic in *SHEEP #1*'s serenity and imagery. But above all else, I loved the piece.

A few weeks later, I had a chance to chat with Sachiyo. Expressing my love for the piece, I told her, "I only wish the sheep figure had fluffy white fur because sheep are supposed to be soft and fluffy. Besides, I like soft fluffy stuff." Those were my guileless words; however, I immediately felt ashamed of my ignorant comment when Sachiyo responded, "I can't alter the sheep because I have worked with that sheep for a long time." I was deeply impressed by her devotion to that sheep. This little one-inch-long plastic figurine is one of Sachiyo's important company members and even her collaborator! As you may know, having the utmost reverence to a particular thing—texture, material, color, smell, sound, shape, or even a mere dot—is a meaningful gift that artists possess to create art. (For your information, Sachiyo actually has a "dot" as one of her other company members, as she describes on her website.)

Lastly, I want to note that our presentation of *SHEEP #1* includes a different version from its premiere at The Tank. Since I wanted to excavate further the potential of *SHEEP #1*, I set up a "blind date" for Sachiyo to meet with musician Kato Hideki. To my pleasure, they creatively got along with each other, resulting in the sheep having another journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yoko Shioya', with a small dot above the 'i'.

Yoko Shioya, Artistic Director

SHEEP #1

Concept, Sound Design, Visual Design and Performance: Nekaa Lab / Sachiyo Takahashi

Live Music: Emile Blondel, piano (Program A)
Kato Hideki, bass guitar (Program B)

Dramaturg: Peter Eckersall

Technical Advisor, Builder: Willie Gambucci

Music/Sound: Original Live Music (Program A)
by Emile Blondel with excerpts from
Franz Schubert's *4 Impromptus, D. 935 / Op. 142*

Original Live Music (Program B)
by Kato Hideki with excerpts from
his song "The Man Who Married the Moon"

Electroacoustic Soundtrack by Sachiyo Takahashi

Text: Quoted from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and original text by
Sachiyo Takahashi

Production: Nekaa Lab / Sachiyo Takahashi

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Sachiyo Takahashi (Creator/Performer) is a composer, musician and artist whose work centers around storytelling. Compositing sensory elements in a minimalist manner, she explores the border between

narrative and abstraction to generate fables for the subconscious. Takahashi founded *Nekaa Lab* in 2006 together with other “lab members” (stuffed toys and tiny figurines). She has been producing performances, installations and writings, while observing human nature from alternative perspectives. Takahashi’s Microscopic Live Cinema-Theatre—unique performances projected from a miniature stage—has been appraised as a quirky yet imaginative merging between theatrical and cinematic experiences. She has presented her works at international venues and festivals including Prague Quadrennial, St. Ann’s Warehouse, La MaMa, The Tank (including the U.S. premiere of *SHEEP #1* in 2018) and HERE. Her recent works *Everything Starts from a Dot* and *Shinnai Meets Puppetry: One Night in Winter* have been supported by The Jim Henson Foundation. Takahashi is also an accredited master of Okamoto School Shinnai-bushi, a form of traditional song-storytelling from Japan, and performs using the stage name Okamoto Miya. As a way to integrate her electroacoustic audiovisual works with traditional Asian sound, she has collaborated with gamin, a Korean avant-garde instrumentalist, to conceptualize a new music theater, *The Emotions*, with which she joined the HERE Artist Residency Program in 2020. nekaa.org

Emile Blondel (piano, Program A) collaborates with musicians, dancers and artists of all media. He studied at the North Carolina School of the Arts under the guidance of Eric Larsen and in Paris at the Ecole Normale de Musique Alfred Cortot. Blondel was a recipient of the Kenan Fellowship at Lincoln Center Education, culminating in his performance *Folk Roots Remixed* at Rose Studio Theater. Orchestral appearances include the Richmond Symphony, Durham Symphony and the Heritage Chamber Orchestra. A frequent collaborator in theater, Blondel created music for *Marcel and Man Ray*, which premiered in the Labapalooza! Festival at St Ann’s Warehouse. He is currently on the faculties of the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music and the Dalton School.

Kato Hideki (bass guitar, Program B) is a Brooklyn-based musician, composer and producer. His work is truly diverse with a wide range of forms and sounds—from ambient, noise, electro-acoustic, songs and improvisation to sound design and music for dance, film and

TV. Hideki has released over 15 titles and has performed at Lincoln Center, Japan Society, MOMA, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. He has toured Japan, the U.S., Europe, the UK and Australia. His music has been broadcast on NPR, the BBC and ABC (Australia). His compositions include *Tremolo of Joy, Hope & Despair*; *Turbulent Zone* (premiered at the Bang on a Can Marathon); *Mystic Ship of Life* (commissioned by the Kitchen); the film score for the award-winning documentary *The Journey of Monalisa*; and the dance scores *In the Sea of Heaven* and *There and Here* for TAKE DANCE and the Dallas Black Dance Theatre. In addition to his own work, Hideki has collaborated with artists such as Christian Marclay, Koichi Makigami, Ikue More, Fred Frith, John King, Yoshihide Otomo, Take Ueyama, Toshimaru Nakamura and John Zorn. He is also a producer of other artists' work, including Karen Mantler's album *Business Is Bad* on ECM Records, and music for a Bessie-Award winning project *THEM* with Chris Cochrane, Denis Cooper and Ishmael Houston-Jones. Currently Hideki is producing the album *Baba Bibi* with Tony award-winning songwriter and playwright Stew (Passing Strange) and an album *I Hate Memory* with actor/songwriter Eszter Balint (*Stranger Than Paradise*). He holds a BA from Waseda University, where he studied creative writing, and teaches at New York University Tandon School of Engineering's Integrated Design & Media.

Peter Eckersall (Dramaturg) is co-founder/resident dramaturg of *Not Yet It's Difficult*. Recent dramaturgy credits include *Everything Starts from a Dot* (Sachiyo Takahashi, La MaMa) and *Phantom Sun/Northern Drift* (Alexis Destoop, Beursschouwburg, Riga Biennial). He is a professor in the Ph.D. Program in Theatre and Performance at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Publications include *Curating Dramaturgies* (ed. with Bertie Ferdman, 2021), *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Politics* (ed. with Helena Grehan, 2019) and *New Media Dramaturgy* (author with Helena Grehan and Ed Scheer, 2017).

Willie Gambucci (Technical Advisor, Builder) is a Brooklyn-based art fabricator and designer specializing in kinetic work that includes motorizing sculptures, building custom mechanisms and installations, and devising unique stage fixtures. He works out of his small home machine shop that's steadily taking over the apartment.

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