

Yoko Hirota, Pianist

Having been praised by the press as “*precise and keenly projective*” and demonstrating “*the highest level of proficiency*,” Japanese-Canadian pianist **Yoko Hirota** is considered one of the leading interpreters of contemporary piano repertory of her generation.

Born in Japan, Ms. Hirota began piano lessons at age four. She entered the State University of New York at Buffalo where she studied with **Livingston Gearhart** and received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees in piano performance. Yoko pursued her commitment to contemporary piano literature with the prominent Canadian pianist and pedagogue, **Louis-Philippe Pelletier**, at McGill University where she received her doctoral degree in piano performance in 1999. In addition to studies in North America, grants from the Canada Council for the Arts allowed Ms. Hirota to study in Europe with renowned interpreters of contemporary piano music such as **Gabor Csalog** at the Bartók Music Conservatory and **Gabor Eckhardt** at Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Hungary, **Herbert Henck** in Germany, and **Florent Boffard**, former pianist with L’Ensemble InterContemporain in France.

Yoko Hirota is a strong advocate of contemporary music and she particularly enjoys performing music, including works written for her, by some of Canada’s finest composers. She has performed in solo and chamber recitals with major organizations and festivals across North America including: **New Music Concerts** (Toronto), **Discovery Series** (Calgary), **Windsor Canadian Music Festival** (Windsor), **Domaine Forget International Music Festival**, **Innovations en concert** (Montreal), the **Ottawa International Chamber Music Festival**, **Friday Evenings at the Rolston** (Banff), and **Chapelle Historique du Bon Pasteur** (Montreal). Ms. Hirota was invited by the notable ensemble, the **Nouvel Ensemble Moderne** (NEM), to Canadian premiere the challenging work, *Joy* (for 23 musicians and tape), by the renowned Finnish composer, **Magnus Lindberg**. The **Montreal Gazette** gave special recognition of her performance. She has also been the guest soloist with orchestras including the **Sudbury Symphony** for the world premiere of “*Oiseau de Givre*” a concerto written for her by the Canadian composer, **Robert Lemay**.

Ms. Hirota’s excellence in contemporary music interpretation is reflected in the many broadcasts of her performances on **Société Radio-Canada**, her participation as a juror for the profession’s leading grant agencies including the **Ontario Arts Council**, and the many awards she has received including prestigious grants from the **Ontario Arts Council** and the **Canada Council for the Arts**, and semi-finalist at the Nutley Symphony Orchestra’s Concerto Competition. At the 1996 **Clara Liechtenstein Piano Competition** (Montreal), a Special Mention Prize was especially created to distinguish her excellence in the interpretation of twentieth century repertoire. In 2013 she was invited to perform at **Le 16e Gala des prix Opus**.

Yoko’s first CD, “*The Piano Music of Arnold Schoenberg with 17 Fragments*,” was released to critical acclaim and was listed as one of Essential Tracks by **The Globe and Mail**. Her second CD “*Small is Beautiful: Miniature Piano Pieces*”, a project made possible through the **Canada Council for the Arts** and **Ontario Arts Council** featuring sixteen concise 20th and 21st century piano works (released in 2009). Her third CD, made possible through grants from the **Ontario Arts Council**, was recorded for Centrediscs: “*Voces Boreales*” featuring solo piano compositions by contemporary Canadian composers (released February 2013), and has received rave reviews from **Wholenote**, **Musical Toronto**, and **The Globe and Mail**.

Ms. Hirota is currently Professor of Piano in the Music Department at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, and co-founder and co-artistic director of **5-Penny New Music Concerts** (www.yokohirota.com and www.5pennynewmusic.ca). *Management for Ms. Hirota: Michael Gerard Management Group –Michael Dufresne, President www.mgmg.ca.*