



NY Licorice Ensemble

Biography

NY Licorice Ensemble was founded by Ayako Oshima, a clarinetist based in New York City. All the members studied in New York with the celebrated clarinetist, Charles Neidich, who is Ayako's husband. NY Licorice Ensemble is truly an international group; four of its members currently live in the United States: Michiyo Suzuki, Akari Yamamoto, Yumi Ito and Ayako Oshima, while Ikuko Suzuki, Noriko Nagao, Fumie Endo, Nozomi Ueda, Kayako Ohashi, Hiroko Muzuguchi, Ikuko Tsukamoto, Fusayo Oike and Hiromi Nishida live in Japan. They are all active professional performers and teachers. While NY Licorice may well be the first professional clarinet choir consisting entirely of women, it is certainly one of very few non-student clarinet ensembles consisting entirely of players who studied with the same teacher, a fact which must be partly responsible for the extraordinary blend and matched color of the group.

Members

Ayako Oshima

Ayako Oshima, winner of numerous international competitions including the 55th Japan Music Competition in Tokyo, the Winds and Percussion Competition in Japan, and the 17th International Jeunesses Musicales Competition in Belgrade, where she also received the "Golden Harp" award given to the favorite of the audience and critics, is one of the most popular clarinet soloists in Japan. She performs on a regular basis both in recital and in concerto appearances with orchestra, highlights of which have included performances in Osaka, Nagoya, Kobe, Tanuma, at the Casals Hall, Kioi Hall, and Bunka Kaikan in Tokyo, and with the Hiroshima and Osaka Symphonies. She is quite active in chamber music festivals. Festivals at which Ms. Oshima has appeared include Kuhmo Festival in Finland, the Festival Consonances in France, the Sarasota Summer Music Festival. Ms. Oshima is a member of the noted ensemble "Contrasts Quartet" and playing historical clarinets is a member of the acclaimed period instrument ensemble "Mozzafiato". Ayako Oshima has recorded for Toshiba EMI, Victor Japan, Naxos, and with "Mozzafiato" for Sony Vivarte. She has recently recorded "Songs of Japan" for the Aurora label and her most recent recording "Bel Canto" music for two clarinets released 2011 summer. In addition to her performing career, she maintains a high profile as a teacher and is on the faculties of the State University of New York at Purchase, the Juilliard School, and Hartt College. She has kept her connection with the Toho School and gives regular master classes there. She has also served on the juries of both the Japan Music Competition and the Japan Winds and Percussion International Competition. She has founded and is the Director of the Kita Karuizawa Music Seminar which attracts clarinet students from all over Asia. With her husband, Charles Neidich, she has written a book on the fundamentals of clarinet technique for the publisher, Toa Ongaku Inc. and writes a monthly column on music and the clarinet for Pipers Magazine.

Michiyo Suzuki

A native of Japan, Michiyo Suzuki began her musical studies with piano at age three, violin at age six and clarinet at age thirteen. She studied with Charles Neidich at Purchase College Conservatory where she received her MFA degree and at SUNY Stony Brook in the DMA Program. As a recitalist and chamber musician she has performed internationally,

particularly in contemporary repertoire. Ms. Suzuki is a member of Absolute Ensemble and NY Licorice Ensemble, has recorded and toured extensively with those groups.

Ikuko Suzuki

Ikuko Suzuki studied clarinet both in Tokyo and NY in addition to studying bass clarinet in Amsterdam. A versatile musician, she performs not only as a soloist and chamber musician, but also has collaborated with dancers, pottery artists, photographers and narrators. Ms. Suzuki is a member of Ensemble Contemporary α and the Hobereaux Clarinet Ensemble.

Fumie Endo

Native of Kanagawa Japan, Fumie Endo received her Bachelor of Music degree at the Tokyo University of the Arts. She continued her study at the State University of New York at Stony Brook where she received her Master of Music degree studying with Charles Neidich. She is the winner of the 15th Japan Wind and Percussion Competition. She was also a semi-finalist at the 53rd Geneva International Music Competition. She has been a member of the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa since 1999.

Nozomi Ueda

A native of Japan, Nozomi Ueda completed her undergraduate studies at the Osaka College of Music. After receiving her Bachelor's degree, she went to the United States and completed her Master's degree at the Juilliard studying with Charles Neidich and Ayako Oshima. Returning to Japan in 1999, she won first prize in the 68th Japan Music Competition. Since then, she has been performing as a recitalist, chamber musician, and orchestra player. She is presently a member of "Next Mushroom Promotion," an ensemble specializing in contemporary music, and is on the faculty of the Osaka College of Music.

Akari Yamamoto

Akari Yamamoto attended the Toho Gakuen School of Music in Tokyo where she received her BM. Upon graduation, she was awarded the Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholarship and moved to New York in 2000 to study further at SUNY at Purchase where she completed her MM and Artist diploma degrees. She has participated in many music festivals around the world including the Kirishima International Music Festival (Japan), Sarasota Music Festival (Florida) and the Bayreuth Young Musicians Festival (Germany).

Kayoko Ohashi

Born in Tokyo, Japan, Kayoko Ohashi graduated from the Toho Gakuen School of Music (BA), SUNY Purchase (MM) and the Mannes College of Music (Professional Studies Diploma). She has won several international competitions including the Japan Clarinet Competition. She performed as recitalist, chamber musician, and orchestra musician throughout Japan, the US and Europe. Kayoko Ohashi currently lives in Brussels, Belgium.

Hiroko Mizuguchi

Hiroko Mizuguchi began studying the clarinet at the age of 12. She completed her Bachelor of Music degree at Soai University with honors, and then continued her study in the Master's degree program at State University of New York, Purchase College. After receiving first prize at the Purchase College Concerto Competition, she was selected to perform with the Purchase Symphony Orchestra. She also received the special award at the Kirishima International Music Festival and has been a scholarship participant in the Sarasota Music Festival.

Ikuko Tsukamoto

Ikuko Tsukamoto, an active soloist and chamber musician in Japan, began her musical studies with piano at the age of five and clarinet at the age of twelve. Upon graduation from the Kunitachi College of Music, she studied at the State University of New York at Purchase. In 2007, she performed her debut recital in Tokyo at Tokyo Bunka Kaikan as an award winner from the Japan Federation of Musicians.

Fusayo Oike

Fusayo Oike began her clarinet studies at the age of 12. She studied at the Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo and the Mannes College of Music in New York. After finishing her studies in New York, she returned to Japan and performs as a recitalist and chamber musician. She is also a very active teacher.

Noriko Nagao

Noriko Nagao, clarinetist, was born in Kyoto, Japan. She began playing the piano at the age of three and the clarinet at the age of ten. She received her M.A degree at Queens College, CUNY as a student of Charles Neidich and Ayako Oshima and B.M. and Artist Diploma from the Conservatory Music of Soai University where she studied under Masatomi Kaigawa and Toyohito Suzuki. As an orchestra player, she has performed with various groups, such as RICCS, NYJAA (New York Japanese American Association) Chamber Orchestra, Queens College Orchestra, Kirishima Music Festival Youth Orchestra and the Youth Orchestra for the "Beethoven 9th Symphony with ten thousand choirs" with Peter Schmidl, Principal Clarinetist of Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. She is also an active chamber musician performing music of many different styles. Music festivals in which she has participated include the Kirishima International Music Festival and the Kitakaruizawa Clarinet Seminar. Currently, Ms. Nagao is an active clarinetist in the NY area and also a clarinet and piano teacher at several music schools which foster children's musical talent and prepare them for ABRSM and Carnegie Hall TAP.

Hiromi Nishida

Hiromi Nishida studied under Charles Neidich and Ayako Oshima at Queens College in New York City from 2009 to 2010. Before that, she received her Master Degree with honors at the Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano, Switzerland and her Bachelor's Degree at the Musashino Music University in Tokyo, Japan. In 2001, she won first prize in the Toyama Young Artists Competition and in 2004 first prize in the Kanazawa Young Artists Competition. She was also a finalist in the Concours National d'Execution Musicale in Switzerland and in the International Competition Jeunesses Musicales in Romania.

Yumi Ito

Yumi Ito has been performing as a recitalist, chamber musician and orchestral player throughout Japan, the U.S. and other countries. After receiving her BA from the Musashino Academia Musicae in Tokyo studying with Masaharu Yamamoto, she completed the Master Degree at the Manhattan School of Music under the direction of Charles Neidich and Ayako Oshima. She is currently continuing her clarinet studies at the Hartford school. Yumi Ito is the winner of the second prize of the 42nd International Jeunesses Musicales Competition in Belgrade and also the special prize winner for the best performance of the compulsory piece. She is also the first prize winner of the 11th KOBE international student music competition.