

Ryoko Aoki, Noh-singer/-performer

Biography

Ryoko Aoki holds a unique position in the field of Noh theatre as a female singer and performer. She has performed in several traditional Noh plays, historically the reserve of male actors. Above all, she is the pioneer of and inspiration for a new artistic form combining utai – traditional Noh recitation – with contemporary music. More than 55 works have been written for her by various composers including Peter Eötvös, Toshio Hosokawa, Stefano Gervasoni, José María Sánchez-Verdú, and Oliver Schneller.

She has performed with ensembles and orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Ensemble Musikfabrik, the Remix Ensemble, the Munich Chamber Orchestra, the Arditti Quartet, the Quatour Diotima, and the Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra.

In 2013, Ryoko Aoki made her debut at the Teatro Real de Madrid in Wolfgang Rihm's opera *The Conquest of Mexico* in the role of Malinche, in a production directed by Pierre Audi. During the 2017/18 season Ryoko Aoki performed the world premieres of two works composed for her: Federico Gardella's *Two Souls* at the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and Toshio Hosokawa's *Futari Shizuka (The Maiden from the Sea)* with the Ensemble Intercontemporain at the Philharmonie de Paris and Kölner Philharmonie. Further performances of the work included the University of Toronto, the TTIMF Festival in Tongyeong/Korea, the Talea Ensemble in New York and the Suntory Hall Summer Festival 2021 with the Ensemble Intercontemporain. Furthermore, she performed Peter Eötvös' *Secret kiss*, premiered by the Gageego Ensemble, at Konserthus Göteborg, followed by performances at Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, Casa da Música Porto with Remix Ensemble and Auditorio Nacional Madrid with Plural Ensemble. She has also performed with the Ensemble Musikfabrik at the Berlin Philharmonie and in Cologne and Budapest.

Highlights of the 2021/22 season included the world premiere of Jamie Man's *ZELLE: Wenn es dunkel wird* with LOD muziektheater at deSingel Angwerp as well as José María Sánchez-Verdú's *Hazia la Luz* with the Spanish National Orchestra and Choir (OCNE) at the Auditorio Nacional Madrid. In the past season, Ryoko Aoki could be heard in Lea Letzel's production *Kame - nozoki* in Cologne and Kyoto, in further performances of *ZELLE* at the Palau de la Musica de Valencia and the Gulbenkian in Lisbon, and with the Arditti Quartet at the Philharmonie Essen. Furthermore, she performed in a concert with the Spanish cellist Aldo Mata for the "Year of Japan" programme held by the University of Salamanca in Spain.

She will start the 2023/24 season at the Festival Hironnelle in France. A performance at the MERIDIAN International Festival in Bucharest will follow in November, before she will travel to Tokyo for the world premiere of a work for Noh voice and string trio by Annelies Van Parys.

As part of her NohxContemporary Music project, Ryoko Aoki has commissioned a series of new works for Noh voice. A recording of some of these compositions, including Peter Eötvös' *Harakiri*, was released in 2014. During Covid-19 pandemic, she broadcasted the online concert *HO NOH - Pray for an end to the Covid-19* as a live-streaming remote session on her YouTube Channel. In 2021, she released the recording *Yoru no Kotoba* with the cellist of Ensemble intercontemporain, Éric-Maria Couturier, which was created in a real-time remote recording session between Tokyo and Paris.

Ryoko Aoki obtained a BA and a Master of Music from the Faculty of Music at the Tokyo National University of Fine Art and Music with a focus on the Kanze school of Noh theatre, before gaining a Ph.D. from the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, with a thesis on "Women and Noh". She was appointed "Japan Cultural Envoy" by the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japanese government in 2015 and was awarded "The Creative Tradition Prize" by the Japan Arts Foundation in 2019.

2023/24 season

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