

Speculum

Speculum, for oboe and koto.

Duration: 9 minutes.

From the very beginning, the idea of working with an instrument of which I had no previous knowledge aroused a strong interest in me. The penetrating timbre of the koto has a unique, piercing quality which makes it versatile and suitable for the demands of the contemporary composer. Many different types of koto have been developed during the last century; however, all of them derive from the original 13-stringed Koto, which is the one that is used in this piece. Its design allows it to be tuned with relative ease; thus, I distanced myself from the traditional Japanese tunings and developed a tuning of my own. Speculum is the Latin word for "mirrors". Nervous textures, sudden changes and clear contrasts characterize this work. The oboe undulates in a constant flow of scales based on the tuning of the koto, while the latter sets the prevailing character of each different section. Both instruments explore their respective ranges extensively, alternating various ways of articulation.

This piece is also a personal adventure and an autobiographical note at the time of its creation. It has a marked improvisational flavor given by the fact that it appears to be engaged in a continuous, unquiet search. This search, however, proves to be futile, leaving us in a state of solitude and uncertainty. Speculum was premiered in September 2002 in France, during the Session de Composition of the Royaumont Foundation by Makiko Goto, koto and Ernest Rombout, oboe. It also exists in a version for recorder and koto.

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