

ACL Bulletin

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June 2020

A special Issue in Honor of Prof. Isao Matsushita November 23rd 1951 ~ September 16th 2018

OBITUARY: Isao Matsushita



Isao Matsushita (1951–2018)
Composer, conductor, producer

Born in Tokyo, Isao Matsushita studied at the Tokyo University of the Arts and the Universität der Künste Berlin.

He was professor at both the Performing Arts Center and Center of Innovation (COI) of the Tokyo University of the Arts and vice-president of the Tokyo University of the Arts since 2014.

He was President of the Japan Federation of Composers from 2012. While serving as chairman of the ACL from 1999–2004 and 2014–18, he hosted six ACL festivals: 1990, 2000, 2003, 2010, 2014, and 2017.

He was very active as a member of the Culture and Arts Committee of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Organizing Committee from 2016. He organized concerts that brought together the arts, sport and science at the Tokyo University of the Arts.

He was also a regular attendee at events for the Pacific Alliance of Music Schools (PAMS) on behalf of the Tokyo University of the Arts.

His 66 years of life were filled with music, new ideas and many friends.

Biography by Izumi Miyoshi

In Memory of Isao Matsushita

by Yoshihiro Kanno, President,
The Japan Federation of Composers Inc.

It was an unforgettable Sunday afternoon, on September 16, 2018; I received a call to inform me of the passing of Isao Matsushita. He fell during the rehearsal of Bunkyo Civic Orchestra, a Tokyo orchestra he had been conducting and directing for many years, and he never came back. The utterly unexpected death at the age of 66 was caused by aortic aneurysm dissection.

Born in 1951, Isao graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts. After receiving his Master's degree, he continued his study at Universität der Künste Berlin with DAAD



Young Isao by Ritsuko Tuchiya Matsushita

Scholarship and stayed in Berlin until 1986 while launching his creative career as a composer.

Until the day of his death, Isao was active as Vice President of Tokyo University of the Arts, Professor of the University's Performing Arts Center, President of Japan Federation of Composers, and President of Asian Composers League. In our Japan Federation of Composers, he successively held the positions of Vice President from 1997 to 2012 and President from 2012. He headed ACL Music Festivals of 1990, 2000, 2003, 2010, 2014, and 2017, and especially after 2014, as the first Japanese President of Asian Composers League, he led the Festivals to a great success. His international contribution between JFC and ACL was so extraordinary that without him we would not have the profound relationship as of today.

So many can be said, but he is not with us anymore. My personal grief and thought will always remain. We can only recompense for his efforts if we truthfully succeed the achievements he left behind.

In deepest sympathy, I pray Isao Matsushita's soul rests in peace.



MEMORIES ON ISAO MATSUSHITA

by Ramon Pagayon Santos (Honorary Member)

Isao Matsushita is one person whose passion for music – composing, conducting, organizing – is immeasurable. He seems to breathe music in every moment of his life. And this passion has touched and reached many people, including Filipino composers and musicians. He has organized competitions among Asian composers and he has invited me to be one of the panel of judges. He has arranged the performance of our pieces in a Japan-Philippine musical encounter, held in Nagano.

He has led the Asian Composers League twice and he has not only spearheaded the main festivals in Sendai, in Tokyo, and Yokohama, but has also arranged smaller performances between countries in Asia.

I knew Isao since 1991, when I organized a small ACL festival in Ilo-ilo City, in a meeting of the ACL Executive Committee. I remember that he enjoyed the beautiful island of Nabuot.

We are going to miss him, what he has done, and his commitment to the young Asian composers and the Asian Composers League.

A Tribute to Isao

by Richard Tsang

Honorary Member, ACL

January 2020, Hong Kong

Isao and I are of a similar age..... We were friends way back in the early 1980s when we first met in Tokyo. I was helping Doming Lam to meet various leading Japanese composers in preparation for the 1981 ACL-ISCN Festival in Hong Kong; and Isao proactively introduced himself and brought us to a coffee shop for a long chat – since he had only recently come back to Japan from study in Germany, his English was only catching on. Yet from his conversation he gave us an impression of an earnest and committed composer who shared a common commitment to the promotion music from Asian countries. And up to his very last moment in life, he was still actively pursuing this goal

Isao was a Buddhist who loved drinking, and life. He has lived life to the full, devoting his time among his various important artistic and administrative works, yet still able to find time to compose brilliant and inspiring music, many of which draw inspiration from Buddhist literature and philosophy. His tireless frequent travel to different Asian countries, even during the time when he was not ACL Chairman, showed his passion and selfless devotion to discover and promote authentic Asian contemporary music. He was instrumental in bringing in composers from countries like Vietnam, Indonesia and others to the fold of the ACL. And as ACL Chairman, he has organized many festivals, some even at last-minute notice. That's how resourceful the man was.

Isao never complained, even when faced with life's difficulties. He was always silently working, planning and facilitating. I can always remember his childlike grins whether in greeting people, making public speeches, or

making jokes among friends. A memorable anecdote was a time in Iloilo, the Philippines in the 90s when we were having an ACL ExCom meeting. During our leisure time, we made fun with our names in different languages. He enjoyed his name-sake joke so much that he repeated the phrase for quite some time afterwards whenever we met. And the phrase was: “Tsung Hsia Gung: Sung-Yi-Sung” (松下功: 鬆一鬆), literally meaning “Isao Matsushita, Relax a little!”

True, Isao you may relax now. Your spent a fruitful life in service of music. A treasured friend, a respected colleague, a remarkable composer, Chairman of the ACL: Isao, we surely miss you.

Isao Matsushita—a composer of flowing presences

by Bruce Crossman

Bruce Crossman, Associate Professor, Music,
Western Sydney University, 9th January 2020

Japanese architect Akihisa Hirata’s ‘tangling’ concept (2011) of the flow of life in architectural creativity, can in a sense be viewed as a metaphor of composer Isao Matsushita’s structured organic ‘tangling’ of revealed ‘presences’ of higher beings evident in his creativity. Matsushita’s creativity worked through: firstly, organically flowing music of presence, and secondly, moving spaces of revelatory festival curation. His beautifully constructed festivals, such as the Asian Music Festival 2014 in Tokyo and Yokohama, showed a mastery of organic flow where music, dance and visual sense of place allowed the collective intelligence of musicians and presences to flow towards inner space revelations of Oku. Sounds—hidden secret spiritual presences—were revealed amidst the brick and resonant wood-panelled structures of ritualised concert places. This flow moved through his own compositions: complex, seamless intercultural tanglings of music within lucid forms that emerge from the moment naturally. His music moved from the spiritually deep, moment of sound of revealed presence—heard in the Zen Buddhist Honkyoku



Japan Federation of Composers-Melbourne Composers League Millennium Hall concert, Tokyo 2017 (left to right):

Isao Matsushita, Bruce Crossman, Namatjira Morgan, Johanna Selleck, Kaori Nabeshima, Rui Ogawa, and Andrián Pertout

(photo: Izumi Miyoshi)

tradition of the shakuhachi performer—but intertwined with multiple tanglings from traditional East Asian aesthetics and ancient instrumentation with connections to European modernist mastery. Its affect was to create music of sonority tanglings that emerged with moments of dramatic force amidst floating ambiguities of colour and mode that had an indefinable but unified perceptible presence. The dramatic flow of his Dance of the Firmament: Concerto for Two Shakuhachis and Chinese Orchestra performed in Taipei, and the dancing bird-like breath of Time of Birds (flute, viola and harp) in Tokyo revealed spiritual quality. In his presence, Isao was both warm and formidable yet always characterised by humility and gentleness. He always sought to encourage others with a carefully chosen word that reverberated in the space and silence between people—a sensed *ma*. In my memory, he was and is ‘beautiful’.

Tribute to Isao Matsushita

by John Elmsly

ACL ExCom member, 1997-2002;

President Composers Association of New Zealand 1997-2000.

My special memories of Isao Matsushita include his work for ACL events as conductor and promoter, and his tireless efforts as Chairman of the Executive Committee from 1999-2004.

As a student a life-changing experience was participating in the 1984 ACL Festival in Wellington. When conducting the Karlheinz Company, I had the thrill of collaborating with shakuhachi master Kifu Mitsuhashi. I experienced further ACL festivals and related events in Auckland, 1992, Bangkok 1995, Manila 1997, Tokyo 1999, Melbourne 2001, Bangkok 2005, Seoul 2002, 2009.

When on the Executive Committee I found Isao Matsushita a capable and unifying Chairman, a persuasive negotiator, keen on strong consensus and resolving problems. He was concerned for an active and stable ACL, for young composers and for widening the number of countries involved.

Isao put great energy into the organisation and direction of the 2000 Asian Music Week, Yokohama. Programming ranged from a Myanmar ensemble to the Ensemble Moderne.

Although most of his ACL work was in the service of other composers, I enjoyed hearing Isao’s music through recordings and at a concert performance at Federation Music Week in Melbourne in 2001: typically these show powerful, assertive, convincing blending of influences ‘Eastern’ (ritual, spaciousness, colour sensitivity) and ‘Western’ (layering, density, rich instrumental displays, tonal complexity). At the 2002 Isang Yun Festival in Korea, I witnessed Isao directing the Ensemble Kochi performing music by students of Isang Yun. Matsushita himself had studied with Isang Yun in Berlin from 1979 to 1986.

It was a privilege and honour to know Isao Matsushita, and to enjoy an informal glass or two. For anyone wishing to know more, I suggest Tenku-no-Mai for 2 Shakuhachi & Chamber Orchestra on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/F8Z9s5d3O-U> and Prayer to the Firmament, <https://youtu.be/4QtbHaEjAdM>. May his sounds ring forever.

Isao Matsushita: A True Artist

By Dr. Andrián Pertout

President of the Melbourne Composers' League, visiting Professor of Composition at Aichi Prefectural University of the Arts (2019), Honorary Fellow at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne (2007-2015).

On Sunday, 16 September 2018, the world lost not only a great composer and artist, but also a great human being. As president of the Melbourne Composers' League and on behalf of the MCL and greater Australian artistic community I would like to express my deepest condolences on the sad passing of Isao Matsushita –undoubtedly one of Japan's national treasures. Matsushita was a true artist in every sense of the word. He possessed a unique compositional voice that connected with the listener both on an intellectual and emotional level. Matsushita's music is astounding. In the November 2012 edition of the Australian Music Centre's publication of *Resonate* I wrote the following about one of his works that was presented at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art by the Israel Contemporary Players, conducted by Zsolt Nagyas, as a part of the 30th Asian Composers League Conference and Festival: "The concert not only featured a twentieth century masterpiece (György Ligeti's *Piano Concerto*), but what could possibly be regarded as 'perfect art': Matsushita's (Japan) *A Shining Firmament* for chamber orchestra –a work so masterfully crafted, so refined, so delicate, so subtle; consisting of a beautiful yet simple melodic fragment repeated and developed with ingenuity and finesse."

Matsushita will be greatly missed also in Latin America, where in 2018, as part of 120 years of diplomatic relations between Chile and Japan, Matsushita conducted the Tokyo-based Geidai Philharmonic Orchestra in a series of memorable concerts at the Teatro Municipal de Santiago, performing Smetana, Dvořák, Cáceres, Beethoven, and Matsushita. Dear Isao, we will all forever miss you.



To My Brother, My Colleague and My Best Friend

by Dr Weerachat Premananda

*Man who is warm and as shiny as the Sun
Affiliated and a dedicated 'Budokan'
Together 'our dream' is on the run
Suddenly the World has lost his son
Unexpectedly, is possibly how it has been done
Sound of the requiems by Mozart and Schumann
Have them sung to farewell our ACL spirit
Isao may rest in peace and love
Tomorrow will come but you would never be forgotten
ACL is proud, honoured and grateful to have you*

LỜI CHIA BUỒN

by Prof. Ph.D. Composer Do Hong Quan
Chairman of the Vietnam Musicians' Association

"Nhận được tin GS, nhà soạn nhạc Isao Matsushita đột ngột qua đời ngày 16 tháng 9 năm 2018, những người làm công tác Âm nhạc Việt Nam vô cùng đau buồn và tiếc thương ông.

GS. Isao Matsushita là người bạn lớn, đã gắn bó với Việt Nam trên 30 năm qua. Ông là người có công lớn kết nối nền âm nhạc 2 nước Việt Nam – Nhật Bản, là người bạn chí tình của Hội Nhạc sĩ Việt Nam.

Thay mặt Hội Nhạc sĩ Việt Nam, tôi xin gửi lời chia buồn sâu sắc nhất tới Liên đoàn các nhà soạn nhạc Nhật Bản (Japan Federation of Composers (JFC), ACL và gia đình của GS Isao Matsushita.

Cầu mong linh hồn ông siêu thoát, thanh thản nơi vĩnh hằng.
NAMO A DI DA PHẬT.

LETTER OF SYMPATHY

Please accept sincere condolences from the Vietnamese Musicians Association for the sudden loss of Prof. Composer Isao Matsushita on 16th September, 2018. Prof. Composer Isao Matsushita is a great friend who has been involved with new music in Vietnam for over 30 years. He has devoted his life to connecting Vietnamese and Japanese music, and he was a very close friend of the Vietnam Musicians Association. On behalf of the Vietnam Musicians Association, would you please pass on my sincere condolences to Japan Federation of Composers (JFC), ACL and to the rest of his family. May his soul rest in peace! Amitabha!

by Eve Duncan

ACL Executive Committee (2003-4, 2014-15)
Melbourne Composers League Chairman
(1995-1998, 2004-2009, 2013-2016)

Isao Matsushita was an inspiring and accomplished composer, a natural entrepreneur, and excellent administrator, and a delightful friend to many. Working tirelessly with Izumi Miyoshi by his side, he achieved a new vision for the ACL at a time of great change in the Asia-Pacific region.

I look back on more than twenty years of Friendship and meetings with Isao after an invitation to Japan to discuss the

Melbourne Composers League role in the ACL. These rich and creative meetings in Japan included enthusiastic and productive discussions, concerts and dinners. He made each country member feel valued and welcome. He encouraged Australia to host Federation Music Week, an ACL sixteen-concert festival, and he attended ACL events in Melbourne twice. I have memories of Isao and Izumi watching with delight as fairy penguins waddled through the sand dunes at Phillip Island, near Melbourne.

When I served on the ACL Executive Committee Isao was Chairman. My memories are especially of his happy laughter with his many colleagues, including Chan Hae Lee, Kyung-Sun Suh, Ramon Santos, Josefino Chino Toledo, Jose Maceda, Wen-Tze Lu, Wing Wah Chan, Sung-Jae Lee, Ma Shui-Long, Jack Body, Reiko Irino, Dan Yuhas and Richard Tsang amongst many others. He was a respectful colleague, overflowing with rich visions and enormous energy. He worked swiftly, intelligently and inclusively. I admired his captaincy deeply. He was loyal and committed to the ACL, even when professional commitments made great demands of him.

I was struck by the refined delicacy and assured power in Isao's music, in which a subtle sense of sacred respect for life

and the spiritual was beautifully expressed. I experienced with awe and appreciation the maturing of his artistry and technical ability over these years.

I send Prof. Isao Matsushita's My Condolences.

by Reiko Takahashi Irino (Japan)

ACL Honorary member

I have edited the ACL Memorial Bulletin for the late Isao Matsushita.

I met him for the first time in 1986, when he awarded the 7th International Irino Prize for Orchestral work. He had been working as a Jury member for over 15 years.

He was very energetic and active man. He had many friends in Japan, as well as in foreign countries. But in Japan, he sometimes had problems with other music organization and composers.

My sympathies are with Mrs. Ritsuko Tsuchiya Matsushita (pianist).

Rest in peace Isao-san!

Photo Album of Do Hong Quan & Izumi Miyoshi



Meeting with ACL at Hanoi Opera house 2001



ExCom meeting in Wellington 2004



ACL 34th Conference in Vietnam 2016



ACL 34th Conference in Vietnam 2016



ACL 34th Conference in Vietnam 2016



ACL 34th Conference in Vietnam 2016



ACL 34th Conference in Vietnam 2016



Vinh phuc theatre 2016



ACL 34th Conference in Vietnam 2016



GS Isao surveying Vinh Phuc theater for 34th ACL and Festival 2016 - 29-6-2016



Isao at th1 Festival Asea - Erope Vietnam 2014



Miyoshi, AMF orch. 11.7



surveying hoa nhac Hoc vien 3 28-6-2016



GS Isao Matsushita work with Vietnam musician association 28-6-2016



surveying Vinh Phuc theater 29-6-2016



Festival Asea - Erope Vietnam 2016



Visited Tay Thien 29-6-2016



worked with the board of directors of Vietnam National Academy of Music 1 28-6-2016

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2018~2020**

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