

< Kazuhito Yamashita + bambini >

This quartet looks to the risorgimento of a quintessential and older musical tradition. This recalls a bygone era of both Europe and Japan when such music was known and valued and whose echoes can still be heard in the classic 11th century novel "The Tale of Genji."

"KASANE" is the quartet's main repertoire and typifies the music of the age. Four guitars, multi-layering with shifting tonal colors, represent the various plucked stringed instruments of old Japan. In Matsuo Basho's seminal work "Oku no Hosomichi" (The Narrow Road to the Interior) the great poet's disciple and travel companion Kawai Sora composed the following Haiku: *Kasane to wa / Yae Nadeshiko no / Na naru be shi*. One day, lost on a moor, the travelers were charmed by a little girl called 'Kasane' running after them: a rare and elegant name for such a rural area. *Nadeshiko* or 'Fringed Pink' is a flower associated with girls whilst *Kasane* means 'layers'. The poet wordplays by adding the prefix *yae-* or 'eightfold or multilayered' to *nadeshiko*; thus "This child Kasane when compared with a flower must be a Yae-nadeshiko." The title of this album derives from Sora's haiku and the image of 'kasane' indicating the multilayered dress of Heian Period aristocracy. Each track is based upon Gagaku's *Riku Choshi* (six main modes): 1. *So-jo*, 2. *Waushiki-cho*, 3. *Hyo-jo*, 4. *Banshiki-cho*. The four modes gradually became associated with the four seasons. In the Heian period, the word *asobi* (leisure, play, pastime) signified playing Kan Gen (pipes and string instruments). The aristocracy of the era apparently derived much pleasure and healing from music. This album comprises an effort, in my own fashion, to recall the music of the Heian Period; in my own way. Track 5, *Taishiki-cho* has an exotic key because *Taishiki* is the name for Islam or the Arab in the Sung or Tang Dynasty. (The 'Taj' in Taj Mahal may be a cognate) Track 6, *Ichikotsu-cho* is positioned in the center of all modes). Japan's national anthem *Kimi Ga Yo*, was composed in the same key. Alas, *Kimi Ga Yo*, as currently rendered, does not sound like a piece of *Ichikotsu-cho* on account of the unmatching harmonies of the accompaniment. *Ichikotsu-cho* was originally a mode employed to invoke a celebratory mood.

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translated by John Maher