

On 15 January 2019, the JDZB will hold an event featuring five different artists, including jazz pianist TAKASE Aki and the novelist and poet TAWADA Yōko. Our magazine sat down with Ms. TAKASE and Ms. TAWADA to discuss their careers as artists, as well as the event in January.

Please tell us about how you two met. When and how did you start working together?

TAWADA: When I was in high school, I had a precocious friend who loved free jazz, and we would go to listen to YAMASHITA Yōsuke play the piano. After moving to Germany in 1982, I would see Ms. TAKASE's concerts on the television. In the 1990s I heard from an Australian writer I know living in Berlin that Ms. TAKASE is living in Berlin, and one day, a Japanese journalist named AOKI Yoshiko asked me if I would like to meet TAKASE Aki and collaborate together. I went to Berlin to meet her, and in 1999 we did our first project together, which was a joint performance on a Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) radio program.

Both of you live and work in Berlin. What's the reason for that?

TAKASE: I think being invited to the Berlin Jazz Festival in 1981 was the trigger that finally led me to move to Berlin. At that time the Berlin Wall was still standing, so I had to fly from Japan to East Berlin via Moscow before taking a bus to West Berlin, and I was very interested in Berlin as a single city that had been divided into east and west. In 1988 I received a request from the city of Berlin to write an orchestra piece, and that's when I met my husband, Alexander von SCHLIPPENBACH, who was the music director of the orchestra at that time. As a result, I found both work and marriage and started living in Berlin. That piece was "Musik ist meine Sprache" (Music is my language). Living in Berlin, you can see and hear how language, music, and time changes. A living environment that exists together with all of those elements is very meaningful to me in my composition and performances.

TAWADA: I lived in Hamburg for 24 years and moved to Berlin in March of 2006. A lot of my friends from my time in Hamburg moved to Berlin after Germany's reunification, so for me Berlin and Hamburg are actually one and the same. But unlike Hamburg, many of my friends from France, America, South Korea and Japan came to



Berlin for work and travel, so for me it feels more like a type of meeting place than a location. Personally, I've been interested in Poland and Russia for a long time, so I especially like that Berlin is close to Eastern Europe. I work "inside my own brain", so I'm not sure if you can really say I work "in Berlin".

What can the audience expect from the five-artist joint event that will be held at the JDZB on 15 January 2019?

TAKASE: In the first part, I (piano) will perform with NAKAMURA Mayumi (opera singer) and Daniel ERDMANN (tenor saxophonist) a number of pieces, including originals, themed around songs from "Carmen", the representative work of French composer George BIZET (1838–1875). We will also be showing an installation by SHIOTA Chiharu, who will be making a cameo appearance. The second part is "Words and Sound", a performance by TAWADA Yōko and myself, which we have been doing for close to 20 years. On this occasion we will be focusing on the American John CAGE (1912–1992, composer, poet, thinker, and mycologist), and our performance will consist of Ms. TAWADA's newly written texts together with original songs and improvisation. The performance represents concepts such as silence and the randomness of sound.

"Carmen", a collection of masterpieces based on the novel by Prosper MÉRIMÉE in the 19th century, John CAGE, a modern music composer of the 20th century typified by a deep passion for BIZET's opera, and his experimental mentality that was directed towards chance operations and the future of music: Our hope is that, through our interpretation of the two figures' differing music senses, the audience will be able to experience something new with a liberated sensibility.

Please tell us about your future plans and resolutions.

TAKASE: Recently I have been very interested in connecting with artists from a variety of different genres, regardless of their age,

sex, or nationality. If possible, I would like to compose a piece that will allow me to create a new, interesting world that was not imaginable before. In 2019, starting with a CD sale concert tour for the new group "JAPANIC" in Germany, I will be performing around Europe. This group consists of young musicians of varying nationalities, including the German saxophonist Daniel ERDMANN, who lives in Paris and will be joining us at the upcoming Carmen performance, and the Norwegian drummer Dag Magnus NAVERSEN.

Other than that, there is also the "DACAPO" dance and music collaboration (Dancers: KAWAGUCHI Yui, Kofie DA VIBE from Ghana, Musicians: French clarinetist Louis SCLAVIS, Berlin-born DJ Illvibe, and myself), which I have been working on with Berlin resident and dancer KAWAGUCHI Yui as a new project in the "Stadt im Klavier" series, and which premiered in Austria in spring 2018. From 2019, I would definitely like to be able to perform not only in Europe, but in Asia and Japan as well.

TAWADA: Beginning with the New Year issue, I will be serializing a novel in the magazine "Gunzo." It's titled "Hinted in the Stars" and is a sequel to "Spreading Around the Globe", which was published as a book this year. I also plan on continuing to write my Asahi Shimbun essay series "Berlin Correspondence" next year. In addition to that, I may well be serializing a novel in Asahi Shimbun sometime around the year after next. I was invited by the Japan Foundation to lecture in Thailand and Myanmar in March of next year. I'm interested in the history of Myanmar, so I'm really looking forward to it.

Next year, TAKASE Aki and I will be taking on the works of German playwright Heiner MÜLLER (1929–1995) and performing at Tōkyō's Ryōgoku Theater X as a part of its regular performances. Actually, I wrote about his work "Hamlet Machine" in my Master's dissertation at Hamburg University a long time ago, and to me he was the author that represented Berlin above all others.