

Creating the Concert “Listen to Haruki Murakami”

Challenges and Difficulties from an Insider’s Perspective

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Abstract

The concert “Listen to Haruki Murakami,” created in 2015, toured in Singapore and Seoul as a Japan Foundation project. Japanese author Murakami Haruki is well-known for his frequent references to music in his works; however, there had been no officially licensed permitted concert before this project, which integrated and interweaved the texts and songs used in his works. In this essay, the author, who was the chief officer in charge of this concert, reflects on the process of creating this concert in chronological order and describes challenges and difficulties she faced from an insider’s point of view. More specifically, this essay covers the questions of (a) how the basic concept was created, (b) how the songs were selected from Murakami’s novels, (c) how Murakami’s texts, including the Japanese originals, English translation, and Korean translation, were selected for the concert, and (d) how the concert script was finalised through collaboration with those involved in this project.

Keywords: concert, Haruki Murakami, music, translation, intercultural exchange

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Introduction

The world-famous and best-selling Japanese writer Murakami Haruki is well-known for his frequent references to music in his literary texts. As suggested by the fact that he used to run a jazz bar in Tokyo before becoming a writer, and as shown in several essays and dialogues such as *Absolutely on Music: Conversations with Seiji Ozawa* (Murakami & Ozawa 2016) and *Portrait in Jazz* (Wada & Murakami 1997), his knowledge and passion for music have been widely recognised by readers around the world. Several books, magazines, and CD compilations featuring the music being referred to in Murakami’s works have been published in Japan (for example, Konishi 1998; Konishi 2007; Kurihara et al. 2018). In the U.K., NTS Radio (2018), which is an online radio station based in London, has released a three-part series of music compilations titled “Haruki Murakami Day,” and worldwide listeners can enjoy the tunes appearing in Murakami’s works online¹.

The curator of this series, Scott Meslow (2015), also shared the list of excerpts of Murakami’s novels. However, no live event featuring Murakami and his music had been held before 2015² when The Japan Foundation produced the concert “Listen to Haruki Murakami.”

In 2015, The Japan Foundation, a public organisation “dedicated to carrying out comprehensive international cultural exchange programs throughout the world” (Japan Foundation, n.d.), organised a project titled “‘Watch,’ ‘Listen to,’ and ‘Talk about’ Haruki Murakami” in Singapore and Seoul. The Japan Foundation has implemented mainly projects aiming at making cultural contributions to Japan’s diplomatic policy; therefore, while planning the projects to be held in the following year, it has given higher priority to events such as, for example, the commemoration of exchange between Japan and other countries³. The project “‘Watch,’ ‘Listen to,’ and ‘Talk about’ Haruki Murakami” was planned and creat-

ed as a commemorative event of the 50th anniversary of the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Japan and Korea in 2015 and as a prelude to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Japan in 2016.

As the title suggests, this project consisted of three programs. In the part titled “Watch,” The Japan Foundation was co-organiser of the theatrical play *Umibe no Kafuka* [*Kafka on the Shore*], an adaptation of Murakami’s novel for the stage directed by Ninagawa Yukio (1935-2016), touring Singapore and Seoul, from October to November 2015. In the part “Talk about,” The Japan Foundation collaborated with the Singapore Writers’ Festival, which was also held in October 2015. Shibata Motoyuki, Ted Goossen, and Roland Kelts, who all have a strong connection to Murakami, were invited and participated in a panel discussion titled “Unravelling Haruki Murakami.” Shibata Motoyuki is a scholar of American literature and a translator. He has collaborated with Murakami for their essays and dialogues (Murakami & Shibata 2000; Murakami & Shibata 2019). Ted Goossen has translated a number of Japanese authors, and at the time of the Singapore Writers Festival in 2015 he had just released the English translation of Murakami’s first two novels, *Kaze no uta o kike* [*Hear the Wind Sing*] and *1973nen no pinboru* [*Pinball, 1973*]⁴. Roland Kelts is the author of *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture has Invaded the U.S.*, published in 2006, and he has interviewed and written about Murakami in many newspaper articles (for instance, Carpenter 2015; Kelts 2002; Kelts 2011). With these two programs, “Watch” and “Talk about,” the project already seemed quite ambitious. However, realizing one more program which, additionally, would concentrate on the sense of hearing, the whole project would provide an opportunity to enjoy the world of Haruki Murakami with all five senses. That is how the third part, “Listen to,” was initiated.

This essay is based on my own experience as the chief officer in charge of this project at The Japan Foundation (Konu-

ma 2016a; Konuma 2016b; Oshima, 2015). A brief summary, including the dates and venues of the concert, is shown in the Appendix. In this essay, I aim to reflect on the process of creating this concert in chronological order and describe the challenges and difficulties the production faced from an insider’s point of view. More specifically, I will focus on the questions of how the basic concept was created, how the songs and passages from Murakami’s texts were selected from his novels, and how the script was finalised.

April 2015: “I Want You to Create a Concert in Connection with Murakami Haruki”

On 1 April 2015, I was entrusted with the mission of creating a ‘Murakami Haruki concert.’ There were three conditions that I had to satisfy while implementing the project:

1. The theme of the concert was supposed to be Murakami Haruki and the music he refers to in his novels.
2. The concert must be held from October to November 2015 because it should be held in conjunction with the play *Kafka on the Shore* and the Singapore Writers’ Festival.
3. The concert should not only involve Japanese artists but also include collaboration with local artists in Singapore and/or Korea.

Considering that less than six months were available until the realisation of the concert, it seemed a battle against time from the start. Throughout the month of April, I had to deal with creating a basic concept for the concert, securing the venues in Singapore and Seoul, and appointing the concert supervisor, musicians and technical staff. Among these three, creating a basic concept was the most fundamental and essential work. Without it, I could not decide the size of venues, ask a music expert to serve as the supervisor for creating the concert, or start negotiating with musicians and staff. Therefore, in the first two weeks of April, I expanded my vision for

the concert by drawing conceptual images, reading Murakami's novels, and putting sticky notes on the pages with references to music.

After two weeks, I was able to fix the basic concept of this concert. My concept paper at that time included the following phrase: "an original concert which interweaves various music genres (including jazz, classical music, and pop music) and songs (such as those written and performed by the Beatles) appearing in Murakami's novels and actual passages from his novels." To transform the world of Murakami's novels into one concert, I regarded it exceedingly important to interweave various musical genres and, at the same time, actual passages from his novels.

However, realising this concept was not a straightforward process. Having to play various musical genres in succession on one stage brought about several challenges regarding musicians, instruments, and the stage setting, all of which were related to one another. One challenge was the

problem of how to minimize the number of musicians while ensuring that it was possible for them to cover various musical genres. Due to budget constraints, it was not feasible to ask a full orchestra to be on stage, so I decided to appoint a jazz trio and a classical music quartet to cover jazz, classical music, and pop songs. For the jazz section, I asked two trios of renowned jazz pianists, the Yamanaka Chihiro Trio and the Kokubu Hiroko Trio,

to play in Singapore and Seoul, respectively⁵. For the classical music section, I appointed the 1966 Quartet, whose repertoire included classical and non-classical songs by musicians such as The Beatles and Michael Jackson.

Another challenge was where to place all the instruments used on the stage. Both the Yamanaka and Kokubu jazz trios used a grand piano, a drum set, and a bass, while the 1966 Quartet used a grand piano, two violins, and one cello. Accordingly, audio equipment such as microphones and speakers needed to be positioned differently depending on whether a tune was played by the jazz trio or the classical music quartet. When staging two groups within one concert, the easiest option would be to divide the concert into two parts, playing classical music in the first half and jazz in the second half or vice versa. In such a scenario, we could have changed the stage setting during an intermission.

However, I did not want to take this option because it was essentially important to perform different kinds of music on a

single stage in succession, as this is also the way various music genres and songs appear in one and the same Murakami novel. Finally, I thus came up with the idea of putting two grand pianos on the stage—one for the jazz trio on the stage right and the other for the quartet on the stage left (Figures 1 and 2). Using two pianos and dividing the stage space into two, the jazz trio and the classical quartet would be able to alternate and appear together at various times.

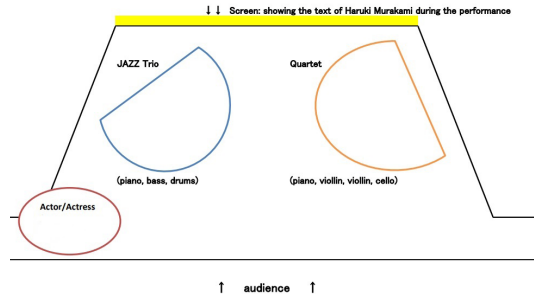


Figure 1: Rough Image of the Stage Setting (Created by the Author, 2015)



Figure 2: Stage of the Victoria Theatre, Singapore (Photo by the Author, 2015)

Note: The jazz trio is on the stage right (left side of this photo), and the classical music quartet is on the stage left (right side of this photo).

May to June 2015: Selecting Songs from Murakami's Novels

Konuma Jun'ichi, a professor at Waseda University in Japan and a music and literature critic, was appointed as the concert supervisor by me because of his expertise in music and his studies on the relationship between music and other genres, including literature and film. I officially asked him to be the concert supervisor in late April. Since then, Konuma and I started reviewing all Murakami's novels published as of 2015, from *Kaze no uta o kike* [*Hear the Wind Sing*] (1979) to *Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to kare no junrei no toshi* [*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*] (2013).

Based on the basic concept for the concert with the rough stage plan (Figure 1), we first reached a consensus that passages from several of Murakami's novels would be read aloud or shown on the screen before and after the music played and that we would not separate music tunes by genres in the setlist. As Konuma stated, "we wanted, in one form or another, the world of novels or the text in the novels to either meld or disconnect with the music in the ears of the people who came to listen to the concert" (Konuma 2016b).

In addition to mixing various musical genres and passages from Murakami's novels, we also discussed how to involve local artists in Singapore or Korea and realise collaboration with them on stage in this concert. First, we decided to ask at least one actor in each country to read passages from Murakami's novels. Considering the language that most members of a large audience would understand, we decided to use English in the Singapore performance and Korean in the Seoul performance. Secondly, we decided to invite one pianist from each country, Lim Yan (Singapore) and Cho Jae-hyuck (Korea). We asked them to play a piano solo and a few pieces together with the Japanese classical music quartet. In this way, we could also satisfy the condition of collaboration.

Finally, and most importantly, I contacted the copyright office in charge of Murakami Haruki's works. I could obtain ap-

proval to hold this concert as planned, and the copyright office then told me to take the necessary copyright clearance procedure once the selection of the respective passages from the novels would be finalised.

Who Would Be the Audience?

Before starting the selection of the songs to be played in the concert, the supervisor and I discussed who would be our target audience. Konuma anticipated that the audience would include the following people:

1. People who have read and people who have not read Murakami's novels. The music tunes chosen for this concert should appeal to both groups.
2. People who know that music appears in Murakami's novels. However, they may not be particularly familiar with or not interested in music, even if they have noticed the songs' titles in the novels. Once they closed their books, they might have forgotten about the tunes. They might have kept on reading without paying any special attention to the music. This concert is expected to allow these people to become familiar with the music mentioned in Murakami's novels.
3. People who know the titles of some songs cited in the novels but made no further efforts to make themselves familiar with them. (Konuma 2016a, 2016b)

We expected these kinds of people to form the audience; the concert thus would be an opportunity for them to be exposed to different kinds of music which they were not usually listening to. Besides, as a Japan Foundation project, we also aimed to introduce Japanese artists and culture to the audiences in Singapore and Korea.

Selection of the Songs Played

Most importantly, songs had to be selected which harmonised with Murakami's novels. In his novels, music appears in various contexts. Sometimes, music is played on the radio or the record player. In other instances, it is being played or whistled by

characters in the novel. And very often the names of composers or the titles of songs are just mentioned in the narrative passages of his texts. In the initial screening, Konuma and I reviewed all of Murakami's novels (we had excluded his short stories and nonfiction texts) published as of 2015. The total number of musical allusions in these novels is 716 (see Table 1). Among this large number of music references in Murakami's novels, we went through the following three phases to select the tunes to be played in the concert: (a) the concert supervisor created an initial list of songs for the jazz trio, the classical music quartet, and the local pianists in two countries, (b) I asked the musicians for their comments on the song list, and (c) the supervisor and I finalised the setlist for the concert with the consensus of the musicians.

Table 1: Number of Music Pieces Mentioned in Murakami's Novels

Murakami's Works Novel Titles	Japanese Original Publication Year	Number of Music Mentioned
<i>Hear the Wind Sing</i>	1979	23
<i>Pinball, 1973</i>	1980	25
<i>A Wild Sheep Chase</i>	1982	30
<i>Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World</i>	1985	59
<i>Norwegian Wood</i>	1987	87
<i>Dance, Dance, Dance</i>	1988	195
<i>South of the Border, West of the Sun</i>	1992	25
<i>The Wind-up Bird Chronicle</i>	1994 & 1995	49
<i>Sputnik Sweetheart</i>	1999	33
<i>Kafka on the Shore</i>	2002	48
<i>After Dark</i>	2004	22
<i>1Q84</i>	2009 & 2010	96
<i>Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage</i>	2013	24

Note: Created by the author with reference to Kurihara et al. (2018).

Konuma (2016a) explained the criteria for choosing the songs for the initial list as follows: First, he selected tunes that would be strongly related to the titles of Murakami's novels, such as "On a Slow Boat to China"

appearing in the novel *Chūgoku-yuki no surō bōto* [A Slow Boat to China], or "Norwegian Wood" by The Beatles, appearing in the novel *Noruei no mori* [Norwegian Wood]. Secondly, tunes having an exceedingly important meaning in the novels were included, such as Leoš Janáček's "Sinfonietta" appearing in *1Q84* and "Danny Boy" in *Sekai no owari to hādo-boirudo wondarando* [Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World]. Thirdly, pop tunes that would be familiar to many concert visitors were also included due to entertainment reasons. The Beach Boys' "California Girls" appearing in *Kaze no uta o kike* and Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" in *Dansu dansu dansu* [Dance, Dance, Dance] were chosen in this respect. Finally, considering that local pianists from Singapore and Korea had been invited, their piano solo and ensemble tunes were selected. For example, Beethoven's "Trio in B-Flat Major, Op 97," which plays an important role in *Umibe no Kafuka*, was chosen for collaboration between the Japanese violinist and cellist (from the 1966 Quartet) and the local pianists from Singapore or Korea.

Having received the initial song list from the supervisor, I shared it with the Yamanaoka Chihiro Trio (for Singapore), the Kokubu Hiroko Trio (for Seoul), the 1966 Quartet (for Singapore and Seoul), and the two local pianists, Lim Yan in Singapore and Cho Jaehyuck in Seoul. I asked for their comments on the song list and checked whether any special arrangement of music scores was deemed necessary or not. No major issues were pointed out from the jazz trios. Because most tunes were so-called standard jazz pieces, all I needed to do was deciding on the performance time for each tune and informing them. On the other hand, I had to prepare a special arrangement for the classical music quartet. For instance, Janáček's "Sinfonietta" appearing in *1Q84* needed to be re-arranged because it is usually played by an orchestra. Including this tune, the supervisor Konuma re-arranged a few pieces to fit the purpose of this concert. For the solos of the local pianists from Singapore and Seoul, the supervisor had provided two options: Brahms' "Ballade"

appearing in *Sputoniku no koibito* [*Sputnik Sweetheart*], or Liszt's "Le mal du pays" from "Années de pèlerinage, Première année: Suisse" appearing in *Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to kare no junrei no toshi*. Coincidentally, both pianists chose Liszt.

The supervisor and I could therefore finalise the setlist (see Table 2) with consensus among all musicians involved in this project. The songs in the setlist can be listened to via Spotify (use this URL <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/4lOu6i0snNeGY-FZuNPnzss?si=e814b07f7012443d> or the QR-Code on the right), which the author compiled for this essay.

From July to August 2015: Selecting Passages from Murakami's Novels

Konuma commented that, "if we just chose music from Murakami's novels and play these tunes, it would be an 'ordinary' concert" (Konuma 2016b:76), and indeed, what made this concert unique was our attempt to interweave various musical genres with Murakami's texts. Based on the finalised setlist, the supervisor first selected 16 passages from Murakami's novels, and through creating the whole concert's script, we finally chose the following nine passages⁶ for the concert:



Table 2: The Finalised Setlist of "Listen to Haruki Murakami" in Singapore and Korea

Title of Music	Murakami's Novel	Composed by	Arranged by	Performed by
Norwegian Wood	<i>Norwegian Wood</i>	John Lennon & Paul McCartney	Shinichiro Kato	1966 Quartet
Danny Boy	<i>Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World.</i>	(Irish folk song)	Chihiro Yamanaka / Hiroko Kokubu	Chihiro Yamanaka Trio / Hiroko Kokubu Trio
South of the Border	<i>South of the Border, West of the Sun</i>	Jimmy Kennedy & Michael Carr	Chihiro Yamanaka / Hiroko Kokubu	Chihiro Yamanaka Trio / Hiroko Kokubu Trio
California Girls	<i>Hear the Wind Sing</i>	Mike Love & Brian Wilson	Shinichiro Kato	1966 Quartet
On a Slow Boat to China	<i>A Slow Boat to China</i>	Frank Loesser	Chihiro Yamanaka / Hiroko Kokubu	Chihiro Yamanaka Trio / Hiroko Kokubu Trio
Penny Lane	<i>Pinball, 1973 / Norwegian Wood</i>	John Lennon & Paul McCartney	Chihiro Yamanaka / Hiroko Kokubu	Chihiro Yamanaka Trio / Hiroko Kokubu Trio
Billy Jean	<i>Dance, Dance, Dance</i>	Michael Jackson	Shinichiro Kato	1966 Quartet
Das Veilchen	<i>Sputnik Sweetheart</i>	Wofgang Amadeus Mozart		Yuki Hanai (1966 Qrt) & Lim Yan / Cho Jae-hyuck
Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 97	<i>Kafka on the Shore</i>	Ludwig van Beethoven	Jun-ichi Konuma	Risa Matsuura & Haruka Hayashi (1966 Qrt) & Lim Yan / Cho Jae-hyuck
Le mal du pays (from "Années de pèlerinage, Première année: Suisse")	<i>Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage</i>	Franz Liszt		Lim Yan / Cho Jae-hyuck
Sinfonietta	<i>1Q84</i>	Leoš Janáček	Jun-ichi Konuma	1966 Quartet
St. Matthew Passion	<i>1Q84</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach	Jun-ichi Konuma	1966 Quartet
La Gazza Ladra (The Thieving Magpie): Overture	<i>The Wind-up Bird Chronicle</i>	Gioachino Antonio Rossini	(a short phrase was picked up by Jun-ichi Konuma)	Risa Matsuura & Yuki Hanai (from 1966 Qrt)
Five Spot After Dark	<i>After Dark</i>	Benny Golson	Chihiro Yamanaka / Hiroko Kokubu	Chihiro Yamanaka Trio / Hiroko Kokubu Trio
My Favorite Things	<i>Kafka on the Shore</i>	Richard Rodgers	Chihiro Yamanaka / Hiroko Kokubu	Chihiro Yamanaka Trio / Hiroko Kokubu Trio
Norwegian Wood	<i>Norwegian Wood</i>	John Lennon & Paul McCartney	Chihiro Yamanaka / Hiroko Kokubu	All musicians

Passage 1

“Play ‘Norwegian Wood,’” said Naoko.

Reiko brought a porcelain beckoning cat from the kitchen. It was a coin bank, and Naoko dropped a ¥ 100 piece from her purse into its slot.

“What’s this all about?” I asked.

“It’s a rule,” said Naoko. “When I request ‘Norwegian Wood,’ I have to put ¥ 100 into the bank. It’s my favorite, so I make a point of paying for it. I make a request when I really want to hear it.”⁷

Passage 2

It’s a melody. Not a complete song, but the first phrase of one. I play the three cords and twelve notes, also, over and over again. It is a song, I realize, that I know.

Danny Boy.

The title brings back the song: chords, notes, harmonies now flow naturally from my fingertips. I play the melody again⁸.

Passage 3

“But what is there, west of the sun?” I asked.

She shook her head again. “I don’t know? Maybe nothing. Or maybe *something*. At any rate, it’s different from south of the border.”⁹

Passage 4

The performers were right there in front of me, it seemed, their delicate phrasing swelling up, then retreating, then swelling up again. One of the songs in the collection must be “Sumire”. I sank back in my chair, closed my eyes, and shared this music with my missing friend¹⁰.

Passage 5

“Do you think music has the power to change people? Like you listen to a piece and go through some major change inside?”

Oshima nodded. “Sure, that can happen.”¹¹

Passage 6

When the phone rang I was in the kitchen, boiling a potful of spaghetti and whistling along to

an FM broadcast of the overture to Rossini’s *The Thieving Magpie*, which has to be the perfect music for cooking pasta¹².

Passage 7

As I stood there wondering what to do, I heard a familiar sound in the distance. It was the whistling waiter. He was in perfect tune. There was no one to match him. As before, he was whistling the overture to Rossini’s *The Thieving Magpie*—not an easy tune to whistle, but it seemed to give him no trouble¹³.

Passage 8

But anyway, the first tune on side A was ‘Five Spot After Dark,’ and it was *great*. A guy named Curtis Fuller played the trombone on it. The first time I heard it, I felt the scales fall from my eyes. That’s *it*, I thought. *That’s* the instrument for me. The trombone and me: it was a meeting arranged by destiny¹⁴.

Passage 9

I try whistling to fill in the silence. The soprano sax from Coltrane’s “My Favorite Things,” though of course my dubious whistling doesn’t come anywhere near the complex, lightning-quick original. I just add bits so what I hear in my head approximates the sound. Better than nothing, I figure¹⁵.

Unique Experiences in the Process of Copyright Clearance

In general, when holding a music concert, concert organisers are responsible for music copyright clearance in the country where the performance is held. As with the music copyright, when using texts from novels in a concert, the concert organiser must undergo the necessary copyright clearance procedure. The concert “Listen to Haruki Murakami” included both music and passages from Murakami’s novels; therefore, the copyright clearance, especially that for Murakami’s texts, was the most sensitive issue that required the utmost care and attention.

Murakami wrote his original works in Japanese, but for the audience’s better un-

derstanding of this concert, we decided to use English and Korean as the medium of performance in Singapore and Seoul, respectively. Based on the Japanese passages that Konuma chose from Murakami's original works, I looked up their English translations. The respective Korean passages were identified by the staff of The Japan Foundation's overseas office in Seoul. Due to the involvement of three languages, I had to complete copyright clearance to use Murakami's original works, their English translation and their Korean translation.

While reading through the English translation of his novels published by Vintage, every time I found a unique, important feature on the credit page: "Copyright © Haruki Murakami" and "English translation © Haruki Murakami." This credit shows that, although Murakami's novels were translated by Alfred Birnbaum, Jay Rubin or Philip Gabriel, Haruki Murakami himself owns the translation copyright. A scholar and translator, David Karashima, also highlights this fact in the following statement: "While authors generally retain copyright of the translated editions of their work, the translation copyright, at least in the U.S. and U.K., usually remains with the translator. With Murakami's work in English, however, the author retains the translation copyright" (Karashima 2020:212). Therefore, for the concert in Singapore, I could complete the copyright clearance to use Murakami's works as well as their English translations by sending only one application to Murakami's copyright office in Japan.

As for the concert in Seoul, Murakami's copyright office informed me that I would have to contact several different Korean publishers for the passages. According to the office, several versions of the same text exist in Korean translation, but some of them could not be used for the concert because these publishers' license agreements had already expired¹⁶. While I completed the copyright clearance to use Murakami's works in Japan, our Seoul office got permission to use the Korean translation for the Seoul concert from several publishers in Korea.

Moreover, I also went through the procedure of obtaining permission to use the titles of Murakami's novels in the concert brochure in Singapore and Korea because we wanted to make it clear to the audience which song was chosen from which novel. Upon consultation with the copyright office, I was allowed to do so. Thus, for example, the brochure distributed to the Singapore audience includes the following information:

Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 97

Ludwig van Beethoven, Arr. by Konuma Jun'ichi

UMIBE NO KAFUKA (Kafka on the Shore)

As the above example shows, the original Japanese title of Murakami's novel was referred to in roman letters, followed by its English translation.

From September to October 2015: Finalising the Concert Script

During the last two months before the world première in Singapore on 28 and 29 October 2015, which was to be followed by the concert in Seoul on 17 and 18 November, the supervisor and I started finalising the concert script in collaboration with our partners in Singapore and Seoul. Because The Japan Foundation did not have an office in Singapore, I had invited an international arts management and consulting agency, CultureLink Singapore, as a co-organiser to take care of the local arrangements¹⁷. For Korea, our overseas office in Seoul and the Kumho Asiana Cultural Foundation had become the local partners (see Appendix).

The difference in the local partners brought about an interesting difference between the two countries in the staging of the concert: For the Singapore performance whose venue was a theatre, CultureLink assigned a director, Kok Heng Leun, with whom Konuma and I discussed the program sequence; that is, the songs would be performed, and the passages from Murakami's texts would be shown on the screen or read by actors during the concert. Leun wrote in the concert brochure that the collaboration between Jap-

anese and Singapore artists “underscores the universality of Haruki Murakami’s writing, connecting two parallel worlds to share something deeply human”¹⁸. Motivated by his career in theatre, Leun clearly put emphasis on his intention to represent the “two parallel worlds” often appearing in Murakami’s works. We, therefore, concluded that two actors (male and female) should appear on stage. Some passages from Murakami’s works were to be read by these two actors, positioned in different places on the stage (e.g., in front of and behind the screen) simultaneously, while in other instances they should read the same text with slightly different timing, thus producing echoes. Other text passages should be shown on the front screen using a fabric called scrim¹⁹. On the other hand, in the Seoul performance held in a concert hall with rather simple equipment, Konuma and I decided to simplify the stage directions and invited one female actress to read all the quotes from Murakami’s texts in Korean. This simplified version also effectively worked for the audience to arouse their imagination based on the texts and songs performed in the concert.

Although we had finalised the script before the Japanese team’s departure to Singapore, it should be noted that we decided to use some additional effects during the rehearsals in Singapore and Korea. For example, the finalised script included one scene in which the violinist played a short phrase of Rossini’s “The Thieving Magpie” in response to the actor’s reading of *Nejimakidori Kuronikuru* [*The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*] (Passages 7 and 8 above). Konuma explained that “just before the second performance in Singapore” (2016a:79), he came up with the idea of having the violinist newly employ a flageolet technique to produce a sound that was closer to whistling. Another example of such a ‘last-minute change’ is the part of the concert program in which the jazz trio played “Danny Boy” just after the reading from *Sekai no owari to hādo-boirudo wondārando* (Passage 2 above). During the rehearsal in Seoul, Konuma told Kokubu Hiroko (the jazz pianist) that a character played “Dan-

ny Boy” with his accordion in the novel²⁰. Following this conversation, Kokubu decided to use the keyboard harmonica at the beginning of the tune because its sound seemed closer to the accordion.

Reception and Future Prospects

By reflecting on the process of creating the concert “Listen to Haruki Murakami,” I aimed to examine what challenges we overcame in developing the basic concept, selecting the songs and Murakami’s texts, and deciding how the concert program should look like²¹. In the following, I will reflect on the audience and media response of the production as well as further projects with the concert event.

The performances in Singapore and Korea were covered by articles in two major Japanese newspapers, the *Mainichi Shimbun* and the *Tokyo Shimbun*. They positively reviewed this concert which is, for example, shown by the following quotes: “The plot of the concert was developing one after another, from jazz, pop, to classical music. Whenever a song was finished, the audience reacted with enthusiastic cheers” (Yonemura 2015), or “Full-house audience in a wide age range applauded with shouts of ‘bravo’” (Higuchi 2015). On the other hand, the local media in Singapore and Korea did not give the concerts a lot of attention, despite the favourable responses obtained by the audience. Because three events (“Watch,” “Listen to,” and “Talk about”) took place in a relatively short period of time, the local media’s attention was not focused only on this concert. Above all, the local media tended to cover a bigger theatrical production within their limited paper space; thus, they reviewed the play *Kafka on the Shore*, directed by Ninagawa, more extensively than the concert. Our co-organiser, CultureLink Singapore, also explained that “the main papers were reluctant to provide bigger coverage due to the major reports they already gave to Ninagawa’s production of *Kafka on the Shore* that was being held...at the same time”²². Thus, in terms of media coverage, the simultaneous implementation of three different programs

– “Watch,” “Listen to,” and “Talk about” – regarding Murakami Haruki, made it difficult to attract the media’s attention to this specific concert²³. However, by creating such a tripartite event, we managed to provide an opportunity for the audience to experience the world of this Japanese author with all five senses, as had been our goal from the beginning.

I had written the following comment just after the performances in Singapore and Korea: “Murakami’s works served as a bridge, and everyone involved transcended the boundaries of musical genres, the hedge separating music and writing, the borders between Japan, Singapore and Seoul, and their respective languages, to create the concerts” (Oshima 2015). In response to the requests from the Japanese audience, the concert later returned to Tokyo, Japan, for two days in 2016. “Listen to Haruki Murakami” was performed in Japanese, the original language of Murakami’s works, for the first time on these occasions. In 2018, the version with the English translations of the passages taken from Murakami’s works was successively revived in Manila, the Philippines, in which the Hiroko Kokubu Trio and the 1966 Quartet collaborated with a Philippine actor and pianist. Having gained experience of organising this concert in four countries, I have continued rediscovering the power of music and texts referred to in Murakami’s works, which can cross borders of many kinds. Through collaboration and discussion with all individuals involved in this production, the concert was always in an evolving process. Further development or evolution of this concert can be expected in the future as new works by Murakami are being published, such as *Killing Commendatore* (2016). Thus, this production has the potential to go even further, incorporating new literary texts and their translations, as well as new artists and audiences in different countries.

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Appendix

Basic data concerning the concert “Listen to Haruki Murakami” in Singapore and Seoul

1. Singapore

- a. Dates: 28 & 29 October 2015
- b. Venue: Victoria Theatre
- c. Performers:
 - Yamanaka Chihiro Trio (Yamanaka Chihiro, Waki Yoshinori, Momoi Hironori)
 - 1966 Quartet (Matsuura Risa, Hanai Yuki, Hayashi Haruka, Egashira Miho)
 - Lim Yan (Pianist)
 - Oon Shu An (Actor) & Joshua Lim (Actor)
- d. Credits:
 - Organised by The Japan Foundation & Culture-Link Singapore

2. Seoul, Korea

- a. Date & Time: 17 & 18 November 2015
- b. Venue: Kumho Art Hall Yonsei
- c. Performers:
 - Kokubu Hiroko Trio (Kokubu Hiroko, Yahiro Yōichi, Iwase Tappi)
 - 1966 Quartet (Risa Matsuura, Hanai Yuki, Hayashi Haruka, Egashira Miho)
 - Cho Jae-hyuck (Pianist)
 - Son Sook (Actor) & Kim Sohee (Actor)
- d. Credits:
 - Organised by The Japan Foundation & Kumho Asiana Cultural Foundation
 - Cooperated by Yonsei University
 - Supported by Yamaha Music Korea

3. Production Team in Japan (all relevant positions except of that of the author’s)

- a. Supervisor: Konuma Jun’ichi
- b. Stage Manager: Ogawa Yutaka, Kishimoto Ayana
- c. Sound Designer / Operator: Ueno Toshiaki
- d. Lighting Designer / Operator: Tetsuya “Jimmy” Suzuki

Endnotes

- 1 “Haruki Murakami Day: Part One to Three” can be accessed at the NTS radio website (<https://www.nts.live/shows/murakami-day-9th-december-2018>).
- 2 There has been a case in which musicians play several tunes and refer to Murakami’s works in live concerts, TV programs, or university lectures. For example, in the Japanese TV program “Untitled Concert,” three classical music tunes were played by an orchestra while mentioning Murakami’s novels (TV Asahi 2017). For another example, in a symposium about Murakami Haruki and Kazuo Ishiguro held by the Nagoya University of Foreign Studies (2018) in Japan, five classical music tunes were introduced by a pianist. However, there had been no officially permitted concert which integrated Murakami’s novels and music in his works before this 2015 production.
- 3 For further information on the commemorative events of the Exchange Year, see The Japan Foundation website (<https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/about/area/index.html>).
- 4 Haruki Murakami, *Wind / Pinball: Two Novels*, trans. Ted Goossen (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015).
- 5 Because of their availability in October and November 2015, I asked Yamanaka Chihiro for the performance in Singapore and Kokubu Hiroko for that in Seoul.
- 6 Spelling and the use of punctuation in Passages 1 to 9 are not modified but maintained as they are in the English translations of Murakami’s novels.
- 7 Murakami Haruki, *Norwegian Wood*, trans. Jay Rubin (London: Vintage, 2003), 143.
- 8 Murakami Haruki, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (London: Vintage, 2003), 368.
- 9 Murakami Haruki, *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, trans. Philip Gabriel (London: Vintage, 2003), 156.
- 10 Murakami Haruki, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, trans. Philip Gabriel (London: Vintage, 2002), 183.
- 11 Murakami Haruki, *Kafka on the Shore*, trans. Philip Gabriel (New York: Vintage International, 2005), 395.
- 12 Murakami Haruki, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, trans. Jay Rubin (London: Vintage, 2003), 5.
- 13 Murakami Haruki, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, trans. Jay Rubin (London: Vintage, 2003), 553-554.
- 14 Murakami Haruki, *After Dark*, trans. Jay Rubin (London: Vintage, 2008), 21.
- 15 Murakami Haruki, *Kafka on the Shore*, trans. Philip Gabriel (New York: Vintage International, 2005), 401.
- 16 The existence of several Korean translations brought about one interesting incident during the rehearsal in Seoul: Although the Korean passages had been correctly picked from the proper publishers’ versions, an actor looked up the quotes from the novel in her possession, noticed some differences in the translations, and subsequently used the text of her copy. The staff at The Japan Foundation, Seoul, noticed this during the rehearsal, and we hastily corrected the passages.
- 17 In addition to CultureLink Singapore, I also communicated with the Embassy of Japan in Singapore because this concert was regarded as a prelude to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Japan in 2016.
- 18 From the concert brochure of “Listen to Haruki Murakami: Music beyond Words” (Japan Foundation, 2015) in the author’s possession.
- 19 A scrim is a type of fabric made from cotton. In a theatre, scrim fabric is often used as a front screen to create a special effect with lighting. Scrim fabric is transparent when lit from behind, but it appears solid when lit from the front. Thanks to this feature, the audience sometimes can see what is behind the scrim and sometimes can only see the screen itself.
- 20 Haruki Murakami, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (London: Vintage, 2003), 366-370.
- 21 Of course, in addition, numerous other details had to be arranged, such as the booking of flights, obtaining of visas, accommodation for the artists, and the like.
- 22 From the report by CultureLink Singapore (2015), which is in the author’s possession.
- 23 In comparison, the event “Listen to Haruki Murakami” which took place in Manila, the Philippines, in 2018, was the only performance organised by The Japan Foundation in Manila at that time, and it gained the attention of not only Japanese media (e.g., NHK TV and Jiji Press) but also several local magazines and newspapers such as *Business Mirror* (15 April 2018, <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2018/04/15/two-day-concert-pays-tribute-to-murakami-inspired-music/>) and *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (9 April 2018, <https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/291119/murakami-music-night/>).

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