

Shoko SUGITANI (Piano)

After graduating from the Tokyo National University of the Arts, having studied under Eiko Yada and Akiko Iguchi, Shoko Sugitani studied in Germany. While in Germany she studied under Detlef Kraus, Eliza Hansen, Bruno Leonardo Gelber, Alexis Weissenberg, Claudio Arrau and others, and won the 1971 Essen Folkwang Competition. She came in second place at the 1972 Maria Canals International Competition, and appeared at the Milan Music Festival, in addition to winning the silver medal at the 1973 Viotti International Competition. In 1976 Ms Sugitani graduated from the Graduate School of the State College of Music in Cologne. Her performance of Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15 earned her the recognition of major managers, as well as a first place prize in the ex-West German Concert Examination. In the same year, she made her European debut in Dusseldorf. In 1977 she released her first solo album on the German Schwann label. She has performed with the New Symphony Orchestra of London, Berliner Symphoniker, North German Radio Symphony Orchestra, Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra, Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, Wurttemberg Chamber Orchestra Heilbronn, Moscow Chamber Orchestra, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Hungarica, Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic String Sextet, Leipzig Gewandhaus Octet, Leipzig Gewandhaus String Quartet, Berlin String Quartet, Seifert Quartet, Amarcord Quartet Berlin, NHK Symphony Orchestra, and New Japan Philharmonic at venues including London's Wigmore Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Concertgebouw, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Berlin Schauspielhaus, Stuttgart Liederhalle, and Suntory Hall. She also held consecutive positions with Martha Argerich, Alexis Weissenberg and Vladimir Ashkenazy as a judge at the International Clara-Schumann Piano Competition. Her expanding global activities are not limited to that of a concert pianist, but also are at the forefront of piano education. 1984's release of Brahms' Complete Piano Solos, and 1995's Beethoven's Complete Concertos with the Berliner Symphoniker (Including the piano version of the Violin Concerto in D major) were together noted as being a brilliant global first for a female performer. She has had many domestic and international releases, including Clara & Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto in A minor, Op.54, and Beethoven's Three Great Piano Sonatas. In recent years the PolyGram label has released her Gems of the Piano Masterpieces: Catari Catari, which has gone on to become a long-seller. In 1998 to celebrate her 30th anniversary as a performer, she criss-crossed the country performing memorial concerts, as well as recording a CD of Mozart's piano concertos with the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice. She has made repeated performances of Beethoven's piano sonatas as well as completed recordings of those, earning her even to this day the attention of many analysts for her vitalistic performances.

In December 2001 she performed the Appassionata sonata at the Viennese Music Association Goldener Saal, and in November 2002, at the Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall she performed Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 73 Emperor Concerto with the Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra directed by Kazimierz Kord to great acclaim. Also, at the Schumann Festival she performed the Berlioz written/ Liszt edited Symphonie Fantastique, earning praise from world-class musicologists and critics including Prof. Dr. Joachim Kaiser and Martha Argerich. She was regularly invited to perform in the Leipzig Gewandhaus Chamber Music Regular Concert, and performed evening chamber music with top members of the Vienna Philharmonic and Berlin Philharmonic in numerous locales. In 2008 she celebrated her 40th anniversary of professional performance. On New Year's Eve 2008, she performed the Funeral March and Sonata Quasi una Fantasia at the Beethoven: Piano Sonata Complete Concert at the Opera City Hall with 16 of Japan's finest pianists. In March 2009 she released Gems of the Piano Masterpieces Vol. 2 "Nessun Dorma", and held commemorative recitals in various locations to celebrate the release. In addition to being a top-level pianist in Japan, she is also highly acclaimed internationally.