

Wild East

Lee Sang-il's remake of Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* reviewed

Struggle for Survival

Sir Hugh Cortazzi reviews Rana Mitter's book on Japan's conflict with China

In this issue of *The Japan Society Review* we cross genres, reviewing a film, two books, a performance and conducting an interview with a violinist. Our first review of Issue 54 is of Lee Sang-il's remake of Clint Eastwood's critically acclaimed film *Unforgiven*. Sang-il's version sets the narrative in the era of the Edo Shogunate, as Chris Corker assesses the balance *Unforgiven* strikes between faithfulness to the source material, and artistic decisions to leave out parts of Eastwood's original. Sir Hugh Cortazzi then reviews Rana Mitter's *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: the Struggle for Survival*, a meticulously researched history of a particularly cruel and brutal chapter in Sino-Japanese relations. Mitter considers the period from a Chinese perspective in a brutally honest and insightful manner; there are no heroes in the story, only different types of villains. Moving on from Mitter's book we consider a collection

of detective stories penned by Edogawa Rampo. Chris Corker examines how Edogawa's style and interests, particularly the influence of English detective literary traditions as well as a fascination with the macabre and grotesque, affect his latest work. The final offering in this issue takes the form of an interview and review by Mike Sullivan. Linking the two together is violinist Komachi Midori, and Sullivan asks firstly about her debut album as well as her life and development as a classical musician. He then moves on to review her collaboration with other performers as part of the group VISUALISE! at Swiss Church London.

William Cottrell

Contents

- 1) *Unforgiven*
- 2) *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: the Struggle for Survival*
- 3) The Early Cases of Akechi Kogoro
- 4) Interview with Komachi Midori
- 5) VISUALISE! At Swiss Church London

Guest Editor

William Cottrell

Managing Editor

Isabel Barne

Reviewers

Chris Corker & Mike Sullivan

Special Reviewer

Sir Hugh Cortazzi

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Unforgiven

Directed by Lee Sang-il

Based on Clint Eastwood's 1992 film of the same name

135 minutes, 2014

Review by Chris Corker

The original version of *Unforgiven* was a major critical success, hailed as

one of Clint Eastwood's best films and considered one of the finest westerns ever made. It didn't glorify violence or sugar coat any of the hard truths faced by the killers or their victims, but had a philosophical, existential form that was well-crafted alongside the minimalist cinematography and dialogue. The most surprising thing about this remake directed by Korean, Lee Sang-il, and starring Watanabe Ken, is how closely it sticks to the source material, and how successfully it does so considering the wildly different settings. It may replace some of the meditative feel with a visceral aggression, which doesn't – despite its best attempts – make the film any more emotionally impactful, but it still remains incredibly close to the original.

When the Shogunate is defeated and his reason to fight has been torn away from him, Kamata Jubei (Watanabe) is forced to flee from the pursuing opposing forces. Jubei, exhausted and clearly desperate, defeats the soldiers in the snow-laden woods, before disappearing.



Many years later, Jubei is now living with his two children on a small and remote farm, completely isolated from the outside world. This isolation, however, cannot hide him from his past. The movie does a great job of recreating the small farm setting from the original, and the wide panoramic shots in the sunset are nostalgic for those familiar with Eastwood's film. This familiarity can be felt throughout the movie, with scenarios being recreated and, more importantly, certain dialogue (or at least the translation of dialogue) being

identical to the original. Strangely, however, some of the more profound and memorable script ('we all got it coming, kid,' being a notable exception) is absent. Watanabe, as Jubei – the name of a traditionally heroic figure in Japanese legend – does a good job with his delivery, and portrays a grief-stricken man very well, despite lacking the stoic presence and subtlety of acting that Eastwood oozes. This lack of subtlety – something that critics would say Japanese filmmaking lacks in general – does feel ill-placed in certain scenes, but the film as a whole remains understated.



It is while Watanabe is on the ranch, that his friend Kingo (Emoto Akira) visits him and asks him for his help with a bounty placed on two men by a group of prostitutes. The men are said to have cut the face of one of the women, leaving her horribly scarred. Kingo refers to Watanabe as 'Jubei the Killer', giving us an indication of his infamy. After consideration, Jubei sets off to the town with Kingo. Here the story diverges from the original, in which the younger Schofield Kid tries to recruit Eastwood, before Eastwood, as Munny, approaches his friend. This, along with the more comic version of the kid – a representation of the naivety and innocence that is drawn to violence, followed by its disillusionment – creates a different dynamic among the trio. And while the kid, played by Yagira Yuya, is probably the weakest character, his origin and ethnicity as an Ainu adds a new element to the story, representing the biggest divergence from the source material. Where the undesirable element of the original are mainly those who go from town to town and bounty hunters, the undesirables here are the Ainu race.

The Ainu, indigenous to Japan, underwent a similar, though less severe fate, as the Native Americans. They were mainly shunned and ostracised, being considered little more than barbarians. In *Unforgiven*, as towns grow and the expansion of commerce spreads throughout the forest, there is little room left for the Ainu with their simple practices and pagan religion. As the kid and Jubei's deceased wife are both of Ainu ancestry, this racial tension between them and the authorities adds a depth to this version that the original lacks.

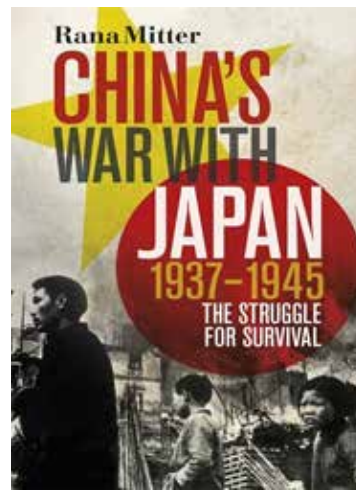
Also a welcome addition to the film is the focus on the prostitutes' plight, as they begin to realise the

tragedy they have set into motion. This is also shown in the original, although I feel that it is more fleshed out here, giving an insight into a group that were considered unimportant beyond their practical uses, considered as only slightly more deserving of compassion than animals.

In an age where remakes are perhaps more common than original ideas, it is still difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is that so often makes them inferior. Of course, for anyone familiar with the original, the remake could never have the same initial impact. There is also something intrinsically pointless about another version of a movie that is already critically acclaimed and loved. The remaking of foreign films – more common in reverse, with Japanese films being made into American – is a different challenge altogether. A film is often made out of a social matter that is personal to that particular country, to a set of beliefs which are indigenous there. It can feel strange when we take those social issues and thrust them into a new environment, where they don't have the same gravitas. *Unforgiven*, however, has done very well with these challenges, creating a new tension and doing a great job of transferring the remainder into a foreign context. Perhaps this is a testament to the universal appeal of the original. This transference, however, is where most of the film's strengths and weaknesses lie. The kid, for example, has undergone a necessary transformation – an aspiring samurai would make a lot less sense in an age where they are becoming obsolete, than an aspiring cowboy assassin – and his Ainu roots create an interesting tension. In this process, however, he has also become more comical, less believable and likeable, making his later regret less meaningful.



Overall, this remake does a great job of transforming a familiar idea into a new context. With its amazing scenery and impressive cinematography, it is a treat for the eyes, but it lacks some of the depth and philosophy that Eastwood's film seemed to intertwine so effortlessly. Fans of the original may find certain scenes and dialogue nostalgic, but those same fans may wonder about those that are missing. §



China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: the Struggle for Survival

by Rana Mitter

Penguin, 2014

ISBN 978-0-141-03145-3

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

This is a meticulously researched history of a cruel and tragic war

which, in the histories of the Second World War, has often been overshadowed by the battles in Europe and the Pacific. As Rana Mitter points out, these eight years of fighting caused some 14 million deaths, vast flows of refugees, misery, famine and the destruction of much of China's embryonic infrastructure. The war enabled the Chinese Communist Party to seize power and destroy the Chinese Nationalists.

Rana Mitter, who is the Director of Oxford University's China Centre and a fellow of St Cross College, observes that the story of China's war with Japan is 'crucial to understanding the rise of China as a global power.' In his view it must 'restore China to its place as one of the four principal wartime allies.'

As the title implies Mitter looks at the conflict from a Chinese perspective and his main focus is understandably on China and the impact of events elsewhere on China. He has put together a compelling narrative and has drawn on a wealth of original documents as well as referring extensively to secondary sources.

He clearly sets out the background to the conflict and notes that Japanese modernization after the Meiji restoration became a model for China. Indeed, many Chinese nationalist leaders including Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Nationalist movement, studied in Japan.

He deals briefly with the 'Manchurian Incident' and other developments leading to clashes between Japan and China prior to the so-called Marco Polo bridge incident in 1937. This marks the beginning of the war although the Japanese did not formally declare war until much later. The Nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek had adopted a policy of 'avoiding public confrontation with Japan' while preparing for the inevitable conflict. The Japanese took advantage of what they saw as Chinese weakness and inflicted humiliations on the Chinese. In Mitter's view 'if the

Japanese had stayed content with their already powerful control over North China in 1933, and not sought to advance further into the mainland, the war which would eventually consume much of the continent of Asia might have been averted' (p. 59).

The Chinese were never in a position until the very end to do more than delay the Japanese advances. However, the Japanese for their part, although ultimately they controlled vast swathes of China, never had the resources to bring China effectively under Japanese rule. The Japanese military were arrogant and greedy but unrealistic about how far they could achieve their objectives.

There are lots of villains but no heroes in this book. All the main leaders emerge as tainted and flawed. Roosevelt was a consummate politician but failed to understand the extent of China's problems and how best to deal with Chiang Kai-shek. For Churchill, China's war was a sideshow and Chiang Kai-shek felt that Churchill treated him with disdain. But the most insensitive and arrogant of the westerners with whom the Chinese had to deal was General Stilwell, known as 'Vinegar Joe' who clashed constantly with Chiang for whom he was supposed to act as chief of staff and whom he called 'peanut.' It is hard to believe that Stilwell, who was selected by General Marshall, was allowed to remain for so long in Chongqing poisoning US-China relations.

While Mitter has some sympathy for Chiang in his perils and difficulties, he exposes clearly the mistakes made by Chiang and his coterie and the cruelties inflicted on the Chinese people as a result of Nationalist mistakes and ruthlessness. Not least of these was the decision, in a vain attempt to defend Wuhan, to destroy the dykes on the Yellow River in 1938.

A myth, still believed by some but exposed by Mitter, is that Mao Zedong and his communist army in Yan'an contributed much more than the Nationalists to the fight against the Japanese. While the communists were quite effective in guerrilla warfare, Mao preferred to keep his forces in reserve for the post-war battle for supremacy in China.

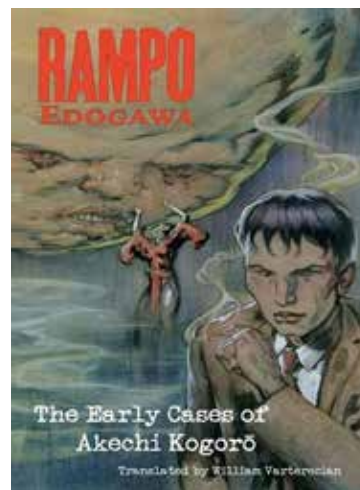
Wang Jingwei, who had been Chiang's rival for leadership of the Nationalists and who defected to the Japanese, set up a Vichy style regime in Nanjing. Mitter points out that the Japanese, despite their propaganda about Asia for the Asians, did little to boost Wang's position.

As Mitter records in telling detail, none of the three rival regimes could claim any kind of democratic legitimacy. All three had their own particularly nasty secret police apparatus.

Mitter's narrative inevitably contains much about Japanese atrocities in China. The chapter on the Nanjing massacre is particularly searing as it draws extensively on western witnesses. He notes that the Chinese were not faultless. But 'their missteps were the result of a war they had never sought. In contrast, the Japanese behaviour was inexcusable' (p. 137). There may be questions over the numbers killed by the rampaging Japanese soldiers, but the attempt by Japanese revisionists to deny the facts simply add fuel to the fires of Chinese resentment. But there were many other incidents to arouse Chinese hatred, including the indiscriminate and relentless Japanese air attacks on Chongqing, which led to appalling loss of life and predated the German and later Allied use of saturation bombing.

This book only tells the story from the Chinese angle. I would like to see a study of the conflict, which analyses the views of developments in China recorded in the files of the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office. Mitter is generally contemptuous of comments by British diplomats in China, but not all looked at China with an imperial gaze. There were some realistic China experts. While Britain recognized the Chinese Communist Government soon after it had won the civil war, it took the Americans until 1972, when President Nixon visited China, to come to terms with the Chinese Communist victory. I would also be interested in seeing the extent to which Japanese officials recognized the quagmire in China into which they were being drawn by the military. It is never easy to tell politicians what they don't want to hear and such memos may well have been suppressed or destroyed.

This book should be on the reading list of all students of modern Japanese history and of international relations in the Far East. §



The Early Cases of Akechi Kogorō by Edogawa Rampo

Kurodahan Press, 2014

ISBN-10: 4902075628

Review by Chris Corker

Edogawa Rampo (1894-1965) is one of the founding fathers of Japanese detective novels. A prolific writer, he wrote over one hundred and fifty short stories and novels in his long career. Like many famous Japanese novelists, he

attended Waseda University but studied economics rather than English literature. Influenced by early translations of Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe, he became fond of the gritty, dark nature of western murder mysteries. Edogawa unashamedly references these works, especially Poe – whose name is anagrammed to create Edogawa's own pen name – in his own stories. This is apt given both authors exhibit a penchant for the grotesque and macabre that can at times discomfort the reader.

The detective, Akechi Kogorō is very much moulded in the image of Sherlock Holmes, on the one hand quick and ingenious, on the other eccentric and haughty. When taken to an extreme, Akechi's lack of humility and gloating over even the small victories can wear thin. Perhaps this is because these four stories, each early works that the author condemned as "failures", do not focus overly on Akechi, instead preferring to rely, as Conan Doyle did, on a less than brilliant sidekick. Without the requisite column inches, Akechi is left to revel in his own ingenuity only in brief snatches or bloated denouements. The sidekicks are relatable enough in their way and serve their purpose as narrators that are not privy to all of Akechi's dealings, creating an air of mystery. A certain amount of suspension of belief is necessary, however, as they repeatedly choose not to report facts to the police and attempt their own hapless and ineffectual investigations, eventually passing the baton to Akechi, who fits the pieces together and takes the credit.

There are four cases in all. The first, 'Murder on D Hill', begins by listing the facts of the case in the style of a police report. The narrator here is a young man out of university but without a job, an acquaintance of Akechi Kogorō. As rumours circulate of women appearing at the bathhouse covered in bruises, the wife of a bookshop owner is found strangled to death. When Akechi himself comes under suspicion, he must clear his name and point to the real murderer. Both here and in 'The Dwarf', we find that Akechi takes little pleasure in discovering the murderer and actually sympathises with the culprit.

In 'The Black Hand Gang', a string of abductions and robberies have the city on edge. Amidst the confusion, the narrator's cousin is taken and his uncle beaten up. When the cousin is not returned even after the ransom has been paid, Akechi is called in as an advisor. An inspection of the ransom handover point reveals only the uncle's and the servant's footprints. This case is the weakest of the collection and its resolution involves a cryptogram based entirely on the Japanese writing system, which gets somewhat lost in translation and will be

lost on anyone not familiar with Japanese.

'The Ghost', ostensibly the story of a haunting, stands apart from the other cases. When his fierce rival dies, the successful and wealthy businessman Hirata believes that he can rest easy. His peace, however, is disturbed when he receives a letter from the dead man, promising that he will kill him from the afterlife. Having wronged his rival in the past, the subsequent torment has every indication of being karmic for Hirata, who sees his dead rival's face wherever he goes. This creepy tale is written predominantly from the perspective of the isolated and jittery Hirata. 'The Ghost' is almost entirely bereft of Akechi until the final pages when the underwhelming conclusion is reached with a few simple enquiries.

'The Dwarf' is the longest and strongest detective story of the four. It does a good job of leading the reader down various avenues of thought, only to be dropped back at the edge of the maze. Amongst the backdrop of a night of vagrancy, arrests and dirt, the narrator sees a dwarf drop a human hand out of his pocket. Following him, he sees the dwarf enter a temple. Returning the next day, however, he finds that no-one in the temple or in the local area has ever seen him. Soon after, as a young girl is reported missing, a human arm is found affixed to a mannequin in a department store. When the fingerprints match with those of the missing girl, everyone assumes the worst. Akechi, however, is not so sure. 'The Dwarf' employs a third-person narrative that switches scenes often, allowing the reader to know things that the protagonists do not, as well as giving them an insight into the criminal's world. Despite the reader again needing to employ suspension of disbelief as every character except Akechi flaps about and makes questionable decisions, the conclusion to 'The Dwarf' is far more satisfying than in the other stories.

In 'Murder on D Hill', it was understandable that Akechi may have felt sympathy with the murderer whereas in 'The Dwarf', it is almost incomprehensible. It is also going against his earlier assertions. Throughout the story it is the dwarf who is the contemptible one, his unseemly appearance acting only to highlight his even uglier character. Perhaps a product of its times, political correctness is rarely observed, referring to the dwarf as both 'a deformed child' and his face as 'a wasp spider that had been crushed by a foot.'

Ugliness is a staple of Edogawa, however – he is fascinated by it, often juxtaposing it with beauty, blending the grotesque and the erotic.

'[...] he also had a desire, like an ache, to see the lady's flustered condition alongside to that hideous dwarf.'

It's difficult to recommend *The Early Cases of Akechi Kogorō* as an entry point to the works of Edogawa Rampo. It is explained in an introduction that focuses heavily on the merits of later work, not available here, that the character of Akechi here bears little resemblance to the one that readers have come to love in literature and film. While 'The Dwarf' does do a good job of building tension and deceiving the reader until the last, the other three stories feel rushed, the revelation of clues feeling more like a statement of facts rather than a source of surprise. A few spelling and grammar mistakes also break the flow of the narrative, along with some confusing dialogue where the interlocutor is not clear.

Anyone already familiar with the Akechi series may enjoy seeing the origins of the character, but newcomers should look to better-known works. Lovers of bizarre mysteries and the grotesque may find something to love here and 'The Dwarf', in particular, is a sound and sometimes intriguing story. Despite this, it is hard to argue with the author's condemnation of his own stories. §

An Interview with Violinist Komachi Midori

Interview by Mike Sullivan

Komachi Midori is an up and coming violinist whose debut album was released in April, and who regularly



holds concerts around the world. She completed her Master of Music degree at the Royal Academy of Music in 2012, and has won many prizes such as the Sir Arthur Bliss Prize and the MBF Emerging Excellence Award. She has developed a cultural exchange project in the UK and Japan which has involved working with composers from both countries. In the last couple of years, she has not only led a series of workshops with composers Nicola LeFanu and Takechi Yuka, but also worked with Hosokawa Toshio. She took time out of her busy schedule to answer our questions for the latest Japan Society interview.

Please tell us about your background.

I am a concert violinist based in London. I graduated

from the Royal Academy of Music in 2012, and since then have been freelancing with various concert projects in Europe and Japan. Before coming to the UK in 2002, I previously lived in Switzerland and Hong Kong, as well as in Japan for just a few years, where I was born. I enjoy having a combination of different kinds of performance platforms, including recitals, chamber music concerts and educational workshops. In recent years, I have developed several concert projects that express the significance of collaborations between artists, and which also explore the historical context that gives a fascinating insight into our understanding of musical work. I have also founded a cultural exchange project between UK and Japan, as I am interested in developing closer links between composers, performers and the audience in both countries, through cultural exchanges in classical music.

This month your first album, with Simon Callaghan, is being released. How did this collaboration come about?

Back in 2012, I was starting to develop my concert project, *Delius and Gauguin*, which explores the special exchanges between composers and artists centred around the English composer Frederick Delius, and painter Paul Gauguin. I was introduced to Simon by the Delius Society, as he had previously recorded two discs of Delius's works. We performed a series of concerts in the UK as part of the *Delius and Gauguin* project. It was such an exciting process for me to collaborate with Simon – his fantastic sound and sensitive playing really stimulated a 'conversational' partnership throughout our performances.

What is the meaning of the album title *Colours of the Heart*?

The album is based on the colourful inspiration shared by Delius and Gauguin, and their friends: Ravel, Grieg and Debussy. Delius admired Gauguin's paintings, and was the first owner of Gauguin's *Nevermore*. Gauguin also intended to express emotions, like music, through his colours. There is a quote by Gauguin, which I believe is a concept valued by all of the composers in this album: 'Colour is the language of the listening eye.' Ironically, Delius was blind and paralyzed when he wrote the 3rd Violin Sonata – so in fact he could no longer see the colours that he loved. Despite this tragic fate, his music became liberated in an infinite world of colours. This was my inspiration for the title – that colours, both in music and art, are an expression from the heart.

On the release date of this album you also had a launch recital, how did you feel about doing a concert to launch your first album?

The launch recital was held to introduce the CD and works by Delius to a wider audience. I have been supported by the Arts Council England and also the Delius Trust to give a series of concerts in the UK this spring, along with the release of the CD. My wish is to invite a wider audience to encounter the fascinating music and life of Delius. Throughout the project I intend to communicate in close distance with my audience, through talks, concerts and liner notes on the CD. I hope that the audience can also experience the sensation I gained through seeing *Nevermore* and hearing Delius's music.

You perform a lot every year in both Japan and the UK, as well as other countries, are there any particular concerts which stick out for you?

This is very hard to pick, as there are many special moments and many funny backstage episodes to tell! But one which remains close to my heart is the performance of Toshio Hosokawa's *Elegy for Solo Violin* at Tokyo Opera City in December 2013. As I had the opportunity to rehearse this piece with the composer and gain an insightful guidance through his music on several occasions, this was a special opportunity for me to bring immediacy in Hosokawa's sound world. It is a beautiful piece, resembling a song of a human voice in search for the dead spirit. This was programmed in an 'English inspired' recital of works by Elgar, Delius, Holst, Ernst and Britten. Having lived outside of Japan for most of my life, the piece also brought me to the realisation of my Japanese identity as a violinist.

Are there any differences between a British audience and a Japanese audience?

I don't find many differences when performing, as audiences in both countries are appreciative and 'well mannered'! However, I do have a strong wish that there will be more interest in English music in Japan, and Japanese contemporary music in the UK. I hope I could continue to introduce these works in both countries in the future.

How did it feel to perform with Tarō Hakase at the special charity concert at Cadogan Hall in 2012 to raise money for the 2011 Tohoku earthquake victims?

The whole experience was very touching. Back then I was still a student at Royal Academy of Music, and it was exciting to perform together with Tarō and fellow Japanese musicians from RAM. Throughout the performance and the live broadcast on 'Jounetsu Tairiku', there was a sense of strong hope that the collective energy from every musician, and the audience, could reach the people in Tohoku.

You also participated in the Music of Britain and Japan – A Cultural Exchange in 2011, can you tell us about the background behind this project and your involvement?

This was a research-based concert project I founded in 2011, after being inspired by the extraordinary cultural exchanges between Britain and Japan since the 'Japanese Village' was built in Knightsbridge in 1885. I was intrigued to discover the influence of these exchanges in classical music, in both countries. The influence of 'Japonism' has been previously explored in French music, but not so much in British music. It was interesting to find British roots in the development of classical music in Japan in the early 20th Century – in Kōsaku Yamada's compositions, for example. I introduced these

historical and cultural exchanges through a recital programme in London. As a result, I received the Friends of RAM Development Award for my research and initiative.

On the 2nd of May you will be performing at St. James Piccadilly in London, do you have other London concerts planned?

The concert on 2nd May is the last concert in the concert series in London this season. I will be performing outside London in June and July, including a very exciting programme at the National Trust's Leith Hill Place in Surrey. In October I will have a recital in London at the Royal Over-Seas League with the renowned pianist Ian Brown. I am very much looking forward to sharing the stage with him! §



VISUALISE! At Swiss Church London

With Komachi Midori, Belle Chen, Olivia Geiser and Lydia CS

2014

Review by Mike Sullivan

VISUALISE! is a recent performance group that has come together in order to provide a new perspective on how classical music is experienced by the current generation. They work on bringing classical musicians together with visual and performance artists, thus creating a new medium in which the audience can enjoy both music and live art. On the 14th of August they had an event at Swiss Church London, there has been a Swiss church for over 250 years which still today freely welcomes anyone who wants to enter their doors. As part of their mission aims they invite artists to exhibit, and have performances by musicians with links to Switzerland.

You may wonder why this event is being covered by the Japan Society Review, but in fact a musician who we interviewed earlier this year also performed at this event due to her studies in Zurich. Komachi Midori is a very gifted young lady whose debut album, *Colours of the Heart* with Simon Callaghan, came out in April. At that time she had the following to say:

'I enjoy having a combination of different kinds of performance platforms, including recitals, chamber music concerts and educational workshops. In recent years, I have developed several concert projects that express the significance of collaborations between artists, and which also explore the historical context that gives a fascinating insight into our understanding of musical work.'

VISUALISE! at Swiss Church really showed her dedication to being involved in a different kind of performance, and alongside fellow musicians Belle Chen on the piano, and Olivia Geiser, also on the piano, it was a really unique concert. Belle Chen is also the organiser behind VISUALISE! and, along with Olivia Geiser, was a co-curator for this event entitled 'Swiss Summer Nights in London.' Belle Chen has performed around the world and studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London, she has won numerous prizes and is connected to many projects. Olivia Geiser studied at the Zurich University of Arts also studied at the Royal Academy of Music.

The audience members were greeted into the performance area by the sight of mountain-like objects which served as the backdrop behind the



artistic aspect of this event. The artist Lydia CS created an animated visual video which played out on the back of the church behind the 'Swiss mountains' which the objects on the floor represented. The art worked to recreate the passing of time as a sunny afternoon turned to night. A notable touch was as the day outside turned to night and our performers reached their 'night-time' section, the visual artists placed candles across the floors and lit up the musicians with a light.

In terms of music we were treated to Charles Samuel Bovy-Lysberg's *Fantaisie sur des airs Suisses* performed by Olivia Geiser, Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending for Violin and Piano* performed by Midori Komachi and Belle Chen and Frank Bridge's *Poems for Piano* performed by Olivia. After a break we listened to Britten's *Suite for Violin and Piano, Op. 6* by Midori and Belle, and Volkmar Andreae's *Piano Pieces, Op. 20* by Olivia. A final, very interesting piece of music was played by both pianists together, which for me, certainly, was a first! Olivia and Belle performed Hans Huber's *Ländler vom Luzernersee for four hands, Op. 15*.

It was a very interesting event. For most people when you picture a classical music concert it would consist of just musicians playing their instruments, which there is nothing wrong with, but the complimentary visual performance certainly gave it a new angle. Of course, for a Japan Society writer the highlight was to listen to a performance which included rising starlet Komachi Midori, and in particular *The Lark Ascending for Violin and Piano* was a really outstanding piece of music to listen to.

We can look forward to future events by VISUALISE! as well as Komachi Midori's next concert. §