

Yoko Hirota, Pianist



Having been praised by the press as “*precise and keenly projective*” and demonstrating “*the highest level of proficiency*,” Japanese-Canadian pianist **Yoko Hirota** is considered one of the leading interpreters of contemporary piano repertory of her generation.

Born in Japan, Ms. Hirota began piano lessons at age four. She entered the State University of New York at Buffalo where she studied with **Livingston Gearhart** and received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees in piano performance. Yoko pursued her commitment to contemporary piano literature with the prominent Canadian pianist and pedagogue, **Louis-Philippe Pelletier**, at McGill University where she received her doctoral degree in piano performance in 1999.

In addition to studies in North America, grants from the Canada Council for the Arts allowed Ms. Hirota to study in Europe with renowned interpreters of contemporary piano music such as **Gabor Csalog** at the Bartók Music Conservatory and **Gabor Eckhardt** at Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Hungary, **Herbert Henck** in Germany, and **Florent Boffard**, former pianist with L'Ensemble InterContemporain in France.

Ms. Hirota is a strong advocate of contemporary music, in particular music by Canadian composers. She has performed in recital across North America and has been the guest soloist with orchestras including the **Sudbury Symphony** for the world premiere of “*Oiseau de Givre*” a concerto written for her Canadian composer, **Robert Lemay**. She is also highly regarded for her contemporary chamber ensemble skills and has performed in numerous concert series including **Silver Birch Concerts** (Ontario) where she is a regular guest, the **Domaine Forget International Music Festival** (Quebec), the **Many-One Concert Series** (New York City), and the **Ottawa International Chamber Music Festival** (Ottawa). Ms. Hirota was invited by the notable ensemble, the **Nouvel Ensemble Moderne** (NEM), to Canadian premiere the challenging work, *Joy* (for 23 musicians and tape), by the renowned Finnish composer, **Magnus Lindberg**. The **Montreal Gazette** gave special recognition of her performance.

Yoko Hirota’s excellence in contemporary music interpretation is reflected in the many broadcasts of her performances on **Société Radio-Canada**, and the many awards she has received including winner of the **SUNY/Buffalo’s Baird Concerto Competition**, and semi-finalist at the **Nutley Symphony Orchestra’s Concerto Competition**. At the 1996 **Clara Liechtenstein Piano Competition** (Montreal), the jury requested the creation of a Special Mention Prize in order to distinguish her excellence in the interpretation of twentieth century repertoire.

Ms. Hirota’s professional activities also include recordings. Her first CD, “*The Piano Music of Arnold Schoenberg with 17 Fragments*,” was released to critical acclaim and was listed as one of Essential Tracks by **The Globe and Mail**. Her latest CD “*Small is Beautiful: Miniature Piano Pieces*”, a project made possible through prestigious grants

from the **Canada Council for the Arts** and **Ontario Arts Council** featuring sixteen concise 20th and 21st century piano works, was released in 2009.

Ms. Hirota is a passionate educator. She is Professor of Piano and Chair of the Music Department at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, and co-founder and co-artistic director of **5-Penny New Music Concerts**.

*For more information please visit: www.yokohirota.com and www.5pennynewmusic.ca.
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