

Tuesday November 25, Hobart Town Hall
Wednesday November 26, Princess Theatre Launceston
Thursday November 27, Burnie Arts Centre

PATTERNS OF PLANTS

植物文様

Mamoru Fujieda
藤枝守 (b.1955)

The Round of Olive

shō 笙, violin, viola da gamba, bass koto 十七絃箏

Today Is a Very Good Day to Die

voice, shō, recorder, violin, gamba, koto, bass koto

Guillaume de Machaut
(1300-1377)

Motet No.11: 'Fins cuers dous/Fins cuers dous Dame, je sui cils

recorder, violin, gamba

Mamoru Fujieda

The Primordial Mother (Hobart)

recorder, violin, gamba, koto, bass koto

Yoshizawa Kengyō II
(1808-1872)

Chidori no Kyoku (Song of Plovers) (Hobart)

koto & voice

Thomas Preston (d.1563)

Uppon La Mi Re (Launceston)

recorder, gamba, koto

Traditional Gagaku

Oshiki-cho no Choshi (Burnie)

sho with koto & bass koto

Mamoru Fujieda

Ame-tsuchi

voice, shō, recorder, violin, gamba, koto, bass koto

Karano

voice, shō, violin, gamba, koto, bass koto

Astra Ensemble

Miyama McQueen-Tokita, **koto & voice**

Laura Vaughan, **viola da gamba**

Julia Fredersdorff, **baroque violin**

Brandon Lee, **koto**

Ryan Williams, **recorders**

Henry Liang, **sho**

Alexander Ritter, **countertenor**

Directed by Andrew Byrne

Arrangements of Mamoru Fujieda's Patterns of Plants for the Astra Ensemble was commissioned by Astra and first performed at The Eleventh Hour Theatre (Fitzroy, Victoria) in 2023.

Concerts are supported by Creative Australia.

In our daily life, a variety of plants appear to remain silent. Are they trying to speak to us? I wondered if it was possible to hear what they were trying to say.

- Mamoru Fujieda

Delving into the ethereal realm where nature's whispers intertwine with musical expression, today's concert offers the performances of Mamoru Fujieda's recent arrangements from his *Patterns of Plants*. Initiated in 1996, *Patterns of Plants* reveals Fujieda's longstanding interest in uncovering the concealed melodies within the world of flora. It explores botanical harmonies, ingeniously captured through the "Plantron", a device created by botanist and artist Yūji Dōgane 銅金裕司.

The Plantron measures electrical fluctuations on the surface of plant leaves, converting this data into sound using Max, a visual programming language for music. Fujieda sifts through these sounds in search of pleasing musical patterns, which form the foundation for his short compositions. The pieces reflect each plant's subtle beauty and uniqueness, all while maintaining a calming, contemplative mood.

Fujieda's visionary journey has led him to reimagine his music across an array of ensembles, leading to today's eclectic gathering of traditional Japanese instruments (kotos and sho) and Western early music counterparts (baroque violin, viola da gamba, recorders, and countertenor). For this project, we bring together virtuosos from across Australia and beyond, including Miyama Tokita-McQueen (koto) from Toyko; Henry Liang (shō) from Sydney; Laura Vaughan (viola da gamba), Brandon Lee (koto), Ryan William (recorders), and Alexander Ritter (countertenor) from Melbourne; with Van Diemen's Band's own Julia Fredersdorff on baroque violin.

Beyond Fujieda's ensemble works, each instrument takes centre stage over the three lunchbox concerts with works that span a range of styles. The recorder, baroque violin and viola da gamba intertwine in Machaut's motet *Fins cuers dous/Fins cuers dous Dame, je sui cils*. In the first concert in Hobart, *Chidori no Kyoku* ('Song of Plovers') by 19th-century Japanese composer Yoshizawa Kengyō emphasises the dramatic fervour of the koto. The recorder plays *Uppon La Mi Re*, a 16th-century English organ piece with a jagged even modern-sounding melody in Launceston. While the tranquil introspection of the ancient Gagaku tradition is highlighted by the shō in *Oshiki-cho no Choshi* in Burnie's concert. All reverberate with Fujieda's works in a tapestry of connections and echoes.

- Andrew Byrne

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Fujieda Mamoru 藤枝守, About *Patterns of Plants* 植物文様

The Round of Olive オリーブのラウンド (2008-2015)

shō 笙 / violin / gamba / bass koto 十七絃箏

The original piece, *Patterns of Plants* Collection 19: Pattern A, was premiered by American pianist Sarah Cahill. I composed it using data collected from the olive tree in my garden. I realized that the melody of this piano piece overlaps in a time difference of 4 bars, so I arranged the piece in a round format.

Today Is a Very Good Day to Die (今日は死ぬのにもってこいの日) (1999-2017)

voice / shō / recorder / violin / gamba / koto-I / koto-II (bass koto)

The text is a poem by American poet Nancy Wood. The Native American view of life and death is expressed in simple words.

Today is a very good day to die.
Every living thing is in harmony with me.
Every voice sings a chorus within me.
All beauty has come to rest in my eyes.
All bad thoughts have departed from me.

Today is a very good day to die.
My land is peaceful around me.
My fields have been turned for the last time.
My house is filled with laughter.
My children have come home.

(Text: Nancy Wood)

The Primordial Mother はじまりの妣 (2011-2020)

recorder / violin / gamba / koto-I / koto-II (bass koto)

This piece is another instrumental version of a song from my mono-opera *Yakumo no Himawari* ("Yakumo's Sunflower") composed in 2020. The mono-opera is based on the story "Sunflower" by Koizumi Yakumo or Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), who became a Japanese citizen in 1896.

Chidori no Kyoku (Song of Plovers) by Yoshizawa Kengyō

Shionoyama
sashide no iso ni
sumu chidori

At Shionoyama
the stony shore that juts into the sea
where the plovers abide

Awajishima
kayou chidori no
naku koe ni
ikuyo nezamenu
Suma no sekimori

At Awaji Island
the plovers fly to and fro
and their cries
have so many times awakened
the guards at Suma Pass.

Ame Tsuchi 天地 (2023)

voice / shō / recorder / violin / gamba / koto-I / koto-II (bass koto)

This song was composed as part of the modern kagura play *Tamatare*, which was premiered this year (2023). *Tamatare* are two balls that represent the ebb and flow of the tide, and this modern kagura is based on the legend of Empress Jingū (putatively 169-269 CE). Kagura is Shinto ritual music and dance.

Ame tsuchi to / tomo ni wohemu to / omoitsutsu
tsukahe matsurishi / kokoro tagahinu

I have waited on my lord,
Wishing the days to endure
With heaven and earth—
That hope is now broken

(Text: Manyōshū anthology, 759 CE, poem 176.

Translation: The Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, Columbia University Press)

Karano 枯野 (2023)

from *Patterns of Plants* Songbook

voice / shō / violin / gamba / koto-I / koto-II (bass koto)

This song is also part of the modern kagura *Tamatare*. 'Karano' is the name of a ship. The final onomatopoeic word 'saya saya' expresses how the koto, created from a ship, sounds like swaying seaweed.

Karano wo shio ni yaki
shiga amari koto ni tsukuri
kakihikuya yuranoto no
Tonaka no ikurini furetatsu
Nazu no ki no saya saya

Karano was
Burnt for salt
And the remaining wood
Made into a zither
When its strings were plucked –
It was like the brine-soaked plants
Growing on the underwater rocks
In the Yura Channel
Which sway slowly – saya saya

(Text: Kojiki – Record of Ancient Matters, 712 CE)

(Translation, Donald L. Philippi)