

Interview with Christophe Charles

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by

Edward K. Chan

愛知大学国際コミュニケーション学部

Faculty of International Communication, Aichi University

E-mail: echan@vega.aichi-u.ac.jp

Preface

This interview is the second in a series on Japanese “underground” music. The interview was conducted in English (thanks to Charles for accommodating my lack of foreign language skills). This project was inspired by two books: Peter Belsito’s *Notes from the Pop Underground* (1985, Last Gasp)—which features a series of interviews with underground artists such as Survival Research Laboratories, the Church of the Subgenius, Diamanda Galas, Jim Jarmusch, among others—and Julian Cope’s *Japrock sampler* (2007, Bloomsbury). Like both of those books—more the former than the latter—I am trying to capture aspects of popular culture that are not well known and to some degree ephemeral. My objective is to introduce readers to this somewhat esoteric music and capture a snapshot of some stories from the Japanese underground. The selection of interviewees is somewhat idiosyncratic based on my own tastes.

Christophe Charles is originally from Marseille, France, and has been living in Japan since 1987. He “works with found sounds, and makes compositions using computer programs, insisting on the autonomy of each sound and the absence of hierarchical structure” (Charles website, “bio”). He received two Ph.D.s from Tsukuba University (Japan) in 1996 and from Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO, France) in 1997. He is a professor at Musashino Art University and performs music in Japan and around the world.

His music is within the avant-garde tradition that goes back to at least John Cage’s experiments

with sound. I would describe Charles's work as simultaneously demanding of the listener to engage with the abstract sounds in his music but also complementary as the music intermixes with the listener's own sound environment. To me, Charles seems to be quite an intellectual, if not academic, sound artist. Several of his texts regarding his approach to "(de)composition" can be found on his website and in CD liner notes. The sculpting of sounds seems to be a process through which he can apply principles of "undirected" arrangements that lean more toward chance and randomness, rather than constructed melody. As Eero Tarasti remarks in the liner notes to the CD *HCDC*, there is no narrative progression in that piece and Charles's other work. Instead it is like floating in and shifting through different environments.

I first became familiar with Charles's work from the compilation CD *In Memoriam Gilles Deleuze* (1995, Mille Plateaux), for which he provided a track. Although much of Charles' work is difficult to obtain on CD, except for *Undirected 1992-2002* (2003, Sub Rosa) CD and a relatively new CD called *HCDC* (2013, Murmur Records), most of his music is available to download from his website: <http://home.att.ne.jp/grape/charles/sound.html>. In addition to his solo work, he has collaborated with many musicians in Japan and Europe, including Markus Popp who releases music under the name Oval and Microstoria (collaborating with Jan St. Werner from Mouse on Mars).

EKC: How did you end up becoming a musical artist?

My father, Daniel Charles, played the piano as a young man, and studied at Paris' Conservatoire with Olivier Messiaen in the '50s, taking the classes of analysis and composition. In his 20s, he had the opportunity to meet the new music or contemporary music scene in Europe through the conservatory and while going to Darmstadt in Germany. There was every summer a very important festival where all the Europeans composers would gather. Americans were also there: John Cage, Morton Feldman, David Tudor. I remember one story about David Tudor, playing a very repetitive piece (something like *X for Henry Flynt* by La Monte Young, where a cluster on the piano is repeated for several hundred times) and Pierre Boulez and Henri Pousseur being totally upset when hearing it.

In France, Pierre Schaeffer was the leader of the electronic music studios at ORTF (French national radio), and founded what is called *musique concrète*. He was working with recorded sounds on tapes, cutting and splitting those tapes with very precise rules, like in classical music. My father worked with Schaeffer for a while, but from the moment he became interested in John Cage, it became difficult to go on working with Schaeffer, who was against the Cageian approach using chance operations. It seems that his use of chance operations didn't find any supporter in

Europe, except my father.

My father was also studying philosophy, and was not only attracted by Cage's music, but also by his philosophy. Cage had learned a lot from Meister Eckhardt, Hinduism, Buddhism and H. D. Thoreau, and would also relate his spirituality to Native Americans.

In 1970, my father and Cage had a session of interviews. My father collected all the interviews and rewrote them, and it became the book *For the Birds*. In the first half of the '70s I was still a kid, and was hearing about all these topics. I also went to some Cage concerts in Paris (I remember the musicians of the Opera of Paris, slapping cardboard from the audience seats on the upper floors, during the Merce Cunningham ballet "Un jour ou deux" in 1973).

EKC: So you were listening to all this stuff when you were 9, 10 years old?

In 1972, when I was 8 and got my first record player, my father first gave me his old jazz records of Sidney Bechet and Gerry Mulligan. I found some EPs by the Rolling Stones: *Honky Tonk Women*, *Tumbling Dice*, which I kept listening to. When I was 9, I got some rock records for Christmas: Pink Floyd's *Ummagumma*, David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust*, Soft Machine and Jimi Hendrix on the *Faces and Places* series by the French BYG records. I liked to listen to classic music too: especially Brahms 1st Concerto.

Very often we were receiving new records and my father would play them. I remember being stunned by Steve Reich's *Violin Phase* played by Paul Zukovsky and Terry Riley's *In C*. There was also a new record company in Italy called *Cramps Records* who put out their *Nova Musica* ("new music") series. The first LP was a collection of Cage compositions, with a version of *4' 33"* and *Music for Marcel Duchamp*, played by composers Walter Marchetti and Juan Hidalgo, members of *Zaj*, a Spanish / Italian group which had similar concerns with Fluxus. Both were advisors for that new music series. They released two records by Cage (the second one being *Cheap Imitation*) and one by Robert Ashley: *In Sara, Mencken, Christ and Beethoven...* . In the series were also composers from Europe: Cornelius Cardew, Costin Miereanu, Davorin Jagodic, Horacio Vaggione (who was from Argentina but working in Paris). There was also the *DIVerso* series with improvisators like Derek Bailey or sound artists like Christina Kubisch.

On the first Cage LP, apart from the instrumental compositions, there was also the *Sixty-Two Mesostiches re Merce Cunningham*, sung by Demetrio Stratos. He had an incredible voice, and was also the singer and front-man of *Area*, an Italian group of progressive and jazz-rock. At that time the main groups in jazz-rock were the *Miles Davis Band* or *Weather Report*, but *Area* was musically wider: more experimental and related to avant-garde music, playing with electronic noise, folk melodies, or rare instruments. I believe *Aera* has had a deep influence on my music

orientation.

Horacio Vaggione, who had composed two pieces (*La maquina de Cantar* and *Ending*) for the *Cramps Nova Musicha* series, invited me to come to his flat in Paris to play with his equipment. In 1976-1977, when I was 12-13, I visited him several times and did my first experiments on his Minimoog and Revox open-reel tape recorders. I had already bought electric guitars and was experimenting at home with wah-wah and other pedals which Horacio had lent me (that gear was stolen in 1977 from our house in Fontainebleau).

I got new instruments, and in 1978, when I was in high school, I started a jazz-rock group with my classmate Daniel Yvinec. We did experiments with guitars, bass and drums. A Minimoog like the one of Horacio was too expensive, but Korg released the affordable MS series, and I bought a *MS-20*. Then Moog released the *Prodigy*, which I bought too. To record and do multi-track collages, I bought an old UHER open-reel tape recorder, which could play and record tapes from 2.8 cm/s to 18 cm/s: that means that I could slow down the tapes 4 times, which was very slow, and revealed usually unnoticed sound details.

In 1984 my gear was stolen again. I owned a 1973 Les Paul and a 1964 Stratocaster, and that was certainly a big shock, but this time I decided to buy a good quality cassette tape recorder (Sony TCD5) and a TEAC portable cassette multi-track recorder. I began to record and accumulate sound of all kinds of environments, and make sound collages. I had the occasion to go to India for a short trip and recorded there about ten hours of sounds, which I used extensively during the following years (and still using now).

After that trip, I wanted to escape from the dull atmosphere of Paris, and decided to go to Hamburg (Germany) to study at the art school (HfBK). I stayed there for about two years, from 1985 to 1987. Some professors were former students of Joseph Beuys; so was my mentor Claus Böhmler who had therefore many Fluxus-related acquaintances. Allan Kaprow, Al Hansen, Nam June Paik and other big figures came to the school for guest-professorships. And what was most important for me is that I met the Danish composer Henning Christiansen, who had collaborated with Beuys many times. He became a visiting professor just after I arrived in Hamburg. He used to record any kind of sound, sounds of nature, especially animal sounds (like in his *Symphony Natura*), sounds of human activities (hammer, voices) and use them in his music in a very organic way. With him, I really started to make compositions. He gave me ideas about the structure of a work, and made me think about the ideas of beginning and end (or no beginning and no end), and of dynamic in the music, of narrativity, etc. I also learned how to make the music more compact, and to think about time-lengths. I had learned from Cage and Robert Ashley that “music is time” (or inversely “time is music”), and thanks to Christiansen this idea became concrete. He came to

school every week, and I would meet him and have him listening to my music and get his feedback. Before that I was just experimenting with sound, without having found a structure. When studying with Christiansen, I was able to compose a few short pieces, and Cage listened to them in 1986 in Marseille (*Video et Multimédia* exhibition at La Vieille Charité), and he told me that: "I had sustained my music very well, that is, I let it hold itself up". I used this sentence: "let it hold itself up", as a title for my first solo CD in 1993 (released by Gallery HAM, Nagoya).

EKC: What about your encounter with Japanese Music?

During the '70s I had learned from my father and John Cage about Japanese philosophy and poetry (Haiku, etc.), I had read books about Buddhism by Alan Watts and Suzuki Daisetsu. My father who was also interested in Japanese aesthetics, showed me books on architecture and gardens (the Ryôan-ji). In fact my Grandfather had visited Japan in 1963, and had then published a book about the Japanese high-growth economy in the '60s. He had a close friend who was a jurist like him, who always mailed Japanese postcards, books and souvenirs. With this documentation, Japan was already a country of deep interest.

In 1978, I was 14 and visited in Paris an exhibition called *Ma: Espace-Temps au Japon*. It was curated by Isozaki Arata, an architect who was not only involved in architecture, but also in most of the avant-garde movements in Japan from the end of the '50s. That was a beautiful exhibition about the main concepts and ideas of space and time in the Japanese traditional culture (see http://www.festival-automne.com/uploads/Publish/evenement/448/FAP_1978_AP_01_JP_PRGS.pdf). Unfortunately I could not attend the performances, which were planned during the exhibition (Hijikata Tatsumi, Kosugi Takehisa, Suzuki Akio, Takemitsu Tôru and many others were participating), but I began to think seriously of going to Japan.

In the Summer of 1979, I went to *Les Fêtes musicales de la Sainte Baume*, in the south of France. Cage had been invited there in 1978, and in 1979, Esther Ferrer and Juan Hidalgo from the group *Zaj*, the people from the *GMEM*, the electronic music group of Marseille, Pierre-Yves Artaud (who played a piece for continuous breathing on the flute for 90 minutes in the middle of the night), Kosugi Takehisa and many others were there to hold workshops and concerts. Demetrio Stratos had also been invited, but he had died sadly in June from a sudden aplastic anemia.

So I met Kosugi Takehisa, a violinist who was known to play the electric violin, plug it into self-made electronic devices and effectors, like an electric guitar, and transform the sound with loops, delay, reverb, or phasers. He did not only music pieces but also performances: He has a famous piece where he cuts from behind a white screen with scissors, which seemed to me quite

long at the time, but its minimalistic flavor together with its humor left a deep impression on me. The architect Naruse Hiroshi, a friend of Kosugi, had brought a shakuhachi and that was probably the first time I heard that sound for real.

Kosugi can be called the father of Japanese free music, as he started it in the beginning of the '60s. His first group was the *Group Ongaku*, they were working with all kinds of electronic electric noises, together with traditional instruments. He was then the leader of the *Taj Mahal Travellers*. He had many disciples and an important influence on many avant-garde musicians. When considering Japanese noise/free music, I think we always have to go back to Kosugi.

I believe that Kosugi met John Cage in the beginning of the '60s, probably when Cage came to do concerts at the Sôgetsu Art Center in Tokyo. Before that, I suppose that the first Japanese composer who went to New York to work with Cage was Ichiyanagi Toshi. Ichiyanagi was married to Ono Yoko for a few years, and Cage wrote in 1962 a variation of *4'33"* which he called *0'00"*, and dedicated it to Ichiyanagi and Ono. Ono Yoko, apart from being a well-known Fluxus artist, had an important role in the '60s because she lived in New York and introduced many Japanese avant-garde artists to the American audience.

Ichiyanagi also made a lot of experiments. I saw a photo recently, where he was using neon lights together with sound in the early '60s. It looks like what Itô Atsuhiko is doing now: playing self-made instruments with neon lamps going through guitar effectors. Many of these composers linked to Cage were experimenting in all kinds of directions. What we call "noise" today was already common in the art and music practice at that time. Kosugi and other composers of his generation like Tône Yasunao also used light devices in their performances and installations.

Many art events were held at the Sôgetsu Art Center (Sôgetsu is a school of ikebana, or flower arrangement) in the end of the '50s and the beginning of the '60s. John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and many artists of the American and European avant-garde were invited, and they met with the Japanese scene at the Sôgetsu. The founder of the Sôgetsu school, Teshigahara Sôfu was born in 1900. His son, Teshigahara Hiroshi, was an Ikebana artist as well, who worked a lot with bamboos. He was also a film director who made a series of films with Abe Kôbô, among them *The Woman in the Dunes*. By the way I found out recently that Abe Kôbô also did music, working with an EMS synthesizer, which he used to compose sound textures for his own theater plays.

Before Kosugi and Ichiyanagi, Takemitsu Tôru (1930-1996) had already experimented with electronic devices from the end of the '40s. During his life he made music for more than a hundred films, directed by Teshigahara Hiroshi, Kurosawa Akira, Shinoda Masahiro, Oshima Nagisa, and others. He liked jazz very much too. Most of his music uses western instruments and traditional Japanese instruments (biwa, etc), but he has also composed a lot of electronic music

sounding like *musique concrète*: he would record instruments, sounds or environmental noise, change the speed and edit them. There are a lot of CDs out with film music by Takemitsu.

I think these people in the '60s were really like a ground for all the noise and experimental rock and jazz music.

EKC: Were they mostly active in the '60s?

Although Takemitsu and composers of his generation like Yuasa Jōji were already active in the '50s, it seems to me that it really started in the '60s, and they have remained active until now. I was talking about the exhibition *Ma: Space-time in Japan*, which happened in 1978. Its curator Isozaki comes from Ōita in Kyushu. He was a friend of the *Neo-Dada Organizers*, who were doing performances and organizing events in a similar lineage with Fluxus in the beginning of the '60s. *Fluxus* was also neo-Dada in a way, but the *Neo-Dada Organizers* seem to me more "punk": *Fluxus* events had a flavor of seriousness, the performers were wearing suits and neckties, even if they were cutting them, but there was a kind of theater, and the critic of conventions were often an issue. However, the Japanese artists were somehow rougher, and I don't think they were interested so much in parodying the conventions of the established culture.

We were talking about Kosugi. After *Les Fêtes musicales de la Sainte-Baume*, I met him several times during the '80s in Europe. In '85 there was a big exhibition at Paris' Pompidou Center called the *Japon des avant-gardes*. Kosugi came and played violin with one of the *Neo-Dada Organizers*, Kazakura Shō, who was also involved in butoh and film. Kazakura entered a big black balloon and then ran around the hall while Kosugi was playing the electric violin through a wireless device, manipulating his bow like a sword and walking through newspapers randomly displayed on the floor.

When I came to Japan in 1987, Kosugi was very kind to introduce me to personalities of the Japanese music scene. In fact the first concert I did was with Kosugi in February 1988, in Fujinomiya, near Mt. Fuji. He had planned to do a trio with saxophonist Takagi Mototeru, and another guitarist whose name I forgot. I brought my guitar and although I was very unskillful, Kosugi let me play with them for about three hours.

I was living in Nagoya at that time. I met there Mizukami Jun, an artist who was also a lawyer. He often used sound and text, did publications and later focused on engraving seals with old Chinese characters, researching their etymology and transforming accordingly their graphic form. In Nagoya he was at every exhibition opening, every concert, and was well aware of the new arts and music scene. We made a few concerts together. He used self-made amplifiers and speakers to do very tiny sounds.

In Nagoya I also met Yamamoto Keigo, who was one of the first Japanese artists to use video in a solo exhibition in the '60s. Yamamoto is from Fukui, but at the time he was professor at Nagoya Zôkei University, located in Komaki, outside Nagoya. He invited me to do a presentation of my work with musicologist and pianist Tamaki Keiko (who became afterwards a curator for Tokyo's *Video Gallery SCAN*). Yamamoto produced mainly interactive video and sound installations. Being a close friend of Nam June Paik, he was very much interested in global communication, and was one of the first to organize satellite events between Japan, America and other countries. When ISDN technology came out, it was possible to use it to convey sound and video signals, before the Internet was available. That was an extension of Yamamoto's early video installations. I participated in many of the events he organized in the '90s, when he was linking different places on the planet. Sound was central and easier to handle than video.

In 1990, he was one of the founders of Musashino Art University's Department of Imaging Arts & Sciences, and became in 2000 professor at Kyoto Seika University. Thanks to him I got the job at Musashino Art University in that department, where I still teach today.

All these experiences with improvised music, collaborations with video-communication art, with performance art and later with butoh were extremely important in the development of my music.

EKC: After these first encounters, what were your musical activities?

I was studying Japanese at Nagoya University in '87 and '88, and visited Tokyo every month, because I was also doing research on video art for my master thesis at Paris' INALCO. Mrs. Nakaya Fujiko was the leading person for anyone who wanted to do research on video art. In the end of the '60s, she had been involved in *E.A.T. (Experiment in Art and Technology)*, an American group of engineers and artists (with Billy Kluver, David Tudor, Robert Rauschenberg...). *E.A.T.* participated in 1970 in the Osaka Expo, at the Pepsi Pavilion, and Nakaya made there her first fog environment. Nowadays she is still producing fog installations, sometimes of large scale.

After having worked with video artists groups in the '70s, Nakaya opened her *Video Gallery SCAN* in Tokyo Harajuku in 1980, to promote video art in Japan, introduce foreign artists like Bill Viola to the Japanese public, and give to young Japanese artists the opportunity to present their work. When I visited her in 1987, she had already gathered hundreds of tapes of video art. I had the chance to look at most of them. After the gallery director Sei Keiko left for Eastern Europe in 1988, Tamaki Keiko became director and invited me to do my first solo concert in Japan at *SCAN* in September 1988. I had seen a concert by David Tudor at IRCAM, and many concerts by Kosugi in Paris, and tried to create like them "live electronic music". I used sampled

sounds of Buddhist chant on tapes, microphones on metal objects and stones, and effectors to loop and modify the pitch in real time.

In October '88, I was also invited by environmental music composer Yoshimura Hiroshi to participate in his sound art exhibition "Sound Garden" in Roppongi's *Striped House Museum*, where I presented a sound installation with electric fans and recorded sounds of springs and insects. Apart from his music production, Yoshimura was working on permanent installations outside in Yokohama, and also composed the departure melodies for the Subway Nanboku line in Tokyo, and the Seishin-Yamate Line of Kôbe. He died in 2003.

In 1988, I was in contact with artists involved in the music and performance scene: Pantomime Oikawa Nobuhiro had organized during the '80s a performance festival in Hinoemata, a village in the mountains of the Fukushima prefecture. Many famous artists went there to present pieces in nature: Ono Kazuo, Teshigahara Saburô, Ishii Mitsutaka, Yoshimura Hiroshi, Hamada Gôji... Kosugi Takehisa was there too (for a complete artists list see <https://sites.google.com/site/afterscorpio/events/hinoemata1984-1987>).

In 1990 some of those who had been in Hinoemata organized, without Oikawa, a similar event in Tajima, another Fukushima village nearby Hinoemata: Musicians (Takeda Ken-ichi, Chino Shûichi, Mukai Chie...), butoh dancers (Sakuma Kumiko, Tokuda Gan...), performers (Takei Yoshimichi, Shimoda Seiji, Ogushi Kôji, Itô Tari, Sakaibara Tetsuo...) and visual artists (Higuma Haruo, Ikeda Ichi...). I attended The *Tajima Performance Art Festival* twice in 1990 and 1991. In 1991, Haino Keiji, Merzbow, Furudate Tetsuo, Azuma Reiko, CCCC, and other noise musicians were there too (Merzbow recorded there his *Metal Mad Man* piece). I brought my tapes players, loop machines (like Kosugi I had three *Digitech PDS8000*), stones and metal plates amplified with contact microphones, and played solo and in collaboration with other performers. After having heard my solo performance, Haino Keiji straightly told me "I like your music", which was quite a compliment. I met Chino Shûichi and Mukai Chie, with whom I also collaborated many times afterwards.

EKC: And so now you're in Tokyo at this point?

From '89 to '91 I lived in Tokyo with a research student scholarship. I first attended Nihon University, because Mrs. Nakaya was a lecturer in the Cinema Department. Then, from 1991, I enrolled the Master Course of Tsukuba University where Yamaguchi Katsuhiro was a professor.

Thanks to the Tajima Festival, I met many musicians, butoh dancers and performers, and we developed lots of collaborative works in the '90s. In autumn of 1990, they organized a *Japan-Korea Performance Art Festival* in Asakusa. There I met many Korean artists, with whom I

worked during the following years (Mu Se-jun, Shim Chol-jon, Kim Hae-min...) : I had the opportunity to go every year to Seoul and other Korean cities until the mid 2000s. One of the most memorable events during that festival was when (famous Korean female artist) Lee-Bul was hanging naked for about one hour from the ceiling of that big theater, and all participants would join freely on the stage, the audience seats or in the corridors.

Thanks to Chino Shuichi (virtuoso pianist, former keyboard player of band *Down-Town Boogie-Woogie* in the '70s, and then member of Otomo Yoshihide's *Ground Zero* and *Sakata Akira Band*, among other bands), I bought my first Macintosh computer and an Akai sampler, before I went for a Kurzweil. I was carrying those big and heavy machines with a Macintosh SE30 computer... that was really a lot of equipment each time I had to go out for a gig. Chino showed me how to use them and we played many times together during the 1991-1995 years, often as a trio with Mukai Chie, under the name *Next Point*.

Tokyo was a very good environment for me, because I could collaborate and play together with many musicians and performers; it was quite free. Mukai Chie invited me many times. She had studied improvised music with Kosugi, and plays the kokyū (or er-hu), the Chinese violin. She has a lot of energy to gather people, to organize gigs, inviting people to play together. One of her performance series was called *Perspective Emotions*. That was for me the first occasion to play with Yamamoto Seiichi and Sakamoto Hiromichi. When Mukai plays, the energy is there and you cannot flee, you cannot get away from it.

EKC: So most of these performances you were doing were in clubs and galleries, those kinds of spaces?

For example the *Kid Ailack Art Hall* near to Meidaimae station (Suginami ward) is a place where Terayama Shuji and other avant-garde theater and dance artists presented works in the '70s. I played quite often there in small or large groups. Tokuda Gan, a butoh dancer, used to organize every New Year's Eve an all-night concert called *Joyamai*, and I played two or three times around 1991-2. These are very inspiring improvised sessions; you can join when you want. You get an input, which can be sonic or visual or conceptual, and you transform it in your sound and the other performers react to it. Sometimes it's totally messy, but there are many good elements and ideas, which come out of it.

On other occasions we have done sessions with fifty people, becoming progressively a massive wall of white or pink noise. But it's also interesting that because there's so much noise you don't know what sound will come through, you play something but you don't even know what you're playing, especially with a computer; you choose a sound file, you know that it's going through

the amplifier and speakers, but you cannot hear it because the whole sound is so loud. It's interesting because sometimes you have a sound that you wouldn't think it would be heard, but it comes through. And sometimes it's not a very big sound; it's just the right frequency.

I had similar experiences during concerts with Merzbow: it is similarly a kind of pink-white noise. So, you're there, you don't know exactly what you're doing, but anyway you're participating in it, indirectly in a way. There have been a few sessions in the beginning of the 2000s with electronic musicians like Zbigniew Karkowski, Peter Rehberg, Ikeda Ryoji and other people. We were all standing in line with our laptops, playing big noise for 20 minutes. But you can hear bits of sounds from everyone. I quite like this kind of thick and anarchic texture.

I think I played in all kinds of environments. In the '90s I had the honor to play for Kazakura Shô's balloon performances eight times between 1992 and 1995: during the Europe Tour which I organized in 1992, in Kyûshû and Ôita (during the retrospective exhibition of the *Neo Dada Organizers*), and during NIPAF (Nippon International Performance Art Festival) in 1995 in Tokyo and Nagano, organized by Shimoda Seiji. During the 1992 tour, we played in front of the Nice MAMAC (*Musée d'art modern et d'art contemporain*) for about 90 minutes. There is a large open space and Kazakura went all around it. It is great to play outside, because you can hear the sounds of the city or nature together with your sounds, and enjoy their unpredictable encounters.

With the *Megalopolis Aborigines* tour of 1992, I wanted to introduce to the European audience the people whom I was working with in Tokyo. I organized with Sakai Shin-ichi of Gallery Surge (Tokyo) this tour in four cities: Berlin, Eindhoven, Gent and Nice, with 21 artists: *Merzbow* (Azuma Reiko, Sakaibara Tetsuo, Akita Masami), Ishii Mitsutaka, Kazakura Shô, Itô Tari, *Opera* (Kakiage Nahôko, Sagara Nami), Shimoda Seiji, *Office Trip* (Takei Yoshimichi, Seidô Toshiyuki), Takeda Ken-ichi, Chino Shûichi, Nozawa Mica, Haino Keiji, Hamada Gôji, Fujieda Mamoru, Furukawa Toshimasa, Mukai Chie and Yoshizawa Motoharu, and myself. In Berlin 17 concerts (we were joined by Katsumata Yûko, Akio Suzuki & Wada Junko, and theater group *Toki Doki Jidô*), in Eindhoven 14 concerts, in Gent 6 concerts, and in Nice 14 concerts, altogether 51 concerts. In the following year, we organized again, with Sakai Shin-ichi a double concert for the *Japan Culture Festival* at the Unesco Hall in Paris: more than three hours with composer Fujieda Mamoru, dancer Yamada Setsuko, Shômyô singer Sakurai Makiko, sculptor Harada Kazuo, bassist Daniel Yvinec and myself, around an installation by Mineko Grimmer; and one hour with the group Opera (Kakiage Nahôko and Sagara Nami) with a LED interactive installation by media artists Yamaguchi Katsuhiko and Moriwaki Hiroyuki (the whole sound was mixed by Dominique Schmit).

Sakai Shin-ichi continued to organize festivals with artists from Japan, Holland and Belgium, in collaboration with Paul Panhuysen (*Appolohuis*, Eindhoven). We also went to the Czech Republic in 1997 with 15 Japanese artists (Plasy Symposium *From the Beginning*).

(To be continued)

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