



## Seiya Ueno, *flutist*

 Oberon's Grove

### Young Concert Artists Series: Seiya Ueno/Wendy Chen

*Philip Gardner | Oberon's Grove | October 20, 2015*



Flutist Seiya Ueno

*Photo: Matt Dine*

The Japanese flutist Seiya Ueno appeared with guest artist Wendy Chen at the keyboard for the opening event of the Young Concert Artists season. Tonight at Zankel Hall, these two exceptional artists presented a programme that spanned the centuries from Bach to Boulez.

Susan Wadsworth, the founder and director of Young Concert Artists, greeted us at this inaugural concert of her 55th season concert series; what this woman has done for music and for young musicians deserves our deepest gratitude.

The artists then appeared, Mr. Ueno elegant in tail-coat tuxedo, and Ms. Chen simply luminous in a soft sea-green frock. They commenced at once on the Bach *Sonata in B minor, BWV 1030*, and immediately established a lyrical rapport both with one another and with the audience. Mr. Ueno's playing is stylish and deft, and his assured technique makes him capable of anything, including some captivating soft attacks. Watching Ms. Chen's extraordinarily graceful hands move up and down the keyboard became a prime visual aspect of the evening.

Sinking into the dreamy world of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, the two artists painted in sensuous Monet hues. Mr. Ueno's soft attacks and hushed taperings of line were ideally seconded from Ms. Chen's piano, evoking images from the ballet which caused such a scandal at its premiere.

The duo scored a huge success with Pierre Boulez's *Sonatine*, a work filled with challenges for both players. Mr. Ueno is called upon to create rasping, burbling effects; the music whirrs and shrills and pauses on long trills; Ms. Chen meanwhile is weaving her own spell from the Steinway, maintaining an



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attentive connection to the sounds of the flute. Their superb playing of this complex and demanding work drew enthusiastic *bravos* from the crowd.

I love the operas of Richard Strauss, but hearing his *Violin Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 18* performed by flute and piano [in Mr. Ueno's transcription] was new to me. Ms. Chen's somber opening phrases soon give way to a burst of energy and the duo are off in an infectious *allegro*. The score is chock full of lovely themes, many of them whispering of *Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Mr. Ueno seized on these melodies and lavished them with plush, full-toned 'singing', and in the final movement he warbled deliciously as Ms. Chen maintained the varying rhythmic patterns with *élan*.



Pianist Wendy Chen

There have been many fantasies created on themes from Bizet's opera *Carmen*; tonight Mr. Ueno brought forth François Borne's *Carmen Fantasie* which - *de rigueur* - includes such chestnuts as the 'fate' motif, the Habanera, the Toreador Song and the *Chanson Boheme* but also seeks out less obvious passages from the opera, such as Micaela's tune from her Act I duet with Don Jose, and the latter's pleading "Ne me quittez pas" which was deliciously embroidered upon by the flutist. As the fantasy progresses, the demands for bravura embellishments increase: cascading scales at break-neck speed and whirlwind flourishes of notes were delivered with remarkable clarity and vivacity by Mr. Ueno, with Ms. Chen yet again a flawless partner.

Responding to the audience's warm applause, Mr. Ueno appeared alone and in a charming, rather halting speech thanked us for sharing the evening with him and ended with the heartfelt declaration: "I love music..and I love you!" He then offered a ravishing Debussy encore, *Syrinx*.