

## **Voices of the Enchanted Forest (2018)**

Concept - Ami Yamasaki & Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

Video - Ami Yamasaki

Music composition - Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

Performed by Ami Yamasaki (vocals)

This collaborative project started in the autumn of 2017 during our residency at the Pocantico Center located at the Rockefeller estate near New York. Composers Now in partnership with the Asian Cultural Council has a wonderful residency program where they bring together artists from different cultural backgrounds and disciplines and give them the opportunity to collaborate.

Japanese vocalist and cross-media artist Ami Yamasaki and I spent a week trying to find creative ways to work together. It was challenging at first since we both came from very different sides of the musical spectrum. Ami has an unusual voice and she can make any sound with it. She sounds like "a thousand birds" yet she can't read a written score. On the other hand, I am a traditional composer who mostly notates music and writes scores. Eventually we found a way to communicate our creative intentions. Among the rich art collection of the Pocantico Center, we encountered a sonambient sculpture of Harry Bertoia. We immediately were drawn to its magical and meditative sound. With the kind permission of the Sculpture Conservation department, we recorded it along with Ami's voice. That's the origin of the sound world of this piece.

The concept of "The Enchanted Forest" came up naturally when sharing stories from our cultural heritage and childhood. Many fairytales in Japan as well as in Lithuania and more generally in Europe, take place in some enchanted forest where lots of things can happen - either people become trees or trees become people, sometimes trees can protect or frighten us. A forest represents a place of transformation and unexpected adventure; it is a threshold to another dimension. A forest is also a greater metaphor for nature, which needs our care especially in modern times.

We created a poetic story line where a human goes to the forest to learn things and then brings it back to the people. What is it that she learns there? To be more human!