

miwakatood

**solo violin and small percussion
for Miwako Abe**

**Larry Polansky
2004**

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miwakatood is the second in a set of pieces (beginning with *lissatood* #3, for solo trumpet), using a simple melody algorithm written in Java/JMSL. In *miwakatood*, I've made some small improvements to the software written for the previous piece.

Articulations, dynamics, fingerings, whether or not to play notes as harmonics, and bowings are left completely to the violinist, who should, in effect, "compose" these things on top of the raw melody. The percussion part may be played by any musician.

I had wanted to write a short solo piece for my friend Miwako Abe for a while. She and I worked together on some editions of the music of Ruth Crawford Seeger and Johanna Beyer, and I'd enjoyed her performance of an early work of mine for violin and piano. She asked me to help her find the score for Henry Cowell's *Violin Sonata* (from 1947). When I found it, I was fascinated to discover that it was dedicated to Joseph Szigeti. I remembered that Beyer also dedicated her violin suite to Szigeti, but he never played it. Acting as Cowell's unofficial "secretary" in the late 1930s, Beyer often handled requests for Cowell's scores. She had the unusual practice of writing a piece of her own and sticking it in the envelope.

Beyer has been a bit maligned for this, but for me, it's just an indication of her loneliness and inability to connect with the music world around her. Though an important, interesting, and innovative composer, she was, for various reasons, marginalized by her contemporaries and by history. I sometimes imagine a world where performers might have viewed these "stowaways" as unexpected gifts, and played her scores. If they had, Beyer's life would have been transformed along with her role in history. Viewed in this way, her actions seem somehow beautiful, even reasonable, attempts to merely communicate.

So I wrote this piece for Miwako, and enclosed it in the envelope with the copy of the Cowell sonata. Unlike Beyer, I'm not marginalized. I have a wide and active musical world. But maybe, in some important ways, our situations are not all that different.

LP
Hanover, NH
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(Thanks to Nick Didovsky for JMSL advice).