



RYUICHI  
**SAKAMOTO**  
MUSIC FOR FILM

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC CONDUCTED BY DIRK BROSSÉ  
PRESENTED BY FILM FEST GENT



# RYUICHI SAKAMOTO

## MUSIC FOR FILM



'I don't know whether music can enhance a film or not,' was Ryuichi Sakamoto's answer to a question in a 2004 survey of *Sight and Sound* about the relationship between music and film. One thing is certain: *his* scores certainly enhance the films they are made for. One has only to think of the magnificent soundtrack for *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence* (1983), his first major score with which he burst onto the international scene.

Sakamoto was already a celebrated pioneer in electronic music and composer/pianist/singer in Japan when he was asked by Nagisa Oshima not only to write the music but also to star in the film alongside David Bowie as a prisoner who hypnotizes Sakamoto's Japanese prisoner-of-war camp commandant.

Ever since, his work for leading Japanese and international directors revealed him as one of the most inventive film composers of our time. The list of major directors Sakamoto worked with is impressive: Oshima again for *Gohatto* (1999); the veteran Japanese director Yoji Yamada for *Nagasaki: Memories of My Son* (2015); Takashi Miike for *Ichimei (Hara-Kiri: Death of a Samurai)* (2011); Bernardo Bertolucci for *The Last Emperor* (1987; in which Sakamoto also acted and for which he won an Academy Award for Best Original Score), *The Sheltering Sky* (1990) and *Little Buddha* (1993); Brian De Palma for *Snake Eyes* (1998) and *Femme Fatale* (2002); Pedro Almodovar for *High Heels* (1991); Volker Schlöndorff for the *Handmaid's Tale* (1990); Oliver Stone, in his capacity as producer, for the miniseries *Wild Palms* (1993).

For those films and many more Japanese titles that did not get released in the West, the 64-year-old Sakamoto conceived a unique approach of film scoring: a blend of splendid melodies, synthesizer work, traditional orchestral music, drum tracks, sound effects and unusual musical colours. Out of his striking contrast of musical styles and cultures, he created standout scores that will never stop to fascinate and enchant us.

This CD offers the first compilation of Sakamoto's contribution to the art of the film music. From *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* there's the haunting main theme that manages simultaneously to be Japanese and western, an idea that's central to the tension of the film's story.

Sakamoto calls each film he did with Bertolucci 'a big journey', and rightly so. For the intimate epic *The Last Emperor*, Sakamoto's score blends Chinese gestures with accessible melodies, "his music characterizing the opulence, mystery and ultimate sadness of the emperor's life." (VideoHound's Soundtrack). For *The Sheltering Sky*, based on Paul Bowles' 1949 novel, "Sakamoto wrote a rich, profusely emotive score, reflecting the emotional journey of the two characters, and the slow disintegration of their love story." For *Little Buddha* the composer "integrates a standard Hollywood-style film underscore with several Indian motifs."

A seldom mentioned score of Sakamoto is his one time collaboration with Spanish director Pedro Almodovar for *High Heels*. The result is certainly flavourful, relying on the sounds of a flamenco guitar to provide an occasional exotic colour.

Knowing Sakamoto's admiration for frequent Hitchcock collaborator Bernard Herrmann (he called Herrmann's *Psycho* "one of the few exceptions when film music reaches the quality of 'pure music' such as Bach, Mozart, Brahms or Bartok"), no wonder Brian De Palma asked him for the music for *Snake Eyes*. As Jerry McCulley testifies, the result was brilliant: "Sakamoto does a truly amazing Benny impression, cranking up the brass and swirling strings into an unsettling sonic maelstrom that would've done late '50s Hitch proud." Most amazing in *Femme Fatale*, Sakamoto's next collaboration with De Palma is his playful pastiche on Ravel's *Bolero*, teasingly titled *Bolerish* and dictating the obsessive rhythm of the opening sequence, a jewel heist at the Cannes film festival.

Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu's wilderness survival true story *The Revenant* (2015), provides the most recent track on the album, marking Sakamoto's triumphant comeback after he survived throat cancer. The Mexican director already used two pieces of Sakamoto's music for his film *Babel* (2006), one of them, the melancholic Bibo No Aozora, is also included on this album. For *The Revenant*, Sakamoto composed new ambient music that's simultaneously subdued, low-key and emotionally powerful.

Whoever doubts Sakamoto's status as one of the greatest living musicians and film composers, won't anymore after listening to this CD.

**Patrick Duynslaegher**  
*Artistic Director Film Fest Gent*

01 **Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence** (1983)

**Main Theme** 06:02

KAB America, Inc [Sony/ATV Music Publishing]

02 **The Last Emperor** (1987)

**Endroll** 08:03

The Recorded Picture Company (Prod) Ltd. / SM Publishing

03 **The Last Emperor** (1987)

**Rain** 04:16

The Recorded Picture Company (Prod) Ltd. / SM Publishing

04 **The Sheltering Sky** (1990)

**Main Theme** 06:26

The Recorded Picture Company (Prod) Ltd. / Copyright Administration Services

05 **High Heels** (1991)

**Main Theme** 03:08

KAB America, Inc [Sony/ATV Music Publishing]

06 **Wild Palms** (1993)

**Main Theme** 02:31

American Broadcasting Music Inc (BMG Rights Management)

07 **Little Buddha** (1995)

**Acceptance** 08:49

KAB America, Inc [Sony/ATV Music Publishing]

08 **Snake Eyes** (1998)

**Main Theme (long version)** 05:26

Universal Music Publishing

09 **Femme Fatale** (2002)

**Bolerisch** 06:11

KAB America, Inc [Sony/ATV Music Publishing]

10 **Babel** (2006)

**Bibo No Aozora** 06:28

KAB America, Inc [Sony/ATV Music Publishing]

11 **Hara-Kiri (Ichimei)** (2011)

**Small Hope** 05:00

KAB America, Inc [Sony/ATV Music Publishing]

12 **Yae No Sakura** (2013)

**Opening Theme** 03:02

Japan Broadcast Publishing Co. [Sony/ATV Music Publishing]

13 **The Revenant** (2015)

**Main Theme** 03:07

New Regency Music [EMI Music Publishing (New Regency Productions)]

## RYUICHI SAKAMOTO - BIOGRAPHY

As composer, performer, producer, and environmentalist, few artists have as diverse a résumé and fan base as that of Ryuichi Sakamoto. Sakamoto's work has spanned vast musical territories, from pioneering electronic music as a member of Yellow Magic Orchestra to crafting globally inspired rock albums, classical compositions, a stretch of minimal/ambient music collaborations, and over thirty film scores. His work has been recognized with accolades including an Academy Award, two Golden Globes, a Grammy, the Order of the Cavaleiro Admissão from the government of Brazil, and the coveted Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the government of France.

Born in Tokyo, as a child Sakamoto began taking piano lessons at 3. An early admirer of Beethoven, he soon afterwards fell under the spell of English rock – the first record he ever bought was “Tell Me” by the Rolling Stones – and then French Impressionism. “Debussy was my hero,” he says, acknowledging that echoes of his teenage idol can still be heard in his new music. “Asian music heavily influenced Debussy, and Debussy heavily influenced me. So the music goes around the world and comes full circle.” Following channels of culture and history around the globe, Sakamoto has written music inspired by the traditions of Okinawa, Indonesia, and Brazil, while collaborating with

David Bowie, David Sylvian, dramatist Robert Wilson, author William S Burroughs, and His Holiness The Dalai Lama among many others. He also wrote music for the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona and the 400th anniversary of the city of Mannheim, Germany.

Since the mid-1990s, Sakamoto has devoted much of his time to environmental and anti-war causes. His 1999 opera LIFE explored 20th century twin dynamics of WAR and Massacre, Science and Technology, ending on the hopeful note of Salvation. 2006 saw Sakamoto launch Stop Rokkasho, a campaign to halt construction on a nuclear processing facility in the north of Japan. In 2007 he founded the eco-initiative more-trees, which contributes to offsetting carbon emissions through active reforestation. Since 3/11 in Japan, Sakamoto has been a strong voice of support and help for the victims of the earthquake, tsunami, and the anthropogenic nuclear meltdown in Fukushima. He launched the charity organizations kizunaworld, LIFE311, Tohoku Youth Orchestra, and organized a two-day music event, NO NUKES 2012, that included many well-known Japanese artists as well as Yellow Magic Orchestra and Germany's Kraftwerk. These efforts were aimed at raising awareness of the unnecessary dangers nuclear energy has introduced.

In 2014, Sakamoto was forced to take the first major

break of his career upon his diagnosis with throat cancer. Thanks to rest and excellent medical care, friends, family, and fans were able to witness his return in just over a year, and he closed 2015 completing two film scores including the score for Alejandro González Iñárritu's Academy Award-winning *The Revenant*.

While continuing to score films – a process he finds uniquely challenging and exciting, in contrast to the “very intimate, closed universe” of his solo compositions – his recent work includes collaborations with electronic artists Alva Noto, Christian Fennesz, Christopher Willits, and Taylor Deupree. In contrast with the pop sounds that launched him into the world stage, Sakamoto has increasingly focused on the significance of wordless music; in responding to the consumerism of the 21st century, his politically conscious dynamism has cemented his reputation as a renaissance man.

“

As I looked at the list of people who have received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Ghent Film Festival, I became bewildered. I am not a composer who specializes in film soundtracks, nor have I worked on many films in the past – I've only done a handful of American films. I don't consider myself a proper soundtrack composer.

Looking back; however, it was the late Nagisa Oshima who guided me down this path. I was an amateur at the time, for I had never composed music for films before then. That is who Oshima had entrusted with the music for his magnum opus – the film he spent five years producing after mortgaging even his own home. He did not comment on the content of the music either and gave me complete creative freedom. I've never had such luxury in any other film I have worked on since. What a human being, I don't think I could ever be as brave as he was. And again, it was Maestro Oshima who introduced me to Maestro Bertolucci amidst the chaos of Cannes. If I have what people call talent, it would be the talent of being very fortunate. That is what gave me all of the wonderful opportunities to work with filmmakers that I could only have dreamt of working with.

The reason I am here today is because of all of the irreplaceable and talented people who I had the fortune of meeting. I cannot thank them enough.

Ryuichi Sakamoto

”



## DIRK BROSSÉ - COMPOSER, CONDUCTOR

Dirk Brossé is a multi-faceted composer and a respected conductor on the international music scene. Since 2010 Music Director of 'The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia' and Music director of Film Fest Ghent. Dirk Brossé has written some 400 works, including concerti, oratorios, lieder, chamber music, symphonic works, musicals and filmscores. His score for the BBC/HBO series 'Parade's End' was nominated for an Emmy Award. His score for 'Knielen' was nominated for The Golden Calf Award. Maestro Brossé has conducted all the leading Belgian orchestras. He has conducted over 120 orchestras all over the world such as London Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Opera, l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Camerata St Petersburg, Hong Kong Philharmonic, l'Orchestre de l'Opéra de Lyon, Philharmonic Orchestra of Shanghai.

Dirk Brossé has made more than 80 CD recordings and has collaborated with world-class artistes such as José Van Dam, Barbara Hendricks, Julia Migenes, Julian Lloyd Webber, Salvatore Accardo, Alison Balsom, Hans Zimmer, Emma Thompson, Randy Crawford, Lisa Gerrard and Marcel Khalifé.

Dirk Brossé has been awarded the title *Cultural Ambassador of Flanders*, the Flemish Parliament's *Gold Medal for Merit*, the *Achille*

*Van Acker Prize*, the *Joseph Plateau Honorary Award* and the *Global Thinkers Forum Award for Excellence in Cultural Creativity*. In 2013 he was elevated to Belgium's hereditary nobility, with the personal title of Knight.

[www.dirkbrosse.be](http://www.dirkbrosse.be)



## BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

The Brussels Philharmonic was founded in 1935 by the Belgian public broadcaster (NIR/INR). Over the years, the orchestra has performed with many top conductors and soloists. It enjoys an excellent reputation for performing premieres of new works and has collaborated with world-renowned composers such as Bartók, Stravinsky, Messiaen and Francesconi.

In 2015, Stéphane Denève takes over the baton as musical director. This top French conductor plans to design his programmes to combine 21st century music with the great classics, thereby opening up a dialogue between the repertoire of the past and that of the future.

At the international level, the Brussels Philharmonic has made a name for itself, with regular appearances in the major European capitals (including Paris, London, Berlin, Vienna, Salzburg).

The Brussels Philharmonic has also gained an

international reputation in film music. For the performance and recording of soundtracks it regularly partners with Galaxy Studios and Film Fest Gent. International recognition has come, among others, in the form of the Oscar-winning score for 'The Artist' (music by Ludovic Bource).

Along with various partners, the Brussels Philharmonic is working on a number of CD series which are gaining international acclaim: with Film Fest Ghent devoted to great film music composers, with Radio Klara involving Flemish soloists, with the Palazzetto Bru Zane focused on French Romantic music, and still another one with its own label, Brussels Philharmonic Recordings, focused on the great symphonic repertoire. The latest release on the label Deutsche Grammophon covers 21st century music by Guillaume Connesson under the baton of Stéphane Denève and has received various prizes including a Diapason d'Or and a Choc Classica.

[www.brusselsphilharmonic.be](http://www.brusselsphilharmonic.be)





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## SOLOISTS 'THE LAST EMPEROR'

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Dirk Brossé

### Violin 1

Bart Lemmens <sup>1</sup>  
Virginie Petit <sup>3</sup>  
Olivia Bergeot  
Annelies Broeckhoven  
Stefan Claeys  
Anton Skakun  
Philippe Tjampens  
Alissa Vaitsner  
Eva Bobrowska  
Cristina Constantinescu  
Stefanie Van Backlé  
Veerle Van Roosbroeck  
Gillis Veldeman

### Violin 2

Mari Hagiwara <sup>1</sup>  
Olivier Giot <sup>3</sup>  
Caroline Chardonnet  
Bruno Linders  
Eléonore Malaboëuf  
Karine Martens  
Sayoko Mundy  
Karel Ingelaere  
Aline Janeczek  
Eline Pauwels  
Elizaveta Rybentseva  
Fien Van den Fonteyne

### Viola

Morgan Huet <sup>1</sup>  
Griet François <sup>3</sup>  
Philippe Allard  
Stephan Uelpenich  
Patricia Van Reusel  
Benjamin Braude  
Phung Ha  
Maryna Lepiasevich  
Barbara Peynsaert  
**Violoncello**  
Karel Steylaerts <sup>1</sup>  
Kirsten Andersen  
Jan Baerts  
Barbara Gerarts  
Julius Himmler  
Emmanuel Tondus  
Elke Wynants  
Sophie Jomard  
**Double Bass**  
Jan Buysschaert <sup>1</sup>  
Sandor Budai  
Simon Luce  
Philippe Stepman  
Thomas Fiorini  
Daniele Giampaolo

### Flute

Lieve Schuermans <sup>1</sup>  
Eric Mertens  
Maaike Cottyn <sup>3</sup>

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Joris Van den Hauwe <sup>1</sup>  
Maarten Wijnen  
Lode Cartryse <sup>3</sup>

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Danny Corstjens <sup>3</sup>  
Midori Mori <sup>3</sup>

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**Trumpet**  
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Luc Sirjacques  
Philippe Ranallo

### Trombone

Lode Smeets <sup>3</sup>  
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Tim Van Medegael <sup>3</sup>

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### Timpani

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### Percussion

Pieter Mellaerts <sup>3</sup>  
Tom De Cock <sup>3</sup>  
Tom Pipeleers  
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### Harp

Eline Groslot

### Piano/Celesta

Geert Callaert <sup>3</sup>  
Erik Brabants <sup>3</sup>

### Fang WeiLing (Erhu)

Born in China, Fang WeiLing, completed her Erhu studies at the Conservatory of Shanghai. During her professorship at the Conservatory of Shanghai, Fang WeiLing was sent abroad together with other Chinese top-musicians in order to promote Chinese music. In the Netherlands she performed with the Residentie Orkest, The Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, the Storioni Trio and the Nieuw Ensemble.

### Hua Xia (pi-pa)

Hua Xia, born in Beijing but living in Belgium since 1987, is a renowned Chinese pi-pa and carillon performer. Hua is part of one of the more influential ensembles in Belgium named 'Luthomania'. Hua's carillon-playing has taken him to several countries for carillon concerts, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, France and the USA. In October 2014, Hua even successfully introduced the 'Carillon' culture from Belgium and the Netherlands into Beijing in China.

### Li-ling Huang (Guzheng)

Li-Ling Huang was born in Taipei, Taiwan where she graduated from the National Taiwan University of Arts, majoring in Chinese zither: Guzheng and Guqin. After graduation she toured in Japan with a Chinese music ensemble and started teaching these instruments at the Shi-jian Technical College. Along with her husband Hua Xia, she came to Belgium in 1987 where she started studying and performing 'carillon', next to performances with various ensembles.

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*Glossary: (1) Principal, (2) Co-Principal, (3) Soloist*



COMMONS

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RECORDS



What makes Film Fest Gent unique in the fully booked festival calendar is the focus on music and the celebration of the film composer, unfortunately often the forgotten key figure in the artistic and/or commercial success of a film.

Ever since 1982 Film Fest Gent has experienced a growing focus on music in cinema with a special section dedicated to music in films. This led to the addition of screenings with live musical performances, big film music concerts, annual Film Music Seminars and recordings of several CDs.

Over the years, Film Fest Gent became a meeting place for composers such as Dario Marianelli, Angelo Badalamenti, Ennio Morricone, Gabriel Yared, Howard Shore, Hans Zimmer, Elmer Bernstein, Patrick Doyle, Gustavo Santaolalla, Francis Lai and Maurice Jarre.

To consolidate this growing focus on music in cinema, the World Soundtrack Academy was created in 2001, aiming to offer a strong platform for emerging film music talent, through the presentation of awards, as well as through the development of other promotional activities, such as seminars, workshops, master classes, music events, etc.

"Ghent's World Soundtrack Awards have inspired clones throughout Europe" (Variety). The approach of Film Fest Gent has been very influential and has a great follow-up. Many other festivals started to spend more attention to film music or also started to organize concerts and award composers. "However, Ghent can lay claim to having played a pioneering role in this field" (Gabriel Yared).

The culmination point of Film Fest Gent's film music programme is the annual World Soundtrack Awards Gala where several awards are distributed to celebrate outstanding achievements in scoring music for motion pictures. Each year a major film music composer is invited to present his work during this closing event. Furthermore Film Fest Gent and partner Brussels Philharmonic record a CD with their music. This year we are honoured to be inviting one of the most brilliant composers of his generation, Ryuichi Sakamoto, recipient of the World Soundtrack Lifetime Achievement Award. His best known scores from 'Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence', 'The Last Emperor', 'Femme Fatale' and many others are collected on this unique and exclusive compilation album.

[www.filmfestival.be](http://www.filmfestival.be)  
[www.worldsoundtrackawards.com](http://www.worldsoundtrackawards.com)

## CREDITS

**Album produced by:** Film Fest Gent & Brussels Philharmonic  
**Under exclusive license to:** Silva Screen Records

**All music composed by:** Ryuichi Sakamoto

**Orchestra:** Brussels Philharmonic

**Conductor:** Dirk Brossé

**Producer:** Valerie Dobbelaere

**Recording, Mix & Mastering:** Galaxy Studios NV  
([www.galaxystudios.com](http://www.galaxystudios.com))

**Recording Supervisor & Mixing Engineer:** Patrick Lemmens

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**Mastering Engineer:** Tom Van Achte  
**Production Manager:** Sian Bolland

**Introduction:** Patrick Duynslaegher

**Cover Photography by:** Wing Shya  
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**Film Fest Gent wishes to thank:** Ryuichi Sakamoto, Norika Sora & Alec Fellman · Dirk Brossé · Leen Uytterschaut · Brussels Philharmonic: Günther Broucke, Véronique Bossaert, Jim Seynaeve, Judith Van Eeckhout, Nicola Mascia, the entire crew and all musicians for their enthusiasm,

expertise and energy · Galaxy Studios: Ralph Broos, Sian Bolland, Patrick Lemmens · David Stoner & Hendrik De Rycker · Mirek Coutigny · The entire crew of Film Fest Gent

**Ryuichi Sakamoto wishes to thank:** Ayane Takahashi, Leen Uytterschaut, Eric Shanfield, Juan Contreras, Miho Hazama, Dai Fujikura, Tokyo Hustle Copy Inc.

**Executive producers for Silva Screen Records Ltd:** Reynold D'Silva  
**Release co-ordination:** David Stoner, Pete Compton & Rick Clark  
**Design & Layout:** Stuart Ford