

Artist Biographies

The Kobayashi/Gray Duo made their international concert debut as winners of the prestigious United States Information Agency Artistic Ambassador auditions, touring South America and the West Indies. "The Duo's skill, energy and love they have for the music were all evident in this performance which brought the audience to its feet demanding an encore!" The Duo has presented lecture recitals at the First and Second International Conferences on Women's Work in Music in Bangor, Wales in 2017 and 2019; the 2002 International Workshops in Stavanger Norway; and conferences of the Music Teachers National Association, the American String Teachers Association, the College Music Society and the Society of Composers, Inc. They have toured throughout the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces of South Africa (2003), South America and the West Indies (1993) and the country of Thailand (2012). Notable US performance venues include the Dame Myra Hess Series and radio broadcast at the Chicago Cultural Center, the International Festival of Women Composers, the Music by Women Festival, the Hot Springs Music Festival and a number of museum series--the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the Toledo Art Museum.

The Duo is in demand throughout the world for their skillful presentations of the standard repertoire as well as their specialty of the works of more than twenty-five 19th to 21st century women composers. The Duo has two CDs of works by women composers--**Feminissimo! Women Playing Music by Women** (2008) and **Boldly Expressive! Music by Women** (2000). Eight of these works are world premiere recordings, including *Grande Sonate, Op. 8* by 19th century French composer Marie Grandval, which the Duo edited for Hildegard Publishing Company.

Laura Kobayashi leads a varied career as a performer and pedagogue. She has participated in numerous music festivals in the United States, Puerto Rico, Norway, Argentina and Brazil and has appeared as a soloist with the Seattle, Spokane, and Grand Junction Symphonies, the Northwest Chamber Orchestra, the Omaha Symphony Chamber Orchestra, the Salta Chamber Orchestra in Salta, Argentina and the Chiang Rai Youth Orchestra in Chiang Rai, Thailand. In addition to performing with her duo partner, Susan Keith Gray, Dr. Kobayashi also performs as a member of the Main Street Chamber Players (Fairfax, VA) and is a founding member of the Main Street Music Studios in Fairfax, VA where she maintains a large private studio of violin students. She has been honored as a recipient of several awards in her career, including the 2012 VASTA (Virginia State Chapter of ASTA) Outstanding String Teacher Award and the "Excellence in Teaching" Award by the Division of Music and College of Creative Arts at West Virginia University. Her past teaching positions include serving on the faculties at West Virginia University, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the University of Georgia and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. In addition, for a short period of time as a professional orchestral musician, she played as a member of the second violin section in the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. Outside of her teaching and performing activities, Dr. Kobayashi is also an active member of ASTA (American String Teachers Association) and has served as a National Chair for several of ASTA's National Committees including the ASTA National Solo Competition, the ASTA CAP Program (Certificate Advancement Program) among others. Dr. Kobayashi studied violin with Dorothy DeLay, Paul Kantor, Andrew Jennings and Denes Zsigmondy and has performed in the master classes of Nathan Milstein, Arthur Grumiaux, Ruggiero Ricci and Gyorgy Pauk. Chamber music studies have been with members of the Juilliard, Tokyo and American String Quartets as well as with collaborative pianists, Robert McDonald and Samuel Sanders. Dr. Kobayashi earned degrees from The Juilliard School and Yale University and the Doctor of Musical Arts from The University of Michigan.

Susan Keith Gray has performed throughout the United States, South America, Norway, South Africa, Japan, Panama, Taiwan and Thailand. Solo acknowledgements include prizes in the MTNA Collegiate Artist Competition, and appearances with orchestras including the South Dakota Symphony, Dakota Chamber Orchestra, Spartanburg Symphony and Savannah Symphony. An acclaimed collaborative pianist, she is a member of the University of South Dakota Rawlins Piano Trio. Other recent

collaborations include recitals with violinists Anna Vayman and Scott St. John, cellist Keith Robinson, bassist Barry Greene, flutists Linda Chatterton and Martha Councell, trumpeter Joe Burgstaller and singers Carla Connors and Scott Piper. She has served on collaborative piano faculties at the Music Academy of the West, Brancaleoni International Music Festival in Piobbico, Italy and national competitions. Performance specialties include music of women composers, American piano trios and African-American Art Song that she has recorded on the Azica, Albany and Videmus labels. A frequent presenter at conferences such as College Music Society and MTNA, she served as keynote speaker for the first biennial Piano Pedagogy Symposium at the Hong Kong Institute of Education in 2009. Gray joined the faculty at the University of South Dakota in 1995 where she is a recipient of the Belbas-Larson Award for Excellence in Teaching and the 2014-2016 Knutson Distinguished Faculty Award for the College of Fine Arts. She teaches piano and pedagogy and founded and directs the graduate program in Collaborative Piano. Her degrees are in piano performance from Converse College and the University of Illinois and a DMA in Chamber Music and Accompanying from The University of Michigan.