

Somei Satoh - Kisetsu, Kyokoku, Violin Concerto (2003)

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1 *Kisetsu, for Orchestra* (1999) 16:09 2 *Kyokoku, for Baritone and Orchestra* (2001) 21:21
3 *Violin Concerto* (2002) 25:26 Baritone Vocals – Katsunori Kono (track 2) Violin – Anne Akiko Meyers (track 3) Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra Conductor – Tetsuji Honna

Sômei Satoh is often classified as an ambient composer because of his penchant for writing slow, meditative works that evoke the mystical timelessness of Asian sacred music. However, Satoh's tonal harmonies and unblurred orchestration follow western conventions, and his soft, static works are only superficially like ambient music, insofar as very little happens. The drawn-out chord progressions in *Kisetsu* resemble the uninteresting bits of late Romantic slow movements, patched together and stretched into an empty, featureless adagio. Whatever ambience one perceives is incidental, due merely to low audibility. In the same vein, *Kyokoku* is an elegiac work centered on baritone Katsunori Kono's slow, sonorous chant, but the brooding orchestral accompaniment consists of little more than predictable minor key progressions, ornamented with a few exotic bell sounds. The *Violin Concerto* opens with more activity and promises to bring some relief from the tedium of the previous pieces. Anne Akiko Meyers plays a violin part that occasionally stirs to life, but the bulk of the piece is ponderously inactive, and Meyers has few opportunities for virtuosic display -- an absurdity in a concerto and a complete denial of expectations. The Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, directed by Tetsuji Honna, is sufficiently involved in these live performances, and Camerata's recording is clean and resonant. --- Blair Sanderson, AllMusic Review

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