

## **Itinerary leading to painting**

### **Seiryō Surusumi**

I was born in Taipei, Taiwan in 1925. I remember that until the fall of my sixth year, I lived a happy life with my father, a teacher at a catholic girls' school, and my mother, an elementary school teacher from the mainland. The principal was a Portuguese named Tomás Delahoz, so my father was acting principal when he was in his twenties. My father bought me an organ when I was six years old, but my mother died shortly thereafter. This sudden sadness and the large organ I had just bought, certainly seemed to be the beginning of the connection between my life and the arts. Soon after, we (my father and two sisters) moved back to Japan. My father lost his parents early in life and studied hard in Tokyo, but that too was shattered by the Great Earthquake of 1923, and he finally moved to Taiwan and established himself as a teacher. However, he suffered the loss of his wife again, and after returning to Japan, he seemed to have sunk into a life of drinking and faith. Growing up with a father who narrowly protected his living space, my view of life became increasingly nihilistic, and as I grew older, I became more rebellious, eventually clashing with my father and being disowned.

Somehow, I was blessed with an environment where I could play the piano by myself, both at school and at work. At one point, under the dubious title of Legal Office Instructor, I was in charge of music in the classroom. In my adult life, music certainly played a role in shaping my inner life. Even now, when painting has become a definite part of my life, I still prefer music to painting. I would not be able to find any other source of emotional support for me without music.

Tanka has intervened in my inner life since before and after I left school and joined the army. At a military parts factory, I edited a tanka-centered magazine. After the war, I pitched my tanka poems to Araragi and received a selection by Tsuchiya Bunmei. However, after two tanka poems were selected in the special selection column, I left the world of tanka poetry as if the tide was receding.

Immediately after the war, I was thrown among the residents of Liaoyang and became a wonderfully free and liberated creature. Early on, I met two women, a pianist named Toshiko Akiyoshi and a certain Fukushima, in a music club that was formed in this city of confusion. One day, near the end of my trip back to Japan, I found a five-leaf clover by the Liaoyang White Pagoda, and I felt a miracle. In the short time that had passed, he sensed that the rapidly growing rapport between Toshiko and Akiyoshi had solidified

to the point where there was no room for doubt. It was 1946. We returned home as unmistakable fiancées, but for one reason or another we lost touch, and I, having lost Toshiko, became a loser at the end of my egoistic life. In 1954, I learned of Toshiko's success through Fujin Gaho, and in 1957, on the eve of the Yamauchi and Surusumi two-person exhibition to be held at Iwataya Department Store in Fukuoka, I received a letter from Toshiko. Toshiko had organized her own band in New York while attending music school in Boston. This was the end of my postcard journey. I can now continue down the postcard path that I staggered along with unshakable confidence.