

JOE HISAISHI

Conductor and Composer

While at Kunitachi College of Music, Joe Hisaishi discovered his passion for the musical movement of Minimalism, and began his career as a composer of contemporary music and film scores. His first album, *MKWAJU*, was released in 1981, with *Information* being released a year later. After that, with albums including *Piano Stories*, *My Lost City*, *Etude: a Wish to the Moon*, *Asian X.T.C.*, and *Another Piano Story: End of the World* among others, he has established his own style for composing and performing within many different musical genres.

Starting with *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), Hisaishi has produced music for nine films directed by Hayao Miyasaki, including *Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea* (2008), *Princess Mononoke* (1999), *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), and *Spirited Away* (2002 Academy Award Winner, Best Animated Feature).

He also provided music for *Hana-Bi* (1997) and *Brother* (2001) directed by Takeshi Kitano, and for *Okuribito* (2008) by Yojiro Takita, which won the 2009 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. His works have won many awards, including several Japanese Academy Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Music, honoring his vital position in the Japanese film industry. In recent years, he has provided the scores for foreign films, including the Korean film *Welcome to Dongmakgol* (2006), which won a Best Music award from the Korean Film Institute; and the Chinese film *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* (2006), which was awarded a Best Music prize at the 27th Annual Hong Kong Academy Awards. Both at home and abroad, his music has always been extremely well-received.

In 2001, Hisaishi made his debut as a film director in *Quartet* (2001), for which he was both in charge of creating the songs and co-writing the script. The film, receiving excellent reviews, was introduced as the first full-scale musical filmed in Japan and was nominated to World Competition of the Montreal Festival.

He performs music energetically, performing in many genres including piano solo and orchestral conducting. In 2004, Hisaishi became the first Japanese musician to conduct a full orchestra at the Cannes International Film Festival, performing *The General* at the festival. In a 2006 tour across Asia, his collaboration with the top philharmonic orchestras of five different cities was extremely successful, and he shortly thereafter assumed the post of First Music Director of the World Dream Orchestra (W.D.O.), a newly formed orchestra project created by the New Japan Philharmonic. In August of 2008, he both performed in and conducted *Joe Hisaishi in Budokan: 25 Years with the Animation of Hayao Miyazaki*, leading a massive orchestra of over 1,200 people—including a large choir, wind orchestra, and marching band—while himself co-performing on the piano.

In 2009, Hisaishi gave his debut as a conductor with OTTAVA, a Japanese radio station for classical music. Shortly thereafter, he organized a concert titled *Joe Hisaishi Classics: Vol. 1*. By February 2010, he recorded a live album entitled *Joe Hisaishi Classic Series* with Wonderland Records. Hisaishi continues to attract a wide group of people to his classical recordings.

In addition his movie and classical work, Hisaishi released a solo album, *Minima Rhythm*, in August of 2009 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and set out on a tour covering twelve Japanese cities. In November of 2009, he was awarded a Medal of Honor by the Government of Japan in recognition of his cultural services towards the country. As a contemporary musical composer, his unique input to the classical concert world is highly appreciated, and his continuous enthusiasm for musical activities that go beyond the ordinary is anticipated worldwide.