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"Japanese in Tradition, Western in Innovation": Influences from Traditional Japanese Music in Tōru Takemitsu's Piano Works

The music of Tōru Takemitsu is often stated to be essentially Japanese. However, previous studies on Takemitsu tend to highlight the composer's reception of Japanese aesthetics and philosophy rather than his preoccupation with Japan's various musical traditions. This study traces the influence of these traditions in a particular segment of Takemitsu's oeuvre, namely, the piano works. Analyses of selected pieces from this repertoire will show how tradition and innovation (the provenance of which is not always apparent) have merged into Takemitsu's highly distinctive musical language.

The music of Tōru Takemitsu (1930-1996) is often characterized as representing something essentially Japanese. With a few exceptions, attempts to define what makes Takemitsu's music 'Japanese' have been limited to the realm of aesthetics and philosophy, leaving concrete references to traditional Japanese music, to which the composer has pointed more than once, underexposed. This article aims to fill up this lacuna by tracing the repercussion of pitch, textural, and temporal organization as pertaining to traditional Japanese music on Takemitsu's compositional technique. The focus will be on Takemitsu's repertoire for piano, which spans his full career, and which has been given only little scholarly attention in the Western world, especially with respect to its relation to traditional Japanese music.

Takemitsu's Relation to Traditional Japanese Music

When dealing with 'traditional Japanese music', it is crucial to bear in mind that this term does not cover one coherent tradition. Instead, a great number of relatively independent, parallel traditions with no or only limited interaction exists. Throughout this article the umbrella term 'traditional Japanese music' will be used in its broadest sense to refer to all kinds of folk, court, religious, and art music, including dramatic genres such as *nō*, *kabuki* and *bunraku*. From 1868 onwards, Japan opened up towards the West, and traditional musics increasingly became publicly accessible. Prior to this, genres represented independent social strata (Dan 1961: 209), generating independent kinds of music theory (Komoda/Nogawa 2002: 565).

Born in Japan in 1930, Tōru Takemitsu spent an extensive part of his childhood in Manchuria, China. In 1938, he was sent back to Japan to attend primary school, and during the Second World War he lived with his aunt who was a teacher of *koto*, a 13-string long zither. Takemitsu (1989: 200) once claimed that this period made him associate traditional music negatively with war and destruction, which might explain why he initially avoided direct references to this musical heritage. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the war, Takemitsu, like many other members of his generation who were disillusioned by the poverty and disaster brought about by those in power, turned towards the West, the United States of America in particular. As he related more than once in autobiographical

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accounts, Takemitsu's key experience leading to this westward orientation occurred toward the end of the war, when an American invasion threatened and he was drafted into the Japanese army. One day, in a probably risky move, one of Takemitsu's superiors played some Western records for him and his fellow conscripts, including the French chanson *Parlez-moi d'amour*. After the war, the young Takemitsu, struck by the qualities of Western music, was glued to the radio station of the U.S. Armed Forces in Tokyo and explored works of American composers at the library of the Civil Information and Education branch of the U.S. Occupation Government (Takemitsu 1989: 199-200). Here, the foundation was laid for Takemitsu's career as a composer, during which he would adopt principles from various Western repertoires – electronic music, *musique concrète*, serialism, popular music, impressionism, Fluxus, and aleatoric music.

In 1960, a landmark experience (re)awakened Takemitsu's fascination with traditional music which released him from his self-appointed position as '"enslaved" by the music of Webern' (Ohtake 1993: 81): he witnessed a performance of *bunraku*, traditional puppet theater. An encounter with John Cage, too, led him 'to recognize the value of [his] own tradition' (Takemitsu 1989: 199). From then on, Takemitsu increasingly introduced compositional characteristics from traditional musics and started composing pieces for non-Western instruments such as *Eclipse* (1966) for *biwa* (short-necked lute) and *shakuhachi* (bamboo flute), *November Steps* (1967) where these instruments are contrasted with a symphony orchestra, *In an Autumn Garden* (1979) for traditional court music ensemble, *Distance* (1972) for oboe and shō (mouth organ), and *Gitimalya* (1974) in which Chinese and Javanese gongs and an African log drum interact. Moreover, Takemitsu's numerous writings about music reveal his preoccupation with 'Japaneseness' in music as well as East Asian aesthetics. Thus, as a composer Takemitsu positioned himself between two traditions: Western art music and traditional Japanese music. As he once phrased it: 'I would like to develop in two directions at once, as a Japanese in tradition and as a Westerner in innovation' (Gill 1974).

Takemitsu's Piano Repertoire

As mentioned above, Takemitsu was influenced by various artistic currents during his career. Many of these were co-existent, and one should therefore be cautious about forcing a clear-cut categorization of his works. However, for the purpose of an overview I take the liberty of assigning the piano works to five roughly chronological periods:[1]

- Early tonal period (-1950): In youthful works such as *Romance for Piano* (1948) and *Lento in Due Movimenti* (1950 – later published in a reworked version as *Litany* [1989]) the style is rather tonal. However, Japanese influences are manifestly exposed in chord constructions, scales and texture.
- Pointillistic period (1952-1961): This period is represented by *Pause Ininterrompue* (1952-60) and *Piano Distance* (1961). Both are written in compressed form employing pointillistic features suggesting the style of Anton Webern, among others.
- Aleatoric period (1962): Experimenting with Cage-inspired graphic notation in *Corona* (1962) and *Crossing* (1962), Takemitsu denoted a degree of improvisation not witnessed in the four other periods.
- Japanese period (1966-1979): Drawn by the neo-nationalist movement dominant among Japanese composers in the 1960s, Takemitsu composed works with Japanese instruments.[2] A study trip to Bali exploring the gamelan tradition (Takemitsu 1974:

1 For an account of alternative classifications of Takemitsu's oeuvre in Japanese scholarship, see Burt (2001: 1-2).

2 Heifetz (1984) provides a list of neo-nationalist works with Japanese instruments: one piece composed in 1958, one in 1962, four in 1963, one in 1964, three in 1965, four in 1966, five in 1967, and one in 1970.

39-40) also enriched *For Away* (1973), at least according to some theorists.[3] *Les Yeux Clos* (1979) also belongs to this period.

- Expressive period (1982-1992): In the last period represented by *Rain Tree Sketch* (1982), *Les Yeux Clos II* (1989) and *Rain Tree Sketch II* (1992), Takemitsu preferred melodic expressiveness over an avant-garde idiom, which led to a style with modal references, fewer sharp contrasts, more homogenous forms and longer, horizontally extended phrases.

Previous Research

Most of the studies that discuss the reception of traditional Japanese music in contemporary music focus exclusively on historical issues (e.g. Dan 1961; Koizumi 1961; Heifetz 1984) or on abstract aesthetic concepts (e.g. Tamba 1976; Lee 1991; Narazaki 2002) rather than on concrete characteristics of contemporary compositional technique. Ohtake's book (1993), for instance, is a monograph on Takemitsu and dedicates a complete chapter to the piano works, but is, nevertheless, chiefly concerned with aesthetics. The same holds true for Chung-Haing Lee's doctoral dissertation. His investigation of 'how Takemitsu so skillfully infuses his Western-oriented piano compositions with traditional and aesthetic Japanese elements' is limited to philosophical influences like Zen Buddhism and Japanese arts (Lee 1991: 2). Lee's self-proclaimed focus on aesthetic issues leads him to characterize Takemitsu's piano music as merely 'Eastern aesthetics [subjected] to Western compositional techniques' (57), being 'unique in that it so often expresses a Japanese spirit without obviously utilizing Japanese musical material' (2). This conception might be representative of the three particular pieces Lee addressed in his dissertation (*Piano Distance*, *For Away* and *Pause Ininterrompue*), but not necessarily of Takemitsu's piano music in general.

Takemitsu, too, hardly discussed his compositional method throughout his numerous writings (Burt 2001: 2-3). This silence is typical of many of Takemitsu's contemporaries who criticized their predecessors for having employed traditional music for nationalistic purposes. For this generation, 'Japaneseness' did not reside so much in melodies, rhythmic patterns, or instrumental sounds drawn from traditional Japanese music, but rather in a certain 'mind-set'. Therefore, if Takemitsu referred to Japanese elements in his work, he usually limited his commentary to its aesthetic and formal dimensions (e.g., 'strolling through a Japanese garden') rather than on its pitch or rhythmic material.[4] Many scholars and commentators have followed Takemitsu's example, and, in Shuhei Hosokawa's words (2003: 506), especially 'Japanese authors, while quoting from his introspective essays and intuitive interviews, tend to interpret Takemitsu according to his words rather than his score.'

Although successful score-oriented analyses of Takemitsu's music have been carried out, the majority of these do not pay specific attention to the piano works. For instance, Herd (1989) primarily dealt with the neo-nationalist school of the early post-war years before Takemitsu adopted a key position in Japanese musical life, and Watanabe's study (1992) of traditional elements in Western-style piano works by Japanese composers only referred to Takemitsu briefly. Burt's monograph (2001) on Takemitsu is unique by providing the first analytical overview of Takemitsu's complete oeuvre in English, but though references to traditional music occur sporadically, its focus seems biased towards Western influences. Similarly, other score-oriented studies have concentrated on influences from Debussy and Messiaen (Koozin 1993; 2002), American jazz theory (Burt

3 This seems dubious. The trip was only in November/December 1973, the year in which *For Away* was published (Takemitsu 1974: 72).

4 An exception is his discussion of *A Flock Descends into a Pentagonal Garden* and *Garden Rain* in a 1984 lecture titled 'Dream and Number' (Takemitsu 1995: 97-126).

2002a), and dodecaphony (Burt 2002b). On the other hand, Nuss (2002) and Everett (2005) studied court music influences on Takemitsu, but focused on ensemble pieces, as it is the case with Smaldone's analysis (1989) of large-scale pitch organization in *November Steps* (1967) and *Autumn* (1973).

By focusing on Takemitsu's piano repertoire, including youthful pieces prior to the 1960s as well as later pieces from the 1980s and 1990s, I aim at refining the conclusions provided by Lee (1991) and others, and making an attempt towards further generalization. In my analysis I will include excerpts from *Les Yeux Clos II, Rain Tree Sketch I* and *II*, *Romance for Piano* and *Litany,* which were not addressed by Lee and, when appropriate and necessary, provide supplement for earlier analyses. Moreover, I will focus on the direct impact of traditional Japanese musics on Takemitsu's compositional technique, and only refer to the aesthetic dimension and the composer's own writings when this is directly relevant to technical details.

Influences from Traditional Japanese Music on Takemitsu's Piano Works

This section addresses individual topics of influence; initially with respect to technical aspects (rhythm and meter, modes and melody, and texture), and eventually with concepts touching on the aesthetic dimension (simplicity, silence, reverberation, and noise).

Rhythm and meter

Much traditional Japanese music is characterized by free rhythm (Kishibe et al. 2009: §1), reflecting a stronger relation to the unstable human breath than to the stable heart beat or walking pace characteristic of Western music.[5] In his piano works Takemitsu applied different strategies of escaping the divisive meter, which structures most of Western music as an inherent part of the notational system itself. For instance, though generally conforming to the Western concept of regularly metered rhythm, *Litany* contains such elements. In this piece frequent use of fermatas and grace notes disturbs the stability of the beat, and in the second movement, Takemitsu inserted tempo fluctuations with indications such as *poco stringendo*, *ritardando, a tempo*, *in Tempo*, *rapid*, *poco accelerando*, *lento*, *più mosso*. Moreover, this movement lacks clear meter since the bar length varies freely from two to seven beats. Similarly, in *Les Yeux Clos*, distinct tempo indications are given to nearly each bar resulting in a metrical freedom which was hitherto unheard in Takemitsu's piano works.

Unequal bar length is related to the phenomenon 'additive meter', which is evident from the use of additive motifs in Takemitsu's piano music. The motif in Example 1 initially occurs in the left hand and is subsequently repeated in the right hand assisted by another additive motif in the left hand applying similar pitches in a new order. Also the three kinds of fermatas ('very long', 'medium' and 'short') used in *Rain Tree Sketch* add subtleties to the interpretation of the underlying meter. In this piece frequent tempo changes and numerous tempo-related expressions (*rapidly*, *poco rallentando*, *poco stringendo*, *senza misura* and *dying away*) similarly blur the picture.

5 In *shōmyō*, Buddhist liturgical chant imported from China, most pieces are performed in free time (*jokyoku*). However, some have fixed meter (*teikyoku*) or combine fixed meter with free time (*gukyoku*) (Kishibe et al. 2009: §4). Folk music pieces with uncountable metrical structure belong to the so-called *oiwake* style (Watanabe 1992), and especially rural folksongs (*min'yō*) for solo performance are in free rhythm (Kishibe et al. 2009: §7). Also solo music for *shakuhachi* employs free rhythm (Kishibe et al. 2009: §3). In *gagaku*, especially *netori* and *chōshi* movements (i.e. preludes) employ *jo-byoshi*, 'free rhythm' (ibid.). These are referred to as *jo* movements, but also elsewhere tempo varies rather freely. In *nō* theatre, non-metered sections are called *hyōshi awazu* (Komoda/Nogawa 2002: 571). Additionally, metered and free rhythms sometimes coexist, and in *bunraku* the *tayū* (narrator) and the *shamisen* player 'come together to produce an extraordinary wavering "time" in which they are neither together nor apart' (Takemitsu 1987: 12).

Example 1
Les Yeux Clos II, 8/2-3/all.[6]

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From *Les Yeux Clos II* onwards, Takemitsu applied two graphic signs for *accelerando* and *decelerando*. Whereas signs for dynamics had already existed for ages, composers had only recently started developing graphic signs for gradual tempo fluctuation.[7] This extension of notational practice suggests a wish to notate metrical and rhythmic subtleties.[8]

Modes and melody

As is the case for *gagaku,* the 'elegant' ensemble music of the Imperial Court, and the musical instruments used in this genre,[9] the Japanese tuning system and modes were adopted from mainland China and subsequently altered to accommodate Japanese practice and aesthetics (Komoda/Nogawa 2002: 566). Below I will suggest possible connections between Takemitsu and the modal practice of traditional musics.

Takemitsu's piano pieces seem to show a general preference for the melodic intervals of fourths and seconds (Hansen 2007: 18). Similarly, another Japanese composer, Hikaru Hayashi, once admitted to favoring melodies employing those intervals because they remind him of traditional music (Herd 1989: 132). In China and subsequently Japan,

6 Throughout this article the numbers inserted into 'x/x/x' refer to 'page/system/bar' in the score.

7 For instance, ascending and descending arrows indicated *accelerando* and *decelerando* in Pierre Boulez' *Structure - deuxième livre* (1961) and Brian Ferneyhough's *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1970), and two graphic systems for notating gradual movement between tempo levels were developed by Karlheinz Stockhausen in his *Klavierstück VI* (1955) and by Krzysztof Penderecki in his *Strophen* (1959) and *Anaklasis* (1959-60). However, to my knowledge, the signs used by Takemitsu were not common among his contemporaries.

8 Another way of avoiding metrical organization is the 'artificial meter' in *Piano Distance* where each bar is three seconds long. This is a compromise between Takemitsu's goal of metrically free performance and the need for precise notation.

9 *Gagaku* was imported from China in the eighth century AD. Among the instruments employed are *ryūteki* (transverse bamboo flute), *hichiriki* (double reed pipe), *shō* (mouth organ), *biwa* (4-string short-necked lute), *koto* (13-string long zither), and *taiko* (large drum).

tuning was originally performed in ascending fifths and descending fourths (e.g. C4-G4-D4-A4-E4).[10] From the first five notes the pentatonic *ryō* mode (e.g. C-D-E-G-A) was created, and the *ritsu* mode (e.g. G-A-C-D-E) was constructed beginning from the fourth degree of the *ryō* (Komoda/Nogawa 2002: 566-567). In fact, the interval-class vector <032140> shared by *ryō* and *ritsu* only confirms the prominence of major seconds and fourths and thus suggests a connection between traditional melodies and those composed by Hayashi and Takemitsu.

In addition to *ryō* and *ritsu* characteristics, Takemitsu makes extensive use of tritones and semitones (Koozin 1991: 128). Although these intervals are absent from the interval-class vector above, this melodic practice does not preclude the possibility that Takemitsu's melodies are inspired by traditional Japanese music. On the contrary, after the anhemitonic modes were imported from China, Japanese music developed a preference for the fourth of *ritsu* over the third of *ryō* (Watanabe 1992), and particularly in rural areas musicians started lowering the second and fifth degree – especially in descending direction. The result was the hemitonic *in* or *in-sempo* mode (e.g. ascending G-A♭-C-D-F-G <122131> and descending G-E♭-D-C-A♭-G <211231>) which was unknown in China. Whereas in general no upward leading tones exist in Japanese music (Burnett 1989: 99),[11] the chromatically descending leading tone is characteristic of the *in* mode and also very prominent throughout Takemitsu's opus. As noted by Burt (2001: 26-28), *in-sempo* is used consistently in *Romance for Piano*.

In Takemitsu's music, octave equivalence is not always maintained. This practice might, to a certain extent, have its origin in traditional music. As demonstrated by Yoshihiko Tokumaru, the notion that Japanese music should be constructed from the unit of an octave was probably a mere Western imposition (Komoda/Nogawa 2002: 570). The composer Toshirō Mayuzumi (1929-1997) once made recordings of Japanese bells. Having a more cylindrical shape, these are said to be distinctively different from Chinese and European ones. By means of electro-acoustic analysis, Mayuzumi (1964) found the typical overtone series to contain the notes C2, G♯3, C♯4, D♯4, F4, A♯4, D5, E5, F♯5, A5, B5. Clearly, no octave equivalence is present here. By comparison to the harmonic overtone series, it is remarkable that no tones recur in higher registers. Thus, if one were to base a harmonic system on this, octave equivalence would most probably be avoided. Interestingly, two pentatonic sets similar to the *ryō* and *ritsu* pentachords emerge from this series (C♯, D♯, F, G♯, A♯ and D, E, F♯, A, B).[12] In this way, the cylindrical shape of the Japanese bell seems to reflect the preference for pentatonicism characteristic of Japanese melodies.

One way by which Takemitsu avoided octave equivalence appears, for instance, in the first phrase of Example 2, the notes C4 and C♯5, G4 and G♯5, as well as E♭2 and E3 occur simultaneously, and, besides from D♭4, which is enharmonically equivalent to C♯4, these pitches do not reoccur in other octaves. Furthermore, in *Rain Tree Sketch*, Takemitsu introduced a '(quasi) mirror scale' as a strategy to circumvent octave equivalence (Example 3).[13] Here a dense texture arises from displaced superposition of repeated 10- and 8-note motifs applying pitches from a scale constructed from almost consistent intervallic reflection around the middle axis D5-E5. Despite some repeated pitches, such a 'mirror scale' is significantly different in each octave.

10 Throughout this article, the scientific pitch notation system is used to identify the octaves (C4 corresponding to middle C).

11 Burnett seems to refer to the lack of ascending semitones, for ascending whole-tone leading notes are amply present (see e.g. Koizumi's disjunct trichords [Komoda/Nogawa 2002: 569]). These are only present in conjunct *Okinawa* trichords (Komoda/Nogawa 2002: 569). Refer to the description of the terminology related to such trichords later in this essay.

12 Mayuzumi used these pentatonic sets in *Nirvana Symphony (Buddhist Cantata)* (1957-58).

13 Refer to Hansen (2007; 2008) for a discussion of ways this scale could be used in piano improvisation.

Example 2
Les Yeux Clos II, 5/ 2/2.

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Example 3
'Quasi-mirror scale' in *Rain Tree Sketch*, 5/3/1 – 5/4/1.

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Melodic motifs

Another pitch characteristic of Takemitsu's piano works, I argue, is his use of melodic motifs, which is possibly related to the trichordal structure of traditional Japanese music. A similar argument has been made by Timothy Koozin, who conducted set-theoretical analyses of piano works (Koozin 1989; 1991) and three late pieces (Koozin 2002). Koozin (1991: 134) specifically stresses the prominence of pitch-class sets [014] and [026]. Moreover, Smaldone (1989) found [014] and [015] both on the surface level and on deeper structural levels in the two orchestral pieces *November Steps* and *Autumn*, and he convincingly related this pitch organization to the nuclear tones that Burnett (1989) had discovered in a traditional *shamisen* piece (long-necked lute). Importantly, in all examples given below, the tri- or tetrachordal structure only governs single melodic motifs whereas other textural elements in the musical context apply distinctively different sets.

In 1958, Koizumi Fumio proposed a theory of modes based on the unit of a perfect fourth instead of an octave (Komoda/Nogawa 2002: 568-570) to describe pitch organization in traditional Japanese music. This theory has been dominant ever since. Koizumi's modes are constructed from conjunct and/or disjunct combinations of the four trichords *min'yō* (e.g. C-E♭-F), *ritsu* (e.g. C-D-F), *miyakobushi* (e.g. C-D♭-F), and *okinawa* (e.g. C-E-F), each with an ambitus of a fourth and a distinctive intermediary note. Generally speaking, *min'yō* was used for folksongs and traditional children songs, *ritsu* for court music, *miyakobushi* for art music of the Edo Period, and *okinawa* mostly on the Ryukyu Islands. However, in actual practice the four types are combined – also simultaneously in different instruments (Koizumi 1961: 185-186).[14]

In *Rain Tree Sketch* the motif F5-F♯5-F5-E5-C♯5 (including transposed entries starting from A♭4 and B♭5) is melodically prominent. This [0125] tetrachord corresponds with a superimposed combination of the *min'yō* and *okinawa* trichords, which is consistent with the earlier mentioned tendency to combine trichords in actual practice. Another variation of Smaldone's [015] trichord is the motif F4-F4-G4-C5-G4-F4-D♭4 (alternatively starting from B♭3, E♭3 and incompletely from D♭4), which is a [0157] tetrachord corresponding to a conjunct combination of the *miyakobushi* with an incomplete version of the *ritsu* trichord (C, D♭, F + F, G).[15]

In *Les Yeux Clos*, F5-G5-B5 (alternatively starting from F♯4, C5, C♯4, G♭4, C4 and inversely from C4, B3, and D4) is the main motif whereas, in its sequel *Les Yeux Clos II,* B3-C♯4-G (alternatively starting from C4, A3, and B♭3) plays a similar role. Interestingly, both motives represent the [026] trichord, the motif from *Les Yeux Clos II* being a permutation of its predecessor (Koozin 1991). Like the [015] trichord (containing the semitone interval), which figures prominently in *November Steps* and *Autumn* (Smaldone 1989), the use of [026] (containing the tritone interval) implies a characteristic which distinguishes Japanese from Chinese music (cf. *in* mode). At the same time, though, it reminds of the octatonic scale from Takemitsu's early piano works. As I will demonstrate below through an analysis of *Romance for Piano* and *For Away*, this confluence of the modal system of traditional Japanese music on the one hand and of innovative scales favored by early-twentieth-century Western composers like Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky on the other, is characteristic of Takemitsu's compositional technique.

14 For instance, opening the holes on *shakuhachi* one by one results in a disjunct combination of two *min'yō* trichords (e.g. D-F-G-A-C-D) whereas the common *koto* tuning *hirajōshi* adheres to two disjunct *miyakobushi* trichords (corresponding to the descending *in* mode), and the *kokinjōshi* tuning combines *miyakobushi* and *min'yō* disjunctively (corresponding to ascending *in*) (Dean 1985: 151-153).

15 In *For Away* (8/3/all) the *miyakobushi* trichord (i.e. Smaldone's [015]) appears in the repeated four-note motif C-D♭-F-D♭.

Nuclear pitches

A key trait of Japanese music is the prominence given to nuclear pitches through repetition and constant presence. In the *biwa* parts in *gagaku*, for instance, only the uppermost, melodic voice is altered while the pitches of the underlying open strings remain the same throughout a piece (Example 4). In *Les Yeux Clos II* this *gagaku* texture is turned upside down with the stable part maintained in the top voices while notes in the middle and bass registers change continuously (Example 2).

Example 4

Beginning of *senshūraku* movement from the *togaku* repertoire. Transcribed by Robert Garfias, *Music of a Thousand Autumns: The Togaku Style of Japanese Court Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 247.

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Example 5
Nuclear pitches in *Romance for Piano* (1948).

m.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
bass note	D		A	C	D			E^b	D		E^b	D		C	D		C	G A D	D	C	G A						G	A			G	A		G A	D		
nucl. pitch	D (PNP)																				A (SNP)														D (PNP)		

38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74
								$G^\#$!	D				C					D	A	D	A	C						A		D		A	C	D	(A)	
D (PNP)								?	D (PNP)									≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈												D (PNP)						

Another example of nuclear pitch structure is *Romance for Piano*. Analysis of the bass reveals D and A as the most predominant pitches (Example 5). The presence of two nuclear pitches refers to a typical *koto* tuning used in traditional ensemble music. In the chamber composition *Zangetsu*, for instance, the G (PNP = 'primary nuclear pitch') and D (SNP = 'secondary nuclear pitch') both have neighbor notes a whole tone below and a semitone above resulting in a six-note scale where B♭ is absent: F, G (PNP), A♭, C, D (SNP), E♭ (Burnett 1989: 86). Likewise, in *Romance for Piano*, D can be heard as PNP and A as SNP.

Besides PNP and SNP, the neighbor pitches C, E♭ and G occur. Note, in this context, that the upper neighbor of SNP (B♭) is not used as a bass note. The double neighbor note circling around D only supports the notion of this pitch as the primary one – at least initially. F is absent as a bass note and only appears once in the other voices in passing to G (m. 14), which is also consistent with *koto* tuning. The 'modulation' to SNP (m. 21), too, is supported by transposition of the initial descending fourth motif.

At the climax (m. 46), for the first and only time, G♯ is used as a bass note. The tense tritone interval to PNP adds an element of ambiguity to the mode. This ambiguity is maintained in the subsequent section (mm. 56-67) where a conflict between PNP and SNP arises, and even in the final bar SNP attempts to question D's role as PNP. Conforming well with Japanese music, where some pieces end in another mode than the initial one (Burnett 1989: 84), this formal distribution – almost resembling a 'reverse sonata movement' – is in strong opposition to Western musical form. In sum, the modal disposition of *Romance for Piano* is highly comparable to *koto* tuning and Burnett's rendering of the *in-sempo* mode where D is PNP, A is SNP, and secondary notes appear one whole note below and a semitone above each of them.

In *For Away*, which is probably the composition that most extensively applies the concept of nuclear pitches, the sustained note in the initial passage (C5) is also surrounded by the adjacent neighbor notes B♭4 and D♭5 (cf. Lee 1991: 21-25; 36-41). However, due to repetition, B♭4 quickly becomes the nuclear pitch together with E4, thus emphasizing the tritone interval. The situation where several notes act as variations of a single pitch area is comparable with the pitch-bending technique *embai* used on *hichiriki* (double reed pipe) and *ryūteki* (transverse bamboo flute) calling for widening of the pitch spectrum of notes in *gagaku* melodies (Nuss 2002: 96).

As a whole, *For Away* could be understood as a tripartite ABA' form (Example 6). The initial part A spans from 1/1/1 to 4/1/1 and could be further subdivided into *a* (from the beginning) with the nuclear pitches E/B♭ and *b* (from 2/2/2 and onwards) focusing on F♯/C. The middle part B spans from 4/1/2 to 8/1/1 with the further subdivisions *c* with the nuclear pitches G/A♭ and *d* (from 6/1/2 and onwards) focusing on E♭/F♯/C. In *d* the pitches B♭, A and A♭ interfere alternately with the three nuclear pitches, which might be interpreted as an unstable element in this 'development section'. The recapitulation A' from 8/1/2 subsequently combines the two pairs of nuclear pitches used in *a* and *b*. Once again, in this nuclear-pitch structure, one encounters Takemitsu's preference for the

Example 6
Central notes in *For Away* (1973). Numbers refer to [page, system, bar].

tritone at the expense of fourths and fifths. As noted by Koozin (1989), the nuclear pitches (except for A♭) all belong to the octatonic scale. Takemitsu may have made a synthesis of traditional Japanese nuclear pitches and octatonic elements adopted from Western composers.

Texture

One of the most distinctive features of Takemitsu's piano music is its texture. Actually, quite a few references to traditional Japanese instruments emerge from his piano pieces. The following excerpt could for instance be interpreted as referring to the deepest version of the *taiko* drum – the *dadaiko* (low D1) – a plucked string instrument like *koto* or *biwa* (middle part) and the shrill *shō* (top chords) from the *gagaku* ensemble (Example 7). Below I will delve further into each of these.

Example 7
Rain Tree Sketch II, 5/4/1-3.

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Deep, single notes played with soft dynamics occur frequently in Takemitsu's piano music. Often they fill out breaks in one hand (Example 2), and sometimes they support a crescendo (Example 7, 10). Finally, such notes are frequently applied in phrase endings (Example 2), corresponding to the usual role of the *dadaiko* in *gagaku* and *nō* theatre (Komoda/Nagawa 2002: 572).

Koto and *biwa* play the most prominent pitches of *gagaku* melodies in the top notes while underlying arpeggios are added by plucked lower strings (Example 4). Similar textures are an unmistakable part of Takemitsu's piano music occurring in all stylistic periods (Examples 1, 8). In Example 8, note the striking similarity with the *koto* part from Example 4. Such chords are always played in ascending arpeggio, usually combined with

decreasing dynamics. This possibly reflects the fact that higher strings produce a different sound than deep strings. Incorporating decrescendo is also known from *nō* where the *taiko* accompaniment tends to decrease in dynamics towards cadences (Malm 1960). This is in opposition to much Western music preferring pre-cadential crescendo.

Example 8
Rain Tree Sketch, 6/3/1-3.

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Clusters are characteristic of much twentieth-century Western music, including Takemitsu's. Through a pitch-class set-analysis, Nuss (2002) has reported similarities between Takemitsu's pitch structure and the characteristic cluster chords produced by the *shō*. This instrument is tuned after the circle of fifths and is an important part of the *gagaku* ensemble – at least within the *tōgaku* repertoire (so-called 'Music of the Left') originally imported from China and South East Asia (Kishibe et al. 2009). The free reeds inside the seventeen bamboo pipes vibrate both during inhalation and exhalation, producing a continuously pulsating sound. There are ten clusters (*aitake*), and, unlike Western harmonic practice, *aitake* are not characterized by mutual contrast. Instead, transitions between them take place gradually following a detailed set of rules (*te-utsuri*) (see Garfias 1975: 177-188). The *shō* supports central pitches of the *hichiriki* melody with appropriate *aitake,* typically in heterophony. In Western classical music, harmonies usually underlie the melody whereas here they are placed on top of it. Combined with the underlying *biwa* and *koto* chords, this allegedly makes *gagaku* the only music in the world where melody is supported by harmony from above and below (Kishibe 1966: 22).

In the piano repertoire, some *aitake* occur sporadically in their original form. In Example 9, for instance, the left hand plays a tetrachord (Forte-name 4-23, prime form (0257)) identical to a transposed version of the *aitake* named *kotsu*.[16] Although he showed a general preference for the fourths, fifths and major seconds from the *aitake* (six of them contain neither minor seconds nor tritones),[17] Takemitsu used all intervals in his clusters. This results in chromatic variants of the diatonic *aitake*, and, as noted by Burt (2002a: 97), Takemitsu's clusters are not particularly circumscribed as to intervallic content after all.

Besides *Corona for Pianists* from the aleatoric period in which various graphical symbols were used to designate clusters, Takemitsu only adopted the indefinite cluster notation used by many Western contemporaries once, namely in *Piano Distance* (1961).

16 The intervallic structure of the *aitake* is subtly present already in the early, rather tonal, *Romance for Piano*: the initial descending fourth-motif, the dramatic middle part and final chords.

17 Interval-class vectors of the *aitake*: *ichi*, *bō*, *otsu*, *gyō* and *jū* all share <032140>, *kotsu* has <021030>, *kū* <233241>, *ge* <123121>, *bi* <234222>, and *hi* <143241>.

Example 9
Rain Tree Sketch II, 6/1/all.

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Hence, clusters are omnipresent in every stylistic period of Takemitsu's piano music, and it certainly made a difference to him which notes were included. Although Takemitsu's non-functional clusters might, at least on a conceptual level, originate in the Japanese *aitake*, their pitch structure seems to represent his own invention, or to be inspired by Western composers.

Another characteristic of Takemitsu's piano music is his frequent use of unison passages. These are usually combined with a diminuendo and end on a fermata. Often they are transitional passages of 1-4 bars indicating beginnings of new formal sections within larger compositions (e.g. *Romance for Piano*, *Les Yeux Clos I* and *II*, *Piano Distance*, *Rain Tree Sketch II*, and the first movement of *Litany*). In cases where individual voices in unison – or complex – textures do not follow each other precisely, heterophony tends to arise. Example 9, for instance, evokes a heterophonic image rather than a polyphonic one, due to *stretto* imitation. By contrast, traditional Japanese music is not harmonically founded as Western music (Dan 1961: 207). Alternatively, melodies in heterophony are prominent in e.g. *gagaku* (*fue* and *hichiriki* in Example 4), *koto*-accompanied songs, and chamber music of the Edo Period (Burnett 1975). Example 9, for instance, bears a strong resemblance to the imitation technique found in many introductory movements in g*agaku* where the distance between individual parts is similarly short.

In Takemitsu's music, dynamic indications become an independent mode of expression resulting in multidimensional textures in which individual voices emerge alternately. In the culmination of *Rain Tree Sketch II* (Example 10), as many as four textural elements demonstrate separate dynamic disposition (see also Examples 7, 9). Takemitsu's multidimensional textures are comparable to the non-vertical organization of traditional Japanese music, which manifests itself in heterophony, but also leads to individuality regarding dynamic disposition of simultaneous phrases. Though not exclusively Japanese, the tendency for 'great variety but little coalescence' is a key trait distinguishing *gagaku* not only from most Western orchestral music, but also from many other East and South East Asian ensembles such as the Indonesian gamelan and Chinese theatre orchestras (Malm 1990: 124). By contrast, in tonal music of the West, dynamic fluctuations are mostly used for elucidating – or alternatively discouraging – the inherent tendencies of the harmonies. Therefore, in much Western piano music, both hands follow a shared dynamic development.

The wealth of dynamic detail in Takemitsu's piano works is enormous. For instance, no less than sixteen dynamic nuances are given in *Les Yeux Clos*, ranging from *molto ppp* to *ff*. Takemitsu's application of parentheses and 'poco' to provide further distinction might reflect the tendency towards dynamic subtleties found in traditional Japanese music. As regards accents, Takemitsu distinguishes between *poco sf, sf, sff, sfz, sffz, mfz*, and in *Rain*

Example 10
Rain Tree Sketch II, 7/1/1-2.

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Tree Sketch Λ, > and V designate strong, moderate, and weak accents, respectively. Finally, as the performance notes for *Les Yeux Clos* read: '[the m]ost important thing … is to produce subtle changes of the color and the time as floating.' That is, the overall dynamic span might not be particularly wide in Japanese music; however, the ear is accustomed to extremely subtle differentiation (Dean 1985: 161).

Aesthetics

In Japanese language and epistemology, an unwritten rule goes that 'less is more'. The key role of simplicity in Japanese aesthetics similarly appears in various art forms: the brevity of *haiku* poems, the completeness of a single stroke in calligraphy, the sparse number of ingredients in gastronomy, and the minimalistic furnishing. Speaking of his own compositions, Takemitsu once stated: 'I want to make one sound that is as powerful as silence' (Takemitsu 1995: 52). Takemitsu's urge to obtain maximum amount of expression with minimum amount of material is considered a 'basic concept in most Japanese music' by Malm (1990: 123), arguably related to the *Ichi-on jō-Butsu* principle ('Buddha in one sound'), which has been attributed to the itinerant *komusō* monks of the *Fuke* sect playing solo *shakuhachi* as an instrument of meditation (Miki 2008: 4).

Besides the unison textures, simplicity is similarly reflected in the pointillism of Takemitsu's second stylistic period. In *Piano Distance* and *Pause Ininterrompue*, sounds are usually supplied with individual dynamics and performance indications. Lee (1991: 21) ascribes Takemitsu's pointillistic style to traditional *shakuhachi* playing. However, the influence from Webern is likely to be stronger than that from traditional music in the works from the pre-1966 period. Expressing oneself in a few words, there is always a risk that ambiguity will arise. Such vagueness is characteristic of Japanese philosophy and is similarly traceable in the history of musical notation in Japan. As was the case in Europe prior to the development of print,

notation was not intended to fix the melodic patterns precisely, but served primarily as an auxiliary mnemonic device for carriers of the tradition (Komoda/Nogawa 2002: 573). Consequently, until the launch of the Meiji government's modernization program, a common practice was never promoted, and an abundance of repertoire-, guild-, and instrument-specific notational styles developed (573-583).

Though adopting Western notation, Takemitsu also invented novel features and explored graphic notation in *Corona* and *Crossing* (both from 1962). This was inspired by Western avant-garde composers such as John Cage, many of whom, for their part, were deeply inspired by Eastern aesthetics. Furthermore, the lack of meter and the prominence of polyrhythm contribute to the ambiguity faced when performing Takemitsu's music. That is, influence runs in both directions, and one can only point to particularly striking similarities and suggest certain possible connections, but not claim their existence in any incontrovertible way.

In addition to simplicity, related concepts like 'emptiness' or, more generally, 'absence', play a prominent role in Japanese culture as well. The large, empty expanses in visual art and the Buddhist striving towards 'self-transcendence' (*nirvana*) bear witness to this. In traditional music this manifests itself as silence, which exists independently from sound in the concept of *ma*, the noun form of the preposition 'between'. According to Takemitsu, '[s]ilence is the mother of the sounds' (Beckman 1986: 4). The significance he ascribed to silence is most strongly evident in later pieces such as *Rain Tree Sketch* and its sequel in which empty bars are instrumental in creating a sketchy appearance with plenty of room for pensiveness (Example 8). Interestingly, in such pieces, absolute silence is replaced by 'reverberation' representing a special kind of 'absence'.

Takemitsu's reverberation assumes various forms. I will therefore distinguish between 'passive' and 'active' reverberation, the latter occurring in either 'abstract' or 'concrete' form. Whereas actual notes are played in 'active reverberation', sounds are modified in other ways in 'passive reverberation'; for instance, by pressing the key silently to obtain *fp*-effects (*For Away*, *Piano Distance*).[18] In 'concrete', 'active' reverberation, notes are repeated, often in combination with softer dynamics or tempo fluctuation. More prevalent is 'abstract', 'active' reverberation where reverberation is not a carbon copy, but constitutes an abstract comment to the preceding music (Example 1). This phenomenon is not unique to Takemitsu's music; it also characterizes, for instance, Olivier Messiaen's piano textures.

In *nō*, the reverberant silence (*yo-in*) following the drum beat is considered superior to the beat itself (Beckman 1986: 5). Likewise, *ma* designates the interval between sounds and holds a crucial position (Ohtake 1993: 54-55). In contrast to its significance in Japanese culture, emptiness is often associated with a certain fear in the West, sometimes referred to as *horror vacui*, a term borrowed from Aristotelian physics and art criticism. In this context emptiness easily assumes an existential dimension, unexpected silence is awkward in social situations, and pauses in music are usually countable units entailing a promise of continuation. Moreover, pauses serve merely to separate phrases in language or music rather than achieving significance on their own. These implicitly assumed boundaries between music and silence (and in addition, between sound and music) in Western musical thought were the ones which the zen-inspired John Cage aimed to make his Western audiences aware of when he called for a pianist to remain silent at the piano for several minutes in his *4'33"*. Naming the random sounds surrounding the performance an essential part of the performance, Cage insisted that his work not be conceived of as pure silence, but rather as more or less aleatoric sounds concealed in, and divulging from, silence.

18 Various pedal effects also relate to 'passive reverberation'. Since, however, the relation to traditional music is far from obvious, references to previous analysis will suffice here (Hansen 2007).

In *Piano Distance*, Takemitsu refers to a certain kind of silence which is distinct from the pensive reverberation in later pieces and might be related to the Western understanding of absence and emptiness referred to above. More specifically, he writes a 'long' fermata, supported by the text 'be silent' and an indication of no pedal. The subsequent, 'suddenly' occurring, dissonant *sf*-chord is an obvious release of accumulated energy. This phenomenon is not unknown in Western practice. Also, the position of the fermata in the approximate Golden Section (50/79 bars = 0,633) testifies to a stringent formal construction which hints at Western pointillism and differs significantly from the sketchy appearance of Takemitsu's later pieces. On the other hand, the concept of *ma* draws attention to precisely the accumulation and release of energy; for instance, in *nō* silence should be 'performed' in a manner conveying the tension of what is to come. Inclusion of later pieces thus clarifies that Takemitsu's understanding of silence developed throughout his career. However, both kinds of silence have precedents both in traditional Japanese and in Western music.

Noise elements constitute a final influence from Japanese aesthetics on Takemitsu's piano music. The extended playing techniques called for in graphically notated pieces, clusters, *sfz*-effects, and reverberation of silently played keys are all good examples of this. Moreover, dissonant sonorities are added, possibly inspired by the *embai* technique. For instance, Takemitsu's use of parallel major sevenths is an extraordinarily expressive variation of the unison.

In traditional Japanese music all sounds were eligible on equal terms since most music originally served dramatic purposes (Miki 2008: 3). There were no 'inharmonic sounds', and discord did not exist as a concept.[19] Noise, like silence, became an indispensable part of Japanese aesthetics and was deliberately added to instruments imported from mainland China so that, for example, *shakuhachi* and *biwa* became much noisier than their Chinese counterparts, *xiao* and *pipa*. Similarly, on the *shamisen*, noise sounds (*sawari*) produced sympathetically by the lowest string are highly appreciated (Kishibe et al. 2009).

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the omnipresence of influences from traditional Japanese musics in all five stylistic periods of Takemitsu's compositional career. These include: various strategies of escaping meter; trichordal organization of melodic motifs; avoided octave equivalence; chromatically descending leading notes; nuclear pitches; stable harmony (*koto*, *biwa*, and *shō* chords); instrumental imitations; descending dynamics towards phrase endings; cluster chords; unison passages; heterophony; imitation techniques from *gagaku*; multidimensional dynamic texture; subtle dynamics; and aesthetic concepts such as simplicity, ambiguity, silence, reverberation, and noise. Especially in later pieces, clearly not all influences represent merely 'eastern aesthetics' as suggested by Lee (1991: 57), but some do indeed relate to technical details concerning Takemitsu's compositional method. Technical influences are more subtly present in early pointillistic works in which the composer allegedly aimed at avoiding them.

Nevertheless, most of these characteristics also appear in twentieth-century music by Western composers. Pointillism is known from Webern, reverberation is characteristic of Messiaen's piano textures, and Japanese music has no monopoly on clusters, noise sounds, heterophonic elements, dynamic subtleties, silence, and specific melodic motifs either. Moreover, these characteristics are not present simultaneously in a single composition, and Takemitsu never adhered consistently to compositional rules, always refraining from simply copying elements from Japanese music. Rather he created inventive syntheses such as his chromatic *aitake* clusters and his prominent use of the tritone, replacing the fourth of Japanese music, in melodic motifs and as interval between nuclear pitches. As

19 Takemitsu once claimed he did not believe in the existence of 'inharmonic sounds' (Beckman 1986).

mentioned, the tritone can be ascribed to both the octatonic scale of Western music and the hemitonic, pentatonic scales of Japanese music.

Insofar the concept of 'influence' is a sufficient concept at all to describe cultural exchanges, these facts make it extremely difficult to distinguish between Japanese influence, Western influence, and Takemitsu's personal style. However, juxtaposition of technical characteristics from several traditional genres in Takemitsu's piano works is in itself an important innovation departing from traditional practice where genres were hardly mixed. Thus, it seems that Takemitsu did indeed fulfill his wish to develop as a Japanese in tradition and as a Westerner in innovation.

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