



## INNOVATION THROUGH CONFRONTATION AND INTEGRATION – TRADITIONS OF EAST AND WEST IN TŌRU TAKEMITSU’S ART MUSIC

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Even though Tōru Takemitsu’s musical products are clear outcomes of his subjection to Western music – a tradition outside as well as an “Other” from which he was born into i.e. Japanese - they still contain elements of Japanese aesthetics. Despite of this subjection, Takemitsu’s works demonstrate his confidence in both Western and Japanese musical traditions resulting in new 20<sup>th</sup> century compositions that consequently would still be conforming to the Western musical traditions - a tradition that is constantly changing as opposed to the traditions of the East. This paper explores the composer’s treatment of differing musical traditions in the context of a “European revolution and a Japanese tradition” to trace and define various meanings attached to the composer’s compositional process in merging two disparate traditions.

**Keywords:** Tōru Takemitsu, Japanese tradition, Western music, Musical innovation.

### Introduction

“I would like to develop in two directions at once, as a Japanese in tradition and as a Westerner in innovation.... I don't want to resolve (the) contradiction. On the contrary, I want to make the two blocks fight each other.”<sup>1</sup> This statement already implies that Tōru Takemitsu (1930-1996) wished to position himself as an innovator in Western music through the aesthetics and musical practices of his Japanese traditions. Takemitsu was aware of the overt differences between the music of the East and the West and chose to contradict their disparity in terms of all its aspects – formation and institution through attempts at innovation. However, his stance on contradiction seemed to have transformed into one on integration that propels the overall soundscape of his music into the Western domain. Until this writing, Takemitsu’s endeavour in the very notion of revolution itself thus affecting his compositional approaches at the expense of his Japanese tradition has been unexplored. This paper examines Takemitsu’s treatment of disparate musical traditions in the context of a “European revolution and a Japanese tradition.”<sup>2</sup> In order to inform the exploration of Takemitsu’s treatment of disparate musical traditions, the relationship between the concept of revolution and tradition needs to be defined and discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> Takemitsu, Cronin and Tann, ‘Afterword’, p. 209. All citations of Takemitsu's text in this paper are adhered to its original form.

<sup>2</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, p. 67.

### Tradition and Innovation

Can tradition be innovated? Can tradition be utilized to attain innovation? Tradition, according to Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary, is "a belief, custom or way of doing something that has existed for a long time among a particular group of people."<sup>3</sup> It is a form of cultural continuity that is propagated by means of aural transmission as in the diffusion of musical knowledge and practices in most non-Western cultures. This cultural continuity in terms of tradition could be contextualized within the "temporal status" that is "successive and identical as explained by Michel Foucault -

"Take the notion of tradition: it is intended to give a special temporal status to a group of phenomena that are both successive and identical (or at least similar); it makes it possible to rethink the dispersion of history in the form of the same; ..."<sup>4</sup>

On the whole traditional music undergoes very little change, thus its overall musical contents and aesthetics are for the most part preserved. Western art music, on the other hand, is ever changing in time; and in the course of its continuous development Western music has endured perpetual stylistic transformations while maintaining its fundamental Western idiom in terms of movements, structural cohesiveness, and textural construct. Western music composers' persistent striving towards cultivating ground breaking ideas is to facilitate innovation, for instance the creative integration of secular cantus firmus melodies into Latin masses in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Meanwhile, innovation according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary is "the introduction of something new", in line with the definition of innovate in the Oxford Online Dictionaries - "to make changes in something established, especially by introducing new methods, ideas, or products."<sup>5</sup> Transpacific as well as transatlantic crossings by composers such as John Cage, Philip Glass, Lou Harrison, Toshi Ichianagi, Toshiro Mayuzumi, Ravi Shankar, Oliver Messiaen, Alla Rakha, and Chou Wen-chung, made possible by the advent of technology as well as aviation industry naturally bring about cultural exchange and globalization of art music. Hence geographical mobility across continents has allowed composers the opportunity to literally travel outside of their own culture to gain immediate experience and knowledge in the traditional music of other cultures. Prior to this, the Javanese gamelan that reached the European soil via nautical means at the turn of the 20th century had completely captivated the West and amongst the most influenced was Claude Debussy. The impact of this influence further steered Western music away from its elemental nature. Upon hearing a Javanese gamelan performance at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, Debussy was deeply mesmerized by the delicate sonorities derived from the metallic timbre of this exotic Indonesian ritual music. Subsequently those timbral, textural and spatial characteristics intrinsic to this particular type of indigenous Indonesian bronze orchestra<sup>6</sup> were candidly adapted in his works. Incidentally the effects of cultural exchange brought about by Western/European colonization of non-Western territories as well as globalization are evident in the works of European and American avant-garde composers who drew inspiration from various musical materials, concepts, philosophy, and etc., in non-Western cultures; Ligeti, Stockhausen, Boulez, Nono and Cage, to name but a few, have all created notable works that reflect non-Western aesthetics and musical elements.

At this point, it transpires that innovations are an important source of perpetual change in Western music. However, there is cause and effect in these changes – with every innovation made, intrinsic traits and rituals of a tradition is often obliterated little by little. Moreover as an event of perpetual change, innovation could be traced to the notions of development and evolution as attested by Foucault,

<sup>3</sup> Definition is taken from the Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary, 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

<sup>4</sup> Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Both definitions are taken from the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary and the Oxford Online Dictionaries respectively. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/innovation> (accessed on 16 June 2011). <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/innovate> (accessed on 16 June 2011)

<sup>6</sup> There are several types of gamelan orchestras in Indonesia; among them the Javanese and Balinese gamelan orchestras are the most prominent ones. Each type of gamelan orchestra or ensemble has its distinctive musical characteristics - textures, timbral colors; cultural roles, ritualistic practices, as well as the construction and design of the instruments themselves.

“There are the notions of development and evolution: they make it possible to group a succession of dispersed events, to link them to one and the same organising principle, to subject them to the exemplary power of life (with its adaptations, its capacity for innovation, the incessant correlation of its different elements, its systems of assimilation and exchange), ...”<sup>7</sup>

The apparent loss of an original essence in Western music today thus distancing significantly from its origins - the organal, contrapuntal polyphonic traditions of the Medieval and Renaissance amongst many others - while the music of the East still retains most part of its primary characteristics. In this respect, Western music and non-Western music are disparate not only in terms of their musical characteristics and instrumental properties but most importantly in their overall cultural fundamentals and functionality. Therefore, cross cultural reciprocity between the East and the West not only has significant and extensive influences on modern composers of both cultures but has also steered them towards explorations of varied musical properties in these opposing traditions with the ultimate aim at creating a novel art form.

### Formulation of East-West Traditions in Tōru Takemitsu’s Music

Cross cultural reciprocity is the seminal factor in Takemitsu’s compositional approach and process resulting in a musical style that straddles on two distinctively disparate traditions - the East and the West. In 1989, Takemitsu publicized his intention to develop simultaneously “as a Japanese in tradition and as a Westerner in innovation.” This intention is apparent in Takemitsu’s view of himself as a composer of Western art music exemplifying strong influence of harmonic sonorities of Debussy, Olivier Messiaen as well as Anton Webern, in which Japanese aesthetics and musical traditions were routinely incorporated. This traditional incorporation consists of elements related to traditional Japanese music, poetry, gardens and theatre art forms as well as the philosophy of Shintoism and Zen Buddhism. Since Takemitsu’s re-acquaintance with his Japanese traditions in the early 1960s,<sup>8</sup> he had decidedly adopted this compositional approach in realizing his ultimate goal for innovations through traditions as a Japanese composer of Western music.<sup>9</sup>

Most scholastics on Takemitsu’s musical styles tend to address the Japaneseness in his works whether they were written strictly for Western instruments, ensembles or a combination of Western and Japanese instruments. Despite his enthusiastic application of Japanese elements in his Western based music, the overall presentation and musical gestures<sup>10</sup> in his works are noticeably Western hence alluding to a paradox. Even factoring in distinct Japanese concepts such as *ma*, (間) and *sawari* (さわり), Takemitsu’s works hardly detach themselves from the musical syntax peculiar to Western music, resulting in works that are unmistakably Western on the whole. Slow paced, spatial and transparent textures, linear stratification that are light and buoyant, delicate tonal colours and dynamics gradations,

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Takemitsu confessed that the negative impression he had on everything Japanese was the result of his bitter experience of World War II. Despite having heard traditional Japanese music since he was a child and lived with his aunt, a koto player, for a number of years before his conscription into the Japanese military camp in 1944, he avoided traditional Japanese music and was ashamed of his Japaneseness.

<sup>9</sup> Takemitsu identified his ethnicity first – Japanese, and described himself as a composer of Western music. Interestingly he had never labelled himself as a Western music composer or Western composer. Although he was more akin to everything Western and travelled to the West frequently, he could never compose while he was away from Japan. In an interview, Asaka Takemitsu informs Tetsuo O’hara that “Toru really liked the nature and the climate here (the town of Miyota in Nagano prefecture where the Takemitsus had a cottage), so I think he was able to concentrate entirely on his own work. Orchestra pieces and other large pieces were mainly written here, but plays, films, and television works were written in Tokyo ...” (Takemitsu, *A Memoir of Tōru Takemitsu*, p.118).

<sup>10</sup> Western art music especially of the Romantic and early 20<sup>th</sup> century eras has a characteristic sound which does not exist in the music of other cultures. This distinctive quality is attributed to the Western concepts of harmonic dependency, contrasting tonal polarities, progressive linear development of themes, and polyphonic textural intricacies. Besides utilizing affective harmonies, expressiveness is also achieved through evocative orchestral sweeps and poignant melodic contours.

and a sense of harmonic stasis reminiscent of Debussy and Weberian language are key characteristics of his music, as exemplified in works such as *Piano Distance* (ピアノ・ディスタンス; 1961), *Rain Tree Sketch* (雨の樹素描; 1982), and *A String Around Autumn* (ア・ストリング・アラウンド

オータム; 1989). Interestingly this stylistic approach is not as noticeable in *November Steps* (ノヴェンバー・ステップス; 1967), a piece designed for *biwa*, *shakuhachi* and Western orchestra, since confrontation between Japanese and Western musical traditions was the composer's main concern at that point. Subsequently, in 1973 Takemitsu wrote another piece - *Autumn* (秋) - for the same combination of Japanese instruments and Western orchestra which clearly demonstrates his efforts to integrate these disparate traditions. It is worthy of note that Takemitsu's initial attempts at "emphasizing the contradictions and confront them"<sup>11</sup> somehow seemed to resort to a compromise resulting in integration - a principle compositional approach he anchored in throughout the rest of his career span. Therefore, it may be inferred that his works written after 1973 were a consequence of a resolution of the contradictions between East-West traditions. The following discussion will trace the initial emergence of Japanese traditions in Takemitsu's music, and examine the level of confrontation, integration and resolution of the contradictions in selected works of the composer.

### Japanese traditions intrinsic to Takemitsu's music

Early in his career, Takemitsu displayed strong Western musical ideas in his works, especially apparent harmonic colours of Debussy and Messiaen - both composers whom he had high regards for. Moreover, the West has recognized his strong identification with Western ideas as his own, for instance *Requiem for Strings* (弦楽のためのレクイエム; 1957), as evidently attested by a commission from the Koussevitsky Foundation with a piece called *Dorian Horizon* (地平線のドーリア; 1966). This demonstrates great support of the West on Eastern subjection to Western musical aesthetics. On top of this subjectivity, devastating horror of World War II gave rise to negative perception of everything Japanese and thus causing deliberate detachment from it. Takemitsu had expressed this in *Confronting Silence* -

"Because of World War II, the dislike of things Japanese continued for some time and was not easily wiped out. Indeed, I started out as a composer by denying my "Japaneseness". For someone who began by doubting traditional values, my first impression of Japanese music was unusually strong."<sup>12</sup>

It took Takemitsu about thirteen years after the war to return to his roots. The event that initiated this return took place when he heard the *gidayu* in a *bunraku*<sup>13</sup> performance in 1958.<sup>14</sup> During that time he was "a captive of Webern's music ..." and found the music to the scene of *Horikawa Sarumawashi* from the *bunraku* play *Chikagoro Kawara no Tatehiki* completely new.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> *Bunraku* is a type of traditional Japanese puppet theatre founded by Takemoto Gidayu in Osaka in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. A *bunraku* performance is presented by a narrator who tells the story while performing multiple characters through chanting, a *shamisen* player, and puppeteers who are fully dressed in black complete with a hood. *Gidayu* is a specific style of musical narrative with *shamisen* accompaniment developed by Takemoto Gidayu (1651-1714). This narrative style also includes the chanting of texts by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653 -1724) with whom Takemoto Gidayu collaborated to produce plays which combine musical narrative and puppets.

<sup>14</sup> Although Takemitsu never mentioned when he watched the *bunraku* performance, he briefly stated in 'Mirrors' that "It was ten years after I began studying music that I received a strong shock from a *Bunraku* performance. It was then that I became aware of Japan for the first time." (Takemitsu, 'Mirrors', p. 55) Kenjiro Miyamoto and Peter Burt concur with each other that this took place in 1958 which was ten years after Takemitsu took up composition with Yasuji Kiyose. (Cf. Burt, *The Music of Tōru Takemitsu*, p. 110).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Takemitsu, 'Mirrors', p. 55.

“... the intensity of the melodies and the rhythm of the *futazao*<sup>16</sup> – made me aware of a completely different world of music. The world of sound created by the *futazao* was no less impressive than the world of the Western orchestra with its hundred different instruments.”<sup>17</sup>

A second factor that promoted his return to his Japanese traditions was the Western itself - John Cage in the early 1960s. Interestingly it took an impetus from the West for Takemitsu to reject and consequently accept his roots, hence maneuvering his musical evolution. All these events consequently led him to explore other types of traditional Japanese instruments especially the *biwa* and *shakuhachi*. Takemitsu took up *biwa* with a Chikuzen *biwa* master Kyokushu Hirata (平田旭舟; 1909-1964) for two years before he met Kinshi Tsuruta (鶴田錦史; 1911-1995), the famous *biwa* player and composer who played most of Takemitsu’s film music that were scored for the *biwa*.<sup>18</sup> Takemitsu’s private studies and collaborations with these *biwa* masters support the fact that the composer was considerably knowledgeable about his Japanese traditions to evade a superficial understanding and treatment of Japanese instruments and its subsequent musical traditions. As documented in *A Memoir of Tōru Takemitsu* and substantiated by Takashi Funayama,<sup>19</sup> Takemitsu used his film music as experimental subjects to test the viability of his compositional ideas. Hence, the first time Takemitsu scored for the *biwa* was the soundtrack of the NHK (*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*/日本放送協会; Japan Broadcasting Corporation) television documentary *Japanese Patterns* (日本の文様; 1961); subsequently Takemitsu employed *biwa* and *shakuhachi* in the film scores of two period dramas - *Harakiri* (切腹; 1962) and *Ansatsu* (暗殺; 1964) respectively.<sup>20</sup> Incidentally, Takemitsu’s utilization of traditional Japanese instruments in film soundtracks was the first of its kind during that time.

The resounding success in the soundtracks of *Harakiri*, *Ansatsu*, and *Kwaidan* had spurred Takemitsu to formulate his very own Western based compositional style that also contains Japanese aesthetics and musical tradition. His first attempt at scoring for traditional Japanese instruments was realized in *Eclipse* (蝕 <エクリプス>; 1966) at the age of 36, attesting to his strong reproach to his own traditions. *Eclipse* for *biwa* and *shakuhachi* is the first piece by any composer to combine these two traditional Japanese instruments in a composition. Soon after Leonard Bernstein, the music director of the New York Philharmonic at that time, came to know about *Eclipse* through Seiji Ozawa, Takemitsu received a commission from the New York Philharmonic to write a piece for *biwa*, *shakuhachi* and orchestra to commemorate its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The product of this commission is *November Steps* - a major turn in Takemitsu’s musical development that initiated the notion of confronting two disparate traditions that he had been struggling to compromise this far.

### Confrontation versus Integration in Takemitsu’s Music

Takemitsu’s aesthetic conflict and vacillation between the two traditions had eventually led him to attempt challenging this conflict by deliberately confronting the two disparate traditions through making instrumental contrasts more prominent as illustrated in *November Steps*. Takemitsu detailed his decision

<sup>16</sup> *Futazao* is a special *shamisen* used in *bunraku*.

<sup>17</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, p. 53.

<sup>18</sup> Kinshi Tsuruta was the *biwa* player for the soundtracks of *Kwaidan* (怪談; 1964), *Rebellion* (上意討ち 拝領妻始末; 1967), and *Double Suicide* (心中天網島; 1969).

<sup>19</sup> Takashi Funayama is a prominent Takemitsu scholar whom the author interviewed in Tokyo in December 2009 during her research and fieldwork on Takemitsu’s film music sponsored by the Japan Foundation.

<sup>20</sup> Takemitsu produced a big corpus of film music from 1952 to 1995. Besides art music Takemitsu was preoccupied with film scoring and had collaborated with prominent independent art house directors such as Masahiro Shinoda, Hiroshi Teshigahara, Nagisa Oshima and Masaki Kobayashi. *Harakiri* is directed by Masaki Kobayashi while *Ansatsu* is by Masahiro Shinoda.



“I came to realize that a fundamental, indescribable difference that existed between Western and Japanese instruments. To some extent I knew that intellectually, and wished to overcome those differences and unite the two elements in my music, but it was not as simple as I thought. ... I nearly decided the project was impossible. I thought of giving up but reconsidered. It became important to me to show an American audience the fundamental differences between modern European and traditional Japanese music.”<sup>21</sup>

Takemitsu’s awareness of the contradictions between Japanese and Western musical traditions could be traced back to the early 1960s when he started “experiencing a European revolution and a Japanese tradition”<sup>22</sup> Takemitsu was confronted by the robust yet formidable forces contained in the music of the West as well as of Japan. Takemitsu likened his situation at that time as “facing towards an ocean into which everything pours ... I knew I would plunge into this ocean sooner or later.”<sup>23</sup> Thus composing for *biwa* and *shakuhachi* as well as incorporating Japanese traditions into his Western music ensued naturally in his stylistic development as a Japanese composer. *November Steps* was a timely commission for Takemitsu to plunge into this borderless ocean where East meets West.

### 5.1. Confrontation Between the East and the West: *November Steps*

At its premiere in 1967, *November Steps* shocked its audience with its extraordinary sounds resulting from a unique combination of traditional Japanese instruments and a Western orchestra. Its formal structure is built on an introduction, eleven *danmonos*<sup>24</sup> which are equivalent to variations in Western music, a cadenza, and an orchestral coda. The graceful orchestral opening enriched with a harmonious textural sonority characteristic of Western orchestral music is juxtaposed with the rustic sounds of the *shakuhachi* accompanied by the *biwa*. Takemitsu’s intention of not blending these traditional instruments with the orchestra is clearly exhibited in the visual – instrumental lay out during performance - and musical contrasts between two traditions that are at odds with one another. To “intensify” their differences, a large portion of the piece (mm.25 -35, mm.49 -56) is allocated to display a series of musical dialogue between the *biwa* and *shakuhachi*. Idiomatic performance techniques are employed to showcase the distinct characteristics of traditional Japanese music within the matrix of an orchestral piece. By presenting a massive eight minute cadenza for the *biwa* and *shakuhachi* to take the liberty to improvise according to the original graphic score created by Takemitsu himself, is a deliberate attempt to impose the idea of confrontation of the East and the West. This imposition of the East on the West is illustrated through the concepts of *ma* and *sawari* that are clearly exhibited in the *biwa* and *shakuhachi* passages, creating a bold contrast between the East-West sound worlds throughout the entire composition.

Amongst some important impositions is the concept of “*ma*”. The kanji character, 間 (*ma*) means space, distance, an interval, a pause; it is the space between two continuously occurring phenomena. In traditional Japanese music “*ma*” is the silence between two sounds arising in succession, it is the temporal space between a single sound and that point of intense silence preceding it.

“... this *ma*, this powerful silence, is that which gives life to the sound and removes it from its position of primacy. So it is that sound, confronting the silence of *ma*, yields supremacy in the final expression.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, p. 62.

<sup>22</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, p. 67.

<sup>23</sup> Takemitsu, ‘Mirrors’, p. 52.

<sup>24</sup> The word *dan* (段) in Japanese means step. *Danmono* or *dan* is a section in traditional Japanese music. There are eleven *danmono* in this piece which Takemitsu described “My *November Steps* are a set of eleven variations.” (Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, p. 63).

<sup>25</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, p. 51.

Takemitsu inserted his original symbol - a thick downward arrow with a big pause sign and the phrase “Keep Silence” above it - to indicate this silence of *ma* following m. 52. Remnant sounds of the *shakuhachi* played with *muraiki*<sup>26</sup> technique as well as that of the orchestra from m. 52 linger on in time while the powerful silence of *ma* manifests itself. At this instance *ma* also functions as a *hashi*<sup>27</sup> or bridge linking the end of m.52 to the 9<sup>th</sup> *danmono* that is initiated by *biwa* solo.

Another Japanese aesthetic concept which is of major stylistic significance in Takemitsu’s music is the “beautiful noise” of *sawari* - an acoustical phenomenon created by the physical construction of instruments and playing techniques associated in particular with the *biwa* and *shamisen*. Developed and practiced in traditional Japanese music, *sawari* is the noisy “buzz”, the delicate resonance of a single sound with considerable shades of tone colour produced by plucking the loosely stretched strings of the *biwa*. Takemitsu explained that “Japanese music considers the quality of sound rather than melody. The inclusion in music of a natural noise ... symbolizes the development of the Japanese appreciation of complex sounds.”<sup>28</sup> and defined *sawari* as “The sensing of timbre ... the perception of the succession of movement within sound. ... To put it another way, timbre arises during the time in which one is listening to the shifting of sound. It is ... something indicative of a dynamic state.”<sup>29</sup> Hence this distinctive Japanese aesthetic concept is not only heard in the *biwa* passages but also exhibited in the *shakuhachi* sections. The juxtaposition of Japanese temporal space of *ma* and acoustical phenomenon in *sawari* with Western timbral, pitch and rhythmic precision in *November Steps* presents an uncompromising confrontation of two sound worlds. Its resultant effects demonstrate Takemitsu’s bold attempt of not to blend.

## 5.2 An Integration of Traditions: Post-*November Steps*

Six years later in 1973, Takemitsu embarked on three new projects which involve traditional Japanese instruments; one of these is *Autumn* for *biwa*, *shakuhachi* and orchestra which displays palpable integration between traditions of the East and West.<sup>30</sup> In an interview with Tania Cronin fifteen years later at The Japan Society, New York City on 8 July 1988, Takemitsu clarified that “... *Autumn* was written after *November Steps*. I really wanted to do something which I hadn't done in *November Steps*, not to blend the instruments, but to integrate them.”<sup>31</sup> Hence flutes - piccolo, alto and bass flutes – are included as a means to blend the distinct timbral colours of *shakuhachi* into Western orchestra - an orchestration technique which he did not apply in *November Steps*. He also allowed more frequent simultaneity of soloists and orchestra to reduce contradiction of traditions, thus projecting a greater synthesis. To further “integrate” Eastern and Western musical properties, the music for *biwa* and *shakuhachi* are notated using conventional Western notational system. Greater integration is also achieved by bridging the timbral differences of traditional Japanese and Western instruments through exploitation of performance techniques as well as the inherent timbral qualities of the instruments concerned. Overall, it should be noted that Takemitsu’s integration of the two musical traditions also operates within various Western compositional scheme such as melodic motifs, *ostinato*, orchestral

<sup>26</sup> *Muraiki* is a unique breathy blowing technique which produces a strong explosive sound.

<sup>27</sup> Arata Isozaki defines the relationship between *ma* and *hashi* as “Anything that crossed, filled, connected or projected into the interim *ma* between two edges was called a *hashi*.” (Cf. Chenette, ‘The Concept of *MA* and the Music of Takemitsu’, p. 11).

<sup>28</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, p. 65.

<sup>29</sup> Takemitsu, ‘My Perception of Time in Traditional Japanese Music’, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> The other two compositions are *In an Autumn Garden* (秋庭歌一具; 1973, 1979) for *gagaku* ensemble, and *Voyage* (旅; 1973) for three *biwas*. Takemitsu composed a total of seven pieces either solely for traditional Japanese instruments or for a combination of traditional Japanese instruments and Western instruments. *Distance* (ディスタンス; 1972) for oboe with or without *shō* is amongst these works.

<sup>31</sup> Takemitsu, Cronin and Tann, ‘Afterword’, p. 210.

doublings, and contrapuntal textures in *Autumn*.<sup>32</sup> Hence, retaining and giving prominence to both musical traditions.

Another interesting fact about *Autumn* that warrants attention is that it is Takemitsu's penultimate composition written for the combination of Japanese instruments and Western orchestra; the last piece is *Ceremonial - An Autumn Ode* (セレモニアル –An Autumn Ode –; 1992) for *shō* and orchestra. Although Takemitsu did not discuss his decision for not producing further works that include traditional Japanese instruments, both Kenjiro Miyamoto and Peter Burt speculated that Takemitsu himself “showed no further interest” and “it made no sense to unite Japanese music with European.”<sup>33</sup> Burt goes on to say that Takemitsu “was still strongly influenced by the aesthetics of traditional Japanese music. ... Takemitsu was eventually to achieve the most successful integration of ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ elements of any Japanese composer to date.”<sup>34</sup>

Based on Takemitsu's approach and musical products produced after 1970, I view this abandonment of traditional Japanese instruments as a sign of the composer's change of attitude towards the issue of confrontation and integration. This observation may be supported by Takemitsu's clarification regarding *Autumn* at the interview at the Japan Society which implicitly expresses his contradictory perception and approach concerning the treatment of East-West traditions in his musical creation. It is therefore not unreasonable to posit Takemitsu's resolution to integrate as a consequence of his eventual awareness that while confrontation may be achieved effectively through the implementation of combined forces of instruments from both cultures as demonstrated in *November Steps*, the resultant impact through juxtaposing East-West aesthetics in works written for Western instruments is rather inconsequential since a major aspect of disparity in connection with instrumental timbre is nonexistent. Therefore integration of opposing traditions may be viewed as an inevitable response towards what Takemitsu stressed numerous times in his own writings about the inherent properties of both traditions as well as “a fundamental, indescribable difference existed between Western and Japanese instruments.” In a lecture delivered at Yale University in 1975, Takemitsu viewed the “trial-and-error approach” practiced by his contemporaries as well as himself as a consequence of and response towards East-West cross cultural reciprocity at that time as a necessary step towards the hatching of a “vast universal cultural egg” - a concept he formulated based on Buckminster Fuller's view on geographic, historic and cultural unity of all peoples.<sup>35</sup>

### 5.3 Incubating That Universal Egg

Takemitsu's notion of the “universal egg” has direct repercussions on his works in general. Integration of East-West musical traditions which appeared in *Arc* (弧; 1963) for piano and orchestra continued to exert its unabated presence and soon became the stylistic nucleus in Takemitsu's musical language. Centering on the metaphor of Japanese “gardenscape”, one of the several extra musical themes that the composer was preoccupied with for the following two decades, elements in a Japanese garden are symbolically manifested through seating arrangement of the orchestra, analogized instrumental as well as musical representations in this piece. Through his skilful blending of Japanese aesthetics and Western musical practices at multiple levels, Takemitsu was already quietly incubating this universal egg which later became the iconic branding of his musical style.

As epitomized in *Voice* (声; 1971), *Rain Tree Sketch, Dream/Window* (夢窓; 1985), and *How Slow the Wind* (ハウ・スロー・ザ・ウインド; 1991), Japanese aesthetics of *ma*, *sawari*, and delicate instrumental colours are interspersed with Western harmonic idiom, formal structure as well as musical

<sup>32</sup> For further reading of *Autumn* see Yoko Nakatani, ‘November Steps and Autumn: A Comparative Analysis of Two Orchestral Works by Toru Takemitsu’, pp. 32-54, and Edward Smaldone, ‘Japanese and Western Confluences in Large-Scale Pitch Organization of Tōru Takemitsu's *November Steps* and *Autumn*’, pp. 221-225.

<sup>33</sup> Burt, *The Music of Tōru Takemitsu*, p. 111.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>35</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, p. 91.



gestures. *Voice* for solo flute, is an instrumental theatre composition which requires the performer to deliver a spoken text while playing.<sup>36</sup> This piece is saturated by extended woodwind performance techniques exhibiting *sawari* produced by multiphonics, harmonics, and microtones. Besides these, the flautist is also required to sing, hum, growl, and speak into the instrument – Burt corresponds these techniques to the characteristic “extensions of instrumental performance by means of vocalization” in the *nō* and *kabuki* theatres.<sup>37</sup> Through heavily accented attacks without tonguing, rapid movements of hollow tones with pitch-bending vibrato, chromatic glissandi, and multiphonics, Takemitsu promptly evoked the music of *shakuhachi* through the conventional Western flute.

Lyricism, simplicity, tonal harmonic language and extra-musical metaphors referring to garden, rain, and dream characterize Takemitsu’s late period – a stylistic expression which he once remarked to Pierre Boulez “My music is very romantic.”<sup>38</sup> Within the domain of this romanticism, Japanese aesthetics continue to permeate in his music. For instance in *Rain Tree Sketch* for piano *ma* occurs at the end of a phrase or within a phrase as indicated by frequent appearances of rests and fermatas of varying lengths, as well as instructions such as *senza misura* and “dying away”. Delicate and floating timbral textures of the piece are strongly reminiscent of Debussyan pianistic colour despite its octatonic and whole tone harmony. Apart from these musical influences, elements and aesthetics of a Japanese garden play an important role in the integration of East-West traditions in Takemitsu’s music whereby these artistic constituents are transposed to their respective musical representations thus creating a metaphorical garden as in *Dream/Window* for orchestra. These metaphorical references are apparent in the light, pointillistic, evanescent instrumental colours and subtle musical gestures which evoke a continuous kaleidoscopic aural experience which one often encounters in the quiet, serene environment of a Japanese garden. The unique symbolic seating arrangement for this piece candidly parallels the objects – rocks, trees, grass and sand - contained in a Japanese garden. In the midst of this delicate soundscape the ever presence of *ma* is still maintained and can be traced in the intermittent orchestral sweeps.

At this juncture, I would like to consider the culmination of Takemitsu’s creativity with regards to the idea of the universal egg as a formation of a site for cultural reciprocity, which has produced a large corpus of works amongst which demonstrate Takemitsu as a remarkable melodist. These products whose captivating themes may be exemplified in many of his film soundtracks, *Face of Another* (他人の顔; 1966), *Hymn to a Tired Man* (日本の青春; 1968) and *Dodeskaden* (どですかでん; 1970) just to name a few. In his article *Mirror of Trees, Mirror of Grass* of 1974, Takemitsu confessed “I probably belong to a type of composer of songs who keeps thinking about melody; I am old-fashioned.”<sup>39</sup> This side of his musical attributes is not as apparent in the art music of his early and middle period as the composer was in his *avant garde*, experimental mode of operations. Lyricism positioned itself in his late period as demonstrated in numerous compositions such as *How Slow the Wind, And Then I know ‘twas Wind* (そして、それが風であることを知った; 1992), and *Archipelago S* (群島S; 1993) - three pieces which share similar melodic contour. *Ma* is manifested throughout these works suggesting the imagery of the irregular and intermittent movements of the wind in the former two pieces, and figuratively mapping the spatial stage arrangement of the twenty one players onto the five metaphorical islands in the latter.

Hence, Takemitsu’s contribution to the universal egg is portrayed in his musical style that can be seen as a gradual development from the experimental, serial period of the 1960s and 1970s towards a more romantic and tonal phase in his late periods, Japanese aesthetics of *ma*, *sawari*, delicate instrumental colours produced via extended performance techniques, as well as simultaneity of independent stratification of rhythmic construct - a characteristic in the *nō* theatre - are formative traits in his music.

<sup>36</sup> Takemitsu drew verses from *Handmade Proverbs*, a poem by the surrealist poet Shūzo Takiguchi; these texts are first heard in French then in English: “*Qui va là? Qui que tu sois, parle transparence! Who goes there? Speak, transparence, whoever you are?*”

<sup>37</sup> Burt, *The Music of Tōru Takemitsu*, p. 138.

<sup>38</sup> Reynolds, ‘Roger Reynolds and Toru Takemitsu: A Conversation’, p. 70.

<sup>39</sup> Takemitsu, ‘Mirrors’, p. 63.

## Conclusion

In the course of his development as a composer throughout a forty year career span, Takemitsu had numerous times revealed the inner conflict he constantly underwent facing disparate musical traditions of the East and the West. Although he had been successful in producing renowned compositions that are revered worldwide across cultures, he seemed to be constantly engaged with negotiating between the idea of innovation and traditions in both the process of confrontation or integration. Hence, Takemitsu resolved to employ the mechanism of integration as his compositional methodology in creating phenomenal works which strike a harmonious union of two traditions. Burt views Takemitsu's "discovering a personal symbiosis of the two cultures" as his biggest artistic achievements, and the elegance in his works "far surpasses that of the solutions adopted by previous generations of Japanese composers."<sup>40</sup>

From a post-structuralist stance, tradition can be taken to exist as a consequence of innovation and conversely innovation in itself is subjected to tradition. Therefore one is within the other and cannot be without the other. This accounts for the notion that tradition cannot be innovated and thus entails that the binary opposites of tradition and innovation should be displaced and overturned, as these opposites deconstruct themselves whereby one cannot subjugate the other. Hence, this view of displacement and overturning relates to Takemitsu's contradictory ideologies on confrontation and integration stemming from the notion of tradition and innovation may be viewed as a manifestation of his subconscious sympathy on the correlation between tradition and innovation. Moreover, the creative products resulted from Takemitsu's integration of traditions remains within the continuum of musical development rather than a form of innovation. From this exploration of Takemitsu's musical formulation and formation, I reassert that the content of his music reflects one aspect of the inherent properties of the "vast universal cultural egg" of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for which he played an active role in incubating, as reiterated in a lecture delivered at the Donald Keen Center at Columbia University in 1989.

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<sup>40</sup> Burt, *The Music of Tōru Takemitsu*, p. 235.

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