Title
Synergies between East Asian and Western Classical Musical Aesthetics

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Synergies between East Asian and Western Classical Musical Aesthetics

A dissertation submitted
in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Music

by

Pin Hsin Lin

2016
There are two volumes to this dissertation: the first is a monograph, and the second is a musical composition, both of which are described below.

For centuries, many if not most, classical composers have been aiming to make style innovations that are distinct from their predecessors, as well as forge their own unique, musical identities. This dissertation is, in part, an analysis of representative works by seven important composers of the past 150 years, from the East and from the West, focusing on how each has successfully synthesized Western and Eastern compositional techniques, textures, timbres, and
harmonies to create, for their time, fresh, new sounds. One of my main goals was to understand in depth how exoticism works in music, from both cultural vantage points.

This monograph illuminates how Claude Debussy, Giacomo Puccini, Gustav Mahler, Igor Stravinsky, Benjamin Britten, Toru Takemitsu, and I-Sang Yun co-mingle Western and Eastern idioms, in each case seeking new musical and expressive meanings, and an expansion of the traditions that they inherited.

At times such efforts are quite superficial and are intended to exploit a sensational, exotic effect. However, in most of the cases I give, the relationship of East and West is deep and profound. Especially in the works by Britten, Takemitsu and Yun, the cultural hybridism is much more subtle with much blurring of boundaries. This arises in part from the fact that most Western composers of the late 19th and early 20th century had, at best, a vague and simplistic knowledge of the music of the East and, quite frankly, no real motivation to explore it in depth. They were generally inclined to tap into well-understood stereotypes that their audiences would have easily understood. This starts to change with Debussy and Mahler, who may be among the first Western composers to explore a more intrinsic, and subtle cultural hybridism between East and West.

The supplement material, Rippling Brook, is a large scale tone-poem, in part, inspired by Mahler’s symphonic song-cycle, Das Lied von der Erde (“The Song of the Earth”). The central motive that winds through the whole piece is a lovely folk song from the Yunan Province of mainland China called Hstao He Tang Sui (“Rippling Brook”). Mahler borrowed ancient Chinese poems to imbue his score with the perfume of Asian culture, making little effort to make the music sound particularly ‘Chinese.’ However, as we will see there are indeed subtle connections to Chinese
musical elements, though hardly of the overt ‘exotic’ sort of ‘chinoiserie’ that we will see in the Puccini and the Stravinsky.

My ‘song of the earth’ is a rippling brook, a metaphorical witness of the evolution of humanity, and its at-times devastating impact upon the earth’s ecology. To illustrate, I added descriptive texts at important junctures in the musical journey, a kind of running exegesis. Through the composing process, I tried to create a style of work that I had not done before. My orchestral sonorities synergize both Western and Eastern harmonies, timbres, techniques, and textures. I hope that in so doing, I have begun to forge a new and distinctive voice for my music that will be a worthy companion to the great works that I have studied herein.
The dissertation of Pin Hsin Lin is approved.

Michael Dean

David S. Lefkowitz

Elizabeth Upton

Ian Krouse, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016
To the Memory of My Father and Mother
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I have also enjoyed living in Los Angeles for much of this degree as it has enabled me to broaden my horizon in many ways. And deep appreciation to my parents, Chi-Jenn Lin and Ching-Yueh Lin, for instilling in me the importance of education and for offering their love and support when I needed it most. I also thank my supportive uncle, Ding-Ji Lin, and aunt, Hsiu-Hua Hung, as well as numerous friends who enjoyed this long journey with me.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Pin Hsin Lin received her first Bachelor’s degree in Accounting at I-Shou University in 1997, and a second from Roosevelt University in 2003, majoring in music composition. The following fall she enrolled at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, where she received a Master of Music in 2006, again majoring in composition. Her main composition teachers have been Richard Danielpour, Ian Krouse, David Lefkowitz, and the late Nicholas Maw; she has also studied electro-piano with Paweł Chęciński, and acoustic composition. Before matriculating at UCLA, in 2013, she commenced doctoral studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaigne.

Her music has been performed by the American Composers and Peabody Symphony Orchestras. She has also enjoyed performances at the Bridges East and West Music Festival of University at California Los Angeles, “Music Of Taiwan 2013” of the Taiwanese American Sinfonia Organization, SUONO MOBILE USA, Sound Exchange Musical Festival at National Taiwan Normal University, and Indiana State University, and by the University of Illinois Percussion Ensemble, Turks Head Knot (featuring horn soloist Adam Unsworth), Junior Chamber Music, and VEM Quartet. Her music has also been performed at the Bowdoin International Music Festival, the St. Magnus Festival, the Bard Festival, the Centrum Chamber Music Festival, and at Roosevelt University. She has given lectures in composition and analysis at the Aspen Composers’ Conference, Murray State University’s Athena Festival, and University of Central Missouri’s New Music Festival.
INTRODUCTION

Project Background

For centuries, many if not most, classical composers have sought to make style innovations that are distinct from their predecessors, as well as forge their own unique, musical identities. This dissertation is, in part, an analysis of representative works by seven important composers of the past 150 years, from the East and from the West, focusing on how each has successfully synthesized Western and Eastern compositional techniques, textures, timbres, and harmonies to create, for their time, fresh, new sounds. One of my main goals was to understand in depth how exoticism works in music, from both cultural vantage points. There have been (and continue to be) many studies exploring cultural theory, pitch structure, and music composition. There is also much research that endeavor to illustrate precise examples of local musical elements and “transcultural composing blend.” (Locke 228-229) Musically, the selected examples of specific exotic sounds in my dissertation are discussed further for the purpose of demonstrating the characteristics of Western and Eastern systems, as well as some of the aesthetical and technical issues found in cross-cultural hybrids.

Research Objectives

This monograph illuminates how Claude Debussy, Giacomo Puccini, Gustav Mahler, Igor Stravinsky, Benjamin Britten, Toru Takemitsu, and I-Sang Yun co-mingle Western and Eastern idioms, in each case seeking new musical and expressive meanings, and an expansion of the traditions that they inherited. “The categories of “nationalist”/folk-inspired music, on one hand, and “exotic” music, on the other, display certain inherent similarities: Both types of pieces —
nationalist/folkloristic ones and exotic ones — tend to isolate melodies, rhythms, and sonorities that are considered ‘typical” or somehow characteristic of the home or distant people and that are usually also considered somehow pure, simple, and natural. The pieces enrich those musical materials harmonically, develop them motivically, and so on, in order that the resulting musical whole be acceptable within the parameters of Western art music.”

At times such efforts are quite superficial and are intended to exploit a sensational, exotic effect. However, in most of the cases I give, the relationship of East and West is deep and profound. Especially in the works by Britten, Takemitsu and Yun, the cultural hybridism is much more subtle than Debussy, Puccini, and Mahler, with much blurring of boundaries. This arises in part from the fact that most Western composers of the late 19th and early 20th century had, at best a vague and simplistic knowledge of the music of the East and, quite frankly, no real motivation to explore it in depth. They were generally inclined to tap into well-understood stereotypes that their audiences would have easily understood. This starts to change with Debussy and Mahler, who may be among the first Western composers to explore a more intrinsic, and subtle cultural hybridism between East and West.

**Significance of the Project**

This dissertation is divided into four distinct chapters organized by subject. Chapter 1 is devoted to an examination of how Western composers use stereotypical Eastern idioms and techniques for an exotic effect. Works studied are Debussy’s *La Mer*, and Puccini’s operas *Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot*. My analysis reveals numerous sound effects created by a transcultural blending of Eastern and Western musical idioms. Chapter 2 aims to show how Western composers...
create a true synthesis (hybrid) between East and West by focusing on cross-cultural elements in a more subtle and often symbolic manner. To illustrate this, I chose Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*, Stravinsky’s *Chant du Rossignol*, and Britten’s *Songs from the Chinese* and *Curlew River*. My discussion focuses on how Eastern influences enabled Britten, in particular, to reach a new pinnacle in his art that far transcends the more superficial exoticism of some of his predecessors. Chapter 3, in contrast to the previous two, explores how Eastern composers partially assimilate Western musical culture while remaining true to their own native cultures. To illustrate this, I focused on Takemitsu’s *Autumn* and Yun’s *Symphony No. 4*. As might be expected, when the ‘cross over’ emanates from East to West the result is highly distinctive: the Western composers preserve their ‘Westerness’ as the Eastern composers preserve theirs. Arguably this occurs to different degrees: I find Yun’s music to be more ‘German’ than Korean, whereas Takemitsu seems to retain considerable more of his Japanese. And this, as we will see, is not merely the result of Takemitsu exploring Japanese instruments, but has at least as much to do with the composer’s distinctive use of space and time, which often subverts or contradicts the traditional Western predilection for teleological structures and paradigms.

Epilogue, the final part, summarizes the separate analyses of the previous three chapters, and examines my new orchestral work, *Rippling Brook*. This piece is a large scale tone-poem, in part inspired by Mahler’s symphonic song-cycle, *Das Lied von der Erde* (“The Song of the Earth”). The central motive that winds through the whole piece is a lovely folk song from the Yunan Province of mainland China called *Hstao He Tang Sui* (“Rippling Brook”). Mahler borrowed ancient Chinese poems to imbue his score with the perfume of Asian culture, making little effort to make the music sound particularly ‘Chinese.’ However, as we will see there are indeed subtle connections to Chinese musical elements, though hardly of the overt ‘exotic’ sort of ‘chinoiserie’ that we will see in the music of Puccini and the Stravinsky.
My ‘song of the earth’ is a rippling brook, a metaphorical witness to the evolution of humanity, and its all too often devastating impact upon the earth’s ecology. To illustrate, I added descriptive texts at important junctures in the musical journey, a kind of running exegesis. Through the composing process, I tried to create a style of work that heretofore I had not personally explored. My orchestral sonorities synergize both Western and Eastern harmonies, timbres, techniques, and textures. I hope that in so doing, I have begun to forge a new and distinctive voice for my music that will be a worthy companion to the great works that I have studied herein.
Chapter 1
Western Composers and Eastern Exoticism

1.1 Claude Debussy’s La Mer (1903-1905)

The full title of this great Impressionist work is *La mer, trois esquisses symphoniques pour orchestra* (The sea, three symphonic sketches for orchestra), or, as it is usually called, *La Mer*. It was premiered on October 15, 1905 at the Concerts Lamoureux under the musical direction of Camille Chevillard. Debussy’s principle influences include the music of Russia, and certainly the exotic colors of pan-Asian music (such as the Javanese gamelan that he heard at the Paris International Exposition in 1889). He was also influenced by the ideas of writers and poets, like Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, and Charles-Pierre Baudelaire, as well as the Japanese woodblock printing artist, Katsushika Hokusai. *La Mer* is both representative—and perhaps the greatest—of Debussy’s mature works, combining among others, whole tone scales and the exotic colors of Asian music. This work embodies the notion of orientalism, both cultural and musical.

The primary inspiration of *La Mer* comes in the form of Hokusai’s iconic *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* (ca. 1830-32) — also known as *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, from the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji (Fugaku sanjurokkei)* — its popularity emblematic of the “japonisme” movement that

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3 Ibid.

4 The ‘orient’ in the term ‘orientalism’ (literally, *rising sun*) is generally taken to mean either the Islamic Middle East (e.g. North Africa, Turkey, the Levant, Arabia, Persia), or East and South Asia (the ‘Far East’, e.g. India, Indochina, China, Japan), or all of these together. In music, in its strictest sense, ‘orientalism’ refers to the dialects of musical Exoticism within Western art music that evoke the East or the orient; in a broader sense, it refers to the attitude toward those same geo-cultural regions as expressed in certain Western musical works, regardless of whether a given work evokes the music of the region or not. (N.B.: ‘Orientalism’ is a term that has a significant and broad meaning outside and independent of music)
overtook France in the mid-19th century. While a student in Rome from 1885-1887, Debussy often rummaged through the city’s antique shops and purchased Japanese artifacts to take back to Paris. It comes as no surprise then that his studio would retain many of these objects, and chief among them the Japanese artwork. Debussy kept on his wall a framed print of Hokusai’s Great Wave. Cultural circles throughout Europe greatly admired Hokusai’s work — a result of the 1853 treaty that opened commercial trade between Japan and the West and therefore created a prolific market for Japanese art, particularly in France. Just as Japanese art of the Edo period prized decorative motives independent of system or conventional development, so did Debussy have a distaste for formal structure, motivic development, and the use of strict Germanic musical forms that composers adhered to during the Classical and Romantic periods.

For both artists (Hokusai & Debussy), creating dynamic new colors and a sense of motion was of paramount importance, and their work moves well beyond that of mere portraiture. Hokusai’s work as a point of inspiration for Debussy was solidified by the composer’s use of a detail crop of The Great Wave on the cover of the 1905 first edition of La Mer published by A. Durand & Fils. As he said, “I love images almost as much as music.” Debussy was notorious for personally curating the cover artwork for his scores, and in choosing The Great Wave — an image already so recognizable throughout Western Europe — Debussy immediately brought a sense of familiarity and exoticism to his new work.

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5 “Hokusai was one of the most representative Japanese woodblock print artists of the early 19th century. His prints of landscapes exerted a strong influence on the early Impressionists such as Degas, Manet, and Monet, as well as Post-Impressionists such as van Gogh and Art Nouveau artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec.” Rhodes, David. Hokusai Retrospective. The Brooklyn Rail, November 2011.


8 “The links which Debussy maintained with the visual arts were just as significant. During his stay in Rome he wrote: ‘I’ve had enough of music, of the same everlasting landscape; I want to see a Monet and hear some Offenbach’. Louis Laloy, his first French biographer, revealed in 1909 that ‘He received his most profitable lessons from poets and painters, not from musicians’, while he himself told Varèse in 1911 ‘I love pictures almost as much as music’. He met Toulouse-Lautrec, knew Maurice Denis, who designed
Figure 1.1: Katsushika Hokusai, Under the Wave off Kanagawa (Kanagawa oki nami ura), also known as The Great Wave, from the series Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji (Fugaku sanjūrokkei), c. 1830-32, polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on paper, 10 1/8 x 14 15 /16 inches; 25.7 x 37.9 cm. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Two of the painting’s most striking features, the recursive shapes of the waves, and the use of distinct planar spaces have direct correlations in Debussy’s composition: the many repetitions of often static motives across ever changing backgrounds to the former, and the frequent use of textures built of discreet orchestral layers to the latter. Such layering was an oft imitated aspect of this and other mature Debussy works, and a step towards Stravinskian ‘stratification’ to come. Though Debussy never uses fully stratified textures, the layering in La Mer comes awfully close to it.

the cover of La damoiselle élue, Odilon Redon, who gave him a lithograph, and Whistler, from whom he borrowed the title of his Nocturnes; he may also have met Gauguin, who had a ‘mania for relating painting to music’ and likened colors to instrumental timbres. Robert Godet recounted that they established agreement instantly on a number of essential points: love of Degas, indifference or skepticism towards some of the Impressionists who had become ubiquitous, and admiration for Japanese artists, especially Hokusai (whose work adorns the cover of La Mer).” Lesure, François. “Debussy, Claude,” Grove Music Online through Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353?q=Debussy&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit, September 3, 2016 consulted.
I find the possibility that Debussy’s layering and Stravinsky’s stratification may have been in part influenced by Hokosai a quite fascinating prospect. A closer examination reveals that every color in Hokosai’s wood-block print is independent and stays in its small range, without overlapping each other. Yet musically, the multi-dimensional textural parameters of both Debussy and Stravinsky’s composition contain different rhythmic patterns, timbres, dynamic changes, or space (antiphony). “Thus different textural components may be separated or distinguished from one another by any of these (or other) qualities (stratification along any of these parameters may be thought of as placing the textural components in different “spaces,” whether those spaces are registral, literal — the actual spatial location of a textural component—or other).” Moreover, Debussy’s multi-layered textures make La Mer sound like a flowing architecture, which provides some liberty of textural components.

“Debussy’s exoticism differs from that of other composers of his generation in that his appropriation of non-Western music left traces on a structural level as well as on a surface one.” In that sense, his form of musical encounter leads the way towards other techniques and approaches of later 20th-century music, in which composers such as Henry Cowell, Francis Poulenc, Colin McPhee, and Lou Harrison would take such structural appropriation even further. His unique textures and exotic timbres make La Mer sound colorful and enchanting like an atmospheric painting of nature. Arguably the use of the “whole-tone scale” is one of the work’s most spectacularly

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10 Ibid.


13 “Whole-tone melodic passages within the diatonic system were explored fairly extensively by Russian composers in the 19th century. A passage near the end of Glinka’s overture to Ruslan and Lyudmila (1842) shows how a whole-tone scale in the bass can be harmonized by a series of transitions, all keeping within the bounds of traditional tonality. Dargomizhsky, in The Stone Guest (1866–9), came much nearer to using it as an autonomous system, generating contoured melodic lines as well as harmonies (e.g., Act III). But it was in the works of the French Impressionists, particularly Debussy, that it was first used in opposition to the major–minor system, as
exotic elements. Perhaps it is also ironic that there is scant if any evidence that it derives in any way from pan-Asian music. Still to a western ear it evokes another worldly effect quite akin to orientalism and often associated with it. The truth is Debussy appears to have adopted the technique and makes frequent use of it in La Mer and in other mature works. Perhaps we could call this artificial exoticism. It is reasonable to surmise that Debussy probably learned the scale from Russian composers who used both the whole-tone and octatonic scales to express the supernatural, and magical scenes, etc. Debussy seems to have associated the whole-tone scale with water, as Puccini associated the same scale with Asian styles. (Ch. 1.2 and 1.3 discuss how Puccini appropriates the whole-tone scale from Debussy and uses it to evoke the orient in both his Madama Butterfly and Turandot.) It is unclear where Debussy found the whole-tone scale, but he is probably the first French Impressionist to use it to organize and reproduce all elements of a passage in his orchestral work of symbolism, Prélude à ‘L’Après-midi d’un faune (Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun, 1894).\(^\text{14}\) Perhaps his penchant for parallel voice leading (at times by whole step) coupled with his explorations of the augmented triad may have led him in this direction. After all the augmented triad is the only type available in the whole-tone scale and its isolated use conjures up this scale:

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\(^{14}\) Paul Dukas was another French composer using the whole-tone scale during the same period, although he was not Impressionist. “Ariane et Barbe-bleue brought the composer international acclaim following its première in 1907…Dukas finally chose a text in Maeterlinck’s Ariane et Barbe-bleue…Maeterlinck’s narrative style gave Dukas the freedom for symphonic development of a dense motivic texture. A good example of his compositional technique in the opera is the six-stage variation of a theme in Act 1. Its harmonic elaboration forms the fundamental notes of a whole-tone scale and corresponds, in the action, to the opening of six doors and the discovery of six hoards of jewels.” Schwartz, Manuela (with G.W. Hopkins), Grove Music Online through Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08282q=Paul+Dukas&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit, September 8, 2016 consulted.
whether or not it is actually present. Below is a characteristic passage of ‘planed’ augmented triads played by flutes, oboes, clarinets, and violas in mm. 62-63. (Figure 1.2)

![La mer: parallel augmented triads of mvt. 1 (mm. 62-63)](image)

Figure 1.2

The first movement, *De l’aube à midi sur la mer* (From dawn to noon on the sea), is made up of two main sections, enclosed by an introduction and a coda. Building upon earlier defining orchestral works like *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* and *Trois Nocturnes*, Debussy relies heavily upon the harp, woodwind, and muted brass instruments as his primary tone colors, which produce warm, subtle, and introverted tones. Some of their timbres sound reminiscent of Asian instrumental colors. For instance, the harps and strings (with pizzicato) have an affinity to the crisp plucked sound of Asian plucking zithers such as the Japanese koto and Chinese guzheng. (Figure 1.3) The arpeggio and glissando effects on the harps also have counterparts in the timbres of koto and guzheng. The muted brass strongly recalls the potent nasal quality of Asian vocal styles, because the sound quality becomes depressed and the volume reduces. The frequent use of high tessitura recalls the potent nasal quality of Asian vocal styles. For instance, the muted French horns (mm. 35-40 at rehearsal 3) as well as comparable passages throughout the score often remain in the high tessitura, which is obviously akin to the high intensity of Asian instruments such as the sheng (Chinese mouth-blown wind instrument, no reed), shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute), xiao (Chinese bamboo flute), and erhu (Chinese two-string violin).

The very beginning of this piece sounds particularly Japanese and oriental. Why is this? Part of the answer lies in the pitch world: the perfect fifth (B — F-sharp) followed by a major sixth (B —
G-sharp) suggests a major pentatonic scale, and as the passage develops it becomes indeed pentatonic. However, the texture is at least as striking, and bears a strong resemblance to the sorts of heterophonic textures which abound in Asian music. For instance, in the opening passage of the first movement, the first harp imitates the second harp, clearly and constantly stating the same idea (F-sharp — G-sharp) but offset from each other. Meanwhile, the cellos also ruminate upon the same idea but with a different rhythmic pattern — a short sixteenth-note F-sharp followed by a G-sharp. (Fig. 1.3)

![Figure 1.3: Heterophony, mvt 1, mm, 1-5](image)

At Rehearsal 2, the heterophonic effect becomes more colorful while the textural parameters become more complicated and diverse in tessitura, dynamic, and rhythm. The first harp continues

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15 “Heterophony (from Gk. heteros: ‘other’, ‘different’ and phōnē: ‘voice’). Term coined by Plato, of uncertain meaning; now used to describe simultaneous variation of a single melody… The term ‘heterophony’ is also used in discussion of much accompanied vocal music of the Middle East and East Asia, where the instrument provides an embellished version of the vocal part.” Cooke, Peter. “Heterophony,” Grove Music Online through Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/12945?q=heterophony&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#first hit, September 8, consulted.
imitating the second harp as before (B — A), accompanied by strings with tremolo, an effective evocation of ocean sound. The English horn and the first trumpet pick up the same rhythmic idea as the cellos had earlier. Meanwhile, the flutes, clarinets, bassoons, and later first harp present the partial pentatonic scale (C-sharp, F-sharp, G-sharp, B). The overall sonorities herein are strikingly akin to Asian style. (Fig. 1.4 and 1.5)
Figure 1.4: Multi-layers of heterophony, mvt 1, mm, 23-30
Figure 1.4: Multi-layers of heterophony, mvt 1, mm. 23-30 (cont.)
Compare the Debussy to the three excerpts of transcriptions of Asian heterophonic textures that follows\textsuperscript{16} (Fig. 1.5)

Figure 1.5 (a): Excerpt from a Chinese folk song, *Flower Drum Play*

Figure 1.5 (b): Excerpt from a Japanese folk song, *Fuki No Kyoku*\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} “The evidence that heterophony exists in Chinese folk music from very early days is found in “Ch’ang He” or “to sing and respond,” a method of singing much like antiphonal singing in medieval times. “Ch’ang He” may first have come into use because of convenience. Should a singer run out of breath at the end of a long phrase, another singer or a group of singers would join in and carry it to the finish. Or, a singer would begin his part and be joined later in the refrain by a chorus of singers. This is called “I Ch’ang Ts’ung He” (one sings to the response of many)….. Heterophony comes into being when the parts for “Ch’ang” and “Hê” begin to merge.” Mok, Robert T. *Heterophony in Chinese Folk Music*. Journal of the International Folk Music Council, Vol. 18 (1966), 14-23.

\textsuperscript{17} “This composition affords a good example of heterophonic accompaniment, that is, a style in which the same melody is followed by all the performers with slight modifications. The *so* (or *koto*) is an oblong zither, derived from the Chinese *ch’iu*. The dissonant
The heterophony begun by the two harps and basses is quite comparable to this oft-used East Asian texture. A piano reduction of this passage reveals that it is essentially a single melodic shape presented in octaves, at times harmonized by parallel fourths, over an undulating pedal point. However, Debussy orchestrates in such a way that no single instrument or color group presents the entire phrase, creating a spectacular heterophonic effect. Taken as a whole, this is one of the most strikingly Asia-sounding passages of the entire work and, especially coming this early, sets the tone for what is to come.

Numerous instances of micro-heterophony exist throughout this score. In the very next section the divided cellos seem to be playing simultaneous variants of a composite line that neither has, while the flutes and harps are doing simultaneous variants of the same idea at slightly differing speeds. (Fig. 1.6).

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18 "The regional rulers of Siam (and Java) maintain fairly large orchestras, probably descended from those of ancient China. All the instruments play the same melody with certain variants (heterophonic accompaniment). The tempo gradually increases from m.84 to m.136." Ibid., 4 and 213.
Figure 1.6: Multiple layers, heterophony, and pentatonicism, mvt 1, mm, 31-36
The following example of gagaku score demonstrates that each layer has its own characteristic unit and unique identity, another characteristic strategy in Japanese music.

![Gagaku Score](image)

At Reh 6 (Fig. 1.8) the flute (and later the Cor anglais) ‘color’ some of the notes of the solo oboe, but not all, again a heterophonic approach employed not only by Debussy, but as we will see, by Stravinsky and Britten as well. One might be tempted to compare this passage to the characteristic textures of Chinese Beijing opera as well as the musical accompaniment of Japanese Noh, which feature heavy use of strings, flutes and drums, often playing the same idea but slightly varied. In mm. 62-67, Debussy creates multi-layer heterophonic effects with various rhythmic patterns and articulations, avoiding the often heavy-handed orchestration of the late Romantic era in favor of an airy, transparent texture that attenuates the lower register in favor of the high.

One final instance of micro-heterophony is found in the second movement, at mm. 62-67, where the harps, flutes, clarinets, and pizzicato violins, all seem to be presenting the same idea but in different ways. (Fig. 1.8)

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Figure 1.8: Multiple layers heterophony, mvt 1, mm, 62-67
Figure 1.8: Multiple layers heterophony, mvt 1, mm, 62-67 (cont.)
The introduction (mm. 1-30) presents the essential melodic material played by the strings and harps. This opening slow melody (mm. 1-5) presented by harps and violas recalls both Japanese intonation and color (e.g., Koto [long zither], Kugo [angled harp]). (Figure 1.9) The static motion of the melodic line sounds simple and clear, which reminds listeners of the often tranquil mood of traditional Japanese koto music. One could argue that the thin texture evokes the spare style of traditional Japanese painting, with the contrabass and harps contributing a plucked-like effect.

![Figure 1.9](image-url)

The importance of the following motif, a step-wise ascent with a very short sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth note, cannot be overstated. It is called “Scotch snap” and used to initiate many of the most memorable ideas of the work and is clearly derived from Japanese vocal and shakuhachi (尺八) styles.

![Figure 1.10: Scotch snap, movement 1, m. 6](image-url)

Note that in the following example this figure is notated as a grace note a note below or above the main sustained pitch. Debussy however uses the Scotch snap notation characteristic of many Western scores.

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20 “Scotch snap: A melodic figuration consisting of a stressed semiquaver followed by an unstressed dotted quaver, usually applied to melodies that fall or rise by step. It was current in European art music between 1680 and 1800, and in Scottish strathspeys from 1760 to the present. Its origins are obscure. In Italy it was regarded as a Lombard characteristic; in France it was called the manière lombarde. Quantz (Versuch, 1753) wrote: ‘This style began [in Italy] about 1722, but it seems to resemble Scottish music.’” Johnson, David. “Scotch snap,” Grove Music Online through Oxford Music Online, September 8, 2016 consulted.
At rehearsal 1, the trumpet and cor anglais present a theme (mm.12-16), which appears in manifold forms in the first and last movements.

This cyclic motif reminds the listeners of traditional Japanese folk songs such as Sakura, which is based upon a short motif that circles back upon itself. By comparing the first two measures of both Figure 1.12 and 1.13, the repeated A followed by major second interval up (B) recalls the similar gesture of the beginning of Sakura. Later the half-step (m.14) and major third interval (m.15) also recalls the similar gestures in Sakura. Through a careful observation of the melodic contour of

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both examples, one can also discover that they all move in ascending direction first, then descending direction. Both melodies repeat the same action.

![Japanese traditional folk song, Cherry Blossom (Sakura Sakura)](image1)

The prominent use of just two intervals of the trumpet theme (Figure 1.12) in La Mer, steps and major thirds also reminds us of two traditional Japanese scales: In Sen and Hirajoshi.

![Japanese scale: In Sen](image2) ![Japanese scale: Hirajoshi](image3)

At rehearsal 2 Debussy unveils the full major pentatonic scale, hitherto only hinted at. The passage (mm. 23-30), with its prominent leaping fourths and major seconds strongly brings to mind of both Chinese and Japanese music.

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22 “Pentatonic scales: These scales divide the octave into five steps, and exist in several forms. They are sometimes misleadingly termed ‘gapped’ scales, by comparison with seven-note diatonic scales (which however are themselves ‘gapped’ in terms of microtonal scales). But a pentatonic scale is no less complete than any other scale, and the term ‘gapped’ is best avoided. The most familiar form is the tonal pentatonic, the order of its intervals corresponding (by coincidence) to that of the black notes of the piano keyboard. It can begin on any note. The pentatonic scale is the basic scale of music in many non-Western cultures, notably China, Japan, and parts of Africa and Latin America, and it also is a feature of Amerindian music, some plainchant, and much European folk music, especially Scottish and Irish. The octave may be divided into numerous other pentatonic scales, with different arrangements of intervals (tones, semitones, 3rds, etc.); a great many are found in non-Western repertories, many of which use intervals that fall outside European musical traditions (e.g. the Javanese slendro, which divides the octave into five nearly equal intervals). The pentatonic scale, like the whole-tone scale, has attracted some Western composers (Stravinsky, Bartók, Debussy) as a means of expressing NATIONALISM, echoing folk traditions, or creating special effects.” Percy Scholes / Judith Nagley / Nicholas Temperley, “Scale,” The Oxford Companion to Music through Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e5921?q=scale&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit, September 8, 2016 consulted.

Transposing the pitches to fit into one octave rearranges the pitches into the major pentatonic scale: C (宮, Gong), D (商, Shang), E (角, Jue), G (徵, Zhi), A (羽, Yu).

The black keys on a piano keyboard is pentatonic scale: G-flat, A-flat, B-flat, D-flat, and E-flat.
The introduction is followed by the first main section (mm. 31-83), built upon multiple layers of heterophony. This passage owes much to pentatonicism. Note that the key of D-flat major relies heavily upon the black keys of the piano keyboard, upon which Debussy undoubtedly improvised the prototype for this passage. By carefully avoiding the pitch C, the leading-tone of D-flat major, the effect becomes all but pentatonic. Compare this to a similar passage from Debussy’s prelude *Voiles*, whose middle section uses the black keys exclusively, thus generating pure pentatonicism. (Figure 1.15) The bass notes in the bottom systems of *Voiles* are reminiscent of Asian style. (See Figure 1.5 (c)) Both *La Mer* and *Voiles* also employ whole-tone scales, parallel quartal and quintal harmonies.

![Figure 1.15: Middle section of Debussy’s *Voiles*](image)
In both of these passages, each layer essentially repeats the same gesture, creating a static sensation that evokes the Japanese ukiyo-e style of art. In *La Mer*, the heaving string textures are clearly inspired by Hokusai’s *The Great Wave*.

In m. 33 a theme is introduced by flutes and clarinets, combining the Japanese five-tone pentatonic scale with parallel quintal harmonies. The top line could be analyzed as D-flat or A-flat major pentatonic, as the bottom line could be analyzed as D-flat or G-flat major pentatonic scale.

![La mer: 1st main theme of mvt. 1](image)

The second movement, *Jeux de Vagues* (Play of the waves), continues many of the themes and strategies of the first movement, again evoking oriental tone colors and styles. For instance, in mm. 54-61, Debussy combines both whole-tone fragments and parallel augmented triads to create a particularly exotic effect. (Figure 1.17) This is accompanied by chromatic parallel fifths in the cellos. One could argue that the meticulousness of Debussy’s writing especially in this movement coupled with his unerring attention to detail is a perfect musical mirror of Hokusai’s vivid, yet strikingly ‘minimalist’ depictions of waves.
Figure 1.17: Parallel augmented triads (whole tone tetrachord) in horns, parallel fifths in cellos, mvt 2, mm, 54-61
In mm. 62-71, Debussy creates multiple-layers heterophonic effects with various rhythmic patterns and articulations, avoiding the often heavy-handed orchestration of the late Romantic era in favor of an airy, transparent texture that attenuates the lower register in favor of the high.

Figure 1.18: Heterophony within a layered texture, mvt 2, mm, 62-71
Figure 1.18: Heterophony within a layered texture, mvt 2, mm, 62-71 (cont.)
Figure 1.18: Heterophony within a layered texture, mvt 2, mm, 62-71 (cont.)
The third movement, *Le vent fait danser la mer* (The wind made the sea dance), marks the return of the cyclic motif that was first presented in the first movement (mm. 12-16). Debussy’s strict repetition of this idea reminds the listeners of the static drawings of waves in the Hokusai’s painting, where a stylized wave shape is often duplicated to make others.

![La mer: The cyclic motif of mvt. 3 by muted trumpet solo (rehearsal 44, mm. 26-30)](image)

Figure 1.19

As the work draws to its close, Debussy creates a triumphant effect with D-flat and F embellished by a flatted sixth imbuing this passage with the perfume of the whole tone scale (D flat — F — A natural).
Figure 1.20: Major triad with added 6th, mvt 3, mm, 253-255
1.2. Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* (February 17, 1904)

One of the most striking aspects of exoticism in Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* is the extent to which he incorporated Japanese musical materials into his score. It’s reasonable to believe that Puccini was more interested in creating an exotic atmosphere than an accurate musical portrayal of Japan, despite the fact that he uses both authentic Japanese melodies and artifacts throughout his opera. According to Kimiyo Powils-Okano’s research, at least ten authentic melodies can be identified in Puccini’s score. But Puccini also invented his own sonic image of Japan. A distinctive feature of this ‘imagined’ Orient is the use of pentatonic and whole-tone scales, which Western musicians of this period tended to associate with a rather broadly defined and exotic East. Both Debussy and Ravel use a similar mixture in their works. Passages in Puccini’s opera were influenced by comparable passages in Debussy’s *La Mer*. Both works employ the whole tone scale, at times doubled by prominent parallel major thirds. Whether or not Puccini was directly inspired by *La Mer* (after all the two works are essentially contemporaneous), there is no doubt that Puccini was influenced by Debussy, in that he also inserted oriental or quasi-oriental harmonic language into *Madama Butterfly*. (Compare this passage to Figure 1.2)

![Figure 1.21](image)

*Butterfly*, Act I, Rehearsal 109: parallel interval of major 3rd by oboes and bassoons

![Figure 1.22](image)

*La mer*, Mvt. II, mm. 88-89: Parallel intervals of major/minor third by flutes

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In *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini successfully achieves a true cross-cultural hybrid between Western opera and Japanese music of the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries. Further, this work showcases his delicate and profound character-study using conventional Japanese musical devices. His use of authentic Japanese melodies to portray such characters as Goro and Cho-Cho-San creates a sense of true local color. Puccini initially saw a theatrical adaptation by the American actor and playwright David Belasco of Long’s novel in London, in June 1900. It was love at first sight. Back in Italy, he immediately communicated to his publisher Giulio Ricordi his intention to write an opera on the subject of *Madame Butterfly*. It is hard to tell what to extent Puccini was aware of the historical circumstances that surrounded the heroin of his opera. In his correspondence he mentions that Mrs. Oyama, the wife of the Japanese ambassador to Rome, told him that she knew a true story roughly like that of Butterfly. The story of Madame Butterfly seems to have rapidly transformed itself into an archetypical encounter between East and West.

At the point at which Goro announces the “August High Commissioner,” Puccini clearly paraphrases the Japanese national anthem called Kimigayo (Figure 1.23), which produces a satirical (ironic?) effect similar to the later use of the American “Star-Spangled Banner.” (Figure 1.24)

![The national anthem of Japan: Kimigayo](image)

**Figure 1.23**

“Kimigayo” represents the Westernization and modernization of Japan in the late 19th-century, which can be considered an important aspect of Puccini’s quotation. The Japanese regarded “Kimigayo” as one of the symbols of Japan’s patriotism and modernization, just as he paraphrases the “Star-Spangled Banner” earlier for a similar exotic effect.

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25 Ibid.

26 “In their discussions of Puccini’s use of Japanese melodies, Carner, Budden, Girardi, and Powils-Okano refer to “Kimigayo” as the Japanese national anthem and variously interpret Puccini’s quotation of parts of the melody in Act I as an exotic device that
introduces two Japanese officials, an indication of the solemnity of the marriage, or simply an allusion to the national anthem itself.”

Throughout the opera, Puccini paraphrased melodies he had studied in publications containing transcriptions of Japanese songs. It seems likely that he was also able to listen to records shipped from Tokyo. Puccini uses these melodies not merely to underscore what he saw as key aspects of Japanese culture, but also to characterize musically the protagonists of the opera.

The opening ‘fugue’ subject may at first listen fail to make a direct connection to Japanese style yet there is something very ‘Japanese’ about it. It is in a minor mode and its frequent repetition of small scale fragments bear some resemblance to some famous Japanese melodies such as *Sakura*.  

(See Figure 1.13 and 1.26)
Later at rehearsal 2, the repetitive rhythmic pattern recalls the familiar sounds of Japanese Taiko drumming rhythm. (Figure 1.28) Puccini, perhaps under the influence of Debussy’s *La Mer*, orchestrates with many parallel fourths, a harmonic style commonly used by Asian composers. (Figure 1.27 and 1.29) At this point, the composer expresses his strong interest in exploring Japanese exoticism, a subject that had been experimented with in early 20th-century theatre but had not yet become prevalent and popular in Italian opera.  

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Further, Goro’s melody often uses Japanese pentatonic scales and rhythms, accompanied by Western harmonies. In the following example, the accompaniment constantly repeats the same motif and harmonies, which strongly alludes to traditional Japanese folk style, in which melody is strongly emphasized and harmony is all but suppressed. (Figure 1.30)

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28 “In the period of the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618-907) such “instrumental hymns” were performed by large orchestras, consisting of 120 zithers (ch’in), 180 lutes (p’ip’a), 200 mouth organs (sheng), 10 oboes, and numerous drums, bells, and chimes. The melodies of both the ancient hymn and the modern instrumental piece are written in the traditional five-tone-scale (pentatonic scale) of Chinese music; in this scale the third and seventh degrees of the diatonic scale are omitted, and hence there are not semitones.” Willi Apel and Archibald T. Davison. Historical Anthology of Music Oriental, Medieval and Renaissance Music (Harvard University Press, 1974), 3 and 213.
Later he skillfully combines both Japanese and American musical elements — “Kimigayo,” Japanese pentatonicism and “Star-Spangled Banner” — to underscore cultural conflicts between Pinkerton, Goro, and Cho-Cho-San. Such an arrangement greatly increases the emotional impact and dramatic tension of the whole opera. (Compare Figure 1.23, 1.24, and 1.31)
This review from the *New York Times* was printed shortly before its premiere in English in New York at the Garden Theatre:

“Nobody, of course, can treat of a Japanese subject without yielding to the seduction of Japanese local color: and Mr. Puccini has so yielded.... For Japanese color he has employed a number of Japanese themes, and one of them will be recognized by admirers of “The Mikado” as an old friend which Sir Arthur Sullivan made use of there. They may thus assure themselves that it is really Japanese color they are enjoying. There are other themes not national but purely emotional in character of various types of expression, and used always with the suggestive purpose of leading motives.”

The reviewer emphasizes “Japanese local color” from the Western viewpoint. He referred to the “old friend,” the Japanese song “Miyasan” that Sullivan and Gilbert had borrowed and used in the operetta, *The Mikado* (1885). According to his comments, American audiences, who may have been exposed to such Japanese local color from this operetta, seemed to have preconceptions of the sound of Japanese music. The melodic line, at rehearsal 38, is a particularly good example of an original melody written in a faux Japanese mode, which seems to combine significant elements of two different transpositions of the hirajoshi pentatonic scale.

![Figure 1.32: Madama Butterfly, Act I, Rehearsal 38: Melody played by oboe, clarinet, and bassoon.](image)

![Figure 1.33](image)

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Throughout the whole opera, the melodies associated with Madame Butterfly (Cho-Cho-San) are mainly Japanese in style. Cho-Cho San’s melody (C-sharp, B, G, F#) in the first three measures of rehearsal 54 strikingly akin to the Japanese Hirajoshi scale. Her following melody in the last two measures of the first system (G-sharp, F-sharp, D) strongly recalls Japanese Hirajoshi scale according to Sachs and Slonimsky. (Figure 1.33 and 1.34)

Figure 1.34: Madama Butterfly, Act II, Rehearsal 54: Cho-Cho-San’s melody
Again, at rehearsal 112 of Act I, when singing about her father’s suicide, Cho-Cho-San’s opening melody (C, A-flat, G, F) uses the Japanese Hirajoshi scale according to Kostka & Payne and Speed, while the accompaniment employs both the Japanese pentatonic scale and heterophonic effects, imparting both a sense of truthfulness and sincerity to her character. (Figure 1.33 and 1.35)

![Figure 1.35: Madama Butterfly, Act I, Rehearsal 112: Cho-Cho-San’s melody](image)

The emotional intensity culminates at the end of the Second Act, when Cho-Cho-San commits suicide. Puccini’s score absolutely brims with Japanese melodies and musical characteristics, especially from rehearsal 54 to the end. Here his music embodies a perfect mixture of reality and fiction: imaginary musical reconstructions of Japanese music and quotes from authentic Japanese music are co-mingled seamlessly. He took great pains to recreate the “realistic” musical atmosphere of Japan, especially at the end, where the magnificent and impressive music supports Cho-Cho-San’s tragic final aria, as she blindfolds her son. The effect transcends mere exoticism.
Here all vestiges of the West are all but gone — only the final flourish on a first inversion G major chord remains. (A decidedly shocking and distinctly non-Western ending!)

Figure 1.36: *Madama Butterfly*, Act III, Rehearsal 58: Cho-Cho-San died and Pinkerton returned
1.3 Puccini’s *Turandot* (1926)

*Turandot*, left incomplete at his death, was to be Puccini’s last work. He died while working on the last scene in which the young slave-girl, Liù, commits suicide to avoid cracking under torture.\(^{32}\) Later Frederico Alfano completed it, and still later Luciano Berio also composed another version of the ending scene. Its world premiere was led by Arturo Toscanini, a friend of Puccini’s, at the Teatro alla Scala of Milan on April 25, 1926. *Turandot* is another of Puccini’s brilliant experiments in exoticism, full of mysterious foreign characters and settings, which moves audiences anew. For Professor Andrew Davis, the opera’s large scale is the determining factor:

“*Turandot* is [...] a grand opera in the truest sense: an enormous, late-Romantic, Germanic orchestra with large percussion forces and an on-stage band [...] the piece also includes Puccini’s largest and most active chorus, cast as a Pekingese crowd of onlookers, but also including servants of the executioner, attendants to *Turandot*, a group of phantoms (spirits of dead suitors), imperial guards and solidiers, priests, banner bearers, sages, mandarins, and other of the emperor’s dignitaries.”\(^{33}\)

Here instead of the impassioned portrait of a jilted bride, we have a violent vision of mythical and imperial China. As in *Madama Butterfly*, he uses several traditional melodies, this time a Chinese folk song, including the famous *Jasmine Flower*, albeit harmonized in his own Western romantic and dissonant sensibility.

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\(^{33}\) Davis, Andrew, *Il Trittico, Turandot, and Puccini’s Late Style* (Indiana University Press, 2010), 171-2; Budden, Julian, *Puccini* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 446.
The orchestral accompaniment and children’s chorus state *Jasmine Flower*, which instantly provides the opera a traditional Chinese flavor. Apparently, Puccini discovered his Chinese melodies in two known sources. The first was a music box owned by Baron Fassini Camossi, a former diplomat in China, from whom, around 1920, he learned some aspects of Chinese culture. The second source was a book, *Chinese Music* by J.A. Van Aalst, which had been sent to him by Carlo Clausetti. To evoke Chinese local color, Puccini includes instruments such as the gong and xylophone, both of which have Eastern counterparts, parallel quartal harmonies (e.g., the bass of “People of Peking”), much use of the Chinese pentatonic scale (e.g., Liù’s aria “Lord, please listen”), paraphrases of the folk song *Jasmine Flower* (Children’s chorus “Là sui monti dell’Est”), ostinatos, strings pizzicato (e.g., “Hello, Pang! Hello, Pong!”), as well as many heterophonic and unison textures. The opening A — E-sharp — B — C-sharp — F-sharp recalls the whole-tone color of *La Mer* while its rhythm is quite close to the middle section of *Jasmine Flower* (see the Figure 1.38 and the square rhythm of Figure 1.40). The melody all but outlines an augmented triad. (Figure 1.38)

![Figure 1.38: Turandot, Act I: The bitonality in the opening passage](image)


35 J.A. Van Aalst, *Chinese Music*. China: Imperial Maritime Customs, II. Special Series, no. 6 (Shanghai: Inspectorate General of Customs, 1864).

The following passage makes further use of augmented triads, though as we have seen is not quite oriental, still produces an exotic, extra-Western color. It is full of foreign tones. We might call it a ‘neo-oriental’ effect. It is definitely exotic sounding and produces an effect of ‘otherness.’

Figure 1.39: Turandot, Act II, 63: Polytonality

In Act I, Rehearsal 19, Puccini harmonizes *Jasmine Flower* with tonic and flat-VII major triads in parallel motion. This avoidance of the leading tone provides an apt accompaniment, albeit in Western style, to a pentatonic melody. (Figure 1.40) As William Ashbrook claims, this unique compositional technique exhibits Puccini’s modernism and his “highly individualized orchestration that capitalizes on clashing timbres and unexpected harmonies.”37

Puccini often uses pentatonic motifs to represent his major characters. Liù’s first aria, “Signore ascolta” (I, 38), is a terrific example of strikingly akin to Chinese major pentatonic scale. Her aria also expresses Puccini’s gender stereotyping of Oriental women as warmhearted and weak.

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Davis, Andrew. *Il Trittico, Turandot, and Puccini’s Late Style* (Indiana University Press, 2010), 179-180.
and ready to die for love, a characterization that he also employed for Cho-Cho-San. The whole melodic contour of Liù’s aria sounds beautiful, like a tender and graceful Asian woman singing in an intimate manner. “The slave Liù in Puccini’s *Turandot* (1926) shows fewer contrasting facets than Butterfly: no nervous pseudo-gaiety, no sarcasm or playacting. But she displays an almost superhuman willingness to give her life, for love of the heedless tenor who (she recalls) once smiled at her in the palace.”

One can discover that Puccini’s two operas showcase two contrasting gender stereotypes of Asian woman: (1) The woman who expresses strength through personal sacrifice (Liù and Cho-Cho-San), and (2) the woman who expresses strength through haughtiness, disdain and cruelty (*Turandot*).

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40 Locke, Ralph P. *Imperialism and “the exotic Orient” of Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 188.
To depict the grandeur of the emperor’s court, Puccini creates a new pentatonic melody, undoubtedly inspired by *Jasmine Flower*, and again harmonized with parallel triads. Later Turandot sings the same melody, but with some chromaticism. Perhaps such synergies of East and West
contribute in part to what Salvetti sees as the “new Puccini” in his late style in aspects of modern creativity and orchestration:

“a very singular opera because of the boldness of the harmonic and orchestral writing: the use of dissonance gets angular and provocative in the “comic” scenes; polytonal chords, orchestral sonorities with great resonances of the gong open the third act […] this true absence of intimacy, this crowding of the scenes in the culminating moments […] are aspects of a new Puccini, like the impersonal, icy, alienated song of the princess Turandot.”

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Figure 1.42: *Turandot*, Act II, 32: Melody is based on Chinese pentatonic scale

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Figure 1.43: *Turandot*, Act II, Reh. 63: Turando’s melody is based on previous Chinese pentatonic scale (Figure 1.42)

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Puccini uses much parallelism throughout the opera, undoubtedly to make a Chinese-like effect. The open-fifth 1-5-8 sonorities of Act I, Rehearsal 9, provides a spectacular example.

Figure 1.44: Turandot, Act I, Reh. 9: The parallel 1-5-8 sonorities
In the following passage (Rehearsal 10) a characteristic pentatonic tune is harmonized primarily by parallel triads.
Another striking exotic passage occurs in Act III, Rehearsal 9, where the orchestra and chorus are combined heterophonically to produce a driving harmonic rhythm. The pulsing sonority that supports this is distinctly Asian: it is the tetrachord D-E-G-A. If this passage had been scored for traditional Chinese instruments, it might almost pass for the real thing. (Compare this passage to Figure 1.5-c)

![Figure 1.46: Turandot, Act III, 9: Heterophonic effect](image)

In Act III, Reh. 28, one of the work’s most poignant passages (Liù’s sacrifice aria) begins with Debussy-like parallel quartal chords sandwiched between an octave statement of the melody. (Figure 1.47) This is arguably the most effective hybrid of East and West, in the entire score pointing the way to deeper synergies to follow in the works of later composers.
In addition, Puccini makes more use of unison or octave melodies than in his other operas, whether pentatonic tonal or chromatic. The following passages are typical. (Figures 1.48 & 1.49)
Puccini’s Chinese exoticism is not limited to pitch, texture and harmony, but employs colorful sound effects that invite ready comparison to Eastern instrumental counterparts. In Act II, Reh. 67, a jaunty pentatonic tune is accompanied by a small percussion ensemble that is clearly intended to evoke Chinese instruments. (Figure 1.50)
In all, though at times superficial, *Turandot* exemplifies the sort of Eastern exoticism prevalent towards the dawn of the 20th century, and it is undeniably effective. At times, as we have seen Puccini manages to transcend mere exoticism to achieve a deeper, more subtle synergy.
Chapter 2

Western Composers and the East-West Hybrid

2.1 Gustav Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* (1908-1909, “The Song of the Earth”)

This work by Mahler consists of six movements for tenor and alto (or baritone) soloists and orchestra, each a setting of a poem from Hans Bethge’s *Die chinesische Flöte*, German translations of 8th- and 9th-century Chinese poems; Mahler called it a “symphony” when published, and in fact, its structure does map well to the expanded romantic symphony that Mahler himself had cultivated and enlarged. The famous motto which resonated greatly with in Mahler’s inner world, “Dark is life, is death,” resulted from Bethge’s understanding of the spiritual nature of the original poetry.\(^{42}\) A collection of translated poems from the ancient oriental “Chinese Flute”\(^{43}\) triggered Mahler’s creative imagination. He chose six poems by Li Bai, Meng Haoran, and Wang Wei. Through composing *Das Lied* with six movements, he meant to say farewell to past severe life,\(^{44}\) but also to his past youth, love and beauty. The two singers take turns singing the songs:

- *Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde* (Drinking Song of the misery of the Earth)
- *Der Einsame im Herbst* (The Lonely One in Autumn)
- *Von der Jugend* (Of Youth)
- *Von der Schönheit* (Of Beauty)
- *Der Trunkene im Frühling* (The Drunkard in Spring)
- *Der Abschied* (The Farewell)


\(^{43}\) See Bethge, *Die Chinesische Flöte*.

\(^{44}\) “Some sense of pain and leave-taking in *das Lied von der Erde* is comprehensible from the events of 1907, the year preceding the composition of most of the work. In the spring, Mahler resigned from his position as Director of the Vienna Opera after ten years of tension, acclaim and controversy. Then in July his elder daughter Maria Anna died suddenly from scarlet fever and diphtheria, followed almost immediately by the diagnosis of a heart condition which limited his physical exertion, and made him sharply aware of his own mortality ….. While life events do not necessarily provide the cartography of emotional content in works of art, nevertheless *das Lied von der Erde* has an extraordinary authenticity as a document of personal expression and meaning.” Barry, Barbara R. “Eternal Return in *Das Lied von der Erde*” of *The Philosopher’s Stone: Essays in the Transformation of Musical Structure* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2000), 204-205.
Leonard Bernstein described *Das Lied von der Erde* as Mahler's “Greatest symphony.” But it is also, perhaps more obviously, a song cycle. In fact, Mahler created something brand new: the lieder-symphony. Bethge’s description of his first experience translating Chinese poetry casts light on possible motivations for Mahler in his selection of the specific texts of *Das Lied*:

“When I first laid my eyes on some of these lyrics from the Chinese, I was utterly enchanted. Imagine my feelings on encountering so lovely a lyric art! I perceived a fragile, quasi-evanescent tenderness of lyrical sound. I gazed at a fully realized imagistic art in words that illuminated melancholy and the riddle of existence. I sensed a tremblingly delicate, fine-tuned lyrical quality, pregnant with symbolism, something tender, fragrant, of the nature of moonlight, flower-like in a graceful rendering of emotion.”

By means of musicality and poetic textuality, Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* is truly a profound narrative full of melancholy, longing, and beauty of youth, a journey whose content is the experience of death, depression, and transcendent life philosophy. Through a closer examination, “the seriousness and intensity Mahler invested in his works may be understood as the interaction of two perspectives — the *musical* challenge posed by the continual recreation of symphonic form; and their *philosophical* meaning, in expressing the range of existential human experience.” Though each text is a Chinese poem (in translation), the harmonies and structures are largely occidental, creating a compelling joining of East and West. Unlike Puccini and Debussy, Mahler avoids overt exotic stereotypes. Instead he focuses on the deep meaning of the words and their contexts. After all Mahler’s motivations in composing the work were very different from those of Puccini and Debussy. Puccini was trying to write musical theater that would bring him much success, whereas Mahler was arguably attempting to exorcise his own personal demons. His focus was on such

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themes as living, parting and salvation. Despite the effusive Romanticism of Bethge’s adaptation, “the Eastern poetic constraint of word repetition became a symbol of freedom from the tensions and disappointments of life in the West.” In the first two songs Mahler aims to convey ennui and even depression about the transitory and fleeting nature of life. Frequently he accomplishes this through descending melodic contours, abrupt changes from major to minor, and the like. His focus is on man’s mortality not on sounding Chinese. In the end, Das Lied conveys deep depression, in contrast to other Mahler’s more optimistic works such as Symphony No. 2 or 4.

However, this is not to say that the work is devoid of exoticism or Chinese musical elements. They are just of a subtler sort. In fact, Mahler makes some self-conscious use of the Chinese major pentatonic scale, which reflects “the composer’s logical response to the poetry rather than mere indulgence in exoticism.” Mahler may have intended passages of heterophony in Das Lied von der Erde as markers of Chineseness. (Mahler may have learned about heterophonic procedures in traditional Chinese music from his friend, the Viennese musicologist Guido Adler.) Guido Adler has demonstrated this in convincing fashion as the following chart amply demonstrates. (Figure 2.1) Each of these fragments, culled from all six movements, are clear instances of Mahler’s ‘pentatonicism.” The melody of the first movement is based on a three-notes descending figure (A—G—E), which despite its high, passionate intensity concisely depicts man’s profound reflection about the misery of the human condition. The second movement features a pentatonic melody that is based on a transposition of this same motif (D—C—A), rhythmically transformed. Yet, its

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48 “On 24 February he collapsed from a severe hemorrhoidal hemorrhage, having conducted the Vienna Philharmonic at midday and the Opera in the evening. The composer who had so often wrested with the mysteries of death and eternity believed that “my last hour had come.” Hefling, Stephen E. Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 19.


51 See, on Campra and Rameau, Betzwieser, Exotismus, 135-39, 169-70; and, on Mahler’s Das Lied and Adler, Mitchell, Gustav Mahler, 62-64, 125-27, 451, 389-92, and 624-34. Betzwieser notes (Exotismus, 169n, 258) that the Campra tune was used even later by Favart (1742) and Gluck (1759).
texture, in contrast to the complexity of the first movement, sounds more innocent and simple. The pentatonicism found in the third movement is a series of three-notes sequences with fixed intervals (F—G—B-flat, C—D—F, etc.).

In the fourth and fifth movements, this process is further developed in retrograde. The pentatonicism of the final movement also inherits the three-notes sequences of the third movement, now using the pitches (A—C—D, D—F—G, etc.).

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Figure 2.1: Adler’s chart of pentatonic cell permutations in *Das Lied von der Erde*\textsuperscript{53} (cont.)

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
Though there is nothing uniquely Asian about strophic songs, the synthesis of song and symphony is arguably a marriage between two alien objects, either could be deemed as ‘exotic’ depending upon which perspective is viewed as the host. It is telling that Mahler was inspired to create his first (and only) song-symphony by a foreign-exotic-element: Chinese poetry. May we call this displaced exoticism? I see in this combination a mirror of the kind of cross-cultural hybridism exemplified by the other works in this study. The ornamental flourishes, trills and tremolos played by the flute, at times with flutter-tongue though meant to evoke the twittering birds, also reminds us of the Chinese bamboo flute. Later the fast 16th-note figure played by the oboes and clarinets accomplishes much the same. The pizzicato of the violins in the second measure conjures up images of both the Chinese guzheng (plucked zither) and pipa (strummed lute). Mahler makes colorful use of two harps throughout, again perhaps a nod to Eastern strummed instruments, especially given the prevalence of trills and other crisp ornaments. (Figure 2.2) Another obvious Asian style is the heterophonic effect — grace notes and the like, which definitely deflect our attention eastward. (Figure 2.2) Mahler also employs heterophonic effect liberally throughout the score. Though there are numerous instances of it on nearly every page, the use of this non-Western texture at Rehearsal 23 of the last song is particularly spectacular, and is a terrific example of Mahler’s hybridism. Also, the use of Tam-Tam is remarkable, obviously recalling the similar timbre and decay effect of the Chinese gong. (Figure 2.17)
Figure 2.2: “Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde” of Das Lied von der Erde: The opening passage, mm. 1-13
Figure 2.2: “Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde” of *Das Lied von der Erde*: The opening passage, mm. 1-13 (cont.)
Like in Puccini’s works, Mahler’s style is heavily “melo-centric texture.” The opening passage of the first movement serves as a fine example. The horns present a strong pentatonic motif. There is no bass here and most of the other instruments seem to be contributing articulations and punctuating chirrups rather than harmonizing in the typical Western manner. Only the trumpets accompany — an articulated triad drone. (Figure 2.2)

In the second movement, “Der Einsame im Herbst” (The lonely one in autumn), we can see a more subtle hybrid of “West” and “East.” We have already discussed the pentatonic nature of the thematic material heard at the outset of movement 2. (“Der Einsame im Herbst”) However, this motive, presented at first by the oboe, is accompanied by a gently undulating melody played by muted violins, clearly outlining a D-natural minor scale. So here we have an unabashed combination of Chinese pentatonicism with Western scale structures. The interaction between these two elements is fascinating. The very first interval that we hear is the decidedly non-Western sound of the perfect fourth (m. 3) (Figure 2.3)

Figure 2.3: “Der Einsame im Herbst” of Das Lied von der Erde, mm. 1-6

54 “Melo-centric is a texture in which the melody stands out as the dominant element. There are a number of ways this can be achieved.” According to Professor Ian Krouse.
Its strong metric position as a downbeat further exaggerates its ‘foreignness.’ The second prominent interval is a fifth, and yet another on the downbeat of m. 4, and so on. Though thirds abound they occupy weak positions and are unable to attenuate the dominance of the perfect fourths. Arguably, as this passage develops, it takes on a more Japanese hue. I notice this color at m. 8, particularly, where the superimposition of the pitch E over B-flat and D etc. sounds like some of the Japanese modes we explored in chapter 1.1 and 1.2, but not, ironically, the Chinese pentatonic scale, which contains no half-steps.

Several Japanese scales, on the contrary, contain half-steps such as birajoshi. Mahler’s second movement is in D minor and necessarily contains many half steps, most prominent E — F and A — B-flat, both of which are found in the opening bass of the second movement.

A careful examination of the melodic contour in mm. 7-12, reveals a certain Japaneseness because of the prominence of the pitches (A, B-flat, D, E, F).

It is no accident that Mahler chose the oboe as the primary voice of this profoundly melancholy song, like telling a story. Its role is reminiscent of Chinese erhu, a bowed two-stringed instrument whose pitched, melancholy voice is often associated with love. I hear a clear similarity to both Puccini operas, though it is mere conjecture on my part to assume that the Italian would have heard any of Mahler’s music, especially Das Lied. The static nature of this music, which circles back upon itself, also resembles the Japanese style. (Figure 2.4)

55 “The sound quality of the erhu is also an important factor in its espousal by the post-1949 ruling class and continued popularity amongst the masses. Its tone is soulful and expressive, both wistful and strong, both pleading and confident, both pliant and supple but also firm and expressive, both masculine and feminine combined and also, importantly, instantly recognisable. All these features make the erhu in some indefinable way quintessentially Chinese and might alone account for its present day symbolic value. What its more, no-one, regardless of cultural background, can deny that the erhu tone contains an intrinsic beauty. This crucial feature makes the erhu internationally acceptable as a cultural icon in a way that the more abrasive tones of many other members of the huqin family could not possibly be, or indeed many forms of Chinese opera for that matter.” Huehns, Colin. “The Shaanxi Qinpai Erhu Tradition. Re-invention and Re-invigoration of a Folk Tradition.” The World of Music 42, no. 3 (2000): 93-119. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41692768.
The style of the next section [rehearsal 4-6] reverts to a more typical Western mode, standing in strong conflict with the previous section [rehearsal 1-3]. (Figure 2.5) This new section, with its thick, chromatic Romantic harmonies, is built upon a deep, rich bass, which was all but missing in the previous section, further highlighting the Eastern qualities at the opening and providing a contrast so that when the style of the opening returns at rehearsal 15, it is even more remarkable, poignant and lonely. We saw earlier how the prominent perfect fourths of the opening created a hollow, lonely effect. Mahler follows through on this by employing its hollow counterpart the perfect fifth at prominent points throughout.

The new section at rehearsal 11 commences with the perfect fifth D—A. (Figure 2.6) When the music turns to the parallel major at Rehearsal 13, we progressively hear the key change while it starts with just the pitch A over D. The section at rehearsal 16 is built almost entirely over the pedal interval D—A, as is the ensuing section at rehearsal 19. It is no surprise that the final sonority at this movement is two stacked fifths on D—A, perhaps expressing the loneliness and inner oppression of the protagonist.
Figure 2.5: “Der Einsame im Herbst” of *Das Lied von der Erde*, Reh. 5-6
The opening melodic material (flowing eighth-notes figure) played at the outset by the flute of the third movement, “Von der Jugend” (Of Youth), is one of the most Chinese sounding passages of the work. (Figure 2.7) The color, mode, and temperament of Mahler’s theme bears a strong, resemblance to the Chinese folk song, *Purple Bamboo Melody*. (Figure 2.8)
The light orchestration of this passage with its simple, naïve, and child-like character also supports the content of the poem about youthful life. Though in B-flat major, the tenor melody at rehearsal 2 is arguably ‘pentatonicized.’ The lone half step (D — E-flat) is tucked away as a passing tone. The leaping fourths and prominence of the pitches of a B-flat pentatonic mode are dominant. The leading tone A is not allowed to resolve. (Figure 2.9) All in all, this is a nifty hybrid between East and West. The important tones of this passage emphasize the Chinese major pentatonic scale, with half-step embellishments sprinkled here and there.
The light staccato dominates the treble-heavy orchestration, recalling the crisp tone colors of the Chinese pipa and zither. The rhythms also sound suitably Chinese, buttressed by pedal tones with attenuated harmonies. The pedal tone is F, once again forming prominent perfect fourths throughout. In fact, the interval F—B-flat is prevalent until rehearsal 3.

The fourth movement, “Von der Schönheit” (Of Beauty), as we have seen, again turns to unabashed pentatonicism to set its distinctive, folk-like tone. In this movement, the effect is tender and lyrical, an appropriate setting of the text, which celebrates the beauty of women and of the earth. At rehearsal 8-9, this lyrical theme is confronted by a sturdy march in the orchestra that prepares for the “handsome youth.” (Figure 2.10)
At rehearsal 12, the octave bass line played double forte by the trombones sounds very Japanese and is strikingly similar to passages in Puccini’s Madama Butterfly. (Figure 2.11)

The fifth movement, “Der Trunkene im Frühling” (The Drunkard in Spring), commences with a forceful burst of ebullient energy with a striking three-note motif that recalls the pentatonism at the very opening of the work.
The orchestral setting is appropriately heterophonic and set in a brilliant, high tessitura. This idea reappears three times and brings the work to a dashing close with great orchestral virtuosity.

The penultimate chord (A—B—D—E—F#), which is sustained for over two measures, is a complete pentatonic pentad. Otherwise, Chinese elements in this movement are somewhat suppressed. (Figure 2.12) The fast scales in the winds might be meant to evoke the color of the Chinese zither. Meanwhile, the tremolo effect in the low strings recalls the aggressive strumming sound of the Chinese guzheng and ruan (strumming lute). (Figure 2.13)
Figure 2.13: Ruan (the upper left corner), Erhu (right next to ruan), Tangu (the upper middle), Dihu (right next to tangu) Mayu (right next to dihu), Sanxian (the upper right corner), Pipa (lower left corner) Guanzì and Hanguan (right next to pipa, Chinese oboe), dizi (lower right corner, Chinese bamboo flute)

The final—and by far longest—movement, “Der Abschied” (The Farewell) abounds in exotic heterophonic effects, and despite some use of pentatonicism it presents an overall dark and bleak landscape. The opening passage bears a striking resemblance to gagaku (Japanese court music). It is static and texturally spare with ornamented bursts perched high above sustained pedal tones. One could easily imagine this music played by Japanese gongs, a Japanese shō (or Chinese hulusçiao and sheng, mouth organ), and a mellow, introspective bamboo flute (shakuhachi). (Figure 2.14) The harsh deep plucks of the low strings and harps evoke the plucked lute such as Chinese pipa or ruan. The strongly articulated oboe melody recalls the similar timbres of the shakuhachi or perhaps the Chinese oboe, while a tam-tam (an Asian instrument) evokes the Japanese gongs. The minor mode, which emphasizes D over C, often accompanied by A-flat has a distinctive Japanese modal flavor. (Figure 2.15)
Figure 2.14: Image of Japanese sho (top), Chinese huluxiao (middle) and sheng (bottom)
Figure 2.15: “Der Abschied” of Das Lied von der Erde: opening passage of Japanese pentatonicism
The dark, low-pitched tone color of the sustained low A played by the contrabass at rehearsal 21-22 profoundly expresses the deep and heavy mood of farewell, as well as a stabilizing element. And once more the bass clarinet and flute simply state the opening Japanese mode. (Figure 2.16 and 2.17)

Figure 2.16: “Der Abschied” of *Das Lied von der Erde*, Reh. 21

Later a striking new sound is heard at rehearsal 23. As noted earlier, this passage is largely pentatonic and sounds much more calming, even optimistic. The mandolin, which enters at this point, produces one of the most exotic sounding passages in the entire cycle and is reminiscent of the timbre of the Chinese *pipa*. (Figure 2.17) Mahler may have chosen the mandolin to evoke the crisp timbre of the *pipa* (despite that the *pipa* is not an indigenous Chinese instrument—it is derived from Middle-Eastern instruments, to which the mandolin is closely related.)

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Figure 2.17: “Der Abschied” of Das Lied von der Erde, Reh. 22-23
The final pages of “Der Abschied” present a subtle synergy of East and West. Though perched atop a long sustained C-major triad, the prominent sustained pitches are A and D in a prolonged plagal-like move. The complete absence of the leading tone tilts the entire passage towards the sounds of the East. (Recall that the major pentatonic scale has no leading tone) The overall effect blends Western major qualities with the colors of Chinese pentatonicism. (Figure 2.18)

Figure 2.18: “Der Abschied” of Das Lied von der Erde, Reh. 67-69
Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* seamlessly mingles Western and Eastern elements together, creating a subtle hybrid of two very different cultures and conveying a higher level of musical meaning. Heretofore I have spoken of Chinese musical influences, Asian heterophonic effects, pentatonicism, and orchestration, I must also touch upon certain of its Western roots as well. “In particular, “Der Abschied,” the finale of *Das Lied* specifically relates to the finale of Beethoven’s 9th in three ways: first, that its composite formal sections comprise the whole; second, the finale is a higher level transformation and resolution of the work’s journey; and last, both finales explore, and come to a reckoning with the interacting worlds of mortality, experience and transcendence — Beethoven’s as spiritual elevation, Mahler’s in an ecstatic vision of nature as eternal return.”57 Yet, musically, Mahler created his peculiar style of symphonic poem. Each movement of *Das Lied* provides all kinds of innovations of structural articulation and vocal setting. Philosophically, *Das Lied* delivers various dimension of philosophical thoughts including the human predicaments of emotional intensity and yearning for beauty and youth. Mahler made great contributions in textural design conveying the poetic imagination that relates to his personal life experience. *Das Lied von der Erde*, Mahler’s erstwhile ‘ninth’ symphony work, stands at the intersection of many perspectives — in the different interpretations of structural retention/transformation in the late 19th and early 20th century vocal symphony; in the avoidance of closure which anticipates later trends in the 20th century.58 Like Alma Mahler believed, “Isn’t his farewell, the ‘Song of the Earth’, the developed fruit of that distant, melancholy preoccupation, the origin of which may have stirred in his bidding youth?”59


58 With reference to Mahler’s Ninth, Julian Johnson says; “Its straining for closure is essentially Romantic, its exploration of alternative, plural strategies is essentially modern.” Julian Johnson, “Mahler’s Ninth” Ibid, extracted p. 120.

2.2 Igor Stravinsky’s *Le Chant du Rossignol* (1917, “The Song of The Nightingale”)

Stravinsky’s symphonic poem, *Le Chant du Rossignol*, is an adaptation from his earlier opera, *Le Rossignol* (also called *Pesnya solov’ya*, “The Nightingale”, 1914). Based on Hans Christian Andersen’s tale “The Nightingale,” it is set in three acts, and is told from the viewpoint of a Chinese fisherman. Stravinsky got the inspiration for *The Nightingale* while he was still a student of Rimsky-Korsakov around the age of 26. His choice of the Hans Christian Andersen story, in 1908, was inspired by Rimsky’s opera, *The Golden Cockerel* (1906-07), depicting a magic bird brought to an Emperor’s court. Stravinsky was highly impressed and inspired by both his teacher’s fondness for fairy tale opera plots, particularly those that glorified nature, and his mastery in recreating exotic images of Eastern cultures in music. He started working on it in 1908, just before Rimsky-Korsakov’s death, whose fantastic operas, along with Debussy’s mature works, were notable influences on *The Nightingale*. He interrupted the opera’s composition to work on his ballets — *The Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* — for Diaghilev’s Russian Ballet, which occupied much of his attention and energy. He returned to *The Nightingale* and subsequently completed it in 1913-14. When he decided to adapt part of *The Nightingale* into the orchestral tone poem, *The Song of the Nightingale*, he not only chose a slightly smaller orchestra for the purpose, but also updated his style of orchestration. In 1919, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva premiered the newly

60 “Stravinsky, Igor, 4: Exile in Switzerland, 1914-20,” Grove Music Online through Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52818pg4? provoke=igor+stravinsky&search=quick&pos=8&start=1#firsthit, September 20, 2016 consulted. “Apart from the Polignac commission, none of these works earned Stravinsky any money, and as the war dragged on his circumstances deteriorated. The pianola study was dedicated to a rich Chilean called Eugenia Errazuriz, a patroness of Picasso whom Stravinsky had met in Spain. In 1917 he extracted from his Andersen opera a ballet to be called *Pesnya solov’ya* ("The Song of the Nightingale") for Diaghilev.”


64 Ibid.
arranged symphonic version under the baton of Ernest Ansermet. However, the world premiere and several later performances received harsh criticism, much like that of *The Rite of Spring*, whose sharp dissonant style Stravinsky had also incorporated here.

The score captured both the poetry and irony of Andersen’s tone, and most importantly its Chinese setting. The musical style is in some ways reminiscent of *Petrushka*, with the frequent use of ostinati, sudden dynamic shifts, preference for short melodic segments, erratic rhythms, and theatrical signals and gestures. There are many traces of impressionism including much use of parallelism. Stravinsky’s interest in chinoiserie inspired many new and strikingly original orchestral effects. He cleverly (and impressively) co-mingles the Chinese five-tone pentatonic scale with harsh, chromatic dissonances.

*Le Rossignol* represents Stravinsky’s thirst for new exotic climes, expanding upon his preoccupation with Russian folk influences. After all, all three of his Russian ballets and *Les noces* that follows abound in exotic elements. He turns his attention away from mythical or pagan Russia to the, perhaps, even more exotic far East. The first recognizable melody fuses Chinese pentatonicism and Western chromaticism. (Figure 2.19)

![Figure 2.19](image)

Parallel fourths abound, often played by percussion, or plucked instruments and are clearly meant to evoke Chinese sounds. (Figure 2.20) The strings often play a percussive role. Stravinsky exerts much effort to evoke exotic bird sounds and lavishes attention on his depiction of the

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decorative chirping of the nightingale’s singing. In addition, his experiments in opposing live (chromatic) and mechanical (diatonic) birds delights the ear. Indeed, Daniel Albright has gone so far as to suggest that *The Nightingale* lies symbolically at the heart of Stravinsky’s aesthetic:

“This, I think, is what Stravinsky’s music is “about”: the deep equivalence of the natural and the artificial. At the center of his dramatic imagination is the desire to juxtapose in a single work two competing systems — one which seems natural, tasteful, approved alike by man and God, the other of which seems artificial, abhorrent, devilish — and to subvert these distinctions as best he can.”

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Figure 2.20: Stravinsky’s *Chant du Rossignol*, reh. 5: orchestra version

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How does Stravinsky distinguish the music of real nightingale from the mechanical bird?

“The real nightingale sings swaying chromatic runs ending in swoons and droops. And the automaton (represented mostly by an oboe, but with a few cheeps from piccolo and celesta) sings crisp, clear seconds and thirds, symmetrical figures rapidly stitched up and down the staff.” The real nightingale’s melody sounds melancholy, atmospheric and subtle in contrast to the mechanical bird’s dry, clean and predictable manner, rather like the “Tour de Passe-passe” in *Petrushka*.

Curiously, Stravinsky uses the Chinese pentatonic scale (albeit strangely harmonized) to evoke the mechanical bird. (Figure 2.21) The real nightingale is characterized by a facile, flexible, artful chromatic style reminiscent of the *Firebird*. Even here, however, are unaccompanied flute cadenzas and numerous passages using consecutive perfect fourths, a subtle though effective reminder that this is a Chinese bird. (Figure 2.22 and 2.23) Stravinsky imbues the real nightingale’s material with flexible rhythms, improvisatory nuances, dissonant sonorities, and set in a higher tessitura than the mechanical bird.

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68 Ibid. 21-24.

69 Ibid.
Figure 2.21: Stravinsky's *Le Chant du Rossignol*: Artificial bird, Reh. 11-12
Figure 2.22: Stravinsky’s *Le Chant du Rossignol*: Unaccompanied flute cadenza of live nightingale, Reh. 38

Figure 2.23: Stravinsky’s *Le Chant du Rossignol*: Live nightingale Reh. 13-15
Passages like Rehearsal 3, with rapid ricochet bowing, prominent use of the perfect fourth, and pentatonic sonorities, suggest both Chinese melody and harmony, as well as performance practices. The frequent use of double tonguing in the flutes suggests the rapid flutter tongue of xiao (vertical notched flute of the Han Chinese). To distinguish the mechanical bird’s sound from the spontaneously chromatic singing of live nightingale, Stravinsky adds harps with plucked staccato and artificial harmonics, evoking the similar timbre of a plectrum with rolling fingers on the strings of the guzheng. (Figure 2.24) The repetitive fifth (G and D) on cello and contrabass, with plucked pizzicato and dry sound effects, recalls for the listeners the crispy timbres of the Chinese guzheng and pipa. The flute trills and flutter tonguing effects both evoke the Chinese bamboo flute. This passage, like so many others, substitutes heterophony for more traditional Western textures.
Figure 2.24: Stravinsky's Le Chant du Rossignol, Reh. 3-4
The “Chinese March” (rehearsal 18-21) may not sound exactly Chinese, but has a strong Asian flavor nonetheless. This is due in part to the sharply articulated rhythms, the use of triangle and tam-tam, the disjunctive graces of the high instruments, and most importantly the parallel fourths of the bassoon melody. (Figure 2.25) The mechanical bird’s singing repeats the same figures over and over without adding new ideas. This on top of the rather mechanical, layered texture in which it is supported, creates a somewhat monotonous effect. This technique recalls Debussy’s layered textures in *La Mer*. Furthermore, Stravinsky’s approach is rather like cut-and-paste clip art, because there is no transition between each section.
Figure 2.25: Stravinsky’s *Le Chant du Rossignol*, Reh. 18-19
Stravinsky exploits parallel fourths even more overtly at rehearsal 22-24, while the rhythm with its bouncing eighths punctuated by double sixteenths, though not strictly Chinese, makes a decidedly folk-like impression; perhaps we could call this passage ‘neo-Chinese’. (Figure 2.27) This effect is heightened by the omnipresent pentatonic chord drones, and the prominent voice of the celesta whose Chinese counterpart is the *yangqin* (Chinese dulcimer, hold an important position in ensemble music). (Figure 2.26)

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Figure 2.27: Stravinsky's *Le Chant du Rossignol*, Reh. 22-23
Stravinsky punctuates his score with loud, octave statements, rather like Puccini did in *Turandot* with a similar result, which also recalls the similar style in Chinese ensemble. (Figure 2.28)
I could have included the Stravinsky in the chapter on ‘exoticism’ but upon reflection, his frequent self-conscious mixing of Western and Eastern elements seems more about synthesis, a quest for new sounds, rather than merely a preoccupation with local color. “Stravinsky’s bringing together of the live and the mechanical is not restricted to his experiments with pianolas; it also extends outwards to the subject matter of Petrushka and Pulcinella, as well as to the opposition between the live (chromatic) and mechanical (diatonic) birds in The Nightingale.” In any event Le Chant du rossignol may be seen as a way station leading to more successful East-West synergies to come.

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2.3 Benjamin Britten’s *Songs From The Chinese, Op. 58* (1957)

*Songs From the Chinese* is an excellent song cycle for high voice and guitar, yet it is curiously one of Britten’s less-known compositions. This piece probably reflects the changes in the composer’s life at middle age while traveling around the world with tenor Peter Pears, and taking in various East Asian cultures, which broadened Britten’s vision and horizon, and exerted an important influence upon his later compositions. The song cycle is comprised of six songs with texts from Arthur Waley’s translations of classic verses, published in 1946, under the title Chinese Poems. Each song can be interpreted as reflecting a particular aspect of Britten’s own life, as if he were using them to ponder his middle age and associate himself with Eastern elements.\(^72\) Both Britten and Pears were not only familiar with the lute songs and consort music of John Dowland, but were staunch advocates.\(^73\) *Songs From the Chinese* was premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival in Great Glemham House on June 17, 1958, dedicated to the 400\(^{th}\) anniversary of Dowland’s birth. Po Chü-I’s poem *The Old Lute* opens with the lines: ‘Of chord and cassiawood is the lute compounded; Within it lie ancient melodies’.\(^74\) “The lute was rarely absent from Britten’s consciousness, and this line in particular must have resonated with him, calling to mind Dowland’s ‘ancient melodies’, which haunted him so much.”\(^75\) Clearly, Britten’s use of the guitar — the lute’s most direct modern descendent — is not only a homage to his Renaissance predecessor, but a vehicle through which he can directly compare himself to one of England’s greatest composers. But there is another

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\(^72\) Philip Brett and Heather Wiebe, “Benjamin Britten: 6. Transition and triumph, 1955–62,” Grove Music Online through Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/46435pg6&q=Britten%27s+Songs+From+the+chinese&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit, September 21, 2016 consulted. “Although the texts, which are largely about the transient nature of beauty and youth, provide a basis for exoticism, Britten avoids it in favour of a musical language that not only exploits the guitar’s capabilities but also suggests the spare, thematically orientated manner that was to occupy him after 1961.”

\(^73\) Holman, Peter. *Dowland: Lachrimae (1604)* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 50.

\(^74\) Waley, Arthur. *Chinese poems* (London, 1946). All the chosen poems set in *Songs from the Chinese* are taken from these translations.

important reason: the composer’s long and fruitful friendship with the great English guitarist and lutenist, Julian Bream, the co-dedicator of the song cycle.\textsuperscript{76} The guitar, of course, shares many similarities with the lute, its timbres, techniques, constructions, etc.\textsuperscript{77} Britten makes this song cycle sound both nostalgic and modern at the same time. Dowland’s musical settings abound with careful attention to treatment of the rhetoric of the language in his chosen texts.\textsuperscript{78} Britten, as an advocate, clearly admired this aspect of Dowland’s art and emulated it, this time through the vehicle of the Chinese poems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Big Chariot</td>
<td>This song is a metaphor for the acquisition of fame, which will “only make yourself dusty.” It also admonishes the listener not to take on the sorrows of the world, but at the end Britten repeats that line, reminding the listener that he could never manage to do that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Old Lute</td>
<td>This song reflects on the fickle changing of public taste; the lute has been superseded by the flute and zither.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Autumn Wind</td>
<td>This song is an obvious image of encroaching age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Herd-Boy</td>
<td>Then the music turns lilting for The Herd-Boy. The tenderness of the setting reflects Britten’s feelings, which are especially awakened by the fact that the boy is exploited, ill-clothed, and unshod, living in poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>This song features spooky glissandi on the guitar as the words ponder the body’s decay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance Song</td>
<td>The deceptively named Dance Song is about a hunt for a unicorn by the retainers of a duke. Britten reminds us that the unicorn traditionally represents chastity. The capture of the unicorn causes Britten to dwell on the word “Alas!” ending the work with his recurrent theme of the destruction of innocence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{77} Kubik, Gerhard. “Guitar,” Grove Music Online through Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/43006?q=guitar&search=quick&pos=1\&start=1#S43006.2, September 27, 2016 consulted. “A string instrument of the lute family, plucked or strummed, and normally with frets along the fingerboard. It is difficult to define precisely what features distinguish guitars from other members of the lute family, because the name ‘guitar’ has been applied to instruments exhibiting a wide variation in morphology and performing practice. In the Hornbostel and Sachs classification system the guitar is a ‘composite chordophone’ of the lute type.”

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
When considering the work through the prism of texture, Britten cleverly creates a true mixture of West and East on a deep level and without resorting much to pentatonicism. Here, for example, he often has both the singer and guitarist stating the same melodic material, but with different ornamentations, and details — heterophony. By comparison, Puccini and Stravinsky’s compositional techniques can sound relatively superficial, because their works focus on surface cultural affinities, rather than deeper, more subtle ones. Though the Songs From the Chinese is unified by the text, the musical style of each movement is distinctive and separate. This reminds the listeners of a similar compositional approach in Mahler’s Das Lied von der Erde, but as we saw there are still vestiges of pentatonicism in Mahler’s composition. It appears that Britten had little interest in attempting to ‘sound’ Chinese. To the contrary, notwithstanding the texts, his real aim was to expand the British vocal tradition: “One of my chief aims is to try and restore to the musical setting of the English language a brilliance, freedom and vitality that have been curiously rare since the days of Purcell.”

Perhaps one could postulate that Britten’s synergies of East and West form a true hybrid — a music that is beholden to neither but whose influences, though subtle are tangible. The first movement, The Big Chariot (The Book of Songs), initially sounds like homophony or counterpoint. Yet it is actually related at least as much to heterophony, because both voice and guitar have essentially the same material. The opening passage sufficiently demonstrates this kind of flexible heterphonic effect. One can see that the vocal line is “nested’ within the more elaborate guitar part. (Figure 2.29)

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Furthermore, the main idea flexibly shifts between them. For instance, the sixteenth-note figure of the bass line recalls a similar performing technique of the Chinese bamboo flute or *hulusiao*. (Please refer to chapter 2.1) Also, both voice and guitar emphasize the prominent notes. The chordal construction of the upper part of the guitar imitates the heterophonic effect of Chinese folk music that functions to accent the important pitches with harmonic tension. “The accompaniment is formed throughout by two contrasted elements — a chordal one that both rhythmically and harmonically moves in step with the voice, and a complementary linear element (running semiquavers) that does not. (“This contrast of texture, incidentally, is only one of the many points in which Britten seems to have taken a hint from the technique of the sixteenth-century lutenists,” said Noble.80) This compositional technique can be seen as a hearkening back to the “broken style” of the 16th-century English lute playing. The aforementioned does not contradict the Eastern contribution, after all, the lute is related to the Chinese *pipa* through their common Middle-Eastern ancestor, the *Oud*.81 Additionally, Britten uses a number of repetitions of the same texts, but decreases the length each time. This technique is similar to Asian folk styles with cyclic themes.

The second movement, *The Old Lute* (Po Chü-i), utilizes a subtle heterophony throughout. At first glance (or hearing) it seems as if we are hearing counterpoint, and if we include the vocal


81 Both the *pipa* and the English lute are descendants of the Middle Eastern *oud*. In Arabic, “the oud” is *AL OUD*, from which we get the word “lute.”
line, their melodies appear to be five separate lines. However, a closer examination reveals that the lines are not as independent from each other as is usually the case in true Western counterpoint but in fact are often more like subtle variations of each other. The passage from mm. 12-15 demonstrate this quite clearly. (Figure 2.30) This song has an ethereal, static effect, again a nod to traditional Chinese music style. The pitch organization is based on five fragmental melodies acquired from the Lydian mode on E, recalling unfolding in an impressive fully flashed out counterpoint reminiscent of Dowland’s fantasies.82 “The highly restricted nature of each modal fragment (the notes in brackets in the polyphony figure are only arrived at after some time) obviously creates a static harmonic environment that gives the song a deeply immanent character further highlighting the diminished status of the instrument in the Chinese poem.”83 Moreover, the guitar’s complete texture is very skillfully and idiomatically wrought, designed in a way to achieve maximum resonance. The texture also reminds us of traditional Japanese “Noh,” which expresses a polyphony of multiple voices through the harmonic progression.84 The ‘tiredness’ of The Old Lute is reflected by a tendency for the lines to fall. (Figure 2.31) The Lydian mode, however, was understood to have the effect of encouraging gravity and solemnity, and was thought to infect the mind with a kind of ecstasy.85 In this aspect, Britten’s method of interpreting the Lydian mode for The Old Lute recalls the listeners of the sorrow and serious mood of the texts that express loss of life, even disintegration, perfectly mirrored by the guitar part and the measured, unhurried vocal line.


83 Ibid.

84 “In 1956 Britten visited the Far East, and a number of Asian influences – including the pentatonicism of Balinese gamelan and the free figuration of a constant tonality found in Japanese Noh-plays – were incorporated into his ballet of that year Prince of the Pagodas. On the other hand, Britten was foremost an ingenious composer when setting text to music, and the following year he employed whatever means were in his arsenal to compose the song cycle Songs From the Chinese, Op. 58 for high voice and guitar.” Steckler, Matthew. Britten’s Songs From The Chinese, Op. 58: A tonality Dissolved or Recombined (December 19, 2009).

Figure 2.30: *The Old Lute* (Po Chü-i), mm. 10-18 (© Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd): Heterophonic effect
The second movement concludes with a sudden burst of energy in a new (quasi-pentatonic) mode using natural harmonics. In contrast to the previous slow, elegiac, and sorrowful modal fragments, this is an obvious response to the textual reference of the brash quality of the two instruments: “Because of the Ch’iang flute and the zithern of Ch’in.” Britten skillfully articulated the instruments’ sound quality by fast, snappy arpeggios executed in harmonics. (Figure 2.32)
The third movement, *The Autumn Wind* (Wu-ti), is a heterophonic tour de force, clearly influenced by Chinese style. The poem is written by the Emperor Wu-ti (157-87 B.C.). Since the texts describe the emperor's nostalgia for his mistress in the capital during an official journey, Britten cleverly creates the partially-controlled\(^{86}\) heterophonic accompaniment-figure to establish the visual aspect of the words. Though the third movement sounds like melody and accompaniment, it does so because Britten has cleverly disguised the fact that the guitar part is purely a highly decorated version of the vocal line. (Figure 2.33)

The dramatic flourish at m.19 (See figure 2.33), though highly idiomatic, reminds of similar techniques of the Chinese zither. The chord itself, which utilizes mainly open strings, is a pentatonic sonority.

![Figure 2.33: The Autumn Wind (Wu-ti), mm. 12-19 (© Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd): Heterophonic effect](image)

The fourth movement, *The Herd-Boy* (Lu Yu), uses the same heterophonic technique that Britten employed in the third movement, but here the effect is much more subtle. It is easy to mistake the texture for Western homophony (melody and accompaniment), though hidden it is in

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fact heterophonic. A closer observation reveals that Britten skillfully creates a subtle heterophony between the voice and guitar. Again, the vocal line is nested within the elaborations of the guitar part. (See the circled pitches in Figure 2.34)

![Figure 2.34: The Herd-Boy (Lu Yu), mm. 1-9 (© Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd): Subtle heterophony](image)

The fifth movement, *Depression* (Po Chü-i), also exhibits many Eastern influences, including many intervals of fourths and seconds, as well as tertian triads in parallel motion. For instance, in mm. 13-end, there are many parallel quartal harmonies. The relationship between the voice and guitar part is highly imitative, however; the relentless parallel quartal harmonies produce yet another subtle hybrid of two cultures. The full effect of the guitar’s natural tuning is emphasized by the gradual growth from a single line to full six-voice chords. This technique effectively amplifies the meaning of the texts, because each repetition of certain words and phrases produces an outburst with extremely high emotional intensity, creating an unforgettable harmonic effect. (Figure 2.35)
Britten’s *Songs from the Chinese*, like Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*, artfully synthesizes Asian and Western elements. “It seems to me that within the narrow limitations of six short songs for voice and guitar Britten has achieved a work that can stand with any of his song-cycles, and that as a whole they make a statement about life (and particularly about the transience of youth and beauty) as poignant and personal as Mahler’s own settings from the Chinese.”

2.4 Benjamin Britten’s *Curlew River A Parable For Church Performance, Op. 71 (1964)*

Britten’s exposure to the medieval Japanese *Nob* (能) drama, *Sumidagawa* (隅田川), by Juro Motomasa (1395-1431), proved to be a crucial influence in the composer’s thinking and arguably precipitated a paradigmatic shift in his thinking from this point onward. *Curlew River* was the first in a series of masterpieces in Britten’s late period that successfully fused East and West in a spectacular and breathtakingly natural hybrid. *Death in Venice* (1973), one of his very last works, is perhaps the culminating work in this series. Britten derived a new voice from the sounds and themes that he heard during his trip to Tokyo in 1956. He saw the Noh performance of *Sumidagawa* twice, and the drama had a profound effect on him. His interest in oriental music was longstanding; as early as the summer of 1939 he had been impressed by Balinese music, transcribed for two pianos, to which Colin McPhee had introduced him, and McPhee and Britten had together recorded some of it. Very soon after his return from the world tour, Britten contacted the poet William Plomer about collaborating on an adaptation of *Sumidagawa*, wanting to develop an English version of the Noh play. *Curlew River*, written for church performance with a conductorless ensemble (just as in Noh), was to be the first of Britten’s self-named ‘church parables’. It takes

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88 “The music of Noh consists of solo singing by the actors and chorus in unison, and an ensemble of four instruments, as well as monologue and dialogue.” Kishibe, Shigeo. “III. Outline of Eight Major Genres: (4) Noh” of *The Traditional Music of Japan*, p. 34.

89 The Japanese for “ability,” *Nob* is a Japanese musical theatre fusing literature, music, miming, and dance. It is performed by all male actors accompanied by drums and *Nokan* (bamboo flute). There are five types of plays: god, worrier, woman, madwoman, and demon. *Sumidagawa*, the name of the river in Tokyo, is the fourth type of *Nob* drama. “Sumida-gawa (Sumida-gawa River),” Noh Plays DataBase, http://www.the-noh.com/en/plays/data/program_012.html, October 21, 2016 consulted.


92 Parable is a short allegorical story designed to illustrate or teach some truth, religious principle, or moral lesson. Its origin was during 1275-1325: Middle English *parabil*, Late Latin *parabola*, and Greek *parabolē*. Britten composed three church parables by using the chamber opera setting without conductor, which evokes the performing style of Japanese *Nob*. *Curlew River* (1964) is based on *Sumidagawa* story. *The Burning Fiery Furnance* (1966) is based on a story from the book of Daniel in the Bible. *The Prodigal Son* (1968) is inspired by Rembrandt’s painting that Britten saw in the Soviet Union. Christiansen, Rupert. “Britten: The Church Parables,
place in a church by a river in the Fenlands of England during medieval times. An abbot and a procession of monks enter, singing a chant-like hymn. Then, led by the Abbot, they present the story of a bereaved mother to the assembled ‘congregation.’ The Madwoman has come to the banks of the river to ask a ferryman to take her across so she can continue her desperate search. Britten’s *Curlew River* can be seen as one of the seminal modern ritual works. Victor Turner defines ritual as:

“Ritual is, in its most typical cross-cultural expressions, a synchronization of many performative genres, and is often ordered by dramatic structure, a plot, frequently involving an act of sacrifice or self-sacrifice, which energizes and gives emotional coloring to the interdependent communicative codes which express in manifold ways the meaning inherent in the dramatic leitmotiv.”

Indeed, in *Curlew River*, Britten ‘Christianized’ the Japanese story by following the narrative and the structure of *Sumidagawa*. In his own way, Britten retains the ritualized aura of the Noh masterpiece. In this spare-textured score inspired by Japanese musical style, he uses Western instruments to imitate the timbres of Japanese instruments. The structure of *Nob*, “Jo-Ha-Kyu,” is derived from the Japanese court music, *Gagaku*, which originates from Chinese and Korean court music. Yet Plomer’s libretto evokes the ancient tradition of both Japanese and Greek tragedy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Noh</th>
<th>Curlew River</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jo</strong></td>
<td>1st Dan</td>
<td>A. Procession (beginning-7) and the entrance of Ferryman and Traveller (8-18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ha</strong></td>
<td>2nd Dan (Jo)</td>
<td>B. Madwoman’s story (rehearsal 19-38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conversation between the Madwoman and the Ferryman, and the realization of her son’s tragedy (rehearsal 39-74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd Dan (Ha)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4th Dan (Kyu)</td>
<td>Weeping at the boy’s tomb (rehearsal 75-86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kyu</strong></td>
<td>5th Dan</td>
<td>C. Prayer and the appearance of the Spirit (rehearsal 87-96) and the recession (rehearsal 97-end)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.36: The structure of *Nob* and *Curlew River*[^96]


[^95]: The middle section of *Nob* is usually considered as a development in the Western point of view, since the story gets expanded even if no material is developed in the section. While Plomer’s libretto follows the structure *Sumidagawa* directly, Britten’s music does not show the straight parallel to the structure of *Sumidagawa*. In Japanese music, *Jo* section starts with a slow and free rhythm followed by the *Ha* section, which establish the rhythm. The *Kyu* section gradually increases the tempo to a climax, while it comes back to the free rhythm of *Jo*. Park, Kye Ryung. *Reconstructing the Boundary: Benjamin Britten’s Curlew River* (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2004).

[^96]: For further discussion of the form in both dramas, see William P. Malm’s *Six Hidden Views of Japanese music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 159-160.
By following the details of how this manifests, *Curlew River*, commences with a traditional monophonic statement of the Gregorian chant “Te lucis ante terminum.” (Figure 2.37)

![Figure 2.37: The beginning part of the original hymn](image)

Perhaps Britten chose this particular chant, in addition to textual reasons, for its striking affinity to narrative Japanese melos. The oft repeated minor third figures (in brackets) and the mode itself, which bears a striking similarity to the Japanese five-tone mode, are two instances of this affinity. (Figure 2.38)

![Figure 2.38: Opening chant of “Te lácis ante téminum” of Curlew River (© Faber & Faber Ltd)](image)

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97 *Vesperale Romanum* (Ratisbonac: F. Pustet, 1925), 153.
The harmonic practice of the work, introduced almost immediately, is often based on tone clusters, while the use of the organ is clearly meant to evoke the *shō*, a fixture of Japanese court music. It is no coincidence that the pitches Britten uses are often pentatonic, like the Japanese chord “bo” (G-A-C-D-E). (Figure 2.39 and 2.40)

Figure 2.39: Tone clusters on the chamber organ of Curlew River, Reh. 1

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Figure 2.40: The use of “sho” in *Tagak*.

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Not long afterwards this chant is transformed into an instrumental march, the robing music, using pure heterophony and Western instruments to imitate gagaku. (Figure 2.41) Apart from the hypnotic drum ostinato (which uses exactly five tones), the remaining parts all present simultaneous variants of “Te lúcis ante téminum.”

The Abbot’s music is a paraphrase of “Te lúcis ante téminum” with prominent descending sixths sprinkled throughout. (Curiously enough the descending sixth is highly unusual in authentic Gregorian chant.) The orientalizing of the Abbot’s paraphrase becomes clear at rehearsal 3, where the sequence of three-note figures all evoke Japanese modes.
The Traveler first appears at rehearsal 14. His declamation “I come from the Westland” is expressed in the Lydian mode — a distinctly non-Asian sound. (Figure 2.43) As he continues, his utterances are all triadic, and Western sounding.

Figure 2.43: Traveler’s first entrance of *Curlew River*, Reh 14 (© Faber & Faber Ltd)

Throughout the score, Britten exploits a harmonic technique that would become a standard part of his palette to the end of his life. (Figure 2.44)

Figure 2.44: *Curlew River*, Reh 29-30 (© Faber & Faber Ltd)
It is clear that the harmonic support is made by anticipating and/or sustaining the notes of the melodies, usually in precisely the same registers, the effect is similar to that of listening to chant in a very resonant space, whereby the melodic content in effect turns into chords. Britten creates a new palette of sonorities neither Western nor Eastern.

The Madwoman’s long narration is ‘accompanied’ only by muted horn, flute and strings, all of which end their phrases by sliding down a step, creating a microtonal end-of note ornament reminiscent of characteristic Japanese performance practice. Her utterances are often punctuated with shrieking tremolo figures in the instruments both evocative of her abject grief and perhaps the lonely cry of the curlews. (Figure 2.45)
Figure 2.45: Madwoman’s narration of *Curlew River*, Reh. 34 (© Faber & Faber Ltd)
In addition, there are many upward and downward glissandi effects in this work, which are influenced by Japanese music.

![Notation of Japanese Buddhist music](image)

Figure 2.46: Notation of Japanese Buddhist music Shōmyō

The rhythmic pattern in the drums at the opening are clearly influenced by a characteristic acceleration played by drums in Gagaku music. (Figure 2.47, 2.48, 2.49)

![The first entrance of the drums in Curlew River](image)

Figure 2.47: The first entrance of the drums in Curlew River. The * sign indicates tremolando with a gradual, unmeasured accelerando.

![The characteristic rhythmic pattern of percussion instruments in Gagaku music](image)

Figure 2.48: The characteristic rhythmic pattern of percussion instruments in Gagaku music

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Figure 2.49: Gagaku ensemble (Kangen) score

78. Kangen score: “Etenraku” A transcription of the beginning part of the score shown on the facing page. From the top, notations for Shō, Ryūteki, Hichiriki, Kakko, Shōko, Taiko, Koto, and Biwa.

The point of the drama where the ferry reaches the eastern banks of the river and the Madwoman realizes that her son is buried nearby, which is derived in turn from the Madwoman’s portamentos. (Figure 2.50) This curious, new scale (Figure 2.51) is a synthesis of pentatonicism and octatonicism. Later the same scale is marked by a new scale played by the ensemble. (Figure 2.52)

Figure 2.50: Madwoman’s major seventh of *Curlew River*, Reh 24 (© Faber & Faber Ltd)

Figure 2.51: Scale of Madwoman’s pitches
The same scale (Figures 2.51 and 2.52) reappears again in the Spirit’s vocal line at rehearsal 96. Here his melodic contour sounds reminiscent of Japanese pentatonicism. (Figure 2.53)

Later the Abbot re-states part of the Madwoman’s scale at rehearsal 99. Yet, his melody here sounds like traditional Japanese folk song. (Figure 2.54)
At Rehearsal 80, Britten’s impressive skills in combining both heterophony and polyphony showcase his successful synergy of Western fugal style and Eastern texture again. He cleverly combines both effects by juxtaposing voices and instruments, a distinctive feature of his late music.\(^{104}\) (Figure 2.55)

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At rehearsal 88, the first and second stanzas of “Custódes hóminum” (Figure 2.56) are sung by the Abbot and the Chorus while the Ferryman and the Traveller echo each other. This is another instance of Britten’s amalgamation of fugue and heterophony. (Figure 2.57) At this point, all the instruments and voices sing together in spectacular heterophony until the Spirit’s “Amen” responds to them.

Figure 2.56: “Custódes hóminum”\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{105} Vesperale Romanum, 497.
This passage (and style) culminates at rehearsal 90 in a magnificent — if slightly chaotic — final upwelling. (Figure 2.58) Of all the works I have presented, *Curlew River* is perhaps the most compelling and successful of the hybrids we have seen. Britten fluently and skillfully paraphrases the Gregorian Chant to shape the melody, retains the ritualized aura and stage set of the Noh, all while using Western instruments to imitate the timbre of Japanese counterparts. His experiment produces new sonorities that do not belong to any “school” or style.
Figure 2.58: The last stanza of the hymn in heterophony imitated by the Spirit of Curlew River (© Faber & Faber Ltd)
3.1 Toru Takemitsu’s *Autumn* (1973) — the “Takemitsu sound”

*Autumn*, a tone poem for Japanese *biwa*, *shakuhachi*, and full orchestra, exemplifies Takemitsu’s unique, and influential style of composition. The work consists of an introduction and twelve sections, expressing the composer’s interest and delight in “nature.” He often creates music inspired by natural sources. “It is really an imaginary “nature” in which I experience reality intensely, particularly in Eastern and Western music, both of which are entirely “natural” because of being imaginary.” His intuitive creativity of imaginary nature distinguishes his music from any “school” or style.

Takemitsu was perhaps the most famous avant-garde Japanese composer to combine the Western orchestra with Japanese traditional instruments — *shakuhachi* (bamboo flute, 笛), and *biwa* (short-necked fretted lute, 琵琶, similar to Chinese *pipa*, whose four strings are played with a large plectrum). (Figure 3.1) William P. Malm, an American ethnomusicologist who is considered an authority on Japanese traditional music writes:

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106 Dominic Gill, Liner Notes on recording of Takemitsu’s work for keyboard instruments. Corona, for away, undisturbed rest, decca (London).

107 “Talking of Japanese avant-garde composers, many people will agree with Mr. Malm that Toru Takemitsu, born in Tokyo in 1930, deserves to be mentioned first. Known internationally, Takemitsu gives little aesthetic and technical explanation of his music. A typical statement from him concerning his compositions would be, “It seems to me that most contemporary music carefully avoids the past. I am not afraid of it. On the contrary, I need at the same time whatever is newest just as much as I need whatever is oldest. However, the Unknown is found neither in the past, nor in the future, but in reality, simply in the immediate present.”” Feliciano, Francisco F. *Four Asian Contemporary Composers: The Influence of Tradition in Their Works* (1983), 69.
“It has often been felt that no true combination of Japanese and Western music would be possible until there was some composer who was equally knowledgeable in both Western and Japanese traditional styles. Until recent times such a musical, aesthetic barricade seemed unbroken. But the international musical styles of the last third of the 20th century seem to make culturally transcendental eclecticism a viable medium for those composers with enough talent and insight to control the infinite idioms available to them. In Japan, Takemitsu Toru seems a likely candidate for such an accolade. His music is totally contemporary and never directly “orientale,” yet some of his senses of timing, texture, and structure are characteristically Japanese."

To bridge Western and Japanese cultures, Takemitsu has composed the following works. It appears from the following that he has a particular delight in Autumn!

- Eclipse (1966) for biwa and shakuhachi
- November Steps (1967) for biwa, shakuhachi and orchestra
- Distance (1972) for oboe and sho
- August (1973) for biwa, shakuhachi and orchestra
- Voyage (1973) for three biwas
- In an August Garden (1973-1979) for orchestra and gagaku
- Ceremonial — An Autumn Ode (1992) for sho and orchestra

---

Actually, Toru Takemitsu was not initially interested in traditional Japanese music. However, in the aftermath of World War II, he became much more exposed to Western culture and music. His encounter with John Cage was particularly momentous, because the American encouraged the young Japanese composer to re-discover the beauty of traditional Japanese culture and music, in short to reawaken his roots. “From Cage I learned life — or I should say, how to live and the fact that music is not removed from life.” Takemitsu was influenced by Cage’s philosophies of composing music, which encouraged him to be free from all constraints and rules. In the late 1950s, Stravinsky visited Japan. The Japanese NHK (Japanese: 日本放送協会: Nippon Hósó Kyōkai, official English name: Japan Broadcasting Corporation) radio played a number of Japanese pieces chosen just for him. The staff, by mistake, selected Takemitsu’s Requiem, which was not initially on the playlist. Yet, Stravinsky, after listening to this work, insisted that the NHK staff play the entire piece. He thought it was an outstanding composition and invited Takemitsu to have dinner with him afterward. This encounter helped to launch Takemitsu’s international career.


A close look at *Autumn* reveals a textural design and orchestration and even atmosphere, suggesting influences from Messiaen, and Debussy, as well as Cage. The composer juxtaposes and superimposes many characteristics that makes the piece sound like a “confrontation” between Western and Eastern cultures. Takemitsu’s ultimate goal, however, was not to confront the remarkable difference between the two cultures, but to explore ways of blending Japanese instruments with the Western orchestra. For instance, Takemitsu’s penchant for developing brief ideas recalls a similar treatment in Messiaen’s *Turangalîa-Symphonie*. However, Takemitsu’s textures tend to be thinner. At rehearsal A, an accompanied canon built of several distinct simultaneous layers reminds us yet again of the recursive use of shapes in Japanese Ukiyo-e with multi-planar texture (Figure 3.2), as we first observed in Debussy’s *La Mer*.

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111 “Even though Takemitsu was self-taught, he considers Debussy his mentor. It was Debussy’s use of colours, of light and shadow, that fascinated Takemitsu …. Another French composer who had a profound influence on Takemitsu was Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992). … In fact, after hearing Messiaen’s *Préludes* for piano, Takemitsu resolved to pursue music as his life’s work.” Ohtake, Noriko. *Creative Sources for the Music of Toru Takemitsu* (Scolar Press, 1993), 7.

112 Ibid., 57.
Figure 3.2: Canonic effect of Takemitsu’s *Autumn* (copyright © Editions Salabert), Reh. A, p. 4-5
Moreover, in contrast to the teleological style of Western classical music, Takemitsu’s *Autumn* consists of static and fragmental moments, often isolated from their surroundings by silence and/or registral space. For me this is one of the traits that render Takemitsu's music so Japanese. *Autumn* is unpredictable in this sense. Each moment sounds still, separate, disconnected, rendering a static effect as a whole. His harmonies are made of chromatic fields, rather than ‘chords’ and he often uses gradual changes in register, or textural accumulation to create a sense of direction or momentum. Yet there are a few moments that sound teleological, with longer continuous phrases, such as the passage already referenced. (Figure 3.2 and its continuation at Figure 3.3)
Figure 3.3: Continuation of Takemitsu’s *Autumn* (copyright © Editions Salabert), Reh. A, p. 4-5 (cont.)
The densely textured web of sound beginning at rehearsal A which, as Smaldone points out, is “organized by a complex procedure of transposition, ordering and transformation, which governs the nineteen individual string parts,”\(^{113}\) creates one of the longer ‘phrases’ of the work and does indeed sound as if it is ‘moving’ somewhere. (Figure 3.2 and 3.3) The layering, coupled with the evocative colors, bears a certain resemblance to French impressionism. The textures and orchestration create an almost Ravelian perfumed landscape, providing a wonderful example of an East-West hybrid.

Meanwhile, he continues to explore the confrontation between silence and sounds\(^ {114}\). Takemitsu’s use of silence, an oft-noted and distinctive feature of his style, bears some scrutiny. Such a preoccupation could be attributed to his exposure to Cage, as well as to indigenous Japanese aesthetics, but whatever its source it enhances the charmingly static impression of this score. Actually, there are other Japanese composers such as Joji Yuasa and Jo Kondo who also expressed that “time and space” are important phenomena in their music. “One can trace this concept of sound and silence not only in the day-to-day life of the Japanese people. The Japanese word \textit{ma}, meaning space, an interval or a pause, permeates every aspect of Japanese life\(^ {115}\).”

Curiously, Takemitsu adopts Western isorhythmic techniques to create a number of distinctive textures. This can be seen clearly at rehearsal A, where the lowest textural layer combines a ‘color’ of eight notes with a ‘talea’ of two beats duration. (Figure 3.3) These two cycles interweave to create a fascinating evolving texture.\(^ {116}\)

\(^{113}\) Poirier, Alain. \textit{Toru Takemitsu}, 224.

\(^{114}\) “Takemitsu’s music in the 60’s, \textit{Ring} (1961), \textit{Sacrifice} (1962) and \textit{Varelia} (1965) demonstrate the composer’s concern regarding the problem of silence—silence between musical events being as important as the sound itself. \textit{Arc} for piano and orchestra (1963-66) shows clearly the idea of sound in challenging opposition to silence. In \textit{Eclipse} for shakuhachi and biwa (1966) where a pause occurs, a verse from Tagore’s “Gitanjali” is quoted and the players are to read it in their minds creating the time in which the pause lasts.” Feliciano, Francisco F. \textit{Four Asian Contemporary Composers: The Influence of Tradition in Their Works} (1983), 71.

\(^{115}\) Feliciano, Francisco F. \textit{Four Asian Contemporary Composers: The Influence of Tradition in Their Works} (1983), 72-73.

At the very outset of the piece, the harp articulations prepare us for the biwa to come.

(Figure 3.4)

![Figure 3.4: The opening passage of Takemitsu's *Autumn* (copyright © Editions Salabert), p. 1](image)

Starting on page 2 at m. 5, the first violin states a motif (Figure 3.5) (whose prime form set is \[0, 1, 2, 3\]), which also bears a striking resemblance to the singing style of Asian opera.¹¹⁷ (Figure 3.6a) Later, at p. 3, m. 9, the violin clearly develops a very similar idea (Figure 3.6b), which contains the same four-note pitch cell plus two additional notes (G and F sharp). (Figure 3.7) Still later, at p. 25, mm. 59-60, this idea is ‘recapitulated’ and again we see the set \[0, 1, 2, 3\]. The ramifications here are clear: Takemitsu employs a neo-serial method to achieve a dense chromatic harmony quite similar to the European avant-garde composers of that time.

Figure 3.5: The Motif 1 of Takemitsu’s *Autumn* (copyright © Editions Salabert), m. 5, p. 2

(a) Violin I (solo), m. 5, p. 2

\[
\begin{align*}
C & \quad D \text{ flat} \quad D \text{ natural} \quad E \text{ flat: [0, 1, 2, 3]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(b) Violin I (solo), m. 9, p. 3

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \quad B \text{ flat} \quad B \text{ natural} \quad C: [0, 1, 2, 3] \\
\end{align*}
\]

(c) Violin I, m. 59-60, p. 25

\[
\begin{align*}
C \text{ sharp} & \quad D \quad E \text{ flat} \quad E \text{ natural: [0, 1, 2, 3]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Figure 3.6: Reduction of motifs 1-3 played by violin(s)
Despite its Western harmonic style, these passages, in particular the third statement of the motif (Figure 3.8), sound somehow 'Japanese.' Perhaps this is due in part to the extremely slow tempo and the overall tranquility of the passage. Or perhaps this impression arises from the essentially homophonic texture. All in all, this passage represents a subtle and clever hybrid of Western techniques with Japanese sensibilities.
Other Japanese characteristics, and these are things we have examined in several of the earlier pieces, are numerous instrumental effects, particularly tremolos, strummed chords, sharp articulations, glissandi, and so on, that are clearly meant to imitate Japanese instruments and their distinctive articulations. Takemitsu’s orchestration tends to emphasize higher registers and to attenuate the lower. For instance, the violin solo at p. 2, m. 5 is partially doubled by the first clarinet, but the violin slowly glisses upward, a distinctively Japanese sound: the violin solo is ‘doubled’ heterophonically by two additional solo violins whose tremolo is reminiscent of similar effects on the shamisen (Figure 3.9) and biwa (Figure 3.1). In the following measures, the flutes, harps, and contrabass are combined to produce composite timbres similar to those found in
traditional Japanese chamber music, which mostly combines woodwind with plucked instruments such as the *koto*, *shakuhachi*, *shamisen*, and *biwa*. (Figure 3.1, 3.9 and 3.10)

![Shamisen Diagram](image1)

**Figure 3.9: Japanese shamisen**

![Koto Diagram](image2)

**Figure 3.10: Japanese koto**

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The biwa passage, accompanied by harps, generates a static atmosphere similar to French impressionism, with significant use of silence. (Figure 3.11) Here, the pitches primarily function to provide a “color” instead of establishing a melodic contour. The biwa enters, played in the traditional manner, accompanied by two harps whose affinity to their plucked Asian counterpart is belied by their ultra-chromatic, abstract pitch language.

Figure 3.11: The entrance of biwa of Takemitsu's Autumn (copyright © Editions Salabert), p. 13

The rhythmic freedom in these two passages (pp. 14-15) is in keeping with Japanese folk style, although the notation demonstrates Western avant-garde influences. (Figure 3.12)
The shakuhachi makes its long anticipated entrance on p. 6. (Figure 3.13); it also plays in a way quite close to the traditional Japanese style.
“The sound which a shakuhachi master hopes to achieve in performance, the consummate shakuhachi sound, is the sound the wind makes when it blows through a decaying bamboo groove.” The blend of vibraphone and strings with shakuhachi at p. 9, m. 25, is one of numerous imaginative combinations found throughout the score. (Figure 3.14)

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120 Toru Takemitsu, Liner notes on November Steps.
Figure 3.14: The blend of vibraphone and strings with shakuhachi of Takemitsu’s Autumn (copyright © Editions Salabert), p. 9
Takemitsu’s attitude towards the West and to traditional Japanese instruments can be seen as a self-conscious juxtaposition of highly constructed sounds and aesthetics. In the composer’s own words, “the sounds of Western music dispose themselves horizontally, whereas the sounds of the shakuhachi occur vertically, the way a tree grows, e.g., the way a bamboo tree grooves, out of which plant the shakuhachi is made.”

In addition, the blend of *biwa* with orchestra (flutes, oboes, bass clarinets, trumpet, horns, harps, celesta, vibraphone, and strings) at rehearsal E, p. 15, provides a characteristic sample of how Takemitsu blends these disparate timbres. (Figure 3.15)

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121 Feliciano, Francisco F. *Four Asian Contemporary Composers: The Influence of Tradition in Their Works* (1983), 76.
Figure 3.15: The blend of Biwa and orchestra of Takemitsu’s Autumn (copyright © Editions Salabert), Reh. E, p. 15
Takemitsu often employs aleatoric or semi-aleatoric notation for both Japanese instruments, but never (and I must emphasize this) for the Western orchestral instruments. We see this most clearly in the duo passages where the traditional methods of performance, including microtonality, are written in partially graphic notation. Though influenced by Cage’s time notation, the music sounds authentically Japanese, with little effort to ‘westernize.’ Of course, it is important to make an obvious observation: traditional Japanese music has its own highly sophisticated notational system, which Takemitsu could have used but chose not to.

Figure 3.16: Duet of shakuhachi and biwa, Takemitsu’s Autumn (copyright © Editions Salabert), p. 21

Figure 3.17: Duet of shakuhachi and biwa, Takemitsu’s Autumn (copyright © Editions Salabert), p. 22
Looking at the whole of *Autumn*, the use of *biwa* sounds very cold, penetrating, and piercing, especially its harsh plucking effect. The passage on p. 13 successfully synthesizes Western and Eastern elements to create a fresh new identity of musical sound.
In summary, *Autumn* demonstrates Takemitsu’s new adventures in timbral diversity. The work ultimately provokes an interesting question: is it truly a hybrid of two cultures and systems, or is it, as Takemitsu himself so characterized, an effort to juxtapose two spectacularly contrasted musical aesthetics? In my view, it is both. We discovered numerous instances of subtle combinations between Eastern techniques and Western avant-garde pitch languages for instance. Even its passages where the two Japanese instruments are left to themselves to essentially improvise in the traditional manner, the notation itself (though we can’t see it) is Western. As with Britten, Takemitsu successfully fuses East and West and, in so doing, creates a compelling, recognizable and wholly new voice. One that does not fit easily into a school or style.
3.2 I-Sang Yun’s *Symphony No. 4* (1986)

I think of I-Sang Yun’s *Symphony No. 4* as flowing architecture. He composed the work in Berlin-Kladow from April 18 to July 8, 1986. A commissioned work for the dedication of Suntory Hall, it was premiered by the Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra under Hiroyuki Iwaki in Tokyo on November 13, 1986. Yun wrote a programmatic commentary for the premiere: “If a ‘program’ is required for the understanding of my *Symphony IV*, then the first movement is to be interpreted as a description of the various conflicts involved in human society, as a confrontation between hopeful beginnings and ever-new threats, as an unceasing battle pitting positive tendencies against negative forms of resistance. Taken as a whole, the second movement is a song sung by the oppressed or sung for them. This song comes from the darkness and again sinks down into the gloom — always and everywhere. While composing it, I thought of the Asian women who are held in disdain and oppressed by a patriarchal society. I would like to lends the support of my voice to them: to defenseless women who, along with their children, are expected to violate in war-torn regions, to young girls who are forced into a more or less officially tolerated prostitution, to women who, as modern slave laborers, are deprived of elemental human rights in the shadow of economic development. All these women live in darkness. Without song their life would be devoid of all hope.”

He took the title “Singing in the Dark” from the published diaries (1982-85) of the German writer Luise Rinser. A friend of Yun’s, she led the “Dialogue Concerning the Composer’s Life and Work” on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday (Frankfurt am Main, 1977).

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122 I-Sang Yun’s words in the program note of *Symphony No. 4*.

123 Yun’s *Symphony No. 4* (1986) was based on political essayist and nazi prison survivor Luise Rinser’s personal diary, *Im Dunkeln Singen: 1982 bis 1985*. 
“In the first movement Yun follows principles of declamation modeled on the Korean sijo. Sijo, along with kagok and kasa, forms a central type of classical lyric Korean (art) song. It is a type characterized by simplicity in its relatively short melismata and by concentration on the essential. In sijo song three sung tang’ga verses (lyrical short poems from the Koryó Period, 935-1392) are accompanied by the changgo hourglass drum. The almost rigid, more or less standardized melodic structure goes back and forth between a mere two core tones at the interval of a fourth or fifth, and its variants serve contents. (Figure 3.19 and 3.20)

Figure 3.19: The sijo (classical lyric song) performance.
The accompaniment includes (from the left) haegum, taegum, p’iri and changgo.

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124 “Sijo is a Korean poetic form that emerged in the Koryó Period, flourished during the Joseon Dynasty, and is still written today.” Further, sijo consists of 3 lines in length, averaging 14-16 syllables per line for a poem total of 44-46 syllables. Rutt, Richard. The Bamboo Grove: An Introduction to Sijo (1998).


126 Ibid.
Figure 3.20: An excerpt from “T’aepp’yangga,” the only duet piece of the *kagok* song cycle.\(^{127}\)

At the outset of his symphony, Yun draws on several iconic devices of traditional Korean music. These are the so-called Lombardic rhythm (also known in the West as the Scotch snap) which figures so prominently in Korean vocal and instrumental practice. (Figure 3.21)

![Figure 3.21: Korean traditional notation of vocal and instrumental practice](image1)

Next is the prominence of the perfect fourth, often used to initiate or cadence a phrase. (Figure 3.23) Korean music often works by building phrases on chanting tones which are expressed embellished in numerous ways, including short ‘cuts’ or grace notes, glottal chains and so on. (Figure 3.20 and 3.22)
We can clearly set all of these things in Yun's score, and from the outset. (Figure 3.24)
The cello’s first phrase, although written in a highly stylized pitch language reflecting the influence of the German composers amongst whom he thrived, is nevertheless a clear paraphrase of the mannerisms of traditional Korean song, with many of its iconic hallmarks. Korean traditional music is almost always monophonic, with percussion or drones providing support and accompaniment. The contrabass serves such a purpose in the opening bars. The higher strings can be viewed as harmonized percussion punctuations. As in much traditional world music, it is hard to say whether the voices are imitating instruments or vice versa, regardless the aesthetics, techniques, and articulations are often strikingly similar. Here the instruments are celi and basses, clearly employed in a ‘vocal’ manner, and expressed through a serial pitch language, which nevertheless retains many of the characteristic Korean intervals, perfect fourths, minor thirds, as well as major and minor seconds. Meanwhile, the subtle gradations of dynamics and vibrato in mm. 1-3 by the low strings is characteristic of sijo music, as is the slow tempo and static movement of the music which progresses with great calm and serenity.

The second movement fulfills the two-fold function of slow movement and finale. Its architectural design is modeled on the first movement, but it has its own unique structure. Drama and declamation yield to a darkly colored tone of quiet resoluteness. The oboe solo enters on B-natural, a tone also figuring importantly in the first movement and its opening.

In Symphony No. 4, Yun intentionally juxtaposes Western and Korean musical styles in an admirable seamless hybrid. In this he can be placed within a lineage of Korean composers with a similar bent. However, there has long been “a rift among Korean composers: they are rather sharply divided, on the basis of their university major, into composers of kugak (traditional music) and composers of yangak (Western music). Composers trained in traditional music write mainly for

129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
traditional instruments, while those who have concentrated on Western music, many of them studying in foreign countries, feel more at home with Western instruments and idioms.” Yun is thus a yangak. Traditional Korean music is rife with micro-tonal ornamentation. This manifests in countless glissandi and other sliding effects throughout Yun’s score, blended effectively with the German twelve-tone language within which he writes. (Figure 3.25)

Figure 3.25: Micro-tonality in Yun’s Symphony No. 4, mvt. 1, mm. 26-28 (copyright © 1990 Bote & Bock, Berlin)

One would have to characterize Yun’s harmony and textures as decidedly dissonant, often quite dense — again characteristic of many of the post-Schoenberg generation of German composers.

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In fact, the horn solo in mm. 26-28 has the contour of a traditional *sijo* melody contour, especially the prolonged E and the ornamental sixteen-note figure. The vibrato effects by the winds and strings and the prolongation of single notes also evokes the distinctive vibrato that is used in *sijo*.\(^\text{132}\)

Figure 3.26: Yun’s *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 1, mm. 26-28: Horn solo (copyright © 1990 Bote & Bock, Berlin)

Figure 3.27: Korean art song, *P’yong-sijo*\(^\text{133}\)


\(^{133}\) Ibid., 194.
The numerous idiomatic embellishments recall similar articulations of Korean vocal and instrumental style such as the previous excerpt from “T’aep’yongja” or the following excerpt. (Figure 3.29) One can see their affinity most clearly in the solo monologue at m. 150, which comes as close as any passage in this score to authentic traditional Korean practice. (Figure 3.28)

Figure 3.28: Yun’s Symphony No. 4, mvt. 2, mm. 149-155: Oboe and violin duet (copyright © 1990 Bote & Bock, Berlin)

Figure 3.29: Slow and fast “Moshingi sori / Rice Planting songs”, as taught by Cho Kongnye, 1983

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The articulations in the strings can evoke the timbre of the Korean plucked zither, *gomungo* (six-stringed zither, also called “komun’go”) and *yanggum* (dulcimer, also called “yanggum”). (Figure 3.30 and 3.31)

![Image of Sin Yun-bok, Girl stringing a komun’go, 18th-19th century](image)

Figure 3.30: Sin Yun-bok, *Girl stringing a komun’go*, 18th-19th century

![Image of Korean yanggum](image)

Figure 3.31: Korean yanggum

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The following excerpt recalls the traditional styles of these two instruments. Moreover, the intervals of perfect 4th and 5th produce a truly Asian sound. (Figure 3.32)

In the rhythmic realm, Yun’s articulations and use of percussion instruments also saliently reflect his Korean roots. In the traditional Korean folk song, “the small percussion band provides a rhythmic foundation for songs,” said Professor Keith Howard.\(^{136}\) Yun cleverly uses the percussion family to build up the climax or increase the dynamic intensity of music, because “the drummer illustrates how developing a standard form involves the creation of visual aesthetics.”\(^{137}\) (Figure 3.33, 3.34 and 3.35)


\(^{137}\) Ibid.
Of special mention is that the diversity of rhythmic patterns plays an important role in traditional Korean music, a phenomenon also seen in Yun’s representative works, including *Symphony No. 4*. In the first movement, mm. 167-170, Yun uses some short repetitive rhythmic patterns to shape musical phrases, evoking the similar patterns of Korean *changdan*.

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138 “Rhythmic patterns, known as *changdan*, are usually announced by the two hands of *changgo* player and may identify the movements by name, as they do in *sanjo*. They do not, as in the manner of western terms such as *largo*, *presto*, *scherzo*, or *minuetto*, refer exclusively either to tempo or to meter, but to a combination of these and other characteristics. The *changdan* occur in short recurrent phrases, easily memorable and recognizable.” *Sanjo*, literally meaning ‘scattered melodies,’ is a style of traditional Korean music, involving an instrumental solo accompanied by drumming on the *janggu*, an hourglass-shaped drum. The art of *sanjo* is a real crystallization of traditional Korean melody and rhythm which may have been handed down by rote generation after generation. The drummer who beats the *janggu* also makes *chumshae* (exclamations) in order to please the audience. *Pratt, Keith. Korean Music: Its History and Its Performance*, 58.
Here the percussion sounds (tambourine, triangle, and cymbals) dominate the progress of the music while the woodwinds function to decorate the rhythmic patterns of percussion. The second, mm. 20-23, is also a good example of passages quite close to traditional Korean drumming. (Figure 3.38 and 3.39) This passage demonstrates a textural layering found throughout the score that reminds us of both Debussy’s similar technique and Stravinsky’s stratification.

Figure 3.37: Yun’s Symphony No. 4, mvt. 2, 20-23: Percussion family (copyright © 1990 Bote & Bock, Berlin)

Figure 3.38: Korean rhythmic patterns: six principles of Changdan

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As we saw in several of the earlier works, Yun tends to prefer high intense tessituras — with an intensity especially characteristic of Korean style. Yun’s melos makes especial use of “partially-controlled heterophony, because there are no performer-created ornamentations,”140 recalling similar effect in Britten’s *Curlew River* (at Reh. 5). (Figure 3.39) Compare this to the Korean passage that follows. (Figure 3.40)

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Figure 3.39: Yun's Symphony No. 4, mvt. 2, mm. 99-102: Heterophony (copyright © 1990 Bote & Bock, Berlin)
Figure 3.40: An excerpt of heterophony from “T’ae-p’yon-gga,” the only duet piece of the kagok song cycle.¹⁴¹

Yun’s music, like its Korean prototypes, is melo-centric despite the other busy and thick texture. (Figure 3.41) This passage is punctuated with heterophonic color effects.

Figure 3.41: Yun’s Symphony No. 4, mvt. 1, mm. 200-202: Melo-centric texture (copyright © 1990 Bote & Bock, Berlin)
Yun deliberately imitates traditional Korean notations and articulations, especially in the flute part. The melodic contour of alto flute solo in mvt. 2, mm. 24-27 (Figure 3.42), sounds like a variation of a Korean song, *Jung-Sung Gok.* (Figure 3.43) The double grace-note figure before the long main tone, followed by more closing grace notes is found in Yun’s *Symphony No. 4.* (Figure 3.42 and 3.43) Compare this to the boxed example which includes two grace notes before the long main note, followed by more closing grace notes, with a dramatic dynamic result. A similar technique can also be found in his *Etude for Flute Solo.* (Figure 3.44)

![Figure 3.42: Yun’s Symphony No. 4, mvt. 2, mm. 24-27: Flute and oboe duet (copyright © 1990 Bote & Bock, Berlin)](image)

Arguably the Yun work more smoothly integrates East and West than does his Japanese counterpart. However, the Koreaness of this work is easier to see than discern. It actually sounds quite German in its overall style and aesthetic! This is not to say that Yun’s piece is superior to the Takemitsu, in fact, I much prefer the Japanese work. Clearly the two composers approached the challenges of hybrid in very distinctive ways.

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Epilogue

Lin’s Rippling Brook (2016), Conclusion

My new orchestral work, *Rippling Brook* (2016), is a symphonic poem in part inspired by Mahler’s *Song of the Earth*, which describes aspects of the human condition such as living, parting and salvation. The central melodic idea is based on a Yunan folk song, *Rippling Brook* (小河淌水), which is from mainland China. I also composed a new pentatonic melody which is introduced after the first climax, my own response to this folk song.

![Figure 4.1: Yunan folk song, *Rippling Brook* (小河淌水), from south mainland China](image)
The materials and compositional techniques of *Rippling Brook* are inspired by my research of the music contained in this monograph. Whereas Mahler used ancient Chinese poems to to say goodbye to past youth and love; I used a Chinese melody to convey a sense of connection to Chinese culture. However, throughout the score at important junctures I have added narratives to aid the listener/conductor in following my musical narrative.

In my work, the music materials and instrumentation tend to stay in high registers dominated by bright tone colors, much as in many traditional Asian musical traditions. To establish the increasing intensity of the brook, I chose heterophonic effects to mimic the ebb and flow, and the crisp sound of running water. For instance, in mm. 24-27, the second flute plays a sixteenth-note figure while simultaneously the flute, oboe, vibraphone, and piano explore the same figure with slightly different rhythms, in which a longer note is followed by a shorter one. (Figure 4.2) This is inspired by the ‘Lombard’ rhythm in Yun’s *Symphony No. 4*, yet I reverse the syncopated rhythmic pattern. The grace notes of the piano part imitate the water drops from a leaf, one of many instances of nature tone painting. The Chinese folk song, *Rippling Brook*, is first heard at m. 4 played by the horn and piano. This passage was inspired by the first movement of Debussy’s *La Mer* in mm. 33-34, in which the woodwinds play a pentatonic melody in a high register while the strings create an effect that depicts waves.
To express that the rippling brook bears witness to human life from its simple to advanced development, from innocent to complex, I used mainly a melo-centric texture, inspired by Yun’s *Symphony No. 4* as well as Debussy’s *La Mer*. Each layer retains its own separate identity, contributing to an evolving texture with attenuated harmonic support. As this passage builds to a climax consonance gives way to dissonance and increase chromaticism as the textural density reaches a saturation point. (Figure 4.3) The heterophony of the brass was inspired by passages in Britten’s *Curlew River*. 
Figure 4.3: Melo-centric texture of Lin’s *Rippling Brook* (2016), mm. 57-62
After the climax in mm. 71-72, the entire orchestra drops suddenly to a thin, tranquil sonority. The following section (Reh. F) introduces new melodic materials inspired by Rippling Brook, which are superimposed upon the folk song. The text painting here depicts such natural sounds as bird song and blowing wind, this inspired by Stravinsky’s Chant du Rossignol (The Song of the Nightingale). My aim was to create a pure, natural sound world that reflects the narrative “From the first farming men and weaving women …” through the slender texture and light harmonies. (Figure 4.4)
Figure 4.4: Text painting of Lin’s *Rippling Brook* (2016), mm. 77-81
Next follows a middle section that depicts later recurring disasters, such as war, famine, and pollution that corrupt this initial pure field turning it to increasingly restlessness. To accomplish this, I used indeterminate notation inspired by both Takemitsu’s *Autumn* and John Cage’s *Music of Changes*. This technique creates an agitated, chaotic sound effect, which intensifies the emotional impact. To sufficiently evoke the atmosphere of the narrative “Later, recurring disasters … Wars, famines, and pollution … Make the initial pure field become increasingly restless … The quiet brook keeps flowing, on the sidelines, as always …”, I used oboe, English horn, and bassoon playing contrasting chromatic melodies, each with their own tempo, while the vibraphone, cymbals, celesta, and strings depict the fast-flowing meanderings of the brook. This section makes much use of free meter. (Figure 4.5)
Figure 4.5: Free meter of Lin's *Rippling Brook* (2016), Reh. K
As I have shown, composers often use melodies, rhythms and sonorities that are somehow stereotypical and strongly associated with a particular region or culture. To be sure I am doing this in my piece as well, by my goal is not to employ such techniques for merely exotic ends, rather, following the models of Britten, Takemitsu and Yun, to create a true hybrid of cultures that is all my own.
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