

Commentaries

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Commentaries

This chapter deals with the brief analysis of seven original compositions. Although all of them utilise elements of Japanese arts and music, each work is optimised differently in order to reveal more extensively the potential of *wabi sabi* for contemporary composition.

Each of the following commentaries comprises of two sections. In the first, general information about the work's performance, recording or publication is provided followed by a brief analytical overview. The second section is a more in-depth analysis of the work based primarily on the aesthetic premises of *wabi sabi*, established in the previous chapter. The reoccurrence of references to certain aesthetic issues has been unavoidable as all works share a common aesthetic background and their omission would lead to an incomplete picture of the works in analysis.

The pieces have been presented in an order designed to help clarify issues, rather than their order of composition.

I. FANTASMATA

Fantasmata is a 14-minute work for female voice, flute, violin, cello and piano. The text consists of single words and short phrases taken from Haruki Murakami's sort story *The Mirror* (Murakami, 1981/82). The work was composed as part of a wider collection of pieces connected under the thematic title '*A Glimpse of Japan*'. Its premier took place at Sapporo Kitara Concert Hall in 28 November 2007 performed by *Shonorities*.

Fantasmata is a composition in one movement, consisting of a series of short sections seamlessly connected. The text, which is in Japanese, is the principal generative power of the entire piece, as each music section is associated with a single unique word or phrase. There are two distinctive contrasting principles that characterise the construction of both small and large scale structures:

In the first, described as 'repetition in small scale structures', the textual and musical ingredients are recycled within the individual sections through processes of repetition, variation and development. The number of repetitions of the thematic/motivic occurrences does not follow a specific pattern but varies for each of the different sections.

The image shows a musical score for measures 48 to 51 of the piece 'Fantasmata'. The score is written for five instruments: Voice, Flute (Fl.), Violin (Vln.), Cello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.).

- Measure 48:** The voice part begins with the lyrics 'ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko - ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro'. The flute, violin, and piano parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The cello part has a long, sustained note.
- Measure 49:** The voice part continues with 'ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro'. The flute, violin, and piano parts continue with the rhythmic pattern. The cello part has a long, sustained note.
- Measure 50:** The voice part continues with 'ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro ko-ko-ro'. The flute, violin, and piano parts continue with the rhythmic pattern. The cello part has a long, sustained note.
- Measure 51:** The voice part continues with 'ro ko-ko-ro'. The flute, violin, and piano parts continue with the rhythmic pattern. The cello part has a long, sustained note.

Dynamic markings include *ff* (fortissimo) for the voice, flute, violin, and piano parts, and *mf* (mezzo-forte) for the piano part. Performance instructions include *simile* for the violin and *cresc.* (crescendo) for the cello.

Figure 30: Small scale repetition (within a section).

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In the second, described as ‘non-repetition in the large scale structure’, there is no obvious motivic/thematic affinity between the constituent sections (though some distant similarities in timbral/harmonic content occur); unique textual occurrences result in individual music sections.

Despite their loose thematic connection, the constituent sections are connected by means of pivot devices of similar function as the *kireji* particles employed in *haiku* or Japanese *renga* poetry. *Renga* is the word for brick; in its poetic context, however it refers to a linking of poems into long chains in such a way that the second stanza of any poem also serves as the first stanza of an immediately following poem (Nuss, S., 2002, p.47).

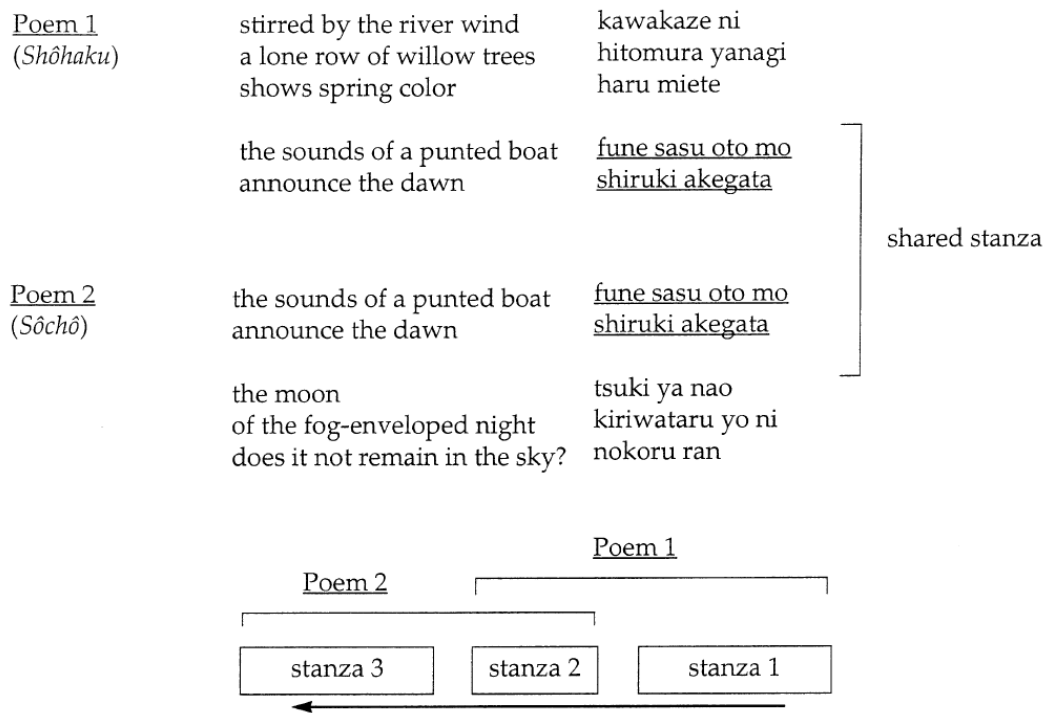


Figure 31: Two linked poems from the collection *Minase Sangin Hyakuin* (Nuss, S., 2002, p.47).

As in *Renga* poetry, in *Fantasmata* the use of pivot phrases, motives, pitches, intervals and rhythms ensures the smooth transition between sections and lend the work unity without the necessity of a coherent musical narrative. In Figure 32 we can see an example of a pivot tone linking two sections. The C sharp in the cello part, is sustained through section five (see full score) and continues up to the beginning of section six (where it passes on to the piano part etc.). The same tone (left hand of the piano part, bar 56) is used as cutting device that delineates the ending of one section and the beginning of the following (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Two linked sections in *Fantasmata* by means of a pivot tone. ⁽¹⁾

In Figure 33 we see the musical equivalent of the ‘common stanza’ as in *renga* poetry. The sequence A–B of section 6 is mirrored in section 7 and varied, without though losing its distinctive identity.

Figure 33: Two linked sections in *Fantasmata* by means of a shared mirrored “music stanza.” ⁽²⁾

¹ Only ending of section 5 and beginning of section 6 is illustrated.

² Only ending of section 6 and beginning of section 7 is illustrated

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The tonal and rhythmic organisation is very simple and straight forward. The work has a strong modal character and as a general rule, each section dwells on a single total center. The rhythm is fluid but fairly simple, limited in the main rhythmic subdivisions (quavers, semiquavers, triplets etc.). Any rhythmic complexity is a result of the superimposition of freely notated instrumental/vocal parts, the use of proportional notation, temporal fluctuation and the use of slides (Figure 34).

The image shows a musical score for a slow-movement excerpt from *Fantasmata*. The score is arranged in five systems, each with a different instrument or voice part. The first system is labeled '59' in a box. The parts are: Voice, Fl., Vln., Vc., and Pno. The Voice part is written in a high register with a single note. The Flute part has dynamics *mp*, *pp*, and *ppp*. The Violin part has dynamics *pp* and *ppp*, and includes markings for slides: 'slid E', 'slid A', 'slid D', and 'slid D slid A'. The Viola part has dynamics *pp* and *ppp*, and includes markings for slides: 'slid C', 'slid G', and 'slid D slid A'. The Piano part has dynamics *ppp*, *pp*, and *ppp*, and includes a marking 'change to horns'. The score is characterized by long, flowing lines and a relatively simple rhythmic framework.

Figure 34: A typical example of rhythmic fluidity in a slow-movement excerpt from *Fantasmata* within a relatively simple rhythmic framework.

The vocal part is shaped by the intrinsic properties and intonation of the Japanese text. Each section focuses on a single word (or phrase). The setting of the text follows the rule of absolute simplicity and austerity where each syllable corresponds to a single pitch. The vocal phrases thus follow the syllabic organisation of the text. There are hardly any moments of melodic embellishment with the exception of the some passing/grace notes or the use of *portamento* in the improvised sections. The vocal part is divided into two distinctive stylistic species:

In the first, reminiscent of chanting, the delivery of the text is based on a single tone with the occasional addition of grace notes/embellishments. A similar technique is used in *shōmyō*, a type of Japanese Buddhist chanting⁽¹⁾, heard in Buddhist rituals such weddings, funerals, memorials etc. as well as the *Noh* theatre.

¹ For more information on the Buddhist Chanting see Shigeo, K., 1984, p. 44 .

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Hashi-Benkei, P.481

e - na ga ku o ten to ri no he te ka shi ri ha ka ten ki cho o to hi re ha
 -A (A) (M) (A)

Figure 35: An example (transcription) of a chanting-like type of singing in *Noh* (Tamba, A., 1981, p.75).

198 *p* ne - mu - re - nai

Figure 36: An example of slow chanting-like singing in the last section of *Fantasmata* through the embellishment of a single tone.

47 *p cresc.* ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro ko - ko - ro *ff*

Figure 37: An example of fast rhythmic chanting-like singing through the repetition of a single tone.

In the second species, a type of heightened speech the text is delivered either as improvised heightened speech or accurately notated singing which in essence derives from heightened speech.

131 freely, heightened speech-style singing
 Voice ka - - - ze wa ma - - - su ma - - -

135
 Voice su ku ki wa ma su ma -

Figure 38: Heightened speech-style singing in *Fantasmata*.

To make this clearer, I experimented with the singer who was asked to interpret all the fully notated vocal sections (excluding those of a chanting-like style) in a free manner. By ignoring the pitch indications and taking only in account the general contour of the notated phrases and the notated rhythm, the experiment showed that those sections worked equally well (if not better) as in the conventionally sung interpretation (Figure 39).

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Figure 39 consists of two musical staves, both labeled 'Voice' and numbered '13'. The top staff shows a conventional singing line with lyrics 'mi - e - ru' and 'Mi - e - - - ru'. It features dynamic markings of *mf* and *f*, along with hairpins indicating volume changes. The bottom staff shows a heightened-singing version of the same passage, with the same lyrics and dynamic markings, but with a more pronounced and sustained vocal line.

Figure 39: Conventional singing (top staff) and heightened-singing version ⁽¹⁾ (bottom staff) of the same passage).

The *Instrumental parts* are rather bare, simple and limited in terms of decorative or brilliant gestures. The concept of virtuosity focuses on short-scale accent gestures often lasting up to a few seconds.

Figure 40 is a musical score for *Fantasmata*, starting at measure 101. It features five staves: Voice, Fl., Vln., Vc., and Pno. The score includes various annotations and dynamic markings. Key annotations include:

- 'fresh, non sync with music' pointing to a vocal line.
- 'arco' pointing to a violin line.
- 'T.T. arco' pointing to a violin line.
- 'ect.' pointing to a violin line.
- 'pizz (quasi arco)' pointing to a violin line.
- 'arco' pointing to a violin line.
- 'pp' pointing to a violin line.
- 'f' and 'mp' pointing to a piano line.

 The piano part shows a complex rhythmic pattern with dynamic markings of *p* and *f*.

Figure 40: An example of subtle virtuosity in *Fantasmata*, as a series, of brief non-thematically connected gestures, linked through the general notion of acceleration (in rhythm and urgency).

¹ This type of heightened speech is encountered in Chinese Opera (Peking Opera) and certain traditional Japanese music genres such as *Odori* (Dance Festival Music) in the form of cheering calls, *Bunraku* (Puppet Theatre), and *Noh* theatre (mainly in vocal recitatives).

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It is evident that a great deal of the sonic identity of *Fantasmata* is due to the extended use of natural instrumental resonance. As a general rule natural harmonics are favoured due to their greater resonance comparing to the artificial ones.



The image shows a musical score for Violin (Vln.) and Viola (Vc.) in *Fantasmata*, measures 62 to 9. The Violin part features a long, sustained note with a 'sul pont.' (sul ponticello) instruction, and a 'picc.' (piccato) instruction. The Viola part features a long, sustained note with a 'sul pont.' instruction. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *mp*, *mf*, and *mp*. There are also performance instructions like 'nd Dnd A' and 'arco'.

Figure 41: An instance of exclusive employment of natural harmonics in *Fantasmata*.

Often the clarity of the pitched instrumental or vocal sounds is deliberately smudged with the inclusion of 'noise effects'. In fact these timbral gestures, as we will see later, play a well defined role in the sonic quality pursued throughout the work.



The image shows a musical score for Flute (Fl.), Violin (Vln.), and Viola (Vc.) in *Fantasmata*, measures 18 to 3. The Flute part features a 'jet whistle' instruction with '(turn flute outwards)' and '(turn flute inwards)' directions. The Violin and Viola parts feature 'sul pont.' (sul ponticello) instructions. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f* and *pp*. There are also performance instructions like 'change to harm. norm.' and 'sul D'.

Figure 42: Integration of 'noise' into the textures of *Fantasmata*.

Aspects of Wabi Sabi

Fantasmata, the last of the series of works especially composed for the current research, features a plethora of musical references to the aesthetic of *wabi sabi*

Kanso (simplicity or refined poverty) is prevalent throughout. As seen earlier, the thematic cells (both in vocal and instrumental parts) are devoid of any unnecessary complexity in terms of rhythm, harmony and density. The few rhythmically challenging passages are counterbalanced by the underlined harmonic simplicity within a slow temporal framework. The brevity of the music phrases resembles incomplete musical fragments – similar to the Japanese sentence fragments examined in the Introduction (insert cross-reference)–rather than complete thematic

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statements. The constituent sections have a similar quality, spanning in their majority from eight seconds up to two minutes. As seen earlier expressive gestures have most often a microcosmic quality (Figure 40) functioning as revitalising devices that sustain the musical interest. The featured simplicity and brevity contribute to the creation of a non-saturated soundspace that draws the listener's focus towards subtle timbral/expressive details that otherwise would have been overlooked.

The musical score for Figure 43 consists of five staves: Voice, Fl., Vln., Vc., and Pno. The Voice staff begins at measure 68 and includes the lyrics "Tsu - tsu - tsu - tsu - tsu ts - ts ts ts ts ts sssshh u - - ki". Above the voice line, there are performance instructions: "inwards, gradually change to non-pitch" with an arrow pointing right, and "... and back to pitch" with an arrow pointing left. Dynamic markings include *p*, *pp*, and *mf*. The Flute staff has a "whistle tones" section with a wavy line above it, and dynamic markings *p* (ossia: actual pitch) and *mp*. The Violin staff has a "disolve" instruction and dynamic markings *pp* and *mp*. The Viola staff has "col legno" and "sul C. pizz" instructions, with dynamic markings *mp* and *mp*. The Piano staff has dynamic markings *pp*, *p*, and *mp*, and includes a "Rea" marking with a star symbol.

Figure 43: Subtle timbral effects within a transparent textural framework in *Fantasmata*.

As seen in the tea ceremony, the tea utensils and pottery used demonstrate an abundance of design irregularities (natural imperfections) resulting in non-canonic shapes and forms. The presence of the same concept (*fukinsei*—irregularity, imbalance) is also prevalent in *Fantasmata*.

Earlier we saw (insert cross reference) that each music section is built by recycling limited thematic ingredients—unique for each section—through exact or inexact repetition. The number of repetitions varies greatly throughout the sections spanning from two up to dozens. Irregularity in repetition effectively means an irregular structure, devoid of distinctive, recognisable aural patterns leading to an increased present-oriented awareness (in both small and large scale levels) and hence the sustaining of musical interest.

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An example of this can be observed in the opening of *Fantasmata* (Figure 44). The motivic cell (A) distributed between piano (A1) and voice (A2), reoccurs in bar 3. However this repetition is rendered incomplete by the immediate nested repetition of A2. The appearance of a short interlude between violin and flute, also based on an irregular repetition of limited pitches, interrupts further the repetition process of A, only resumed later in bar 7.

The musical score for the opening of *Fantasmata* is presented in two systems. The first system (bars 1-6) is marked 'Lightly' with a tempo of 69. It features five staves: Voice, Flute, Violin, Cello, and Piano. Motivic cell A is identified in the Piano staff (A1) and the Voice staff (A2). The Voice part includes the lyrics 'De-mo'. The Flute part has a 'blow-off' instruction. The Violin part has a 'change to pitch' instruction. The Cello part has a 'sul D' instruction. The Piano part has a 'mp' instruction. An 'Interlude' is marked between bars 3 and 6. The second system (bars 7-10) starts with a 'poco ritenuto' instruction and a tempo of 79. It features the same five staves. Motivic cell A is identified in the Voice staff (A2) and the Piano staff (A1). The Voice part includes the lyrics 'De-mo'. The Flute part has a 'blow-off' instruction. The Violin part has an 'arco' instruction. The Cello part has a 'sul D' instruction. The Piano part has a 'ppp' instruction. A 'Codetta' is marked at the end of the section.

Figure 44: Irregular structure in the opening of *Fantasmata*.

Here however the initial order of A1-A2 is inverted (A2-A1) with the variant of A2 now appearing on the cello. The following bars feature the varied repetition of A2 in a form of a miniature

stretto (both A1 and A2 occur simultaneously) leading to a type of codetta. Although repetitive in essence, the entire movement is an example of a miniature irregular structure. Similar processes can be observed throughout the work.

At a technical level there is a pronounced imbalance in the use of register. It seems that despite the presence of instruments capable of exploring the low register (piano and cello) their potential remains largely unexplored as both are limited to playing in their mid-upper register almost for the entirety of the piece.

At a structural level, there is an obvious lack of uniformity and logic. Sections of varying lengths and styles devoid of a coherent thematic thread are bound together into a one-movement work. The thematic development is minimal and localised in the microstructures only.

At a stylistic level, there is a well pronounced inconsistency between sections. The work opens with a neo-classical air (e.g. the quasi-pentatonic tuneful opening in Figure 44). In the middle of the work (bar 131) there is an abrupt shift towards the soundworld of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (Figure 45) combined with elements of *noh* theatre (Figure 46).

135

The musical score for Figure 45 consists of five staves: Voice, Fl., Vln., Vc., and Pno. The Voice staff shows a Sprechstimme-type of singing with the lyrics 'su ku ki wa ma su ma'. The Fl. staff features melodic lines with dynamics like *p* and *sub.*. The Vln. staff includes dynamics like *p* and *mp*, and performance instructions like *arco* and *sal pont.*. The Vc. staff shows dynamics like *pp* and *pizz*, and performance instructions like *arco* and *(tap fingers only trill)*. The Pno. staff features chromatic harmony with dynamics like *p* and *pp*, and performance instructions like *arco* and *pp*. The score is marked with a box containing the number 135 at the top left.

Figure 45: *Sprechstimme*-type of singing, pointillism and chromatic harmony in *Fantasmata*.

The image shows a musical score for two staves: Voice and Flute (Fl.). The score begins at measure 180, indicated by a box. The Voice staff has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with a 'Freely shout' instruction and a 'KA' marking. The Flute staff also has a treble clef and contains a series of vertical lines with stems, representing non-pitched 'noise effects'. There are 'N.V.' and 'M.V. cresc possible' markings on the Flute staff.

Figure 46: Integration of *Noh*-like vocal treatment and flexible monophonic instrumental accompaniment in *Fantasmata*.

According to the Japanese aesthetics, *sabi*, (corrosion, rustic patina) is appreciated as a sign of natural and unpretentious beauty. Also in the short introduction to the acoustic properties of the *shakuhachi*, the concept of *sawari* (inclusion of noise or distortion in the sound production) ⁽¹⁾ was defined as the equivalent of *sabi* in music (see page 34).

In *Fantasmata*, *sawari* is created through the incorporation of non-pitched 'noise effects' into a Western conventional musical context leading to a variety of non-standard timbral mixes. Such examples are the wind effects (non accented, jet whistle, breathing, whistle tones etc.) produced on the flute, the use of nail for pizzicato, the use of slides and pitch bending as well as the various percussive effects produced by the voice. The presence of noise in *Fantasmata* contributes significantly to the expansion of both instrumental and vocal timbral/expressive palette.

¹ See also Shigeo, K., 1984, p. 27.

143 Imaginative ♩ = 58

Voice: KA - GA-MI

Fl.: change to flute, jet whistle, ff

Vln.: sid port., whisper, ff, col legno tratto, ppp

Vc.: KA - GA-MI, whisper, piz., gliss., f

Pno.: KA - GA-MI, whisper, ff, mp, I.C. ppp sensitively

Figure 47: An example of *sawari* in *Fantasmata* (wind effects, various types of slides and percussive sounds) through careful dynamic balance of the individual sound ingredients.

Another reference to the Japanese aesthetics is that of the *kire* (cut) or *kire-tsuzuki* (cut-continuity) examined in the introduction through a variety of references to poetry (*haiku* and *regna*), gardens (*Ryoanji*)⁽¹⁾, Noh etc.

In *Fantasmata*, *kire* is similarly employed as a means of establishing flexible links between sections. Ranging from a single pitch, a melodic or rhythmic cell, a harmonic or an expressive gesture, the notion of *kire* separates while simultaneously connects any two adjacent sections. Therefore despite the notable lack of thematic or stylistic uniformity, *kire* functions as a hidden thread that binds the various structural ingredients into a whole—the same way that *renga* poetry maintains a form of ‘irrational’ coherence despite its stylistic and contextual contrast—and like asymmetry assumes a revitalising function.

In Figure 48 we can see an example of the importance of the ‘cutting’ particles in *Fantasmata* as alternatives to the traditional thematic development. Section 6 (only its ending is illustrated here) concludes with of a short ‘cutting’ cell, based on the rapid repetition of a single tone (in a

¹ A similar notion appears as a fundamental feature in the distinctively Japanese art *ikebana* (flower arrangement). The term means literally ‘making flowers live’—a strange name, for an art that begins by initiating their death.

variety of timbral variants). Its connection with the next much faster section is based on the subtle but well balanced relationship of this particle with the opening thematic content of the section 7, marked as 'echoes' on the example, also based on a single repeated tone but at a significantly slower frequency. The same 'cutting' particle also functions as a music divider, as its presence in three of the parts signifies the imminent conclusion of the slow section (section 6)

The figure displays a musical score for five instruments: Voice, Flute (Fl.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The score is divided into Section 6 and Section 7 by a vertical dashed line at measure 14. Section 6 spans from measure 85 to 14, and Section 7 begins at measure 14. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 128$ and the dynamic is *mf*. The voice part includes the lyrics 'tobira no o-to no ki - ko-e-ry' and 'u - tsu-'. The score features various musical markings such as *p*, *mf*, *f*, and *pp*. Annotations include 'whisper' and 'Well articulated'. A legend at the bottom identifies 'Cutting' music particles with a solid box and Echoes with a dashed box. The 'Cutting' particles are highlighted in measures 10-13 of Section 6 and measure 14 of Section 7. The Echoes are highlighted in measures 14-15 of Section 7.

Figure 48: 'Cutting' music particles and their dual function (as connectors and separators).

Beyond the obvious division between the micro and macrocosmic structure of the work, there is a hidden principle that rules to a great extent the direction of both large and small scale structures.

Jo Ha Kyu, progressive mutation (literally meaning introduction development and finale, rapid ending⁽¹⁾) is a fundamental principle of the Japanese aesthetics under which *Noh* plays are categorised. Such a principle does not only apply for the play categories but also governs the

¹ The *Noh* terms 'opening', 'development' and 'finale', do not have quite the same meaning as in Western music. They refer more to the transformations of energy throughout the sections, the unravelling of the drama on the stage or the suspension of the dramatic interest rather than the mere exposition and development of themes (i.e. as in the sonata form or the fugue). See also Tamba, A., 1981.

structure of each individual *noh* play as well as the organisation of the melodic and rhythmic cells ⁽¹⁾. In *Fantasmata*, the presence of *Jo Ha Kyu* is also apparent. The piece begins in a tranquil mood (a combination of slow-medium tempo) and with the exception of brief vivid expressive gestures, it dwells in this mood (until bar 85). The section of *Ha* (development) is established in bar 86 with an obvious increase in tempo during which the mood stays more or less in the same playful tranquillity of the preceding *Jo*. In bar 130, a 14-bar transition leads to the introduction of the final *Kyu* (rushing) (bar 143). As we mentioned earlier, this section may appear quite at odds with the stylistic identity of the 'opening' and 'development'. However seen through the aesthetic of *Jo Ha Kyu*, this abrupt stylistic shift assumes a role of a significant expressive and structural importance: after a rather long musical meandering, without the necessity of further acceleration, the *Kyu* section is psychologically established as part of a procedure of a graduated intensification. The initially anticipated temporal acceleration only makes its appearance later, in bar 166, leading to the final climactic peak (bars 188–189). The concluding section that follows plays here a winding-down role—as often happens in certain *noh* plays—and creates an appropriate ending atmosphere for a concert.

As in *noh* plays, the presence of *Jo Ha Kyu* is also evident in the construction of smaller structures in *Fantasmata*. Indeed the individual sections can be divided into an opening, a short development and an even shorter finale (Figure 6). The organic integration of *Jo Ha Kyu* in the structure lends the work its inner consistency and clear sense of direction.

Here the concepts of asymmetry and fragmented continuity combined with the ubiquitous presence of the principle of *Jo Ha Kyu*, provide certain answers to continuity issues in structures of thematic inconsistency.

¹ The *Kasen* type of *Renga* poetry (consisting of 36 verses), also demonstrate a structure of *Jo Ha Kyu*. The first six or seven verses (*Jo*) reflect the atmosphere of the beginning of a social evening. Verses 7–29 (*Ha*) are more loose and free. The last six poems (*Kyu*) have a fast rhythm, much like the broken conversation of people as they prepare to leave. (Miner, E., *Japanese Linked Poetry*. Princeton University Press, 1980).

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10 Legatissimo $\text{♩} = 72$

mf

mi - e - - ru

T.T. (inbrat riu)

pp

f

pp

p

slow gliss.

una corda

senza 1/2 ped.

Jo (introduction)

Ha ("development")

16

mf

mi - e - - ru

jet whistle (non flare onwards)

(non flare onwards)

slow gliss.

sul pont.

sul pont.

f

f

p

f

Kyu (scattering)

Figure 49: An example of the principle of *Jo Ha Kyu* in small scale structures in *Fantasmata*.

II. FADED SHONORITIES

Faded Shonorities is a ten-minute composition for wind quintet, composed for the New London Chamber Ensemble. The piece draws its inspiration from the sound of the Japanese *sho* (mouth organ) focusing on its distinctive sonic continuity (achieved through consecutive inhalation and exhalation), its ethereal harmonic quality and subdued expressive beauty. *Faded Shonorities* received its premiere at the Deal Festival in July 2005.

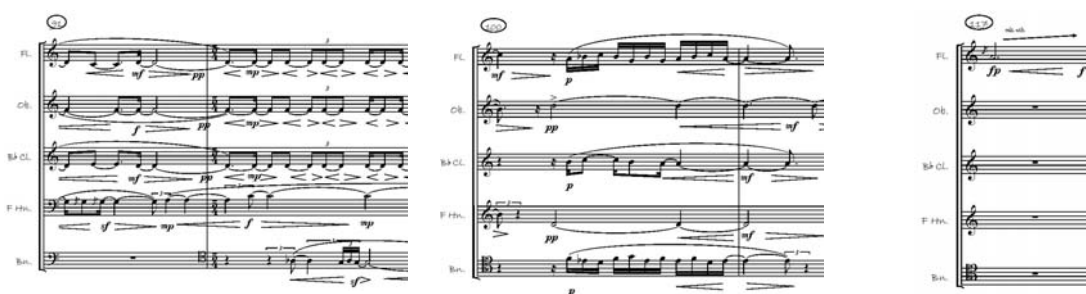
The work is composed as a single-movement divided into seven sections of unequal lengths. As each section deals with a different aspect of the expressive qualities of the *sho*—adapted and transformed as necessary to suit the instrumental medium of wind quintet—*Faded Shonorities* can be perceived as a group of variations. As in Takemitsu's *November Steps* which lacks in a certain melodic material, the variations in *Faded Shonorities* focus on various characteristics of the sound of *sho* rather than aspects of thematic/motivic transformation and unity. (Figure 50)

Section 1: focus on the fluid and periodic (breathing) harmonic quality of the *sho* (middle register). Harmony prevails over melody whereas the latter is only hinted at through the presence of short melodic fragments.

Section 2: focus on the concept of the harmonic, dynamic and sonic pulsation of the *sho* through fluidly layered trills and embellishments (oboe and clarinet) over the dynamically static heterophonic texture created by the horn and bassoon.

Section 3: the concept of pulsation, here assuming the form of melodic embellishments around the pitch F, gains further prominence breaking free from the harmonic boundaries (mid-upper register).

Section 4: layered melodic pulsation through heterophonic treatment in the three upper winds (upper register).



Section 5: Discrete melodic emergence (horn and bassoon) under the floating harmonies of the upper winds.

Section 6: melodic predominance in the mid-upper register.

Section 7: focus on the aspect of pulsation of the natural vibrations contained in a single tone.

Figure 50: The seven sections (variations) of Faded Shonorities.

The harmonic construction of the piece reflects certain similarities with the harmonic organisation of the chords of *sho*. Here the original five/six-note aggregates have been reduced down to four/five pitches respectively due to the number of available instruments and their vertical organisation extends beyond the mere replication of the 11 standardised chords of the *sho*.



Figure 51: The eleven standardised chords (*aitake*) of the *sho* (Nuss, S., 2008, p. 57)

As in *Fantasmata*, the selection of the harmonic pitch content is not determined by a strict process. In contrast the choice of harmonic register and spacing, is delimited by two main external factors: the individual instrumental registral characteristics and the necessity for a narrow voicing as per the original harmonic model (see above Figure 51). Based on such restrictions, the area of the middle register (\pm one octave piano's middle C) is determined as the common registral span within which any of the pitches of the featured clusters can be reproduced by any of the five winds. .

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Unlike the rhythmic formalism evident in Ligeti's works of a similar texture (e.g. *Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet*) (Figure 52), the rhythmic organisation in *Faded Shonorities* aims to capture the irregularity of the process of human breathing. Devoid of distinguishable patterns, melodic phrases of varying lengths, attack and dynamic span illustrate subtle fluctuations that naturally occur in the breathing process. The distinctive lack of a strong metronomic pulse (e.g. absence of downbeats) within the relatively slow temporal context supports a tranquil ambience reminiscent of *gagaku*. And yet the concept of pulse is far from being absent. In the performance notes is suggested: "... breath rhythm where long note values are employed, or make use of vibrato in order to create a pulsating, vibrant sound". (Figure 53).

The image shows a page of musical notation for a wind quintet. It consists of five staves, each labeled with an instrument: Fl. Sol., C. Ingl., Cl. Sib., Cor. Fa., and Fag. The notation includes various rhythmic figures such as triplets, semiquavers, and quintuplets. Dynamic markings like *mf*, *pp*, and *sempre espr.* are used throughout. The score is organized into measures, with some measures containing multiple notes grouped by brackets and numbers (e.g., 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).

Figure 52: Consistency of rhythmic organisation in Ligeti's *Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet*. Throughout the movement each part maintains a consistent rhythmic character e.g. triplets for the flute, semiquavers for the English horn, quintuplets for the clarinet etc. (Ligeti, G., 1968, p.5).

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is for Flute (FL.) and includes performance instructions: "gradually overblow", "mit. vib.", "norm", and "f bend down, ad lib.". The middle staff is also for Flute (FL.) and includes a circled number "92" and dynamic markings *pp*, *mp*, and *f*. The bottom staff is for Oboe (Ob.) and includes a circled number "33", a tempo marking "= 76", and dynamic markings *pp*, *mf*, *pp*, *mf*, *pp*, *mf*, and *p*. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and articulation marks.



Figure 53: Examples of the structural significance of pulse in *Faded Shonorties* evident in the natural vibrations contained within a single pitch (first example), the varying dynamic fluctuations in a single part (second example), the pitch vibrations (use of trill or tremolo) (third example), and their combination into layered harmonic periods (fourth example).

Melody is subservient to harmony, and to a large extent is a harmonic by-product mainly encountered in the form of short melodic ornaments, trills or quasi-melodic fragments (Figure 54). The role of melody is limited to colouring and varying the harmonic textures, providing a linear dynamic contrast against the vertical structures that reinforces the forward drive (Figure 55).



Figure 54: An instance of melodic dependency on harmony. The horn solo seems to differentiate from harmonic cluster only due to its somewhat more vivid character and dynamics.

Figure 55: The animated melodic functions as a harmonic extension deriving from the embellishment of a single pedal tone (F).

Aspects of Wabi Sabi

One of the primary aesthetic goals of *Faded Shonorites* is the exploration of the subdued expressive qualities of the *sho* clearly recalling the aesthetic of *yawaragi* (softness/quietness). Best exemplified in the tea ceremony (see page 12), *yawaragi* is also charged with a multitude of semantic connotations.

In his description of the tea house interior, Okakura makes specific references on the importance of appropriate lighting in the mood of the overall ceremony: “even in the daytime the light in the room is subdued, for the low eaves of the slanting roof admit but few of the sun’s rays” (Okakura, K., 1989, p.78).

The soft-light effect of the tea house, also prevalent in the design of the traditional Japanese home, results in a soothing, tranquil environment suitable for meditation and relaxation. A similar ‘softness’ describes the prevailing timbral character in *Faded Shonorities*. Sharp sounds are almost entirely excluded and soft attacks (fades) are favoured instead (Figure 56).

The sound graduations through smooth crescendos create a spatial effect of movement. Instruments are used at their optimum register for better sound control. In the instances where the high-register is required the piccolo flute doubling is used. The horn with its more prominent sound projection is muted throughout the entire piece. The use of soft dynamics throughout the work creates the impression of distance from the sound source in a similar manner as in the example of the diffused light filtered through the screens of the tea house. In a

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second version of *Faded Shonorites* (not included in the recordings) the oboe has been replaced by the oboe d'amore or the English horn to maximise the timbral uniformity and softness of attack.



Figure 56: Example of soft attack, timbral smoothness and dynamic moderation.

Another important characteristic of *yawaragi* is the use of unobtrusive colours. Okakura continues with his description: “everything is sober in tint from the ceiling to the floor; the guests themselves have carefully chosen garments of unobtrusive colours”. (Okakura, K., 1989, p.78).

The instrumental treatment in *Faded Shonorities*, alludes to a timbral sobriety similar to that evident in the tea ceremony. Here the instruments, as seen earlier, do not function as standalone entities nor create independent melodic statements but are largely part of a unified sound canvas. The timbral resources employed here are limited to a minimum. The instrumental treatment is characterised by a non-virtuosic modesty where even trills, tremolos and embellishments are executed in a slow/moderate temporal context. Dynamics also contribute significantly to this expressive subtlety, limited as they are within a ppp/pp and mp/mf framework. The subdued quality of sound is maintained even in the instances of louder dynamics as the dynamic peaks occur only momentarily through a gradual crescendo quickly receding back to silence.

Wa (harmony) is an aesthetic term that shouldn't be confused with the musical term that regulates the vertical organisation of tones. Originating from the Zen literature of China, *wa* alongside with the aesthetic principles of *jaku*, *kei* and *sei* (tranquillity, purity, respect) were embedded in the general meaning of *yawaragi* (Okakura, K., p. 133). In the vocabulary of Japanese aesthetics, *wa* describes the atmosphere of accord and solemnity characteristic of the social gathering of the tea ceremony: “all guests at a tea gathering who were of the warrior class had first to remove their swords—the symbols of their rank—before crawling through this entrance. Even the ruler of the nation was required to do this. By thus entering the tea room, all assumed an equal posture, having cast off their status...” (Okakura, K., page 136).

In *Faded Shonorities*, the application of *wa* (harmony) is manifold. At a primary level, harmony can be observed in the instrumental balance: the use of register, dynamics, tone colour (e.g. use of mute) and spacing, call for a uniform sound where, as seen earlier, no instrument should

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stand out above the others. There is also a balanced distribution in the modest prominence occasionally given to the individual instruments. More specifically the discreet melodic statements in the bassoon and horn parts in bars 80-98 are counterbalanced by the earlier solo in the piccolo (bar 50) and oboe (bar 63) respectively. At a structural level, harmony is associated with the natural forms, focussing in the periodic character and continuity of the human breath. The shapes of the melodic or harmonic phrases here assimilate the regularity of the breathing pattern at a state of calmness ('silence→sound→silence') and the natural continuity contained in the process of inhalation-exhalation. Overlapping layers of unequal lengths create an uninterrupted sonic thread without the need of frequent cadencial pauses.



Figure 57: Example of role equity in *Faded Shonorities* and continuity through the use of layered textures.

Jaku (tranquillity, loneliness) which as we have seen (give cross reference) shares the same spelling as the term *sabi*, is another of the terms descriptive of the aesthetic of *yawaragi*. Daizetz Suzuki gives a description of its deeper meaning: "... if Nature is to be loved, must be caught while moving and in this way its aesthetic value must be appraised. To seek tranquillity is to kill nature, to stop its pulsation and to embrace the dead corpse that is left behind" (Suzuki, D., 1959, p.361). Suzuki's statement, contradictory though it may seem, captures the dynamic, deceptively quiet essence of *Jaku*.

The tranquillity evident in *Faded Shonorities* seems to fit this description. The tempo as well as the harmonic, melodic and dynamic pacing is slow while the improvised-like structures lack in distinctive large scale climactic gestures. The melodic character is subdued and there are hardly any instances of abrupt melodic articulation while in harmony, soft diatonic clusters are favoured.

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And yet here, the tranquillity has its dynamic aspect. In *Faded Shonorities* there are many discreet yet powerful mechanisms stimulants of the musical suspense such as the overlapping melodic layers of unequal lengths (Figure 57), the economical use of solely melodic occurrences, the harmonic ambiguity in the connection of harmonic phrases, the discreet temporal variations between sections (Figure 58), etc.

Figure 58: Examples of subtle temporal variations.

A characteristic example of the dynamic aspect of the quietness in *Faded Shonorities* is the concluding flute solo. Though, much smaller in scale comparing to the cadenza of *November Steps*, the brief and simple solo, establishes a dramatic presence despite its anti-climactic nature, reflecting the solitariness contained in *Jaku* (Figure 59).

Figure 59: Concluding flute solo.

<i>Kare eda ni</i>	A branch shorn of leaves
<i>Karasu no tomari keru</i>	A crow perching on it
<i>Aki no kure</i>	This autumnal eve

Figure 60: Solitariness has always been one of the most favourite subjects of haiku as in the instance of this poem by Basho
(Miyamori, A., 2002, p.6).

III. CHARMED BY A DREAM OF A BUTTERFLY

Charmed by a dream of a butterfly⁽¹⁾ was composed for the virtuoso Cheng Yu, and her unique five-stringed pipa⁽²⁾. This instrument, lost for many centuries, has been recently reconstructed by Cheng Yu, based on historical descriptions, drawings, images and references to its sound and shape. A number of contemporary composers from all over the world have been commissioned to create new works (both solo and chamber) for this “lost-and-found” ancient instrument.

Charmed is a solo composition that demonstrates the expressive ability and versatility of the instrument by using a contemporary syntax. The style and notation of the piece has been shaped to a great extent by conversations with the performer about the instrument’s expressive capabilities and limitations. During its composition I had the privilege to keep in my possession one of the two existing five-string *pipas* for sound reference.

Pipa, as well as its Japanese counterpart, *biwa*, were instruments usually played by blind musicians (Stock, J., 1996, p. 70). Its music transmission was either based on the oral process in which musicians learn to extemporise on the basis of set tunes or melodic outlines or the written notation⁽³⁾. The solo repertoire developed for the instrument is divided into two main categories: the ‘martial style’ and the ‘lyrical style’. The first, is highly descriptive, episodic and animated, often depicting historical events (e.g. the sounds of battles, epics etc.). The tempo is fast and often unstable, portraying the fluctuating emotional states of the characters or events described. The lyrical pieces are more tranquil and subdued focusing on the production of ear-pleasing, often fragile, sounds.

Charmed, composed in a single-movement, encompasses both the martial and lyrical styles without dwelling in either of them. The historical aesthetic terms ‘martial’ and ‘lyrical’, here apply more in their abstract sense, translating as ‘energetic/unsettling’ and ‘subdued/regular’ respectively. Like the traditional *pipa* repertoire, *Charmed* consists of a series of episodic sections. Each section focuses on a specific expressive aspect of the instrument. Each aspect is explored at a different rate before moving on to the next one. As in the structural organisation

¹ Hereafter we will refer to the work simple as *Charmed* for reasons of economy.

² Historically both four and five-string *pipa*, descendants of the Middle Eastern and Central Asian lutes arrived in China some 1,600 years ago. Transformed and musically expanded, they flourished during the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE), and were exported eastwards to become the *pip’a* in Korea and *biwa* in Japan. Yet, while the four-string *pipa* continues to thrive, the five-string *pipa* mysteriously fell out of favour around the eight century and its unique capabilities and repertory were lost (Cheng Yu, 2007).

³ In *Gongche* notation for *pipa* a simple Chinese character represents each scale degree. Metrical and rhythmic annotations are, by Western standards, sparse: occasional dot, dash, circle, cross or triangle marks beside note-symbols indicating the metrical beat on which the pitch should be performed. Rhythmic subdivision of beats and the insertion of ornamentation were left to oral transmission or the performer’s interpretations. In some scores, phrase endings are shown by the allocation of extra space (Stock, J., 1996, p. 70).

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of *Fantasmata*, the constituent sections bear very little or no thematic affinity to one another, and the overall shape of the work has an improvised character.

Here the traditional Western processes of thematic development, tonal coherence and structural formalism are replaced by a number of alternative devices. As in *Fantasmata*, pivot devices are used as a means of linking adjacent sections (thematic cells, pitch, rhythm cells, timbre, or any combination of those). An example of this can be observed in Figure 61. The unique short vivid cells at the end of each section, not only delineate their borders but establish the pitch material for their smooth connection

The figure displays three musical sections, A, B, and C, arranged vertically. Section A is the top staff, ending with a short cell marked *ffp*. Section B is the middle staff, starting with a cell marked *ff* and containing instructions: "VOID VARIATIONS IN ORDER DYNAMICS AND SPEED", "19", "As BEFORE", and "19". Section C is the bottom staff, starting with "MYSTERIOUSLY" and "♩ = 72", and containing instructions: "CHANGE GRADUALLY INTO", "P^{sub}", "BEND", "NOEM.", "PP WITH VIRE AD LIB.", and "19". Dashed lines indicate connections between the end of one section and the beginning of the next, highlighting pivot devices. Section A is marked with a circled 'A', Section B with a circled 'B', and Section C with a circled 'C'.

Figure 61: Common tones as pivot devices (Reference CD, track 6).

Despite the higher level of fragmentation between sections, *Charmed* demonstrates smoother and subtler transitions than *Fantasmata*. Often thematic fragments are carried over from one section to the other allowing a gradual thematic or tonal 'cross-fade' whereas the textually-triggered structure of *Fantasmata* calls for a clear-cut differentiation between sections

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Another device is the attraction of opposites described as the juxtaposition of expressive gestures of contrasting energy in short or large scale structures. Such gestures have a complementary expressive function (i.e. irregularity/regularity, loud/soft, fast/slow, erratic/static etc., Figure 62, Figure 63) and in the long term are perceived as common ingredients of a unified sound canvas. Their complementary relationship sustains the musical interest and creates dynamic links between sections.

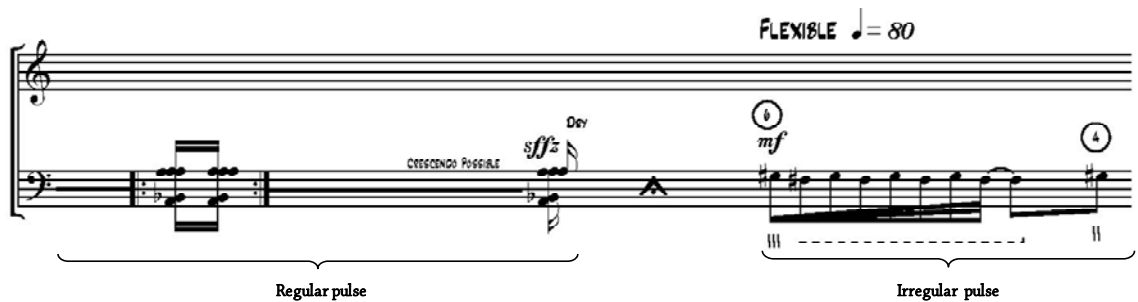


Figure 62: Linking sections through contrast. The two sections differ not only in terms of rhythm/pulse, but also in dynamic direction (crescendo vs. non crescendo).

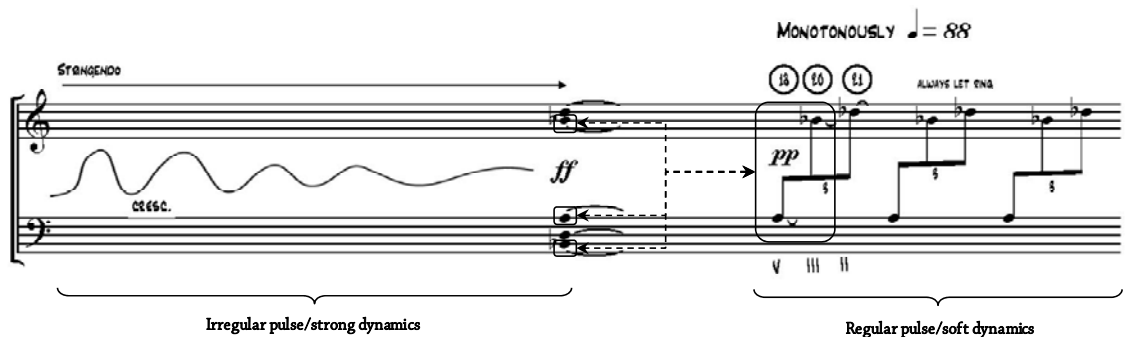


Figure 63: Combined use of contrasting gestures and pivot tones in the process of linking sections.

As mentioned above, *Charmed* was composed in order to demonstrate the unique expressive abilities of the 5-stringed *pipa*. Therefore as anticipated, the melodic and harmonic writing is tailored around the unique characteristics of the instrument (e.g. tuning)⁽¹⁾. This is also evident in the standard *pipa* repertoire where the incorporation of open strings in the music affects dramatically the tonal language of the work as well as the resulting resonance (Figure 64).

¹ The standard *pipa* tuning is E, A, D, E, A (starting from the lower string, the bottom E is the additional fifth string).



Figure 64: Importance of open string tuning (A, D, E, A) in the harmonic content of *Dragon Boats* by Abing (1950) (Stock, J., 1996, p.172) (reference CD, track 5).

In *Charmed* the standard tuning has been customised by lowering the lower string (fifth string) by a semitone and raising the fourth string by a semitone resulting to a perfect fifth (Eflat–Bflat versus the standard E–A). The resulting tuning forms a cluster of medium/low dissonant intensity alluding to the dreamy atmosphere of the title (Figure 65).



Figure 65: Tuning of *Charmed*.

The intervallic relationship of the open strings also permeates the overall melodic and harmonic content of *Charmed*. Examples of such close-knit relationship between tuning and harmony⁽¹⁾/ melody can be observed in the opening where an array of natural harmonics are played on the same or adjacent positions creating transposed variants of the initial tuning (Figure 66).

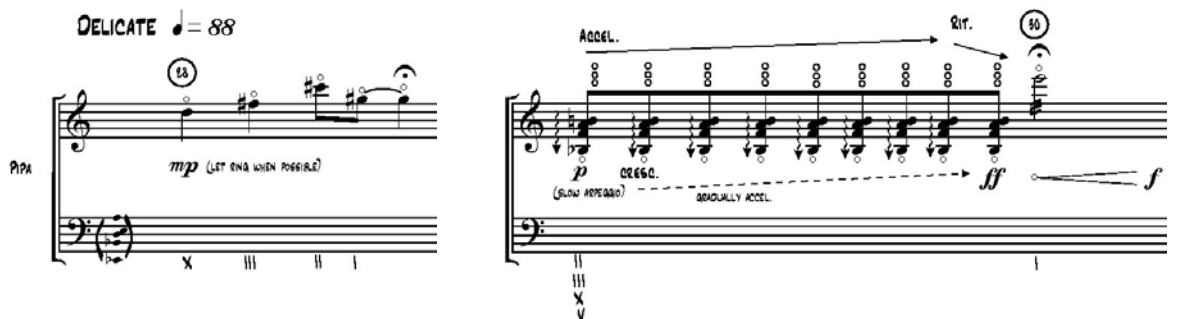


Figure 66: Examples of melodic and harmonic affinity of the opening of *Charmed* with the initial tuning.

¹ The term harmony here applies only in its general sense referring to the simultaneous sonorities as colours rather than their functional relationships.

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Indeed throughout the work there are hardly any instances of thematic or harmonic statements alien to this tuning.

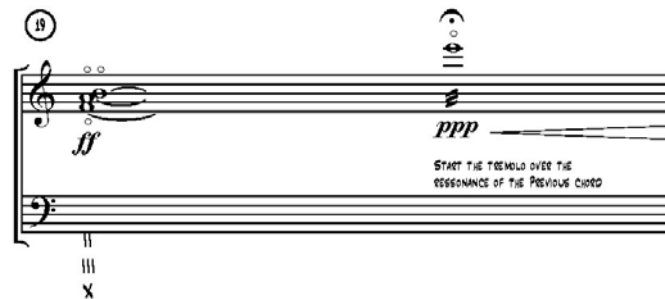


Figure 67: The harmonic/melodic content of the closing of *Charmed* (F, A, B, E) is a transposition of the tuning (Bflat, D, E, A) up the fifth.

Charmed demonstrates a notable changeability in tempo and pulse, recalling the flexible and elastic substance of the Japanese architectural space. In the opening, for example, the established rhythmic stability is quickly interrupted by gradually increasing palindromic temporal shifts (Figure 68).

Figure 68: Two examples of rhythmically destabilising cells of small (top) and medium (bottom) intensity.

Towards the end of the work, the rhythmically regular sections are reduced to brief static statements as a means to counterbalancing the dominating unstable sections (Figure 69).

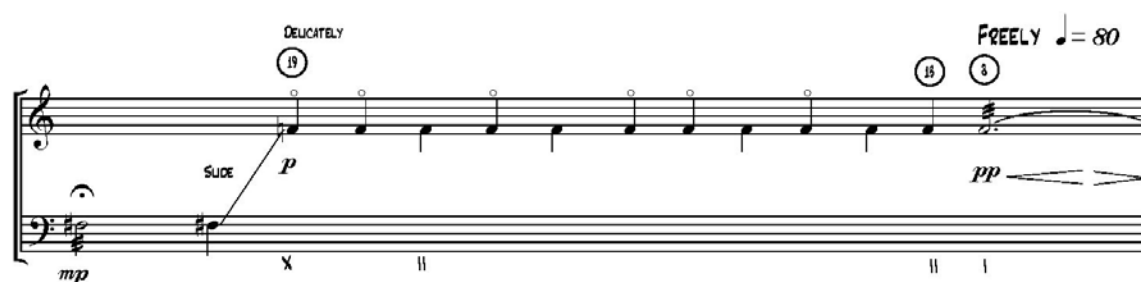


Figure 69: One of the final rhythmically regular statements in *Charmed*.

The resulting flexibility and ambiguity in both tempo and rhythm is, as we will see later, one of the primary forward driving devices in *Charmed*.

The largely proportional notation employed throughout the work is in keeping with the improvisatory character often characterising the traditional *pipa* repertoire. Here, as in *Fantasmata*, simple rhythmic subdivisions are favoured (minims, crochets, quavers, semi/demi-semi-quavers and triplets). The interpretation of such simple rhythmic structures within a fluid temporal framework, results in intricate rhythmic gestures that would be very difficult if not impossible to notate otherwise.

Aspects of Wabi Sabi

Among the works analysed in this chapter, *Charmed* holds a unique place as the references to the Japanese aesthetics are less conspicuous. Composed primarily for the purposes of instrumental demonstration, it seems to have little to do with the prevailing modesty of *wabi-sabi*. Being neither too simple nor too complex, neither too subdued nor too brilliant, *Charmed* stands on an expressive threshold that does not seem to fit fully into either Western or Eastern aesthetic frameworks.

However, the very reasons of structural vagueness and aesthetic ambiguity that render the clear categorisation of *Charmed* impossible, can readily be recognised as two of the primary aesthetic characteristics of wabi-sabi. As hinted from the title, *Charmed* focuses on the aesthetic aspects of impermanence (Butterfly), lack of structural formalism (Dream) and intuition (Charmed)

The presence of *mujo* (impermanence) can be pinpointed at various levels. Due to the absence of a precisely notated rhythm, duration or often pitch order, in a similar manner as in the *honkyoku* pieces for *shakuhachi*, impermanence is manifested through the non-exact interpretations between different performers or between different performances by the same performer. The evident flexibility in notation supports idiosyncratic interpretational approaches

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where parameters such as mood, temperament, ability, acoustics, etc. can have a significant influence on the final aural result. The structural flexibility allows certain passages to be extended, others shortened, without distorting the work's internal balance (Figure 70).

Figure 70: Example of notational flexibility in *Charmed*.

At a technical level, impermanence is manifested in the temporal framework through constant fluctuations in tempo and pulse. Its effectiveness is enhanced by the employment of brief temporally regular sections (see Figure 69) that function as referential aural landmarks. This enables the listener to have a measurable perception of the shifting relationships between the concepts of stasis and kinesis and appreciate both as such. In *Charmed*, impermanence also assumes a timbral aspect reflected in the subtle and often fragile textures the score calls for.

Figure 71: Example of the effect “twisting of stings” (*jiao san xian*) associated with a variable, nondescript timbre, juxtaposed with the “pure” sound of the open strings.

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The tendency to utilise the natural expressive properties medium as a means to expression contained in the aesthetic of *sabi* is also evident in *Charmed*. Through the integration of open strings and natural harmonics⁽¹⁾ in the shaping of the horizontal and vertical structures, the concepts of theme/melody or harmony are disassociated from their traditional meaning focusing more on aspects of natural resonance (Figure 72).

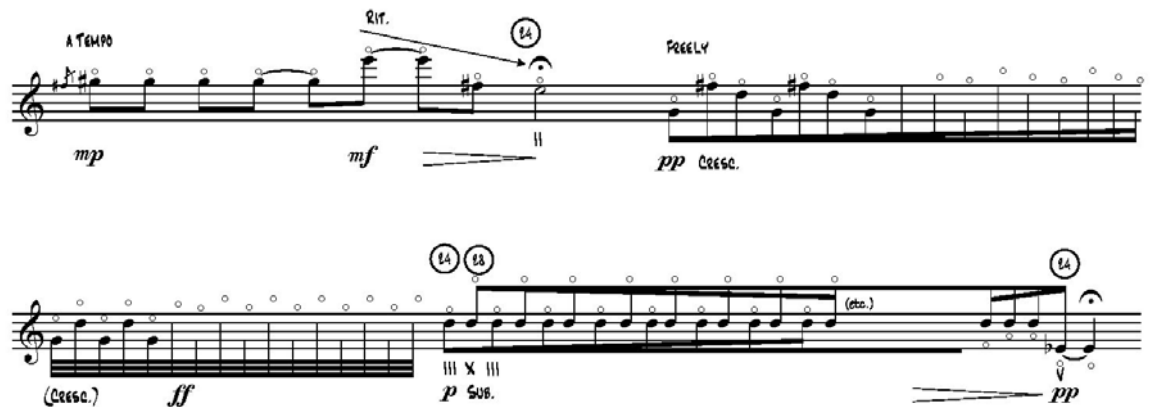


Figure 72: Exclusive use of natural harmonics in the opening of *Charmed*. For purposes of maximising resonance, the same pitch is played in different strings.

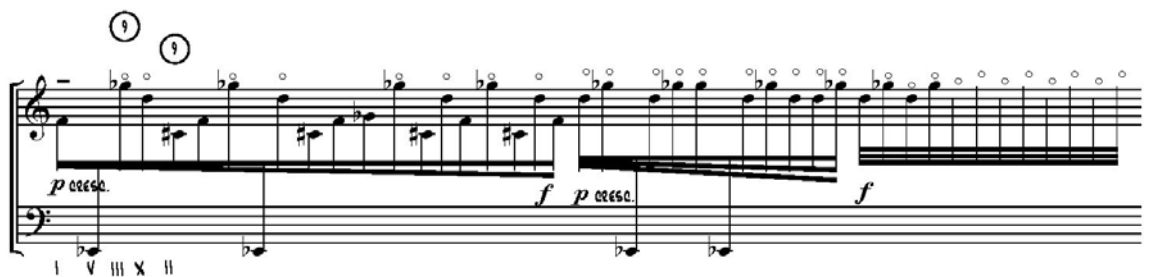


Figure 73: A more intricate example of the integration of natural resonance in the harmonic/melodic structures of *Charmed*. The above passage features an irregular juxtaposition of non-harmonics (F, C_#, G_b), natural harmonics (G_b, D) and open strings (E_b).

Chords also feature one or more open strings, harmonics or their combination in order to maximise the projected resonance.

¹ Almost a third of *Charmed* is written in natural harmonics.

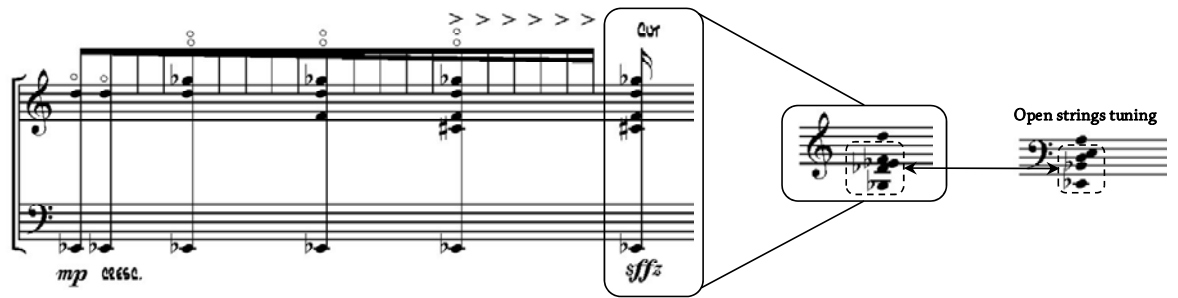


Figure 74: Combination of natural harmonics (D, G_b) and open strings (E_b) in the vertical structures of *Charmed*. The above diagram also shows the relationship of such structures with the initial tuning.

Unlike *Fantasmata* where the text assumes a structural function or *Faded Shonorities* where the performance practicalities (e.g. the necessity for an unconduted instrumental co-ordination) delimit the choice for notation and musical expression, *Charmed* features an almost unlimited freedom in the organisation of musical ideas and choice of expressive resources.

Whereas the structuring of melody and harmony is objectively determined by principles of natural resonance (see Figure 73) the organisation of structure, unity, continuity etc., is largely intuitive, based on principles of tension and release, stability and instability stasis and kinesis, contrast etc (Figure 75).

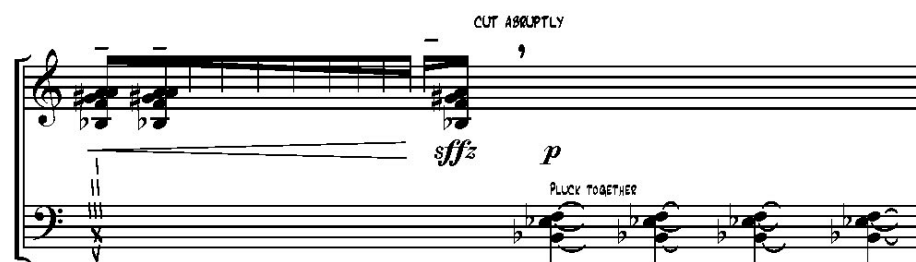


Figure 75: Principle of dynamic contrasts as structural ingredients.

The intuitive treatment of the music material shows a strong preoccupation with the nuances of sound and its fugitive nature. This requires a non-methodological approach, based on the flexibility and immediacy contained in the subjective processes of musical associations where the concept of function is alien. The obvious advantage of this freedom is an almost infinite expressive vocabulary paired with unpredictability: in a non-teleological expressive context the conditioning of the logical transition from the precedent to the antecedent ceases to exist alluding to the irrationality of a 'Dream' quoted in the title (Figure 76).

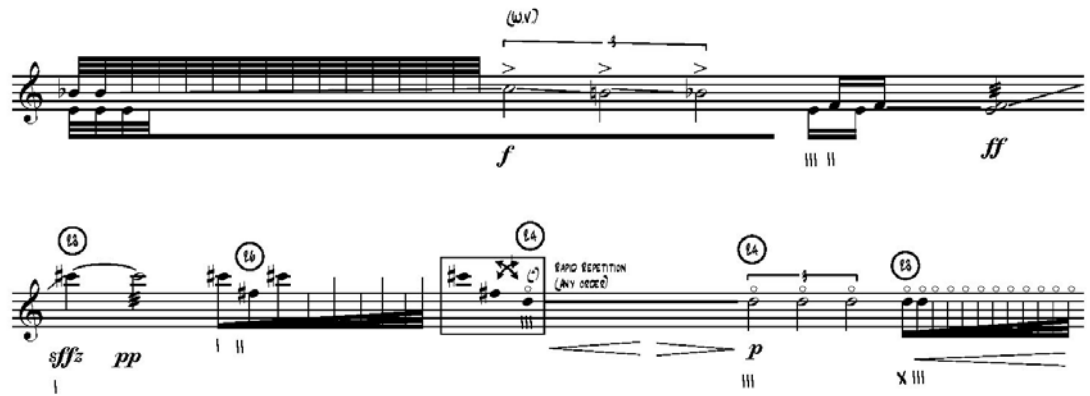


Figure 76: An example of the expressive flexibility and gestural multiplicity in *Charmed*.

Although *Charmed* was composed in order to demonstrate the expressive and virtuosic potential of the 5 stringed-*pipa*, its writing limits the required virtuosity to the absolutely necessary. The various passages are bare from any unnecessary frills. The additional fifth string has been hardly used independently though its presence has an indispensable harmonic, melodic and expressive significance. Here speed and brilliance are of secondary importance as they derive naturally from the inner interpretative necessity for a convincing atmosphere. That renders *Charmed* to a large extent purposeless, artless and hence closer to the true spirit of *wabi-sabi*.

IV. ITHAKA

Ithaka is a ten-minute work composed for the Ensemble *Okeanos*, as part of a concert series featuring Japanese and Western instruments. The project, organised by spnm, included a selection of contemporary and traditional compositions conceptually connected under the title “*Contemporary/Traditional, New Music for Japanese and Western Instruments*”. In spnm’s program notes is written: “*Okeanos presents a program of traditional music and new works exploring the possibilities in the union of Western and Japanese instruments*”. With the inclusion of two guest artists (Clive Bell and Etsuko Takezawa) the ensemble consisted of eight players featuring the *shakuhachi*, *samisen*, *koto*, *sho*, oboe d’amore, clarinet, viola and harp.

Ithaka, (also the title of a poem by the Greek poet Konstantinos Kafavis) composed for all eight instruments, was performed at Spitalfields Festival in London, the York Late Music Festival in York and at Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester in 7, 8 and 13 June 2006.

Earlier we saw that in *Charmed* the acoustic peculiarities of the 5-stringed *pipa* had a significant effect on various parameters of the composition. A similar phenomenon is evident in *Ithaka*. Here, the presence of not just one but four traditional instruments—namely the *sho*, *shakuhachi*, *samisen* and *koto*—has increased the magnitude of such external influences exponentially. Therefore, in order to comprehend better the processes that govern the melodic, harmonic and structural organisation of *Ithaka*, it is essential to introduce some basic principles that describe the acoustic properties and interpretation of those instruments.

The *sho* is capable of producing a continuous sound-stream by means of consecutive inhalation and exhalation through the mouthpiece. Both single tones and chords are possible. Its virtuosic ability is limited: fast passages are not idiomatic for the instrument and the possible chords are also limited (Wade, B., 2005, p.27).

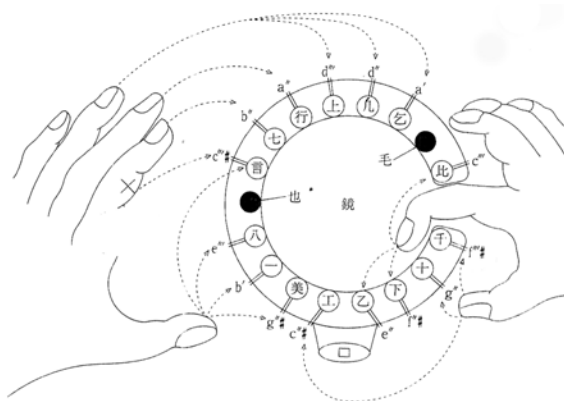


Figure 77: An illustration of possible pitch combinations in *sho* (Minoru, M., 1996, p. 75).

The *shakuhachi* is capable of producing an immense variety of sound nuances. Built to play diatonically, it is characterised by a limited ability to play fast chromatic passages. Unlike the Western flute, the *shakuhachi* features a distinctive lack of timbral and dynamic homogeneity throughout its register. In general only the five pentatonic tones are clear and strong (though soft expressions are also possible on them) whereas the rest tend to sound softer and darker (Lependorf, J., 1989, p.233).

The *shamisen* is a three-stringed long-neck lute, normally plucked with a plectrum. Its most important characteristic is a trailing, buzzing tone (*sawari*) produced when lower string of the *shamisen* is plucked or when the other strings resonate with the lowest string, especially when the tone of the string played and the tone of the lowest string are multiples of the octave, fifth or fourth. In the Japanese traditional repertoire the presence of *sawari* is a sign of a successful, idiomatic writing for the instrument. Therefore in order to produce this effect more easily the three strings of the *shamisen* are usually tuned in fifths or fourths. The tuning of the *shamisen* in *Ithaka* is d-a-D (Kikkawa, E., 1987, p.91).

Finally the *koto* is a thirteen-stringed zither. In contemporary music its strings can be tuned in any pitch combination (gamut) however across its two and a half octave register certain tones of the chromatic scale have to be excluded from the tuning (due to the string number limitation). One of the *koto's* unique characteristics is that the pitch can be raised up to the interval of a tone, (or exceptionally a minor third) by pressing the string to the left of the bridge. In that way tones other than those of its original tuning can be produced. However it is obvious that only the tones of the original tuning are readily available (Wade, B., 1976, p. 28).

By taking into consideration the pitches with stronger sound projection (e.g. the D pentatonic scale of the *shakuhachi*), pitches of significance (e.g. the *sawari* tones of the *shamisen*: D, E, A) the pitches unavailable in the *sho* (A sharp, C, D sharp, F), as well as the tuning limitations of *koto* and harp, it becomes apparent that *Ithaka's* tonal language and consequently the instrumental melodic writing are largely limited within predetermined expressive borders. These borders, result of the natural acoustic limitations inherent in the Japanese traditional instruments, provide the key for understanding *Ithaka's* simplicity of style and sobriety of mood.

Ithaka, like all the previously analysed works in this chapter, consists of a series of loosely linked sections. Throughout the work two major structural characteristics can be observed.

The first defined as 'fragmentation' features a non-continuous soundspace of sparse chords or brief thematic statements that highlight the non-sustaining (plucking) quality of the instruments, often preceded and followed by fermatas (Figure 78).

Figure 78 is a musical score for five instruments: Koto, Harp, Oba, B♭ Cl., and Vla. The score is marked with a circled '21' at the beginning. The Koto part starts with a 'ham.' (harmonics) instruction and a 'p' (piano) dynamic. The Harp part also starts with a 'p' dynamic. The Oba part has a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic and a 'with utmost care' instruction. The B♭ Cl. part has a 'mp' (mezzo-piano) dynamic and a 'with utmost care' instruction. The Vla. part starts with a 'p' dynamic. There are also 'N.V.' (No Vibrato) markings and 'a' (accents) in the Oba and B♭ Cl. parts.

Figure 78: Fragmentation example in *Ithaka*.

The second described as 'continuity' features an uninterrupted flexible soundspace largely attributed to the *sho*. An in *Faded Shonorities* emphasis is given on the sustaining quality and the circular properties of human breath (Figure 79).

Figure 79 is a musical score for four instruments: Sho, Shak., Harp, and Vla. The score is marked with a circled '34' at the beginning. The Sho part starts with a 'p' (piano) dynamic and has a '3' (triple) marking. The Shak. part has an 'espressivo' instruction and a 'poco sfz' (poco sforzando) marking. The Harp part has an 'sfz' (sforzando) marking. The Vla. part has a 'sul A' (sul tasto) marking, an 'S.P.' (Sostenuto Pedal) marking, and a 'norm.' (normal) marking. There are also 'mp' (mezzo-piano) and 'f' (forte) dynamics in the Vla. part.

Figure 79: Example of continuity attributed to the uninterrupted sonic quality of the *sho*.

The fragmented sections that appear in the opening, middle and end of the work, designate points of reference against which the fluidity of the continuous sections is projected. In the sustaining and more substantial sections, the presence of the *sho* is constant, functioning as a generative source of the harmonic, melodic and structural backbone of the work.

The harmonic content of *Ithaka* is restricted to the eleven standardised chords of the *sho* used either, as blocks of five and six notes, or broken into smaller harmonic units. The consistent presence of F sharp, C sharp and G sharp within these chords is suggestive of G, A and D major, or their relative minor modes (Figure 80).



Figure 80: The melodic range of sho (top); the eleven standardised chords (bottom).

As in *Faded Shonorites*, the process of harmonic succession and structuring is largely based on subjective factors where colour, density, and intensity are of primary importance. The choice of the opening chord of the *sho* for example, is largely determined by the acoustic properties of the viola. Its pitch collection and register are such that it is possible for the viola to ‘trace’ a melodic doubling in unison, all in natural harmonics, creating a subtle, yet refined composite timbre (Figure 81).

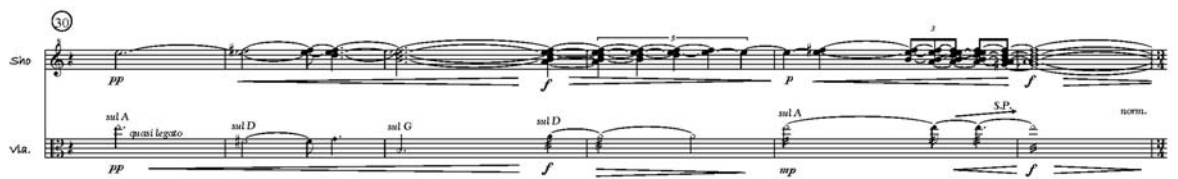


Figure 81: Melodic doubling of the *sho* part, by the viola in natural harmonics.

The melodic organisation, (as in the example of harmony) is closely linked with the intervallic organisation of the eleven chords of *sho* as both favour diatonic intervals especially fourths and fifths. In other instances as in the above example (Figure 81) or in Figure 82, the instrumental melodic content directly derives by extrapolation from the harmonic aggregates of *sho*.

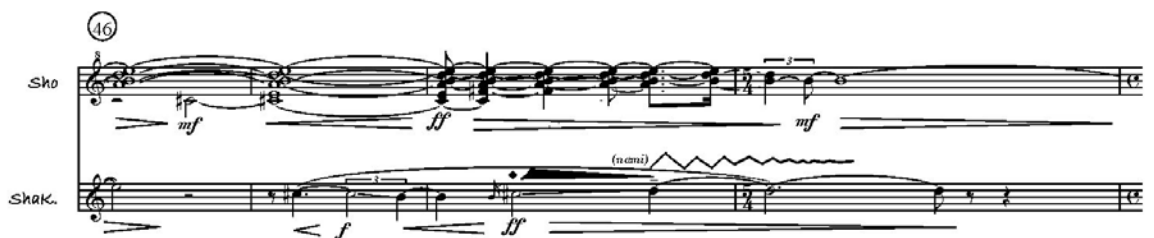


Figure 82: Example of melodic dependency on the harmonies of *sho*

Similar examples are abundant throughout the piece. It is worth mentioning that the slow harmonic pacing of the *sho*, in accord with the human breathing pattern in a state of calmness,

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has a strong impact upon the derivative melodies, lending them the distinctive meditative, non-angular quality also prevalent in the *shakuhachi honkyoku* repertoire.

As in *gagaku*, the instruments here, both Japanese and Western, are treated in an anti-virtuosic manner. Unlike the instrumental equality featured in *Faded Shonorties*, the *koto*, *samisen* and harp assume a minimal role. Indeed, with the exception of very few instances (e.g. bars 7, 13 and 125), all three instruments are limited to playing either brief melodic cells or single repeated notes (Figure 83). In comparison the rest of the instruments enjoy a greater prominence by mainly elaborating on the sustaining clusters *sho*.

Figure 83: Three examples of instrumental simplicity in *Ithaka*.

The rhythmic organisation in *Ithaka*, resembles largely that of *Faded Shonorties* as both have as a focal point the fluidity of *sho*. That is conveyed through the absence of frequent strong downbeats, the use of slides (which we will analyse later) and the slow tempo.

Ithaka's performance notes read: "The score has been marked in detail in terms of dynamics, articulation and rhythm. However, as any kind of notation is incomplete, especially when trying to describe the sound of traditional Japanese instruments, a great deal of invention, imagination and freedom is required from the performer in order to achieve a convincing musical result ... The rhythmic interpretation of the piece shouldn't be strictly metronomic (unless specified otherwise) but should aim for a smooth, flowing quality".

The *sho* features a similar rhythmic fluidity as in the classical *gagaku* pieces (Figure 84).

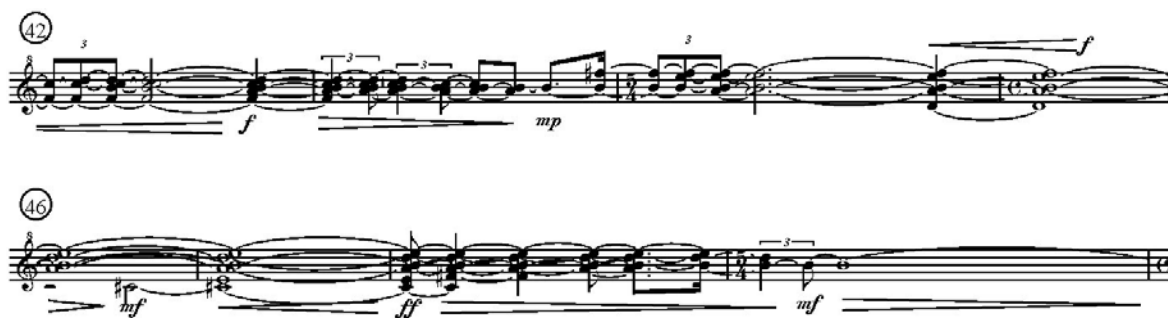


Figure 84: A comparison of the rhythmic writing for *sho* in the traditional *gagaku* repertoire (top)⁽¹⁾ and in *Ithaka* (bottom).

The rhythmic writing for the *shakuhachi* part is in keeping with the meditative style of the *honkyoku* repertoire. Despite the precise notation employed, its musical interpretation calls for a flexible and imaginative approach (Figure 85). A similar fluidity—both notational and interpretative—characterises the rest of the instrumental parts

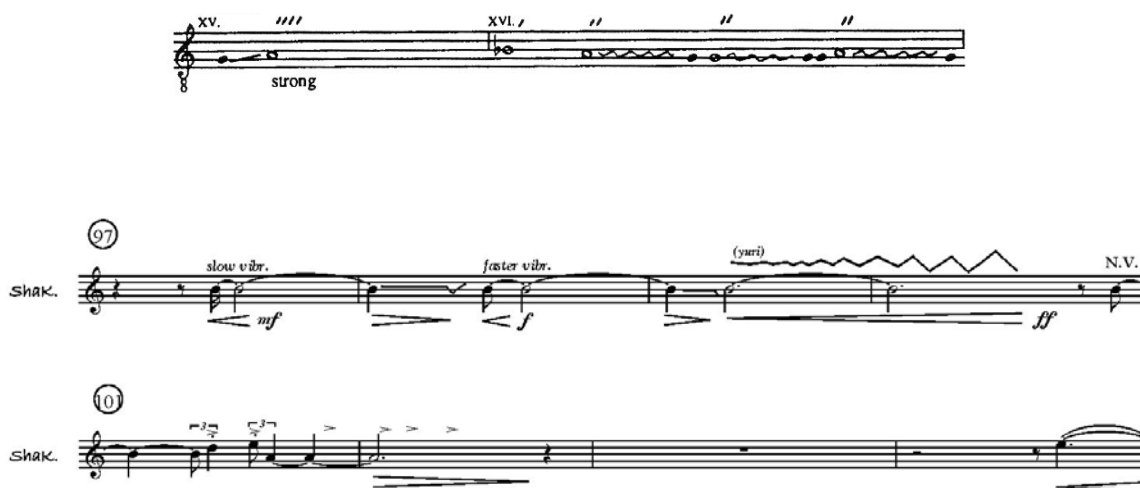


Figure 85: An example of the meditative quality of the *shakuhachi* writing in *Ithaka* (bottom) compared with an excerpt from the *honkyoku* piece *Reibo* (top) (Tann, H., 1980, p.53 and 70).

Aspects of Wabi Sabi

Every new work that utilises both Eastern traditional and Western instruments, or is created upon a cross-cultural principle raises some significant questions: how far should one try and disassociate the traditional instruments from their historic role? What should be the point of contact between the western and eastern instruments (if any)?

¹ Excerpt from Western transcription of *Ondori* (Shiba, S., 1969, Volume 2, p. 160).

Though there are not any universal answers to such questions it is apparent that each work of aesthetic value and originality seems to transcend its original influences according to the composer's sensitivity. Takemitsu for example in *November Steps*, as seen earlier, did not have in mind to create a balance between the opposing forces of the soloists and the orchestra but rather to highlight their irreconcilable opposition. In *Ithaka* on the other hand, an approach of reconciliation between the Western and Eastern instruments and their expressive language has been chosen instead; such an approach is based on simplicity.

As discussed earlier *Ithaka's* simplicity is not arbitrary, a mere result of a personal impulse but an organic derivative of the limitations dictated by the expressive, acoustic and technical peculiarities of the Japanese instruments. *Ithaka's* simplicity, the meeting point of two musical worlds, lies in the aesthetic presumption of equity, contained in *wabi sabi*, according to which all instruments irrespective of their technical/ expressive abilities and limitations should be able to function as equals. However, unlike in *Faded Shonorities* where each instrument more or less enjoys a similar share of prominence, in *Ithaka* there are instruments significantly underutilised in comparison to others. This discrepancy does not mean that equity is altogether absent from *Ithaka*. The two works are simply differently optimised, and while *Faded Shonorities* favours equity over simplicity, *Ithaka* stresses simplicity and economy over equity.

In *Ithaka* the presence of *kanso* (simplicity) is expressed through the economy of melodic treatment, the transparent textures, the straightforward harmonic language and the overall slow temporal framework. The process of thematic development has been at times replaced by a type of Weberian *klangfarbenmelodie* (pointillism) where a single melodic line is distributed among different instrumental parts. In Figure 86, the boxes highlight the constituent elements of a single melody divided among six instruments within the span of four bars. Such instrumental/spatial treatment creates an illusion of harmonic density and a strong sense of a timbral depth without the need for a substantial vertical or horizontal complexity.

We pinpointed earlier that both melody and harmony relate closely to the relatively simple and limited harmonic structures of the *sho*. Vertical simplicity is also achieved by means of economical orchestration and careful use of space as throughout the work there are hardly any moments of vertical saturation.⁽¹⁾

Melodic simplicity is achieved through the extensive use of heterophony. Here, heterophony replaces both polyphony and harmony through which a pseudo harmonic/polyphonic impression is achieved in a similar manner as in *gagaku* where all the instrumental lines derive

¹ With the only exception of the brief tutti in bars 69–74.

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from a mother tune. An instance of such heterophony is encountered in bars 90–114 where both the melodic lines of clarinet and oboe d’amore stem from the music material of the *sho* (Figure 87). What is most interesting in this example is the heterophonic focus on a single pitch within bars 90–102. Here the harp, *koto* and *shamisen* feature consecutively and in a variety of ways the pitch B. In bars 128–134, the repeated B played by the harp functions as an anticipation of the B of the *sho* only appearing later in bar 93 whereas in bars 98–104 (not included in the example) the *koto*, *shamisen* and harp project the same tone embellished and in different registers (see also Figure 87).

Figure 86 is a musical score for six instruments: Shamisen, Koto, Harp, Oboe, B♭ Clarinet, and Viola. The score is marked 'a tempo' and includes various performance instructions. The Shamisen part starts with a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) instruction and a 'V' (vibrato) marking. The Koto part has a 'p' (piano) dynamic. The Harp part has a 'P.dlt.' (pedal) instruction and a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic. The Oboe and B♭ Clarinet parts have a 'p' dynamic. The Viola part has a 'pizz.' instruction and a 'p' dynamic. The score includes a 'slow pulse' section with a '+' sign above it. There are also 'M.V.' (Molto Vivace) markings and 'ord.' (ordine) markings. The score is numbered 9.

Figure 86: Example of *klangfarbenmelodie* in Ithaka.

Figure 87 is a musical score for seven instruments: Sho, Shamisen, Koto, Harp, Oboe, B♭ Clarinet, and Viola. The score is marked 'Molto tenuto' and includes various performance instructions. The Sho part has a 'p' dynamic. The Shamisen part has a 'p' dynamic. The Koto part has a 'p' dynamic. The Harp part has a 'p' dynamic. The Oboe and B♭ Clarinet parts have a 'p' dynamic. The Viola part has a 'p' dynamic. The score includes a 'M.V.' (Molto Vivace) marking and a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) instruction. There are also 'ord.' (ordine) markings and a 'b.b. lig. (move higher on the strings)' instruction. The score is numbered 90.

Figure 87: Heterophonic focus on a single tone.

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In *Ithaka* the concept of *ma* (space) assumes a structural function and its presence can be pinpointed in both the horizontal and vertical aspects of the composition

In the horizontal axis space defines the distance between two or more isolated sound events (e.g. the spacing between the entries of clarinet, oboe d'amore and tutti in Figure 88) or the spacing of a series of events (e.g. the spacing between repeated tones of the harp in Figure 89). In the first instance, space is identified as silence that links loosely connected musical periods or entire sections. In Figure 88 for example, silence functions as a unifying device that binds two diametrically dissimilar sections in terms of thematic, temporal, textural, and gestural substance.

The musical score for Figure 88 is arranged in five staves. From top to bottom, they are: Shak. (Shakuhachi), Koto, Harp, Oba. (Oboe d'amore), and Cl. (Clarinet). The score begins with a circled number '23' and a tempo marking '♩ = 96'. The Shakuhachi part has a 'pp' dynamic and a performance instruction 'like a whisper'. The Koto part has a 'pp' dynamic and a 'blow air' instruction. The Harp part has a 'pp' dynamic and a 'blow air' instruction. The Oboe d'amore part has a 'pp' dynamic and a 'blow air' instruction. The Clarinet part has a 'mp' dynamic and a 'blow air' instruction. The score includes various dynamics such as 'pp', 'mp', and 'f', and performance instructions like 'blow air', 'high on the strings', and 'high on the strings'. There are also markings for 'N.V. with utmost care' and 'M.V.'.

Figure 88: Horizontal aspect of *ma* through the use of silence.

In the second instance space functions as a flexible substance that expands and contracts. This principle appears in the gradual *accelerando* and brief *ritenuto* on the single tone of the harp in Figure 89. Here the palindromic quality of space provides a clear sense of direction, not only in the harp part but in the entire instrumental section, facilitating the creation of unconduted aural cues for a better interpretative coordination.

The musical score for Figure 89 is arranged in four staves. From top to bottom, they are: Sho, Shak., Harp, and Via. (Viola). The score begins with a circled number '33'. The Sho part has a 'p' dynamic and a performance instruction 'espressivo'. The Shak. part has a 'p' dynamic and a performance instruction 'espressivo'. The Harp part has a 'mf' dynamic and a performance instruction 'espressivo'. The Viola part has a 'mp' dynamic and a performance instruction 'espressivo'. The score includes various dynamics such as 'mf', 'p', 'f', and 'sfz', and performance instructions like 'espressivo', 'F.V.', 'S.P.', and 'norm.'. There are also markings for 'F.V.', 'S.P.', and 'norm.'.

Figure 89: Elasticity of space.

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In the vertical axis space describes the harmonic density created through accumulation of tones or partials either within a single line (e.g. the building-up of the *sho* clusters and the overblowing of the *shakuhachi* (Figure 90)) or in the combined result of the instrumental parts. In *Ithaka* in many instances, the focus on spatial parameters of sound and density replaces the thematic development. An example of this can be observed in Figure 91, where the musical interest focuses on the control of density in both its horizontal (e.g. through acceleration) and vertical planes (e.g. tone accumulation, incorporation of noise, use of dynamics).

Figure 90 consists of two musical staves. The top staff is for the *Sho*, starting at measure 77. It features a melodic line with dynamics ranging from *pp* to *f*. A tempo marking 'Calm' with a quarter note equal to 72 is present. The bottom staff is for the *Shak.*, starting at measure 27. It features a melodic line with dynamics ranging from *p* to *f*. Markings include '(more&)', 'breathy', 'norm. vibr.', and 'M.V.'.

Figure 90: Vertical density in the harmonic progression of *sho* (top) and the accumulation of partials/noise in the *shakuhachi* (bottom).

Figure 91 is a multi-staff musical score. The top staff is for *Shak.*, starting at measure 27, with dynamics *p* to *f* and markings '(more&)', 'breathy', 'norm. vibr.', and 'M.V.'. The second staff is for *Sham.*, with a marking '(swipe strings with l.h.)'. The third staff is for *Koto*, with dynamics *p* to *f*. The fourth staff is for *Harp*, with dynamics *mp* to *mf*. The fifth staff is for *Oba.*, with dynamics *sfz* and 'vibr.' markings. The bottom staff is for *B. Cl.*, with dynamics *pp* to *f*.

Figure 91: Structural function of density. Incorporation of *sawari* (noise) in the harmonic spectrum.

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In *Ithaka* the use of space does not support the concentration of the aural interest onto a single sound but scatters it into multiple focal points creating a colourful, changeable sound canvas, an orchestration technique perhaps reminiscent of Debussy (Figure 93).

Despite the accurate music notation employed, *Ithaka* features an increased sonic flexibility—a combined result of the slow tempo, the rhythmic fluidity of the melodic line and as we saw earlier the use of slides/pitch bends.

Partially this fluidity stems from the employment of slides/bends. Indeed there are numerous examples throughout the work where adjacent pitches are bridged by means of sliding. In some occasions (like in the instance of the harp or *koto* e.g. Figure 83), the use of pitch-bending suggests possibilities of breaking free from the rigidity of the tuning. In either way their presence weakens the rigidity of both melodic and harmonic pulse and renders the boundaries of the harmonic changes more ambiguous. The presence of simultaneous or consecutive slides among various parts against the fixed harmonic background (usually provided by the *sho*), creates fluid harmonic sweeps that enriches the otherwise limited harmonic content. Similarly the incorporation of sounds of non-pitched or 'noisy' quality (e.g. breathing, scraping of strings, percussive sounds etc.) adds significantly to the melodic and harmonic ambiguity (Figure 92).

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Sho, Shamisen, Koto, Harp, and Viola. The score is divided into three measures. The Sho part consists of sustained notes with a slur. The Shamisen part has notes with accents and dynamic markings of mp, mf, and f. The Koto part features a complex rhythmic pattern with slurs and dynamic markings of p, mf, sfz, mp, and sfz. The Harp part includes a section labeled 'bibb. high on the strings' with a slur, followed by notes with accents and dynamic markings of pp, ff, mp, and f. The Viola part has a long slur and dynamic markings of mp and f. Performance instructions include 'poco' at the bottom left and 'M.V.' (Molto Vivace) in several places.

Figure 92: Combination of slides (viola) and pitch bends (*koto*, *shamisen*).

The most important but less obvious mechanism that enhances the sense of fluidity in *Ithaka*, is the flexible vertical alignment of parts defined as rhythmic, melodic and dynamic vertical

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independence (Figure 93). *Ithaka* may not present the same level of vertical independency comparing to *Noh*, however the slow harmonic pacing and lack of clear-cut melodic/harmonic successions built-in to its structure still offers a great deal of horizontal and vertical flexibility.

The musical score for Figure 93 is arranged in seven staves, each representing a different instrument. The instruments are Sho, Shak., Sham., Koto, Harp, Oba., and B♭ Cl. The score is in 9/8 time and features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings. The Sho part starts with a circled '11' above it. The Koto part has a 'quasi accel.' marking. The Harp part has a '5' marking. The Oba. part has 'M.V.' and 'N.V.' markings. The B♭ Cl. part has an 'n' marking. The score is divided into three measures, with the first measure containing the most complex rhythmic patterns. The dynamic markings include *f*, *ff*, *ppp*, *mp*, and *ff*.

Figure 93: Example of the non-dynamic relationship of the instrumental parts in *Ithaka* through independency in the use of dynamics. Presence of multiple focal points.

A final reference to the aesthetic of *wabi sabi* is the strong presence of *sawari* (noise). In comparison to *Fantasmata*, *Ithaka* has an obvious advantage in its instrumental resources. Here the presence of four traditional Japanese instruments offers a wide range of timbral choices (see Figure 91 and Figure 94).

Here the function of *sawari* is not confined to the aspect of sonority alone. It also fulfils a significant role in determining the general framework of tonal structure. That can be observed on the significance of the *sawari* tones of the *samishen* or the timbral peculiarities of the *sakuhachi* for *Ithaka*'s tonal direction.

Figure 94 is a musical score for a multi-instrument ensemble. The instruments listed on the left are Shakuhachi (Shak.), Shamisen (Sham.), Koto, Harp, Oboe (Oba.), Bass Clarinet (B♭ Cl.), and Viola (Vla.). The score is marked with a circled '4' at the beginning. It features several performance instructions and dynamic markings:

- Shakuhachi:** 'blow air' and 'vibr.' markings are present above the staff.
- Shamisen:** 'M.V.' (Messa di Voce) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte) markings are present.
- Koto:** 'M.V.' and 'mf' markings are present.
- Harp:** 'F.V.' (Forte di Voce) and 'mf' markings are present.
- Oboe:** 'blow air', 'vibr.', and 'sfz' (sforzando) markings are present.
- Bass Clarinet:** 'blow air', 'vibr.', and 'sfz' markings are present.
- Viola:** 'sul pont.' (sul ponticello), 'arco norm.' (arco normale), 'sul G', 'cut abruptly', and dynamic markings 'mf', 'pp' (pianissimo), and 'f' (forte) are present.

Figure 94: The presence of noise in both Japanese and Western instruments.

V. FOR THE ICE

For the Ice is a 16-minute work for solo *erhu* (the Chinese two-stringed fiddle) and piano commissioned by Colin Huehns. Together with two more compositions – *Calling for ...*, and *The Little Songs of the Geisha*⁽¹⁾ – it was included in a project featuring new works featuring the Chinese *erhu*, either in a solo or chamber context supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. *For the Ice* was first presented by Colin Huehns and the pianist Junko Nakamura at a workshop with Peter Maxwell Davies at Canterbury Christ Church University and was also a shortlisted work for the ISCM International Music Festival in Hong Kong.

Unlike all the other compositions analysed so far, featuring a single-movement structure, *For the Ice* is divided in four thematically independent movements of approximately equal lengths. Within the individual movements, unity is maintained by means of i) melodic continuity, ii) the use of rhythmic disjunction and iii) heterophony.

Melodic continuity can be observed in the division of single melodic lines into standalone melodic segments, spaced according to their expressive character and separated by silences. The adjacent melodic segments are linked, not so much thematically, but in terms of intervallic proximity: as a rule the final tone of the first and the first tone of the latter are in unison or an octave, semitone or tone apart. In exceptional instances the interval of perfect fourth or fifth is allowed due to its remote cadential associations (Figure 95).

Rhythmic disjunction is a device often used in Japanese music. As a result the first beats of the phrases of the different instrumental parts often do not coincide, creating an effect that William Malm has often referred to as *the sliding doors effect*. In his own words: “*The similarity between sliding doors and Japanese rhythmic structure is as follows. If there are two or more doors in a frame, each has a specific size and each has a track parallel to that of the other doors. However, when doors move along their tracks they may start from different positions. They usually come to an equal, parallel position only at the end of the track (the cadence?). The “sliding”, disjunct phrases in Japanese music are one of the hidden devices that contribute to the sense of forward motion in time*”. (Malm, W., 1986, p. 42) This technique differs to the process of superposition of rhythms of unequal length common in Messiaen’s music, or the *stretto* sections in Bach’s fugues as the Japanese approach lacks in precision compared to its Western counterparts.

¹ All three works have been composed in the form of a music suite and all are divided in four independent movements. A brief analysis of *The Little Songs of the Geisha* is included in the next chapter.

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The numbers on the top of the score define a grid of eight-beat units into which the Noh music is divided. The brackets appearing over the second and third staves depict the groupings of the various rhythmic patterns employed. The brief text on the top of each pattern represents the name of the pattern (as a means of memory aid). In this example neither the melodic nor the rhythmic patterns demonstrate a vertical alignment due to the variations in length and type. Here, in the aharmonic textures of *Issei* the *sliding doors effect* becomes the primary mechanism that sustains the forward motion.

The process of rhythmic disjunction evident in *For the Ice*, is closer to the Japanese aesthetics where an intuitive approach of inexact repetitions of thematic cells creates vertically disjunct layers that maintain continuity within large phrases and sections.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "III Hail". The tempo is marked "Delicate" with a quarter note equal to 132. The score is for two instruments: Erhu and Piano. The Erhu part is in the upper staff, and the Piano part is in the lower staff. The score is divided into two systems. The first system has three staves: Erhu, Piano, and a third staff (likely a continuation of the Piano part). The second system has three staves: Erhu, Piano, and a third staff. The Piano part features a "pp (una corda)" marking and a "1/2 pedal" instruction. The Erhu part has a "quasi legato" marking. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 97: Example of melodic disjunction in *For the Ice* (third movement) evident in the process of superimposition of non coinciding melodic cycles (*sliding doors effect*).

The presence of heterophony in *For the Ice* compensates for the lack of a significant harmonic and polyphonic presence. In *gagaku* as seen earlier heterophony is a result of certain flexibility embedded in the unconduted manner of the music interpretation as well of the differences in the individual instrumental characteristics (i.e. their sustaining ability, projection, register etc.). In this type of heterophony, (see the example of *Etenraku*), the material of each melodic instrumental part derives from a 'mother tune'.⁽¹⁾

A similar process of melodic extrapolation, also prevalent in *Ithaka*, can be observed in *For the Ice*. In Figure 98 for example the melodic material of the *erhu* (top line), appears also in the piano

¹ Indeed the melody created by the bottom part of the sho clusters is doubled and melodically/rhythmically varied by each of the *biwa*, *koto*, *hichiriki* and *ryuteki*.

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part with a small delay. The intervallic relationship between the two parts is not limited to unisons and octave transpositions but incorporates the neighbouring intervals of minor and major seconds (or ninths) as a means of creating a type of harmonic tension.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piece titled 'Frost'. Each system consists of three staves: a top staff with a treble clef, a middle staff with an alto clef, and a bottom staff with a bass clef. The first system is marked with a circled '63' and features a triplet of eighth notes in the middle staff. The second system is marked with a circled '66' and includes a dynamic marking of 'mf'. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks, illustrating the concept of heterophony through the use of different rhythmic patterns and intervallic relationships between the parts.

Figure 98: Example of heterophony in *Frost*.

In the example below (Figure 99), heterophony functions as a subtle link between thematically unrelated parts. Despite their dissimilarity in character, both parts are linked through the use of common pitch material indicated by solid and dotted lines.

The tonal language varies largely not only between movements but often between sections of the same movement. In general the tonal references in *For the Ice*, can be divided in two main categories: i) modality and ii) chromaticism.

The opening and closing movements employ a combination of both worlds whereas the second and third focus on either modalism or chromaticism respectively. Throughout the four movements there are only sparse purely harmonic gestures and harmony is often implied rather than directly expressed—mainly as lingering overtones in the piano with the use of sustain pedal.

— Relationship of parts based in pitch coincidence (unison, octave) - - - Relationship of parts based in pitch proximity (minor seconds, ninths)

Figure 99: A representation of the web of pitch relationships between parts in *Hail*.

Figure 100: Harmonic presence in *Snow* implied through the use of sustaining pedal. The flexible spacing between consecutive piano entries as well as the harmonic simplicity and transparency facilitates the independent melodic development of the erhu.

The overall linear piano writing together with the distinctive lack of low-register harmonic gestures, create highly transparent textures in favour of the higher range of the harmonic spectrum that complement the dynamic fragility of the *erhu*. The harmonic halo created by the use of pedal, such as for instance in the example below, results to discreet and flexible harmonic gestures supportive of the fluid melodic character of the *erhu* (see above, Figure 100).

As in the previously analysed works, the instrumental parts are characterised by a subdued expressive quality and lack of virtuosity as fast passages are limited to an absolutely minimum.

Unlike the Western violin, *erhu* has only two strings and for that is far more limited in the interpretation of fast cross-string passages. This limitation has had a significant impact on the melodic character of *For the Ice*, lending to it a smooth, curvaceous quality where large intervallic leaps are almost entirely absent. Here the interpretation of the melody relies more on sliding along the fingerboard rather than crossing strings. As sliding is a standard interpretative technique on the *erhu*, slides have only been sparingly notated in the score.



Figure 101: Example of non-angular melodic quality in the *erhu* (*Ice*).

Both parts demonstrate a balance between fluidity and fixity as faster rhythmically precise sections succeed slow flexible ones (Figure 102). Despite the precise notation of parts the fluidity embedded in the structures and phrasing of the slow sections of *For the Ice*, allows a large margin for interpretational freedom in a similar manner as in *Ithaka*. According to the performance notes: “the *erhu* player should glide *ad libitum* between tones when seems appropriate and bend the dynamic indications when necessary in order to project the sound adequately. The overall performance should be as imaginative as possible with a focus on the tone colour, the space between the individual sound events and the rhythmic fluidity”.

Figure 102 shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, starting at measure 21, includes a piano part with dynamic markings *mf*, *mf*, *ff*, *pp*, and *ff*, and tempo markings *a tempo*, *freely accel.*, and *rit.*. The second system, starting at measure 25, is marked *Animato* with a tempo of 88 and includes markings for *well articulated*, *f*, *mf*, *pp*, *delicate*, and *p with pedal*. The score also features various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic hairpins.

Figure 102: Juxtaposition of fluid and rhythmically fixed sections in *Frost*.

Aspects of Wabi Sabi

In the *For the Ice*, the presence of the *sliding doors effect* (rhythmic disjunction) described earlier, assumes a similar function to the ‘cutting’ particles and pivot devices of *haiku* and *renga*, as it binds together single phrases or contrasting sections into a continuity that derives from processes other than those of thematic development and coherence. Its function is universal irrespective of the stylistic/expressive musical context in which it applies. Its importance lies in its ability to link thematically or stylistically unrelated parts and sections offering an unprecedented expressive flexibility.

In the first movement *Frost*, where the concepts of ‘theme’ and ‘thematic development’ are not totally obsolete, the *sliding doors effect* aids the uninterrupted transition from one section to the other without the necessity of a cadence, climax or abrupt cut. Indeed in our example the process of development is interrupted before its resolution by the introduction of new thematic ingredients of contrasting expressive character in the *erhu* part (B). This transition to the next

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section is feathered by the thematic continuity of the piano accompaniment (Z-Z1), resulting in an imperceptible cross-fade into the next section.

The figure displays a musical score with several systems of staves. The first system, labeled 'A', shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. A melodic cycle 'X' is circled in the piano part, with dynamics *mf*, *f*, and *p* indicated. A note is marked with a question mark and a circled '1'. A footnote reads: '* (fade in over the pedal sonorities)'. The second system, labeled '15', shows a piano part with a melodic cycle 'Y' circled, with dynamics *mf* and *f*, and the instruction 'let ring'. The third system, labeled '50', shows a vocal line 'A1' and piano accompaniment with a melodic cycle 'Z' circled, with dynamics *mp*. The fourth system, labeled '55', shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. A vertical dashed line marks the start of a 'New Section' at measure 90. The piano part is divided into 'Common material' and 'Z1'. Section 'B' is circled and labeled 'New contrasting material', with dynamics *pp* and the instruction 'leg. ato con vibr.'. The piano part in 'Z1' has a dynamic of *mf*.

Figure 103: Asymmetrical melodic cycles in Frost and thematic cross-fading between sections. Here the duration of the chords in Z1 is halved to compensate for the drop of tempo (from crochet = 88 to 40).

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Such transitions are made possible due to the flexible vertical alignment of parts and the irregularity in their organisation. Unlike the thematically coherent processes in Bach's music where the layered polyphony leads to unavoidable cadences or Messiaen's inevitability signified by the completion of a full cycle, *For the Ice* displays an expressive flexibility where modality succeeds chromaticism and homophony succeeds heterophony through the smooth connection between contrasting sections or thematic entities. Such contradictions form a dynamic tension within the structural hierarchy replacing the conventional processes of thematic development or polyphony.

With the exception of the relative symmetry in the movements' durations, *fukinsei* (asymmetry) is a principle evident in every single musical parameter of the work. Within the movements asymmetry is evident in their structure as each movement evolves in a linear manner lacking in exact thematic reoccurrences throughout. As a result, the first two movements in particular, demonstrate little or no affinity between their opening and conclusion (Figure 104).

The image displays two musical staves for a piece titled "Ambient, but flowing" with a tempo of quarter note = 52. The top staff is for the Erhu and the bottom for the Piano. The opening section (measures 1-4) features a piano part with dynamics *pp*, *p*, and *pp*, and a quasi vibrato effect. The ending section (measures 85-90) features a piano part with dynamics *mp* and *pp*, and a fragile marking. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Figure 104: Asymmetry between opening (top) and ending (bottom) of *Frost*.

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The construction of phrases is also irregular, consisting of short, loosely-related melodic fragments. The coexistence of continuity and fragmentation within the melodic organisation facilitates an expressive flexibility which enables easy transition from one musical language to another. In Figure 105 is an example of a transition from chromaticism to modality in *Hail*. Here continuity processes are primarily based on pitch relationships. Hence contrasting melodic segments in the *erhu* are connected by means of a pivot tone (D), the downwards leap of seventh that functions as a 'cutting' device assisted by the dynamic drop (from *sforzando* to *mezzo forte*), the harmonic ambiguity of the piano accompaniment and the rhythmic disjunction in the superimposition of the melodic cycles.

As seen earlier, asymmetry also governs the organisation and length of thematic cycles—which appear at times elongated, shortened, transposed or truncated—as well as the relationship of parts—evident in their vertical independence—resulting in a significant weakening of coherence in thematic development, the teleological connection of musical ideas and anticipation of climactic or anticlimactic gestures.

The image displays a musical score for two systems. The first system is labeled 'Chromatic' and the second is labeled 'Modal'. Both systems feature a single melodic line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves (treble and bass clefs). The 'Chromatic' section begins with a dynamic marking of *f* and includes a *sforzando* (*sf*) marking. The 'Modal' section begins with a dynamic marking of *mf* and includes a *delicate* marking. The score shows a clear transition from chromatic movement to modal movement, with a pivot tone (D) and a dynamic drop from *f* to *mf*. The piano accompaniment in the 'Modal' section is marked *pp*.

Figure 105

Rhythm is also fluid and avoids dwelling in regular patterns. The last movement presents a fine example of rhythmic irregularity which in essence functions as a hidden device that highlights the individuality of the parts and maximises the textural transparency (Figure 106).



Figure 106: Rhythmic fluidity and textural transparency in *Ice*.

The instrumental treatment features a preference for soft dynamics and pale tone colours. However occasionally, expressive accents are employed (either short gestures or brief sections) whose function is similar as in the Japanese painting, calligraphy, architecture and flower arrangement where strong accent points lend the otherwise subdued design a dynamic aspect that illuminates the entire structure from inside. In *For the Ice*, such accent gestures are sparse, but their placing is carefully calculated in order to create a highly irregular canvas. Indeed their organisation does not follow any consistent pattern but sees the maximum effect through limitation, scarcity and sparseness.

For the Ice is characterised by an absence of intention for climactic gestures. This does not mean that climaxes are avoided; they are simply not caused deliberately or at least not used in their Western traditional sense. Here the accent gestures we examined earlier assume the role of the traditional climaxes. These accents despite their localised function create a significant impact upon the dynamic balance of the large scale structures and thus question the definition of the term 'climax'. If climax is translated as the physiological anticipation of a resolution of gradually accumulated tension, then *For the Ice* lacks in climactic gestures. If though, climax is defined as a concentrated expression of energy projected within a limited space, then the accent gestures become climactic gestures, though of a different kind. Their sparseness and brevity result in an inevitable shift of focus towards the present rather than the anticipation of future. Drama here reveals another dimension, channelled through the appreciation of the interplay of sounds and isolated musical events the moment they arise (Figure 107).

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Figure 107: Various examples of accent gestures in *For the Ice*. In the last example, the layered climactic effect in both *erhu* and piano is diffused by the presence of rhythmic disjunction.

The fragile dynamic relationship between the piano and the naturally more subdued *erhu*, requires a spatially unsaturated canvas where brilliant gestures, long virtuosic passages and dense textures are absent. That way the expressive language in *For the Ice* yields for a more delicate approach focusing on the interplay of sounds as in Bach's polyphony. In Takahashi's words:

"What is felt in Bach's music is that each sound has a different quality, that the combination of such sounds creates form of immense complexity. There is a free play of sounds. The formal structure is a framework for this play. It appears that Bach kept watch over this play and tried not to alter its natural flow by dramatic changes. This attitude is not one of indifference. It might be called a gentle thoughtfulness ..." (Takahashi, Y., 1992, p.74).

VI. FOR THE ICE II

Composed after *For the Ice* for erhu and piano, *For the Ice II* is a ten-minute work for soprano saxophone and piano. Its title, *For the Ice II*, also sounding as 'For the Eyes Too' alludes to the visual aspect of the work, as it was primarily composed as a dance piece for two female dancers. Its structure is based on the Japanese *noh* dance *Chu No Mai* (literally meaning 'moderate dance'). The work received its premier at Sounds New Festival in the Gulbenkian Theatre performed by Sarah Field and Simon Lepper in 23 March 2005.

Unlike the structural and expressive freedom of *Charmed*, *For the Ice II* demonstrates a fixed structure and a significantly more austere musical language, with direct reference to the *Noh* dance *Chu-no-mai*. The original *Noh* dance, as seen earlier, consists of four sections⁽¹⁾ (*dan* in Japanese). Each of them consists of two elements: i) a variable part (*kusari*) and ii) a fixed sequence (*ji*). The overall structure of the piece is a result of the combination of the variable parts with the fixed sequence. The interest of the music lies in the introduction of new material in the variable parts of each section and the gradual increase of the tempo.

Based on just a portion of the structure of *Chu No Mai*, *For the Ice II* features a similar (if not greater) structural and thematic simplicity as the original dance⁽²⁾ (Figure 108).

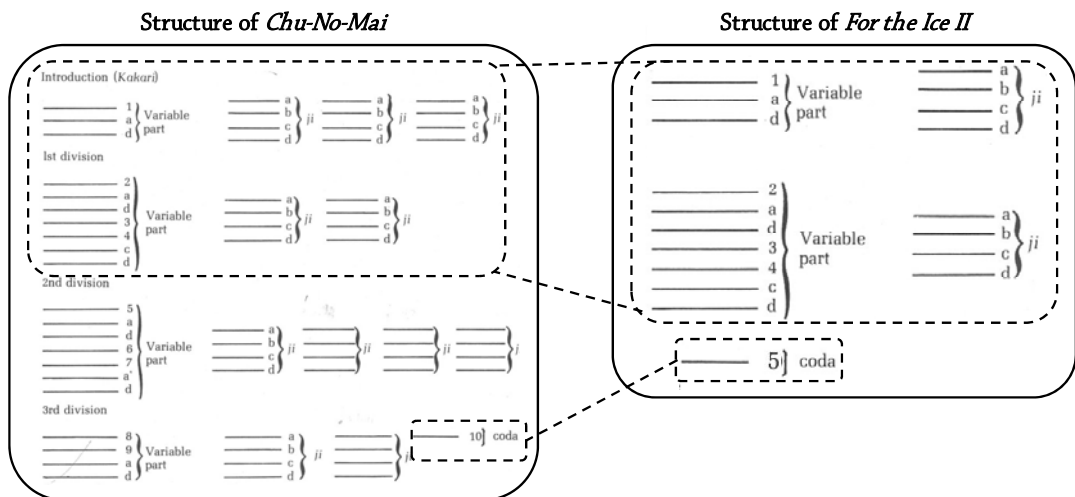


Figure 108: A side-by-side comparison of the structures of *Chu-No-Mai* and *For the Ice II* (see page 24) (Tamba, A., 1981, p.176).

¹ These sections are marked on the example as *Introduction*, *1st*, *2nd* and *3rd division* respectively.

² *For the Ice II* is structurally simpler than *Chu No Mai*, as only partially replicates *Chu No Mai*'s structure.

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Both works also share common temporal characteristics: in *Chu-no-mai*, the approximate temporal range of $\text{crochet}=58\text{--}144$ corresponds closely to that of $\text{crochet}=50\text{--}152$ in *For the Ice II*.

The structure of *For the Ice II* bears distant similarities with the traditional rondo form, although in many aspects it is much more irregular. Two distinctive processes can be observed throughout: i) repetition and ii) non-repetition.

Figure 109: Correspondence between the temporal extremes of *Chu-No-Mai* (left) and *For the Ice II* (right).

Repetition occurs within the variable sections (evident in the irregular reoccurrence of the thematic sequences A–D)—as well as the repetitive sections (evident in the exact reoccurrences of A–D).

Non-repetition is a result of the irregular occurrences of the four non-repetitive sequences (1–4) and the final coda. Although those sequences are disconnected to one another, at the same time they derive from the repetitive sequences by means of thematic transformation/variation (Figure 110). Their presence, not only infuses musical interest to the otherwise invariable repetition of A–D, but also establishes subtle links between the thematic ingredients within and across sections. A similar process is also evident in *Fantasmata* (see page 51) however its function is restricted only within sections.

Figure 110 illustrates thematic or rhythmic relationships between thematic ingredients of repetitive and non-repetitive sequences. The figure is organized into four rows, each showing a pair of musical sequences connected by a dashed arrow.
 - **Sequence A** (measures 8-11) is linked to **Sequence 1** (measures 1-4). Sequence A features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and a bass line with sustained chords. Sequence 1 shows a similar melodic structure with dynamic markings *pp*, *mp*, *p*, and *mf*.
 - **Sequence B** (measures 55-58) is linked to **Sequence 2** (measures 88-91). Sequence B consists of a rhythmic pattern of chords. Sequence 2 shows a more complex rhythmic structure with dynamic markings *p* and *pp*.
 - **Sequence C** (measures 61-64) is linked to **Sequence 3** (measures 106-109). Sequence C features a melodic line with a triplet. Sequence 3 shows a similar melodic structure with dynamic marking *mp*.
 - **Sequence D** (measures 19-22) is linked to **Sequence 4** (measures 123-126). Sequence D includes the marking 'fragile' and dynamic markings *pp* and *p*. Sequence 4 shows a similar rhythmic structure with dynamic marking *f*.

Figure 110: Thematic or rhythmic relationships between thematic ingredients of the repetitive and non-repetitive sequences.

The harmonic content of *For the Ice II* is characterised by simplicity and ambiguity. The suggested harmonies on the piano, which are in their majority restricted to dyads, fours and fifths, create textures of a significant harmonic transparency (Figure 111). As in *Fantasmata* and *Charmed*, each section dwells on a single tonal centre.

Instruments are treated in a non virtuosic manner. Unlike the timbral vibrancy of *Ithaka* and *Fantasmata* or the idiomatic character of *Charmed*, *For the Ice II* features a fairly limited array of timbral resources. Moreover the part for saxophone can easily be interpreted by a number of alternative instruments of a similar range (e.g. clarinet, flute, English horn etc) making apparent that tone colour is not among the primary expressive goals in the work.

A probably more pronounced emphasis is given on the polarisation of the rhythmic and expressive functions of piano and saxophone. On the one hand the saxophone features an improvised-like, non-metronomic fluidity also enhanced by the presence of slides and pitch bends. On the other hand the piano features a rhythmic fixity determining the musical pulse and tempo.

⑧ Delicate ♩ = 69

Figure 111: Rhythmic polarisation between piano and saxophone parts.

Aspects of Wabi Sabi

As in *Ikebana* (flower arrangement) where the process of meticulous filtering may leave as little as a single flower in the composition, the presence of *kanso* (simplicity) in the thematic character of *For the Ice II* stems from a subtractive process. Although the sequences (A–D) as seen earlier are recycled for more than half the length of the piece, as in *Chu-no-mai*, their repetition is not exact but modified by the factors of temporal and structural asymmetry.

In *For the Ice II*, tempo progresses from slow to fast, increasing gradually in predetermined increments. The resulting large-scale acceleration is in itself a variation mechanism that renders the also predetermined thematic recurrences inexact. The combination of the irregularity in the ordering of the melodic sequences (both repetitive and non-repetitive) the constant presence of acceleration and the required contrast between sections limit dramatically the choices for harmony, melody, rhythm, spacing and timbre. Each thematic sequence has been composed in

an economic, flexible manner, as a compensation for the structural fixity, as each sequence should be effective at both slow and rapid tempos, and make musical sense in any context in any order and sequential combination.

Sequence B for example in its first occurrence in bar 8 (Figure 111), is characterised by sparse, improvised-like quality due to the slow tempo and the use of long note-values in both parts. The repetition of the same sequence at a faster tempo (e.g. *crochet*=132 in bar 163) reveals a distinctive waltz-like quality in the piano part, not noticeable at slower speeds, while the saxophone melody gains a stronger sense of direction.

Simplicity and economy have also a crucial effect on the overall musical result especially when reshuffling thematic material. As a rule the less cluttered the sound canvas, the easier to incorporate into a structural continuum where the process of development is of secondary importance. The harmonic succession in Sequence A can thus be explained in this light. The repetitiveness of the perfect fifth dyad (E flat/B flat) in the piano part, is broken at the very end by the upwards chromatic shift to the E/B dyad. Such a simple harmonic gesture which would go easily unnoticed in any other occasion, here functions as an important aural link. The harmonic repetitiveness of the opening creates an *ostinato*-like effect (Figure 111) that secures a convincing connection with the section that precedes it (irrespective its melodic, harmonic and rhythmic character) whereas the abrupt chromatic modulation in the penultimate bar (Figure 112) loosens the harmonic rigidity established in the previous bars and functions as a flexible link to the section that follows. In similar ways a smooth transition to and from any other sequence in the work is ensured.

Opening bar of sequence A

Closing bars of sequence A

Figure 112: Chromatic shift in the concluding harmonic gesture of sequence A.

“The Japanese aesthetic preoccupation of *fukinsei* (asymmetry) is also evident in *For the Ice II* manifested in three levels:

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In the first defined as asymmetry of instrumental roles, the two instruments occupy two opposing, well defined roles. The piano, mostly notated in crochets, quavers or minims, determines the pulse by stressing the regular beat whereas the saxophone, by hovering across the beat, lends the work its fluid quality. Their dissimilarities not only refer to the polarisation of the Western and Eastern concepts of fixity and fluidity but also underpin the differences between the two stage characters impersonated by the two female dancers

In the second, defined as asymmetry of structure, the distribution of the constituent thematic sequences follows a rather irregular plan (Figure 108). This asymmetry is reinforced by the gradual introduction of the non-repetitive sections (1–4) whose function is to revitalise the musical discourse by means of variety. Although the four repetitive and four non-repetitive sequences bare no thematic affinity with any other of the same category, the latter derive from the repetitive sequences by means of variation and/or thematic development (Figure 110). Here, the coexistence of both the Western process of variation/development and the Japanese concept of non-change function as a subtle gesture of asymmetry and expressive tension.

Finally in temporal asymmetry, the monotony of repetition is broken by means of temporal acceleration (example 28). Although to a certain extent thematic variety is ensured by the gradual introduction of new material, the principal transformative power in the work is the gradual acceleration through which, the reoccurrences of the four repetitive sequences are rendered inexact and in a sense unique.

The figure displays four musical excerpts from a score, each showing a different stage of temporal acceleration for Sequence A. Each excerpt consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the saxophone and a bass clef staff for the piano. The first excerpt, labeled 'Delicate' with a tempo marking of ♩ = 69, shows a slow, delicate melody in the saxophone and a steady piano accompaniment. The second, 'Imaginative' at ♩ = 76, features a more active saxophone line and a piano accompaniment with a slight increase in tempo. The third, at ♩ = 116, shows a significant increase in tempo, with the saxophone playing a more rhythmic and energetic line. The fourth, at ♩ = 132, reaches the highest tempo shown, with the saxophone playing a fast, driving melody. The piano accompaniment also becomes more rhythmic and energetic. The excerpts are arranged from left to right, showing a clear progression of increasing tempo and energy.

Figure 113: Stages of temporal acceleration of Sequence A in bars 8, 30, 95 and 163 respectively (from left to right).

The irregular structure of *For the Ice II*, that consists as we saw of four non-repetitive thematic sequences juxtaposed by their four thematic variants, does not support a conventional dramatic flow. The gradual temporal acceleration not only does not create strong dramatic gestures but paradoxically is the main factor for their absence. The lack of significant variant gestures that

function as aural landmarks combined with a fractured continuity created by the irregular juxtaposition of the sequences, results in an unstable time continuum where the order of the events ceases to be of any significance. The brevity of the individual sections as well as their contrast in terms of character, spacing, intensity, and timbre, disfavours climaxes as, the faster the music gets, the more frequent the thematic juxtaposition. Therefore the drama ends soon after it has begun.

For the Ice II, built upon the structure of a Noh dance, is characterised by an absence of a long scale dramatic arc. The concept of 'drama' here assumes a deeper meaning designating something that is contained within the limits of the constituent sections thus highlighting their autonomous entity. The structure can be seen at a glance, it can be unrolled and followed from any point in any direction. "As all is there, it does not make any difference" (Takahashi, Y., 1992, p.73). All that matters is savouring the moment.

Japanese simplicity cannot be appreciated without the presence of *ma* (space). While the Western concept is based on the definition of borders, Japanese take a more flexible approach. In the fifteenth century for example, Japanese residences made use of translucent sliding doors (*shoji*) which have the ability to transform the space when drawn open or shut without stopping the light and sound moving freely from one chamber to the other. (Ueda, A., 1990, p.46) For Japanese, space is not vacant-ness, but a substance containing emptiness (Yuasa, J., 1993, p.187); such a concept greatly differs from the western space where the function of doors and windows has little to do with the spatial fluidity and rather more with physical access: *holes cut in solid barriers* (Reynolds, R., 1992, p.27).

Ma in *For the Ice II* is a well defined expressive device. Primarily connected with the parameters of temporal mutability and functional flexibility, its function seems closer to the Japanese rather than the Western perspective. As we saw earlier, the four non-repetitive sequences have been composed in a flexible manner. Ambiguity, one of the two primary aspects of their flexibility (tonal, harmonic, or melodic), enables their systematic reordering throughout the work. The other aspect, space, can be defined as the flexible distance between musical events capable of facilitating the ongoing temporal mutations through contraction or expansion. Hence the four thematic sequences (A–D) have been designed in such a way so as to function musically in both slow and fast tempi (Figure 113).

Another and not less important spatial parameter is the presence of melodic slides. Their employment on the saxophone, creating an effect reminiscent of the sound of the *hichiriki*⁽¹⁾,

¹ A reed instrument used in *gagaku* music with a unique ability to slide between tones with ease.

enhances the sense of sonic flexibility. Here the transition between adjacent pitches is not only determined by note values but also by the speed, direction and type of slide that interconnects them (e.g. linear, exponential etc.)⁽¹⁾.

Henry Cowell expressed a particularly interest in their expressive and functional ability. In his book *The Art of Melody* writes: “sliding tones, portamentos, or glissandi are not usually considered in musical theory, but it is our belief that they should be. The most natural and primitive way of expressing feeling through sound is a wailing cry... they are differentiated so as to express the finest shades of meaning in the cultivated Oriental systems of music. In all vocal music, and on all stringed and other instruments capable of sliding, they are used often according to certain conventions; but these conventions are a matter of feeling. They have not been formulated into words, and are not usually taught...they may be recommended heartily as a fine field for expansion in a highly refined art, which might conceivably grow into something altogether different in the Occident from what it did in the Orient.” (Cowell, H., 1996, p.76, 81).

In *For the Ice II*, the importance of slides in the slow/medium tempi lies on their ability to infuse with musical interest the otherwise simple melodic character of the saxophone part (Figure 114a), whereas in faster speeds their effect becomes less pronounced allowing the rhythmical aspect of the music come forth (Figure 114b).

Figure 114a: Example of melodic slides in slow/moderate tempo.

Figure 114b: At a faster tempo, slides function more like appoggiaturas.

¹ In the performance notes of *For the Ice II* two types of slides are indicated: the long slides where the sliding rate increases with time and the faster slides where the sliding ratio follows a linear pattern.

In *For the Ice II* *ma* is not concerned with the generative or expressive aspects of silence encountered in the music by Cage or Takemitsu⁽¹⁾, but the speed of succession of sound events transformed through the process of temporal acceleration, from slow and flexible to compacted and rhythmically precise; therefore *ma* assumes here a flexible transformative function.

It is evident that *For the Ice II* shares many of the characteristics of *wabi sabi*. Also overt is its opposition to the prevalent Western concept that stresses above all variety or thematic development within a piece in order to obtain a certain dynamism in the musical organisation. In the *For the Ice II*, new elements are avoided in an attempt to attain a static state. Here the temporal acceleration and the shifting relationships of the constituent music sequences are the main parameters that sustain the musical interest and reinforce the forward drive. The structure of *For the Ice II* is an allusion to the concept of a Zen garden. Whether it be Ryōanji's fifteen rocks or *For the Ice's* four sequences, both are designed to make the most out of the deceptively simple.

¹ Toru Takemitsu talked often about *ma* referring to it as "*the mother of all sounds*". He consciously cultivated this idea in his music from the very early works. Cage who was acquainted with this concept through the influence of Zen Buddhism worked his own way towards understanding and applying this idea into his music. In the third movement of his concerto for prepared piano and orchestra, Cage stopped using silence as a mere musical tool to articulate the grouping of sounds. For the first time, with the help of *I Ching*, sound and silence were treated as events of equal standing.