

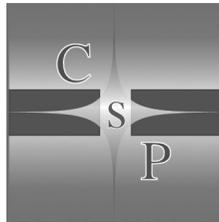
# Music of Japan Today



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Edited by

E. Michael Richards and Kazuko Tanosaki



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Music of Japan Today, Edited by E. Michael Richards and Kazuko Tanosaki

This book first published 2008 by

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-84718-562-2, ISBN (13): 9781847185624

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## PREFACE

During our more than twenty-five years performing and organizing events of contemporary Japanese music, we have become indebted to many people and organizations. We are especially grateful to Professor Joji Yuasa, our teacher beginning in 1981 at the University of California, San Diego. When Hamilton College asked us in 1991 to recommend a distinguished Asian artist to present a talk, sponsored by the Mellon Foundation, he accepted our invitation, which proved to be the start of the *Music of Japan Today* symposia. Over the years, Professor Yuasa has generously given his time to us on many occasions, and we have learned much from him.

We began the series of international symposia that form the frame for this book in 1992 (*Music of Japan Today: Tradition and Innovation*), and continued in 1994, 1997, 1999 (*Asian Music in America: A Confluence of Two Worlds*), 2003 and 2007 (*Music of Japan Today*). During this time, we have received a variety of international, national and local support. We are especially grateful to the Embassy of Japan (Washington, DC) and All Nippon Airways, under the auspices of which the 2003 and 2007 symposia were presented, and to the distinguished composers who participated since 1992: Shirotomo Aizawa, Masao Endo, Masao Honma, Toshi Ichianagi, Hiroyuki Itoh, Harue Kunieda, Bun-Ching Lam, Masataka Matsuo, Isao Matsushita, Tokuhide Niimi, Akira Nishimura, P.Q. Phan, Toshimitsu Tanaka, Richard Tsang, Hiroyuki Yamamoto, and Joji Yuasa.

*Music of Japan Today* symposia have received additional support from the Japan-United States Friendship Commission (Washington, DC), the Japan Foundation Tokyo and Japan Foundation NY, the Asian Cultural Council (NY), the Association for Asian Studies (Ann Arbor), the Freer Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC), the National Cherry Blossom Festival (Washington, DC), the Maryland State Arts Council, an agency funded by the State of Maryland and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Japan Commerce Association of Washington DC, the Shimadzu Corporation, the Selmer Corporation, and the Syracuse Society for New Music.

We would like to express our thanks to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and Hamilton College for their financial support, and

also to Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, president of UMBC; Arthur Johnson, provost of UMBC; Sheldon K. Caplis, vice president, Institutional Advancement UMBC; John Jeffries, dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences UMBC; Thomas Moore, director of arts and culture, Institutional Advancement UMBC; Eugene Tobin, president of Hamilton College; Bobby Fong, dean of Hamilton College; and the Class of 1940 Cultural Endowment Fund at Hamilton College.

In the Department of Music at UMBC, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to Linda Dusman, Chair, who has selflessly supported and encouraged our work. We also thank our many colleagues and staff members of the music departments at UMBC and Hamilton College for their artistic and organizational contributions. Finally, we offer special thanks to the hundreds of students who have participated in the six symposia – we hope that the spirit of artistic cooperation, scholarly investigation, and cross-cultural understanding that they experienced will remain in their lives.

With regard to this book, we thank European American Music, Schott Music Japan, Mannheim Musikverlag, Chester Music Limited, and C.F. Peters Corporation for permission to reprint excerpts from their scores. We also express thanks to composers Hiroyuki Itoh, Hiroyuki Yamamoto, Shiroto Aizawa, Marty Regan, and Koji Nakano for supplying recordings and copies of their musical scores. For the chapter on computer music, we extend our gratitude to Takayuki Rai, Daichi Ando, Shintaro Imai, Naotoshi Osaka, and Hideko Kawamoto for sending us recordings of their music. Finally, we are grateful to *shakuhachi* virtuoso Retsuzan Tanabe, and composer Shiroto Aizawa for writing about *Music of Japan Today 2007* for Japan's *Hogaku Journal*.

Thanks also to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for taking on this project, and especially Amanda Millar and Carol Koulikourdi for all of their work and advice.

Finally, we would like to dedicate this book to Kazuo and Minako Tanosaki, and Edwin and Janet Richards.

In the text that follows, we have attempted to be consistent in our use of the Hepburn system of transliteration of Japanese words. Also, following Western practice, we spell Japanese names first name first, last name last.

## INTRODUCTION

This book is an outcome of work put forward by scholars, composers, and performers at the international symposium *Music of Japan Today 2007*, held in Baltimore, Maryland and Washington, DC from March 30-April 1. MOJT 2007 is part of a sequence of events we (Tanosaki and Richards) have established, over fifteen years, dedicated to the examination of cross-cultural elements within Japanese music. The first of these events (1992) was organized at Hamilton College in upstate New York – *Music of Japan Today: Tradition and Innovation*. This symposium was the first in the United States on contemporary Japanese music to couple scholarly presentations with a number of musical performances (including commissions and premieres), and integrated musicians and scholars from Japan, Hong Kong, and a variety of locations in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Presenters (papers, workshops, panel discussion, performances) at MOJT '92 examined contemporary Japanese music (primarily notated music in the Western art-music tradition) that displayed “a cross-fertilization of aesthetics and musical characteristics from both East and West.....reflective of a variety of aspects of contemporary Japanese society, all of which are deeply rooted in an aesthetic, psychology, and culture that has evolved over many years.”<sup>2</sup> The format of the symposium was designed to present views of insider and outsider (as defined by both ethnic/national and geographical/cultural identity), musician/scholar and non-musician/scholar, and music specialists who represented each step in the process from idea to sound: creator (composer), re-creator (performer), and listener/analyst. At the heart of the gathering were three distinguished Japanese composers, representing three different generations: Joji Yuasa (b.1929), Tokuhide Niimi (b.1948), and Masataka Matsuo (b.1959). These composers presented their musical ideas in several different formats: lectures, master-classes with performers, and a panel discussion, in addition to performances.

MOJT '92 led to five other symposia that we directed on topics of contemporary Japanese music (1994, '97, '99, '03, '07) – the first three at Hamilton College, with the most recent two at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County in Baltimore MD, and the Smithsonian National Asian Art Museum (Freer Gallery) in Washington DC.<sup>3</sup> Although the format

remained fairly intact, these subsequent symposia were significantly shaped by the participants (many of them from the youngest generation of scholars). New topics arose, and older topics shifted in scope, refocusing the investigations. Since 1994, scholars from an expanding list of backgrounds and specialties have presented their observations at MOJT – anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, theater historians, dancers, and music educators, as well as musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and theorists from Western Europe, South and Central America, Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand have enriched the dialogue.

Additional perspectives have been advanced by Japanese composers/musicians not centered in Tokyo (Masao Honma, Mari Akagi), but in less cosmopolitan communities, where the position of traditional Japanese aesthetics and art in everyday life illuminates a different Japan. Also, an increased diversity of perceptions has been brought forth from composers ranging in age from their early thirties to late seventies. Equally important insights on Japan's music and its place within Asian music have likewise been provided by composers born and educated in the cultural milieu of Hong Kong (Richard Tsang), Macau (Bun-Ching Lam), and Vietnam (P.Q. Phan), as well as composers of Japan or other areas of Asia who immigrated or spent a significant amount of time living and creating music in the United States (Hiroyuki Itoh) or Europe (Isao Matsushita).

Also reflected in the background of MOJT participants during these fifteen years (as well as globally) is an increase in demographic inversion – the growing number of Japanese/Asian musicians studying Western music in the US and Europe, and American/Western musicians studying *hogaku* in Japan.<sup>4</sup> Some have returned to their home countries; others have immigrated. Japanese immigrants have assimilated in varying degrees to new cultures – yet, once outside Japan, a number of musicians have recognized a part of their (musical) thinking that is Japanese, and sought to preserve it and explore its artistic implications. The consequence is a rising number of what could be characterized as sophisticated bilingual cultural brokers. Convenient divisions of musical elements/ideas into East and West have become less distinct (if not impossible). The musical/aesthetic confluence within Japanese music today continues to evolve through a mounting number of conduits, including imitation, adaptation, assimilation, indigenization, transculturation (cross-fertilization), acculturation, syncretism, and synthesis.

The weight given performers' voices in MOJT is a direct outgrowth of our background as performers of contemporary music, especially of Japanese chamber music, since the mid-1980s.<sup>5</sup> To formulate a compelling

and faithful interpretation for performance, one must “re-create” the composer’s ideas as an insider, identify (as listener/analyst/scholar) the most essential characteristics of the musical work as an outsider, reconcile these views and effectively project the result. We have not only encouraged performers to participate in these symposia, with the hopes of stimulating performances of new repertoire and collaborations resulting in new compositions, but felt that their written/spoken ideas and discussion of this music was essential to a complete and meaningful picture of the topic. It is a significant process from notation on paper to the sound of a complete musical work, so in addition to traditional paper presentations on issues of performance practices (such as new sonic resources, including subtleties of timbre nuances and transformations appropriate to Japanese music), and notation (such as designing more appropriate representations of *portamenti*, silences, and ringing resonances), visiting performers have participated in master classes on particular works by a visiting composer (Nishimura – *Tritrope* for solo piano; Ichiyonagi *Paganini Personal* for solo marimba; Yuasa *Domains* for solo flute), and/or in a performance competition designed to help advance the music towards a place in the standard repertoire (Mayuzumi–*Bunraku*; Takemitsu–*Voice*). With regard to performances at MOJT 2007, close to 40 works of 20 Japanese composers were presented during the symposium, including ten works (four of them premieres) of the three guest composers. These performances included computer music by mid-career composers, chamber music for Western instruments, chamber music for Japanese instruments, and a work for a combined ensemble of Japanese and Western instruments.

This book, like the MOJT symposia, examines various topics concerning cross-cultural confluences in contemporary Japanese art-music through multiple approaches and views from composers, performers, and scholars. It is neither comprehensive in scope nor detail – a number of recent publications in English are available to provide a greater depth of historic, aesthetic, or cultural context.<sup>6</sup>

In Part I, three Japanese composers of international stature discuss their compositional techniques as well as aesthetic orientations, together with how these views have been constructed. Excerpts from interviews and the symposium’s panel discussion, in addition to a brief analysis of Hiroyuki Itoh’s *String Quartet* by theorist David Pacun, provide supportive material. The three composers represent a generation born after 1960 – mid-career composers who were pupils of leading composers from the postwar generations of Yuasa, Miyoshi, Ikebe, Noda, and Kondo.

Hiroyuki Itoh, a winner of international composition prizes in Europe and Japan (including the prestigious Akutagawa Award), has been commissioned and performed by major ensembles including the New Japan Philharmonic, the Nieuw Ensemble, and the Arditti Quartet. Hiroyuki Yamamoto, whose works have been performed at Forum '91 (Montreal), Gaudeamus Music Week '94 (Holland), and ISCM World Music Days (2000 in Luxembourg and 2001 in Yokohama), has received prizes for his work, including the Japan Music Competition, Toru Takemitsu Composition Award, and Akutagawa Award. Shirotomo Aizawa, winner of an Ataka Prize, and composition prize from the National Theater in Japan, has studied composition in Tokyo, Berlin, and Vienna, and conducting with Seiji Ozawa, among others.

The body of the book (Part II) contains nineteen essays by scholars and creative musicians, grouped under five broad sections, arranged in a general sort of chronological frame:

1. Politics and Music: Japan, World War II, and its Aftermath
2. Beyond Tradition: Recent Perspectives on Toru Takemitsu's Music and Legacy
3. Cross-Cultural Uses of Japanese and Western Instruments
4. Mid-Career Japanese Composers and their Work with Computer Music
5. Four Japanese Societies and their Current Music: Communities Within Japan, and "Offshore" Japan

The two essays in Section One focus on connections of the music and ideas of Japanese composers to Japan's politics before, during, and after the Second World War. David Pacun (*Style and Politics in Kosaku Yamada's Folksong Arrangements, 1917-1950*) provides an analysis of the relationship between composer Kosaku Yamada's deepening exploration of Japanese folksong (projecting an evocative sonic space that anticipates the explicit spatial characteristics of some post-war Japanese composition), and Japan's own budding militarism (considering whether it is possible to link changes in musical style to changes in society). Fuyuko Fukunaka (*A Japanese Zero-Hour?- Postwar Music and the "Re-making" of the Past*) examines individual composers' personal attempts to re-define themselves – their writings on the role(s) of (their) music during this time, possibly as evidence of their response to the ideological revolution "from above" – and, the twelve-tone technique of post-war composers as a catalyst for constructing a new identity.

Since his death in 1996, a number of important publications about the life and work of Takemitsu have been released. In Section Two, three papers present and analyze recent research – two of them concern contemporary readings of his music. Mitsuko Ono, a Japanese musicologist, discusses Takemitsu's use of *sawari* - a complex single sound containing many overtones, commonly heard in music for *biwa*, but which also exists in Takemitsu's music for Western instruments. She takes up the question of how Takemitsu's usage of *sawari* for Western instruments is different than that found in the traditional instrument repertoire. An essay by Hideaki Onishi examines three "Japanese garden" works of Takemitsu through a new set theory concept. According to Onishi, pitch structure in these compositions can be looked at as a seemingly random recurrence of a referential sonority and its derivatives, which is not dissimilar to the view of an object seen from various angles in a Japanese garden (a metaphor often used by Takemitsu with regard to a large number of his works). Finally, the role of the Western press in the emergence of Takemitsu as Japan's most recognized international composer is scrutinized by Peter Burt, a leading Takemitsu scholar and author of *The Music of Toru Takemitsu*.

The essays of Section Three investigate innovative, cross-cultural uses of Japanese and Western instruments, shaped by historical traditions, physical design, and acoustic characteristics and constraints. Musical examples from works of Yuasa, Hosokawa, K. Tanaka, Ishii, Mayuzumi, Nakano, Nishimura, Matsuo, and others are considered. Some of the writings also elaborate on collaborations between composers and performers. Groups of essays are organized according to instrumental families found in both Japanese and Western cultures – flutes, voice, and strings and piano.

Essays by both Stacey Fraser and Colin Holter focus on a single work that involves the voice (Koji Nakano's *Time Song II: Howling Through Time*; Joji Yuasa's *Observations on Weather Forecasts*). Both of these works move the voice outside of the bel canto tradition into extended technical and theatrical worlds. Holter reads Yuasa's work as a complex, dialogic exploration of television phenomena in a chamber music context, which is characterized not only by Yuasa's perspective on popular media, but by his lifelong relationship with *Noh*. Fraser discusses vocal gestures from Nakano's score that incorporate both Western and non-Western vocal techniques, and the composer's intention to portray the spiritual side of particular Japanese rituals associated with ceremonies.

Composer and *hogaku* performer Marty Regan (*Composing for the Shakuhachi*) offers some technical and practical resources for composers

to explore the possibilities and constraints of the *shakuhachi*, with special attention paid towards new and innovative repertoire. With regard to the Western flute, Antares Boyle (*Flute Works of Toshio Hosokawa*) identifies and explores over-arching and recurring aesthetic concepts found in three solo flute works.

Grouped with writings here that involve string instruments is one which concentrates on a work for the piano (described as a “Western *koto*” during the Meiji era). Similar sonic ground is found among these instruments through their common usage in the music under investigation – percussive, plucked sounds, and nuances of timbre transformations (including resonances). Marty Regan introduces this group through his look at the *koto* (*Composing for the Twenty-One-String Koto*), including problems inherent in cross-cultural ensemble writing. Hugh Livingston describes the many techniques he has developed to realize sounds of traditional Asian instruments for the modern cello (*Adaptations of Performance Style from Early Modern Japan to the Contemporary Cello*), including narrator/*shamisen*/drums for use in Toshiro Mayuzumi’s *Bunraku*. Different examples of *ma* are identified and discussed by Airi Yoshioka in violin works by Hosokawa, K. Tanaka, and Ishii (“*Ma*” (*sense of time*) as *Compositional Tool*). Finally, pianist Kazuko Tanosaki examines Joji Yuasa’s concepts of temporality and cosmos reflected in his masterpiece for solo piano *Cosmos Haptic II: Transfiguration*.

The last essay of Section Three details performer/composer collaborations between several Japanese composers and E. Michael Richards (clarinet). He reveals how the resulting music represents consolidation of extended traditions: a merging of recent research into extended techniques for the Western clarinet, derived from acoustic principles of the instrument, with aesthetics, materials, and underlying musical syntax borrowed from traditional Japanese music and culture (*The Clarinet of the Twenty-First Century and Recent Music by Japanese Composers*).

Section Four describes the encounters of mid-career Japanese composers with computer music. A number of these composers, though born in Japan, have either trained or worked extensively in the United States or Europe (serious computer music studios for music and research were not established in Japan until the 1990s). These composers and their music include a tape work of Hideko Kawamoto, a violin and tape work of Karen Tanaka, interactive works by Atau Tanaka, and music for robots by Suguru Goto. A second group of computer composers (Daichi Ando, Shintaro Imai) trained at the Sonology Department at the Kunitachi College of Music (Tokyo), under the tutelage of Takayuki Rai and visiting

American professor Cort Lippe. Finally, Japanese composers who have trained and worked primarily in Japan are represented by Hiroyuki Yamamoto and Naotoshi Osaka.

Four sub-groups of Japanese society and their current music are examined in Section Five. David Hebert explores how music changes sonically and when crossing cultural boundaries during the adoption of the wind band genre in Japan (*Alchemy of Brass: Spirituality and Wind Music in Japan*). Yann Leblanc, a French anthropologist/ethnomusicologist, writes about links between sound and the body, sound and space in the work of sound artists within Tokyo's avant-garde music community - Toshiya Tsunoda, Toshimaru Nakamura, and Sachiko M (*Sonorous Bodies*). Identity paradoxes concerning Japanese composers living in England, trained in Western art-music, who are writing for Japanese *hogaku* instruments that are unfamiliar (performed by British musicians who have studied extensively in Japan), is discussed (*Identity Tactics of Japanese Composers in the Multicultural UK*) by Yumi Hara Cawkwell (a Japanese composer living in England). Finally, Noriko Manabe looks at cell phone *chaku-uta* (ringtones) and their role in the Japanese music market (*Ring My Bell: Cell Phones and the Japanese Music Market*). She argues how unique aspects of the Japanese cultural environment affect the development of this market, and identifies possible implications for other music markets.

Reading about the music discussed in *Music of Japan Today* is incomplete without an opportunity to hear it. This presents special problems since some of the music is not yet recorded, or recorded on small company labels. The reader is referred to the discography in this book on page 277, which includes websites with available scores and sound files. In addition, we have created a webpage, to be periodically updated, that contains sound-clips and further information about available recordings <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~emrich/mfj2007.htm>.

We hope that *Music of Japan Today* could be useful as supplemental reading for university undergraduate or graduate level courses on twentieth/twenty-first century music, Japanese, Asian, and World music and culture, and that it will, in some way, stimulate future research of the topics presented, as well as collaboration, artistic creation, and artistic re-creation in wide-ranging performances of music of Japan.

## Notes

1. MOJT was structured differently from the well-known concert series in New York, *Music From Japan*, which did not present views from scholars.
2. topics did not only relate to notated music in the Western art-music tradition, but also popular music and *hogaku*. See <http://home.sprintmail.com/~emrichards/musjapan.html> for a list of presenters, abstracts, concert programs and notes, etc.
3. see Appendix A for listing of participants, paper topics, and works performed, or see <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~emrich/MFJ2003.html> for further information.
4. *hogaku* can be defined as traditional Japanese music, or music derived from “traditional” music, written for Japanese instruments. Richards and Tanosaki organized the symposium “Asian Music in America” in 1999 at Hamilton College, Clinton, New York.
5. see <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~emrich/tanosakirichards.html>
6. see Galliano 2003, a detailed historical study of Japanese art-music after the Meiji Restoration in the 19th century, and its development through the end of the 20th century. Galliano’s book also addresses aesthetical and theoretical aspects of the music. Also see Everett and Lau 2004, a comparative study of Asian-influenced Western composers and Western-influenced Asian composers by music theorists, musicologists, composers, and ethnomusicologists.

## References

- Everett, Yayoi Uno and Frederick Lau. 2004. *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*. Wesleyan U. Press.
- Galliano, Luciana. 2003. *Yogaku: Japanese Music in the Twentieth Century*. The Scarecrow Press, Inc.



# PART I

## COMPOSER LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONS

Mid-career Japanese composers (born in the 1960s) are positioned historically as a bridge in the post-war transculturation and assimilation of Western art-music in Japan – too young to have participated in the avant-garde movements after the Second World War, yet old enough to have studied with some of the musical leaders of this first post-war generation.

Hiroyuki Itoh (b.1963), Hiroyuki Yamamoto (b.1967), and Shiroto Aizawa (b.1962) are composers of international stature who represent three different backgrounds and aesthetic/musical orientations. Itoh, a student of Shin-Ichiro Ikebe in Japan, and Roger Reynolds, Joji Yuasa and Brian Ferneyhough in the United States, has developed a distinctive compositional voice, using primarily quarter-tones in “swaying, flickering” textures. His music is highly virtuosic, and some of his earlier work involves electronic resources as well as ideas expressed through complex and precise notation. Hiroyuki Yamamoto, a student of Jo Kondo, among others, composes virtuosic music that explores shifting cores of sound – it synthesizes elements from Japanese (heterophony) and European (textural) music, yet has a very personal voice that does not sound derivative. Shiroto Aizawa, a student of Akira Miyoshi, Teruyuki Noda, and Makoto Shinohara, is also a conductor, and writes music for *hogaku* instruments, and for combined *hogaku* and Western instrument ensembles. His music relies on the subtleties of spectral merging in its quest for a synthesis of musical systems.

Hiroyuki Itoh (b. Sakata, Japan) studied music composition at the Tokyo College of Music, and earned a PhD in music from the University of California, San Diego in 1994. After residing in the United States for ten years, he returned to Japan, where he currently teaches at Nihon University and lives in Yokohama. Itoh has written works for solo instrument, chamber ensembles, and orchestra – much of it not only in a musical language of quarter-tones, but with dark textures and an elastic manipulation of time, among other characteristics. He has won prestigious international awards including the first prize at the Nuove Sincronie Competition (1995), a Stipendienpreis at the Darmstadt Ferienkurse

(1996), and the Akutagawa Composition Award for Orchestral Music (1998) in Japan. Itoh has been commissioned by the Suntory Music Foundation, the Akiyoshidai Festival, the Yokohama Culture Foundation, the Klangspuren Festival, and Music From Japan (New York), among others. His works have been performed at major festivals such as Darmstadt, Gaudeamus, ISCM World Music Days (2000 in Luxembourg, 2004 in Switzerland), Klangspuren, June in Buffalo, Akiyoshidai, and Takefu, and by orchestras and ensembles such as the New Japan Philharmonic, Tokyo City Philharmonic Orchestra, Kanagawa Philharmonic Orchestra, Izumi Sinfonietta Osaka, Art Respirant, Nieuw Ensemble, Klangforum Wien, and the Arditti Quartet.

Itoh's comments about his compositional process reveal that he tends to "use textural materials more often compared to many Western composers, who prefer motivic material."<sup>1</sup> He most often breaks his musical material apart into many pieces, rather than combining disparate parts into one. Two of Itoh's works performed at MOJT 2007 displayed some of his recent music. *Salamander 1b* for solo flute (2005) is a re-working of an earlier piece for solo piccolo (1995). The sonic image of the piece was inspired by the mythological reptile that is said to have lived in fire. "Despite this, a salamander is believed to be extremely cold. It is also believed to move very quickly. Once it is out of the fire, however, it dies immediately."<sup>2</sup> Itoh's writing in this piece employs quarter-tones extensively, and the musical materials are constantly changing speeds through complex rhythms that are meticulously notated. In *out of a blaze of light* (2007), a work for clarinet and piano that was premiered at MOJT 2007, Itoh composes a three part structure: an aggressive yet short introductory section where the clarinet's quarter-tone lines are picked up in the pedal resonances of the piano; a long middle section where multiple lines with complex rhythms between the two instruments are juxtaposed and overlapped (never phrasing together); and a final reflective slow/quiet section where the quarter-tone tremolo sequences of varying speeds and rhythms are again "reflected" in the piano resonances.

In his essay *Swaying Sensation and Fragile Beauty*, Itoh discusses the aesthetics from which his music grows – these principles have been dominant in all of his pieces during the last ten years. He points to examples within his compositional language found in *Mirror I* for twelve players (1997). Itoh also writes about the relationship of his aesthetics to the fact that he is a "Japanese" composer.

David Pacun presents an overview of Itoh's *String Quartet (Hiroyuki Itoh's String Quartet: Form, Style, and Content)*, written and premiered by the Arditti Quartet in 2002, which both draws upon and extends musical

traditions through pitch/interval control, complex polyrhythmic textures, and quarter-tone harmonies. Pacun illustrates through musical examples from the *Quartet* many of the aesthetic/musical ideas mentioned by Itoh in his essay such as distorted time flow and complex superimposition of lines.

Hiroyuki Yamamoto (b. Yamagata Prefecture, Japan), was raised in Zushi City of Kanagawa Prefecture (southwest of Tokyo). He received both his bachelors (1990) and masters (1992) degrees in composition from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. Yamamoto's honors and awards include third prize at the Japan Music Competition (1989), JSCM Composition Award (1996), Toru Takemitsu Composition Award (2002) and Akutagawa Award (2003). His works have been selected for Forum '91 (Montreal), Gaudeamus Music Week '94 (Holland), ISCM World Music Days (2000 in Luxembourg and 2001 in Yokohama) and performed by the Nieuw Ensemble (Amsterdam), Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks (Munich), Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg, and the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, among others. Yamamoto is a member of the composers' group TEMPUS NOVUM, which he helped to establish in 1990. He directed the Ensemble d'Ame (Tokyo) for four years from 1997. He currently teaches at Iwate University in Morioka City.

Three acoustic works of Yamamoto were performed at MOJT 2007. In the earliest of these works, *Saxophone The Relay* (1999) for solo alto saxophone, the composer shows an interest in ambiguous sounds by focusing on mechanical noises which are usually hidden behind the traditional sounds of the instrument. Yamamoto comments that

“the saxophone’s noise elements are louder than other wind instruments. But when we combine these noises and very beautiful soft sounds, this particular combined sound raises the saxophone to a special position.”<sup>3</sup>

*Matsumorphosis* (2001) for solo violin is a one minute work written to celebrate composer Yori-aki Matsudaira’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. Yamamoto uses the Morse code rhythm of Matsudaira’s name to generate elements of the work such as articulations and sounds with different noise content. The source rhythm is hidden within these ambiguous elements. Finally, *The Wedge is Struck, the Fog Remains* (2006) for clarinet and piano, which was premiered at MOJT 2007, is constructed with shifting cores of sound between the two instruments. The clarinet part is written in quarter-tones, and Yamamoto uses complex polyrhythms and overlapping phrases in which the instruments never have rhythmic attacks together, as well as

clarinet *portamenti* and muted pitches on the piano, sometimes among three voices (clarinet, piano left hand, piano right hand), to alter the “core of monody” that drives this through-composed piece forward.

Yamamoto discusses his compositional techniques before 2004 (accumulation of ambiguities) and after 2004 (monody with a core used to realize ambiguities) in his essay *My Compositional Technique and Thoughts on the Ambiguity of Sound*.

Shiroto Aizawa, winner of the Ataka Prize, and composition prize from the National Theater in Japan, completed his undergraduate and graduate studies in music composition under full scholarship at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. He studied composition with Teruyuki Noda, Akira Miyoshi, Yuzuru Shimaoka, Koichi Uzaki and Makoto Shinohara. Aizawa also studied conducting with F. Travis, Kotaro Sato, Yoko Matsuo, Chiyuki Murakata, and Seiji Ozawa in Tokyo. He undertook further studies in conducting and composition in Berlin and Vienna.

Two premieres by Aizawa were presented at MOJT 2007. In *Time of Time* for clarinet and percussion,

“harmonic overtones from metal percussion rise from, and emphasize, multiphonic sounds and microtones from the clarinet. This idea, which I used for the first time in this work, replaces the chronological concept that I formerly practiced with works combining Japanese traditional instruments and Western musical instruments.”<sup>4</sup>

Influenced by Boulez, Grisey, Murail, Webern, Shinohara, and Takemitsu’s *November Steps*, Aizawa’s *Deposition for shakuhachi and Western instruments* (clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion) combines two musical systems with delicate colors that are carefully placed so that their overtone spectra merge. The title (meaning “evaporation”) serves as a metaphor for this method of fusion.

In his essay (*Syncretism in Cross-Cultural Ensembles*), Aizawa looks at the problems and their possible solutions in writing for *hogaku* and Western instrument ensembles, including notation, and specific influences on his music.

## Notes

1. from Composer Panel Discussion, Music of Japan Today 2007, March 31.
2. from program note by Hiroyuki Itoh on CD *Swaying time, Trembling time*, MSCD-0019, MusicScape, Tokyo, Japan, 2006.
3. from program note by Hiroyuki Yamamoto (March 31, 2007)
4. from program note by Shiroto Aizawa (March 31, 2007)

## CHAPTER ONE

### SWAYING SENSATION AND FRAGILE BEAUTY<sup>1</sup>

#### HIROYUKI ITOH

Last year, my portrait CD was released by the Japanese label MusicScape. This CD includes six pieces (two solos, two chamber pieces, and two orchestral works) that I composed between 1995 and 2004. The CD is subtitled *Swaying time, Trembling time*, which describes one of the major characteristics of my music. This essay will attempt to introduce my music and the aesthetics that underlie my work.

The piece I am going to discuss first is *Mirror I* for twelve players (flute, oboe, clarinet, mandolin, guitar, harp, piano, percussion, violin, viola, violoncello, and double bass). I wrote this piece in 1997. The performers on the CD are the Nieuw Ensemble conducted by Ed Spanjaard (a live recording from a concert in Amsterdam in 1998). The total duration of the piece is about twelve minutes.

In *Mirror I*, I established my musical language in which a “swaying sensation” and “fragile beauty” play important roles. (These two notions have been dominant in all of my pieces for the past ten years. This does not mean that I have composed the same piece again and again, but that these ideas can be found to varying degrees in each of my works.)

Swaying, trembling, wavering, shimmering, or flickering images of trees, water, fire, lights, shadows, and so on, inspire me as I begin a new composition. These images trigger concrete sonic images and let my music breathe. They also compel me to gaze deeply into our existence and listen to our inner voices.

In actual pieces, such materials as repeated notes, trills, and tremolos, that change their speeds constantly, are quite frequently used to realize the images mentioned above. The successions of the repeated notes, trills, and tremolos constitute lines. These lines—having their own internal speeds—are superimposed one on another, intertwine, and create the sensation of a more complex and multi-layered time flow (Figure 1-1, p.10-11). For this reason, rather complex rhythms are meticulously notated in the score.