

**Japan in British Music after Britten's *Curlew River*:  
Goehr, Denyer, Marsh, and LeFanu**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines post-1945 British musical representations of Japan, focusing on four composers: Alexander Goehr, Frank Denyer, Roger Marsh, and Nicola LeFanu. Using Benjamin Britten's *Curlew River* as a starting point, it traces the transformation of British composer's engagement with things Japanese from the latter half of the twentieth century into the twenty-first. Through detailed case studies, it illuminates the processes underlying cross-cultural composition, from initial inspiration to final realisation.

This investigation has two key focuses: 1) *why, how, and under what circumstances* these composers adopted cross-cultural practices; and 2) how shifting historical conditions and access to things Japanese have shaped their artistic approaches. Insights from interviews corroborate the complexities of cross-cultural composition and underscore the importance of personal experiences and contexts in these creative processes. Over four thematic chapters, the thesis provides contextualised readings of cross-cultural musical creation that go beyond notions of musical exoticism, Orientalism, and the musical Other, proposing alternative interpretations grounded in cross-cultural interconnectedness and interaction. These perspectives align with recent scholarship offering more culturally specific readings of creative representations within a global context.

The composers' deeply researched, collaborative approaches reflect not only changing artistic priorities but also broader transformations in global cultural exchange. By considering history as a series of events constructing cultural and social meaning, and recognising the significance of cross-cultural contacts between individuals, this study elucidates the evolving, multi-layered, and intricate relations around which such cross-cultural musical practices occur.

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## Notes

Japanese names are written according to English-Japanese practice, with given names first and family names second (e.g. Tōru Takemitsu). Japanese words are romanised using the Hepburn system and italicized (e.g. *shakuhachi*), except for words common in English (e.g. Kyoto). Japanese words take the same form both in singular and plural; thus *shakuhachi* can be one or more instruments.

Composers and historical figures are introduced with their full names and birth and death years upon their first appearance in the thesis. In subsequent appearances, only family names are given.

All quotations without individual reference are derived from the interviews I conducted with composers. A substantial amount of information, particularly about each composer's experience with things Japanese and its relationship to their compositions, comes from these interviews.

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## Introduction

W.S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900) wrote *The Mikado* in 1885 when Japan was, for most Britons, merely an imagined island represented by exhibited objects; Gustav Holst (1874–1934) composed *Japanese Suite* in 1915 at the request of a Japanese dancer, Michio Ito (1892–1961), then in London, while Japan and the UK fought as allies in the First World War; and Benjamin Britten (1913–76) wrote *Curlew River* (1964), inspired by his trip to Japan soon after diplomatic relations between the two nations were re-established after the Second World War. This list demonstrates an important point for this thesis: the way composers experience another culture varies greatly depending on the historical, political, and cultural moment in which they find themselves.

Among a large number of Western composers who have incorporated *things Japanese* into their works since the late nineteenth century, the compositions given above are likely the most recognised British musical representations of Japan.<sup>1</sup> While these prominent cases have drawn some scholarly attention, musicological and cross-cultural scholarship has granted little critical focus to Japan-inspired works composed by post-war British composers which, I argue, have great potential to illuminate contemporary cross-cultural dynamics and more relevant cultural issues of today. This thesis aims to address this absence through analysing post-1945 British musical representations of

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I use the term ‘things Japanese’ as a concept encompassing all forms from material objects and cultural forms to people and aesthetics, adopting it from a book titled *Things Japanese: Being Notes on Various Subjects Connected with Japan for the Use of Travellers and Others* by Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935), published in 1890 ([1890] 1905).

the broad array of things Japanese, indicating how shifting historical conditions and composers' access to different aspects of Japan have shaped artistic practices over time.

The study focuses closely on four composers – Alexander Goehr (1932–2024), Frank Denyer (1943–), Nicola LeFanu (1947–), and Roger Marsh (1949–) – who have extensively engaged in cross-cultural composition and enacted vital roles in British musical modernism and beyond. It investigates *why, how, and under what circumstances* such cross-cultural compositional practices have been adopted amongst a particular generation of British composers, setting Britten's *Curlew River*, the first of his three Japan-inspired Church Parables, as a starting point. In methodological terms, the project draws upon two streams of primary source evidence: interviews asking composers about what initially inspired them to represent things Japanese and the aesthetics behind their cross-cultural musical practices, and music analyses examining how their experiences and ideas achieve realisation within and beyond their scores. Structured into four chapters emphasising the *process* of cross-cultural composition, this thesis spotlights: 1) shifts in conditions and practices between Britten and Goehr; 2) Denyer's collaborative approach; 3) Marsh's research-led composition; and 4) LeFanu's opera as a socio-cultural project.

For some time now, cross-cultural composition has been predominantly interpreted through the lens of Orientalism, exoticism, and the notion of the musical Other. Rather than framing them in these narratives, the focus of this thesis is to be grounded in each creative case study. Therefore, this project argues for more nuanced, culturally specific, and contextualised readings of modern and contemporary Western musical representations of another culture, aiming to depict the multiplicity and complexity of such compositional practices. The overarching theory posited here is that such

musical representations constitute composers' individual responses to the historical, social, and political moments in which they live and create, while simultaneously reflecting how they are affected by structurally engineered perceptions of that culture mediated through cultural intermediaries, cultural products, and material objects. By closely examining composers' personal stories and analysing their compositions, as well as contemplating the systemic conditions in which they are situated – specifically, underlying power dynamics and cultural ramifications – this thesis endeavours to elucidate the evolving set of multi-layered and intricate relations around which such cross-cultural musical practices take place.

### **The awakening of musical exoticism studies**

This introductory chapter first situates the theoretical and analytical approach of this research within the wider context of previous scholarship on musical representations of the Other, before delineating the historical backgrounds, and stating the scope, methodology, and structure of this thesis. Adopting non-Western materials into Western musical forms had been a highly favoured practice long before composers turned their attention to Japan. The propensity for exotic representations in music can be traced back to the sixteenth century, when musical exoticism developed concurrently with European colonial expansion and the “Age of Exploration” (Taylor 2007; Locke 2009). Musical exoticism, defined as “the process of evoking and representing a place, people, or social milieu that is *perceived* as profoundly different from the home” in and through music (Locke 2008, 357–58; original emphasis), has been mainly associated with the *alla turca* or Hungarian-Gypsy styles since the eighteenth century. The trend flourished in the late nineteenth century with romantic operas such as

*La Princesse Jaune* [The Yellow Princess] (1872) by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), followed by Gilbert & Sullivan’s *The Mikado*, and *Madama Butterfly* (1903) by Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924), which readily adopted non-Western elements to transport European imaginations to a colourful, remote, and mysterious Orient (Eppstein 2007, 211). The incorporation of exotic musical materials persisted and expanded in the twentieth century as composers including Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), Henry Cowell (1897–1965), and Olivier Messiaen (1908–98) utilised non-Western materials in pursuit of new musical languages.

However, despite the comparatively large number and variety of musical works, there were just under two dozen scholarly works on operatic exoticism published in the 1970s and 1980s (Sheppard 2014, 799), and few publications offered nuanced readings regarding the process and nature of such composition until the late 1980s (Everett and Lau 2004, xvi–xvii). Notably, music encyclopedias did not include entries on ‘exoticism’ and ‘Orientalism’ until the 1990s (Locke 2012, 319). This coincided with a nearly six-fold increase in the number of writings on musical exoticism, Orientalism, and representations of the Other, which continued to expand into the twenty-first century (Sheppard 2014, 799). Major publications first emerged as studies focusing on individual compositions (Said 1987; Locke 1991; McClary 1992; Hunter 1998), then developed into collections of essays with extensive theoretical introductions (Bellman 1998; Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000; Everett and Lau 2004), and broader single-authored surveys (Scott 1998; Sheppard 2001a; Taylor 2007; Locke 2009).

### **Theoretical framework: ideological dichotomy of the field**

Though several causal explanations for the dramatic shift during the 1980s and 1990s have been offered, there is a consensus among scholars that the proliferation owes much to Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* published in 1978. Said defines Orientalism as a system of knowledge about the Orient invented by and for the West, and claims that what is circulated by Orientalist texts is not truth but imaginative acts of representations; the relationship between Occident and Orient is "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said [1978] 2003, 5). Said's legacy is considered as a foundation for the rise and crystallisation of musical exoticism studies (Cohen 2016, 213), as well as being a forerunner of postcolonial studies; though it has also been criticised for reifying binary relationships (Willson 2016), and for augmenting rather than demystifying Orientalism's power by downplaying internal contradiction (Porter 1993). Nevertheless, the emergence of Orientalism brought radical change to musical scholarship, proposed an ideological dichotomy of the field, and raised the matter of the difference between two representative notions, Orientalism and exoticism. In fact, it led to a fundamental questioning of the ideological stance one takes up in conducting research on musical exoticism.

Some scholars regard exoticism as a corollary term of Orientalism: Sindhumathi Revuluri suggests that the terms probably should not be interchangeable but should generate the same fundamental ideas of representation, power, and invention (2016, 205). She emphasises that Orientalism is not simply an objective study to discover something in existence but *an active practice*, and that exoticism should be reevaluated in line with the Saidian discourse (ibid., 206; my emphasis). Those who roughly share this thought use the critical terms, *borrowing* and *appropriation*, based on

convictions that the non-West has been victimised, and aim to unmask imperialistic and Orientalistic aspects of exotic musical representation. This is well exemplified by publications such as *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Born and Hesmondhalgh, 2000), whose political stance is self-explanatory from the title,<sup>2</sup> and Timothy Taylor's *Beyond Exoticism*, which opens with a strong statement: "this is a book about power, about systems of domination and oppression, and about who has had the power of representation of Others in music" (2007, 1).

These scholars – occasionally categorised as "cultural theorists" (Banfield 2001, 57) – criticise those who discuss musical exoticism as cross-cultural styles and who treat composers' acts of borrowing as open-minded, empathic, and neutral gestures (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000, 8). Matthew Head, for example, condemns the overall attitude of the multi-authored *The Exotic in Western Music* (Bellman 1998) for its unscholarly resistance to postcolonial theory, its tone of defensiveness with treating music as some realm free of culture and ideology, and its folding of Orientalism back into conventional frameworks of musicology (Head 2003, 218). He also criticises Mervyn Cooke's *Britten and the Far East* (1998) for rendering Orientalism innocent by asserting that Orientalism arises from *influences* on a composer; moreover, he deplores Richard Taruskin's subtle rhetorical way of writing to invoke an imperial subtext by intentionally passing it over (Head 2003, 218–20; Taruskin 1998; my emphasis). Head insists that these attitudes merely maximise

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<sup>2</sup> The idea for the book originated in a conference, "The Debt to Other Musics", at which Gerry Farrell suggests that some sort of intellectual or cultural debt-payment scheme is in operation in musical exoticism with confessional appeal to culpability (2001, 680). Stephen Banfield's argument about Western scholars' guilt in the review of the book is also provocative: "the victims never hear the apology (only other victors do), indeed most of the time probably have no idea that they are victims" (2001, 55).

Orientalism's ideological force, and that there is no scholarly escape from postcolonial theory (ibid., 216–18), against which W. Anthony Sheppard argues that numerous scholars have followed Said's lead in assuming that exoticism has repeatedly offered justification for political imperialism, racist policies, and other ill-founded public perceptions, without making extensive endeavours to establish causal relations (2014, 797).

On the other hand, some scholars take a stance that Orientalism, along with primitivism, should fall into a category subordinate to exoticism, adding that it is often employed as an equivalent term that clearly points to the political implications of exoticism (Sheppard 2014, 797).<sup>3</sup> Ralph P. Locke asserts that Orientalism is understood as the ideologically supported system in exoticism, indicating “a much more ‘real-world’ phenomenon”, while questioning the benefits of the heavily politicised use of the term (2009, 3–4). Scholars who adhere to this view essentially argue that political aspects are not the whole but form a part of musical exoticism, and that the ideological critique depreciates the aesthetic value of musical exoticism in favour of political correctness (Revuluri 2011, 254). Jonathan Bellman states that the adoption of a postcolonial perspective renders musical exoticism vulnerable to being judged as artistically less valuable and even culturally objectionable (1998, xiii).

Sheppard and Locke offer more nuanced readings in recent publications. In his *Extreme Exoticism: Japan in the American Musical Imagination*, Sheppard states that:

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<sup>3</sup> Primitivism is one of the key concepts that correlates with Orientalism. This thesis does not discuss primitivism directly because of its complexity and relevance, though there are some issues raised in the later chapters that can be approached through the lens of primitivism (for example, Britten's views of Japanese people in Chapter 1, or the notion of *nature* associated with *shakuhachi* in Chapter 2).

Rather than attempting to debunk such terms as [...] “appropriation” and “influence”—indeed, I continue to rely on these terminological crutches—I argue that none of these categories has proven mutually exclusive in practice, and that these and other false binaries have warped the way we think about and hear twentieth- and twenty-first-century musics, even deafening us to otherwise audible similarities across time and across aesthetic and cultural boundaries. (2019, 6)

Sheppard also claims that the entire construct Said offered is threatened when “the timeless exotic” moves out of the eternal past to take its place in the unfolding present, and suspects that Orientalism distracts us from the fact that exoticism is a global phenomenon that has been present throughout history (2013, 606–7). His “Global Exoticism and Modernity” (2013) provides alternative interpretations of musical exoticism with cross-cultural interpenetration, interconnectedness, and interaction, which are often associated with the notion of globalisation. Globalisation in musical studies primarily indicates the system whereby the West dominates non-Western cultures, which results in homogeneity (Wallis and Malm 1984; Taylor 2007). However, it also can designate “the intricate web of relations” resulting from diversity (Slobin 1993), for cultural influences and movements. Locke similarly encourages scholars to interpret recent musical exoticisation of the Other in the context of musico-cultural negotiations (2012, 328).

Rather than arguing the utility of Orientalism, I suggest revisiting prevailing forms of exoticism and Orientalism and consider to what extent these ‘-isms’ are applicable and what other readings might be offered to understand the past and present. Indeed, it is quite ironic that Said’s *Orientalism*, in which he clearly stated that all work was conditioned by its political time, still retains a certain credibility almost five decades since publication (Revuluri 2016, 208). We cannot read the music after the 1950s in the same manner as interpreting nineteenth-century operas, for which

Saidian Orientalism is well suited, when world politics, the means of cross-cultural encounters, and the nature of such compositions have changed. Before exploring cross-cultural music studies of recent times, the next section delineates relevant analytical approaches.

### **Evolving analytical approaches**

Analytical approaches are another key issue for musical exoticism studies. Bellman defines musical exoticism as “the borrowing or use of musical materials that evoke distant locales”, and “a matter of compositional craft, of making the notes do something different” (1998, ix). This definition, focusing on “musical materials” and “compositional craft”, comes from the long-prevalent formalistic analytical approach that reads exotic works exclusively with deliberate stylistic *codes* employed in the service of exotic representation *inside* the notes (Sheppard 2014; my emphasis). Locke calls this approach the “‘Exotic Style Only’ Paradigm”, and provides “the Essential Exotic Composers’ Toolkit”, a table of fifteen types of stylistic features, such as specific modes, harmonies, rhythmic or melodic patterns, and instrumental techniques, that carry exotic connotations (2009, 49–55). This kind of “relatively comprehensive typology” (ibid., 49), which is also attempted by Carl Dahlhaus ([1980] 1989, 306) and Bellman (1993, 93–134), is highly controversial, its usefulness notwithstanding, because this precisely falls into Orientalist discourse: the fondness for naming, classifying, and studying the Other, and the essentialising treatment of identifiable Orientalist musical figures, despite their blurred categories and boundaries in reality (Head 2003, 223–24). Such encyclopaedic enumeration relies on the idea that the Orient is singular, homogeneous, and timeless. These issues are indeed well exemplified by Derek B. Scott’s analytical study in which he suggests

that all we need to have is knowledge of Orientalist signifiers, rather than knowledge of Eastern musical practices, and demonstrates the interchangeability of these musical signifiers as commonplace (1998).

This approach to identifying exotic signifiers also calls into question the authenticity of the relationship between exotic representation and *actual* models, which Sheppard calls a “cross-cultural comparative approach” (2014). Aforementioned studies of individual works published in the 1990s mostly fall into this category, including some studies adhering to authenticity and accuracy: Michele Girardi calculates forty-five percent of the music in Act One of *Madama Butterfly* is comprised of direct borrowings of Japanese-sounding elements (2000: 211–17). Sheppard lends a certain validity for such careful revealing of the relationship between exotic cultures and specific acts of exotic representation, while acknowledging the danger of tracing individual melodies back to exotic sources and adjudicating whether a work is *authentic* or *corrupted* (2014, 803; my emphasis). Dahlhaus criticises this comparative approach by stating: “musical exoticism is a question of function, not of substance”, and claims that it is wrong to judge exoticism by the criteria of descriptive anthropology; what matters is not the original context, but the artificial context, as that functions as a legitimate departure from the norms of European music ([1980] 1989, 302). Moreover, the comparative analytical method is similarly reductive, as it is founded on the assumption that there is some single authentic, actual, and original model or context.

There are two main problems that limit these quasi-semiotic analytical approaches. The first is “the conventionality (or inventedness) of exotic styles” (Locke 2008, 336). Most composers acquire specific cultural knowledge through previous works of music, literature, or art, which are

primarily fictive, and even composers who encounter a culture do not just depict what they observe but invent what they need (Locke 2012, 434). Composers select exotic materials for use and write a work according to their own aesthetic goals and ideological stances to make the exotic representation coherently work in their music (Locke 2007, 492; Everett and Lau 2004, xv). As Mary Hunter aptly puts it, exotic works should be considered not as an imitation of an original but “as a translation of a perception”, and what scholars need to question is “the underlying principles of translation and the nature of the perception on which the translation is based” (1998, 48–52). Revuluri also argues that turning to records like ethnographies and questioning authenticity do not solve the issues of power Said calls out (2016, 208). Indeed, what matters is not imagination or invention themselves but the foundation upon which they are practiced.

The second problem is that musical exoticism does not necessarily *sound* exotic. Focusing only on musical signifiers *in* music systematically excludes many facets of musical exoticism (Locke 2008, 337; my emphasis). This would lead to a question of whether music is a representational or non-representational medium. Stravinsky believes in the autonomy of musical language, and states that “music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all” (Stravinsky [1936] 1990, 53–4). Locke follows this and argues for music’s inaptness to represent specific entities, while offering two exceptional means: 1) the music echoes certain musical aspects of the represented music; 2) the music allies itself with words, visual images, stage action, and other extra-musical features (2008, 334–48). In this way, music that is inherently incapable of directing one’s gaze to specific phenomena can evoke a culture when the reference is identifiable by listeners, though these associations vary from individual to individual and are mediated by other media (ibid., 345–50).

To transcend the limitations of text-based approaches, Locke offers the “‘All the Music in Full Context’ Paradigm” which allows the freedom to consider any components within and exterior to the music and embrace all parts of the process, from production to reception and dissemination (2007). Moreover, Sheppard’s *Revealing Masks* (2001a) presents an alternative framework exploring modernist music theatres inspired by exotic models – Japanese *noh*, medieval Christian drama, and ancient Greek theatre – under the conceptual notion of masks. However, work-based approaches in general are denounced by the aforementioned ‘cultural theorists’ for their undervaluing of political dimensions, social conditions, and cultural shifts (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000; Head 2003; Taylor 2007). Even though mere textual analyses are no longer the dominant voices and while contextual interpretations have been much developed, it is true that some scholars are reluctant to employ political discussions over musical exoticism (Budden 1989; Locke 2009; Della Seta 2013), when compared to the fields of feminist musicology, ethnomusicology, and popular music studies.

### **The stance of this thesis: cross-cultural music studies for the present**

Having explored issues raised in previous literatures, this section contemplates the potential readings of modern and contemporary exotic representations. The cross-cultural comparative approach is rightly criticised for its emphasis on influence over representation; however, to analyse post-war compositions written in an age of information and cross-cultural contact, the means and sources of influence cannot be neglected. Composers have had more sustained and direct engagement with the music and various aspects of other cultures and have avoided the use of stereotypical representations of the Other (Sheppard 2014, 802). Hence, discussing composers’ cross-cultural motivations and

influences is inevitable, and this is the key element of my thesis. In this regard, there are several studies that elucidate composers' cross-cultural motivations, influences, and encounters in greater detail (Cooke 1998; Wiebe 2003; Sheppard 2008a). Their stances, primarily focusing on an individual composer's involvement with the Other, can be traced back to Said's assertion that no production of knowledge can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as "a human subject" in their own circumstances of actuality ([1978] 2003, 11). These studies treat composers as "social actors in particular times and places" (Taylor 2007, 4), and therefore project a wider perspective of particular and shifting historical moments.

The role of the media and new technologies should also be addressed as matters of substance. In the electronic age, television, films, and all the media's resources have changed the way in which the Orient is viewed (Said [1978] 2003, 26). The change was accelerated with the emergence of radio and sound film in the 1920s, with television in the 1940s (Taylor 2007, 211), and later with the Internet in the 1990s. Moreover, the rise of commercial aviation and recording technology has created a particular impact on composers' creative processes, and in fact changed the entire landscape of musical exoticism. Taylor provides an extensive survey of the changing discourse, practice, and mode of musical exoticism, as a result of shifting material conditions, new communication technologies, new regimes of consumerism, and new approaches in advertising and marketing (2007). The marketability of exoticism is not entirely new but certainly augmented in post-war global marketplaces. Locke regards this as a potentially negative side of exoticism since it lends itself to various manipulative and exploitive tactics merely meant to produce something colourful, attention-grabbing, and attractive (2008, 355).

These multifaceted cross-cultural components bring us back to the ideological discussion: whether composers are innocent or guilty of Orientalism when cross-cultural interaction is played out, and whether certain works are to “be celebrated [...] or condemned” (Sheppard 2008a, 529). Sheppard argues that experimentation and abstraction tend to be valued over quotation and imitation, and extended engagement is favoured over brief encounter (ibid., 467). For example, Herbert Lindenberger removes Philip Glass (1937–) from the claim of Orientalism because of his detailed studies with consulting experts (1998, 175), while John Corbett disparages American experimentalists for defining the Orient as a generalised set of potential new musical resources, and condemns their compositions as acts of typical Orientalism that project Western desires and anxieties upon Oriental objects (2000, 168). Corbett criticises Cowell for his “decorative Orientalism”, John Cage (1912–92) for his means of “conceptual Orientalism”, Alan Hovhaness (1911–2000), Colin McPhee (1900–64), and Lou Harrison (1917–2003) for their flattering and cheap imitation, all of which come from their belief in the political blank slate of experimentality (2000, 164–73).

In contrast, Taylor argues that composers such as Cowell might have caused modern Western selfhood to have permitted one to view Others as selves at the same time (2007, 211). Some even proclaim “a modernist and postmodernist emancipation of Orientalist signs” though, as Sheppard asserts, this stance could appear rather utopian (2014, 811). This is not unrelated to postmodernism’s de-centred discourse, which makes historical inequalities and power relations look ostensibly equalised (Head 2003, 228). I share Sheppard’s view that this kind of evaluation is pointless, as there is no single ideal cross-cultural interaction wherein every musical engagement with another culture

is determined by “both personal motivations and broader social factors as well as by current conceptions of compositional prowess” (2008a, 467).

The historical value of musical exoticism has also been revisited in recent studies. Nineteenth-century operatic exoticism, which used to be exoticised as an infiltrator in music history, is now seen as a significant catalyst for stylistic and technical development in modernist instrumental music, opera, and music theatre (Sheppard 2014, 804). In particular, music from the mid-twentieth century onwards cannot be discussed without referring to exotic representations, though such compositional practices were disdained by some modernist composers like Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951).<sup>4</sup> It is further argued that the developmental trajectory of music history is the process of a composer’s Othering and exoticising music from its *normal* practice (Head 2003, 216; my emphasis), hence all composers are somewhat *exoticist* (Locke 2008, 354). Ironically, modern composers’ styles have been deemed alien no matter whether the represented is exotic or not (Sheppard 2014, 802). What has been explored so far demonstrates that musical exoticism is contradictory and multifaceted (Sheppard 2008a, 468), internally conflicted (Head 2003, 220), and ambivalent, and therefore gives rise to multiple, contradictory interpretive possibilities (Revuluri 2011, 259).

In this thesis, I engage with the ideological and analytical discussions mentioned above by incorporating them into the following frameworks. Theoretically, I distance myself from the common scholarly attitudes that blame Western composers for their cross-cultural compositions,

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<sup>4</sup> With a specific reference to Japan, Schoenberg states that “[i]t seems a nightmare to imagine what might have become of music if Japan had succeeded in conquering America, England and finally Germany[:] [...] they would rather destroy our music than comply with its conditions” ([1951] 1975, 162–63).

either in an accusatory or apologetic tone, as well as those that seek to insulate musical exoticism from political criticism. I agree with Sheppard that the analytical concept of “cross-cultural influence” cannot be separated from the political concepts of “Orientalist representation” and “cultural appropriation”, however, I also contend that it is possible to appreciate the cross-cultural compositions of post-war composers without ignoring the contexts that shaped their music and philosophy (2008a, 533). I employ the relatively neutral term ‘cross-cultural’ to encompass various modes of representations and interactions ranging from mere fascination to face-to-face collaboration, involving two or more cultures. While acknowledging the criticism that the term “cloaks the persistence of racial and ethnic violence and hierarchy in a gauzy, celebratory scrim” (Stanyek 2004, 5), it allows for case-based analysis as a starting point to consider the specifics of actual cultural interactions without presuming a power imbalance.

From this theoretical basis, I proceed analytically by placing emphasis on each composer’s cross-cultural motivations and influences as well as compositional strategies to understand why and how these composers represent Japan the way they do. This thesis combines text-based analysis with contextual interpretations, which I regard as process-oriented analysis, employing the holistic approach Locke advocates to study all components lying within and exterior to the piece (2007).<sup>5</sup> In addition, I adopt cross-cultural comparative approach to compare representations and their models, not to examine their authenticity but to understand composers’ individual practices and the nature of

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<sup>5</sup> Following Locke, I use the term ‘process’ in a broader sense to encompass the full aspects of composition from inspiration to production, acknowledging its particular connotation in musicological studies as in process music (including minimalist music) or the idea of ‘music as process’ (often associated with practice-led approaches) (for the latter, see Redhead and Hawes 2016).

representation. The stress is on cross-cultural compositional *process* rather than assessing cross-cultural musical end products.

### **British musical representations of Japan and related studies**

Since the 1950s, Japan has become an increasingly prominent source of musical representation within musical modernism (Wen-Chung 1971; 1974; Eppstein 2007). Major post-war works incorporating things Japanese include: Cowell's *Ongaku* (1957); Messiaen's *Sept haïkai* (1962); Iannis Xenakis (1922–2001)'s *Hibiki Hana Ma* (1970); and Cage's *Ryoanji* (1985), among others. Turning to British composers, several Japan-inspired works predate Britten's *Curlew River*, such as *The Geisha* (1896) by Sidney Jones (1861–1946); *A Tale of Old Japan* (1910–11) by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912); *Japanese Suite* (1915) by Holst; *The Sumida River* (1916) by Clarence Raybould (1886–1972); *Komachi* (1925) and other *noh*-inspired works by William Henry Bell (1873–1946); *Sinfonia da Requiem* (1940) by Britten; and *Four Songs from the Japanese* by Goehr (see Appendix 1 for a non-exhaustive list of Japan-related compositions by British composers).

The number of compositions adopting things Japanese then increased significantly between the 1970s and 1990s amongst British composers such as Goehr, Jonathan Harvey (1939–2012), Denyer, John Tavener (1944–2013), Michael Finnissy (1946–), LeFanu, Geoffrey Poole (1949–), Marsh, Beth Wiseman (1951–2007), and Mike Vaughan (1954–). Moreover, from 2000 onwards, there is a marked tendency that Japan-related compositions have appeared when commissions were made in the global marketplace, exemplified by high-profile pieces like *Symphony No. 3 'Silence'* (2002) by James MacMillan (1959–), and *Silent Cities* (1998) and *Hibiki* (2016) by Mark-Anthony

Turnage (1960–).<sup>6</sup> Other Japan-inspired works in the 2000s and 2010s include those by Harrison Birtwistle (1934–2022), Oliver Knussen (1952–2018), Andrew Toovey (1962–), and Roxanna Panufnik (1968–), alongside continuing output from Goehr, Harvey, Denyer, LeFanu, Poole, Marsh, Wiseman, and Vaughan.

Despite the number of post-war British composers who have adopted things Japanese, such cross-cultural compositions have attracted little scholarly attention. Two major means of organising objects of study could be the cause of this deficiency. One is the scholarly tendency to set a theoretical framework first, and then choose case studies that fit into preformed narratives. This method could well demonstrate the power structure at a certain moment in history by emphasising two binary entities of the West and the Others, but, at the same time, dismiss the equal particularity and cultural specificity of the cultures involved in the exchange. Some cases do not readily fall into these dynamics. Japan, for example, has been a unique Other when it comes to issues of modernisation, colonialism, and imperialism, especially since the late nineteenth century, and these particular aspects are often disregarded when they appear in musicological studies. While there exists a small number of publications on British music and the Other, mainly focusing on British imperialism (Richards 2001; Mabilat 2006; Clayton and Zon 2007), Japan-related compositions do not feature in that literature.

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<sup>6</sup> MacMillan's Symphony No. 3 'Silence' was co-commissioned by the NHK Symphony Orchestra and the BBC for the BBC Philharmonic, premiered at the NHK Hall, Tokyo, by the NHK Symphony Orchestra, and recorded by the BBC Philharmonic. Turnage's *Silent Cities* was a commission by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, and *Hibiki* was commission by the Suntory Hall.

The other factor is the inclination to consider a nation as “a primary conceptual prism” (Cohen 2016, 214). Japan gradually became perceived not as a constituent of the collective Orient but as a specific place with particular cultural connotations. Analytical approaches that associate musical exoticism with cross-cultural and global exchanges were derived from this nation-oriented matrix. However, when it comes to the Anglo-Japanese relationship in music, there is hardly sufficient research on British composers in the relatively cultivated field of British contemporary music, with the exception of some influential research on *Curlew River* (Alexander 1988; Cooke 1998; Wiebe 2013), and brief mention of *noh* influence on Goehr and Birtwistle (Cross 2000; 2017; Sheppard 2001a; Beard 2012; Hall 2015; Rupprecht 2015). In contrast, more extensive research has been carried out on American composers who incorporated things Japanese into their compositions. As Said notes, the relationship between Japan and the US is historically and geographically much closer than that between Japan and Europe ([1978] 2003, 1).

The breadth of knowledge of American-Japanese musical relationships owes much to Sheppard. Both in published and unpublished papers, he has covered subjects such as nineteenth-century Americans and Japan, Cold War *Japonisme*, the musical representation of Japan in Hollywood films, and American musical modernism with a focus on John Adams (1947–), Cowell, Henry Eichheim (1870–1942), Harry Partch (1901–74), Roger Reynolds (1934–), and Stephen Sondheim (1930–2021) (see bibliography). As demonstrated in his *Extreme Exoticism* (2019), the value argument on musical modernism and exoticism Sheppard has developed over the years greatly contributes to the wide-ranging discussion in the scholarship. Not just the interest of Sheppard but that of others in American musical modernism and Japan appeared to grow after the 2000s (Rao

2001; Haskins 2014). There has also been more extensive attention to Japan's presence in the US. In her *America's Japan and Japan's Performing Arts* (2013), Barbara Thornbury explores how Japan and Japanese culture have been constructed, reconstructed, and transformed in response to Japan-related theatrical, music, and dance productions in New York.

Furthermore, Japanese instruments and traditional music have long been of interest in English-language scholarship, with a particular focus in recent decades on their use in modern and contemporary music by both Western and Japanese. Notably, composers writing for the *shakuhachi* (vertical bamboo flute) have been the subject of numerous academic works (see Chapter 2 for details). Composers also have access to a considerable number of analogue and digital resources in English that provide knowledge on Japanese traditional theatre, music, and instruments, some of which are specifically targeted at composers (Iwamoto 1994; Miki 2008; Aoki 2016). Despite this, studies focusing on the post-war British musical representations of things Japanese or Japan's cultural presence in the UK remain largely undeveloped compared to their counterparts.

In the early twentieth century, American composers like Eichheim and Cowell were already composing Japan-inspired works, considering "the whole world of music" as part of their compositional resources in pursuit of new musical languages and a *universal* music (Cowell [1930] 1969, ix). Sheppard argues that "Eichheim attempted to evoke the sound of 'being there' in these pieces", and that their music endeavoured to capture the atmosphere of the original Japanese music and to be perceived as "examples of 'Japanese' music" by their audiences (2008a, 475, 509). He indicates "the educational aspects of such direct cross-cultural translations", given the inaccessibility of musical recordings at that time (*ibid.*, 489). In the UK, these modes of representation arose later

in very different musical landscapes. British composers explored not just Japanese music but also theatre, literature, films, and other art forms, utilising them from both technical and aesthetic perspectives. In this regard, this thesis attempts to explore what it means to evoke Japan in music in a technological age when “the whole world of music” is readily accessible with ubiquitous information.

### **Historical background: British ideas of Japan**

This section outlines shifting British conceptions of Japan, from the late nineteenth century to the post-war period, to establish historical context for the creative case studies that follow. Although Western perceptions of Japan are largely founded on constructed images generated in the West, it should be acknowledged that a real country exists at the source of these perceptions and representations (Napier 2008, 14). Indeed, evolving political and cultural relations between Britain and Japan have largely shaped the formation and fluctuations of British ideas about the country over time.<sup>7</sup> As John W. Dower encapsulates, for Britain, “Japan has at times been ignored altogether; at other times, it has appeared as exotic, feminine, and alluring; on still other occasions, especially those fraught with conflict, it has been witheringly caricatured as a simian threat with barbarous moral standards” (1995, 292). Against this backdrop of radical representational shifts between allure and enmity, this section traces key historical moments, intellectual exchanges, and cultural products, projects, and intermediaries that have variously constructed British images of Japan.

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<sup>7</sup> While abundant scholarship addresses Anglo-Japanese relations as shown in Cortazzi 2016, few writings examine presence of things Japanese in Britain or its representations in British cultural works.

In the late nineteenth century, on the one hand, Japan was treated as “a type of aesthetic paradise” because it was less central to British economic concerns (McLaughlin 2007, sec. 2). The popular 1885 Japanese Village exhibition in Knightsbridge – the same year as the premiere of Gilbert & Sullivan’s *The Mikado* – epitomised the production and consumption of imagined Japan in Victorian Britain.<sup>8</sup> By 1885, Japanese goods and art products had also been widely available, and “many middle-class Victorian homes became filled with Japanese bric-a-brac” (Cortazzi 2009, 5).<sup>9</sup> Susan J. Napier suggests that Western nineteenth-century constructions of Japan constituted “a complex fantasy, a living, breathing *tabula rasa* onto which Westerns projected a variety of desires, fears, dreams, and schemes” (2008, 9). With minimal first-hand cultural contacts, imported objects like Liberty Co.’s textiles spawned fanciful imaginings, and, in this paradigm, relative political stability further encouraged British exoticisation of Japanese culture as an alluring Eastern curiosity.

On the other hand, British cultural exposure to Japan gradually expanded beyond superficial Victorian *Japonisme* from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, laying foundations for ensuing representations. Intellectual exchange predicated on in-person contact began through Japan’s modernisation and Westernisation in the Meiji era (1868–1912), increasing British

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph McLaughlin summarises that “the material culture of orientalism—commodities like tea and swords, authentically organised scientific exhibitions, as well as imported structures and natives—supplies the raw material for art and popular culture” (2007, sec. 7). See also *Japan in Late Victorian London: The Japanese Native Village in Knightsbridge and the Mikado, 1885* (Cortazzi 2009) for details; it also lists international exhibitions Japan was featured since 1862.

<sup>9</sup> One of the major sellers of items from Japan at that time was Liberty and Co. in London. The founder Arthur Lasenby Liberty (1843–1917) opened a warehouse in Regent Street in 1875 with a collection of ornaments, fabric, and objects d’art from Japan and the East. See Cortazzi 2009 for detailed information about presence and dissemination of Japanese goods in the UK.

access to written accounts, visitors, and cultural artefacts.<sup>10</sup> Notably influential were English language publications by Western intellectuals who lived in Japan, primarily as foreign government advisors, seeding creative representations with on-the-ground observation.<sup>11</sup> One of the earliest was A. B. Mitford (1837–1916) who lived in Japan as an attaché from 1866 to 1970 and wrote *Tales of Old Japan* in 1871.

The foreign advisors whose pursuits are most relevant to this thesis are as follows. The British Japanologist Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935) lived in Japan between 1873 and 1911, and published *The Classical Poetry of the Japanese* (1880) and *Things Japanese* ([1890] 1905), the former of which introduces *noh* with translations from some *noh* plays.<sup>12</sup> The American historian Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) lived in Japan for about ten years from 1878, and his interest in *noh* theatre had a great influence on W. B. Yeats (1865–1939), Ezra Pound (1885–1972), and Arthur Waley (1889–1966). Their literature, translations, and cultural activities helped establish enduring notions of Japan among British intellectuals with particular focus on *noh*.<sup>13</sup> Lafcadio Hearn (1850–

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the designer and theorist, Christopher Dresser (1834–1904), who travelled to Japan between 1876 and 1877 to represent the South Kensington Museum, published *Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art-Manufactures* (1882), and became a seminal influence on *Japonisme* in Britain.

<sup>11</sup> The function of the foreign employees of the Meiji period, called *oyatoi gaikoku jin* [hired foreigners], was to assist in the modernisation and Westernisation of Japan. The several thousand teachers/professors, technicians, and advisers were employed in such fields as agriculture, art and music, education, engineering, foreign affairs, law, medicine, military, and natural science (*Encyclopedia of Japan*, s.v. “foreign employees of the Meiji period”).

<sup>12</sup> *Noh* is a Japanese theatrical form developed into its present form during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, combining dance, drama, music and poetry into a highly structured stage art; it is performed by the main character (*shite*), the secondary character (*waki*), several companion characters (*tsure*), a chorus (*jiutai*), and four instrumentalists (*hayashi*) playing a transverse flute (*nōkan*), an hourglass-shaped drum (*kotsuzumi*), a larger hourglass-shaped drum (*ōtsuzumi*), and a barrel-shaped drum (*taiko*) (Emmert 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Pound edited Fenollosa’s manuscripts and published *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* in 1916. Among several translations of *noh* plays, Waley’s *The Nō Plays of Japan* (1921) became a major resource for contemporary and later

1904) lived in Japan from 1890 until his death, and his writings about Japan, such as *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields* (1897), have been widely read and represented in the West. With regard to music, having lived in the country for a few years, the British jurist and writer Francis Taylor Piggott (1852–1925) published *The Music and Musical Instruments of Japan* (1893), covering a wide range of Japanese music/theatre and instruments in great detail. In reverse, Japanese people who were in the UK also made some lasting impact. Michio Ito, a Japanese dancer, who lived in London for a few years from 1914, inspired Holst to write a work for him and Yeats and Pound to reconstruct *noh* plays in the UK in which Britten was involved (Takeishi 2000; Albright 1995).

Several key developments characterise this period's evolution in such British representations of Japan. First, Japan gradually became conceived as a real nation not merely an exotic distant locale, grounded in intellectual exchanges. While such writing still presented mediated perspectives, it proffered more multidimensional portrayals of a nation undergoing rapid transformation in dialogue with the West. Nonetheless, many still reflect “the *Old Japan* of [their] dreams” (Chamberlain [1890] 1905, 6; my emphasis). Chamberlain, in his *Things Japanese*, engaged with the discrepancy between the Western idea of Old Japan – “a delicate little wonder-world of sylphs and fairies” – and the actual nation in the 1890s, stating that “Old Japan is dead and gone, and Young Japan reigns in its stead” (ibid., 4–7). Sheppard describes that Americans lamenting the loss of Old Japan can be seen from Hearn's turn-of-the-century writings to scholars and composers' pronouncements at the 1961 East-West Music Encounter conference in Tokyo (2019, 8–9). Indeed, this nostalgic view of Japan, that

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composers. Waley's translation was also an important influence on Bertold Brecht (1898–1956) (Di Napoli 1981), whose theatrical works provided great inspiration to the formation of British music theatre.

the country has something the West had lost, did not only exist in the nineteenth century but has been a prevailing projection ever since.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, textual artefacts like memoirs, often authored by key individual Western intellectuals, joined material objects in shaping British understandings, somewhat carrying Orientalist weight as individuals and their works gained power to represent the whole culture. Thirdly, American perspectives and creative interpretations often filtered British impressions of Japan, which elucidates a triangular dynamic between the UK, the US, and Japan underlying cross-cultural meaning-making. Thus, while there was still an idolised image of Old Japan, interpersonal exchanges in this period fostered increasingly nuanced British conceptions of Japan developing beyond reductive Orientalist tropes.

The early twentieth century, at the same time, witnessed Japan's rising visibility in Britain across political, economic, and cultural spheres. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902 promoted cooperation through the First World War, and the Japan-British Exhibition at White City in London in 1910 heralded close relations. By the 1920s, however, Japan's growing power provoked British unease, ending the alliance in 1923, and positioning the nation as an emerging economic and political threat (Towle and Kosuge 2007, xvi). Though the purview of cultural exchanges narrowed amidst such pre-war tensions, Japanese culture still seems to have occupied a place in the British cultural mind into the 1930s. For example, Daisetz Suzuki (1870–1966), whose series of *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (1927; 1933; 1934) influenced Waley and Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), travelled to England in 1936, and it stimulated Alan Watts (1915–1973) to later publish a great deal about Zen

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<sup>14</sup> As stated by McLaughlin, early writes such as Mitford “believed that they had discovered a society stuck in the Middle Ages, one which was still imbued with the values of chivalry and honor which Victorian intellectuals [...] felt had been lost in an age of industrial capitalism” (2007, sec. 1).

Buddhism (Westgeest 1997, 52). Traditional forms like *noh* theatre also attracted British emulation and adaptation: the aforementioned attempt to reproduce *noh* plays by Yeats and Pound was organised in 1938. Despite impending conflict, this period reflected a lingering allure, ambivalence, and complexity around British constructions of Japan.

Complicating 1930s British views of Japan was the charged juxtaposition of an aesthetically and spiritually intriguing Japan against politically hostile perceptions. These two views were reduced, not surprisingly, to a single, negative view during the war. Jon Pardoe's study of British writings on contemporary Japan in the interwar years displays the political complexity and the way in which Japan was depicted in newspapers, books, films, reviews, and propaganda (2002). Sheppard also examines how wartime radio and films were used to distribute anti-Japanese propaganda in the US, and argues that "[w]artime Orientalist representation of the Japanese understandably emphasised the repulsive alien qualities rather than the potential exotic enticements of the enemy" (2001b, 303–57). Some British ideas of Japan were certainly derived from such American presentations of Japan.

Given the circumstances, it is striking to note the extent to which Japan reconstructed its image after WWII. Following the restoration of diplomatic ties between Japan and Britain in 1951, technological developments and cultural diplomacy brought many more things Japanese, including theatrical performances, recordings, and films, to the British public. Such cultural products, events, intermediaries, and material objects formed the fertile ground for the development of post-1960s British ideas and representations of Japan. For example, the accessibility to written and audio materials considerably increased in the 1950s and 1960s. Relevant books published in English include: those on Japanese theatre (Bowers 1952), *kabuki* (Scott 1955), *gagaku* (Harich-Schneider

1954), *noh* (Japanese Classical Translation Committee 1955; O'Neill 1958; Keene 1966), and *kyogen* (Kenny 1968).<sup>15</sup> The American musicologist William P. Malm (1928–) also successively published on *noh* (1958; 1960), Japanese music and instruments (1959a), and *nagauta* in *kabuki* (1963). Several LPs were available at that time, such as those of *noh* (1959; 1964), *kabuki* (1966), *koto* (long board zither) (1965; 1966), *shakuhachi* (1969), and folk music (1968), many of which were released by Nonesuch Records. In terms of performances, Azuma Kabuki Dancers and Musicians toured London, Edinburgh, and Dublin in 1955. There was then the first *noh* performance at the Aldwych Theatre in 1967, the first *gagaku* performance by the Japanese Imperial Court Musicians at the Royal Albert Hall in 1970, and the first full *kabuki* performance at Sadler's Wells in 1972.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, there was also a Zen boom, sown during the late 1950s in the US, that later arrived in the UK. Many of these were mentioned by composers I interviewed as parts of the earlier encounters with things Japanese.

Although not precisely indicative of a Japanese presence in the West, the list of composers who travelled to Japan in the 1950s and 1960s for the purposes of cultural diplomacy is crucial for understanding post-war musical exoticism and further musical representations of Japan. Britten and Cowell were among the earliest to visit Japan in the mid-1950s, followed by composers such as Stravinsky, Aaron Copland (1900–1990), Leonard Bernstein (1918–90), Xenakis, Cage, Messiaen,

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<sup>15</sup> *Kabuki* is a popular theatrical form originated in the Edo period (1603–1868), featuring singing and dancing. Its vocal music, *nagauta*, is a type of *shamisen* music accompanied by instruments such as the *shamisen* (plucked lute), *kotsuzumi* (shoulder drum), and *nōkan* (transverse flute). *Gagaku*, Japanese court music established around the eighth century, is performed by an ensemble including the *ryūteki* (transverse bamboo flute), *hichiriki* (small double-reed pipe), *shō* (free-reed mouth organ), *biwa*, *gakusō* (*koto*), *wagon* (six-string zither), and percussion instruments. *Kyogen* is a dialogue-based comic theatre developed alongside *noh* and programmed with *noh* plays.

<sup>16</sup> The information was collected by referring to newspaper articles (see bibliography).

Carl Orff (1895–1982), Aram Khachaturian (1903–78), Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928–2007), Pierre Boulez (1925–2016), and Luciano Berio (1925–2003) (in order of their visits).<sup>17</sup> These sojourns, especially the earlier ones, were treated as diplomatic affairs to reconcile international relationships, and were opportunities for Japan to rectify the negative image of its imperial past. Their visits were mostly to attend a premiere of their works (sometimes as conductors) or to give lectures, but many were also exposed to Japanese traditional theatre, music, and more. While most of their trips were short, some composers stayed in Japan for an extended period. For example, Cowell and Goehr stayed in Japan for two months respectively in 1957 and 1968, and Reynolds lived there from 1966 to 1969.<sup>18</sup> Some learnt traditional music and instruments, and others worked with Japanese composers. No matter what form the visits took, these composers who travelled to Japan around that time had a significant impact on the landscape of Western music in the second half of the twentieth century through their composition, writing, and teaching that reflected their experiences in Japan.

In the post-war years, the Japanese government and cultural organisations succeeded in creating a new image of Japan by promoting a constellation of traditional art forms. Thornbury claims that Japan’s Cultural Properties Protection Law coming into force in 1950 was “a crucial step in the country’s postwar cultural rebuilding” and “a matter of [...] producing a strong cultural

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<sup>17</sup> To detail the nature of some visits: Cowell’s first trip in 1957 was funded by Rockefeller Foundation and the United States State Department, and the 1961 visit was as John. F. Kennedy’s representative at the East-West Music Encounter; Cage was invited by Sogetsu Art Center in 1962; and Messiaen went on a concert tour with the pianist and his wife Yvonne Loriod in 1962. Several musicians, such as Joseph Szigeti, Alfred Cortot, and Isaac Stern, visited Japan immediately after 1951, as well as some chamber ensembles and orchestras. There was also a jazz band that already toured throughout Japan in 1953 (Atkins 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Reynolds received a fellowship of the Institute of Current World Affairs to stay in Japan and wrote reports while in Japan (Reynolds 1967; 1969). He also later published a series of articles on Japanese composers (Reynolds 1992a; 1992b; 1993).

identity for Japan” (2013, 16). Using its own traditions to restore the cultural value of the country internationally, the negative perceptions of wartime Japan had been gradually overshadowed. In this sense, there is a significant discontinuity between pre-war and post-war Japan. On the one hand, this is, in no small part, the result of Japan’s careful and elaborate self-Orientalism. As Koichi Iwabuchi argues, “Japan is presented and represents itself as culturally exclusive, homogeneous, and uniquely particularistic through the operation of a strategic binary opposition between two imaginary cultural entities ‘Japan’ and ‘the West’” (2002, 7). On the other hand, this is a product of Western media reflecting the Western desires of Old Japan. Returning to Said, standardisation and cultural stereotyping of the Orient have been intensified by new media in the twentieth century ([1978] 2003, 26). The image of Japan that is disseminated through media is seen as reality, and it underpins cultural understandings of Japan. By the 1980s, Japan was a major economic power and a hotbed of technological innovation. These diverse elements, linked in the fabricated and mediated ideas of the country, led to images of Japan that were a unique fusion of the traditional, the exotic, and the futuristic.

### **The scope and methodology of this research**

I began my research for this thesis by cataloguing Japan-inspired compositions by British composers. I conducted searches of British composers’ oeuvres to identify works incorporating things Japanese, ranging from implicit to explicit. Some references are evident in titles, music, styles, lyrics, staging, programme notes, or composers’ writings, while others prove more oblique, serving as inspiration or remaining immanent in the creative process. Cross-cultural references sometimes go

unacknowledged by composers, especially when adopting non-Western materials (owing partially to the aforementioned political discussion and value judgement), or only coming to light retrospectively. In some cases, titles suggesting things Japanese may not indicate any Japan-related elements in the music or the creative process. After compiling a preliminary list of British musical representations of Japan, making no claim to exhaustivity, I delimited its scope by composer generation and engagement types.

With regards to composer generation, my catalogue revealed a concentration of Japan-related works created between the 1970s and 1990s by British composers born during the 1940s and 1950s. Focusing on this cohort, especially those born in the 1940s, holds significance for several reasons. Emerging amidst post-war musical exoticism cultivated by modernist predecessors, these composers came of age as the UK's accessibility to Japanese cultural forms blossomed through performances, publications, recordings, and interpersonal exchanges facilitated by academic and cultural institutions. They had witnessed cross-cultural events such as the aforementioned *noh* and *kabuki* performances and had access to newly published books and recordings in addition to pre-war materials in the 1950s and 1960s, and then continued cross-cultural practices while experiencing technological shifts that enabled new modes of access in the 1980s and 1990s. Unlike prior generations, their ongoing careers fully span both analogue and digital paradigms. Moreover, many of them remain active as composers and are aware of current socio-cultural climates surrounding cross-cultural activities, reflecting on discourses such as political correctness and cultural appropriation, which differ radically from when they started composing in the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, this generation of composers is uniquely positioned to demonstrate the drastic changes in

historical conditions, available materials, and compositional approaches, underlying Western musical representations of Japan from post-war optimism through contemporary globalisation. Their evolving creative approaches may shed light on shifting East-West dynamics since the 1950s while articulating the intricacies of cross-cultural understanding and expression today.

Regarding the nature of engagement, this study spotlights composers with multiple Japan-related works created over sustained periods, prioritising those demonstrating substantive active pursuit of Japanese cultural elements. This aligns with the aim of elucidating entire compositional processes from initial inspiration through eventual musical realisation. I approach these case studies from a perspective of *research* – systematic investigation generating new knowledge through careful study – conducted by the composers, construing cross-cultural composition as research-led creative practice (which is a focus in Chapter 3). Typically initiated by composers' curiosities sparked through experience, such practice involves thoroughly examining the historical and technical facets of chosen materials on both scholarly and artistic levels, then integrating this learning into their own musical language and aesthetic vision. I hypothesise that such practices, seriously engaging foreign cultures, not only provide composers with new perspectives on creative processes, but also broaden their, and others', knowledge of music and culture and further bring additional dimensions to cultural exchanges. Based on these foundations, I selected four composers – Goehr, Denyer, Marsh, and LeFanu – as case studies, setting Britten as a starting point and Goehr as a bridge between Britten and three composers who were born in the 1940s.

Methodologically, this thesis takes an analytical approach to investigating selected composers and their cross-cultural works. Composer interviews, which elucidate the specific aspects

of Japanese culture sparking their interest and motivating musical representations, shape each chapter's content. All interviews occurred face-to-face, sometimes followed by email exchange for clarification. In addition to the four composers in focus, Poole, Vaughan, and the *koto* player Melissa Holding provided valuable insights through extensive interviews. Questions were tailored to each composer based on their biography, compositions, and writings. Moreover, this thesis preserves elements of oral history, retaining autobiographical voices and narratives.<sup>19</sup> The music analyses adopt a process-oriented approach, taking Locke's imperative to study all components lying within and exterior to the work (2007). Thus, the study embraces the full spectrum of processes from inspiration, research, creation, to production in assessing what these instances of cross-cultural creative practices reveal about evolving intercultural dynamics since the mid twentieth century.

### **The structure of the thesis**

The thesis is structured into four main chapters, each primarily focusing on a single composer: Goehr, Denyer, Marsh, and LeFanu, respectively. The first chapter compares Goehr to Britten, while the fourth chapter analyses an opera as project. Both the second and fourth chapters discuss the role of collaborator(s) integral to the cross-cultural music process. Although each chapter's themes stand independently, they often intersect and apply to other chapters. For instance, the third chapter's theme of 'research-led composition' is a practice which, I argue, was adopted by all the composers

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<sup>19</sup> Although oral history does not generally include one's own life story and is often motivated by creating an archive (Thomson 2020), the interviews I conducted provide first-person accounts from participants or witnesses of past events, aiding historical reconstruction. In this sense, they can be considered partially oral history.

discussed in this thesis. With the exception of the first chapter, each includes a section on the composer's background, contextualising their work within the broader landscape of music history.

The first chapter delves into the journeys of Britten and Goehr as they explored things Japanese, from their initial encounters to their visits to Japan and the creation of their *noh*-inspired operas, *Curlew River* and *Kantan and Damask Drum* (1997–98). It investigates their pre-existing knowledge and perceptions of Japan, the motivation and logistics behind their trips, their experiences in the country, and how these experiences and ideas were incorporated into their compositions. The chapter serves the following key purposes. First, it lays the groundwork for subsequent chapters by regarding Britten's exploration of Japan as the origin of musical representations of Japan by British modernist composers. Secondly, it portrays the landscape of cross-cultural exchange and the shifting socio-political circumstances from the 1930s onwards by detailing Goehr's engagement with Japan and contrasting it with Britten's. Lastly, it introduces overarching themes that recur throughout the thesis, such as music theatre and *noh*, collaborations in cross-cultural practices, and the typical stylistic features used to represent things Japanese in music.

The second chapter focuses on Denyer's exploration of Japanese music and collaboration with Japanese *shakuhachi* player Yoshikazu Iwamoto, probing the collaborative aspects of cross-cultural composition and the material culture of musical representations of Japan. This chapter raises several key questions: 1) how the historical and cultural associations of a composer, performer, and instrument influence such collaborations; 2) to what extent it is possible to detach musical instruments from their originating culture(s) or traditional context(s); and 3) what it takes to create something *anew* in this context. By illuminating Denyer and Iwamoto's collaborative process, this

chapter aims to demonstrate the interweaving of history, tradition, and culture that connects a composer, performer, and instrument in such cross-cultural interactions. Furthermore, it addresses the multiplicity of individual cultures and the complex nature of cross-cultural interactions in what Denyer refers to as “an age of migration” (2016).

The third chapter explores why and how Marsh and his Japan-inspired works embody the concept of research-led composition, and how his stance on cross-cultural composition and the nature of cross-cultural representations have evolved over five decades through extensive engagement with things Japanese. It investigates Marsh’s career, aesthetics, and compositional practice, considering research not only as systematic enquiry into a subject but also, in a broader, more pragmatic sense, as a framework that entails institutional, educational, and ethical aspects. The music analyses focus on Marsh’s *noh*-inspired *Samson* (1983/1992), *gagaku*-inspired *Kagura* (1991), and film-inspired *Black Hair* (1992/1995), while also touching on other Japan-related works that incorporate elements from *kabuki*, *shakuhachi* and *biwa* (short-necked lute) music, *sankyoku*, *taiko* drumming, and Japanese stories. Through this comprehensive examination, the chapter seeks to shed light on the transformative nature of Marsh’s cross-cultural compositional approach and the depth of his engagement with Japanese cultural elements.

The fourth chapter shifts focus from individual composers to LeFanu’s multi-media chamber opera, *Tokaido Road: A Journey After Hiroshige* (2014), written for Okeanos, a UK-based ensemble that combines Western and Japanese instruments. Examining *Tokaido Road* not only as a work of art but also as a socio-cultural project, this chapter traces the opera’s journey from planning and collaborative creative process to fundraising and final outcome. It also explores the process, through

which a series of *ukiyo-e* (Japanese woodblock prints) by Hiroshige Utagawa (1797–1858) inspired the book of poems by the opera’s librettist, Nancy Gaffield, and how these poems were then adapted into the opera by Gaffield and LeFanu. The chapter delves into LeFanu’s background and engagement with the ensemble’s Japanese instruments, specifically the *koto* and *shō*, while analysing the opera’s music and direction from musical, visual, dramatic, historical, and cultural perspectives. The central questions posed in this chapter are: *if, how, and in what context* the opera achieves “a place between [...] the West and East” (Romano 2016, 42), and what it means in the twenty-first century for a British opera to depict Japan. The chapter also aims to demonstrate the complexities and significance of cross-cultural artistic collaborations in contemporary society.

Since the birth of Orientalism as a theoretical concept, individual studies of musical exoticism, differing in their theoretical, ideological, and methodological approaches, have demonstrated that the act of cross-cultural composition never was a unidirectional process, thereby enriching and enlarging the intellectual landscape. The composer interviews, designed to see Japan through their unique perspectives, reveal highly divergent historical and material conditions, while the musical analyses showcase a rich diversity of modes and means of cross-cultural composition. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, understanding the dynamics of cross-cultural exchange and representation in music becomes more vital. This thesis endeavours to contribute to an ongoing dialogue, seeking to shed new light on the forces that shape musical representations of another culture.

## Chapter 1

### Departure from Britten:

#### Goehr and His *Noh*-Inspired *Kantan and Damask Drum*

Over the course of the tumultuous twentieth century, British cultural conceptions of Japan underwent several seismic shifts, perhaps most dramatically around the Second World War. Two composers who navigated these fluctuating landscapes are Benjamin Britten (1913–76) and Alexander Goehr (1932–2024). Britten visited Japan in 1956 prior to composing his acclaimed *noh*-inspired opera *Curlew River* in 1964, while Goehr made his own trip in 1968 before crafting the *noh*-inspired opera *Kantan and Damask Drum* between 1997 and 1998.

Aiming to contextualise the case studies in the following chapters, this opening chapter compares these two British composers' distinctive interactions with things Japanese, from early interests and overseas visits to eventual operatic realisations, highlighting similarities and differences. As an esteemed elder statesman holding immense influence over the next compositional generation, Britten's incorporation of Japanese elements resounded widely and had a major impact on the musical landscape. Every interviewed composer for this study referenced Britten and *Curlew River*, and I regard the work as a significant starting point for subsequent British musical representations of Japan. Goehr, another leading composer, is part of the generation between Britten and the other focal composers in this study – Denyer, Marsh, and LeFanu. Although his *noh*-inspired opera was composed in the 1990s, Goehr's artistic engagement with things Japanese stretches back to formative encounters in the 1950s, evolving continuously over successive decades. The way in

which Goehr has immersed himself in things Japanese signifies how cross-cultural compositional attitudes and practices depart from Britten.

This chapter is divided into three sections and differs in structure and perspective from the subsequent two chapters, which focus on individual composers, due to the extensive literature available on Britten and Goehr. The first section explores those aspects of Japanese culture to which Britten and Goehr had access before their departures for Japan. This part includes political and cultural backgrounds which show how Japan was represented in the UK in a broader context, raising questions about British views of Japan, constructed upon cultural artefacts whose mediums radically changed over the twentieth century. The second section investigates the composers' direct encounters with Japan to illuminate the discrepancy between Japan as an aesthetic object and Japan as a modern nation. Information for the first two sections is largely derived from personal accounts found in Britten's letters, and an interview I conducted with Goehr (2015a).<sup>1</sup> The third section analyses how things Japanese – *noh* and *gagaku* in particular – are represented in the two aforementioned *noh*-inspired operas. Composers studied in the following chapters are also brought into the discussion after each section.

Much space in this chapter is dedicated to Goehr, with a detailed account of his relation to Japan which has hitherto received little scholarly attention, compared to Britten, whose engagement

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<sup>1</sup> Britten's letters with detailed annotations are published in *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters and Diaries of Benjamin Britten 1913–1976*, which consists of six volumes (Mitchell, Reed, and Cooke, 1991–2012). Throughout this chapter, letters and annotations in these volumes are quoted as *Letters* followed by a volume number and page number. For full publication details of each volume, see bibliography. The interview with Goehr was held on 16 July 2015 in Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge, for my master's dissertation (Hayashi 2015). All quotations without individual references hereafter are derived from the interview. Much of the information, particularly about his experience in Japan and its relationship with *Kantan and Damask Drum*, are from the interview.

with Japan and *Curlew River* has been investigated in several scholarly works (Malm 1986; Alexander 1988; Cooke 1988; 1998; Rupprecht 2001; Sheppard 2001; Wiebe 2013).<sup>2</sup> I believe that contrasting Britten's and Goehr's stories reveals how the nature of cross-cultural exchanges has been transformed after the Second World War, forming the backdrop for the music scene of the following generations, including the composers studied in the thesis.

### **Britten's and Goehr's encounters with things Japanese**

Britten and Goehr came across Japanese culture at relatively early stages of their lives. Cooke suggests that Britten's incipient interest in *noh* can be traced back to the 1930s, when the composer became interested in non-Western music (1998, 24). He continues, "Britten became involved in a rather eccentric attempt to reconstruct the atmosphere of a Japanese [*noh*] play" organised by Ronald Duncan (1914–82) and Pound in 1938 (ibid.).<sup>3</sup> According to Donald Mitchell, this encounter was marginal, and there was no evidence that Britten attended the event where Pound recited one of his own *noh* translations accompanied by a musician (whom Britten had introduced to Pound) and with a dancer (*Letters* 1, 588–89). From this initial encounter, it took until the 1950s, fifteen years later, for Britten to rekindle his interest in Japanese culture. This gap is understandable considering the political situation during the period of the Second World War, however, Britten did accept a commission from the Japanese government to write a piece for the 2,600th Anniversary Celebration

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<sup>2</sup> The most exhaustive account on *Curlew River* would be the chapter "From Nō to Church Parable: The Evolution of *Curlew River* 1956–64" in Cooke 1998, 130–89.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald Duncan is a librettist of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946).

of the Japanese Empire as a British representative, and composed *Sinfonia da Requiem* in 1940.<sup>4</sup> In 1953, Britten obtained a copy of Pound's translations of fifteen *noh* plays ([1916] 1953), which were based on the fragmentary notes of Fenollosa. William Plomer (1903–73), the librettist of the Church Parables who lived in Japan for nearly three years in the late 1920s, also helped to foster Britten's interest in Japanese theatre (*Letters* 3, 672). When Plomer heard that Britten was going to Japan, he strongly recommended the composer to “make the most of the opportunity to immerse himself in the Japanese dramatic arts” (Cooke 1998, 116).

For Goehr, Japanese culture was more of a preoccupation from his formative years. He recounts that his first active contact with Japan was “by chance” through the post-revolutionary Soviet theatre and films of Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948) from the early 1920s.<sup>5</sup> Just like Britten, Goehr then developed his interest in the *noh* translations of Fenollosa and Pound. It is unclear when Goehr first encountered these, but it seems that his youthful interest in non-Western culture, particularly Japanese culture, was developed considerably during his time at the Royal Manchester College of Music between 1952 and 1955, where he met Richard Hall (1903–82) and Peter Maxwell Davies (1934–2016), both of whom were attracted to Indian music. Goehr also mentioned the Henry Watson Music Library in Manchester as a rich source of information on non-Western music. He subsequently became interested in Japanese literature through Hearn's *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields*

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<sup>4</sup> For the detailed history regarding the commission, see *Letters* 2, 703–6; Carpenter 1992, 143–45. Other composers who were commissioned were: Richard Strauss (1864–1949), Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968), Jacques Ibert (1890–1962), and Sándor Veress (1907–92). Sheppard maintains that it is notable that “Britten's first contact with Japan involved such a public clash between his Christianity and Japanese sensibilities” (2001, 293). Britten conducted the Japanese premiere of this work in 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Steve Odin explains that studying Japanese aesthetics, especially *kabuki* and *haiku*, was one of three major sources for Eisenstein's cinematographic principle of montage (1989, 70).

(1897), and composed his first Japan-related work, *Four Songs from the Japanese* (1959), with texts freely adapted from the book. Goehr stated that he was still interested in Japanese literature and theatre at the time of our interview in 2015 and talked about the film *Ugetsu monogatari* [Tale of *ugetsu*] (Mizoguchi 1953) as enduringly memorable.

An explicit reference to Japan did not appear again for some time in his oeuvre after *Four Songs*, however, his interest in Japanese theatre was manifested in the Music Theatre Ensemble that he launched in 1967. Goehr did not want music theatre to be “a small opera but something else” (Goehr 2015a), and his ambition was to achieve “a form where vocal performance, instrumental expression and circus-derived virtuosity for its own sake existed in contrapuntal balance” (Goehr 2015b, x). The subject matter of his *Music Theatre Triptych* composed for the ensemble was remote from anything Japanese, but Goehr acknowledges that its presentation through actions performed by masked mimes and the use of a narrator were inspired by Japanese theatre.<sup>6</sup> In fact, he went to Japan to study *noh* the year after the launch of the ensemble, and decided to incorporate “what he thought was Japanese at that time” into his direction of the theatre to “solve the problem of music theatre”. It should be noted that a mime actor with whom Goehr worked at the theatre had lived in Japan and was in Japan at the same time as the composer.

Regarding their pre-visit interests in Japan, certain similarities between Britten and Goehr, as well as differences, can be drawn here. One of the similarities is that both were attracted to forms

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<sup>6</sup> *Music Theatre Triptych* consists of *Noboth's Vineyard* (1968), a dramatic madrigal which is redolent of Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)'s *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624) with texts adapted from 1 Kings 21 from the Old Testament; *Shadowplay* (1970) with a text from book VII of Plato's *Republic*; and *Sonata about Jerusalem* (1970) about a Jewish convert with the texts from the twelfth century.

of traditional Japanese theatre, particularly *noh*, an attraction that owed much to Pound's translations. This suggests that their access to another culture, and the conceptions they had of it at that time, were highly dependent on someone's decision to translate specific artefacts of that culture. It also reflects the way in which the culture concept typically operates: small numbers of artefacts have the power to represent the whole of a culture. Since Fenollosa's interest in *noh* had caught the attention of Pound, Yeats, and Waley, *noh* became one of the main aesthetic art forms that represented Japan among intellectuals, including composers.<sup>7</sup>

Evidently, the twenty-year age difference between Britten and Goehr gave them different access in terms of cultural, historical, and social experiences. For example, Goehr's interest in Buddhism, sparked by Hearn's writing, is associated with the post-WWII dissemination of Buddhism to the West. The compositional tendency with regard to non-Western materials also significantly differed between the 1950s and the 1960s. By the time Goehr went to Japan, not just Britten but other leading composers, including Cowell, Messiaen, and Cage, had visited Japan and composed Japan-related works.

Apart from written accounts or artistic collaborators, other resources would have been available to them by the time of their visits to Japan because of technological developments around that time. Firstly, Goehr could certainly have heard gramophone recordings of Japanese traditional music before travelling to Japan. Such a recording of a *noh* performance was available as an LP disseminated in the US by the late 1950s (*Noh Plays of Japan: Hagoromo and Kantan*, 1959).

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<sup>7</sup> Those who wrote *noh*-inspired works include Brecht, whose *Der Jasager* inspired composers such as Goehr, Bell, Partch, Hovhaness, Xenakis, and Stockhausen.

Secondly, after diplomatic relations were re-established in 1951, the development of commercial airlines, which made it easier for Britten and Goehr to travel to Japan, also brought traditional Japanese theatre companies to the UK for the first time in the 1950s and 60s. *Kabuki* first came to the UK in 1955, around the same time as Britten conducted a world tour, and *noh* arrived in 1967, contemporaneous with Goehr's *noh*-inspired music theatre. There is no definitive proof that Britten or Goehr listened to the recording or attended these performances, and indeed Goehr claims that "at that time [in the 1960s] there was no visiting company, and nobody came". Nonetheless, these products, developments, and events demonstrate the radically changing availability of things Japanese during that period.

There are important analogies between some aspects explored above, regarding Britten and Goehr, and composers of the following generation, namely Denyer, Marsh, and LeFanu. In terms of sources, *noh* as a theatre form occupied a central place in the succeeding composers' interests especially with the development of modernist music theatre, though it was no longer Pound's translations that represented it. Both Marsh and LeFanu came into contact with Japanese music and theatre through Britten's *Curlew River*, and then searched for literature and translations. *Curlew River* did not just direct composers' attention to *noh*, but fostered a lasting impact of *noh* in the British music theatre scene. Goehr's decision to use *noh* to solve what he thought as the problem of opera as a genre parallels Marsh who saw potential in traditional Japanese theatre to offer an alternative to Western theatre. In fact, *noh* became one of the standout models, along with Greek drama and medieval Christian theatre, in modernist music theatre (Sheppard 2001, 36–37).

Hearn's works, and certain Japanese films that had struck Goehr, also became representative sources of fascination and reference. Additionally, like Goehr in the 1950s, Marsh also used public libraries to find sources, which demonstrates a certain degree of accessibility to the materials, although the Henry Watson Library in Manchester was the special collection of a prominent musician. Artistic collaboration with someone who was familiar with Japan could further be seen in LeFanu's opera production. Regarding the availability of things Japanese, by the early and late 1960s when Denyer and Marsh became interested in Japanese music respectively, there were many more books and articles on Japanese music available compared to the early 1950s. Denyer and Marsh also remembered that they went to see performances of *noh* (and also *gagaku* for Denyer) in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

### **Their travels to Japan**

Britten's and Goehr's views about Japan and Japanese people before they each travelled to Japan, in the mid-1950s and mid-1960s respectively, were rather negative, and reveal certain anxieties.

Britten's reluctance about his visit was expressed in a letter which he wrote on his way from Hong Kong to Tokyo:

And so we go on to Japan. I must say I don't want to, awfully. I don't like what I know about the country or the people – I certainly don't like the way they look (the Yellow races look very strange & suspicious [...]) – and judging by the difficulty Peter [Pears (1910–86)] & I had in getting our visas, they don't like me any more than I like them [...] But I mustn't be silly, & must try to like them. (8 February 1956, *Letters* 4, 404)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Square brackets in quotations are changes made by me. After mentioning the Yellow races, Britten continues, "whereas the Brown, the Indians, or Indonesians, look touching & sympathetic, & can be very beautiful" (*Letters* 4, 404).

Cooke indicates that this anti-Japanese sentiment on Britten's part could seem surprising some eleven years after the end of the Second World War, and argues that Britten's unsatisfactory experience with Japan over the commission and refusal of *Sinfonia da Requiem* before the war caused his negative feeling toward the country (1998, 113). I consider that it is not really surprising in the light of Japan's situation and the way in which Japan was portrayed in the UK and the US during the war (Britten was in the US from 1939 to 1942).<sup>9</sup> Goehr's recalling 1960s perceptions of Japan corroborates this:

One didn't know much [about Japan] at that time ... and of course it was in the after-war period, and there was terrific hostility to Japan because of the war. And not only that but also China and Japan, we regarded as sort of primitive places. Nobody knew about it really. But I got interested in it. So I applied for the scholarship [to go to Japan].

Evidently, such feelings of antagonism had remained typical preconceptions about Japan after the Second World War. What is interesting here is that the appreciation for the culture and reluctance to visit the country where that culture originally sprang from co-existed in both composers as if these two things were detached. This discrepancy between their artistic interests in Japanese culture and the actual image of and distance from Japan as a nation is the key element to be unpacked when the post-war Anglo-Japanese relationship is considered. As can be seen in the last sentences of both Britten's and Goehr's comments above, their travels to Japan were the results of their overcoming the disinclination to confront Japan.

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<sup>9</sup> An example can be seen in "An Exotic Enemy: Musical Propaganda in Wartime Hollywood" in Sheppard 2019, 197–233.

When it comes to their trips, the ideas and purposes of their journeys to Japan were fundamentally different. Britten's journey to Japan was part of a five-month concert tour to Austria, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, which Britten undertook between November 1955 and March 1956 with Pears. Their visit to Japan was co-hosted by the British Council and the Japan Broadcasting Corporation – NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai) – Japan's only public broadcaster, reflecting the fact that the event was supported by public funds and had diplomatic overtones. In fact, the hundreds of cameras and reporters who welcomed Britten and Pears on their arrival at Tokyo demonstrate how much it mattered to post-war Japan.

The itinerary for this eleven-day stay (8th–20th February) was thoroughly planned and included: two broadcast concerts, one of which was the Japanese premiere of *Sinfonia da Requiem* performed by NHK Symphony Orchestra conducted by Britten; *noh*, *kabuki* and *gagaku* performances, entertainment by *geisha*, and a tea ceremony; a recital by Britten and Pears which was broadcasted on NHK; and a press conference and meetings for diplomatic purposes. Among the Japanese traditional art forms Britten experienced, the *noh* performance of *Sumidagawa* captivated the composer. He found the experience comical at first but later profound, writing “[o]ne thing that I unreservedly loved in Japan was the theatre [...] [a]t first it all seemed too silly, & we giggled a lot, [b]ut soon we began to catch on a bit, & at the end it was very exciting” (*Letters* 4, 409). He wanted to see the performance a second time, and later acquired a reel-to-reel tape-recording of the production (Cooke 1998, 120). The composer was also attracted by *gagaku*, visiting the Music Department of the Imperial Household Agency [*Kunaicho gakubu*] in Tokyo twice, and acquiring recordings and transcriptions of *gagaku* repertoire, as well as a *shō* in Kyoto (*ibid.*, 124–25). Britten

expressed in a letter that “Japanese music is the oddest I’ve ever heard, but very impressive, & beautiful” (ibid., 129). There was a meeting with Japanese composers as well, though it was reported to have been awkward and disappointing: a Japanese music critic wrote that “Britten stopped by during his sight-seeing trip to the East [...] and left as a two-week tourist” (Toyama 1956; Miura 1956).<sup>10</sup>

Goehr’s journey to Japan was much more personal and understated than that of Britten. Goehr remembers that, in the 1960s, he became very enthusiastic about *noh* and wanted to know how it was done. Having realised that “they had no theory, but their way of working [was] entirely practical”, the composer applied for a Churchill Fellowship to go to Japan to study *noh* at around the same time as he established his music theatre company.<sup>11</sup> During his two-month stay in Japan, Goehr was hosted by a Japanese cultural organisation which arranged meetings between Goehr and *noh* actors, and visited many *noh* theatres as well as *gagaku* and *kabuki* performances. He also met with “Japanese Western-style composers”, although he chose to devote most of his time to studying *noh*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Several articles about Britten’s visit to Japan appeared in music magazines in 1956 (Gotō 1956; Miura 1956; Toyama 1956; Tsuji 1956). Yūzō Toyama, a composer, detailed Britten’s meeting with Japanese composers (1956), and Atsushi Miura, a music critic, recounted Britten’s stay and his works (1956). I do not expand on them here since the reception of the Japanese side is outside the scope of this thesis, but these articles would offer interesting perspectives on study of Britten.

<sup>11</sup> The Churchill Fellowship, which Goehr remembers as the Churchill Scholarship, was established in 1965, and provides a wide range of opportunities for British citizens of any educational and professional background to travel overseas and bring back fresh ideas for the benefit of the UK (Winston Churchill Memorial Trust 2023). Goehr’s project report was titled ‘Notation of Music and Opera at the Noh and Kabuki Theatres’, which could not be obtained either from the organisation or the composer.

<sup>12</sup> The composers mentioned in our interview were Tōru Takemitsu (1930–96) and Makoto Moroi (1930–2013). Goehr got “quite friendly” with both of them but thought Takemitsu was too derivative of other Western pieces, while what Moroi was doing at that time interested Goehr.

Aiming to gain hands-on experience with it, the composer registered at the “Toyo Academy” to take approximately eight lessons from a master *noh* singer.<sup>13</sup> Goehr remembers it as follows:

I mean, it is ridiculous. I couldn't sing to help myself. But [the teacher/*noh* actor] was a very nice man. He was an older singer, and he taught *noh* singers in the academy. So I went to him [...], and I still have the notes. And I had a young lady who translated for me. He didn't speak English. And like all Japanese, he likes drinking. So I invited him out for drink, [...] we became very friendly, and he tried to teach me how it works.

Goehr recounts that the *noh* actor informed him of “the secret” of how *noh* singing was formulated.

Goehr acknowledges that what he learnt from *noh* singing pervades his oeuvre and has significantly affected how he shapes melodies, though I suggest it is subtly embedded into the melodic structure and does not come to the surface.

Goehr also wanted to find out how *gagaku* works and visited “the emperor's palace” (which I suggest was the Music Department of the Imperial Household Agency [*Kunaicho gakubu*]).

Goehr remembers that one of the musicians with whom he conversed then arranged a private tour to show him around.<sup>14</sup> After that, Goehr joined an amateur *gagaku* ensemble to learn the bass drum, *tsuri-daiko*. He recollects that “they said, ‘quarter note, quarter note, rest, quarter note’, but did not tell me the distance between one and the other”; “so I never understood, but again it was the experience of knowing how the music works”. Goehr thus acquired practical knowledge of relational, not measurable, rhythm and how they put it together, which intrigued many Western composers at

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<sup>13</sup> I could not identify what school Goehr studied in, which he mentioned as “the Toyo Academy in Ueno Park”. It could be Toyo Ongaku Gakkō (current Tokyo College of Music), though it is not in Ueno. Other possibilities are the Tokyo University of the Arts or Ueno Gakuen, both in Ueno.

<sup>14</sup> The musician sold a Japanese flute to Goehr which he gave to Alan Hacker, an English clarinetist.

that time. Even though he could not perform it in the ensemble, Goehr thinks the experience fed into his composition.

Heather Wiebe describes Britten's journey as "a carefully orchestrated set of cultural exchanges", and suggests that we step aside slightly from musicological discourses of exoticism and cross-cultural influence, and consider it in the more specific contexts of global cultural exchange in the 1950s and early 1960s (2013, 156–60). Britten and Pears went to Japan to play their roles as cultural ambassadors to bridge the two countries and cultures, and it was a chance encounter with *noh* which had an impact on Britten's later compositions. In fact, Britten's trip was a seminal event for post-war Japan, followed by successive visits by the aforementioned distinguished Western composers. Japanese traditional music and theatre were there to amuse guests from the West as well as to be discovered and evaluated. In hindsight, Japan's diplomatic purpose to promote its culture seems to have been fulfilled, given that Britten's composition inspired by the trip has had a lasting impact on the musical landscape of the UK and beyond.

However, the situation had changed by the late 1960s when Goehr went to Japan. There, he made a conscious decision to learn *noh*, and his time in Japan was far less institutionally organised. Goehr made contact with related people and institutions with the aid of the host organisation in the first instance, and then developed face-to-face relationships independently. He learned traditional music with the attitude of a pupil, and interacted with Japanese composers as "colleagues". The culture Goehr experienced in Japan could be regarded as something beyond *a Japan* that the country displayed to Britten. The differences between these two visits show a shift in the meanings of cultural exchange, the composers' social roles, and their attitudes towards non-Western culture.

The changed circumstances are also reflected in what happened after their journeys. Britten expressed his impression of Japan in a letter written soon after he left:

It is far the strangest [...] country we have yet been to; like, in a way, going to a country which is inhabited by a very intelligent kind of insect. Very industrious, very clever, but very different from us, very odd. They have very good manners, they bow & scrape all the time: they have most beautiful small things, all their houses, their flowers, the things they eat & drink out of, are wonderfully pretty, but their big things, their cities, their way of thinking, and behaving, have all somehow got wrong... (21 February 1956, *Letters* 4, 408; emphases in original)

This discomposure and incomprehension Britten felt about Japan can be related to Christopher Goto-Jones's statement that Japan has "a rich history of 'Eastern' traditions and an oddly 'Western' present" (2009, 5). What made Britten uncomfortable was not the Eastern traditions, which were entirely alien to him, but the modern features of Japan that could be more easily associated with where Britten came from. The extract from the letter above demonstrates that his encounter with Japan did not really help to resolve the contradiction between his pre-visit fascination for Japanese culture and his hostility towards the nation. On the one hand, Japan still existed as "a type of aesthetic paradise", to borrow McLaughlin's expression (2007, sec. 2); on the other hand, it could no longer be an imagined paradise because of its modern present. This confusion also stemmed from the way that Japan presented itself, which can be characterised as self-exoticising, while demonstrating how close it could be to the West. Britten wrote, "I wasn't sure I wanted ever to go back [to Japan] (in spite of the Theatres, the Temples etc.), because I felt rather uncomfortable there" (*Letters* 4, 410).

By contrast, Goehr recollects that he said that “it was not different from what I thought it was” when he came back from Japan the first time, although he found it extremely difficult to learn Japanese traditional music without any knowledge of the language. What he was struck by was neither its modernised appearance nor its traditional music itself but a different aspect of Japan. He explained that “Japan was so strange because on the one hand [it is] a very formal nation and on the other hand [people] say things which we would never say”. This observation is based on everyday social interactions with people, several examples of which he provided in our interview, rather than the more fleeting and diplomatic exchange that Britten experienced. Goehr also seemed to have more pleasant encounters with Japanese composers. After the first visit, Goehr travelled to Japan several times, taught in China, and later even considered himself “quasi-living in the Far East”.<sup>15</sup>

Despite these differences, what Britten and Goehr were attracted to in *noh* was remarkably similar. Britten stated, “[t]he deep solemnity and selflessness of the acting, the perfect shaping of the drama (like a great Greek tragedy) coupled with the strength and universality of the stories [of *noh*] are something which every Western artist can learn from” (Britten and Kildea 2003, 156–57).<sup>16</sup>

Goehr also thought that some of the subject matters of *noh* plays could be understood in terms of Western theatre. The perceived universality *noh* offers to composers is the central idea to analysing

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<sup>15</sup> In “Messiaen and China”, Wai-Ling Cheong notes that Goehr gave a series of ten lectures on contemporary music at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing in 1980; it was Goehr’s initiative, but the invitation to a composer-scholar from the West rather than from the Soviet Union was unprecedented in China (2023, 69–70). Regarding the lecture series, Nancy Yunhwa Rao lists Goehr’s visit to Beijing as one of the turning points for the post-Cultural Revolution composers (2017, 163). Among representatives who attended the lectures from conservatories all over the country (Cheong 2023, 69–70), there was Tan Dun (1957–). As Goehr states, his involvement with China owes much to his wife, a professor of Chinese literature. His relationship with China awaits further study.

<sup>16</sup> This is part of Britten’s warm New Year’s address to Japanese music lovers, broadcasted on Japanese Radio on 1 January 1958.

*Curlew River* and *Kantan and Damask Drum*. Goehr further maintained that his interest was always in *noh* but not in *kabuki* as “*kabuki* seemed too eighteenth or nineteenth century for me” (while Britten described *kabuki* as “madly exciting” and incorporated its aspects in the later *Church Parables* (Cooke 1998, 197)). What Goehr admired about *noh* is the austere technical attitude of the actors who are trained to perform just to make it perfect whilst not being moved themselves, which contrasted with what he disliked about Western music.<sup>17</sup> Goehr thought that “that is a sort of austerity that keeps one going in life” and how he wished to be as a composer. Moreover, as a composer who originally studied classics and regretted the extinction of the original form of Greek tragedy, Goehr was fascinated by the fact that *noh* is the only surviving theatrical form in the world whose original form is thought to be handed down in a more or less hereditary succession via oral instruction from as long ago as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Bringing the other composers studied in this thesis into context, those who were born towards the end of or after the war do not seem to have the same resentment or uneasiness to Japan as Britten and Goehr. By the time the younger composers became interested in Japan in the 1960s or 1970s, there seemed to be much less mental barriers, and the introduction to the country appeared to be smoother. The nature of the interaction between British and Japanese composers and musicians changed from Britten to Goehr, but also from Goehr to these later composers. Denyer, for example, was much more engaged with Japanese composers and their music, and had a close and long-lasting artistic relationship with the *shakuhachi* player Iwamoto. However, interestingly, of all the

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<sup>17</sup> Goehr heard Janet Baker (1933–), an English mezzo-soprano, said on a TV programme that “I study the piece I am going to sing and then I try to do it perfectly; I do not have to be moved; nobody wants to see me being moved” (words remembered by Goehr). Goehr thought that is a good description of what he likes about Japanese theatres.

composers in this thesis, Goehr is the only one who studied in Japan for an extensive period. This partially reflects the increased availability of resources such as literature, audio-visual materials, and collaborators to which they had access, without being in Japan. Moreover, the way in which Britten expressed his thoughts and feelings so directly seems striking from the perspective of today's reader. However, since the quotations are from personal letters rather than interviews as conducted for this thesis with the other composers, it would be somewhat unfair to compare and make a judgement. The evident change in the socio-cultural climate since Britten's time is due in part to Said's *Orientalism* ([1978] 2003), and the composers I interviewed are very much aware of the risks associated with composing cross-cultural works or discussing them.

### ***Curlew River and Kantan and Damask Drum***

This section investigates how Britten and Goehr incorporated their knowledge and experience of Japan into their compositions. Britten's passion for *noh* became apparent in his first Church Parable, *Curlew River*, completed after almost eight years of "protracted discussion and conceptual development" (Cook 1998, 149). It followed by *The Burning Fiery Furnace* (1966) and *The Prodigal Son* (1968), and the trilogy as a whole demonstrates how the composer continued to incorporate Japanese elements and develop the particular format.<sup>18</sup> In the case of Goehr, he adopted Hearn's literature in *Four Songs from the Japanese* in 1959 and some aspects of *noh* in the aforementioned

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<sup>18</sup> This thesis primarily focuses on *Curlew River* as a point of reference, though many of the Japanese influences noted in this section regarding *Curlew River* are applicable to the later Church Parables. For analyses of how the later Church Parables were generated and incorporate *noh*, *gagaku*, and other Japanese features, see "The Later Church Parables" in Cook 1998, 190–219.

music-theatre productions and *Nonomiya* for piano (1969) in the late 1960s. After *Nonomiya*, it was almost thirty years before Goehr wrote another *noh*-inspired work, his fourth opera *Kantan and Damask Drum*. Subsequently, his fifth opera *Promised End* (2008–9) was evoked by a dream he had in which Shakespeare's *King Lear* was performed as *noh*. Among these pieces, *Kantan and Damask Drum* appears to be the focal point of his Japan-related compositions founded on his earlier intellectual and cultural experiences.

#### *Curlew River* (1964)

*Curlew River* is a Church Parable set in East Anglia one thousand years ago. Wishing to write something close to his heart and feeling a strong resistance to writing a pastiche of *noh*, Britten adopted the style of the medieval European religious drama as well as that of *noh* and, with Plomer, Christianised the plot and libretto of the original *noh* play, *Sumidagawa*. *Curlew Rover* is, to a large extent, conceptually inspired by *noh* and stylistically and musically influenced by *gagaku*. The overall dramatic and musical structure, stylised character types, instrumental and vocal constituents, highly stylised vocal delivery, and the function of the chorus and its monophonic nature owe much to *noh*; while heterophonic elaboration of a line, layered texture, asynchronous style, *jo-ha-kyū* shape (explained in Chapter 3), and some individual elements, such as harmony of the *shō* and accelerating rhythmic patterns, can be associated with *gagaku* (see Cook 1998: 130–89).<sup>19</sup> *Noh* influence can also be seen in the stage design, the stage properties, the use of masks (covering only the upper part of

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<sup>19</sup> Cooke also points out that the heterophony is influenced by traditional Japanese vocal music with *shamisen* accompaniment Britten was experienced while in Japan (Cooke 1998, 130).

the face), and the highly symbolic gestures and movements of the actors produced by Colin Graham, which are included in the score (Graham 1965).<sup>20</sup>

Exploring some notable Japanese musical characteristics adopted in *Curlew River* in more detail, the opening of the organ part adopt *aitake* – a set of chords played by the *shō* in *gagaku*; and *teutsuri*, the gradual shift of fingering positions from one chord to another, which is of “greater musical significance” (Miki 2008, 66).<sup>21</sup> Britten succeeded in producing an other-worldly atmosphere at the very beginning of the work which incorporates the *shō*’s distinctive sustained sound. Cooke remarks that “Britten’s version of *shō* technique is disconcertingly authentic” and “the timbre of the chamber organ [in the original recordings] is uncannily close to the sonority of the original instrument”; Britten was well acquainted with the instrument owing to the *shō* and the printed volume of *gagaku* transcriptions that he acquired on his visit (Cooke 1998, 182–3; Shiba 1955). The percussion in the prologue and epilogue emulates accelerating rhythms (*katarai/mororai*) played on the *gagaku* drum (*kakko*). Cooke also indicates that heterophonic interplay between *hichiriki* (double-reed ‘Japanese oboe’) and *ryūteki* (transverse flute) in *gagaku* could be a source of inspiration for the ceremonial robing music in the Church Parables (1998, 180). Although much of the musical style is thus drawn from *gagaku*, the ascending and descending vocal glissandi in *Curlew River* is correlated with the prominent portamento of *noh*’s vocal writing (ibid., 169). These conceptual and technical attributes, a few of which are explained here, are subtly contextualised in

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<sup>20</sup> Marsh calls for reinterpretation of the original production guidelines for contemporary audience, stating “[f]or just as Orford Church is not Tokyo, so a modern concert hall is not Orford Church...” (Marsh 1997).

<sup>21</sup> See Cooke (1988, 233; 1998, 181–85) for transcription of transitioning harmony in *Curlew River* and how *aitake* chords are adopted.

the general themes of the adapted drama, and it demonstrates how stylistically significant *Curlew River* was both for Britten to develop his musical language and subsequently as an example to later composers.<sup>22</sup>

### *Kantan and Damask Drum* (1997–98)

*Kantan and Damask Drum* was composed from 1997 to 1998 for a commission by Theater Dortmund in Germany, though its original and unrealised plan dates back to when Goehr was in Japan.<sup>23</sup> It is actually two separate operas, *Kantan* and *Damask Drum*, based on two different *noh* plays of the same names, *Kantan* and *Aya no tsuzumi* [The Damask/Twill Drum], and can be performed individually. They can be followed or interspersed by *(Un)fair Exchange*, a farcical story taken from Japanese comic theatre, *kyogen*. *Noh*, based on music and dance, has been adopted by many Western composers, especially since the 1960s. However, using dialogue-based *kyogen* as a model and combining it with *noh*-inspired pieces to replicate how they are normally programmed in *noh* theatre is rather rare, and reflects Goehr's direct experience and detailed knowledge of the genre.<sup>24</sup> Although

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<sup>22</sup> Wiebe analyses that this framing of the drama resonates with Britten's own encounter with Japan, and the way in which its music depicts the Madwoman represents the process of reorientation of the composer (2013, 168–77).

<sup>23</sup> It was premiered in Dortmund on 19 September 1999, followed by the British premiere in Aldeburgh and London in 2001, and in Cambridge in 2002. Regarding the original plan, the aforementioned mime was a friend of the renowned Japanese writer Yukio Mishima (1925–70) who wrote *Five Modern Nō Plays* (1957) and suggested that Goehr and Mishima should collaborate to produce an opera or music theatre piece. Goehr conversed with the writer five or six times on the phone but “the brilliant, crazed, masochistic author” was not interested in working on an opera (Driver 2001). In retrospect, Goehr understood why Mishima was not too enthusiastic as “he was shortly going to make his big stand” (Mishima performed a ritual suicide as part of the *coup d'état* attempt against the Japanese authorities with his private army). Goehr adopted two *noh* repertoires that Mishima had also chosen; however, Mishima's adaptation written in the 1950s became of no use to Goehr by the time he revisited the idea in the 1990s.

<sup>24</sup> In *noh* theatre, it is common to programme two or three *noh* plays interspersed with one or two *kyōgen* plays (Emmert 2001). Goehr instructs *(Un)fair Exchange* to be performed after *Damask Drum* in the description of the work, and that is where it was placed in the Dortmund performance as if it were a sort of encore. For later productions in the UK, however, it was treated as an intermission played before *Damask Drum*.

the work has been printed and advertised as a “Japanese opera by Alexander Goehr” (to Goehr’s surprise), the composer did not in any way attempt to recreate or reformulate the style of a traditional *noh*.<sup>25</sup> It is, rather, an adaptation of Japanese *noh*, “done in the belief that the dramas, originating from far away and long ago, may be understood by modern [Western] audiences” (Goehr 1998b).

In the process of adaptation, Goehr adopted the plots of the original *noh* plays but significantly modified the translations by Waley and others to make them mean something for himself and his audience. For example, the composer thought it was unconvincing and ridiculous to have the traveller Rosei (the protagonist of *Kantan*), whom Goehr regarded as “a present-day youngster” or “a discontented hippie”, speak in Waley’s “mystical upper-class way”, and Goehr rewrote the texts in a manner that he thought a young person would speak in modern times. Moreover, Goehr felt the need to rethink the Buddhist element in *Kantan* in the Western context to take it beyond mere “intellectual tourism”. In the original *Kantan*, Rosei searches for the way he should live and is convinced that life is but a dream (Waley 1921, 156–64). Goehr’s Rosei, on the other hand, seeks enlightenment, learns that “life is here and now”, and is delighted to discover the “immeasurable wisdom” that a glorious life only lasts for a flash (Goehr 1998a, 199–200). He made the story “comprehensible to me so that I can feel it”, thinking that “half of Cambridge is trying to seek Enlightenment”.

For the libretto, Goehr “mirrored the conventions of the originals which distinguishes songs and quasi-madrigals which are in a syllabically determined verse and prose which is used for

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<sup>25</sup> Goehr was surprised when I mentioned this in our interview and maintains that “it is either opera by Alexander Goehr or Japanese opera[;] it cannot be both”, and it is obviously not a Japanese opera [though] one gives signpost”.

conversation and soliloquy” (1998b). Once the texts were set, he kept saying the words and sentences over and over again until they became music. Goehr explains that the words and their characteristic *Gestus*, using Bertold Brecht (1898–1956)’s term, are absorbed into a purely musical context by this method; it establishes firstly the number of syllables per beat and, consequently, its tempo of setting, and also suggests the character and the type of the accompaniment (Goehr and Wintle 1997, 156). This is, according to Goehr, how Gregorian chant (which he “uses all the time”) is formulated, and he thinks that “it sounds very much like *noh* as it comes from the same time”. In *Kantan and Damask Drum*, Goehr uses this method but applies “the secret” of *noh* singing that he learnt from the *noh* master in the process. In principle, what he understood the actor taught him was that, in *noh*, each sentence or verse of the text has an identical formula, rising and descending, which can be altered by a comma; when it comes back to a different note because of the comma, the next melody starts from there (ibid., 251).<sup>26</sup> He acknowledges, “whether it’s true or not, I have no way of knowing; but it was true for me”.

In addition, Goehr studied “the colours of Japanese syllables” using recordings he found on the Internet or in CDs he had, and imitated *noh* singing with the words in English to make “an imaginary Japanese theatre”. In our interview, he demonstrated what he understood as *noh* singing just as Marsh did in his interview. The resulting melodies are sung in operatic voice (unlike Marsh’s *noh*-inspired *Samson*, which I study in Chapter 3), making it difficult to hear it as *noh* singing even

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<sup>26</sup> Goehr also explained and demonstrated the melody formula in our interview, mentioning the comma as *hiraki* which indicates where an accent is in the stylised speech (*kotoba*). There are different types of chanting in *noh* which have different melody patterns, and it is not clear which one Goehr refers to.

when the source and method are explained. However, the process gives an idea of how Goehr “internalises” *noh*, the concept of which I return to shortly, beyond merely borrowing or imitating.

In terms of the opera’s direction, the score states that “the scene should reflect but not attempt to emulate a traditional [*noh*] stage”, and his only instruction (reflecting his stance not to interfere with direction of his operas (Goehr 2010)) is that a walkway leads to a stylised house with a divan and the magic pillow of Kantan in it (Goehr 1998a). What Goehr believes is that, on the one hand, the direction should not be made to imitate the *noh* theatre, which would be “pretentious”, but on the other hand, it should not exceed what *noh* can do. Judging by the photographs of the Dortmund performance directed by Philipp Kochheim (see Figure 1.1 for an example), the stage design and costumes most certainly do not imply anything Japanese or *noh*-like; they seem to offer much more than what *noh* can do.<sup>27</sup>

The instrumentation also demonstrates how Goehr integrates elements of *noh* but also keeps a distance from them. The small orchestra consists of violins, viola, cello, harp, percussion, and keyboard sampler (and alto flute and alto trombone in *Damask Drum*). Goehr describes the ensemble as “somewhat Handelian in inspiration and by and large avoids the Orientalism which might be thought to be appropriate” (1998b). This explanation is slightly confusing as one would

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<sup>27</sup> The stage photo (Figure 1.1) is of the world premiere on 19 September 1999 at Theater Dortmund, obtained through Schott Music Ltd. It is a different direction from the photo but the British performance by Tim Hopkins has been severely criticised by almost all critics regardless of the highly praised musical performance; Goehr also comments that “I could not look at it”. Paul Driver indicates that the staging is “to mock the delusions of the characters with bathos”, and expresses strong antipathy towards the playpen set and bright mechanics’ costumes (2001). Similarly, Andrew Clements reviews that the “perverse” production mistakes infantilism for imagination, and pities singers for having to do the silly things admirably (2001a). For the Cambridge performance, Goehr remembers that “it was alright though it was not how I would have imagined it”.

expect Orientalism to be *inappropriate*, but I read it as indicating that Goehr thought some people might anticipate exotic elements in an ensemble because of the subject matter and wanted to confound such expectations.

The male Chorus in *Kantan and Damask Drum* adopts the role of the *noh* chorus (*jiutai*) which “narrates the background and the story itself, sometimes describing a character’s thoughts or emotions or even singing lines for a character” (Emmert 2001). Goehr acknowledges that he “very much adopted that idea from the *noh*” and was particularly intrigued by its function as an extension of the protagonist. He explains that the *noh* chorus sometimes takes over from the soloist in the middle of a sentence and brings the texts to a climax, and adopts this practice on several occasions in the opera.



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**Figure 1.1** Stage photo of Rosei, *Kantan*

Musically, Japanese elements are not recognisable for the most part in the opera but are brought to the surface in some places, such as in the Praeludium in *Kantan*. (*Kantan* consists of four scenes: 1) Entrance, 2) Praeludium, 3) Praeludium, and 4) Ritornello; Goehr explains that the Entrance is “a direct homage to the *noh* in the sense that it is gestural”, and the Praeludia are “the actual music sections”.) The first Praeludium is where Rosei in his dream is picked up by the Woman in a shiny dress and an “exotically dressed Envoy ‘from another world’ [...] followed by porters bearing an elegant palanquin” to become an emperor (Goehr 1998a, 58). It opens with a completely different sound world from the Entrance (the music of which does not signify Japan), owing to the following musical qualities.

First, the beginning of the Praeludium (Example 1.1) is composed using a Japanese mode. The first five bars are comprised of four notes *f-sharp–g–a-sharp–b* (Example 1.2a): the pitch set forms the opening augmented octave, cluster chords by the sampler’s ‘Japanese *shō*’, ornamentation by the violin, and inserted natural harmonics by the harp.<sup>28</sup> It is then followed by a melody composed of *b–c–(d-sharp)–e–f-sharp* (Example 1.2b) by the violin and the harp. The resulting mode (Example 1.3) is almost identical to an *in* scale (*miyakobushi* scale), although Goehr notes that he was not aware of using it, maintaining that he “might have picked it up from somewhere” as he “was very much immersed in listening to whatever [Japanese music] [he] could find” at the time of composing the opera. Indeed, this mode which is also used in Marsh’s *Black Hair* is one of the most used Japanese modes to signify Japan in Western music.

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<sup>28</sup> The sampler is noted as “AKAI S6000 (programmed by Paul Arditti and available on hire)” (1998a, [i]). Arditti is a renowned sound designer.

♩ = 52

Vn. Hp. Tabor

*poco f*

Sho.

*poco f*

1

1. Vn. *poco f cant.*

2. Vn.

Vn.

*f*

*mp sf p*

2 *liberamente senza misura*

Hp. *f*

*bisbigliando*

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Example 1.1 Goehr, *Kantan*, the beginning of the first Praeludium (1998a, 58–60)



**Example 1.2** Goehr, *Kantan*, notes that form the beginning of the first Praeludium



**Example 1.3** Goehr, *Kantan*, the mode used in the beginning of the first Praeludium

Secondly, the orchestration makes this opening sound very distinctive. The instruments include an antique cymbal, a small slapstick, a tenor drum slapped with a leather thong, a harp, a sampler’s *shō*, and strings. Goehr describes that the sampler’s *shō* is “not exact or anything but an invented imaginary instrument which vaguely sounds like *shō*”. The *shō* here is neither restricted to *aitake* chords nor to the sound of the original instrument, but it nonetheless captures some sonic and gestural characteristics of the *shō*. Another instrument that arguably signifies Japan is the harp with harmonics and *koto*-like ornamentation. The harmonics obscure the distinctive qualities of the instrument and, when it carries a phrase that is in a Japanese mode (see the last bar of Example 1.1), it is reminiscent of the sound of the *koto*. Moreover, the *bisbigliando* on  $e^2$  in the same phrase resembles the *koto*’s tremolo – one of the typical gestures of the *koto*.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, all these musical elements above need not be associated with Japanese music. They could be interpreted as depicting a more generalised otherworldliness to listeners unfamiliar with Japanese music: as

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<sup>29</sup> Throughout this thesis, I mark middle C as  $c^1$  and the octave from the note as  $c^1$  to  $b^1$ .

Sheppard points out, cross-cultural perception depends on the minds of individual audience members (2019, 9–10).

Thus, both in *Curlew River* and *Kantan and Damask Drum*, the original materials are neither glorified nor decomposed, but integrated in a way that one would not be able to detect without background knowledge. When studying the final products, what Britten and Goehr did in their operas can be considered as cultural translations of *noh*. In *Curlew River*, Britten translated *Sumidagawa* into a Christian setting and transformed it into a Church Parable. In *Kantan and Damask Drum*, Goehr translated the *noh* plays into a contemporary framework. Musically, some aesthetic and musical aspects of *noh* and *gagaku* penetrate through into their compositions, though the cultural particularity is fully adapted into each composer's own language through a process of stylistic modulation. In this sense, a cultural object that is thought to be untranslatable is in fact translatable, and, borrowing Emily Apter's expression, translated "across linguistic, cultural, and social contexts" (2006, 98). Sheppard describes such phenomenon as "domesticating the exotic", considering that it comes from "a strong desire to bring [the exotic] back home", and demonstrates how common such a practice was throughout the twentieth century (2001, 128).

When exploring the adaptative and compositional processes of Britten and Goehr, different degrees of integration emerge. On the one hand, the way Britten incorporates Japanese theatrical and musical elements of *noh* and *gagaku* into his music, such as the adaptation of *shō*'s *aitake* chords, is described as "authentic" (Cooke 1998, 183). Indeed, Britten was quite faithful to what he learnt, although these elements are disguised in a completely different context. On the other hand, Goehr emphasises the importance of not merely integrating ideas but internalising them, stating that "it is

not only integration you need [but] you have got to make it your own". He continues, "my criticism of many [composers] is that they take ideas but do not internalise them enough", and "even Britten, in [*Curlew River*], I don't know if it is really internalised". Goehr refers to this internalisation of dialectical ideas, such as past and present or West and East, as "synthesis". While he adopts conceptual aspects of *noh* and musical materials such as the mode, the most pivotal influence – his learning of *noh* singing – is not immediately perceptible, as it is first internalised and embedded in his language before resurfacing in a transformed manner.

Lastly, I raise issues that are relevant to the later chapters. As detailed in the thesis introduction, *noh* and *gagaku* are the most referenced genres by both Western and Japanese composers in the twentieth century. The characteristics that Britten and Goehr incorporated in their operas, such as the instrumental and vocal constituents, the function of the chorus, and the gestures and movements of *noh*, and the heterophonic treatment of a melody (Britten only), the *shō*'s *aitake* chords, and the *katarai* rhythm of *gagaku*, are the most adopted features that I revisit in the chapters on Marsh and LeFanu. Relatedly, the mimicry of Japanese instruments by Western instruments, such as the organ or keyboard sampler representing the *shō* and the harp imitating the *koto*'s practice, has been a prevailing theme in cross-cultural composition. There are also some parallels between Britten who is called "a tourist" by a Japanese composer; Goehr who fully rewrites the *noh* story to avoid "intellectual tourism"; Denyer whose works are valued for "manifesting a truly global perspective [...] without descending into the superficiality of cultural tourism or ethnic kitsch" (Gilmore 2003, 29); and Kate Romano, the producer of LeFanu's *Tokaido Road*, who explains that their stance is to remain "the curious tourist", sharing Britten's "tourist's fascination with Japanese culture" (Romano

2016, 41–42). Moreover, while Goehr “hate[s] it when people want to make bridges between cultures [as] it is not genuine synthesis”, Romano hopes that they have created “a bridge between cultures” (ibid., 42).<sup>30</sup> LeFanu might not have shared Romano’s views, however, the way Romano presents *Tokaido Road* raises an interesting question about labelling of cross-cultural composition and signposting of the reference.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has investigated not only *how* Japan is represented in cross-cultural compositions but also *why* and *under what circumstances* such works were produced in relation to their extramusical conditions. In the first half of the twentieth century, British artistic perceptions of Japan gradually shifted from a nineteenth-century partially fantasised exoticism to a more realistic and artistic fascination and appreciation, as composers gained access to Japanese culture through artefacts and records of others’ experiences. However, the Second World War instilled barbaric images of Japan as a military and political threat, and such memories lingered in British minds for a while after the war. The situation radically changed again when Japan began using its traditions to restore its cultural value, significantly influencing British ideas of Japan. Technological advancements also played a crucial role in changing perceptions: the emergence of commercial airlines enabled composers to experience Japanese culture in Japan, and access to sound and visual resources allowed them to study

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<sup>30</sup> Goehr recounts what appealed him in Tokyo was that *noh*, *gagaku*, and Western music were “all completely separated” and that “there was no attempt to make bridges between them”.

it thoroughly without being in the country. *Curlew River* and *Kantan and Damask Drum* are the fruits of these shifting conditions.

Juxtaposing Britten and Goehr's explorations of Japan, this chapter also revealed that not only did the political, social, and cultural circumstances and accessibility to resources change significantly between the two composers, but so did the physical and psychological distance from Japanese people and culture. Britten's attitude parallels that of a tourist, exemplified by the way in which his trip was organised. In contrast, Goehr actively pursued an understanding of what it was like to be in the culture, living in Japan for two months to obtain knowledge, experience, and skills of *noh* with inquisitiveness and seriousness. He then internalised the elements with his own perception and interpretation, manifested both in his Japan-related compositions and other works. In this regard, Goehr's engagement with *noh* aligns with his career-long approach to compositional "models"; he approached *noh* just as he studied Gregorian chant and the music of Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) to which he had devoted himself since his youth.<sup>31</sup> In choosing a model, Goehr seeks common ground between his composition and the model, and obtains it neither as a

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<sup>31</sup> These models vary from composers, forms, and styles in the past to extra-musical sources, such as literature, paintings, historical events, beliefs, and cultures. In addition to such work as ...*a musical offering*... (1985) with musical motifs from Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), Goehr's operas particularly exemplify the diversity: *Arden muß sterben* [Arden Must Die] (1966) with texts by Erich Fried (1921–88) based on the sixteenth-century play; *Behold the Sun - Die Wiedertäufer* [The Anabaptist] (1981–84) derived from the Anabaptist uprising in Münster in the 1530s; *Arianna* (1994) inspired by Monteverdi's lost opera and its remaining music, *Lamento d'Arianna* (1608), with a libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini (1562–1621); *noh*-inspired *Kantan and Damask Drum*; and *Promised End* (2008–9) originating in *King Lear* by William Shakespeare (1564–1616). References to different fields of art can also be seen in *The Deluge* (1957–58) and *Sutter's Gold* (1959–60) based on shooting scripts by Eisenstein; and his political view are represented in *In Theresienstadt* (1964) with poems by children from the Nazi concentration camp, and *Warngedichte* [Warning Poems] (1967) with anti-Vietnam-War texts. See Goehr (2002) and Goehr and Wintle (1997) for his theory on compositional models and how he engaged with them.

tourist nor as a collector but from the position of a pupil (Goehr 1998b, 99). Goehr's sympathy for what he thought were the fundamental principles of *noh*, such as the actors' stance, also had a significant impact on what he became as a composer.

Goehr believes that the non-Western nature of a model is no longer a special matter. Thinking that some aspects of *noh* can be understood in terms of Western theatre, he states, "it is not a magic [...], one of the things one had to overcome about Japan and China [...] is the mystery of the Orient". For post-war composers, this statement epitomises a critical point of departure from Britten's approach. Significant changes in cultural attitudes have continued and intensified for the composers who succeeded both Britten and Goehr. The following chapters explore the developments that followed and coincided with Goehr's engagement with things Japanese from the 1960s onwards.

## Chapter 2

### Cross-Cultural Collaboration and the Triple Alliance:

#### Denyer, Iwamoto, and the *Shakuhachi*

This chapter focuses on Frank Denyer (1943–) and his collaboration with the Japanese *shakuhachi* player Yoshikazu Iwamoto (1945–), exploring the process of their collaboration and contextualising the resulting compositions, in light of the composer’s artistic aspirations, aesthetics, and musical thoughts which were shaped by his education, ethnomusicological pursuits, and other experiences. It also highlights the role of the *shakuhachi* in their collaboration, aiming to demonstrate the intricate strands of history, tradition, and culture that intertwine a composer, a performer, and an instrument. Recent studies on creative collaboration have shown that an instrument is more than just a passive object in collaborative music-making processes, and the way in which the composer and performer interact with the instrument determines the dynamics of their collaboration (Hooper 2012; Clarke et al. 2013, 2016; Payne 2016). A composer-performer collaboration is therefore not just one between two actors, but rather a triple alliance between the composer, performer, and instrument, with each constituent entailing its historical, social, and cultural matrix.

The *shakuhachi* is a vertical, end-blown bamboo flute with an outward, oblique mouthpiece and five holes, commonly associated with the roaming mendicant monks *komusō* (‘priests of nothingness’) of the *Fuke* Buddhist sect, who developed a repertoire of solo pieces called *honkyoku*

(‘original music’) as part of their religious practice.<sup>1</sup> While some still use the *shakuhachi* as “an instrument of Buddhist philosophy and meditation practice”, others adopt it as a musical instrument (Keister 2004, 99). Its dissemination resulted in “the global *shakuhachi* scene” (Browning 2014) and a diverse range of music “from the traditional Zen meditative pieces to folk songs, jazz, popular and avant-garde” (Tsukitani 2008, 145). In Western art music, besides the exceptionally early piece *The Universal Flute* (1940) by Cowell, a *shakuhachi* repertoire emerged in the 1960s, developed in the 1970s and 1980s, and has been expanding ever since.<sup>2</sup> Among them, Denyer’s *shakuhachi* works stand out because of his idiosyncratic musical aspirations, compositional manners, and long-lasting collaboration with Iwamoto, who pursued a distinctive aesthetics and displayed extraordinary musicality.

To elucidate the evolving trajectories and changing circumstances of their collaboration, this chapter studies Denyer’s aesthetics from which his *shakuhachi* oeuvre is generated and examines the pieces chronologically. The composer, whose quest was to find new approaches that could free music from “the nineteenth-century time capsule”, met the *shakuhachi* player who was determined to unlock new potential for the instrument at Wesleyan in 1975 (Denyer 1994, 45). Preceded by Denyer’s earlier musical experiences and their encounter in the mid-1970s, this chapter divides the process of the collaboration into three phases. The first phase (1970s–1980s) was a period of struggle

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed accounts on the history and origin of *shakuhachi*, and its schools and repertoire, see Sanford 1977, Gutzwiller 1984, Blasdel and Kamisangō 1988, Lee 1993, T[s]ukitani et al. 1994, Tsukitani 2008, Day 2009, Linder 2012. Gunnar Linder deconstructs the often uncritically used notion of “tradition” and “the *genuine* origin of the instruments” (2012; my emphasis).

<sup>2</sup> See Lependorf 1989, Benítez and Matsushita 1994, Cronin 1994, Iwamoto 1994, Samuelson 1994, Takemitsu 1994, Casano 2005, Regan 2006, Day 2009, Browning 2014, Henderson 2015, for “the instrument’s incorporation into the international contemporary art music scene” (Browning 2014, 28).

for both to overcome the loaded associations and implications of the instrument. The second phase (1980s) situated Iwamoto and the *shakuhachi* in new musical contexts, encouraging Denyer to write ensemble works that opened unprecedented potential avenues. The final phase (1990s) saw Denyer pushing boundaries, exploring the instrument's timbral spectrum, and embarking on a quest to find a voice closely associated with the physicality of the player and the instrument.

As noted in the thesis introduction, I argue that biographical information, personal interests, and musical anecdotes are as important as historical, cultural, and social circumstances when exploring individual cases of music making.<sup>3</sup> They offer scopes for more nuanced readings of the underlying conditions and entangled nature of such cross-cultural collaboration, one of which would be inner cultural diversities of Denyer and Iwamoto. This chapter raises questions about the role of historical and cultural associations of a composer, a performer, and an instrument in collaborations, the possibility of detaching musical instruments from their originating culture(s) or traditional context(s), whether an instrument is a sonic or cultural material, what it takes to create *anew*, and what cross-cultural composition entails in our time.

### **Frank Denyer and the background**

Frank Denyer, born in London in 1943, served as chorister at Canterbury Cathedral Choir School and organist and choirmaster at Small Heath Methodist Church.<sup>4</sup> He studied piano, organ, oboe,

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<sup>3</sup> Denyer points out “the importance of musical anecdote in the oral transmission of musical cultures around the world, and how this was the foundation of the more formal written biographies in modern literate societies” (2016, 70).

<sup>4</sup> Denyer described his background as “coming from a lower middle class family with working class roots” (2019a, 88). For the detailed accounts on his life as a chorister at Canterbury, see Denyer 2019a, 88–94.

trumpet, and theory at the Birmingham School of Music, then composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Denyer recalls that, although he was already interested in non-Western culture – particularly of India and Japan – his relatively conventional music education did not provide the opportunity to learn, for example, either traditional or contemporary Japanese music.<sup>5</sup> He therefore made it his objective to find out what he could learn through and beyond books on traditional Japanese music by Malm.<sup>6</sup> This was the time when few, though increasing numbers of, Japanese performances took place in London, and he remembers seeing *gagaku* and *noh* in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>7</sup> Denyer was also interested in contemporary music by Japanese composers. He already knew some of the music by Tōru Takemitsu (1930–96) and Toshi Ichihyanagi (1933–2022) as a student, contacting them to inquire if they had any other pieces to share, and subsequently came to know more composers, such as Maki Ishii (1936–2003) and Yūji Takahashi (1938–), through Edition Peters, which was then actively publishing new music. In particular, he remembers that the music of Takahashi, with whom he was in correspondence at that time, and of Jō Kondō (1947–), with whom he later developed a close friendship, had a tremendous influence on his own compositions. It is notable that Denyer was approaching Japanese composers from his end, the direction of which seemed rather rare in the 1960s.

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<sup>5</sup> All quotations and background information without individual references, are derived from an interview with Denyer held on 16 August 2019 at Wadham College, University of Oxford, and follow-up correspondence via email (2019b). The access to the unpublished materials, including scores, was generously given by the composer.

<sup>6</sup> It is not clear which book Denyer had access to at that time, but Malm had published books and articles on *noh* (1958; 1960), *kabuki* (1963), Japanese music and musical instruments (1959a), and bibliography of Japanese magazines and music (1959b).

<sup>7</sup> I infer that he attended a *noh* performance by Kanze school at the Aldwych Theatre in 1967, and a *gagaku* performance at the Royal Albert Hall in 1970. He was also aspired to learn about Indian Music and actively involved in its scene in London at that time.

Denyer's early interest in Japanese composers coincided with the launch of the experimental ensemble Mouth of Hermes, which he founded in 1967 and directed in performances of new music.<sup>8</sup> In 1971, this ensemble put on a concert entirely of music by Japanese composers titled 'New Music from Japan', which Denyer believes to be the first concert in Britain that consisted only of Japanese contemporary music.<sup>9</sup> Denyer's programme notes for the concert demonstrate his understandings of Japanese contemporary music and his interest in music that adopted aspects of Japanese traditional music and instruments. For example, he wrote, "[in Yuasa's work] the inflections and tonal modulations are reminiscent of *shakuhachi* music, although they are entirely recomposed in a contemporary context" (Denyer 1971). He found Japanese contemporary music "very distinctive, having something quite unique to say", and could not understand why the music was not already in the repertoire as it seemed so obvious that it should be. Around that time, he also had his introduction to traditional *shakuhachi* music through the LP, *A Bell Ringing in the Empty Sky* (1969), by Gorō Yamaguchi.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The music the ensemble programmed was principally by Cage, Morton Feldman (1926–87), Kondō, Giacinto Scelsi (1905–88), Takahashi, Christian Wolff (1934–), LaMonte Young (1935–), as well as Denyer. Denyer was attracted to those who were dismissed at that time "as crackpots or charlatans" and "had only tiny, devoted circles of followers", but for him were "trapped within the narrow historicism of the European avant-garde", and considered that "such composers offered a door to an alternative world" (Richard 2017).

<sup>9</sup> The concert was held at the Purcell Room, Southbank Centre, on 26 May 1971. The programme included *Bridges I* for amplified harpsichord (1963) and *Rosace I* for amplified violin (1968) by Takahashi, *Kan Soku* for amplified dice (1964) and *Interpenetrations* for two flutes (1963) by Yuasa, *Varelia* for guitar, electric organ, violin, cello and two piccolos (rev. 1969) by Takemitsu, *Kadha Karuna* for flute and piano (rev. 1964) by Kazuo Fukushima (1930–2023), and *Activities* (1962) by Ichiyonagi.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Browning explains that "along with recordings by other major figures, Yamaguchi's recording helped spur many of the first generation of non-Japanese who travelled to Japan to study the *shakuhachi*" (2016, 74).

While Mouth of Hermes held a number of concerts, mainly with a repertoire of European and American music, Denyer increasingly felt a need to know much more about music from around the world. In 1973, he travelled overland to India, catching buses from one town to another and looking for musicians in the streets to interact with – an experience he found “eye-opening and revelatory”. In the following year, he made another journey – this time with his wife, who is Indian – and thanks to her well-connected family, he felt he discovered things to which he would not have otherwise had access.<sup>11</sup> What he experienced during these trips made him realise that he knew little about music and that, despite his formal musical education, he was not equipped with an adequate framework either to understand what was going on in their music, or to ask any intelligible questions. He became conscious that his prior studies were of little use, while anthropological perspectives became more and more important, thinking that “the awareness of the vast worldwide treasure trove of musical theoretical thought could fundamentally transform outworn but ingrained attitudes and prejudices” (Denyer 2019a, 106). Denyer hence decided to embark on studying again, and took up ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University, Connecticut.

He sought answers to such key questions as “what music had been and was now, here and elsewhere”, “what roles it played in the lives of people who made it”, “what the exact nature of music was”, and “if there was such a thing as mankind’s music”. From then on, Denyer found that the act of composing became a journey to pursue these quests and to “find a music which is ‘different’, an alternative path, another perspective that might lead to a widening of possibilities” (Denyer 2019a,

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<sup>11</sup> He stayed with a small rural community in Kullu Valley in North India, learning their way of life, and listening to music wherever it arose. He also held a position as a visiting lecturer at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad.

55). He felt the need for music that is both suitable for and that reflects our social and cultural conditions, describing his life as “an inner journey, a search for a voice in an age of migration” (Denyer 2016; Gilmore 2002). Turning to non-Western music to seek “an alternative” was not uncommon for a modernist composer, but undertaking a doctorate in ethnomusicology certainly was, which demonstrates Denyer’s distinctive musical aspirations and seriousness about the search. His collaboration with Iwamoto played a significant part in this quest and worked as one of the driving forces to move these perennial pursuits forward.

### **Searching for music beyond “the nineteenth-century time capsule”**

Denyer’s experiences in India, then, both posed metaphysical questions and significantly affected his approach to composition.<sup>12</sup> The composer pondered the inherent attributes of instruments and musicians and the prospects to change them so as to adapt new approaches to melody, or more precisely, the tuning system, intonation, and melodic articulation. Prior to detailing Denyer’s collaboration with Iwamoto, this section explores his earlier musical interests that laid a foundation for his entire oeuvre: concerns with instruments and musicians, and a preoccupation with melody, with which he first experimented in *Melodies* (1974–77).

Studying composition in the 1960s, Denyer was uncomfortable with “the narrow range of instrumental types within which [he] was expected to operate” (Denyer 1994, 46), and the further

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<sup>12</sup> Bob Gilmore notes that, shortly after a concert devoted to his music at the Festival d’Orléans in 1973, Denyer withdrew many of his earlier works – some of which were revived in *A Book of Emblems And Songs* (1972–73) – as if “to purge himself of the unwanted residues of the entire sixties, the decade with the longest musical hangover in recent history”, and set out on the new path free from instruments that are clogged up with fixed identities of their own (2003, 28).

limits on combinations of those instruments, such as string quartet and orchestra, which he sees as “institutions” where one is obliged to behave with certain manners (Denyer 2019c). He thought it was paradoxical that, when Western art music attempted to cease “to be merely ‘Western’ in order to appear in a new guise as the ‘internationally contemporary’”, the inherited acoustic instruments were still locked in “a nineteenth-century time capsule” (Denyer 1994, 45). “The peculiar tonal restraints imposed on the development of acoustic instruments” were, he felt, a serious impediment for a composer to find “an individual authenticity” (ibid., 45–47), and expressed his frustration as follows:

Every instrument I could think of [...] was sort of done for, because I’d heard so many pieces for it. There didn’t seem to be any music left to write. So, I just had to find a little corner somewhere... always I want to find *one instrument* I can connect with, that I can make a gesture with, that I can possibly live with. It’s a kind of desperation. (Gilmore 2003, 28; my emphasis)

Denyer then started exploring the alternatives and making instruments of his own.<sup>13</sup> However, he also began to recognise the significance of the other side of the equation – the players and their inherited *modus operandi*; their acquired techniques and performance behaviour influenced the musical articulation and continuities, and defined the music within a context that itself is an expression of a very specific set of cultural values transmitted from the earliest stage of training (Denyer 1994, 46). It was becoming clear to Denyer that reforming the attitudes of a player was far

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<sup>13</sup> Denyer has been using non-standard or invented instruments in his works since 1973: for example, *Marine Residua* (1986), *A Monkey’s Paw* (1987), *Broken Music* (1990), *The Fish that became the Sun (Songs of the Dispossessed)* (1991–96), *Finding Refuge in the Remains* (1992), and *Contained in a Strange Garden* (1994). See Denyer’s website for the catalogue of his hand-made instruments (Denyer 2015–21).

more difficult than redesigning an instrument (Richards 2017). Furthermore, he wondered with whom he could share his music. When he was working with musicians in India, he found it pointless to have written music which could only be understood by certain musicians with specialised training. Denyer thought that discovering the musical means “to transcend these fundamental cultural conditionings”, both of instruments and musicians, was the challenge faced by composers (1994, 47), and started working on compositions that could be approached by skilled musicians of *any* tradition in the 1970s.

As regards melodies, Denyer states that “linearity” had always been the primary concern of his compositional praxis, while “purely monodic composition was extremely rare” in European musical history for a huge historical span (2019a, 50). He dreamt of a new kind of melody, and the preoccupation came together with his newly developed conceptions on note and pitch in his composition *Melodies*, which exemplifies the transition of Denyer’s fundamental musical thoughts during the period. He remembers that the initial idea for this piece was triggered when he heard the chanting from a funeral procession passing alongside his flat in Ahmedabad. The people were chanting, as they walked along, “rāma, rāma, rāma...” (ma is higher and shorter than rā; sung by the composer), a typical two-note melody he was familiar with from a book by musicologist Curt Sachs (1881–1959).<sup>14</sup> When the procession returned, the upper note got higher, and that intrigued him:

It was only a two-note melody, so perhaps the identity of the upper note just comes from being above the first note, and anywhere will do in a way, in theory, because

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<sup>14</sup> Denyer was influenced by Sachs’s ideas that limited note melodies and tumbling strains were “one of the starting points, one of the basic motivations of music, one of the earliest musical forms that we can know about, [and] one of the most universal” (Denyer 2018a). Sachs’s work was one of the topics Denyer was lecturing on in Ahmedabad.

it does not lose the identity of being above the first. I thought, so, a note is not a frequency. It is not a pitch. A note is *an identity!* (my emphasis)

Denyer then began to probe further the notion of a note's identity and to question how this identity would define the characteristics of other notes. He thought, in the two-note melodies of the chanting, the first note had a fixed identity and the other rose imperceptibly and presumably unconsciously upwards. Following this idea, Denyer started writing a two-note melody, then realised that there were far more things that a single note could do and, consequently, decided to start with one-note melodies. The experimentation develops to two and more notes, and this is how *Melodies*, a ninety-minute "exploration of intonation", came about (Denyer 2006). In the course of twenty-five movements, Denyer used various kinds of staves from one to eight lines, culminating in the twentieth movement with a fourteen-note melody. Denyer's theory posits that the conception of a note should be more flexible than "a fixed point on a discreet scale of frequencies" (Gilmore 2007a), which he considered to be another paradigm composers were locked into. Denyer also stressed the necessity of "multiple cultural perspectives on tuning issues" and started writing out tuning systems in cents to free note as "a flexible pitch entity" (2016, 73–74), which, along with Sachs's ideas on limited note melodies, can be associated with his ethnomusicological concerns.<sup>15</sup>

### *Melodies* (1974–77)

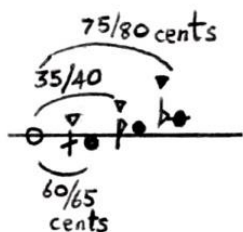
To explore how Denyer incorporates these ideas in *Melodies*, I make brief analytical remarks on its characteristic features. *Melodies* consists of twenty-five monodic movements with their own intonation systems, and may be played by a variety of voices and instruments. In the score, the voices

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<sup>15</sup> The cent system, which divides an octave into 1,200 cents, was offered by mathematician Alexander John Ellis (1814–90) (Ellis 1885, 487–88), and has had a lasting impact on ethnomusicology (Stock 2007, 307–8).

and instruments are only generically suggested to enable the use of rare or newly invented instruments as well as those from diverse cultural origins, whether traditional, classical, or folk. The score of *Melodies* is preceded by sixteen pages of instructions indicating the way in which the music should be read and performed in terms of stave, accidentals, other general signs, glissandi, rhythm, and percussion.

Each movement is written in severely modified staff notation, the basic idea of which is that the note on the stave can be *any* note, and “a note resting on a line is a half-tone higher than the line of the stave, and a note hanging from the line is a half-tone lower[;] if a ledger line is added above or below the stave line, it is a further semitone removed” (Denyer 1974–77, i). The accidentals further raise or lower the pitch of each note by 5–20 cents ( $\Delta$  or  $\nabla$ ), 20–30 cents ( $\blacktriangle$  or  $\blacktriangledown$ ), and a quarter tone (50 cent).<sup>16</sup> As can be seen in the intervallic relationship of the first piece ‘1-Note Melody’ (Example 2.1), the intervals are also indicated in cents: the note on the stave line can be *any* note, the second from the left is 60/65 cents lower than the stave note, the next is 30/45 cents higher, and the one on the right is 75/80 cents higher than the stave note respectively.

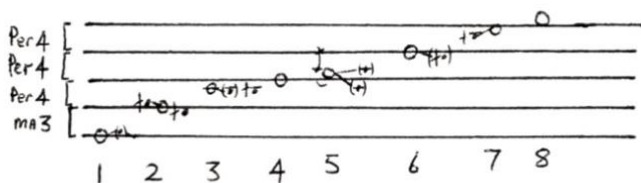


**Example 2.1** Denyer, *Melodies*, intervallic relationship of ‘No. 1, 1-Note Melody’ (1974–77, 2)<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> A semitone in twelve-tone equal temperament is 100 cents. Denyer uses his own accidentals for demiflat and demisharp.

<sup>17</sup> All the examples and figures in this chapter are reproduced by kind permission of the composer.

The pitch is not absolute but relative, thereby further facilitating the performance by a variety of unspecified instruments (Denyer 2019b). When developing to more notes, more staves are employed. In the intervallic relationship of the seventeenth movement ‘8-Note Melody’ (Example 2.2), the distance of five staves is indicated as the major third and perfect fourth, and eight notes, each of which inflects differently, are situated around them with the same principle.



**Example 2.2** Denyer, *Melodies*, intervallic relationship of ‘No. 7, 8-Note Melody’ (1974–77, 35)

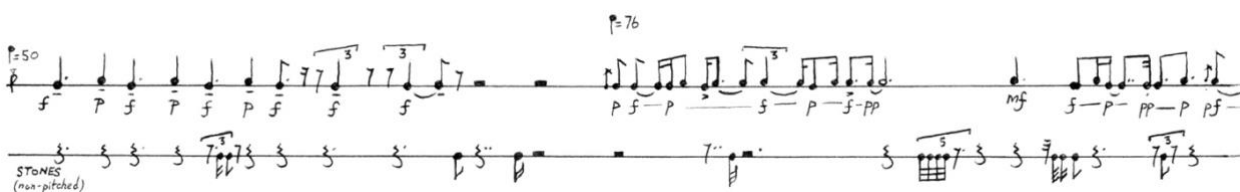
Different types of vibratos, tremolos, and glissandi are precisely specified with “general signs” indicated in the instructions. Rhythm is minutely notated with or without bar lines, and the fractions (e.g.  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$ ) can be occasionally found above a note. Some ‘melodies’ are accompanied by percussion instruments such as stones, muffled drum, and wooden box, and there are special signs to “scrape or produce the sound by friction” (Denyer 1974–77, iv). There are also ‘melodies’ that contain syllables, and the instruction explains the pronunciation of each syllable. These gestures and timbres developed in *Melodies* permeate through the following compositions.

Besides the intonation system, Denyer experimented with different musical elements in each movement. When comparing the first three one-note movements, the first can be read as an exercise on gradual progress and rhythmic expansion in a closed form with metred notation (Example 2.3);

the second on rhythm, dynamics, and timbres, accompanied by non-pitched stones, in a melodically even more restricted pitch range without bar lines (Example 2.4); and the third on articulation in long slurred segmentation, fluidity and mobility of a note and its variants with no bar lines, dynamics, and breaks (Example 2.5).<sup>18</sup>



**Example 2.3** Denyer, *Melodies*, ‘No. 1, 1-Note Melody’, the first line (1974–77, 2)



**Example 2.4** Denyer, *Melodies*, ‘No. 2, 1-Note Melody’, the first line (1974–77, 3)



**Example 2.5** Denyer, *Melodies*, ‘No. 3, 1-Note Melody’, the first line (1974–77, 5)

These single-note melodies signal the greater potentiality of a note and the performativity of its linear development. Moreover, when a note can be *any* pitch, it self-defines its functions and characteristics, which takes one back to Denyer’s point that a note is not just a pitch but an identity.

<sup>18</sup> The first movement is for flute (or voice)/ treble; the second is for horn (or voice) middle range; and the third is for flute (or reed) (or bowed string)/treble or alto (Denyer 1974–77, 2–5).

Denyer left India in 1974 and continued working on *Melodies* as part of his doctoral project at Wesleyan. He proceeded to scrutinise how linear intervals are heard differently to harmonic intervals and, from this, developed the concept of what he calls “linear microtonality” (Denyer 2006). Denyer was also intrigued by the fact that even primary intervals are judged as being ‘in tune’ when heard linearly only after they are tuned a few cents flatter than their harmonic equivalent, and was attracted to the particular qualities of the linear microtonality for their being soft, round, “less rigid, more inherently flexible, and ‘more humane’” (Denyer 2009).<sup>19</sup> However, he again faced the problem of traditional training and preparation for performances by musicians. Modified intervals, for Denyer, are only viable when “they have been completely absorbed into the substrata of the performers’ subconscious”, whereas musicians’ internal pitch repertoire is deeply embedded already within the early years of training, and it is difficult for them to add new and unfamiliar intervals even with rigorous practice (ibid.).

Denyer was also confronted by the issue of instruments; the generic instrumental designation that he thought might open doors to musicians from other cultural traditions was “more an aspiration than reality” (Denyer 2019a, 65), while Western standard instruments are not suitable for what he sought. For example, he thought that open-holed woodwind instruments from *any* culture would be more responsive to his particular compositional aspirations, but it was not possible to find capable and willing performers. Clearly, non-Western instruments and performers, which Denyer expected

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<sup>19</sup> Denyer discovered this phenomenon through his experience studying the *koto* at Wesleyan. Every time he tuned the instrument, his teacher adjusted it a bit, which made him realise that she tuned the instrument melodically while he did it harmonically. He then set up an experiment in which he asked around thirty musicians to tune octaves and fifths linearly.

to free his music from the time capsule of Western art music, are indeed constrained in time capsules of their traditions, trainings, and musical styles, which some consider more difficult to break through than Western instruments (I will return to this concept concerning the *shakuhachi* later).

Denyer had started figuring out, to some extent, how to be free from “the nineteenth-century time capsule” conceptually, yet he encountered obstacles in its realisation: the unfamiliar intonation and notation systems seemed to be insurmountable for musicians at that time (Denyer 2019a, 66).<sup>20</sup> “Having reached this impasse”, Denyer recalls, “I was very fortunate to meet Yoshikazu Iwamoto, for he possessed a whole technical/aesthetic approach to music that required a refined control of pitch inflection [...] and subtle nuance” (Gilmore 2007a). Denyer maintains that “everything I was trying to do with microtones he could do in spades, and what he couldn’t do he was willing to practice until he could” (2006). Concerning instruments, Denyer describes that having listened to Yamaguchi’s LP in the late sixties “was a revelation because it showed [Denyer] for the first time that a single unaccompanied line could be elevated to great art” (2019a, 51), though he had no idea “how significant the *shakuhachi* was to be for [his] development” (Denyer 1994, 47). Denyer, at that time, took notice of the self-sufficiency of the individual line and its development, which are built into the player’s whole relationship with the instrument and its aesthetics in *honkyoku* (ibid.). The pitch flexibility of the *shakuhachi* was also ideal for Denyer’s concept that defines a note as a flexible pitch entity.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Melodies* was not performed until 2010 when most of Part One was presented in Los Angeles.

<sup>21</sup> Tania Cronin, a composer, describes that she hears a note with a sense of tone quality rather than a sense of pitch, and this “hearing pitch as movement is [...] the essence of the *shakuhachi*” (1994, 77), which resonate with Denyer’s ideas.

Denyer later acknowledges that “*shakuhachi* opened the door to a world beyond that defined by the aesthetic obsessions and conceptions of my education” (2014), and “it was easier to achieve the detailed articulation that is crucial to the continuity for my music when starting with the *shakuhachi* than it had ever been previously with more obvious points of departure” (1994, 47). These remarks demonstrate that Iwamoto and the *shakuhachi* are not just incidental but central to the development of Denyer’s musical thoughts.

### **Wesleyan: immersion in Japanese music and an encounter with Iwamoto**

Denyer chose to undertake his PhD in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan because of its world music programme.<sup>22</sup> The programme offered, among others, courses in Indian music and Japanese music with *koto* and *shakuhachi* players. Denyer remembers that, while he felt fairly familiar with Indian music by that time, he was puzzled when listening to *sankyoku* as he could not grasp the relationship between the different instruments and the voice in the small ensemble.<sup>23</sup> “The more I heard the music, the more mysterious it seemed to be”; Denyer thought he would never gain an understanding of the repertoire unless he played it himself. This made him decide to major in Japanese music, so as to study ethnomusicology with Gen’ichi Tsuge (1937–) and the *koto* with Namino Torii.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Denyer recalls that he often encountered the name Wesleyan on the LPs he was listening to in the 1970s as an institution where non-Western musicians were invited as artists-in-residence (Denyer 2013). The *shakuhachi* player Yamaguchi was also at Wesleyan.

<sup>23</sup> *Sankyoku* is a generic term for music of *koto*, *jiuta* (voice and *shamisen*), and *shakuhachi* or *kokyū* (bowed fiddle). *Sankyoku gassō* (also commonly referred as *sankyoku*) is an ensemble of the three often with vocal accompaniment.

<sup>24</sup> The first group of Japanese musicians and scholars came to Wesleyan in 1967 and 1968. It included Yamaguchi (*shakuhachi*), his wife Torii (*koto*, *shamisen*, and voice), Fumio Koizumi (a visiting professor in ethnomusicology), and Tsuge (an ethnomusicologist working on Iranian and Japanese music).

Denyer was spending long days practising the *koto* and worked through repertoire from simple tunes such as *Sakura sakura* to more complex repertoire as *Rokudan no shirabe*.<sup>25</sup> He then composed his first work for a Japanese instrument, *Piece for Koto* (1975), notated in *koto* tablature.<sup>26</sup> Denyer thought he would understand the music better if he wrote with the notation that was chosen or made for the specific instrument, considering that different notation systems prioritise different aspects of music, and each system reflects the society that produces it. There was also a weekly *sankyoku* ensemble class where everyone who was learning *koto* or *shakuhachi* had to attend and stay for the whole session, while each person played something in order of seniority. He found it very hard to get through listening to “not so dissimilar *sankyoku* pieces with not-so-inspiring performances by students” for hours, though when he looks back at it now, he greatly values the experience as it allowed him to absorb the music.

Denyer also took a Japanese film course “to watch Japanese films”, many of which Japanese composers wrote music for. He was particularly taken by the film *Kwaidan* (Kobayashi 1964) whose approach to music and technique Denyer found “very novel and distinct” (Marsh later composed pieces inspired by the film, which I will detail in Chapter 3). Denyer’s PhD dissertation (1977) was on music and musicians in folk stories from different parts of the world, including a detailed analysis of ‘*Hōichi the Earless*’ from Lafcadio Hearn’s *Kwaidan* (1904).<sup>27</sup> Wesleyan also invited Japanese

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<sup>25</sup> *Rokudan no shirabe* is one of the most well-known traditional instrumental pieces *for koto*.

<sup>26</sup> Two versions of *Piece for Koto* were recently recorded by the *koto* player Nobutaka Yoshizawa and released in a CD, *The Boundaries of Intimacy* (2019).

<sup>27</sup> The article “The Musician Myth and the Failed Quest” (Denyer 2010) is derived from his dissertation titled *The Rainbow Bridge: A Perception of the Images and Myths of Musical Creation* (Denyer 1977).

composers such as Takemitsu and held concerts of new works by both the guest composers and the students (Figure 2.1).<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 2.1** Denyer, Lucier, Torii (from the right), and Takemitsu (the third from the left) at Wesleyan (Denyer 2015–2021)

Denyer thus immersed himself in traditional and contemporary Japanese music and beyond as musician, ethnomusicologist, and composer, surrounded by Japanese musicians and people who were interested in Japan.

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<sup>28</sup> Denyer assumes that the composer Alvin Lucier (1931–2021) who was in charge of composition at Wesleyan invited Takemitsu and several other Japanese composers. Figures in this chapter are reproduced from the ‘gallery’ of Denyer’s website with his permission.

Denyer recounts how, in 1975, the young *shakuhachi* master Iwamoto came to Wesleyan as an artist-in-residence.<sup>29</sup> Denyer helped Iwamoto, who seemed to be “very shy and nervous”, settle into his flat when he arrived. As a graduate student majoring in Japanese music who by chance lived opposite Iwamoto, Denyer became very close to the *shakuhachi* player. He recalls that his relationship with Iwamoto was always through music and music-related aspirations: for Iwamoto, “the *shakuhachi* and its new role in the modern era” and, for Denyer, new composition that was free from old constraints (2019a, 126). In addition to the weekly ensemble classes where they played both *sankyoku* and contemporary Japanese music (with Denyer playing the *koto* and piano), the composer listened to Iwamoto practising *honkyoku* “morning, noon, and night” from where he lived.<sup>30</sup> Denyer believes that composers can learn about instrumental techniques from a book but cannot get the sound in one’s ear and imagine how it works without listening intensively, and thinks these first-hand experiences, however unintentional, had equipped him for his writing music for *shakuhachi* later. Denyer’s interest was also sparked by the contrast between Iwamoto’s rigorous approach to music, which he found “very traditional and conservative Japanese”, and his keenness and openness to finding ways for the *shakuhachi* to internationally branch out into new music composition, unlocking “[its] unrealised technical and emotional potential” (Denyer 2019a, 127).

Indeed, Iwamoto already had quite a repertoire of contemporary Japanese pieces. In his article “the potential of the *shakuhachi* in contemporary music” (1994), Iwamoto details

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<sup>29</sup> Iwamoto is a pupil of Baisen Ōnishi and Katsuya Yokoyama and an exponent of the Kinko school. His name was first established in Japan and started to gain international reputation when he came to Wesleyan.

<sup>30</sup> Denyer remembers that, at the beginning of the year, Iwamoto planned out *honkyoku* pieces he was going to play for the year and put dates for practicing them to the month and the day. Among other works they played together, there was music by Ishii.

compositions for the *shakuhachi* by both Japanese and Western composers from its rise by *Five Pieces for Shakuhachi 'Chikurai'* (1964) by Makoto Moroi (1930–2013) to the 1990s. Iwamoto wrote, referring to Ishii, that the sudden interest of Moroi, a regular attendant of the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music, sparked off new enthusiasm in the minds of Japanese composers who were then, on the contrary, striving for *internationalism* (Iwamoto 1994, 7). It is also noteworthy that Ryōhei Hirose (1930–2008), a composer composing for *shakuhachi* in the 1960s, claimed that it was greatly the enthusiasm of the traditional players who inspired contemporary composers to challenge and contribute to the new field (ibid., 8). According to Denyer, Iwamoto believed the long and distinguished history of *shakuhachi* in Japan was just the seed of the development, and “it was time for the instrument to have a global history”.

‘Play’ from *A Book of Emblems and Songs II* (1973)

Although they had played together quite often, Denyer neither had immediate plans to write for *shakuhachi* nor thought that Iwamoto would be interested in playing his music. Denyer carried on composing at Wesleyan, but his music did not really come into their relationship, except for one occasion when Iwamoto asked Denyer if he had a piece that could be played on the *shakuhachi*. Denyer suggested ‘Play’ from *A Book of Emblems and Songs II*, written for two woodwind instruments from any background and violin.<sup>31</sup> ‘Play’ is written in staff notation, with the notes confined in a restrained pitch space in a similar way to *Melodies* (the notes used are *d*-demiflat, *e*-flat, *f*-demiflat, *g*-demiflat, *a*-flat, and *b*, and they are occasionally altered by accidentals) (Example 2.6).

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<sup>31</sup> The recording by two clarinets can be heard in the CD, *Faint Traces* (2005).



**Example 2.6** Denyer, ‘Play’ from *A Book of Emblems and Songs II*, the second line (1973, 1)

The time signatures of the two woodwinds differ from each other and, therefore, they share bar lines only every few bars. Iwamoto decided to perform it with a student *shakuhachi* player, and Denyer thought two *shakuhachi* had a special quality to the ear, particularly with their fast tempo, rhythmic aspects, and microtonality.<sup>32</sup>

In 1976, Iwamoto completed his time at Wesleyan. A day before his departure for Japan, Iwamoto asked Denyer if he would write music for *shakuhachi* and help realise “not what the *shakuhachi* has been but what it *might* have been” (my emphasis). Denyer responded that he would think about it, being wary for several reasons: he was aware of “the *shakuhachi*’s potent Japanese Buddhist pedigree”; he felt that every sound of the instrument is imbued with a rich tradition; and he wanted neither to ignore it nor to be lured into imitating the traditional *honkyoku* repertoire (Denyer 2019a, 127; 2019b). Nevertheless, Denyer could not resist the last words Iwamoto spoke at the airport: “about the music you write, I do not care how difficult it is, even if it takes me more than

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<sup>32</sup> It would be interesting to know how this piece, in which each note should be “detached throughout”, is played on the *shakuhachi*. The *shakuhachi* generally does not use a tongued or breath articulation for a reiterated pitch, but rather achieve it by fingers’ quickly opening and closing an already closed hole (Lependorf 1989, 233–37).

twenty years, I will solve the problems”. According to Denyer, “such sentiments a composer hears seldom and they could not be easily ignored” (ibid.).

The process from the initial hesitation to overcoming the anxiety seems common among composers of his generation who embarked on cross-cultural composition in the 1970s onwards. Martin Regan suggests that “by deliberately referencing some distant or imagined musical ‘Other’, the composer puts himself or herself into unnecessary competition with traditional repertoire, a repertoire that already has its own history, performance practice, and cultural baggage” (2006, 7). The question here would be whether the cultural baggage of the musical Other actually weigh more than that of the West. The next section investigates how Denyer first confronted the challenge by employing “counter-strategies” to *honkyoku*, then departed from there, and how Iwamoto executed what Denyer proposed by developing techniques within and beyond what was used in *honkyoku*.

### **First phase of the collaboration: negotiation with what the *shakuhachi* had been**

In 1977, Denyer also left Wesleyan to live in Kent, England, where he started working on the *shakuhachi* pieces *ON, ON, - It must be so* (1977–78), *Wheat* (1977–81), and *Quite White* (1978), corresponding with Iwamoto in Japan.<sup>33</sup> Denyer had heard *shakuhachi* to a great extent by then but did not play the instrument, so when he sent parts of the scores to Iwamoto, he always asked Iwamoto to return them if there was anything technically difficult or impossible to play. Denyer recalls that

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<sup>33</sup> These three pieces were once collectively titled “Folio for *Shakuhachi*” (Iwamoto 1994, 9–10). The first piece’s title varies: *ON, ON, - It must be so* in the score (Denyer 1977–78), inscribed as *On, on – it must be so* on the CD (Denyer 2007), and *On, On, It Must Be So* on his website (Denyer 2015–21). This thesis uses the score. The score lists two completion dates: July 1977 and February 1978.

Iwamoto “never said that any passage was unplayable or asked for anything to be altered” and would just say “I cannot play that yet” (Denyer 2019a, 127). Iwamoto, however, later recollects that he was bewildered and thought “this [was] not possible at all!”, “was I [to] dismiss these pieces as nonsense or impossible?”, and “none of my previous knowledge about *shakuhachi* techniques seemed to work in these compositions”, then “one and a half year passed in vain without any successful technical solutions to the overwhelming difficulties to be surmounted” (Iwamoto 1984; 1994, 10). What Iwamoto found most problematic in these pieces were: 1) fitting inordinate numbers of microtonally modified notes in any given time without undermining musical satisfaction; 2) making the instrument respond quickly to execute the complicated rhythmical passages; and 3) realising the carefully worked out dynamic indications (Iwamoto 1994, 10). He nevertheless kept trying, by reconsidering the whole technique of the *shakuhachi*, to tackle the difficulties one at a time (ibid.).

Meanwhile, Denyer struggled to find work in the UK and decided to go where he could combine a job with fieldwork. He first became a research fellow in African music at the Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi, in 1978, and then a lecturer in ethnomusicology at the Kenyatta University College in 1980. Denyer had almost finished the three *shakuhachi* works by the time he left for Kenya, and his correspondence with Iwamoto continued through letters and cassettes between Kenya and Japan. Denyer reflects that the geographical isolation from Europe and Japan benefitted him in finding his own way with *shakuhachi*, free from conventions of both (1994, 48). Denyer sent corrections to Iwamoto, asking if things were working on the *shakuhachi*, while Iwamoto updated Denyer on progress and sent some recordings on tapes. In 1981, when Denyer sent the additional part of *Wheat*, Iwamoto decided to record the whole piece in a studio and send it to

the composer. Denyer was “terribly disappointed and found it demoralising” because, “despite all [Iwamoto’s] incredible dedication and hard work, the pieces had not come out at all as [Denyer] had imagined them” – the music to him sounded fragmented, lacked spontaneity, and was far too much like “standard new music” (Denyer 2019a, 128; 2019b). Denyer remembered receiving profuse and gracious apologies from Iwamoto when he communicated his dissatisfaction, though he thought most of the failure was due to his own inadequacies (ibid.). This event seemed to become an incentive for Iwamoto to push their collaboration to the next stage later in the same year.

After spending almost three years in Kenya, Denyer moved to Muswell Hill in London in 1981. A few months later, he received an unexpected call from Iwamoto telling him that “I would like to study these pieces with you”, announcing that “I am in London now and have got a flat around the corner from where you live”. Thereafter, they “spent time together every day, going through each note and every phrase of the three compositions” for the next several weeks. Denyer remembers that Iwamoto sometimes rang Denyer’s doorbell very early in the morning, saying “I have seven ways of playing this passage”, and played them to him. At some point, Denyer noticed that Iwamoto was not doing anything else and had come to London just to study Denyer’s pieces. Denyer now looks back and thinks that Iwamoto was “very undemonstrative, sober in manner, but could take one’s breath away like that”.

After their exhaustive efforts, Denyer recalls, these three pieces came into “an amazing performance”, and they first recorded *Quite White* at the Royal College of Music in September 1981 and later the other two pieces at Dartington Hall in April 1984, which comprised the LP, *Wheat: The*

*Music of Frank Denyer* (1984).<sup>34</sup> Iwamoto recollects that he undertook “quite a personal and long journey of research” before beginning to understand some principles, and it was like a dream for him after spending three years practising the music and slowly discovering the new techniques demanded by each piece (Iwamoto 1984; 1994, 10). For microtonal issues, Iwamoto formulated a simple principle to realise quarter tones and further minute inflections with particular fingerings and head movements; for intricate rhythms, he discovered alternative fingerings that enabled him to play fast notes; and, for other issues, he invented new techniques, for instance, the knee technique which I explain shortly (Iwamoto 1994, 11).

*ON, ON, - It must be so* (1977–78)

Denyer’s first *shakuhachi* piece, *ON, ON, - It must be so* (hereafter referred to as *On, On*), for *shakuhachi* and percussion, was written as “an antidote” for him to overcome the anxiety about the historical shadow of traditional *honkyoku*, whose seductive influence Denyer considered to have “the power to subvert almost any compositional idea into a pale silhouette of itself” (Denyer 1994, 47; 2019a, 127). As opposed to *honkyoku*, which Denyer regards as “predominantly slow, and meditative, exerting a mesmeric power that draws the listener into its unique spiritual and aesthetic ambit”, *On, On* is fast, constantly moving, rhythmic, and virtuosic with percussive sounds, all of which Denyer adopted as “counter-strategies” (Denyer 1994, 48; 2019a, 127).<sup>35</sup> However, this does not mean that

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<sup>34</sup> The LP was issued under the composer’s own label Orchid Records. The three *shakuhachi* works were performed by Iwamoto (*shakuhachi*), Denyer, and Paul Hiley (percussion). The *shakuhachi* pieces on the LP were later re-issued in the CD, *Music for Shakuhachi* (2007).

<sup>35</sup> Flora Henderson claims that “all *honkyoku* has movement [...] and the tempo is not uniformly slow in performance” and assumes that what Denyer attempted to explore was “greater movement parameters and *tempi* than would usually be the case in *honkyoku* and a means of rendering implicit movement explicit” (2015, 225).

he objected to the convention of the *shakuhachi*. Denyer was keen to utilise “its unique arsenal of special techniques” to their full capacity and was particularly taken by: the wide variations in open and veiled timbre between different notes in the same register; the ornamentations (e.g. *ha-ra-ro*); the breathing timbres (e.g. *muraiki*, *kazaiki*, and *sorane*); the flutter tonguing (e.g. *tamane*) and trill and tremolo techniques (e.g. *korokoro*); and certain types of vibrato (Denyer 1994, 48).<sup>36</sup> To “release [these inherited techniques] from their Japanese context so as to personalise them in [his music]”, Denyer set the changed circumstances within which the techniques should still work but differently, and fully notated the ornamentations and timbre modifications with notes and signs (ibid.).

The *shakuhachi* in *On, On* is written in G clef staff notation without bar lines and key signatures, and tempo is indicated with metronome marks.<sup>37</sup> Structurally, the work can be divided into three parts: 1) a first part in which the short and fragmented yet fluid *shakuhachi* melodic lines move restlessly in a fast tempo, with the rattling castanets and thumping bass drum; 2) transient, pensive *shakuhachi* solo phrases in a slow tempo, introduced by the metal slab; 3) another quick development of melodies with percussion. The most noticeable features of *On, On* are the various kinds of pitch inflection and slide within and between notes that are mainly produced by *meri* or *kari* (modification of pitch and timbre generated by the head movement and embouchure control), *suri* (portamento with cross-fingering and finger movement on a hole), and glissandi (slide with a greater intervallic span with a change of fingering), all of which reflect Denyer’s earlier ideas on pitch

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<sup>36</sup> I will explain these techniques when it is relevant to Denyer’s music. For the overviews of *shakuhachi* techniques, see Lependorf 1989, Tsukitani 2008, Miki 2008.

<sup>37</sup> Traditional *shakuhachi* notation, which is unique to the instrument, is in tablature form written with Japanese syllabary *katakana* in columns.

fluidity. He explains that “hard fixed pitches become moving glissandi[,] [...] and things we thought we knew start to transform and appear in unfamiliar guises” (2019a, 58–59).

As can be seen in the first few notes of the piece (Example 2.7), Denyer often combines them with *molto vibrato* (“MV”), *molto throat vibrato* and oscillation of the breath (“MTV”), *non-vibrato* (“NV”), and flutter-tonguing (“flt”), which can be traced back to both his previous works and traditional *shakuhachi* techniques.

**Example 2.7** Denyer, *On, On, - It must be so*, the beginning (1977–78, 1)

While these sliding notes generate a sense of an uninterrupted flow, some glissandi provide a distinctive feature: for example, the repeated glissandi descending from accented  $e^1$ -flat with tremolo and flutter-tonguing, and the following upwards glissandi from  $b^1$  to  $a^2$  at the beginning of the second line (Example 2.8).<sup>38</sup> The latter minor seventh reoccurs as a reference point along with occasionally inserted tonal reference points including perfect fifths.

<sup>38</sup> The glissando between  $b^1$  to  $a^2$  has a technical difficulty as it crosses over two ranges, which according to Iwamoto can be overcome by using vibrato (1994, 26).



**Example 2.8** Denyer, *On, On*, - *It must be so*, the beginning of the second line (1977–78, 1)

Moreover, I suggest that the central notes of the piece are *e*-flat in the first part and *a* in the slow part: when played on a standard *d-shakuhachi*, *e*-flat is one of the most veiled notes, in contrast to *a* which is one of the fundamental notes that are clear and strong.<sup>39</sup> By their recurring appearance, they become an agent that determines the character of the sections. These two notes, a tritone apart, dominate the melody towards the end of the piece, where *e*-flat (*d*-sharp) eventually resolves to *e*.

*On, On* is an extremely virtuosic piece, and Iwamoto regarded it as the hardest among the three for “its on-going nature [that gives] no space for ‘breathing’” and for its complex rhythms coupled with microtonal inflections (1994, 10), all of which distance this piece from *honkyoku*. Most notably, in *honkyoku* pieces, each phrase is played within a single breath without underlying pulse or metre, which “lends a sense that *honkyoku* [...] are shaped by the natural progression of time, rather than artificial rhythmic systems” (Browning 2014, 70). Contrastingly, in *On, On*, the player must adhere to the notated rhythm and “snatch breaths” where possible. Denyer, by carefully

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<sup>39</sup> The length of standard 1.8-*shakuhachi* is one *shaku* eight(*hachi*), approximately 54.5 centimetres, from which the name derived (*shaku* is a unit of Japanese traditional measurement that is 30.3 centimetres). It is also called *d-shakuhachi* as the foundation note produced when all the holes are closed is *d*<sup>1</sup>. Iwamoto details the different types of *shakuhachi* in his article and notes that he personally treasures the *b*-flat-(2.3-)*shakuhachi* both for traditional and contemporary works (1994, 13–14). Denyer normally does not indicate which *shakuhachi* to be used.

employing these “counter-strategies”, evaded “the historical shadow of the *shakuhachi*” – its association with Buddhist history and traditional music – in his first piece for the instrument, though there are musical features that convey his intimate knowledge of traditional *shakuhachi* music and techniques: for example, frequently appearing grace notes (*atari*) that articulate the beginning of phrases and explosive breath (*muraiki*) notated with *crescendo*. It is also intriguing that the slow section opens with the temple-bell-like metal slab which could evoke the *shakuhachi* tradition. Iwamoto received *On, On* as Denyer’s declaration of his compositional method for the *shakuhachi*, and was eager to comprehend the meanings of each component and understand them with a logic to which his body and fingers could respond (Iwamoto 1994, 10, 29).

#### Wheat (1977–81)

After *On, On*, Denyer found that “the commercial mass produced quality” of the percussion in *On, On* “[sat] awkwardly with the *naturalness* of the *shakuhachi*” (Denyer 1994, 48; original emphasis).<sup>40</sup> The connection with nature is another prevailing connotation of the *shakuhachi*, primarily because of the instrument’s deceptively simple physical appearance as an unrefined bamboo cylinder, but also because of its history and associated aesthetics.<sup>41</sup> Denyer was also conscious of the perceptual disparity in dynamics between the instruments in *On, On*: “[the

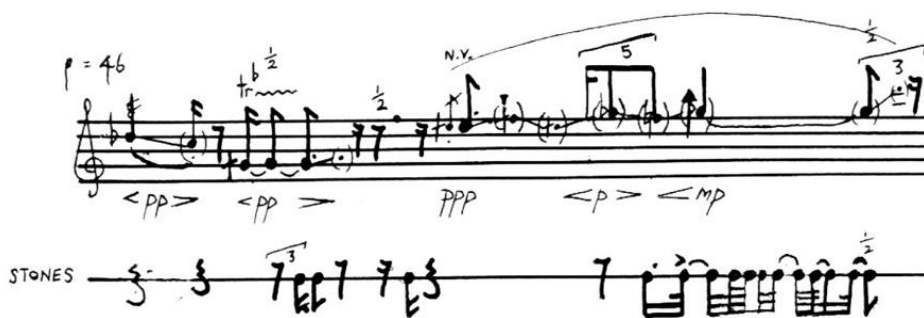
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<sup>40</sup> The word ‘naturalness’ here should be understood as “the quality of possessing the distinctive features of a naturally occurring object, landscape, etc.: the appearance of being unchanged or unspoilt by human intervention” (OED, s.v. ‘naturalness’).

<sup>41</sup> Browning lists directions in which the *shakuhachi*’s connection with nature is extended in current discourse of the instrument: “to the physical instrument, a simple bamboo tube without mechanical parts; its history as an instrument played by itinerant monks who travelled the Japanese countryside; references to natural phenomena in the titles of some *honkyoku*; and the iconic status of natural metaphors in describing the instrument’s sound” (2016, 71). For more extensive accounts on the *shakuhachi* and nature, see Browning 2014.

percussion] were too loud, whilst the *shakuhachi*'s soft sound was extended almost down to infinity".<sup>42</sup> Those concerns, with the experiences in Africa that drew Denyer's attention to "the mystery of simple sounds derived from the everyday ephemera of life", resulted in incorporating "simpler and found materials" to accompany the *shakuhachi* in his next piece *Wheat* (Denyer 2018b).<sup>43</sup>

*Wheat*, consisting of six short pieces, opens with a slow piece in which the *shakuhachi* stays soft and quiet, accompanied by clicking stones staying subtle and close with the melodic line, which add some serenity despite its rhythmic gesture and crispness (Example 2.9).<sup>44</sup>



**Example 2.9** Denyer, *Wheat*, the first piece, the beginning (1977–81, [1])

In contrast to *On, On*, the phrasing could be perceived as breath phrases with rests in between, though both the phrases and the rests are strictly in tempo. Rests are indeed important in his compositions,

<sup>42</sup> When they later recorded *On, On*, the sound editor had great difficulties in balancing the *shakuhachi* and the percussion because of their incompatible dynamic range.

<sup>43</sup> Denyer started composing *Wheat* before *Quite White*. The first five pieces were written between August and December 1977, and the sixth piece was written between December 1980 and February 1981 in Nairobi (Denyer 1977–81).

<sup>44</sup> The stone is described as "flint pebbles struck together using hand as resonator" in his instruments catalogue (Denyer 2015–21).

as will be seen later; “the line never breaks” and, even with rests, it “continues mentally and encompasses the silence” (Denyer 2019a, 49). There are two occasions where the *shakuhachi* player is instructed to sing while playing the same notes, which provides a distinctive timbre. The freely flowing melody with slow *portamenti* gives the impression that the space of melodic mobility is illimitable.

In contrast, the second piece is fast and vibrant with variegated but well-merged percussion instruments.<sup>45</sup> The coarse texture of sandpaper blocks gives prominence to the sound of the unadorned bamboo slit-drums and resonating bell-like metal slabs. Two driving forces in this piece are the repeated melodic structure initiated by sliding two notes in *forte* that signal the beginning of a phrase, and the percussion coming in while the melody is descending and briefly lingering on lower notes at the end (Example 2.10).

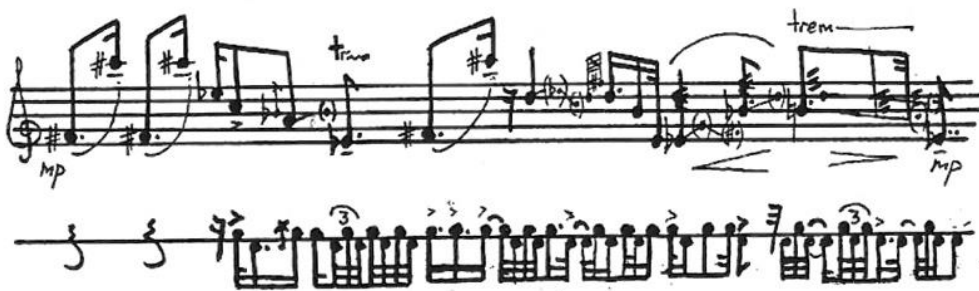
**Example 2.10** Denyer, *Wheat*, the second piece, the beginning (1977–81, [2])

The opening two notes, a portamento from  $d^3$ -three-quarter-tone-sharp to  $b^2$ , are the key segment for the melodic developments, and its urging repetition later forms the climax. Iwamoto recounts the

<sup>45</sup> The bamboo slit-drums, which are in four in the catalogue, are originally designed for this piece.

new technique he discovered to make the seemingly impossible with any (in)conceivable fingering but the most crucial downward portamento possible: that is, to close the bottom of the end hole of the instrument on a knee in order to reach the required pitch, which he calls “the knee technique” (1994, 11, 37). Iwamoto also agilely performs the deft shift from the vigorous opening to the stagnant ending in each phrase.

The third and fifth pieces are both unaccompanied and slow in tempo: Denyer had developed the confidence to challenge “the harder task of making a distinctive slow style music [...] without its reminding the listener of *honkyoku*” by the time, and expanded it further in his next piece *Quite White*, that is “not only very slow but soft and withdrawn” (Denyer 1994, 48). The melody in the third piece is written in a wide dynamic range and register with long non-vibrato notes that generate serenity, while that of the fifth piece stays mostly in *piano*, although expressivity emerges from the different timbres produced by flutters, trills, and tremolos. The swift fourth piece has a melodic construction similar to the second piece with the repeated signalling segments: a leap between *f<sup>l</sup>*-sharp (dotted crotchet) and *c<sup>3</sup>*-sharp (semiquaver), to open each phrase, followed by descending development accompanied by percussive instruments (Example 2.11).



**Example 2.11** Denyer, *Wheat*, the fourth piece, the beginning of the second line (1977–81, [5])

The numbers of the segment at the beginning of each phrase increase from one to four and, correspondingly, the phrases get longer as if the melody can fly higher and land further when it is led by more driving segments. The clattering stones in two pitches effectively hasten and ruffle the music.

The last piece, which was added to *Wheat* later in Nairobi, presents a relentless interchange between the long-slurred, vigorous melodic movements of the *shakuhachi* and the rhythmic responses of the percussion. The percussive aspects of this additional piece imply the composer's more open and bolder approach to rhythm instruments. *Wheat* is thus a kaleidoscopic showcase of the natural flow of *shakuhachi* melodic lines Denyer achieved, both in fast and slow music, and of the *shakuhachi*'s compatibility with found instruments.

### *Quite White* (1978)

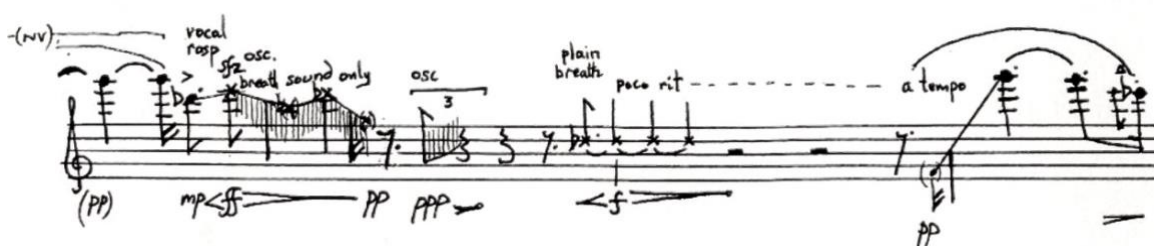
*Quite White* is a slow and introspective piece which antecedes Denyer's later exploration of quietude. The first note  $g^3$  is in the very top of the *shakuhachi*'s range which tends to be played very loudly (Iwamoto 1984),<sup>46</sup> though Denyer was attracted to the "strange, flat, featureless translucence" of the note in *pianissimo* and adopted it as a "reference point like a high, remote, vibratoless white beacon" (Denyer 1994, 48).<sup>47</sup> As in the second and fourth pieces of *Wheat*, all the phrases, Denyer explains,

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<sup>46</sup> Iwamoto instructs how to make notes higher than  $f^3$  that are beyond the range of traditional music, using special fingerings and the technique of closing the bottom end-hole on the knee (1994, 20–21). He writes that they should not appear in quick passages but as a separate or sustained note, and suggests a use of shorter instruments.

<sup>47</sup> Denyer also admits that this great challenge was partially attributed to his ignorance, although he knew that Iwamoto had a good fine note around the range. Iwamoto maintains that challenging to "reverse the inherent dynamic value of notes" in *Quite White* made him re-examine his dynamic realisation in contemporary music performance (Iwamoto 1994, 11). According to Denyer, Iwamoto performed *Quite White* in public only once or twice as, even for Iwamoto, the piece was too risky to be played in public.

“emanate and fall from, or gravitate towards and merge into [the note], as if it inhales and exhales”, mostly without preparation (Gilmore 2007a). The recurring, highly controlled sustained note makes the whole piece static and serene. The piece also explores new timbres: vocal rasp, breath sound, oscillations, plain breath, and slow glissandi combined with drastic changes in dynamics (Example 2.12).



**Example 2.12** Denyer, *Quite White*, the third line (1978, [1])

The inorganic texture of the high note and occasional animated gestures – for example, a full-speed blast in which the breath going through the instrument is vividly heard – offer a marked contrast. Thus, by the time he composed *Quite White*, Denyer has come to terms with the *shakuhachi*’s associative traditional music, which he thought “too big a burden to take on” (Denyer 2006), in terms not just of tempo and rhythm but also phrasing, timbres, and atmosphere, and gradually brought them into play rather than cautiously keeping them away.

When listening to Iwamoto’s performances of these earliest *shakuhachi* pieces, they appear to be spontaneously improvised, although, when compared to the scores, it is clear how accurately Iwamoto executes every detail indicated in the fully-notated scores, while still sounding free and being expressive. From a compositional point of view, Denyer thought that he “had been fairly

successful in creating a melodic form that was fluid and flexible enough”, given that it appeared to be improvised to the listeners’ ears. At the same time, the improvisatory effect owes much to Iwamoto’s considerable effort to fully internalise the music in order to produce a natural and eloquent performance. Iwamoto believed that “naturalness present in the playing of traditional *honkyoku* can still be maintained even in this new setting”, and that “these difficult pieces are possible only when they are played with complete naturalness, in the body and mind of the performer, which has been cultivated through training in *honkyoku* for many years” (Iwamoto 1994, 11).<sup>48</sup> There is an interesting correlation between Denyer’s earlier idea of *naturalness* of the *shakuhachi* as an object associated with nature and Iwamoto’s view of the *naturalness* in playing the instrument.

Iwamoto also suggests that, regarding the techniques, “there were some good hints hidden in *honkyoku*”, and that he always returned to the existing playing technique of *honkyoku*, despite his first impression that none of those would be applicable.<sup>49</sup> These accounts indicate that, in Denyer’s works which provide new guises for the *shakuhachi*, the exploration of new aspects of the instrument emerged from the player’s physicality and techniques – a solid grounding in the instrument’s traditional repertoire. To borrow the terms of Eric Clarke (et al.), the instrument and performer’s body still “[act] as a repository of history” (2016, 157). This point becomes important for a later discussion of whether an instrument can be detached from its originating culture.

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<sup>48</sup> The word ‘naturalness’ here should be understood as “lack of artificiality or affectedness” (OED, s.v. ‘naturalness’).

<sup>49</sup> The *shakuhachi* player, Katsuya Yokoyama, who famously premiered Takemitsu’s *November Steps* (1967) claims that almost all conceivable playing techniques have been exploited through the long history of the instrument, and that there is not much, in terms of playing techniques, that has come out of a brand new creative activity appeared in our time; it is simply a matter of “how to re-organize the techniques that had already been devised” (Tokumaru 1994, 57).

Thus, the first phase of the collaboration of Denyer and Iwamoto is the period during which the composer and the performer both strove to go beyond what they had been, being deeply rooted and fully trained in their own traditions, while also negotiating with what the instrument had been in its long history. With regards to *On, On*, Denyer comments:

[W]e obey the imperative for discovering the ‘other’, and are led by the mystery of desire. [...] With music that does not yet fully exist, but is still in that semi-dreamlike state of sonic disembodiment to which the composer is so fatefully drawn, the process and the desire are the same. (Denyer 2019a, 12)

Denyer and Iwamoto shared “the desire” and played their roles in “the process” to embody a new sonic world. The first three pieces are the fruition of their working together for almost four years without any institutional framework or planned performance opportunity, driven only by the shared aspirations and perhaps curiosity. Iwamoto wrote, “in the first session [of the recording], I was suddenly caught by a very deep feeling” and “was very delighted that I could at last touch the core of the work” (1984). This was the beginning of *shakuhachi* oeuvre they created together which are now considered to be, as Kiku Day suggests, “an important milestone in the history of the instrument and an affirmation of the role it can play in genres outside its own tradition” (2008, 294).

### **On their collaboration**

This section reflects on the nature of their collaboration from the first phase and contextualises it in recent scholarship of composer-performer collaboration. Based on the course of events from their encounter to the realisation of the first three pieces and related anecdotes, the process seems to follow the linear model of collaboration – conventional in much Western art music – in which a composition

is developed as “the autonomous work of a composer” and then passed on to the performer, who realises the composer’s creative imagination as embodied in the written score (Clarke et al. 2013, 628; 2016, 114–15). In this model, composers are situated at the apex of the musical hierarchy (Taylor 2016a, 559). Individuals tend to have “a fixed and defensive view of what their role is”, and the tacit understanding is that “the role of the composer is creative[,] and the role of performer is technical” (Hayden and Windsor 2007, 30–31).

In the creative process between Denyer and Iwamoto, despite the composer’s willingness to incorporate the performer’s suggestions, Iwamoto was adamant in mastering what was presented in the score and asked Denyer’s opinions throughout the preparation. Having a background in the *shakuhachi* tradition in which notations are used as mnemonic devices and leave details to the oral transmission, Iwamoto probably acquired this very attitude to be faithful to the score from working on new compositions. The technical demands Denyer made were not only unconventional but also beyond the bounds of possibility. Nonetheless, Iwamoto’s response to them was to taciturnly tackle the problems rather than asking the composer to amend it for the performer’s convenience. Moreover, their interaction through preparation and performance shows that Iwamoto gave great importance to the ideal realisation of a piece in the composer’s mind.

One might argue that this working relationship should be described as directive or interactive rather than collaborative. Alan Taylor suggests that the term collaboration should only be applied to cases where the imaginative tasks and decision-making process are shared without hierarchy between the participants, referring to Sam Hayden and Luke Windsor’s distinction between: 1) directive in which the notation has the traditional function as instructions and the composer aims to

determine the performance through the score; 2) interactive (or consultative) in which the composer is still the author but is involved in negotiation with musicians whose process is more interactive, discursive, and reflective; and 3) collaborative in which the music is developed through a collective decision-making process without no singular author or hierarchy of roles (Taylor 2016b, 567–68; Hayden and Windsor 2007, 33). In fact, when it comes to how Denyer and Iwamoto work on individual pieces, the relationship seems to be directive or interactive at most (though Denyer was open to “collective decision-making process”). However, when considering what happens before and after each composition, Denyer takes shared experiences, aesthetics, ideas, techniques, and knowledge they had exchanged over a lengthy period of time into serious consideration, and their interaction continuously and mutually influences their musical lives and practices; for that reason, I would call the entire creative process collaboration.

### **Second phase of the collaboration: the *shakuhachi* in new musical landscapes**

In September 1981, Denyer was appointed as a senior lecturer at Dartington College of Arts and, within a month, he convinced the principal to start a Japanese music programme and to hire Iwamoto to lead the course, which allowed the two artists an opportunity to further develop their collaboration.<sup>50</sup> After joining Dartington, Iwamoto became a leading figure of the *shakuhachi* scene at the college and thereafter in the UK, with *shakuhachi* players congregating around him, with

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<sup>50</sup> One of key elements of Dartington’s unique ethos and pedagogy was “the (complex) presence of the ‘other’, represented by fellow students, diverse staff, music from different cultures [...], and a range of visitors with an international profile who not only talked to the students but played music with them” (Wiggins et al. 2018, 395). Iwamoto was hired as permanent staff, was given a house on campus, and brought his family from Japan to the UK in 1982 (Denyer 2019a, 128).

composers whom he encouraged to write for *shakuhachi*, and with musicians who aspired to play with him.<sup>51</sup> Iwamoto was gratified that contemporary works for *shakuhachi* introduced him to the world of the performers of Western instruments and the excellent musicianship of other instrumentalists (Iwamoto 1994, 12). He particularly enjoyed his collaboration with the French flautist Pierre-Yves Artaud and believed that, through their collaboration, “the *shakuhachi* and flute duo was firmly established in truly contemporary terms for the first time” (ibid., 12–13).<sup>52</sup> In terms of new compositions, students at Dartington, including Vaughan and Michael Turnbull (1959–), wrote *shakuhachi* works for Iwamoto.<sup>53</sup> Denyer also invited Japanese composers, such as Somei Satoh (1947–) and Kondō, and organised lectures and concerts (Figure 2.2).<sup>54</sup> Iwamoto, around the same time, came to make frequent public appearances outside the college context, as well as releasing his *honkyoku* LP.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, his moving to England gave Iwamoto a reputation in

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Stagg was one of Iwamoto’s students from the early days. He was a flautist for the BBC Symphony Orchestra and is considered to be one of the few people who can play Denyer’s *shakuhachi* works.

<sup>52</sup> The two musicians met at the Almeida Festival in 1986, and their collaboration began at the Dartington International Summer School in 1987, followed by travels to Paris, Turin, and Tokyo. The works composed for them include *High Song* (1987) for soprano flute in G and *shakuhachi* (or alto flute) by Kondō, *Synchrony* (1986) originally written for two flutes by Yoshihisa Taira (1937–2005), and *Nāda* (1987) for *shakuhachi* and bass flute by Vaughan. Artaud detailed his collaboration with Iwamoto and the works in his “Aspects of the Flute in the Twentieth Century” (1994, 132–34).

<sup>53</sup> Vaughan wrote *It Moves ..., It Moves Not...* for *shakuhachi* and tape (1986), *Nāda* for *shakuhachi* and bass flute (1987), and *Darkening Horizons* (1990) for *shakuhachi* and *koto*. Turnbull, who Denyer considers to be the most distinguished, wrote *Blue Lines* for *shakuhachi*, bass recorder, and viola (1985), *Tribute* for *shakuhachi* and taped backing-track (1986), and *Smoke* for *shakuhachi* solo (1990). Around the same time, James Fulkerson, a later founder of The Barton Workshop, also wrote *Interesting Objects, Actions, and Texts* for *shakuhachi* and electronics (1985) in graphic notation. Iwamoto contrasts the enormous freedom a performer can gain in this piece with extremely detailed score of Denyer and Vaughan (1994, 12).

<sup>54</sup> Denyer invited Kondō and Satoh to Dartington several times. Kondō was a British Council Senior Fellow and lived in the UK in 1986, and later came back to Dartington to direct the composition classes at the Dartington International School of Music in 2000. Satoh was also a tutor at Dartington Summer School in 2009. Denyer visited them in Japan.

<sup>55</sup> Iwamoto was featured in a series of four programmes, ‘The Shakuhachi’, by BBC Radio 3 in March 1985, appeared in the Almeida International Festival of Contemporary Music and Performance in 1986, performed in Sondheim’s

Europe which brought him regularly to the continent.<sup>56</sup> It would be no exaggeration to note that the association between Denyer and Iwamoto gave rise to the discovery and development of the *shakuhachi* and its music in the UK and beyond.



**Figure 2.2** Oliver Butterworth, Denyer, Kondo, and Iwamoto (from the left) (Denyer 2015–2021)

Denyer affirms that, at Dartington, Iwamoto made a profound impact on the musical culture, and that people’s attitudes to non-Western music gradually changed, owing to Iwamoto’s personality,

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*Pacific Overtures* with English National Opera at Coliseum as an on-stage musician together with the percussionist Joji Hirota from 10 September to 26 November 1987 (later released as a CD (Sondheim 1988)), and participated in ‘Points of Contacts – a celebration of New Electro-Acoustic Music by Young British Composers’ at Southbank in May 1988. The *honkyoku* LP titled *when the brightness comes...* (1984, re-issued as a CD, *Traditional Japanese Music*, by Continuum in 1989) was recorded in the Great Hall at Dartington whose acoustic, according to Denyer, was ideal for the instrument.

<sup>56</sup> Iwamoto performed in West Germany in 1981; Czechoslovakia and Republic of Ireland in 1983; Hungary and Romania in 1984; Australia in 1985; Italy and Germany in 1986; Belgium in 1987; Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and Italy in 1988 (The International Shakuhachi Society 2020).

extraordinary dedication, and approach to music making and musicians (see Figure 2.3 for an example of Iwamoto’s playing with others).<sup>57</sup>



**Figure 2.3** Iwamoto with Denyer (piano) and Butterworth (violin) at Dartington (Denyer 2015–2021)

Before Iwamoto joined the college, Denyer recounts, the *shakuhachi* had been considered “a piece of *musical exotica*” both by the staff and students; however, within a few weeks, “it [became] just another part of the regular musical landscape”, and “*shakuhachi* music started to be heard *simply as music*” (2019a, 129; my emphasis). These remarks may sound far-fetched, but, to a certain extent, they embody Denyer’s and Iwamoto’s aspirations and characterise the second phase of the collaboration, in which the composer situated the *shakuhachi* in ensembles, and the performer placed

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<sup>57</sup> The caption of the photo indicates 1975 (Denyer 2015–2021), but it should instead read 1985.

himself in the new environment. This section investigates how Denyer placed the *shakuhachi* in musical landscapes that were foreign to the instrument through three pieces he composed for Iwamoto in the 1980s – *After the Rain* (1983, rev. 1998), *Winged Play* (1984), and *Stalks* (1986) – combining the *shakuhachi* with other instruments in the first and last, and developing solo repertoire in the second.

#### *After the Rain* (1983, rev. 1998)

*After the Rain* came about after the first recital Denyer organised to introduce Iwamoto to the Dartington community in their Great Hall where Iwamoto performed *honkyoku*. Oliver Butterworth, a violinist and director of the Dartington Ensemble, was mesmerised by the performance and asked Denyer to write a piece for Iwamoto and the ensemble. Denyer was not inclined to write a piece for an ensemble of Western instruments and a traditional Japanese instrument, firstly, because of his earlier experience with instruments designed for large concert auditoria which “could not comfortably co-exist with the *shakuhachi* with its more intimate tradition” (Denyer 2018b). Secondly, Denyer strenuously objected to the compositional trend which highlights “so-called ‘ethnic’ instruments [...] with the alternate aim of inviting them into the warm embrace of Western practice and glamour”, believing that what he considers “a potential counter-reformation” reaffirmed entrenched Western values and aesthetic traditions (2019a, 106–7).

To settle the issue, Denyer first envisaged an ensemble that is “equally compatible with the *shakuhachi*” as in *Wheat* (Denyer 2018b), then developed the idea of using hand-made and untuned ocarinas made of unglazed clay, which he had purchased in the Camden market. While it is unknown if the naturalness of the ocarinas’ appearance affected his choice of instrumentation to be combined

with the *shakuhachi*, it is certain that he was after the particular quality of open-hole woodwind instruments that can provide the “humane sound of linear microtonality” for *After the Rain*, whose original idea was inspired by nature.<sup>58</sup> He thought, the ocarinas “had a particularly large number of variables that affected pitch, and this unpredictability tended to create a *soft edged intonation* which was further reinforced by the instrument’s soft attack and general dynamic level” (Denyer 2009; my emphasis). This demonstrates why Denyer chose to combine them with the *shakuhachi*, though the unpredictability of pitch does not necessarily apply to the *shakuhachi*.

Denyer consequently adopted seven ocarinas divided among three players, and combined them with the violin, *shakuhachi*, and light percussion.<sup>59</sup> The ocarina players are instructed to sit close together facing the same direction, and the *shakuhachi* player and the violinist are placed on either side of the ensemble facing each other (Denyer 1998) (Figure 2.4).<sup>60</sup> The music is essentially polymetric, hence, independent bar lines were given to each layer of the score to clarify the natural metrical divisions in the 1983 version. However, Denyer prepared the revised version with shared bar lines and rehearsal numbers to facilitate the conventions of the professional concert in which musicians prefer to achieve “a tight ensemble through the intermediary of a conductor” (ibid.).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The title was derived from the image by “unexpectedly witnessing the astonishing transformation of a semi-desert areas in Kenya, when, after a sustained period of drought, a modest shower totally transformed the barren landscape in a very short time into one exploding with life” (Denyer 2018b).

<sup>59</sup> The ocarinas (FR2–FR8) should ideally be “the globular unglazed pottery type”, which could be obtained from the composer along with *chimba*, *kayamba*, and cowhide. The scale and fingering for each ocarina are instructed in the score.

<sup>60</sup> The caption of the photo notes “amsterdam-1977” but it must be again in mistake for 1988.

<sup>61</sup> The first performance was given by Iwamoto (*shakuhachi*), Oliver Butterworth (violin), Kathryn Lucas, Elizabeth Franks, James Fulkerson (ocarinas), and Paul Hiley (percussion) at Dartington in April 1983. There are two recordings: one is played by these musicians in the CD *A Monkey’s Paw* (1991); the other is played by Richard Stagg (*shakuhachi*) and the Octandre Ensemble (2018). The ensemble held a concert *Frank Denyer – A Portrait* on 17 June 2018 at the Coronet Notting Hill, London.



**Figure 2.4** Denyer rehearsing *After the Rain* with The Barton Workshop (Denyer 2015–2021)

Structurally, I suggest that there are three sections in this fifteen-minute piece: 1) a relatively fast quasi-post-minimalistic section where repetitive fragments markedly differ in character and gestures between instruments; 2) a bird-song-like section set between symmetric violin solos; 3) another repetitive section, though this time each instrument carries much shorter segments that play a part in establishing a serene soundscape.

What is distinctive in the first section is the rhythmic and harmonic driving force of the ocarinas and friction drum (Example 2.13).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> The score indicates that “the friction drum for the opening section could be a conga or any medium sized drum but it should have a membrane of genuine hide” (Denyer 1998).

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of 'After the Rain' by Denyer. It consists of four staves: SHAKUHACHI, VIOLIN, OCARINAS (1-3), and FRICTION DRUM. The SHAKUHACHI staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, with notes marked with dynamics like *pp* and *f*. The VIOLIN staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, with notes marked with dynamics like *f*. The OCARINAS staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, with notes marked with dynamics like *f* and triplets. The FRICTION DRUM staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, with notes marked with dynamics like *f*.

**Example 2.13** Denyer, *After the Rain*, the beginning (1998, [1])

The very low, growling rhythmic texture with the atypical pitch change of the friction drum, rubbed with superball-headed sticks, contributes to the agitated quality of the section. In fact, non-pitched friction percussions are what Denyer treasures as “noise elements” to intensify and extend the sound world of pitched instruments, just as the player’s voice or breath are added to a flute to enrich its “almost sine-wave purity” (Denyer 2009). The ocarinas’ repetitive segment, composed by two dissonant chords (*a, d, g* and *b-flat, e-flat, a*), and their constant but irregular shifts give the impression of it being played by one instrument that is peculiarly colourless, rather than by multiple ocarinas. The repetitive melodies of the *shakuhachi* and violin maintain individual gestures with the inherited sonic characteristics of each instrument but correspond to each other with high  $e^3$ -flats marked by turns. While the *shakuhachi* dynamics change constantly and repetitively, other parts stay in *forte*, except for occasional dynamics change of the violin.

The second section is a picturesque showcase of unique timbres starting with the wind blast with upwards and downwards glissandi in *crescendo* and *diminuendo* (Example 2.14).

Handwritten musical score for four instruments: SH (Shofar), VN (Violin), OCS (Ocarina), and FD (Fiddle). The score is divided into two sections. The first section, marked with a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 42$ , features a 'WIND SOUND ONLY' instruction. The SH part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking. The VN part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking. The OCS part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking. The FD part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking. The second section, marked with a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 33-36$ , features a dynamic of  $\text{p}$  and an instruction: '8ve. CON SORD SENZA VIBRATO'. The VN part has a dynamic of  $\text{p}$  and an instruction: '8ve. CON SORD SENZA VIBRATO'. The OCS part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking. The FD part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking.

**Example 2.14** Denyer, *After the Rain*, the beginning of the second section (1998, 6)

The following eighteen-bar-long, slow, muted violin solo without vibrato leads the music from the tumultuous first section to a tranquil scene, where the ocarinas appear to be set free from moving together and become animated and expressive (Example 2.15).

Handwritten musical score for three ocarinas: oc1, oc2, and oc3. The score is divided into two sections. The first section, marked with a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 42$ , features a 'WIND SOUND ONLY' instruction. The oc1 part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking. The oc2 part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking. The oc3 part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking. The second section, marked with a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 33-36$ , features a dynamic of  $\text{p}$  and an instruction: '8ve. CON SORD SENZA VIBRATO'. The oc1 part has a dynamic of  $\text{p}$  and an instruction: '8ve. CON SORD SENZA VIBRATO'. The oc2 part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking. The oc3 part has a dynamic of  $\text{ppp}$  and a  $\text{sfz}$  marking. The score includes various rhythmic patterns and 'sing' annotations.

**Example 2.15** Denyer, *After the Rain*, ocarinas in the second section (1998, 7)

The *bird song*, composed of various timbres of ocarinas with tremolo and glissandi, is rhythmically accented by occasional “sing” indicated on some notes, where ocarina players are instructed to

simultaneously sing the same pitch as the ocarina, which comes across as an artificial timbre added to the soundscape (Denyer 1998).<sup>63</sup> The violin and *shakuhachi* in this section stay in the background with non-vibrato prolonged ostinati in *pianississimo*. When the ocarinas' tweets fade away, there comes a percussive section that opens with metallic sounds of the *chimta*, followed by pitchless, unvoiced breath explosives pronounced in "sh-", then by bustling stiff cowhides accompanied by the bass drum, *chimta*, and small triangle (Example 2.16).

The musical score is a handwritten manuscript for a percussive segment. It is organized into five systems, each representing a different instrument or voice part. The top system is for 'Voices without instruments (pitchless)', with dynamics ranging from *ppp* to *fff*. Below it are staves for SH (Shakuhachi), VN (Violin), oc 1, oc 2, and oc 3 (Ocarinas). The bottom system includes 'BASS DRUM', 'CHIMTA', and 'SMALL TRIANGLE'. The score is marked with various dynamics such as *ppp*, *mp*, *f*, and *fff*. Performance instructions include 'explosive but unvoiced', 'STRIKE STIFF COWHIDES WITH CANES', and 'STRIKE mf BASS DRUM SHELL WITH WOOD'. The tempo is indicated at the top: quarter note = 42, followed by 'accel' to quarter note = 160, then 'rit' to quarter note = 112, and finally 'rit' to quarter note = 48.

**Example 2.16** Denyer, *After the Rain*, a percussive segment in the second section (1998, 13)

The following tentative ocarina instrumentation in block chords evokes the first section, and the violin solo ending in long tone, with the *shakuhachi* and a four-note chord of untuned cowbells,

<sup>63</sup> The sung pitch could be in the nearest possible octave, and male players are expected to use falsetto voice.

gives a sense of closure to the section. In the third section, each instrument is treated equally and in consonance with each other, with subtle rhythmic addition of the *kayamba* (Giriama raft-rattle). The piece ends with descending glissandi of all instruments disappearing into the air.

*After the Rain* appears to be written diatonically in the score, in contrast with Denyer's microtonally notated music, though the intonation is obscured by the untuned ocarinas, friction drum, and glissandi. This helped Denyer evade "the hard-edged intonation from the tyranny" of which he tried to escape (Denyer 2009). Bob Gilmore suggests that "*After the Rain* sets a Western violin and a Japanese *shakuhachi* alongside a collection of culturally non-specific ocarinas" (Gilmore 2014), a statement to which I return at the end of this section. All the instruments, each with a distinctive instrumental colour, play their part, carefully balanced with one another, merging naturally, and becoming one sonic entity.

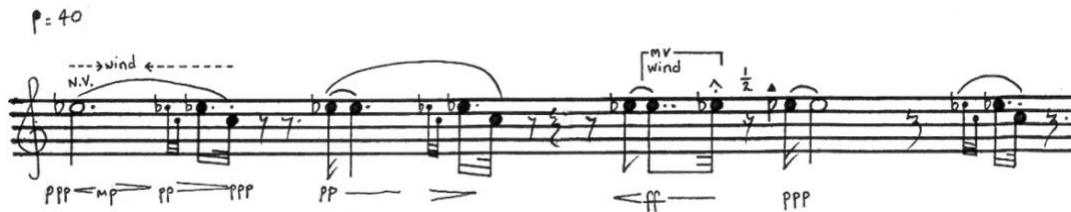
#### *Winged Play* (1984)

While writing *After the Rain* at Butterworth's request, Denyer wanted to "make a real virtuoso vehicle for [Iwamoto], fully exploiting the new technical resources that had emerged from [their] association", and the result came out as *Winged Play* for solo *shakuhachi* (Denyer 1994, 49).<sup>64</sup> This is a typical example of how their creative process influenced Denyer's compositional decisions and resulting works. This piece is a showcase of what Denyer and Iwamoto had developed and a "showpiece" most suitable as an encore; hence, it is their most performed work. The piece is in part microtonal, and I suggest that there are focal notes around which other notes develop. The first focal

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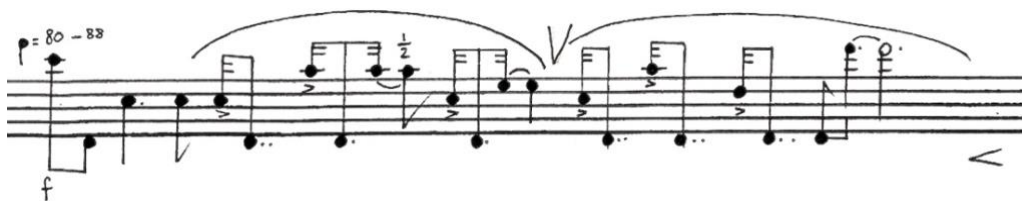
<sup>64</sup> The score is marked as "dedicated to my friend *Yoshikazu Iwamoto*" (Denyer 1984).

note is *e*-flat, the most veiled note on standard *shakuhachi*, at the beginning of the piece (Example 2.17).<sup>65</sup>



**Example 2.17** Denyer, *Winged Play*, the beginning (1984, 1)

Just as in *On, On*, Denyer again chose the note (*tsu-no-meri*) whose “subtlety [makes it] a very important note” in *shakuhachi* playing (Iwamoto 1994, 13). After its melody evolving around *e*-flat, *a*, and *c*, the music reaches the vigorous climax section where the melody leaps between *d*, *e*, *g*, *a*, and *c* (Example 2.18), four of which are the clearest and strongest fundamental notes on the standard *shakuhachi*.



**Example 2.18** Denyer, *Winged Play*, the beginning of the climax section (in G clef) (1984, 3)

The leaps tenaciously come back to the second focal note *d*<sup>1</sup> (produced by all the holes covered if on the standard *shakuhachi*), another important note, which is rich in sound and “gives the most

<sup>65</sup> It is unknown which *shakuhachi* Iwamoto used (and the basic notes and induced notes are different depending on the instrument a player uses), however, the range used in the piece, having *c*<sup>1</sup> as the lowest note, and the shift of the focal notes suggest that it is intended to be played on *d*-(1.8-)*shakuhachi*.

harmonic pattern” (Castellengo et al. 1994, 222). Because of these fundamental notes in *forte*, what we perceive as one of the representative sounds of *shakuhachi* permeates the section, namely the sound of breath that “goes beyond the normal parameters of pitched sound and incorporates non-musical natural timbres into the musical flow” (Tokita and Hughes 2008, 26).

Moreover, *Winged Play* explores different kinds of breath and vocal sounds to a great extent, which are further continued and developed in later works. They are indicated by unique signs which signify, for example, “gradually increases/decreases the degree of breath sound in the tone”, “sound of breath only, or tone distorted with some element of noise”, and “pitch produced by player’s voice” (Denyer 1984). Trill, tremolo, glissandi, flutter, and “cough” are also extensively employed. This is the only piece in which Denyer uses the traditional *shakuhachi* indication “*korokoro*”, a timbre ornament, on the score. As Denyer reveals that he wanted to “extend other inherent capacities of the *shakuhachi*” (1994, 51), he employs the gestures and timbres that are quintessential to the *shakuhachi* in *Winged Play* more so than his earlier works or ensemble pieces, and Iwamoto performs it with great deftness and fluidity as can be heard in the recording.<sup>66</sup>

### *Stalks* (1986)

Denyer adopted the instrumentation of *Stalks* from his student Turnbull’s work *Blue Lines* (1985) for *shakuhachi*, bass recorder, and viola. *Stalks* requires the *shakuhachi* player to use the *b-flat*-(2.1-) *shakuhachi* and each player to attach a small device, which produces foot-taps, to one of their shoes (ideally tap-dancing shoes) (Denyer 1986, i). Structurally, I suggest that *Stalks* comprises two

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<sup>66</sup> The recording is in the CD, *A Monkey’s Paw* (1991).

movements.<sup>67</sup> In the first movement, each instrument retains its idiosyncratic and independent characteristics in timbres, but develops together with the other instruments in phrases separated by rests. Each phrase, or melodic section, seems to have a sphere of mobility, within which the melody evolves microtonally around a focal pitch point, across the ensemble, and the shift of those spheres forms larger melodic structures. For example, in the first two bars there are six notes between *c*-demiflat and *d*-sharp and, in the third bar, it meets the focal pitch from the fourth to the eighth bar where the melody develops around *a* (Example 2.19).

The image shows a handwritten musical score for three instruments: SHAKUHACHI (B<sup>b</sup>), BASS RECORDER, and VIOLA. The score is in 3/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes. Dynamics range from ppp to sf. Performance instructions include 'pizz (nail)', 'arco', and 'push'. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 42.

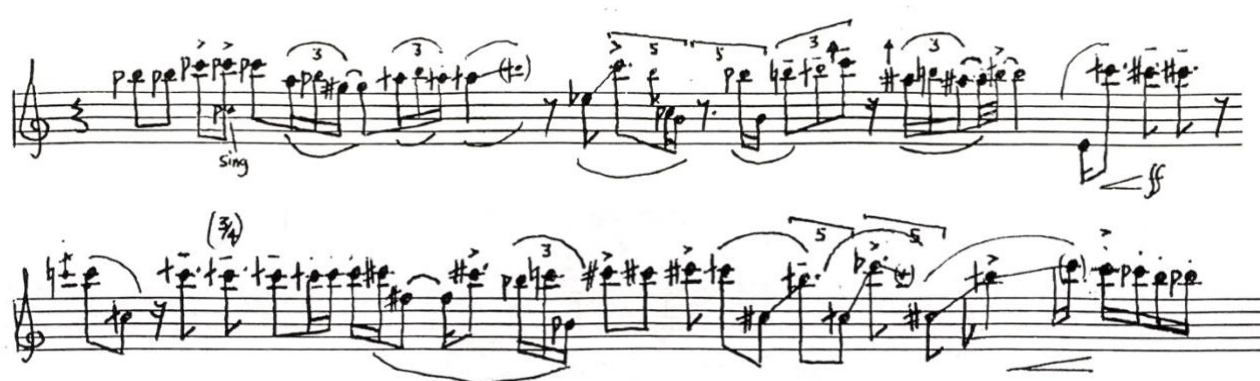
**Example 2.19** Denyer, *Stalks*, the beginning (1986, 1)

This concept of a melody, generated by different versions of the same note, is associated with Denyer's experimentation in *Melodies*. Glissandi, throat vibrato, breath sound, singing while playing, trill, and tremolo that are occasionally inserted in melodies enrich its timbre and obscure the standard sound of the instruments, but the essential sonic characters of each instrument can still be traced.

<sup>67</sup> There is no indication of movements, however, there is "(attacca)" after the extensive *shakuhachi* cadenza.

Meticulous dynamic changes for each instrument make them expressive in their independent capacity.

The first movement, which starts at a slow tempo, culminates in a formidable *shakuhachi* cadenza in the high range, *fortississimo*, and fast tempo, where the melody first lingers around  $b^2$ -flat then gradually pushes the pitch limit (Example 2.20).



**Example 2.20** Denyer, *Stalks*, excerpt of the *shakuhachi* cadenza (1986, 5)

While the melody mostly stays in the high limited range with occasional jumps to lower notes, the cadenza at the end carries seventeen notes in a quarter-tone scale with incidental fractionally finer microtones. The breathless *shakuhachi* line, accented by cough attacks and the vigorous foot-taps, is intensified and climaxed with persistent repetition of  $b^2$ -flat and, after the last blast, is suddenly dissolved into the viola's glissando in harmonics. The last chord ( $c$  in harmonics,  $a$ -demisharp, and  $b$ -demisharp with a shade flat) epitomises the pitch sphere of this movement and precedes the essential quality of the second movement in which, in contrast to the first movement, instruments' individualities are blended.

The second movement is an exploration of unfamiliar and new timbres, articulations, and syntheses of the instruments, comprising four sections or “events”, if borrowing Arnold Whittall’s term (2020, 103).<sup>68</sup> In the first section with the indication of “soft, flexible beat, quasi rubato” (Example 2.21), the *shakuhachi* and bass recorder that “articulate without tongue” make the instruments’ sonic features fuse into one another by veiling each instrument’s sonic contour. It is almost impossible here to distinguish the sound of the *shakuhachi* and the recorder as two instruments when heard acoustically.

**Example 2.21** Denyer, *Stalks*, the beginning of the second movement (1986, 6)

The second section is the most idiosyncratic in its timbre with its sound distorted by voice and breath. It is instructed that the *shakuhachi* plays with “no vibrato, harsh and round sound”, and the bass recorder plays like a brass instrument and without mouthpiece (Denyer 1986, 7). The

<sup>68</sup> Referring to Denyer’s String Quartet (2016–17), Whittall explains that what he considers as *events* “can still be thought of as motives, not in the usual sense of short statements that are purposeful in generating (and furthering) the evolution of longer lines and larger formal units, but as local gestures whose identity, or profile, the composer finds appropriate at that moment in musical time and space” (2020, 103).

recorder player also sings an octave lower than the played notes throughout the piece, which generates a low and loud vibrating drone-like sound. The *shakuhachi* combined with the deep-toned bass recorder and forceful foot-taps contrast with the viola's harmonics. After the last stamp by all the players, followed by the viola's long tone in harmonics and the repeated high *d*-flat alternately played by the *shakuhachi* and viola, the piece enters the third section in which the thematic descending segment in tenuto develops with each instrument carrying the longer phrases that correspond to each other. The idiomatic characteristics of the instruments can be heard again here. In the last section, the melodies are fragmented, and all three instruments play almost simultaneously as if to sum up this movement, in which instruments' individualities are blended and contribute to one unified sound.

The instrumentation of *After the Rain* and *Stalks* reflects the quest Denyer embarked upon in the 1960s to challenge the constrained choice of instruments in Western music, with their accumulated histories, cultures, techniques, and their groupings. Denyer argued that standard Western concert instruments had become so ubiquitous and universal that "their timbre is as inaudible as any other environmental sound"; the historical ensembles too stable to allow further development beyond their "single (and dominant) cultural tradition" (Denyer 1994, 50). He believed this exclusivity unsuitable to today's world in which he believed music should serve as a "framework for human beings to engage in mutual play [...], or as a medium for understanding our times (with all their global implications), or as a mirror to illuminate the cultural diversity of our inner lives" (ibid.). These views raise questions about detaching instruments from their originating traditions and the nature of cross-cultural composition that reflects "our times" – a topic revisited in the chapter

conclusion through the lens of cultural diversity of artists' inner lives inherent in Denyer and Iwamoto's collaboration.

With regard to the former, by the mid 1980s, Denyer had begun using unusual combinations of existing instruments along with “[the] armoury of [new or modified] sound sources [that can] create musical contexts which are then able to absorb individual historical instruments [...] and reveal unforeseen possibilities” (ibid., 51). He was convinced that these new associations can “elicit from the listeners a less conditioned, more direct perception of sound quality”, in which “the senses remain pristine because they are unmoderated by *the residue of historical meanings*” (ibid., 50–51; my emphasis). It may be that the concept of absorption is what is key here.

In *After the Rain*, Denyer combines the historically and culturally accumulated instruments (the *shakuhachi* and violin) with instruments that he considers carrying less of a burden (the ocarinas and percussion), which itself is debatable, and generates a novel sound world. In *Stalks*, he employs three instruments (the *shakuhachi*, bass recorder, and viola), each of which bears their own cultural and musical backgrounds, and brings both inherited and unconventional sounds of the instruments into play. In both pieces, there are sections where it is difficult to sonically resolve the ensemble into individual instruments or determine which instrument plays what part, and this effect is achieved by the unfamiliar and disorientating timbres they produced individually or together. If only taking what we *hear* into consideration, the ensemble can be perceived as a sonic entity, regardless of the contexts in which each instrument is commonly found and associated practices. However, when considering what we *see* in the live performance, visually perceived information of the instruments and performers cannot but evoke their historical or cultural associations, and it is arguable if the music

could ever be perceived as *pure sound* as Denyer expected. Even when an ensemble works as a sonic entity acoustically, visual information aids informed listeners, bringing them back to the historical and cultural background of the instruments and performers.

Denyer's hesitation to combine 'Western' instruments and a 'Japanese' traditional instrument signals his consciousness of the historical meanings and cultural connotations of these instruments. He attempts to offer a new, sonically balanced musical landscape suitable for both the *shakuhachi* and other instruments, to which each instrument equally contributes, instead of situating the *shakuhachi* in already-existing Western or other musical contexts. The notations, and how the ensembles operate, are bound to Western art music with musicians trained in that tradition (except Iwamoto). Yet, these ensemble pieces do not privilege particular instruments; they neither foreground the *shakuhachi* for being non-Western nor prioritise Western instruments and impose Western flute techniques on the *shakuhachi*. The *shakuhachi* that Denyer and Iwamoto strived to take out of the *honkyoku* tradition in the first phase is now, to a certain extent, set free and situated in new musical landscapes in these ensemble pieces. At the same time, Denyer adopted a different approach to negotiate the *shakuhachi* tradition in the solo piece.

Thus, in the 1980s, the musical networks of Denyer and Iwamoto were dramatically expanded within and beyond the institutional framework, and more extended collaborations emerged between Denyer, Iwamoto, and other musicians. After writing *Stalks*, Denyer thought, "I had probably written all the *shakuhachi* music I was likely to write" (1994, 52).

### **Final phase of the collaboration: pushing the boundaries**

The musical activities of Denyer and Iwamoto continued but branched out into various directions in the 1990s, partially because the financial difficulties and the loss of freedom Dartington was facing due to the changes in national education priorities made it impossible for them to work in the same institution (Wiggins et al. 2018, 393). The new management of the college gave up its commitment to non-Western musics and gradually eliminated the individual practitioners as they came to be perceived as “élitist, non-essential, and too expensive for the times” (Denyer 2019a, 131).<sup>69</sup> Denyer, on the one hand, became a professor at Dartington, was a featured composer at the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music, and was invited to Yokohama for the premiere of *Broken Music* (1990) commissioned by Kondō’s ensemble *Musica Practica* in 1990. He co-directed the Amsterdam-based new music ensemble The Barton Workshop, founded by composer-trombonist James Fulkerson in 1989, which toured extensively, including a tour to Japan.<sup>70</sup> Iwamoto, on the other hand, moved to teach at the University of York (at the invitation of Marsh) and the University of Durham in the 1990s, while performing internationally and recording CDs, mainly of *honkyoku* but also improvisation.<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless, their enduring collaboration reached its apex in the 1990s,

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<sup>69</sup> Denyer states that, regarding the World Music scene at Dartington, “personal passions and individual wealth [that bring] artists from around the world to work on the campus in artistic equality[, which create] a remarkable social context characterised by daily passionate debate, global concerns, uniquely orientated music courses” is not the same as the central (government) ‘per capita’ funding which means that “the vision remains, the commitment remains but the artists can only be brief visitors with teaching sustained by ‘western’ teachers with a personal passion” (Denyer 2018c, 396–37).

<sup>70</sup> The Barton Workshop “specialises in ‘research’ rehearsals and direct collaboration with composers”; the original founder members were, apart from Denyer and Fulkerson, John Anderson (clarinets), Jos Zwaanenburg (flutes), and Taco Kooistra (cello) (Denyer 2006; The Barton Workshop 2014).

<sup>71</sup> Iwamoto also taught at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, in the late 1980s before he moved to the north. Apart from teaching in the UK he organised workshops with Daniel Sei Soku Lifermann

both in solo and ensemble with two compositions: *The Tender Sadness of Tyrants as They Dance* (1991) for *shakuhachi* and bass flute, and *Unnamed* (1997) for *shakuhachi*. By analysing these pieces, this section explores three key topics: 1) the way in which Denyer put the two flutes from different cultural backgrounds in yet another new musical context in the ensemble piece; 2) the relationship between instrument and performer with a particular focus on their physicality; and 3) the question of whether an instrument is a sonic material or cultural material.

### *The Tender Sadness of Tyrants as They Dance* (1991)

The initial idea of *The Tender Sadness of Tyrants as They Dance* (hereafter referred to as *Tyrants*) came about when Dutch flautist Jos Zwaanenburg, who had admiration for Iwamoto since they had played *After the Rain* together, asked Denyer to write a piece that he could play on the bass flute in a duo with Iwamoto (Figure 2.5).<sup>72</sup> The *shakuhachi* and the flute had become a much-explored combination by then, and Iwamoto had had extensive experiences in playing the *shakuhachi* with the flute.<sup>73</sup> However, Denyer was again resistant, as he thought “the combination of just two historical instruments would [...] encourage naive comparisons between East and West”, and found such a comparative approach, in which things went in their own corners, “tedious” and merely “cultural point scoring” that he thought prevailed in a lot of compositions at that time (Denyer 1994, 52; 2019b).

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for the French *shakuhachi* association La Voie du Bambou from 1991 to 1998 and appeared in the BBC Radio 2 programme ‘the Music of Japan’ in March and April 1997 to name a few.

<sup>72</sup> The recording is in the CD *Finding Refuge in the Remains* (1998).

<sup>73</sup> Joaquim Bernítez and Kondō edited a special volume of *Contemporary Music Review*, titled “Flute and Shakuhachi” (1994). Henderson, in her PhD dissertation, notes that the three most frequent Western instruments to be combined with the *shakuhachi* are the piano, cello, and flute (2015, 143). She gives an exhaustive gestural analysis of *Tyrants* (ibid., 226–59).



**Figure 2.5** Zwaanenburg and Iwamoto rehearsing *Tyrants* (Denyer 2015–2021)

This offers an interesting perspective of how such a comparative approach is more problematic than other combinations of instruments; juxtaposing two flutes from different locales might indeed bring more attention to the cultural differences especially when the one is familiar to the audience.

Denyer then came to think that, if they both played simultaneously and sang through their instruments while playing at the loudest end of the dynamic spectrum, their individual timbres could be fully obliterated; the distortion of the sound would create another personality – “a persona more monstrous, formidable and terrifying”, materialised in the middle and incapable of being separated back to each instrument (ibid.). Using the bass flute (whose timbral and microtonal flexibility is more compatible with the *shakuhachi* than the standard concert flute) also contributed to the

undividedness of the sound of the two.<sup>74</sup> When listening to the recording, it is in fact difficult to distinguish the sound of two instruments and, sometimes, even to recognise that it is played by two performers and instruments.<sup>75</sup>

The notational instruction preceding the score first directs each player to wear shoes for tap dancing and explains how its notation denotes the use of right/left foot and heel/toe (Denyer 1991).<sup>76</sup> It is followed by other notations indicating: “ghost”, that is, “without the instrument really sounding, breath is directed across the mouthpiece with the correct fingering for the written pitch”; sung pitch; sound of breath – exhale and inhale – without the instrument; voice sound only (without instruments); and microtonal pitch fluctuations (ibid.). The score is written in metered staff notation with frequent changes of time signature, tempo, and dynamics. The opening, in which the *shakuhachi* and bass flute start with the same note, *e*-flat, in *fortississimo* and subtly deviate first in rhythm then in pitch, encapsulates the principle of the piece (Example 2.22) – to create a new, extraordinary, and intimidating personality by merging the sound of two instruments into a single unified sonic world. The multiphonics produced by sung pitch (notated as ▲), often presented with upward glissandi and the foot stamps in *sforzando*, contribute to the ominous and idiosyncratic quality.

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<sup>74</sup> Henderson compares the bass flute to the *shakuhachi* and maintains that: 1) techniques common to both are vibrato and key clicking/finger hitting; 2) techniques common to the *shakuhachi* but uncommon, difficult, or unfeasible on the flute are microtonal movement, glissandi, *muraiki*, enharmonic pitches, and wide dynamic envelopes; 3) a technique common to the flute but not used on the *shakuhachi* is tonguing; 4) a technique uncommon to both is multiphonics (2015, 230–36).

<sup>75</sup> The recording by Iwamoto and Zwaanenburg is in the CD *Finding Refuge in the Remains* (1998).

<sup>76</sup> The anecdotes regarding *Tyrants* are: Denyer found it extraordinary that Iwamoto then went to learn skiing in Switzerland to train his ankles; and Iwamoto had to buy two pairs of tap-dancing shoes in the end as the amateur shoes he “humbly bought” made no sound compared to the professional shoes Zwaanenburg was wearing for their first performance.

**Example 2.22** Denyer, *Tender Sadness of Tyrants as They Dance*, the beginning (1991, [1])

Structurally, I suggest that this eighteen-minute-long piece is built around gestural motifs associated with specific techniques and timbres, which are first presented as fragments then gradually developed to long melodies. They therefore act as repeated signposts that audiences can recognise sonically and melodically throughout the piece. For example, the multiphonics, which generate a significant gesture of shifting four-note chords, form a recurring melodic motif (Example 2.23); the melody in “ghost” develops from a five-note to a seven-bar melody with its fragmented appearances in-between (Example 2.24); and the abrupt and raucous foot percussion inserted throughout the work comprises a section towards the end of the piece. The melodic construction in the two-page-long microtonal melodies (Example 2.25) is notable for its texture in contrast to the rest of the piece, in which two instruments mostly play in unison rhythmically: this motivic section starts in quasi-monophony where they form the melody with short notes in turn, then progresses to heterophonic developments. Some other motifs include those with “breath articulation only”, “whistle tone”, and “throat oscillations”, all of which are in the quiet end of the dynamic spectrum.

Handwritten musical score for Example 2.23, titled "very heavy". It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom in bass clef. The music is characterized by dense, complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and rests. Dynamic markings include *sf* and *sfz*. The piece is marked with a "very heavy" instruction at the beginning.

**Example 2.23** Denyer, *Tender Sadness of Tyrants as They Dance*, multiphonics melody (1991, 2)

Handwritten musical score for Example 2.24, titled "Ghost". It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom in bass clef. The music is a melodic line with some chromaticism and dynamic markings like *p* and *sf*. The piece is marked with a "Ghost" instruction at the beginning.

**Example 2.24** Denyer, *Tender Sadness of Tyrants as They Dance*, "Ghost" melody (*shakuhachi* on the upper staff in G clef) (1991, 7)

Handwritten musical score for Example 2.25, titled "(voice)". It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom in bass clef. The music is a melodic line with some chromaticism and dynamic markings like *sf* and *sfz*. The piece is marked with a "(voice)" instruction at the beginning.

**Example 2.25** Denyer, *Tender Sadness of Tyrants as They Dance*, microtonal melody (1991, 4)

After the loud and heavy multiphonics section and foot-percussion section followed by silence, the piece ends with a twenty-eight-bar-long non-vibrato melodic unison in *pianississimo*, where the sonic personalities of each instrument are completely neutralised. The striking contrast in dynamics

and characteristics can be interpreted as a depiction of the brutality and lack of human frailty of the Tyrants to which the title referred.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, in *Tyrants*, Denyer once again provides a new musical space for the performers and instruments from different backgrounds, and further fabricates the “single, adamantine, sonic wedge”, either by distorting or by neutralising the sound of the instruments (Denyer 1994, 52). In other words, what Denyer realises is not just offering “a third musical context” where flutes from the West and the East converge and merge (Henderson 2015, 235), but also pushing the boundaries of two instruments, creating a new means of sound production – *an imaginative instrument* – emerged from two instruments. When comparing it to the earlier ensemble works, the two participating instruments of *Tyrants* both being flutes seems to have motivated Denyer to push the welding process further. In fact, based on their acoustic analysis, Castellengo (et al.) claim that the method of sound production is common to the flute and the *shakuhachi*, as opposed to the obvious differences in their construction, therefore “there are no fundamental acoustic differences”, and “[the difference] is the image of the ‘ideal sound’ that [the instrumentalist] seeks to reproduce which determines the final sound” (1994, 236). *Tyrants* corroborates both points that the two instruments bear fundamental acoustic similarity, and that the “final sound” of an instrument depends on what the instrumentalists sought for sonically.

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<sup>77</sup> The title refers to a photograph Denyer saw (or imagined having seen) of “a dictator dancing at a diplomatic function”, and “the aura of the condemned hung over him, giving the special sadness of those that have left behind the merely human and are secretly lost, irredeemably alone, having closed the door to the balm of human frailty – their own and others” (Gilmore 1998).

It is important to note that the ideal sound acquired in a specific musical culture is deeply embedded in how performers interact with their instruments, sometimes far removed from mechanically natural ways of producing sound. Consequently, the *shakuhachi* and flute, despite their common sound production methods, customarily carry quite dissimilar sonic characteristics. For example, the sound of *shakuhachi* in traditional music normally contains “a high proportion of extraneous noise at the high frequencies” because “the breath remains permanently present in the sonority” (Castellengo et al. 1994, 227). Furthermore, instrumental techniques and repertoire are developed upon this ideal sound. Altering the sound completely with new techniques, as in *Tyrants*, demands a strenuous effort from performers. Such demands push the limits of the norm of sound and technical abilities inherent in the performers, requiring total dedication, cooperation, and adaptation.

One might argue that imposing one sonic personality on two different entities by obliterating individual qualities is an act of violence, in this case, deriving from the title, formidable musical gestures, or a more general criticism of modernist concerns of sonic neutrality which detaches an instrument’s sound from its music historical context. At the same time, these interpretations are made more often about *ethnic* instruments from standpoints which either consider them more vulnerable than Western instruments or prefer *the exotic* to remain what and where they have been – the attitude that can be associated with the longing for Old Japan mentioned in the thesis introduction.

Moreover, Gilmore describes that, when seen in performance, the “painfully loud” foot stamps introduce “a feeling of desperation, of enormous physical exertion, of the two musicians being stretched to the very limits of the humanly possible” (1998). In fact, what this work requires

is not just unusual instrumental techniques but also the performers' engagement *as* instruments, which are extended to breath, voice, and the bodies of the performers and their gestures. The focus on breath is not new to either *shakuhachi* or flute performance, however, the way Denyer employs it is atypical for both instruments. *Tyrants*, in which two instruments generate somewhat *inhuman* sounds with distortion, is indeed very *human* in this sense, and pushes the boundaries of the performers' physical performativity and the nature of what instruments are. Denyer first felt trepidation, thinking that "this might be taking things a bit far for a player rooted within the Japanese tradition", however, he was impressed by the fact that Iwamoto "accept[ed] the challenges with his usual calm stoicism" (Denyer 2019a, 130; 2019b). The composer, who had been desperate to "find instruments versatile enough (and performers courageous enough) to set aside [...] their accumulated cultural heritage" (Gilmore 2003, 29), thus found *one instrument* and player to realise his compositional aspirations.

After *Tyrants*, Denyer had thought that "this technically and emotionally demanding score would be the culmination of my involvement with the *shakuhachi*". A few years later, though, he began to formulate ideas for his longest composition yet for the instrument, which is both "a kind of summary of his [*shakuhachi*] work" and "music that [...] leads the instrument about as far as I can take it" (Gilmore 2007a).

#### *Unnamed (1997)*

*Unnamed*, an approximately forty-five-minute-long solo piece, is the quietest, most intimate, and most intricate of all Denyer's compositions for *shakuhachi*. It initiated the new compositional phase Denyer was entering in the mid-1990s, "which took the form of an intense concentration of

extremely quiet sounds, sounds so soft and delicate that they seem in danger of disappearing altogether, of being brutally nudged out of existence” (Gilmore 2003, 30; 2007b). Despite its very still appearance, *Unnamed* is technically the most challenging of Denyer’s *shakuhachi* pieces, owing to the complexity of its pitch and articulation.

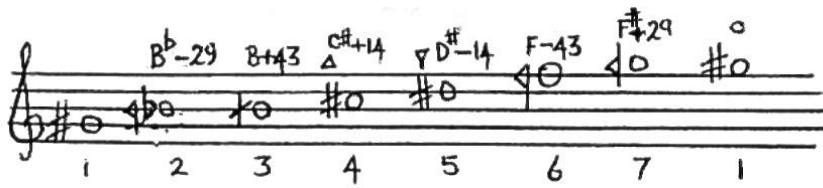
Concerning pitch, *Unnamed* employs several scales, each with its distinct intonation and tuning, which are clarified in different colours in the score, between which a player is required to make quick transitions (Denyer 2019a, 131). The tuning systems are: 1) notes in green – those within an equi-heptatonic scale, that is, tuning in which an octave is divided into seven equal parts whose distance is closer to  $\frac{4}{5}$  tones (Example 2.26, the numbers above notes are in cents);<sup>78</sup> 2) notes in blue – “satellite” notes that are deflected from those in the equi-heptatonic scale by  $\frac{1}{6}$  tone, which are never heard in isolation but reach from or move to the “parent” notes (Example 2.27, “satellite” notes are given as small grace notes);<sup>79</sup> 3) notes in gold – the strongest and most fundamental notes on the *shakuhachi*, *d* and *a* in two octaves; and 4) notes in black – those in the standard chromatic scale with semitones’ subdivided into two equal quartertones (Denyer 1997; 2009).<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> The instruction in the score notes that “the distance between each step [of the equi-heptatonic scale] is a  $\frac{2}{3}$  tone (171 cents to be theoretically exact)”, however, I suggest that 171 cents should be closer to  $\frac{4}{5}$  tones.

<sup>79</sup> Denyer originally notated the equi-heptatonic scale in red but had to change it to green, as Iwamoto firmly told Denyer, “I cannot play red notes, they are too disturbing”. Iwamoto had trouble in managing the scale but found a way to solve the problem by using a swivel chair on the floor whose space is divided into seven by a compass direction; each space represents a note, and Iwamoto seemed to find it easier to learn it when conceived spatially (Denyer 2019a, 131).

<sup>80</sup> Besides the colour code, the exact theoretical position is marked above each note with accidentals, ranged from “shade higher or lower (12–25 cents)” to “ $\frac{3}{4}$  tone sharp”, which are given in relation to the notes of the equal tempered chromatic scale (Denyer 1997).



**Example 2.26** Denyer, *Unnamed*, equi-heptatonic scale (1997, [ii])



**Example 2.27** Denyer, *Unnamed*, “satellite” notes (1997, [ii])

The piece also includes the pentatonic scale produced by the open holes of the instruments and some notes produced through the *meri* technique. Denyer explains that a note is often given “its own particular set of characteristics within its individually sized pitch field”, with variant alternatives of a pitch, satellite notes, and other notes that only appear in movement or traverse their field (2009). The microtonality offers flexibility to the composer, as well as giving the softness to the melodic lines and a sense of rest and belonging via tonal reference points for the listener whose ears are accustomed to tonality.

Regarding the articulation, Denyer sets four grades between a pure instrumental sound and a pure “aeolian”, that is, pitched breath without instrumental sound like “ghost” in *Tyrants*. They are indicated by different note-heads and numbers indicated with each note (Denyer 1997). Types of breath are indicated as “IB” (intermittent breath, oscillations) and “Irreg. IB” (irregular intermittent breath), and “IN” (inhale) and “OUT” (exhale) which are often combined with “whistle” sound. The

ways in which the player changes the pitch is further specified by “f” (finger pitch-change) and “h” (head only pitch-change). Denyer also employs voice-related sound, ranging from groans and humming to singing. Denyer designates new notation for each specified sound and their combinations. The variety of sound and pitch derived from the *shakuhachi* is considerably expanded, and the way in which it is notated by Denyer and executed by Iwamoto demonstrates Denyer’s further knowledge of the instrument and the performer, and Iwamoto’s deep understanding of the composer and his work.

The tempo of *Unnamed* remains slow throughout (except for relatively fast passages in the middle of the piece), and its dynamics stay mostly in *piano pianississimo* to *piano*, with very occasional and momentary rises. The rests, perceptibly embedded between the melodies, contribute to the remarkable stillness of the piece, and how they are inserted enhances the continuity and linearity, as the reserved phrases emerge from and dissolve in the silence. Moreover, towards the end of the piece, silence becomes dominant, so much so that it forms a two-minute climax. In the recording, Iwamoto skillfully and profoundly retains the tension and executes Denyer’s idea of linearity – “a line is a line[;] [e]ven if interruptions occur” (Denyer 2018a).<sup>81</sup>

Gestures that are unique to this piece include: very slow glissandi often upward and combined with equiheptatonic notes (Example 2.28), which exemplifies the notion of “pitch-field”; the multiphonics that stretch over two octaves by singing and instrumental sound (Example 2.29); the

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<sup>81</sup> The recording in the CD, *Music for Shakuhachi* (2007), was largely derived from the Dartington performance recorded by Gilmore with a home tape he had on his lap in the auditorium. Especially with these quiet pieces, the experiences of listening must be very different between listening to it live and through a speaker or headphones. In the liner note of *Silenced Voice* (2008), Gilmore states that “The listener to this CD is however urged not to raise the volume level: ‘if it doesn’t seem vivid enough’, Denyer says ‘try turning it down’” (Gilmore 2007b).

strong breath in and out in *fortississimo* (Example 2.30); and the long section of notes with *senza vibrato* (as legato as possible) and whistle through the *shakuhachi*. All the features mentioned above are strictly notated, though, in the recording, they appear to be free-flowing and open-ended as if improvised.

**Example 2.28** Denyer, *Unnamed*, slow glissandi combined with equiheptatonic notes (1997, 3)

**Example 2.29** Denyer, *Unnamed*, instrumental sound and singing (1997, 8)

**Example 2.30** Denyer, *Unnamed*, breath in and out (1997, 12)

Towards the very end, there is a section in which melodies are constructed using only *d* and *a* in *fortississimo*, constantly returning to the foundation note *d*<sup>1</sup>. The melody fully embraces the quintessential breath noise and expression of the instrument, which could be interpreted as a statement that the *shakuhachi* is partially brought back to what it had been, yet the melodic gesture is not at all that of the traditional music. It is a very powerful and symbolic closure to Denyer's *shakuhachi* oeuvre for Iwamoto.

What is distinctive about *Unnamed* are the groans and sung text distributed throughout the piece, which somewhat give a sense of struggle and discomposure. The sung text first emerges as “o-do-do-do-” in the very low range, and is soon verbalised as “o lest we know”. Texts occur as fragments, and the full text – “lest we know and come to harm” – appears only once (Example 2.31).

The image shows two staves of handwritten musical notation. The top staff is in 6/4 time and contains the lyrics "mp lest", "p", "P", "mp", "f", "ppp", "mp lest we know and". It features various dynamic markings, slurs, and a "vib" (vibrato) marking. The bottom staff continues the lyrics "come to harm" and includes markings for "4", "4", "sv", "ppp", and "3 .. 2 ... 3 ... 4". It also has "sv" and "slow vib" markings.

**Example 2.31** Denyer, *Unnamed*, sung text (1997, 5)

Another sung text, “forgive”, is repeated in *d*<sup>1</sup> in *falsetto* before silence dominates a section. As in *Tyrants*, there are many shades of sound between instrumental sound, voice, and breath used in *Unnamed*. However, these sung texts, which are unique to *Unnamed* among Denyer's *shakuhachi*

oeuvre, are distinct from any other sound for their very direct, personal, and raw quality, which almost imposes the confrontation with the performer as a person rather than an instrumentalist upon the listener.<sup>82</sup> “The residue of the voice” or “under-voice”, Denyer believes, is what remains “when everything else has been lost” and is the most individual and truly authentic, “[coming] from below the persona” (2019a, 42–43); it demands our full attention in a world where things are constantly shouting at us (Richards 2017).

I argue that what Denyer attempted in *Unnamed* is to cross the border between the body of the player and the instrument, and to bring the physicality of the two into play, reaching beyond the historical and cultural baggage attached to both. Denyer thinks that composing for solo voice is “to reduce music down to its fundamentals” (2019a, 38), and that musical instruments are something through which the voice can be extended and offer “a more ideal singing voice” (2014). He continues:

Instruments are never merely inanimate tools to produce sounds. They become a mediation between inner and outer worlds, deriving their potency by their internal and external contact with the player’s body via breath, lips or limbs. However, this interface can only become sufficiently sensitized by the specific physical skills nurtured over years of daily practice. Therefore practicing, rehearsing and study have inherent meaning as vital parts of a single nexus that makes the musical life [...]. From this whole nexus comes the special bond between player and instrument. (Denyer 2014)

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<sup>82</sup> This antecedes Denyer’s later preoccupation with “under-voice”, the significance of which Denyer first discovered through his experience in India when he heard a traumatised woman singing very quietly. The idea was further developed through his time working with the Plains Pokot in East Africa where the most profound texts were sung in a whisper. For detailed accounts of the experiences, see Denyer 2019a, 42–51.

This statement echoes much-developed research on the relationship between performer, instrument, and body, and their roles, in the performer-composer collaboration (Hooper 2012; Clarke et al. 2013, 2016; Payne 2016).<sup>83</sup>

In *Unnamed*, the difference between the sound of the *shakuhachi*, breath, and voice is obscured and flows in a large linear structure, which makes a listener perceive that it is not just the body that produces the instrument's sound but also the instrument that engenders the sound from the player's body. The way in which the breath and voice are musically materialised in this piece evolves *around* the instrumental sound and techniques the player has cultivated, and the sense of intimacy grounded in human bodies has become a central focus in Denyer's quiet works ever since. The boundary of the performer's physicality is expanded in *Unnamed*, in a very different manner from *Tyrants*, and it intersects with the physicality of the instrument – its materiality.

Concerning the materiality, the very intimate and soft nature of the piece, and the different types of sound produced through the *shakuhachi*, bring one's imagination to the material presence of the instrument as a bamboo cylinder. In this sense, *Unnamed* could be comfortably associated with “the wind through the bamboo”, a metaphor that has been “disproportionately” circulated in the discourse on the *shakuhachi* (Browning 2014, 56–57), and also a romanticised notion that is often extended to the unique aesthetic of Japanese music (Tokita and Hughes 2008, 26).<sup>84</sup> Indeed, it seems

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<sup>83</sup> Clarke et al. explores the interplay between the participating elements in the context of “creative ecosystem” which is “a heterogeneous mesh of material, historical, ideological and ‘memorial’ forces operating at a variety of scales” (2016, 120). In terms of the relationship between the body and the sound production, Browning explores the idea of “organic continuity” between the *shakuhachi* and the player's body from the players' perspective (2014, 59–60).

<sup>84</sup> Alison Tokita and David W. Hughes argue that Japanese uniqueness often emphasised in Japanese discussions of the aesthetic of native music, supporting “self-Orientalizing discourses of cultural nationalism”, is not so unique when

almost irresistible to associate this piece with Japanese aesthetics, also with silence that is too often connected with the concept of *ma* –“an unquantifiable metaphysical space (duration) of dynamically tensed absence of sound” (Takemitsu 1994, 3).

However, I would rather identify it with Denyer’s compositional aesthetics, built on diverse experiences, and link the materiality to “the visceral physicality of an instrument” by which he was mesmerised as with *any* instrument (Denyer 2014). Denyer regards an instrument as a sonic material rather than a cultural material, noting that “the instrument’s particular ethnicity is not at all germane to my concerns but its sound quality is central” (Gilmore 1998). What Denyer aspires to achieve musically is fundamentally common no matter what the cultural origins of an instrument may be, though his deep appreciation and understanding of the particular qualities of each instrument are undeniable in their musical gestures, timbres, and techniques. *Unnamed* cannot be realised by any other instrument but the *shakuhachi*. Denyer, in this piece, incorporates the idea of intimate identification between player and instrument, and presents them in a musical form so quiet and bare that their outer characteristics are almost eclipsed.

### **The end of their collaboration and beyond**

*Unnamed* was premiered at Dartington in 1999, then in the Netherlands and Austria, and gained “legendary status among *shakuhachi* players” (Bell 2008, 43). Denyer recalls the very intense atmosphere generated by Iwamoto’s performance. When the piece came to the end, everyone was

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compared to Western music, and that there is “a need to debunk the mystique that has built up around such concepts” (2008, 26–27).

spellbound and remained quiet while Iwamoto was on stage sitting “as still as a statue of Buddha” (Denyer 2019a, 131; 2019b). Denyer regrets that there was no opportunity to record it in a studio at that time as, when it became possible more than a year later, Iwamoto hesitated to go back to the repertoire, and this was when Denyer had an inkling that something had seriously changed (ibid.). This coincided with Iwamoto’s breaking contact first with his former students, second with the musicians he worked with and institutions such as the BBC, and finally with his close friends including Denyer (Denyer 2019a, 132). Denyer recounts that “it was a most carefully planned and executed disappearance that baffled and saddened his friends, his family and his students, and even his revered teacher in Japan”, and “this was the extraordinary end to the musical career of a really great musician” (ibid.).<sup>85</sup> Denyer believes that *Unnamed* was the most elaborate piece that he and Iwamoto ever worked on together and also a summary and the pinnacle of their long friendship and collaboration. Denyer thought, “it would be the end of my *shakuhachi* composing life as there were no obvious signs of new players coming along who were either willing or able to continue the ambitious path [Iwamoto] had begun” (2014). Before concluding the story of Denyer and Iwamoto, this section briefly explores another *shakuhachi* work Denyer later composed.

#### *Woman with Jinashi Shakuhachi (2008)*

Almost ten years after the end of their collaboration, Denyer composed one more *shakuhachi* piece titled *Woman with Jinashi Shakuhachi* (2008) for the Danish-Japanese *shakuhachi* player Kiku Day,

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<sup>85</sup> Iwamoto retired from professional *shakuhachi* playing in 2002 (Day 2009, 132), some say “after a serious illness” (Bell 2008, 43). Ever since, it has remained unknown what happened to him or where he is. Some believe that he is still alive, and others say that he is deceased.

who commissioned works for *jinashi* (unlined) *shakuhachi* as part of her doctoral project.<sup>86</sup> Day details how she collaborated with Denyer, from the first meeting in which the composer asked questions and requested her to demonstrate some techniques on the *shakuhachi*, to the process and struggle she went through to learn the piece with adjustments they made over email correspondence (Day 2009, 141–43, 184–90). Day explains that Denyer “created a syncretic piece based on his own aesthetics, while carefully taking into consideration the characteristics of both the instrument and the performer”, and, as Iwamoto did with Denyer, Day also visited the composer to work through the piece together later (ibid., 202, 236).<sup>87</sup> Musically, *Woman with Jinashi Shakuhachi* is, along the lines of *Unnamed*, quiet, slow, and intimate, and requires the player to sing, whistle, “knock” (tap the instrument or a small piece of hardwood attached to the side of the instrument with a thimble), and rub a cloth board. The soft singing voice is almost indistinguishable from the notes in the low register of the instrument, and the melded sounds become the distinguishing characteristic of the piece. This piece written for *jinashi shakuhachi*, which women were traditionally forbidden from playing, became the second of four pieces Denyer wrote for female performers which are “intrusively private” and “painfully intimate” (Rutherford-Johnson 2015, 79; Gilmore 2014).

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<sup>86</sup> *Jinashi shakuhachi* is the unlined *shakuhachi* (without any filler added to the bore), associated with the mendicant *komusō* monks of Buddhism during the Edo period (1603–1868); it is considered to be “original and authentic to experience spirituality and raw nature”, in contrast with *jinuri* (lined) *shakuhachi* commonly used since modifications to the instrument in the Meiji era (1868–1912) (Day 2009, 31–32; Keister 2004, 109–10). Other composers commissioned by Day include Takahashi, Mogens Christensen (1955–), Yumi Hara Cawkwell (1960–), and Roxanna Panufnik.

<sup>87</sup> The premiere was held on 26 March 2009 at the Purcell Room, Southbank Centre. The recording of the piece is in the CD, *Whispers* (2015).

Returning one last time to Denyer and Iwamoto, they both expressed their views on their collaboration back in 1994. Denyer wrote:

It is difficult to write about the use of the *shakuhachi* in isolation, for not only is it an integral part of my work as a whole but the issue of instruments in general has been a central one. [...] That I was writing for a Japanese instrument was an anomaly which did not occur to me at that time, for I had become accustomed to thinking of it as part of my musical vocabulary. [...] Today, I feel that my relationship with the [*shakuhachi*] is not one that is capable of being concluded, for even when engaged with other sides of my work, I know that the instrument retains the potential to throw out new shoots which could take my own, or other people's music in unforeseen directions, and when least expected. (Denyer 1994, 45–52)

It indicates that the *shakuhachi* became the “*one instrument he could connect with, make a gesture with, and live with*” – something that Denyer was desperate to find before meeting Iwamoto (Gilmore 2003, 28; my emphasis). Iwamoto and the *shakuhachi* were not just an inspiration for Denyer but the essential constituents to the development of his aesthetics and compositional practices. Iwamoto wrote:

My research into some new aspects of *shakuhachi* playing was initiated in the late 70's when I had an opportunity for which I am now very grateful, of studying a work written for me by Frank Denyer. [...] The potential of the *shakuhachi* has been augmented in playing contemporary music, in the sense that in doing so one gains a deeper insight into *shakuhachi* music of the past and of the present. As far as the development of one's cultural awareness lies in the deepening of one's sense of 'harmony' in the particular area concerned [...], contemporary music for the *shakuhachi* has without doubt contributed to the task of deepening the meaning of the existence called the *shakuhachi*. (1994, 9–13)

Some skilled *shakuhachi* players have performed Denyer's *shakuhachi* works since Iwamoto, and the legacy of their collaboration has been continued in new creations both by Denyer and other musicians.<sup>88</sup>

## Conclusion

After nearly three decades, the collaboration between Denyer and Iwamoto fulfilled their original aspirations, resulting in works that pushed the boundaries of both contemporary music and the *shakuhachi* music scene, by offering new aesthetics, musical contexts, and sonorities. Denyer's journey composing for *shakuhachi* can be viewed as a process of overcoming its traditional repertoire to create *anew*, without negating what the *shakuhachi* had been. His initial resistance to the instrument's historical shadow, evident in *On, On*, soon abated, and subsequent works, particularly solo pieces, seemed to retain qualities associated with its tradition. Denyer quickly acquired his own voice for *shakuhachi* that did not drown it in its inescapable associations, developing his *shakuhachi* oeuvre from his sensibility to, and knowledge of, the instrument's historical and cultural contexts.

Denyer's work can also be seen as an attempt to liberate the *shakuhachi* from its historical and cultural baggage, transforming it into a sonic material ready to contribute to new sonic environments. When an instrument is reduced to visceral, material existence, its cultural inheritance seems to no longer matter. This perspective raises the question of whether it is possible to dissociate

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<sup>88</sup> For example, at the World Shakuhachi Festival 2018 (Goldsmiths, University of London), four of Denyer's works – *Wheat*, *After the Rain*, *Winged Play*, and *Woman with Jinashi Shakuhachi* – were on the programme. In terms of music for Japanese instruments, Denyer wrote *A Linear Topography* (2015–16) for small orchestra with *shamisen*.

instruments from their originating culture(s) and tradition(s). In Denyer's *shakuhachi* compositions, he succeeded in releasing the sonic aspects of the instrument from its associated contexts, albeit momentarily. However, the instrument and the player are not, and were not intended to be, fully detached from their originating culture and tradition. This approach distinguishes Denyer from composers who treat musical instruments as neutral sonic materials regardless of their origin, and from those who attempt to embrace non-Western instruments as "musical exotica", both of which are typically associated with cultural appropriation. For Denyer, composing for *shakuhachi* was a journey of interaction with the cultural sphere of interplay between the player, the instrument, and instrument's sonic aspects.

Denyer's *shakuhachi* compositions have been described as "musical spaces not yet identified on any map" (Gilmore 2007a), and "*shakuhachi* music without roots in any particular tradition" (Day 2008, 294).<sup>89</sup> These accounts are accurate when considering his *shakuhachi* works *sonically*, as historical and cultural connotations of the instrument are intentionally obscured when the sound is perceived as a sonic material. In his compositions, instrumental sounds rooted in a particular tradition have been detached from their original contexts and become part of the free sonic material ready to play their part in new manifestations. Additionally, musical style and expression often associated with the *shakuhachi* are challenged, abstracting the culture-style symbiosis typically bequeathed to the instrument. Musical styles too no longer depend on their originating cultures to give them meaning. In this regard, Denyer succeeded in reorienting the instrument's sonic tradition and making the *shakuhachi* heard as "another part of the regular musical landscape", rather than as "a piece of

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<sup>89</sup> The former is in the liner note for Denyer's *Music for Shakuhachi*, and the latter is in the review of the same CD.

musical exotica” (ibid., 129). However, separating the sound from the instrument and the player in the process of composing, interpreting, and listening to the music is nearly impossible in practice. Denyer’s *shakuhachi* oeuvre and associated stories demonstrate the constant negotiation with the accumulated histories, traditions, and cultural conditions of instruments and musicians.

Regarding the instrument, as opposed to what Denyer felt about Western concert instruments, Benítez and Kondō claim that traditional non-Western instruments are more difficult to detach from their musical, religious, and historical roots, specific performing styles, and cultural backgrounds than “conventional Western instruments, which have become by now thoroughly functional with almost no trace of cultural overtones” (1994, 1).<sup>90</sup> Despite the remarkably diverse directions in which the *shakuhachi* has developed, composers and performers are unlikely to remain unaware of, or disregard its traditions and cultural implications, when incorporating it in their compositions. In this sense, the *shakuhachi* is truly “a repository of history” (Clarke et al. 2016, 157), and even more so, of culture.

The instrument is closely connected to the performer who is rooted and trained in a certain tradition (although the tradition is not necessarily singular). Denyer’s works require extraordinary instrumental technique and sonic sensitivities, normally acquired through training in the *shakuhachi* tradition. As Iwamoto utilised the techniques he learned in *honkyoku* to master Denyer’s compositions, the background is the very reason that a *shakuhachi* player can perform Denyer’s music in a particular manner. Composing for *shakuhachi* as a non-Western instrument is not the

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<sup>90</sup> This raises controversial issues whether Western is *unmarked* or not, and from whose perspective it is considered *universal*. It should also be noted that this statement comes from a musicologist (Benítez) who studied and lived in Japan, and a Japanese composer (Kondō).

purpose of Denyer's pieces, but his *shakuhachi* music can only be played and fully expressed by the *shakuhachi*, handled by a trained and skilled player. Denyer states that "we [composers] don't write music for instruments, but for people, the musicians who play them through exquisitely disciplined physical actions" (2019a, 109). Like many other contemporary compositions based on collaboration, Denyer's *shakuhachi* works exist only because of his personal relationship and creative collaboration with a specific player. The non-Western roots of the *shakuhachi* and his collaborator Iwamoto are inescapable but are neither the deliberate incentive nor primary concern, as Denyer considers that "[a]n intense individual relationship with an instrument, as with a person, can quickly eclipse the previously perceived significance of cultural origins" (1994, 49).

Nevertheless, the cross-cultural aspects of the collaboration encapsulated Denyer's convictions as a composer to "find a voice in an age of migration" (Denyer 2016). Since the 1970s, Denyer has thought that Western art music neither meets contemporary needs nor reflects the social and cultural realities of the time – the time with technological developments that free people from being confined to one primary geographical location, and the digitally connected age in which the new global awareness and interdependence permeates all our lives (Denyer 1996, 77–79; 2016, 72–73). He claims that cultural, traditional, and academic institutions constrained to one cultural strand have become increasingly irrelevant to the altered circumstances, and "*no musical tradition today [...] by itself provides a passport to a newly created future that transcends its own narrow cultural origins*" (Denyer 1996, 79; 2016, 73; his emphasis). Denyer believes that "our self-referential cultural boundaries" prevent us from sharing the contemporary imagination, and only individual musicians and instruments that are released from old confines and are open to unorthodox

modifications “take on new life through alliances with other freed spirits” (ibid.). The collaboration of Denyer and Iwamoto embodies the “contemporary sensibility”, emerging from global implications and the cultural diversity of artists’ “inner lives” (Denyer 1994, 45–50). Denyer’s view reflects on music makings of our times and perspectives of practitioners who participate in cross-cultural collaborative process, while the underlining power dynamics between the West and the rest, and cultural boundaries, persist and are constantly reminded when such interactions take place and are discussed.

The collaboration of Denyer and Iwamoto cannot simply be understood as a cross-cultural exchange between an English composer, a Japanese player, and a traditional Japanese instrument. Denyer was born and educated in the UK, studied in the US, lived in India and several African countries for ethnomusicological fieldwork, and had musical bases in the UK and the Netherlands; Iwamoto was born and trained in Japan and lived in the US and the UK. Both travelled to many countries and their inner cultural diversity was shaped by things they read, saw, and heard, as well as the people they interacted with, without physically being elsewhere.

Although a musician may still be affiliated with a particular tradition and culture as a grounding, they can gain a unique, multi-layered cultural and musical background through their experiences and actions, regardless of their geographical origin or location. In this sense, “national identity hasn’t disappeared yet, but its relevance, which was always suspect, is declining” (Denyer 2006). Similarly, the *shakuhachi* is no longer just traditional or Japanese, given its development and dissemination both inside and outside Japan. The tradition itself is not singular, with a long history

of branching out, and the global *shakuhachi* scene situates the instrument in remarkably manifold contexts.

With these global implications, while concerning “the tsunami of global consumer capitalism” that commodifies local cultures (Denyer 2019a, 107), Denyer states:

The world has shrunk. Our confinement within the mental geography of discrete parochial cultures is becoming a thing of the past. The cage door is open, we could fly away... and yet, like little caged birds who have known no other life, we are reluctant, and if we leave we soon return, reaffirming the old certainties and the security they bring, even when we realise consciously that such certainties became redundant long ago. (Denyer 2019a, 37)

By exploring the collaboration of Denyer and Iwamoto with its evolving trajectories and circumstances, this chapter has shown that cross-cultural collaboration entails much more than what the label ‘cross-cultural’ literally implies. It exemplifies the multi-layered nature of such interaction, intricately woven into the biographical, personal, and circumstantial situations of individuals as well as historical, cultural, social, geographical, and institutional circumstances. Cross-cultural readings of music and music-making should not be just a comparative study that starts with an assumed single thread of history and culture of each participating element. Rather, it should be one that emerges from individual stories and reflects the multiplicity and complexity of our cultural conditions.

## Chapter 3

### Research-Led Composition:

#### Marsh's Career, Aesthetics, and Process-Oriented Practice

This thesis investigates how composers become interested in things Japanese, engage with their chosen materials, and incorporate them into their compositions. As demonstrated in previous chapters on Britten, Goehr, and Denyer, this process not only provides new insights into compositional practice but also expands the composers' and others' knowledge of music and culture. These compositional processes become a serious means of understanding the other culture and add new dimensions to cultural exchanges. In this sense, these composers' practices show a strong affinity with the notion of 'research', a term which the OED defines as “[s]ystematic investigation or inquiry aimed at contributing to knowledge of a theory, topic, etc., by careful consideration, observation, or study of a subject” (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Recent scholarship has discussed the interrelation between composition and research, particularly in the context of higher education, in (or against) an attempt to situate composition *as* research.<sup>1</sup> While not entirely unrelated to this current debate, this thesis focuses on research – “systematic investigation or inquiry” in a narrow sense – located *prior to* or *within* the act of cross-cultural composition. I understand such practice as research-led composition. Furthermore, this

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<sup>1</sup> Composition-as-research has acquired special connotations in the context of higher education and research in the UK in relation with practice-led research or research-led practice degrees, and also with the Research Excellence Framework (REF). This is evidenced in publications, most of which have appeared after 2000 (Nelson 2006; Blain 2013; Doğantan 2015), and debates and controversies among composers (Croft 2015; 2016; Pace 2015; 2016; Reeves 2016) in more recent years.

practice encompasses institutional, educational, and ethical aspects of research in a broader and pragmatic sense, with outcomes extending beyond a single artwork, especially when a composer's investigative pursuit is long-lasting and deep-rooted.

Among the composers studied in this thesis, Roger Marsh (1949–) and his Japan-inspired works present the clearest example of research-led composition, demonstrating his extensive and in-depth involvement with things Japanese over five decades. To elucidate why and how Marsh and his works embody research-led composition, this chapter chronologically examines Marsh's career, aesthetics, and compositional practice. Each section begins with accounts of his life and career, proceeds to music analysis, and concludes by noting how some aspects from that period contribute to the concept of research-led composition and the broader framework of research. Information is derived from an interview I conducted with the composer, follow-up email correspondence, and the composer's published writings.<sup>2</sup> The Japan-related pieces analysed include *Samson* (1983/1992), *Kagura* (1991), and *Black Hair* (1992/1995), with brief references to other works spanning from 1972 to 2015: *Dum* (1972/1977), *Hoichi* (1992), *Sozu Baba* (1996), *Sukeroku* (2000), *Atsumari* (2003), *Sankyoku* (2004), and *Kinshi* (2015). Both Marsh's stance on cross-cultural composition and his mode of cross-cultural representations have evolved over fifty years, and this chapter aims to demonstrate this significant shift by tracing his Japan-related oeuvre.

In cross-cultural music studies, “experimentation and abstraction tend to be valued over quotation and imitation and extended engagement over brief encounter” (Sheppard 2008a, 467). It

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<sup>2</sup> The interview with Marsh was held on 11 December 2018 at the Department of Music, University of York. The access to the unpublished materials, including scores and recordings, was kindly given by the composer.

is not my intention to evaluate one mode of cross-cultural composition over another, but I believe that giving a critical overview of Marsh's endeavour offers a rare case of a composer writing Japan-related works, some of which are experimental and abstract, with remarkably extended engagement.

### **Roger Marsh and an encounter with *noh***

Marsh was born in Bournemouth in 1949 and grew up in London where he studied composition with Ian Kellam (1933–2014) privately, and as a junior exhibitor at the London College of Music from 1966 to 1968. He then pursued studies in composition at the University of York and obtained a BA in 1971 and a PhD in composition in 1975 supervised by Bernard Rands (1934–), who Marsh described as “a significant contributor to ‘the new music’” following the premiere of his *Actions for Six* (1963) at Darmstadt (Marsh 1995a, 397), and “the driving force behind the explosion of innovation at York in the early seventies” (Marsh 2012–13).<sup>3</sup> After his PhD, Marsh received a Harkness Fellowship to work as an Associate Fellow from 1976 to 1978 at the Center for Music Experiment and Related Research (CME) at the University of California, San Diego, which was founded by Reynolds.<sup>4</sup> Marsh became a Lecturer at the University of Keele in 1978, moved to the University of York as a Lecturer in 1988 where he eventually became a Professor, and retired in

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<sup>3</sup> Rands is a British-American composer. After studying and teaching at the University of Wales, he studied with Roman Vlad (1919–2013) and Luigi Dallapiccola (1904–75) in Italy where he became friends with Berio and Bruno Maderna (1920–73). He then received the Harkness Fellowship to work in the US from 1966 to 1968 where he met Milton Babbitt (1916–2011) and Cage among others. He was a Professor of Composition at the University of York between 1969 and 1975 before he emigrated to the US.

<sup>4</sup> The center was founded in 1972 as a research centre for experimental and computer music, and later evolved into the Center for Research in Computing and the Arts. Composers who received the Harkness Fellowship include Rands, Birtwistle, Davies, Harvey, and LeFanu.

2019. He was also a Visiting Senior Professor of Composition at Harvard University from September to December 1993. His areas of expertise and teaching cover composition, contemporary music, traditional and modern Japanese music, and music theatre (University of York 2018).

Marsh remembers that his interest in Japanese theatre were sparked when he saw Britten's *Curlew River* on TV in the late 1960s (Marsh 2015a).<sup>5</sup> Britten was his favourite composer at that time, like many other composers of his generation, and Marsh explains that “when I encountered his Japanese influenced ‘parable opera’ – set in a Suffolk church but adopting masks and stylised gestures from [*noh*] theatre – I was very excited” (ibid.). He found it “particularly unusual because of its economy of means, very little but interesting staging, the use of masks, the use of interactive work with the audience” (Marsh 2018).<sup>6</sup> Marsh discovered that these aspects of *Curlew River* arose from Britten's experience of *noh*, and asserts that it was this music theatre piece that made him interested in its source – “*noh* drama”.

Having not known anything about Japan or its musical traditions, Marsh then started reading books about *noh*, as well as *kabuki* and *bunraku* (traditional puppet theatre), that he found in Highgate Public Library in North London where he was working after finishing school and before going to university. Marsh underlines that there was no audiovisual source to which he had access in those days, and it took a few years until he “first got to hear *genuine noh* music” (my emphasis).

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<sup>5</sup> Marsh does not remember the precise details of the event and whether it was the first time he saw *Curlew River*. There was, as far as I am aware, a TV broadcast of *Curlew River* on BBC2 on 5 June 1967, and I assume that this could be the occasion in which Marsh watched the opera (*Times* 1967).

<sup>6</sup> All quotations and background information without individual references hereafter are derived from the interview with Marsh and follow-up correspondence via emails (Marsh 2018). Some of the interview materials overlap with his published blog posts. Regarding *Curlew River*, Marsh later wrote an article on Britten's Church Parables (1997).

Marsh notes that “I may have heard a little bit on a Nonsuch record [...] but didn’t really know what to make of it”.<sup>7</sup> The opportunity to see “real *noh* drama” arose even later; there was a tour of Kanze *noh* school in 1970, and Marsh drove down to Brighton with his friends to see “a *proper* Japanese *noh* group performing *noh* drama” (my emphasis).<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy that Marsh uses such words as *genuine* and *proper* to indicate authenticity of the performances. This poses the same questions I explored in the previous chapter about who owns a culture and is thought to be appropriate to represent it. The experience was, Marsh notes, “pretty much what I expected it to be” because of the research he had already been doing, except that he “was not prepared for that amount of silence and the slowness”. What he remembers most was the very beginning of a play where the protagonist (*shite*) walking across the entrance ramp (*hanamichi*) in absolute silence. “Westerners hate silence”, Marsh maintains, and “sitting in a theatre and watching something happening, but in complete silence, was a real shock”.

These accounts show how the availability, accessibility, and understandings of *noh* had changed since Britten’s time, and how Britten’s reference to *noh* in *Curlew River* influenced composers of later generations, both of which can be seen in other chapters. Marsh recalls that his knowledge of Japan was very limited when he was young as “[one] did not see constant images of other countries” like we do now. However, for a composer and also an actor who was interested in

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<sup>7</sup> As far as I am aware, there is no LP on *noh* that was released by the label. There were, however, several LPs of *noh* music available at that time, including *Noh Plays of Japan* (1959) and *Japanese Noh Music* (Kyoto *nohgaku kai*, 1964).

<sup>8</sup> The tour was organised around the Brighton Festival, in which they performed *Aoi no ue*, *Bō shibari*, *Sagi*, *Tōru*, and *Uri nusubito* on 15–16 August at the Brighton Dome; after attending the festival, the tour continued to West Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Austria, and Switzerland (Nishi and Matsuda 1988).

theatre, traditional Japanese theatre seemed “a very colourful and interesting alternative” to Western theatre which he always felt “a little bit too serious”.

Some aspects of *noh* Marsh had learnt and experienced during these early years became a formative influence on his compositions. One example would be a music theatre piece the composer wrote as a postgraduate student for the group, Clap Music Theatre, which he co-founded and directed at York.<sup>9</sup> The piece, of which there is no trace now, had two actors, two speakers, and a flute and three drums; Marsh indicates that the instrumentation was directly inspired by *noh* which has two main actors (*shite* and *waki*) and an instrumental ensemble that usually consists of one flute (*nōkan*) and three drums (*kotsuzumi*, *ōtsuzumi*, and *taiko*). He adds that the slow stylised movement of the actors who mimed the story in his piece also reflected the distinctive characteristics of *noh*. The piece was based on an English folk poem by Thomas Hardy (1840–1928), and, according to Marsh, it neither sounded nor looked Japanese; it was just the composer himself who knew the inspiration came from *noh* via *Curlew River*.

There were also influences of the vocal shapes and the vocalisations of *noh* on some of his works for voices he was writing in the mid-1970s, focusing on spoken text and non-verbal vocalisation, an approach which he considers “very much in line with the prevailing avant-garde trends of the period” (Marsh 2015b).<sup>10</sup> He was particularly fascinated by the way in which the actors

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<sup>9</sup> Marsh could not remember the title of the piece at the time of our interview. The composers with whom Marsh co-founded the group include Rands, Vic Hoyland (1945–), Jonty Harrison (1952–), and Glyn Perrin (1955–).

<sup>10</sup> The most notable vocal pieces of Marsh from this period would be *Not a soul but ourselves* (1977) he wrote for Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble (EVTE) in California, and *Dum* (1977). Marsh notes that the influence came directly from *Circles* (1960), *Visage* (1961), *Sequenza III* (1966), *Sinfonia* (1968), and *A-Ronne* (1975) by Berio; he also lists *Aventures Nouvelles Aventures* (1962) by György Ligeti (1923–2006) and *Phonophonie* (1963) by Mauricio Kagel (1931–2008) as comparison, though he was not familiar with those pieces at that time (Marsh 2015b).

chanted in *noh* – “not quite singing, but certainly not speaking, this style of delivery offered a way of presenting words unlike anything I had heard in Western music”, and drum calls (*akegoe*) made by drummers (Marsh 2015a).<sup>11</sup> Marsh incorporated these aspects, for example, in *Dum* (*a vocal percussive fantasy*) (1972, rev. 1977) – a theatre piece for one performer.<sup>12</sup> In this experimental piece, the performer standing on a platform at a lectern expresses the struggle to escape the nightmarish prison with intense verbal and non-verbal expressions, from whisper to scream, while striking the lectern with a hammer and a block of wood, hitting the tam-tam, and hurling metal bolts from a bucket into another bucket (Figure 3.1).<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 3.1** Stage Photo of a performance of *Dum* by the composer (Marsh 2012–13)

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<sup>11</sup> The *akegoe* includes *ho*, *yo*, *iya*, *iyo*, *yoi*, *honyo*, and their intonation, vocalisation, and melodic shapes significantly vary. See ‘Taiko’ and ‘Ōtsuzumi & Kotsuzumi’ in *Noh as Intermedia* (Fujita, Kapuściński, and Rose 2019) for demonstration of each *akegoe*.

<sup>12</sup> The fragmented, distorted, and layered texts of *Dum* are brought together from different sources such as poems by Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Donne, Rupert Brooke, and Christina Rossetti – “all loosely connected through the notion of ensnarement and escape”, and intertwined with *The Lord’s Prayer* in Greek, Italian, and English (Marsh 2015b).

<sup>13</sup> *Dum* was initially composed for Steve Stanton at York, but it was then revised in San Diego and from 1977 onwards performed many times by Marsh himself, usually topless. It has also since been performed by, among many others, John Potter, Anna Myatt, and Alan Belk. The details and photos of some performances can be found on his website (Marsh 2012–13). The performance by Roger Marsh is available on his website (Marsh 2012–13), and that by R. L. Silver at the Black Box Theater on the campus of New College of Florida on YouTube (Silver 2017).

Again, the piece is modernist and neither Japanese nor *noh*-like in any part, but Marsh acknowledges that particular vocal expressions and gestures originally came from those of *noh*, and the influence, such as *kakegoe*-like calls, is sonically detectable.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, Marsh's interest in *noh*, generated by *Curlew River*, had grown throughout his student years in London and York, in conjunction with his compositional focus on music theatre and vocal pieces, the latter of which he further developed in the US. However, the influence was then so inexplicit and immanent that it was not traceable had it not been stated. Marsh recalls that "straightaway it started to become an influence, but I didn't do anything specifically". I suggest that there are two main reasons for this perspective. First, this was partly owing to Marsh's compositions being inclined to a modernist approach at that time – writing abstract music, or extracting particular aspects of non-Western music and utilising it in a composition in the way that is musically implicit. Marsh remembers that the Center for Music Experiment and Related Research (CME) he was affiliated to in UC San Diego specialised in experimental performing art and that he did not encounter any non-Western music there, in contrast to Denyer and LeFanu whose interests in non-Western music were nourished in the US, at Wesleyan and Harvard respectively, in the 1970s.

Secondly, as many other composers of his generation did, Marsh pondered that:

The reason for being slow about it might have been because of the whole issue of cultural appropriation, [which] was not called that then, but I was very aware that it would be wrong just to copy something. What's the point of copying *noh* drama? It doesn't make sense.

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<sup>14</sup> Marsh explains that the meta-text was made by over-layering texts from multiple sources, and "'Ho!' and 'Hey!' declaimed in Japanese style, are actually the definite article (masculine and feminine) in ancient Greek" (Marsh 2015b).

When Marsh later discusses the question of what a composer should do when he/she is absorbed in the music of another culture, he refers to the essay Steve Reich (1936–) wrote in 1973 in which Reich claims that what a composer can do is to “create a music with one’s own sound that is constructed in the light of one’s knowledge of non-Western *structures*”, instead of “imitating” which is “least interesting” and “leads to ‘exotic music’” (Marsh 2017; Reich and Hiller 2004, 70–71; original emphasis). Marsh thought this would be the solution for him too, though the anxiety of being accused of “cultural *misappropriation* [has been] constantly lurking above [his] head” (Marsh 2017; my emphasis).

What I would note regarding research-led composition in this section is that Marsh conducted his initial research into Japanese traditional theatres, not for a particular composition but to gain knowledge to satisfy his intellectual curiosity even before university, combined with his interest in music theatre and with urge to find alternatives to Western theatre. It is interesting that the exploration began at a public library, just like Goehr’s own exploration in the 1950s. From a more extensive perspective on research, the detailed accounts Marsh provides at our interview and in his blog posts of what he experienced and produced, what kind of music he was writing, and with whom he was in line musically in these early years demonstrate his methodical approach to his own experiences. His asking questions, such as “what’s the point of copying *noh* drama?”, reflects his critical mindset and awareness of the cultural climate of the time.

It is also notable in his biography that his training and career are almost entirely in academic institutions. I here point out the implication of studying at York at that time, among many influences it had on Marsh’s progress as a composer, which will be seen throughout the rest of the chapter.

Peter Dickinson states that Wilfrid Mellers (1914–2008) started the department in 1964 with young composers including Rands, “unlike most British university music departments, then dominated by musicologists” (Dickinson 2012).<sup>15</sup> Mellers gave performance a high place in the curriculum, believing that “there should be no separation between theory and practice”, and “was open to all kinds of musical expression, anticipating the pluralism and multi-culturalism of the twenty-first century rather than the inherited distinctions between highbrow and lowbrow” (ibid.). “The new and progressive department”, as Marsh calls it, produced a large number of composers with research degrees, who have been leading the British contemporary music scene as composers and educators. Later, some of them also became central to the development and discussion of composition-as-research.<sup>16</sup> For Marsh, the ethos of the department, particularly to integrate theory and practice, seems to have exerted a lasting impact on his composition and aesthetics. In addition, his experience working with artists from other fields, such as painters, performing artists, or poets who did “quite radical and extreme performance art” at the CME in the US, appears to have nourished his interdisciplinary orientation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Mellers was an English music critic, musicologist, and composer. The list of composers who were hired then at the department include Peter Aston (1938–2013), David Blake (1936–), Rands, Robert Sherlaw Johnson (1932–2000), Richard Orton (1940–2013), and John Paynter (1931–2010). Marsh wrote about how the department was like and about the ‘New Music Ensemble’ Rands set up at that time in his article titled ‘Bernard Rands’ on his website (Marsh 2012–13). The Department of Music at York is amalgamated into the School of Arts and Creative Technologies, and no longer called Music Department. In this thesis, I use the previous name of the department to which Marsh (and LeFanu for the next chapter) was affiliated.

<sup>16</sup> The composer Christopher Fox (1974–), who holds a PhD from York, states the significance of the department at the roundtable “Can Composition and Performance be Research?” (Fox, Mera, Pace, Reeves, et al. 2015).

<sup>17</sup> For example, Marsh collaborated with Pauline Oliveros (composer, 1932–2016), Jean Charles Francois (composer, 1942–), Allan Kaprow (performing artist, 1927–2006), David Antin (poet, 1932–2016) and others on What's Cooking Festivals of performance art.

Marsh continued thinking about using *noh* to create an alternative theatre and, after many years of experiments to incorporate certain aspects of *noh* in his “non-Japanese pieces”, began to compose works that were more explicit and open about their inspirations, the first of which was his *noh*-inspired music theatre – *Samson*. He remembers thinking, around the issue of (mis)appropriation, “to use certain aspects of the *noh* drama to make another kind of theatre, that seemed okay, and I found a way to do that in *Samson*”. In the next section, I study *Samson* with the focus on how *noh* is incorporated in this theatrical piece.

### **Research-led teaching and composition: *noh*-inspired music theatre**

After returning from the US, in 1978, Marsh became a Lecturer at the University of Keele. He remembers that the music department, which was very new at that time, employed three new lecturers of whom he was one, and asked them to build and expand the course. Marsh identified that there was no non-Western music on the curriculum, thought that needed to be fixed, and, since nobody else was going to do it, decided to offer Japanese music as a module. He felt the necessity to learn much more about the subject as he knew little about Japanese music in general, except for *noh*, and first set about assembling “all sorts of materials and resources” including books and recordings, to find out about other forms of Japanese music. The books he then obtained included, among many others, Eta Harich-Schneider’s *A History of Japanese Music* (1973) and Malm’s *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (1959a). Marsh also borrowed some of the recordings, such as videos of *noh* and *kabuki*, from the Japanese Embassy. The course he designed eventually covered various genres of mostly traditional Japanese music, from *noh*, *gagaku*, *kabuki*, *bunraku*, to

*sankyoku* (*koto* chamber music). He recollects that “I stayed a few steps ahead of the students and by the second year, I felt less of a *fraud*” (Marsh 2015a; my emphasis). This sentiment, while potentially culturally influenced, is not uncommon when one starts teaching a new subject.

Remembering the experience, Marsh also notes: “I was not (am not) an ethnomusicologist, but I enjoyed learning more myself and believed it benefitted the students to be introduced to remarkable traditions which challenged their preconceptions of what music and theatre are” (ibid.). In fact, the 1970s and 1980s were a time when some composers started teaching Japanese music, mainly to composition students, at several universities in the UK.<sup>18</sup> These composers’ creative practices intersected with ethnomusicological research (though their methodologies and purposes markedly differ from those of ethnomusicologists), and significantly influenced the landscape of cross-cultural musical exchanges, as the previous chapter on Denyer demonstrates. In Marsh’s case, the knowledge he acquired from teaching Japanese music at Keele and later at York over many years have provided resources, inspirations, and networks for him (and for others) and, in the early 1980s, he felt more confident to compose more explicit Japan-inspired works.

#### *Samson* (1983/1992)

The first time Marsh thought – “okay, I am going to *do* Japanese”(my emphasis) – was when the electric voice theatre Vocem asked him to write a new music theatre piece for the newly-founded Nettlefold Festival for contemporary music held in 1984.<sup>19</sup> He decided that “it was time to make my

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<sup>18</sup> These composers, or composers/ethnomusicologists in some cases, include Stanton who studied composition at York when Marsh was also a student and later taught ethnomusicology with special interest in Oriental music at City, University of London, and Frank Denyer (see Chapter 2).

<sup>19</sup> Vocem is a vocal ensemble founded in 1977 by Belk originally to give a performance of Berio’s *A-Ronne for 8 amplified voices* (1975) (see Marsh’s website for the detailed description of the ensemble) (Marsh 2012–13). After

homage to [noh], and to bring together that influence with [his] growing interest in Old Testament tales” (Marsh 2015a), and wrote *Samson* (1983/1992), which is described as “music theatre” and “a dramatic oratorio in Japanese style” (Marsh 2012–13). The original version of *Samson*, premiered at the festival and later staged at Keele, lasts approximately 30 minutes and is scored for dramatic baritone (Samson), soprano (Delilah), female chorus (three/four sopranos), two basses, and soprano/alto saxophone; Samson and Delilah are to wear lapel mikes, and other singers hold individual microphones.<sup>20</sup> It was almost entirely vocal except for the ‘bells’ played by the chorus and the saxophone accompanying Delilah’s song.<sup>21</sup> In 1991, Marsh revised the piece for solo baritone and two male percussionists (who also act as vocalists) at the request of Philip Curtis who played Samson at the premiere.<sup>22</sup> The following analysis mainly refers to the 1983 version.

Marsh notes that the initial idea to use the Biblical story of Samson is traced back to a weekly Keele concert where he listened to the medieval lament *Samson dux fortissime* sung by John Potter in 1981 (it is unclear if Marsh then had in mind Britten’s *The Burning Fiery Furnace* whose story was based on the Old Testament but it is most likely that he was familiar with the second and third

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working with Marsh on *Not a soul but ourselves...* (1977), the ensemble commissioned a new piece with funds from the Arts Council. *Samson* was premiered at the Nettlefold Hall, West Norwood, on 20 October 1984, with Philip Curtis (Samson) and Angela Tunstall (Delilah).

<sup>20</sup> The fourth soprano is sung by Delilah in Part One. The alto saxophone accompanies Delilah’s song, and the soprano saxophone is used in Part Two.

<sup>21</sup> The bells are “two large steel girders (or similar) with penetrating and lasting resonance” (Marsh 1983). *Delilah* for female voice and alto saxophone (1991a) was later published by Novello & Co Ltd. separately, commissioned by Jan Steele and Janet Sherbourne with funds made available by West Midlands Arts.

<sup>22</sup> Both 1983 and 1992 versions were published by Novello & Co Ltd. I obtained a copy of the 1983 version from Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield, with permission from Novello, and that of the 1992 version from the composer. The premiere of the “pocket version” was at the Ars Nova Festival in Brussels in 1992.

Church Parables drawn from Biblical stories).<sup>23</sup> The original ballad is in Latin, and it was sung from a manuscript written in the early form of English mensural notation found in the British Museum. The programme notes of the concert contained an English translation by Clare Russell, on which Marsh developed his incipient idea of *Samson* and which he sets as texts for his piece with some of the Latin text for chorus (Keele Concerts 1981).<sup>24</sup> In Marsh's *Samson*, "Samson [-] fat, hunched, hairy, blind, pitiful", languishing in a Philistine dungeon, tells his own tale painfully in short and direct statements (2015a).

Structurally, the oratorio consists of: Part One (Section A to F) in which Samson reminisces how strong he was; Interlude (Delilah's song of seduction; Section A to H) in which main texts are "*dic* [tell]" and "tell me"; and Part Two (Section G to N) in which Samson tells how he is tricked to tell his secret, Delilah cuts his hair in triumph while performing a "war dance", and Samson promises revenge (Marsh 1983). Marsh states that, in *Samson*, there is no character development to "encourage us to empathize with the Biblical hero", and that he leaves Samson in prison "sniveling", as "[Samson] was a brainless warrior on one side of a complicated inter-racial war" (Marsh 2015a).

Among many aspects of *Samson* that could be explored from different perspectives, I focus on inquiring into how *noh* influenced *Samson* in two strands: in its stage direction and in its music.

In terms of stage direction, Marsh instructs that:

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<sup>23</sup> The concert was held at Walter Moberly Hall on 26 November 1981. The programme combined medieval music – the earliest surviving monophonic songs of St Godric and anonymous songs – and contemporary music by Finnissy, Barry Guy (1947–), Marsh, and Henri Pousseur (1929–2009) performed by Potter and Philip Pickett. With regard to Britten, Marsh later wrote an article on the Church Parables (Marsh 1997).

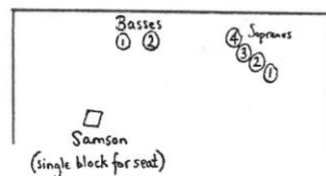
<sup>24</sup> Photocopies of the programme notes with Marsh's idea inscribed, and his transcription of the song, were kindly shared by the composer.

All singers perform from memory. [...] In general the style of delivery should be modelled more on Japanese [*noh*] drama than on any Western model. This applies equally to Samson and Chorus, but not to Delilah, whose long song of seduction should be delivered in an appropriately seductive (though emphatically non-operatic) style.

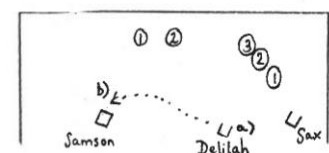
I assume “style of delivery” here indicates the type of voice, facial and physical expression, the communication between performers, or the absence thereof, that cannot be notated. This sentence implies that the individual performers are required to do their own research to have a basic idea about what *noh* is and how it is delivered. It is also interesting that the “appropriately seductive [...] style” for Delilah’s song seems to be contrasted with the *noh* style which is often described as austere. The stage plan (Figure 3.2) also demonstrates a reference to *noh*: Samson is positioned where the *shite* (protagonist) often stands; the soprano chorus are positioned at the right side of the stage at an angle where *jiutai* (*noh* chorus) kneels (though the *jiutai* chorus is positioned parallel to the righthand side of the stage); the basses, at the back of the stage where *hayashi* (instrumentalists) and *tsure* (companion characters of protagonist) sit or stand; and Delilah, at the right side of the stage where *waki* (the secondary actor) stands.

Stage plan :

Part one:



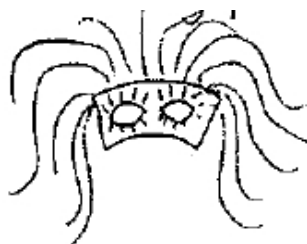
Part Two:  
a) Interlude  
--- b) ⊕



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**Figure 3.2** Marsh, *Samson*, stage plan (1983, [ii])

Another obvious reference to *noh* in *Samson* is that the protagonist is masked; Samson wears a long robe and a half mask with “exaggerated wide open eyes” and “long flowing (golden?) hair [...] attached to it” (Figure 3.3) (Marsh 1992a).



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**Figure 3.3** Marsh, *Samson*, the composer’s drawing of the mask (Marsh 1992a, [i])

It is removed at the climax of the piece where Delilah “slashes downwards and ‘scalps’ him” with a knife, which reveals a bald head and bloody, mucky eye sockets (Marsh 1983; Marsh 2015a). Stylised gestures, another major attribute of *noh*, are also featured in the direction. For example, in Section B, Samson who was “seated, hunched, [and] head bowed” is instructed to “straighten [...] very slowly” for a duration of almost two minutes to express the summoning of his strength (Marsh 1983).

Musically, what is most notable and what makes *Samson* very *noh*-like is how the vocal lines are presented. Marsh explains that, while the simplicity, economy, and slowness of *noh* that inspired Britten also appealed to him, he was fascinated by “the way the actors chanted their lines, using a distinct style of vocal production and a set pattern of micro-tonally rising and falling phrases” (Marsh 2015a). The composer hence adopts these aspects – the particular vocalisation and melody structure

of *noh* – in *Samson*. Marsh demonstrated the vocalisation and shape of the vocal line at our interview, as Goehr did, and explained that “it is like an imitation of *noh* drama, but with English style voice and English words”.

Another major aspect Marsh incorporated is the way in which the ensemble is constructed.

Marsh thought:

The supporting music [of *noh*], provided by shouting drummers and flute, with a chanting male chorus, seemed to be thrown together rather than carefully scored. The different aural strands of the plays ran in parallel, seemingly uncoordinated vertically; no need for a conductor therefore, the whole performance taking on a feeling of fluidity and danger.

In *noh* chanting, there is no conductor, but the lead person (*jigashira*) decides the pitch and speed of the piece for each performance and directs the *utai* (chanting), sitting in the middle of the back row (*jiutai* chorus normally line up in two rows). The *jigashira* leads the chorus, and everyone else closely follows them, so it is essentially monodic and there is not much time lag and difference in pitch within the chorus. In this regard, the heterophonic non-coordination of lines, which is prominent in *Samson*, reflects Marsh’s aural impressions of *noh*, rather than how the music of *noh* is actually constructed.

These aspects are conspicuously manifested from the very beginning of the piece. For example, in the Prologue/Section A, each soprano in the female chorus bears more or less a variation of a line that starts at the same pitch and rises microtonally towards the end of a phrase (reminiscent of the portamento that Britten incorporated from *noh* in *Curlew River*) (Example 3.1).

(A)

Bells  
and girders  
used by  
masses)

*ff* sempre

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**Example 3.1** Marsh, *Samson*, Prologue/Section A, [bars 1–5] (1983, [1])

On a recording, this sounds like a phrase sung freely and spontaneously starting from the same note, resulting in a microtonal cluster that has variation within, though it is actually minutely scored, and the leader is instructed to give small hand signals to begin or close sections.<sup>25</sup> The variations of the phrase are repeated with a few seconds of pauses in-between for the rest of the Prologue, and this form underlies Part One.

Although the *noh* influence is clear if one knows Marsh’s intention, the reference is not musically explicit at this point. The striking of bells at the beginning of each phrase makes the pattern sound rather like religious chanting, and the female chorus does not immediately evoke *noh*, partially because *noh* actors are mostly men but mainly because the phrases sung in *mezzo piano* do not

<sup>25</sup> The recording of the original version was kindly shared by the composer. Marsh acknowledges that the recording is probably from the performance he did with his students at the University of Keele and that “it might not be very good as a performance but it gives an idea of what the whole thing sounds like”.

necessarily represent the “distinct style of vocal production” of *noh*. *Noh* chanting (*utai*) is intoned in full voice, using diaphragmatic breathing that reverberates through the head, chest, and oral cavity (Fujita, Kapuściński, and Rose 2019); hence, it is loud, deep, and low no matter whether it is sung by male or female actors. The progression with fragmented repeated phrases is also dissimilar to *noh* chanting which is composed of longer and uninterrupted phrases. In Section B, the chanting moves to the male voices with similar gestures (a), and the female chorus inserts a cluster chord that descends microtonally (b), which could be interpreted as a reference to the *noh* drum calls (*kakegoe*) (Example 3.2). Thus, *noh* features are there, yet the beginning of the piece does not give a distinct impression of *noh*.

During this section Janzon straightens very slowly.  
Light up to half way, very slowly.

**B**

Sop 1  
mf He (#̣)  
2  
mf He (̣)  
3  
mf He (̣)  
4  
mf He (̣)

8 secs 3 secs

**a**

(chant)\*  
1  
mf ta ——— (̣) ——— (#̣) ——— (̣)  
2  
mf ta ——— (̣) ——— (#̣) ——— (̣)

Example 3.2 Marsh, *Samson*, Section B, [bars 1–2] (1983, 3)

The influence of *noh* vocalisations becomes quite obvious when Samson starts singing in a strong and rich voice at Section C: Samson's line also rises microtonally and articulates each word or syllable in English (a), while the male chorus sings the same line in Latin (b) (Example 3.3).

© ARIA: "I found delight"  
 ♩ = c66

**a** Strong, growling; serious, not ag

Samson  
 f I found de-light in a wife from an a—lie—n ra—ce

**b**

Basses  
 1 Spou-sa mi-hi placu-it a-li-en-or-um  
 2 Spou-sa mi-hi placu-it a-li-en-or-um

**Example 3.3** Marsh, *Samson*, Section C, [bar 1] (1983, 5)

The style of vocal production of both Samson and the basses represents that of *noh*, with the basses being in a more comfortable and controllable range than Section B. The way in which Samson's vocal lines are structured is also similar to *noh* singing to a certain extent (it reminds one of English Noh by Richard Emmert).<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the ensemble of Samson and the basses can be associated with the protagonist (*shite*) and chorus (*jiutai*) of *noh*, despite the fact that in *noh* they do not sing at the same time.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Emmert is a *noh* performer, composer, and professor of Asian performance in Tokyo, who started performing *noh* in English in the 1980s. He then established the Noh Training Project in 1991 mainly to train English-speaking performers (which I participated in at Royal Holloway, University of London, in 2018) and founded the company Theatre Nohgaku in 2000 which has performed both classical *noh* plays and newly composed English Noh. See their homepage for more information (Theatre Nohgaku 2020).

Section D starts with Samson delivering a monologue, which is very much like the stylised speech (*kotoba*) of *noh*. This most *noh*-like part is followed by Samson fiercely shouting and the soprano chorus screaming. The basic unit of Section E consists of *kakegoe*-like ‘ha!’ followed by inhaled and crossing glissandi by the sopranos (a), Samson’s expressively singing through clenched teeth first (b), and basses’ chanting along with Samson with ‘ha!’ at the end of the phrase (c) (Example 3.4).

(E) \* low; expel all air in one rush.

**a** Sopranos [alternating pairs on glissandi] \* > (slow, painful inhaled glissando) (gliss) mf ha! ha

**b** Samson through clenched teeth.  $\text{♩} = 50$  f Because the Philistines bound me de-cep-tul — ly

**c** Basses (a2)  $\text{♩} = 50$  mf Ur-bem quem valla-ver-ant, et me quia vixerant — frau-den-ter ha!

Example 3.4 Marsh, *Samson*, Section E, [bar 1] (1983, 8)

The interval between units then decreases, and the music culminates with everyone shouting ‘ha!’ for a maximum of twenty seconds; the soprano ‘ha!’ turns into a “hysterical cackle” with rising pitch. This section to some degree parallels the climax of a *noh* play where the protagonist (*shite*) dances to expressive music with a lot of drum calls (*kakegoe*). In Section F – recitative, ‘Then I loved

Delilah' – Samson uses “clear, light, breathy voice” that sounds rather in operatic baritone style with some melodic lines that seems to bridge *noh*-like sections to the following Delilah's song.

When comparing Part One to *noh*, the type of chanting Marsh incorporated can be regarded as something between dynamic (*tsuyogin* or *gōgin*) and stylised speech (*kotoba*) among three types of chanting in *noh*. They are: 1) melodic (*yowagin/wagin*) – a style to express elegance and pathos – in which melodies with stable tones and fixed pitch intervals ranged over two octaves are produced with modest vibrato; 2) dynamic (*tsuyogin/gōgin*) – a forceful and dramatic style – in which there is no specific melodic tones but strong vocal oscillation within a minor third with notable vibrato; and 3) stylised speech (*kotoba*) which consists of unmetred prose with typical structure of a microtonal rising in pitch over several syllables then falling off when reaching a peak (Emmert 2001; Fujita, Kapuściński, and Rose 2019). The thematic unit of *Samson* reflects the rising part of the melodic shape of *kotoba* and the characteristics of *tsuyogin/gōgin*. The role of *Samson*'s chorus, which “provide[s] depth and embellishment to the narration and enhance[s] moments of drama with wailing and breathing (they are amplified)” (Marsh 2015a), reflects the *noh* chorus (*jiutai*) that “narrates the background and the story itself, sometimes describing a character's thoughts or emotions or even singing lines for a character” (Emmert 2001). In Part One, Marsh does not “copy” what *noh* does, but incorporates some essential qualities of *noh*.

Delilah's song contrasts starkly with the previous *noh*-inspired sections. The long-phrased, flowing, and chromatic melody of the alto saxophone (a) interacts and intersects with the soprano that is part melismatic, part rhythmic (b) (Example 3.5).

The image shows a musical score for Delilah's song, Section A, bars 1-6. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the vocal line for Delilah (top) and the saxophone/alto line (bottom). The vocal line starts with 'Tell me tell' and has dynamics p, mf, and mf. The saxophone line starts with a long note and has dynamics p, mf, and mp. The second system shows the vocal line (top) and the saxophone/alto line (bottom). The vocal line has lyrics 'me die die die die die die die die tell me tell' and dynamics mf. The saxophone line has dynamics mf.

**Example 3.5** Marsh, *Samson*, Delilah’s song, Section A, [bars 1–6] (1983, 10)

This Interlude is written in Marsh’s musical language in contrast to Part One. In Part Two, the music returns to the sound world of Part One but deviates from something repetitive, fragmented, and monotonous, which I suggest expresses “the stark simplicity of *noh*” in Marsh’s words, to expressive, intense, and extreme ends. The characteristics of musical components are no longer bound to attributes of *noh*; for example, Samson at times sings in falsetto, the female chorus screams or whispers in high pitched voice, and the male chorus repeats very short fragments. The music is built up to the grand climax where Delilah cuts Samson’s hair with “menacing [...] ‘war dance’” with stamping (Marsh 1983), which can be associated with *ashibyoshi* (foot rhythm) of *noh*. Although the stylised gesture is suggested in the direction, the action seems quite literal, and emotion is expressed more directly than *noh*.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> It is directed in Notes at the beginning of the score that “[t]he dance itself consists of stamping with legs slightly apart and knees slightly bent, raising the feet (L & R alternately) only a few inches from the floor[:]; Occasional turns half left

*Samson* is thus neither transcription nor imitation of *noh*, but a creative response to what Marsh thinks *noh* is, based on his research into the art form. Part One of *Samson* seems to be an experiment to answer his question of how *noh* can offer an alternative to Western theatre, which exerts influence on the composer's language that was more prominently presented in Part Two. Musically, it is not that some elements of *noh* are taken into Marsh's fixed language, but rather the composer developed his language flexibly according to, or in the process of accommodating *noh* in his composition. In terms of theatrical expression, *Samson* subtly but fully reflects distinct attributes of *noh*, such as its voice production, use of space, mode of communication, and stylised gesture, all of which are markedly different from Western conventions and go beyond notation. In this regard, the versatility of *Samson* is more a work of "music theatre" than a "dramatic oratorio" (Marsh 2012–13). Music theatre does not carry as many historical overtones as opera, and seems particularly suitable for *noh* reference for Marsh as he considers that music theatre is something that does not necessarily have operatic voices. *Samson* can be contextualised in the lineage of Japan-inspired music theatre works by British composers which clearly owes much to Britten's *Curlew River*.

Marsh explains that he "went for the *noh* drama *full scale* for the first time" (my emphasis), and it is true to a certain extent that *Samson* is very *noh*-like. On the other hand, *noh* reference is everywhere, yet it does not sound like *noh*. Indeed, *Samson* could be taken as just another modernist music theatre piece had the cross-cultural reference not been mentioned. Nonetheless, Marsh made a conscious decision to point performers to *noh* in his direction note, and led the audience to the

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and half right, but no real movement beyond this[; e]ach time she delivers her blood curdling war cry, she throws back her head like a cock crowing" (Marsh 1983).

Japanese theatre by stating the reference, all of which demonstrate the process-oriented nature of his composition.

Relatedly, as regards the idea of research-led composition, it is notable that Marsh's first explicit Japan-inspired composition was generated from the opportunity to teach Japanese music, which he volunteered to add to the curriculum, not because it was what he was doing but because it was what he thought necessary and would benefit the students. He pushed the boundaries to expose his students to unfamiliar music to challenge their preconceptions about music and theatre. His efforts to search and obtain resources and teaching materials even from such places as the Japanese Embassy in order to cover different genres of Japanese traditional music seem to go beyond what a composer is expected to do to teach a module, and these attitudes also point his practice to the idea of research-led teaching.

The compositional process of *Samson* presents a strong and unique correlation between teaching, research, and composition. The teaching gave him confidence to attempt a work such as *Samson*, and the research he conducted for the teaching formed the foundation for the composition. Moreover, the specific inspiration to compose *Samson* came from the weekly concert series at Keele. Such concerts at an academic institution tend to function as a space for intellectual exchanges between staff, students, and the general public, and are a place where members of the institution can programme what they are genuinely interested in, without being too concerned about financial outcomes.

The following section examines Marsh's *gagaku*-inspired instrumental piece, *Kagura*, whose process of incorporating things Japanese is similar to *Samson*, but in an instrumental setting, and with a more assertive expression of Marsh's personal style.

### **“To sound different”: a *gagaku*-inspired instrumental work**

Marsh came back to York as a Lecturer in 1988, and he recollects that at some point around that time, he came to know Denyer. Marsh asked Denyer if he had any suggestions for the course on Japanese music which Marsh continued to teach at York, and Denyer proposed that he would come up to York with the *shakuhachi* player Iwamoto and do some sessions. Marsh remembers that Denyer brought a *koto* with him and talked about *koto* music, and Iwamoto played the *shakuhachi* and let students compose for the instrument. This was around the time that Dartington could not keep Iwamoto anymore and wanted to release him (see the previous chapter for details), so Marsh applied for a funding from then newly founded Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation to bring Iwamoto to York.<sup>28</sup> In 1990, Marsh set up the Centre for Research in Japanese Music and welcomed Iwamoto as a Fellow in Japanese music.<sup>29</sup> Iwamoto taught the *shakuhachi* and also contributed to modules in non-Western music there until 1993. This episode is another example of how a cultural exchange

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<sup>28</sup> The Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation was founded in 1988 and started offering grants in 1989. Marsh received general grants of £10,000 described as “contribution to the costs of the Lectureship in Japanese music at York University for Mr Iwamoto” both in 1990 and 1991. The information was kindly shared by Susan Meehan, the grants and scholarships officer of the Foundation.

<sup>29</sup> Marsh notes that the centre, which he also calls the Centre for Japanese Music, was not really a centre for research but something that was set around Iwamoto. They issued annual newsletters with the list of “Japan-related things that happened”.

expanded around a network of composers and musicians, but also relied heavily upon the financial and political circumstances of institutions and organisations.

### Kagura (1991)

Marsh considers that his knowledge of Japanese music expanded further at York, and remembers, at one point, he discovered that *Curlew River* actually incorporated a lot of *gagaku* as well as *noh*. He then “became really interested” in *gagaku* and, when commissioned to write a piece for the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG), decided to compose his *gagaku*-inspired work, *Kagura* (1991).<sup>30</sup> Although the title is derived from *kagura* – “a dance and/or drama performed primarily in Shinto shrines” (Lancashire 2001–2: 27), some of which were incorporated in *gagaku* as *mikagura* [the palace *kagura*], Marsh’s *Kagura* is purely instrumental, and there are no characters or stories.<sup>31</sup> Marsh states that stylised ceremonial and theatrical characteristics of *kagura* seemed right for the piece he had written.

Marsh “loved the whole sound [...] and differentness of *gagaku*” and, in *Kagura*, incorporates some aspects that he thought are particular to *gagaku* as a basic principle, in order to make the piece so that it “looked like *gagaku* and in some ways worked like *gagaku*”. First, how it *looks* is reflected in the instrumentation and its layout. The standard instrumentation of *kangen*

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<sup>30</sup> *Kagura* was composed for the BCMG, commissioned by Keele Concerts Society with financial assistance from West Midlands Arts. The score was published by Novello & Co Ltd., and it was premiered at the Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham, on 29 September 1991, followed by many performances including one in Japan. The performance of Black Hair Ensemble conducted by the composer in 1995 is available on SoundCloud (Marsh 1995c), coupled with *Black Hair* which I analyse later.

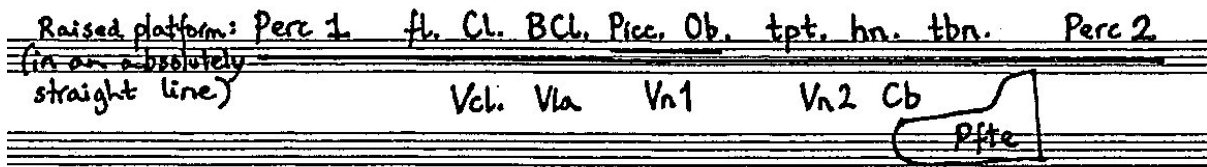
<sup>31</sup> *Kagura* is often seen as “a ritual entertainment”, and *mikagura* performed within the Imperial Court is a genre of *gagaku*. Although *kagura* is commonly categorised under Shinto music in musical contexts (Malm 1959a, 41–59; Waterhouse 2001), Terence Lancashire raises objections to it as it disregards its various origins and the status of Shinto which itself is subject to debate (2001–2: 27, 51).

(instrumental music of *gagaku*) consists of three choirs: 1) woodwinds – the *hichiriki*, *ryūteki*, and *shō*; 2) strings – *koto* and *biwa* (four-stringed lute); and 3) percussion – *shōko* (small gong), *taiko* (large suspended drum), and *kakko* (small two-headed barrel drum). *Gagaku* ensembles have no conductor, and all the players face forwards; woodwinds sit in the back, strings in the middle, and percussion in the front row.<sup>32</sup> Marsh adopts a *gagaku* ensemble norm that has the players lined up straight and looking forward (unusual for a Western ensemble, though Marsh’s *Kagura* requires a conductor). The composer illustrates the stage layout on the instruction page of the score (Figure 3.4), noting that “this layout is important to the piece”: the wind instruments occupy the raised platform in the back (from the left, the flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, piccolo, oboe, trumpet, horn, and trombone); identically arranged percussion kits at both ends; and the string and keyboard instruments in the front (the cello, viola, violins, contrabass, and piano) (Marsh 1991b, [1]).<sup>33</sup> Marsh remembers that, at the rehearsal, he instructed the BCMG players not to turn and look at each other, straightened all the music stands himself, and asked the percussionists to place “the bass drums face on to the audience” (*ibid.*), all of which he assumes the musicians must have found “either amusing or irritating” but thought it really worked visually. Marsh also notes that the drum setting was inspired by the idea of *taiko* drumming.

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<sup>32</sup> It is believed that the seating arrangement was adopted in the nineteenth century so that players can see the hand movement of the players sitting in the front row(s) to judge the timing (Japan Arts Council 2018). Kapuściński and Rose analyse that the wind instruments sit in the back to control the temporal unfolding (2010–20).

<sup>33</sup> It is instructed to highlight the piccolo and oboe, either with subtle lighting or slight elevation. The percussion kits include pair of high drums (“bongo pitch, but deader sound for preference and capable of sharp attack like a Noh drum (*o-tsuzumi*)”, medium drum, tenor drum, small bass drum, and metal bars) (Marsh 1991b, [1]).



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Figure 3.4 Marsh, *Kagura*, stage layout (1991b, [1])

Secondly, for how it *works*, music of *gagaku* is in heterophony like many other Japanese traditional musics; each instrument simultaneously plays a different version of a single melodic line without their being blended or intertwined. Moreover, the function of each instrument and choir is prescribed and never altered: typically, the *hichiriki* and *ryūteki* present the melody an octave apart, and the *shō* fills up the octave with *aitake* chords whose lowest notes follow the melodic line; the *koto* and *biwa* provide melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic variations of the melody; and the percussion creates a single rhythmic pattern which gives the composition with a regular metric outline (Kapuściński and Rose 2010–20). Marsh finds it interesting how “*gagaku* turns the orchestra around”, with a different hierarchy from Western orchestra music in which the strings often play the major part. Marsh’s *Kagura* integrates some of the constitutive attributes above, which are most detectable in its introduction. Thus, there are qualities in *Kagura* that indicate *gagaku* visually and structurally; however, how it *sounds* as a whole is not a musical imitation of *gagaku*. Hereafter, I will analyse *Kagura* section by section, demonstrating the process of how different aspects of *gagaku* are merged into his instrumental writing.

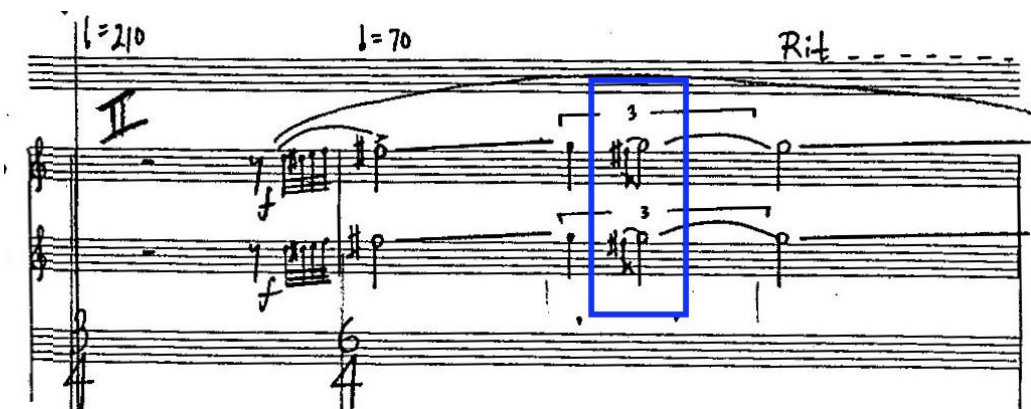
*Kagura*, an approximately sixteen-minute work, consists of what I consider to be the introduction (marked as I to VI) and the main section (marked as A to Q). The way in which the

piece develops can be partially related to the Japanese structural concept of *jo-ha-kyū*, which is originated in *gagaku* and permeated through Japanese art forms. Each section of the tripartite form means: *jo* – prelude or introduction; *ha* – “break away” or “the scattering”; and *kyū* – “rushing towards the end” (Adriaansz 2001; Malm 2021). In *gagaku*, *jo* is often a slow and unmeasured section, followed by *ha* that is a slightly faster measured section, and *kyū*, the fastest measured section. *Jo-ha-kyū* does not only refer to the overall structure but also often applies to moments or smaller components of a piece. *Kagura* progresses from the introduction (I–VI), the transition (A–C), and the rapid climax (D–L), which can be interpreted as *jo-ha-kyū*, though they are followed by the epilogue (M–Q). There are also several motivic segments that bear the characteristics of *jo-ha-kyū* on a micro level.

The introduction, I suggest, is Marsh’s musical tribute to *gagaku* in which he explicitly incorporates *how it works* by presenting some of *gagaku*’s structural features mentioned earlier. The most notable resemblance would be the single slow melodic line given to the piccolo and oboe. When looking at the beginning of *Kagura*, these two instruments approach the first notes, minims, with upward chromatic scales and then play long lines consisting of two notes bridged by glissandi in unison (Example 3.6–a).



These upward scales and glissandi, recurring in many phrases, both capture the essence of how the *hichiriki* and *ryūteki* play melodies in *gagaku* with sliding notes and microtonal inflections, and the *hichiriki* typically reaching the first pitch of a melody with portamento (in *gagaku* they do not play the same melody but different variations of basic melodic lines). Indeed, Marsh instructs the piccolo and oboe that the glissandi not moving at the precisely same rate is “to be welcomed”, that “perfect synchronization is not desirable”, and that “some ‘individuality’ is quite acceptable” in parameters such as tuning and dynamics (Marsh 1991b, 1).<sup>34</sup> Moreover, linearity is one of the core properties of *gagaku*, and Marsh thinks it is rather like *gagaku* that the line played by the piccolo and oboe moves at a pace with intensity, as well as their being “not quite in tune”. In the next phrase of piccolo and oboe in Section II, *g* is accentuated by a quick tap of the neighbouring note (Example 3.7), which corresponds to the *tataku* technique of the *hichiriki* and *ryūteki* that “has a remarkable embellishing effect” (Miki 2008, 21); several phrases end with *enbai*-like ornamentation (Example 3.8).



**Example 3.7** Marsh, *Kagura*, piccolo’s and oboe’s melodies, Section II, [bar 1] (1991b, 2)

<sup>34</sup> Marsh also instructs all the wind instruments that “glissandi are always real glissandi and should be effected through embouchure and slide fingering [and] never resort to chromatic runs” (1991b, 1).

**Example 3.8** Marsh, *Kagura*, piccolo's and oboe's melodies, Section III, [bars 1–2] (1991b, 3)

*Enbai* is a fundamental technique of the *hichiriki* that adds the lowered gliding ornamental inflections to the melody when the reed is held in a shallow position (ibid., 57).

Marsh thus makes the piccolo and oboe, which already resemble the *ryūteki* and *hichiriki* in their physical mechanisms and prime ranges, behave like their Japanese counterparts, adopting musical gestures that are unique to them.<sup>35</sup> He explains that “*gagaku* is a little bit in the choice of pitches, but it is more in the way the pitches are sounded”. Marsh further instructs the piccolo “to play shrilly and quite strong”, and oboe with *senza vibrato*, to make their sonic attributes even closer to the *ryūteki* and *hichiriki*. These two instruments only play long lines throughout the piece, “not very melodic” in his words, and “[become] completely independent from the rest of the orchestra”, which is not the case in *gagaku*.

Another prominent part in the introduction is the percussion (Example 3.6–b). Each section of the introduction is set off by the highly charged and explosive roll of small bass drums placed at

<sup>35</sup> These Japanese instruments, especially the *hichiriki*, have much narrower ranges than the piccolo and oboe.

both ends of the ensemble in a fast tempo (crotchet = 210). Marsh notes that the recurring opening gesture of the drums and brass instruments derives from the climactic moment of his orchestral piece *Stepping Out* for piano and orchestra (1990) composed just before *Kagura*, though what happens after the segments is completely different. The two-beat roar-like roll with rapid *crescendo*, accompanied by a cluster chord that are played with flutter-tonguing by the bass clarinet, trumpet, horn, and trombone (Example 3.6–c) precedes the melodic line of the piccolo and oboe every time it appears. These upbeat parts are abruptly cut where it reaches the first beat in *fortissimo*, accentuated by a piano’s cluster chord which is sustained by the pedal (Example 3.6–d), and the melodic line takes it over in a slow tempo (crotchet = 70 and further slow to crotchet = 56); here, the first violin joins in the melodic line. While the melody declines and disappears, other string instruments enter with harmonics that create a cluster chord (Example 3.6–e), and the bass clarinet, horn, and contrabass in pizzicato insert a short chord (Example 3.6–f).

When comparing Marsh’s *Kagura* to *gagaku* at this point, the recurring pattern of percussion and brass instruments (plus the bass clarinet) that opens each section and structures the introduction are similar in function to the percussion in *gagaku*. Similarly, the role of the piano and the brass instruments which punctuate the phrase can be associated with that of the *koto* and *biwa*, and the sustained chords of the piano and the strings (except the first violin) which add harmonic aspects correspond to the *shō*. This type of replacement of *gagaku*’s functional disposition can be seen in *gagaku*-inspired pieces by other composers, such as *Metamorphosis on Saibara* for orchestra (1953) by Yoritsune Matsudaira (1907–2001) (Narimoto 2019, 265), and ‘*gagaku*’ in *Sept haïkai* by Messiaen (Johnson 1989, 163; Irlandini 2010, 200). Cluster chords are mostly structured around the

notes in the melody, which can be seen as different variations of the basic melodic tones, as in *gagaku*. The static melody, the string parts, and the inserted chords that sound spontaneously generated, also create *gagaku*-like atmosphere.

However, while similarities can be traced in its function, overall musical characteristics are significantly different from *gagaku*, except for the melodic lines of the piccolo and oboe. First, the constant dramatic change of tempo and dynamics initiated by the percussion contrast with *gagaku* which is “devoid of any dynamic variation” (Miki 2008, 19). Secondly, the fluctuating phrase structures, that vary in the number of beats in a bar and of bars in a section, are unlike *gagaku* in which phrase units are normally either four or eight bars long, containing either four or eight beats. Thirdly, the tempestuous and dramatic characteristics mainly created by the drums rather remind one of *taiko* drumming, though these could also be associated with *bugaku* (a *gagaku* genre; music accompanying court dances), performed with symbolic *da-daiko* (large drums). The teleological and directional mood it provides contrasts with typical *gagaku* music that is often described as static. As for the orchestration, Marsh explains that it is as if there are two orchestras – *gagaku* orchestra (wind instruments) behind and a Western one (the string quintet and piano) in front. He notes that the non-vibrato strings bridge Western and Japanese styles, whilst acknowledging “there is no way to make the piano sound Japanese”.

The exit from the introduction – an homage to *gagaku* – to where the music diverges and launches into something completely different is heralded by the rolled high drums with rapid *crescendo* and the three semiquavers on woodwinds, both of which break the structural patterns of the introduction. The latter, which creates sequential cluster chords, becomes a fragment of one of

the motivic segments for the rest of the piece, which are presented more prominently in the following Sections A to C. These sections (*ha*) function as the transition from slow music with recognisable *gagaku* features (*jo*) to fast and furious writing of Marsh (*kyū*). There remains the basic structural pattern with the drum rolls and brass instruments preceding a phrase, but the melodies of the piccolo and oboe no longer dominate the music, and new motivic components come to the front and expand. These components are: 1) aforementioned moving chords in semiquavers (a), which Marsh calls “motor rhythm”; and 2) the sequence of four cluster chords in dotted crotchets (b), variations of whose outer melodic pitch intervals – the major thirds (e.g. *d-f-sharp-e-c*; *d-f-sharp-g-e-flat*) – constantly recur throughout the piece (Example 3.9).

**Example 3.9** Marsh, *Kagura*, part of Section B, [bar 1–6] (1991b, 8)

The frenetic characteristics of the former, and the distinctive sonic attributes of the latter created by the brass instruments with Harmon mutes and the piano, take the music away from the quasi-*gagaku* mood of the introduction. The tension builds up with the upward melodies and consecutive notes in

*crescendo* towards the end of Section B, and it launches into Section C in *Più mosso* in which the motor rhythm becomes dominant, and the interval of inserted drum rolls with rapid *crescendo* supported by other instruments gets shorter and shorter.

The music reaches its fastest point at Section D, where the signifying piccolo and oboe melodies disappear, and the music evolves onwards around the restless semiquavers played by wind and string instruments, the piano's cluster chords, and the prolonged major-third melodies by the violin and trombone. There are also repeated cluster chords by metal bars instructed to be played with heavy metal beaters, which could be associated with the *shōko* (bronze gong) used in *gagaku* but also appeared in Marsh's earlier work, *The Big Bang* (1989). This climactic music, whose style could be traced back to Béla Bartók (1881–1945), Witold Lutosławski (1913–94), and Berio, yet uniquely Marsh, occupies more than a third of the piece (Sections D to L). While the music as a whole seems nothing to do with *gagaku* here, in Section H where it reaches the most climactic point, Marsh inserted dram calls 'he!', 'ha!', and 'ho!' combined with dram rolls in rapid *crescendo*, which is akin to *taiko* drumming. The piccolo and oboe melodies come back in the midst of Section H, and play long soli after the tutti stops and the music momentarily slows down in Section J. The tempo is then brought back, and the restless motor rhythm played in tutti enters again in Section K, which becomes gradually intermittent towards Section M where the piccolo and oboe melodies are left alone.

Sections N to Q, the epilogue, are composed around lingering sound and silence, both of which are often associated with Japanese aesthetics but also prevailing features in contemporary music. The structure is similar to the first two parts of the piece (I–VI and A–C), in which phrases

consist of the same initiating elements and developing components that fill the gap between them; however, the sound profile and atmosphere are very different partially because the piano's quick arpeggio, whose sound and gesture are nothing but Western-music-oriented, initiates each phrase. In Section P, the piccolo and oboe melodies which have been independent from other parts are integrated with other wind instruments for the first time, and the music fades out.

One interpretation of *Kagura* could be that Marsh adopted some *essence* of *gagaku*, if following the typical method of analysis applied to cross-cultural composition as outlined in the thesis introduction. This type of analysis tends to examine what aspects are derived from non-Western resources and how they are incorporated in a composer's established styles. Indeed, *gagaku* has been one of the most adopted non-Western genres in Western-style compositions. For example, such activities have been encouraged by the music department of the Imperial Household Agency in Japan: they had organised a competition for composers to write *gagaku*-inspired pieces as early as the 1930s.<sup>36</sup> Many *gagaku*-inspired works, most of which were composed in the 1950s and 1960s, could be interpreted as a process of *gagaku*'s features being incorporated and merged into the contexts which composers are familiar with, though the degree of assimilation varies. Key *gagaku* features those composers adopted include: instrumentation and the idea of fixed disposition of choirs; linearity and heterophony; the structural ideas such as *netori* (a tuning piece) and *jo-ha-kyū*; melodies, modes, and gestures of *ryūteki* and *hichiriki*; harmonies represented by the *shō*'s *aitake*

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<sup>36</sup> *Gagaku*-inspired compositions include: *Theme and Variations for Piano and Orchestra* (1951) and many others by Matsudaira; *Ongaku* (1957) by Cowell; *Trio for Strings* (1958) and many others by Young; *Sept haikai* (1962) by Messiaen; *Pacifika Rondo* (1963) by Harrison; *Curlew River* (1964) by Britten; *Fantasy on Japanese Woodprints* (1965) and many others by Hovhaness. There are also works written for *gagaku* orchestra or instruments by composers, such as Takemitsu, Toshiro Mayuzumi (1929–97), Ichianagi, Matsudaira, and Stockhausen.

chords; characteristic rhythmic patterns such as *katarai* (an accelerating roll). Marsh incorporates some of these aspects into *Kagura* and, in this regard, it follows the footsteps of these composers.<sup>37</sup>

However, there are many aspects in *Kagura* that this almost anatomical and one-directional way of interpretation – West taking something from East, or East feeding something to West – does not work. Marsh’s *Kagura* neither refers to any particular piece of *gagaku* nor uses quasi-Japanese melodies or harmonies; hence, the music does not appear to be *gagaku*, Japanese, or *Oriental*. In fact, it is quite difficult to pin down what is stylistically and formalistically *gagaku* about the piece. Nevertheless, there is certainly a strong sonic resonance of *gagaku*, particularly at the beginning of the piece. *Gagaku* is there but not as *gagaku* is commonly known. For example, the piccolo and oboe line is not exactly a *gagaku* melody – it neither copies any pre-existing *gagaku* tune nor uses any mode used in *gagaku*, but it has certain qualities of *gagaku* in its sound and gesture. Marsh says that “it is not like any other melody that I have written or any other melody that I know in Western music”. This is, I suggest, what Marsh aimed at: “to sound different” from anything, while in a way retaining everything. Marsh states that in all his music he “has tried not to sound like all the rest of the Western contemporary music”, and “combining the search for another kind of sound with the sounds of Japan [...] helps me to create this other sound”. He hoped that, when one hears *Kagura*, “he/she is reminded of Japanese music but nobody thinks [I am] trying to be Japanese music”. In order to achieve it, instead of taking *gagaku* or parts of *gagaku* into his composition, he lets *gagaku* as a genre influence how he thinks and processes his composition.

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<sup>37</sup> Marsh remembers that he was captivated by ‘*gagaku*’ in *Sept Haikai* as “it does not sound like *gagaku* but it does not sound like anything else”, though the way in which Marsh incorporates *gagaku* is very different from that of Messiaen which is described as “the concept of *stylized transcription*” (Irlandini 2010, 197; original emphasis).

For example, *Kagura* incorporates the majority of how it *looks* and how it *works* from *kangen* (instrumental music), but the dynamic musical characteristics are closer to that of *bugaku* (dance music) which is often rhythmic and fast tempo; *kagura*, which Marsh uses as the title for its ceremonial and theatrical attributes, is categorised in *kuniburi-no-utamai* (accompanied vocal music of Japanese origin) in *gagaku*. The piece evolves *around* both *gagaku* as a genre and Marsh's styles, not that one is taken *from* or incorporated *into* the other. It reflects the composer's extensive knowledge of *gagaku*, which he had acquired through research and teaching over a decade. *Gagaku* is subsumed, intertwined, and permeated both in the compositional process and the musical work. In this sense, it is a prime example of research-led compositional practice.

In terms of research in a broader sense, some of the significant events that happened around that time – Marsh's encounter with Denyer and Iwamoto, inviting them for a lecture at York, and hosting Iwamoto and establishing a centre for research – would not have been possible had Marsh not been in an academic institution. It shows another institutional and educational side of his Japan-related composition. Moreover, Marsh remembers that, regarding *Kagura*, he was worried that “someone would say [I had] *stolen*”. He then asked Denyer, to whom he dedicated *Kagura*, if “it was alright”, and Denyer responded that “it was fantastic, do not worry, you are not *ripping off gagaku*” (my emphasis). This can be read as a crude discussion of ethics in music. As Denyer asked such questions himself (see Chapter 2), they seemed to feel obliged to think about these cultural issues, and to position themselves as composers and researchers who were ethically conscious. This anxiety and awareness of cultural (mis)appropriation has become a major factor in determining the ways in which composers adopt something non-Western in their compositions, starting in the 1950s

and 1960s in some cases but most certainly by the 1980s, and was not unrelated to the social climate and academic discussion of that time. The value system, in which the experimentation and abstraction tend to be ranked over quotation and imitation (Sheppard 2008a, 467), is certainly reflected in Marsh's *Kagura* as well as *Samson*.

### **Creative and poetic reflections of the film *Kwaidan***

In the 1990s, after writing the two major Japan-inspired works, *Samson* and *Kagura*, Marsh composed three smaller pieces inspired by Hearn's stories, two of which were derived from the Japanese film *Kwaidan* (1964) – “another resource which Denyer was responsible for” – according to Marsh.<sup>38</sup> When Denyer came to York with Iwamoto, he asked Marsh if he could get hold of the film, saying “if you want people to understand Japanese culture quickly, this film does it”.<sup>39</sup> Marsh then obtained the full reels of *Kwaidan* from the British Film Institute (BFI) and presented it with an 8mm projector to the students who were taking the Japanese Music course, which “was a real project getting together”. The film *Kwaidan*, an anthology of Japanese ghost stories, consists of four stories collected by Hearn, and Marsh composed *Black Hair* (1992/1995) and *Hoichi* (1992), inspired by two of its stories, for different occasions. Hearn's writing also became an inspiration for Marsh's

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<sup>38</sup> *Kwaidan*, directed by Masaki Kobayashi, earned international acclaim by winning international awards such as Special Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival (1965), and by being nominated for the Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards (1966). It is described as “both a captivatingly creepy horror film and an elegant treatise on death and loss to rank, alongside Kenji Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu Monogatari*” (BFI), the film by which Goehr was fascinated. The film has held special interest for many Western composers, partially because of its music written by Takemitsu.

<sup>39</sup> This is perhaps another throwaway statement, which one may criticise as naive. However, I suggest that this owes to their casual way of communication, and perhaps, too, to the context of our oral interview. Though there is a question of what it means “to understand a culture quickly”, Denyer's understandings of the film must not be underestimated, considering *Kwaidan* was part of his PhD research.

later work; the idea for his *Sozu Baba* (1996) came from Hearn's *The Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894).

When considering how Hearn's writings inspired composers such as Eichheim and Goehr in the past, one can see not just unidirectional but multidirectional circulation of things Japanese here.<sup>40</sup> Hearn's writings, which had played a significant role in creating Japan's images in the West since the late nineteenth century, inspired a Japanese director to make a film in the 1960s, and it fascinated the next generation of composers including Denyer and Marsh as something that represents Japan. In this section, I analyse how Marsh generated *Black Hair* and *Hoichi*, which are very different in nature from his previous works.

#### *Black Hair* (1992/1995)

*Black Hair, A Japanese Ghost Story* came about when Marsh was asked to write a three-minute song by the soprano Mary Wiegold for her *Mary Wiegold's Songbook*.<sup>41</sup> As with other pieces in the songbook, the original version of *Black Hair* (1992) was written for voice, two clarinets, viola, cello, and double bass – the instrumentation of Wiegold and The Composers Ensemble – and Marsh later wrote a version for soprano and piano (1995b).<sup>42</sup> 'The Black Hair [*kurokami*]' in the film *Kwaidan*,

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<sup>40</sup> The musical works inspired by Hearn include: Eichheim's *Gleanings from Buddha Fields for Piano* (1906) and *Oriental Sketches* (1918–20) for piano, and Goehr's *Four Songs from the Japanese* (1959).

<sup>41</sup> Wiegold, who is known for her performance of new music, started collecting a songbook in 1989, inviting contemporary composers to write new songs in collaboration with the composer John Woolrich (1954–). They have collected around two hundred pieces by mainly British composers, such as Thomas Adès (1971–), Milton Babbitt (1916–2011), Sally Beamish (1956–), Birtwistle, Harvey, MacMillan, Colin Matthews (1946–), Howard Skempton (1947–), Keith Tippett (1947–2020), and many others.

<sup>42</sup> The recording of the original version performed by Black Hair Ensemble, Marsh (conductor), Anna Myatt (voice), is available on SoundCloud (Marsh 1995c), paired with *Kagura*. Both versions are published by Novello & Co Ltd. I use both for analysis but adopt the 1995 version for music examples. There also exist other arrangements.

from which Marsh's piece was derived, is an adaptation from 'The Reconciliation' in Hearn's *Shadowings* ([1919] 1900). In the story, a young *samurai* in Kyoto left his dedicated wife, a weaver, to marry the daughter of a noted family to raise himself from poverty; however, the new wife was egotistical and callous, and he regretted his selfishness. He sent the second wife back to her family, and when the official term of employment expired, he went back and found his ex-wife in a backroom of their deserted house. He asked her for forgiveness, and she implored him not to reproach himself. The next morning, he found himself lying next to a rotten corpse of a woman with long black hair (Hearn [1919] 1900; Kobayashi 1965).

In the film, there is subsequently a lengthy dramatic scene in which the *samurai* was attacked by a bunch of black hair, staggered out to escape while rapidly aging, with sound of cracking wood. On the other hand, Hearn's story tells that "[b]efore him, wrapped in its grave-sheet only, lay the corpse of a woman, [-] a corpse so wasted that little remained save the bones, and the long black tangled hair", and that the *samurai*'s neighbour told him of the woman becoming sick and dying soon after her husband left (Hearn [1919] 1900, 11). The differences between the titles – Hearn's 'The Reconciliation' and the film's 'Black Hair' – and between the endings reveal an interesting fact: it was the Japanese director who foregrounded the woman's black hair which has long been associated with female ghosts in Japanese culture.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> In their *Ghosts and The Japanese: Cultural Experience in Japanese Death Legends*, Michiko Iwasaki and Barre Toelken explain that unbound hair and white dress of a woman represent that she has had a funeral, and some ghost paintings derived from folklore portray "[t]he unmistakable visual codes – long (often disheveled) hair, white kimono, lack of feet, a painted or angry expression, tongues of fire nearby – [that] make clear to the viewer that the ghost is culturally authentic, and hence believable" (1994, 70).

Marsh found the story in the film “very beautiful” and, when asked to compose a song, decided to retell the story from the film and write his own lyrics, acknowledging that he did not refer to Hearn’s original story at that time. He remembers that he wrote the song fairly quickly, thinking it had to be simple if it was *a song*. Marsh explains that songs written by contemporary composers fall into three categories: 1) “conventional art songs” that use the language of late twentieth-century concert music; 2) “deliberately simple songs” that any listener would recognise with “simple melodic line, simple harmony, a verse structure, uncomplicated accompaniment”; and 3) “miniature dramatic pieces” (Marsh 2017).<sup>44</sup> Marsh’s *Black Hair* would be of the second kind with a hint of the first. It also has some elements of pop songs and cabaret songs with its simplicity, type of voice, and lyrics, reminiscent of songs by Kurt Weill (1900–50) and *Pierrot lunaire* (1912) by Schoenberg. Marsh states that he has “always been interested [...] in ways of blurring the lines between classical and pop, and between East and West[;] [t]here’s no political agenda here, simply a desire not to compartmentalise my musical interests” (Marsh 2017).<sup>45</sup> *Black Hair* is a good example of that statement. The composer also notes that it may have been the first piece he wrote in his adult life in which he allowed himself to be very simple in contrast to “avant-garde post serial music” he had been writing, and that this song is important as “the simplicity then stuck in the rest of my music after that”.

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<sup>44</sup> In the article titled ‘what is a song?’, Marsh refers to the *Mary Wiegold Songbook* and the *NMC Songbook* (2009). The categorisation in the texts is derived from the latter.

<sup>45</sup> It does not mean that Marsh is a composer who stays away from politics. In fact, he expresses his personal and political views quite explicitly, for example, on his blog posts which I detail later.

Structurally, the lyrics comprise eight stanzas of four verses (see Appendix 2 for the full texts). The music is in variation form, starting with an eight-bar theme and developing in each variation. Each stanza has an introduction and postlude that differ in length. As for how to incorporate the Japanese elements, Marsh states that he “didn’t really even think about that, except it seemed a natural thing to do given the subject matter”; “[*Black Hair*] is a little bit *Japanese-y*” and “has slightly Japanese coloured harmony”, which I suggest owes much to the modes he uses in this song. For example, looking at the theme (first stanza), the melody is in an *in* scale (*miyakobushi* scale) – one of the pentatonic scales that is commonly used in *koto* and *shamisen* music – and the harmony derives from a combination of the *in* scale and *minyō* scale, the latter of which is used in Japanese folk tunes (Example 3.10).

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**Example 3.10** Marsh, *Black Hair*, bar 1–4 (1995a, [2])

The long-slurred clarinet melody, coming after the last verse, is in the *in/miyakobushi* modal scale which one could argue musically signifies Japan. On the other hand, the second and fourth verses ending with *e-a-c* (the tonic chord of *a*-minor) and *g*-sharp inserted in the postlude (the leading note of *a*-minor) hint at some tonal functionality. Both the melody and the accompaniment are very simple and steady in their rhythm and harmony, and develop in circular motion with regular punctuation

(except for the postlude) that can be associated with weaving. The bass notes are played by the double bass on the first beat, followed by the clarinets responding to them with phrases from the second beat, and the viola and cello add the harmony in the background, all of which produce a conventional form of song accompaniment.

When comparing the first two bars of each stanza to study its development as a variation, the melody remains more or less the same for the first four stanzas, during which the accompaniment patterns change with added accidentals (Example 3.11). Although the accompaniment maintains the repeated circular motion, there are more variants, and it becomes more and more expressive in its range and dynamics, which transforms the music from simple to more complicated and from modal/tonal to chromatic/dissonant in stages. Marsh instructs in the score that “the story should be told with a minimum of expression” and “during the first verses, [the singer should] stand still and look straight ahead” (Marsh 1992b), which adds ominous tranquility and stillness to the static music. When it reaches the fifth stanza, where the direction indicates to sing with “a little more passion” (ibid.), the key signature changes from zero to five flats (a mode on *b*-flat). The melodies of the fifth and seventh stanzas are in a modified inversion of the theme, an octave higher, and more chromatic, between which sits the sixth stanza with the original melody in the transposed key. At the end, in the eighth stanza, the music returns to the mode on *a* with the same melody, accompaniment, and tone as the first stanza for the first few bars. However, in the middle of that stanza, “the voice turn[s] cold” (‘you’ll turn to me in bed...’), and then becomes “terrifying” and “menacing” (‘wrapping round your throat my long black hair’). The latter verse starts a final *crescendo* to *fortissimo* with glissandi on

the words “long black hair”, accompanied by dissonant harmony, and further intensification by accelerating the tempo (Example 3.12).

1. *ad lib.*  
We fell in love Years a - go, the

2. We found a clea - ring In the wood, we t

3. You of - ten said I made you strong how

4. You said good - bye with - out a tear "A

5. One day, you'll be sad  
*f*  
*poco f mp f mp*  
*mf*

6. hrough the dark - ness, in one day y

7. You'll beg for - give - ness, I'll stay your lips, you'll

8. *Simply, as before*  
And with the dawn, you'll lift your head, and

**Example 3.11** Marsh, *Black Hair*, the first two bars of each stanza (1995a)

107 *poco tenuto (menacing)* *poco accel.* ..... *c* ♩ = 88

pile of bones, *f* and *mf* wrap - ping round your throat my long black

**Example 3.12** Marsh, *Black Hair*, bar 107–9 (1995a, 9)

What is significant about this song is that Marsh gives a voice to *the unvoiced*. His *Black Hair* tells the story from the first-wife’s perspective and depicts her powerful emotions, in contrast to the film in which the story is told by the narrator, revolving around the *samurai* and his feelings. In fact, most of what is depicted in Marsh’s song is not in the film, except the scene portrayed by the fourth stanza, one that depicts where the film begins. In the film, the woman stays submissive, forbearing, and merciful, and what attacked the *samurai* was depicted as something beyond herself, perhaps a sort of ghost, represented by a bunch of hair detached from her body. In the song, however, the woman portrayed gradually loses control and, with the singer physically present, what she becomes is perceived as an extension of the woman. In this sense, Marsh’s *Black Hair* is somewhat comparable to a recurring subject in Western operas and music theatres – a representation of a madwoman.<sup>46</sup>

One parallel that can be drawn between discourses of musical representations of madwomen and *Black Hair* is that, in Western music, the madwoman’s deviance has long been marked by “the

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<sup>46</sup> In her ‘Madness, Sexuality and Gender in Early Twentieth-Century Music Theater Pieces: Four Interpretive Essays’ (2010), Megan B. Jenkins states that madness, especially female madness, is a recurrent theme in early twentieth-century opera and experimental music theatre works, with examples of Schoenberg’s *Erwartung* (1924), Richard Strauss’s *Salome* (1905), Weill’s *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1933), and Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress* (1951).

excessive ornamentation and chromaticism” (McClary [1991] 2002, 82). Indeed, in Britten’s *Curlew River*, the madness is characterised by “chromatic transposition and inversion” (Fink 2024, 35). In *Black Hair*, the stanza-by-stanza shift from expanded modal/tonal to chromatic language, as well as that from simple to more elaborated rhythm and harmony, and from monotonous to dramatic tones, illustrate the change of the woman’s state of mind from composed to disintegrating. In Marsh’s time, chromaticism clearly does not promise a successful escape from “formal and diatonic conventions”, however, by setting the song in a modal/tonal framework first, Marsh achieves the effect of deviation.

Another parallel is that music “gives voice to symptoms of insanity”, in contrast to most media in which madwomen are silent and “rarely given the power of language, [and] almost never given the opportunity to speak their own experiences” (ibid., 85). Susan McClary states that music offers “another dimension” which is the character’s subjective feelings and “delivers a sense of depth and grants the spectator license to eavesdrop upon the character’s interiority” (ibid.). In fact, in Hearn’s story, the woman “sweetly refused to speak” her own sorrows (Hearn [1919] 1990, 10); in the film, she was given few lines, and those given illustrate her submissive and obedient nature: “I always felt that I wasn’t worthy of being your wife”, for example (Kobayashi 1965). Marsh set the lyrics to give the opportunity to the woman to tell the story, and wrote the music which not just reflects what is in the texts but also conveys the emotional state of the woman. In his writing about words and music, Marsh maintains that:

Our relationship with text should go beyond finding the required number of notes to fit the words and hoping for the best. Music can support text and can comment on text. It can join with and recompose text. There are many ways to *clothe* this particular cat (I’m not keen on skinning them). (Marsh 2015c; my emphasis)

The texts of *Black Hair* already manifest the subjectivity of the woman, but it is the music that enhances the characterisation of the woman's madness, which was probably not even intended in the original story and the film. The idea of black hair is also musically reinforced by the words "black hair" sung at the end of four out of eight stanzas, where the music culminates.

Megan B. Jenkins claims that "[the] musical narratives of madness [...] can be seen as cultural products that shed light on the meanings of madness within a particular culture" (2010, 14). There are most certainly socio-cultural tropes at play that are demonstrated by Marsh's compositional and narrative decisions in *Black Hair* (just as in *Curlew River*, which is based on the *noh* story *Sumidagawa* that is categorised as the madwoman category of *noh* play (*kyōjo mono*)). Unifying the voiceless woman and the faceless hair/ghost that were separated beings in the film, and presenting it musically as a madwoman, can be interpreted as Westernisation of a Japanese woman. The film is not about the woman's madness as she remains composed, and the ghost is almost an independent being, and yet, in the song, all the musical attributes signify her losing her mind. By "clothing" her in Western musical fashion, Marsh does not just release a female character from being silent (as Western scholarship of madwomen would read it), but also gives a voice to a supposedly suppressed and silenced woman – an expected attribute and also a typical image of a Japanese/Asian woman, as seen in *Madama Butterfly* (though the audience could also listen to *Black Hair* without the context of national identity nor of narrative information, such as the woman's silence). This reading itself is probably very Western in its assumption that everyone must be given a voice, while one might want their emotion to be unspoken. The woman's inner voice is entirely imagined as there

is no explicit indication of her grudge or grievance in the film, even though it is evidently suggested by the hair's violently attacking the *samurai*.

*Black Hair* later became rather personal to the composer. Marsh maintains that he wrote *Black Hair* for his wife, the soprano Anna Myatt (despite the fact that it was composed when commissioned by Wiegold) and, when they co-founded a contemporary music ensemble in 1995, they named the ensemble Black Hair.<sup>47</sup> The song *Black Hair* became “a calling card” for the ensemble which was known for “its unusual presentations for new music and music theatre” (Marsh 2012–13), and was always performed at the beginning of their concerts for a few years. The use of the song as a calling card and the repetition might have increasingly detached the song from its original context. It is also possible that *Black Hair* liberated Marsh from being a certain way as a modernist composer – potentially another culturally expected attitude of the time – and let him present a piece that he instinctively composed out of fascination.

### *Hoichi* (1992)

Another piece from the film, *Hoichi* for solo alto flute with amplification and live electronics, was written for the flautist Jos Zwaanenburg.<sup>48</sup> When Zwaanenburg asked Marsh to write a piece, Marsh told him that he “would like to write a piece based on another of the Japanese ghost stories”, which

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<sup>47</sup> The ensemble is introduced as: “Black Hair takes its name from the Japanese ghost story by the 19th century writer Lafcadio Hearn, upon which Roger Marsh based his song of the same name” (Black Hair 2018). Marsh was the principal conductor and one of the artistic directors with Myatt and John Stringer (oboe/conductor). The ensemble’s main repertoire was “the radical classics of modern music (Webern, Varese, Stravinsky, Berio etc)”, and they also performed some works by Japanese composers such as Kondō and Takemitsu. They were Yorkshire Arts Musicians in Residence and also in residency at Dartington College of Arts three times.

<sup>48</sup> It was premiere at the Middelburg Festival, Netherlands, on 3 July 1992, and broadcasted on BBC Radio on 3 April 1994.

Zwaanenburg thought a good idea. ‘Hoichi the Earless [*Miminashi hōichi no hanashi*]’ in the film *Kwaidan* is an adaptation of ‘the story of *mimi-nashi-hōichi*’ in Hearn’s *Kwaidan*.

Marsh’s *Hoichi*, an approximately ten-minute piece, does not literarily tell the story like *Black Hair* but rather metaphorically captures the ambience of ‘Hoichi the Earless’ in the film.<sup>49</sup> The piece is composed for amplified alto flute, voice, and live electronics, all played by a flautist. The flute part includes extensive techniques, such as flutter tonguing, sliding glissandi, and microtones; the voice repeats ‘hoi!’, as well as prolonged ‘Ho-i-chi’ sung in flute; and the live electronics generate reverb of particular note(s) and the voice, all of which are closely notated on the score. When looking at the beginning of the piece, it starts with the lowest note of the alto flute,  $f^{-1}$ -sharp (written as  $b^{-1}$ ), with flutter tonguing instructed with “more breath than flute sound” in *crescendo* (Marsh 1992c, [1]) (Example 3.13).<sup>50</sup> When it reaches *fortissimo*, the voice ‘hoi!’ comes in, and both the flute sound and the voice are reverberated; the call is described as “strained *samurai* shout: ‘ho-i’ elided into a single short and aggressive shout” (ibid.). While the residue of the breathy low note and the throaty shout resonates electronically,  $f^2$ -sharp (written as  $b^2$ ) played by the flute emerges with *senza vibrato* and slides up to  $g^2$  (written as  $c^2$ ).

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<sup>49</sup> The duration of the piece indicated on the publisher’s catalogue is six minutes but the performance by Zwaanenburg takes almost ten minutes (Marsh 2014). The recording is available on SoundCloud (Marsh 1992d).

<sup>50</sup> Zwaanenburg developed the first open-hole alto flute with the Dutch flute makers Eva Kingma and Durk Kuiper in 1986 and 1987 (Eva Kingma Flutemaker 2023). The flute has a  $f^{-1}$ -sharp (written as  $b^{-1}$ ) footjoint and made many extended techniques, such as multiphonics and sliding glissandi, possible.

amplified alto flute

voice: hoi! *senza vibrato*

\*Rz (more breath than flute sound)

mp

ff

[non reverb]

f

electronics

R max

f

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**Example 3.13** Marsh, *Hoichi*, [bars 1–3] (1992c, [1])

This opening phrase epitomises the whole piece in terms of its mood, motivic element, and central notes. The opening note,  $f^{-1}$ -sharp, evokes a feeling that something is quickly approaching, and most of phrases start with or return to this note throughout the piece. The following  $f^2$ -sharp to  $g^2$  is also a recurring motif from which later phrases are developed. The other motivic segment that is not in the first phrase but appears often is the quick demisemiquavers with quarter tones (Example 3.14).

amplified alto flute

ff

mp

(non reverb)

f

reverb

9:8

5:4

electronics

R

f

**Example 3.14** Marsh, *Hoichi*, [bars 26–27] (1992c, [1])

The haunting effect of the live electronics, that comes and goes with each phrase and governs the atmosphere of the piece, is akin to the howling sound effect which appears in the film when Hōichi is entering the other world.

Although there are some clear connections between the piece and the film, the narrative representation in Marsh's *Hoichi* is open to interpretation. For example, the flute is Hōichi, a musician, speaking through the medium of music; the voice is of the *samurai* and/or manservants; and the live electronics depict the soundscape. In this interpretation, *Hoichi* is not an abstract piece but represents personas, as well as visual and spatial characteristics of the film. It is loaded with explicit meanings through words and electronics, and the composition of the piece which becomes more pressing and violent towards the end could be read as representing the story in which the tension is heightened towards the tearing off of Hōichi's ears. Alternatively, the piece as a whole can be understood to represent the mystical landscape of the film. There are different types of filmic description in the score – for example, the breath is described as “[t]he sound of wind in a desolate landscape” (Marsh 1992c, [2]), and the piece evokes a certain landscape or impression of the film.

Lastly, listening to the recording, one would not be surprised if told that it was played on the *shakuhachi*. The wide range of breathiness of notes, glissandi, and other distorted notes with extended technique blur the boundary between the flute and the *shakuhachi*. Marsh indeed acknowledges that he heard Denyer's *The Tender Sadness of Tyrants as They Dance* (1991) (which Denyer wrote for Zwaanenburg and Iwamoto) during one of Denyer's visits to York in the early

1990s.<sup>51</sup> The *shakuhachi*, its connections with the flute, and Zwaanenburg's playing were very much in his mind.

Drawing inspiration from the film, *Black Hair* and *Hoichi* appear to be intuitive rather than research-informed, compared to previous works such as *Samson* and *Kagura*. However, these pieces from the 1990s are produced precisely because the research Marsh had done by the time made him feel more comfortable and open to incorporate things Japanese without being too circumspect about doing so. In other words, it became almost second nature for him to compose a Japan-inspired piece. *Black Hair* and *Hoichi* are creative and poetic reflections of the film, and their musical attributes are drawn from Marsh's broader cultural knowledge rather than from particular sources. To be able to have such an imagination expressed in these pieces, a composer must have culturally embedded and culturally sensitive knowledge. Moreover, every cultural reference is more or less *in* music rather than *beyond* notation, compared to *Samson* and *Kagura* in which some of the references are theatrical expression. As a result, they are Japan-inspired but there is not much one could say musically when conducting cross-cultural analysis.

Another detail that evidences his greater comfort with Japanese sources is that Marsh dealt with the potentially sensitive subject of *Black Hair* quite boldly. Long black hair could be seen as a symbol of Asian/Japanese femininity in the West, and, from that perspective, one might read Marsh's *Black Hair* as a Western male composer's exoticising a non-Western female. The defense would be that it was not Marsh's invention as black hair was the essential part of the film as noted earlier. It

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<sup>51</sup> *Tyrants* was premiered at the Jack Lyons Concert Hall, the University of York.

should also be marked that the piece, inspired by a Japanese film, became a critical turning point in his compositional practice.

### **Practical Project, writings, and later engagement with things Japanese**

This section explores Marsh's creative activities outside composition and examines his later Japan-inspired pieces, demonstrating how his engagement with things Japanese took a new turn in the 1990s and beyond. Marsh considers the annual Practical Project – an intensive five-weeks course for incoming first-year students to produce a full-scale music theatre work – as one of the best experiences of his forty-year career at York (2012–13).<sup>52</sup> He believes the project helps students boost their self-esteem and settle into the community, and provides a valuable learning experience for both students and himself (Marsh 2012–13; 2018). He wrote:

Looking back on the six projects I directed over 26 years, I realise how much I learned from them myself, especially about the importance of allowing full collaboration from the students. [...] For myself, I can say honestly that the satisfaction I have derived from these six projects far exceeds the satisfaction I derived from any of my professional successes or any of my other teaching. Oh yes, because I maintain that the Practical Project is not just teaching, but the best way of teaching[.] (Marsh 2012–13)

This is another example that demonstrates how central the educational aspect was in his career and how passionate he was as an educator. Music theatre is also a life-long preoccupation for him, and the project interrelated with his progress as a composer.

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<sup>52</sup> According to Marsh, the Practical Projects at the University of York dates back to about fifty years ago. The projects, which culminate in several public performances, involve approximately 50 first-year students and some second- and third-year students who are willing to participate. For further details of the course and each project he directed, see his website (Marsh 2012–13).

Among the six projects he directed between 1989 and 2016, one in 1998 was Japan-inspired. As his interest in Japanese theatre expanded from *noh* to *kabuki*, he thought that “the diversity and flexibility of [*kabuki*] would make an ideal challenge for a Practical Project”, the idea of which resulted in an adaptation of a *kabuki* play, *Sukeroku: Flower of Edo*, for UK audience to be performed in their concert hall.<sup>53</sup> To “virtually build a [*kabuki*] theatre”, the project involved erecting a *hanamichi* (a runway through the audience to the main stage), constructing the stage and spaces for the musicians above and off the stage with scaffolding, covering the front of stage with deep red cloths, and putting a large barrel filled with water at one side of the stage (Figure 3.5).<sup>54</sup>



**Figure 3.5** Stage photo of ‘Kabuki, *Sukeroku: Flower of Edo*’ (Marsh 2012–13)

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<sup>53</sup> The performances were on 11 and 12 November 1998 at Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, University of York. I could not obtain the recording, and the information about the production is based on the interview with Marsh, the webpage about the project, and the scanned programme notes uploaded on the page (Marsh 2012–13; 2018).

<sup>54</sup> The water barrel is particular to the story of *Sukeroku*.

They also investigated the ways to replicate the make-up and costumes, asked a Japanese student from other department to coach the performers on Japanese mannerisms, and involved Iwamoto as a special musical advisor. In terms of music, a then-student Kerry Andrew states that “the music itself is an amalgamation of transcriptions/arrangements from various recordings of [*kabuki*] plays and other Japanese theatre traditions, original compositions and group improvisation” (Kabuki 1998, [5]); the new pieces were composed “in suitable Japanese style to accompany the action” (Marsh 2012–13). The form and instrumentation of the *kabuki* ensemble were incorporated with some students’ learning Japanese instruments available at the department and others adapting their Western and Chinese instruments to “resemble Japanese equivalents through non-conventional playing techniques” (Marsh 2012–13); the chorus adopted the nasal vocalisation and “ornamental and almost heterophonic Japanese voice style”; and the percussion sounds were “inventively recreated” (Kabuki 1998, [5]).<sup>55</sup> Marsh recalls that “it was the best music theatre production I was ever involved with”.

Although I do not go into more details of the project since the focus of this chapter is Marsh’s works, this production aiming to “reproduce” a *kabuki* play has great potential for further discussions; for example, the photo from the performance alone could provoke much controversy with its quasi-Japanese set and costumes. While acknowledging possible criticism regarding appropriation, Marsh aims for authenticity and encouraged students to adopt *kabuki* as much as possible. He states that:

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<sup>55</sup> After having Iwamoto for a while, the department had acquired some *koto*, *shakuhachi*, and *shamisen*. In the ensemble, the *shamisen* was supported by pizzicato violins and guitar, two *koto* by Celtic harp, and two *shakuhachi* by wooden and Western flutes (Kabuki 1998, [7]).

I made it clear that, as far as we could, we should aim for authenticity; that we should not shy away from impersonation either vocally or dramatically. The issue of ‘appropriation’ was always a worry, but I felt that we could not really get inside [*kabuki*] without adopting all of its techniques and characteristics as far as possible. (ibid.)

The project’s objective was likely not to reproduce an accurate and authentic *kabuki* performance, despite the term “reproduce” Marsh uses, but to creatively adapt the play using limited resources as stated in the programme notes: “we have allowed our imaginations full reign in all aspects of production to create a spectacular collaboration between East and West” (Kabuki 1998, [3]). This idea of achieving “a collaboration between East and West”, using creative “imagination”, has been prevalent in cross-cultural theatrical and musical works throughout the long twentieth century. The project shares many characteristics with other cross-cultural opera and music theatre, including LeFanu’s *Tokaido Road*: adapting Japanese theatrical forms; assimilating sonic and technical attributes of Japanese instruments; involving a Japanese advisor; and receiving support from an Anglo-Japanese organisation.

The balance between authenticity and creativity is a crucial question in cross-cultural theatrical works. In the current cultural climate, such a project might not be attempted in a UK academic institution due to the concerns around authenticity, impersonation, and appropriation. This scenario further raises questions about the line between cultural appreciation in education and cultural appropriation. Moreover, what is the difference between such an attempt to reproduce a *kabuki* play and student gamelan ensembles which seem to be widely prevalent in British

universities? Marsh initially felt nervous about the production and the reactions of Japanese audience members who ultimately praised the performance (Marsh 2018). He told me that:

I was very nervous about [the production], and on the first night the doors opened and people came in, including a whole crowd of Japanese people. [...] I thought, “oh no, they will hate it”. Afterwards they came up to me and said, “It was just like [*kabuki*] in Tokyo”. It wasn’t really, but thank you very much.

It is a common concern to consider the (sometimes arbitrary) opinions of Japanese individuals or groups, regarding the authenticity of Japan-inspired works. Yet, the question remains: who has the authority to judge the authenticity of such performances?

In addition to his core roles as a composer and educator, Marsh became increasingly active in writing later in his career. He published articles on the works of composers such as Berio, Rands, Brian Ferneyhough (1943–), and Vic Hoyland (1945–) in the 1990s and 2000s (e.g., Marsh 1994; 1995a; 1998; 2007), with a significant increase in output during the 2010s. Most notably, he authored a series of sixteen blog articles on Words and Music, posted on the cmrc (the Contemporary Music Research Centre at the University of York) webpage between 2015 and 2018, in which he expresses his views on a wide range of topics, from music and literature to politics and reminiscences around his own compositions (Marsh 2015–18).<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, Marsh has been developing his website ‘Roger Marsh | Composer’ which not only contains a list of principal compositions with brief descriptions and links to recordings, as one

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<sup>56</sup> The cmrc had started as the Contemporary Music Research Centre and has changed the last part of its name to a Cluster then Collective because of the structural change of the university. The cmrc (Contemporary Music Research Collective) is now a group within the Contemporary Practices Research Cluster. I thank Professor Catherine Laws for providing this information in response to my inquiry.

would expect, but also dedicates substantial space to documenting his activities beyond composition (Marsh 2012–13). The ‘Writing’ section encompasses the descriptions and scanned programme notes of all the Practical Projects he directed, as well as links to published articles; the ‘Music Theatre’ section offers detailed accounts of theatrical works Marsh was involved in during the 1970s and 1980s, contextualising them within the music theatre scene with “a few [...] forays into the genre”. The ‘Blog’ section features an article on the REF, written in 2022 (ibid.). His extensive website thus serves as personal archive, containing unpublished manuscripts, scores, photos, and recordings, structured around his critical observation of particular historical moments and both his own and others’ artworks.

While it is not uncommon for composers to publish articles or books about their life and works, and it has become almost essential for them to maintain websites with biographies, composition lists, and discographies, there have been institutional and structural demands for composers to produce written works to “prove [their] worth” since the introduction of research assessment exercises at UK universities in 1986 (Marsh 2022). Marsh’s publication of several articles in peer-reviewed music journals in the 1990s and 2000s can be seen as a partial reflection of this condition. However, the purpose of most of his publications, especially those concerning his own music, appears to be more self-reflective than a response to research output requirements, given that they were primarily in the form of blog posts or web articles, some of which are buried deep within his website, and that he continues to publish his writings post-retirement. The manner in which Marsh archives his own life and works, complete with information, resources, and

commentaries demonstrates the process-oriented nature of his practices and his intention to contribute to the field of composition, music, and beyond.

### *Sukeroku* (2000)

Shortly after the Practical Project of ‘*Sukeroku*’, percussionist Damien Harron, who had played with Black Hair, commissioned Marsh to write a piece for his ensemble Backbeat Percussion, initially for the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. Marsh composed *Sukeroku* for the percussion quartet, drawing inspiration from the theatricality of *kabuki* and deciding to write a theatrical piece with non-pitched percussion reminiscent of *kabuki* drums.<sup>57</sup> The piece, named after the *kabuki* play *Sukeroku*, features the performers shouting the title phrase and has no narrative unlike the play. Marsh’s *Sukeroku* evokes *taiko* drumming through its instrumentation and charged characteristics, particularly when played in unison. The ensemble performed the piece extensively and, when they were invited to Japan after winning the Gold Prize at the 3rd Osaka International Chamber Music Competition & Festa in 1999, they decided to take *Sukeroku* to Japan.

During one of the performances at a percussion festival organised by a *noh* *ōtsuzumi* (hourglass-shaped hip drum) player Shonosuke Okura, Harron informed Marsh that Okura had inquired about the possibility of riding a motorbike onto the stage during the performance of *Sukeroku*. Subsequently, Okura contacted Marsh (through Harron) to request a new piece for Okura and the ensemble to perform together when he invited the Backbeat ensemble back to Japan in 2003.

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<sup>57</sup> *Sukeroku* was premiered on 5 February 2000 at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, followed by numerous UK performances. It remains unclear why it was not performed at the Huddersfield Festival, for which it was originally written. It is published by Edition Peters (Marsh 2000).

This request led to the creation of *Atsumari*, the only piece Marsh has written for a Japanese instrument.

### *Atsumari* (2003)

*Atsumari* for Okura and Backbeat consists of a freely notated and partially improvised solo part for *ōtsuzumi* and voice, and a fixed ensemble part for untuned instruments.<sup>58</sup> Marsh found the composition challenging because of Okura’s inability to read music. He explains, “[Okura] likes to play with [musicians from other fields] and he doesn’t really adapt what he does very much when he plays with the other musicians; he just assumes that, because both things are good, they will work together”. The title *Atsumari* [a meeting/gathering] reflects the nature of the piece, in which Okura and the percussion ensemble assemble rather than merge. When listening to the recording, it is clear that the percussion plays exactly what is written on the score, but Okura does not. Marsh states, “so there is this very fixed piece with a very variable solo thing that goes on in the middle of it, and it is fine”, adding that he “never writes anything in that way before or since but likes the idea of leaving a soloist room, freedom”.

*Atsumari* contains recognisable traces of *gagaku*, *taiko* drumming, and music of *noh* and *kabuki*, evident in the use of two *miya/nagadō-daiko* (barrel-shaped drum) and two cowbells reminiscent of *atarigane* (dish-shaped bell) – both Japanese instruments used in ceremonies at

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<sup>58</sup> *Atsumari* was premiered on 16 November 2003 at the Kita-kyūshū Media Dome, Fukuoka, followed by a recording at the Sumida Triphony Hall in Tokyo (18–19 November), which is included in an album *Hiten* (Okura 2004) along with *Sukeroku*. The score is published by Edition Peters (Marsh 2004). The title and the name of Okura at where the solo part starts are written in Japanese letters in the score, which Marsh learnt from a Japanese student he was supervising at that time.

shrines/temples, traditional festivals, *kabuki*, and *taiko* drumming.<sup>59</sup> The typical slow accelerating *katarai* rhythm of *gagaku* played by the two *taiko*, and *kakegoe* (drum calls) ‘ha!’ shouted by the ensemble, further contribute to the Japanese musical elements. Once Okura enters, the voice of *noh* music becomes the dominant characteristic of the piece through its vocalisation and gesture (Example 3.15).

The image shows a musical score for Example 3.15. It consists of three staves. The top two staves are for percussion, with rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings such as 'cresc' and 'f'. The bottom staff is for voice, with the lyrics '大倉' and 'jo ho'. A circled 'B' is positioned above the score, indicating a specific section. The score includes various musical notations like notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

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**Example 3.15** Marsh, *Atsumari*, [bars 30–36] (2003, 2)

The genesis of the two percussion pieces – *Sukeroku* and *Atsumari* – reveals a different facet of Marsh’s engagement with Japan. His friend, for whom he originally composed a piece to be performed at a UK festival, won a prize in a Japanese music competition, leading to the performance of Marsh’s Japan-inspired composition in Japan. There, a Japanese musician became interested in Marsh’s work and expressed a desire to perform a new piece written by the composer with the

<sup>59</sup> The score indicates that the performers can choose either two bass drums or *taiko* for the B.D. part. The photo on Okura’s CD cover shows that the Backbeat used two *miya/nagadō-daiko* and located them at both ends.

ensemble. This sequence of events exemplifies the cross-cultural interconnectedness and interaction fostered by cultural movements and influences.

Another notable aspect of Marsh's narrative is Okura's eccentricity, which could be likened to Iwamoto's eccentricity portrayed in Denyer's stories. While eccentricity of the Orient might be interpreted as a typical trait of Saidian Orientalism, it also draws attention to the fact that Japanese artists, particularly those from traditional genres, who are considered eccentric within Japanese society, seem to be increasingly involved in such cross-cultural collaborations.

After *Atsumari*, Marsh composed another Japan-related work *Sankyoku* (2004) for alto flute, guitar, and percussions, before he "thought he had done with writing Japanese-inspired pieces". He explained that his musical style changed radically again after he wrote *Pierrot Lunaire – 50 Rondels Bergamasques* (2001–2), and also that he did not want to be seen that "he was the composer that just does Japanese stuff". However, when Vaganza, the new music ensemble of the University of Manchester, asked him to write a Japan-inspired piece for their 'Eastern Exchanges' concert series, Marsh composed *Kinshi* (2015), returning to *heike biwa* played by the *biwa* player Kinshi Tsuruta in the film 'Hoichi' in *Kwaidan*, as the music had been stuck in the composer's mind since the 1990s.<sup>60</sup>

Marsh describes how the opening phrase of the ballad *Dan no ura*, used throughout the film, is "woven into the music", and he "tried to create a ceremonial piece" with Western instruments behaving like those in *gagaku*, as in *Kagura*. The permeating tranquillity and silence between

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<sup>60</sup> *Kinshi* was premiered on 13 March 2015 at the Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall, University of Manchester. It was published by Decipherer Arts Press Ltd. (2015d), and the recording of the premiere is available on SoundCloud (2015e).

phrases reflect the beginning of the ballad, while the deep voice of Tsuruta corresponds with the bass clarinet and the percussive quality of *biwa* with the low note on the harp. The simple function of an instrument and its development emulate that of *gagaku*. However, these influences are less detectable as they are now embedded at an abstract level. Thus, Marsh's references to things Japanese evolved from circumspect in earlier works, to theoretical and conceptual in *Samson* and *Kagura*, inspirational in pieces inspired by Hearn, and abstract in later works.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored Marsh's career, aesthetics, and compositions, demonstrating why and how his practice serves as a clear example of research-led composition and shedding light on the relationship between composition and research as an overreaching concept in his compositional approach. The chronological examination reveals the evolution of his stance on cross-cultural references, compositional practice, and musical style over five decades, during which his interest in non-Western music have been almost exclusively focused on things Japanese.

While it is common for composers engaging in cross-cultural composition to explore multiple non-Western musical traditions, Marsh's dedication to Japanese music sets him apart. Regarding other non-Western music, Marsh remarks:

I'm very familiar with the sound of [Indonesian music] hearing them around me at York for forty years but I've never really studied them in any way or wanted to pursue them in any detail.<sup>61</sup> But Japanese music I did get very involved with. I wouldn't say I ever became a Japanese music specialist but I knew a lot about Japanese music.

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<sup>61</sup> Marsh maintains that he had "a couple of tiny little Gamelan references" in some pieces, and his *The Bodhi Tree* (1992) draws on Indian music.

Marsh incorporates a wide range of Japanese materials into his compositions, including *noh* (*Samson*); *gagaku* (*Kagura* and *Kinshi*); a Japanese film and stories (*Black Hair*, *Hoichi*, and *Sozu Baba*); *shakuhachi* music (*Hoichi*); *kabuki*, *noh*, and *taiko* drumming (*Sukeroku* and *Atsumari*); *sankyoku* (*Sankyoku*); and *biwa* music (*Kinshi*). This simplified list only highlights the main sources, as these pieces often adopt more than one form of Japanese music, and these are just the explicitly indicated references. Even this limited list demonstrates Marsh's extensive and comprehensive knowledge of a wide range of Japanese music and beyond. His Japan-related works are not mere side projects but have evolved into a key element in his oeuvre and are embedded into its progression.

To conclude, I return to the question of how Marsh's practice qualifies as research-led composition. Firstly, incorporating something Japanese into his compositions was a gradual process rather than a ready inspiration for a single piece before moving onto the next. Despite inexplicitly incorporating aspects of *noh* in his earlier works, it took almost two decades from his first encounter with *noh* in the mid-1960s to write his first Japan-inspired work *Samson*. Secondly, Marsh does not merely search for materials for a piece that happens to be Japanese; his ideas are often generated *from* the research he had already conducted for his teaching, particularly in case of Japanese music. In this regard, his compositional process is a dialogue with (ethnomusicological) research findings and develops within the field of research. Thirdly, Marsh draws on interdisciplinary approaches, connecting with other fields and arts and collaborating with musicians, academics, and artists within and outside institutions.

Moreover, Marsh takes a process-oriented approach, which is often associated with practice-led research, as mentioned in the chapter introduction. While not entirely unrelated to this polemic, Marsh's Japan-related works are neither presented *as* research nor as a demonstration of research knowledge. In fact, the Japan-inspired pieces studied in this chapter could be appreciated in their own right, without being associated with their references and processes, had Marsh not given the titles or explanations. However, Marsh deliberately chooses to give titles that immediately reveal their sources and offers detailed accounts of the compositional processes both at the time of presenting a work and/or in retrospect. This approach points to the idea of music and/as process, where "the processes [...] are audible or perceptible *in* the music concerned" (Redhead and Hawes 2016, 1; my emphasis). Marsh further presents his own research questions, methods, and findings; contextualises his composition in a broader context; and reflects on ethical aspects of his works, which he has been actively publishing on in recent years. While one might suggest that this was a response to the requirements for composers in academic institutions to fulfill current higher education research exercise criteria, Marsh's practice long precedes this policy and was a deliberate artistic choice.

Throughout the chapter, I have also explored Marsh's career, life events, and accounts from the wider perspective of research, particularly highlighting the prominence of educational and institutional aspects in his life. Since studying at York, Marsh had always positioned himself as a composer in an academic institution, and his active involvement in curriculum design and course delivery both at Keele and York was central to his career. For him, they were not merely additional responsibilities alongside being a composer; he had genuine interest in student development and

benefits as well as a positive and enthusiastic outlook as an educator. He also invested significant time and effort in stage performances involving students, such as the Practical Project at York. Consequently, several of his students went onto successful careers in academia inheriting his ethos and drive. Marsh's practice as a composer and his role as an educator are neither separate nor hierarchical but feed into each other, with his Japan-related composition being generated from his teaching serving as one example.

With regards to institutional aspects, academia played a central role in shaping Marsh's thinking and practice as a composer who connects research, theory, and practice. Belonging to academic institutions provided him with a certain freedom to compose, stability to conduct research with continuity, opportunities for collaboration, and resources to present his works, although many of his works were commissioned by ensembles and musicians outside universities with funding from other sources. As an academic at universities like Keele and York, Marsh dedicated himself to working with local musicians and presenting works as a composer, conductor, and educator in local venues, which added an extra dimension to the new music scene in the Midlands and the North.

Marsh's long-lasting and in-depth engagement with things Japanese has profoundly impacted his conceptualisation of compositional practice, and the resulting compositions crystallise his investigative pursuit, enhancing his and others' understanding of music and another culture. His research-led compositional practice has further contributed to the academic field of music research and, more broadly, cultural knowledge. This unique example of research-led practice across a long career adds another facet to the investigation of cross-cultural composition in this thesis.

## Chapter 4

### Japan, the West, and “A Place In-Between”:

#### Okeanos and LeFanu’s *Tokaido Road*

From Britten’s *Curlew River* (1964) to Marsh’s *Samson* (1983/1992) and Goehr’s *Kantan and Damask Drum* (1997–98), this thesis has explored several works associated with music theatre, a form developed by Goehr, Davies, and Birtwistle in the UK during the 1960s and subsequently adopted by modernist composers in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>1</sup> This chapter returns to opera/music theatre in different cultural climates by featuring Nicola LeFanu’s *Tokaido Road: A Journey After Hiroshige* (2014). It examines *Tokaido Road* as both a work of art and a socio-cultural project, investigating *if, how, and in what context* the opera achieves “a place between [...] the West and East” (Romano 2016, 42).

The Tokaido is a route running from Tokyo to Kyoto, and it played a significant role in the Edo period (1603–1868) with fifty-three post stations (*shuku*) that offered lodging, food, and stables. They served as “spaces of public performance, symbolism and imagination” and “became the subject of celebrated representations that overlaid material presence with cultural significance” (Traganou 2004, 151).<sup>2</sup> The road has inspired numerous writers and visual artists, including the celebrated Hiroshige Utagawa (1797–1858), whose *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido* (1833–34) remains popular in

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<sup>1</sup> Music theatre is defined as “a kind of opera and opera production in which spectacle and dramatic impact are emphasized over purely musical factors” (Clements 2001b), and many consider it to be a genre of the 1960s and 1970s (Griffiths 1994, Clements 2001b, Hall 2015). However, Sheppard argues that the discussion should not overlook the works by Stravinsky and Schoenberg (Sheppard 2001, 4–6).

<sup>2</sup> The post stations were built at equal distances of an average of 2.131 *ri* (approximately 5.2 miles), and an official mediator checked transportation of goods, people, and the use of horses at each post station (Traganou 2004, 14).

and outside Japan.<sup>3</sup> The Tokaido has also become a centre of tourism and urban development, and a symbol of modernisation and industrialisation, with the installation of the railway in the Meiji period (1868–1912) and the construction of the Tokaido *shinkansen* (bullet train) in 1964.<sup>4</sup>

In 2012, Kate Romano – a founding member of the UK-based Okeanos ensemble, which consists of Western and Japanese instruments, launched a project to create a multi-media chamber opera, *Tokaido Road*, with a libretto by Nancy Gaffield and music by LeFanu.<sup>5</sup> The opera, derived from Gaffield’s book of poems of the same name (2011), depicts Hiroshige’s journey by using projected images, mime, dance, sung poetry, and music. Romano envisioned *Tokaido Road* as “a catalyst for change” and “an exciting synergy where art forms and cultures could hang on to their identities yet work together” (Romano 2015a).

To study how such a cross-cultural opera is organised as a project and created artistically, this chapter first introduces the genesis and development of *Tokaido Road*, providing a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the project. Secondly, it delineates the adaptation process from Hiroshige’s prints and Gaffield’s poems to the opera, highlighting the characteristics of each artwork and their similarities and differences. Thirdly, to contextualise this project in the wider scope of the thesis, it explores the

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<sup>3</sup> Japanese woodblock printing, *ukiyo-e* (literally translated as pictures of floating world), flourished in the Edo era; its common subjects are *kabuki* actors, *sumō* wrestlers, female beauties, courtesans and sex workers, landscapes, birds and flowers, and erotica.

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Carey explains that “every country has its evocative road: a road that encapsulates that country’s history, or that stirs the imagination with dreams of travel, romance, danger, discovery, adventure or escape”, and compares the Tokaido to Chaucer’s Pilgrims’ Way and the Great North Road in the UK, the Appian Way in Italy, the Silk Road in China, and the Mormon Trail and Route 66 in the US (2000, xxi–xxii).

<sup>5</sup> The score was published by Peters Edition in 2014, and the video of the performance held at Milton Court Theatre, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, on 25 February 2015 is uploaded on YouTube (Guildhall School 2016a). The reasons why it is called opera and not music theatre, which the composer regards it to be, are detailed later.

composer's background, her relation to non-Western cultures, and her engagement with *Tokaido Road* and Japanese instruments. Lastly, it analyses the opera, critically engaging with its music and direction from musical, visual, dramatic, historical, and cultural perspectives. The discussion draws on information from an interview with the composer (LeFanu 2018a), the extensive project blog (*Tokaido Road: The Blog* 2014–2015), newspaper articles, talks, and reviews, as well as an interview with the *koto* player Melissa Holding (Holding 2019).<sup>6</sup>

This chapter explores how *Tokaido Road* culturally and musically achieves “the balance between the West and East” and creates “a new place – not Western, not Eastern, but somewhere unique to the story” (LeFanu 2018a). Additionally, it investigates how the opera's planning, collaborative aspects, fundraising, and outcomes reflect the nature of cross-cultural enterprises, and how the artistic interpretations and imaginations of the *Tokaido* by Hiroshige, Gaffield, LeFanu, and the production team resulted in particular creative representations. This chapter also studies how the opera intersects with cultural matters such as exotic authenticity, cultural diversity, and cultural appropriation, and draws an unavoidable analogy with Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* because of its story and characterisation of female roles. In conclusion, the chapter considers the implications of a British opera depicting Japan in the twenty-first century.

### **Okeanos and the prehistory of *Tokado Road***

Okeanos was formed by the oboist Jinny Shaw and the clarinetist Kate Romano in 2000, in celebration of the UK-wide festival, ‘Japan 2001’, the occasion for which the ensemble commissioned six young

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<sup>6</sup> The interview with LeFanu was held on 6 December 2018 in York, and one with Holding was on 4 July 2019 in Oxford.

Japanese composers to write a musical response to the touring exhibition of contemporary Japanese textile art, ‘Textual Space’.<sup>7</sup> Among the composers who were commissioned, Dai Fujikura (1977–), a Japan-born UK-based composer, wrote *Okeanos Breeze* (2001) for oboe, clarinet, viola, *shō*, and *koto*, and his chosen instrumentation “helped establish the Western/Japanese line-up for which the group is best known today” (Guildhall School 2012).

Okeanos consists of Shaw (oboe), Romano (clarinet), Bridget Carey (viola), Holding (*koto*), Robin Thompson (*shō*, *sanshin*, and *kokyū*), and Clive Bell (*shakuhachi*), with Japanese instrument players classically trained in Japanese traditional music and having studied in Japan for an extensive period.<sup>8</sup> The ensemble has commissioned new works from British and Japanese composers, participated in cultural and educational events, and collaborated with artists from various fields.<sup>9</sup> Okeanos has actively engaged in Anglo-Japanese projects and events, performing contemporary music, sometimes alongside traditional Japanese music, and collaborating with Japanese artists, often with

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Japan 2001’ encompassed exhibitions, concerts, performances, local festivals, sports events, school programmes, and garden projects (Japan Times 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Holding studied the *koto* first with Rie Yanagisaka in London and then with Shigehiro Shimada in Kyoto where she lived for nine years and was affiliated to the Kyoto City University of Arts, after studying the piano at the Royal College of Music; she was also involved in the London Gagaku Orchestra, *Tortoises in Heaven*, in the late 1980s when she was studying at the City University (currently, City, University of London) (Holding 2019). Thompson originally studied the bassoon at the Royal Academy of Music and read Japanese studies at SOAS. He then went to Japan to study Japanese traditional music and did a MA at Tokyo University of the Arts before conducting research and performing Ryukyū classical music in 1982. He has taught both inside and outside Japan and, when coming back to the UK in 1995, formed London Sanshin Group based at SOAS. He was naturalised in Japan in 2018 and lives in Okinawa to promote and preserve Ryukyū classical music. Furthermore, Shaw was Global Artist in Residence with the Tokyo Academy of Instrumental Heritage Music to study the *shō* for a three-month residency in Tokyo in 2016; she wrote about her experiences in detail on Okeanos’s webpage (Okeanos 2020).

<sup>9</sup> The composers they have commissioned include Judith Bingham (1952–), Fujikura, Robin Holloway (1943–), John Joubert (1927–2019), LeFanu, Chikako Morishita (1981–), Nigel Osborne (1948–), Skempton, and Judith Weir (1954–) (Okeanos 2020). Commissioned works do not necessarily mean that they include Japanese instruments.

special grants to foster Anglo-Japanese creative partnerships.<sup>10</sup> Romano states that “[Okeanos] never set out to be Japanese” or “a Japanese fusion group”, but she had found the sound-mix of instruments interesting for a new music ensemble at the beginning and, after its development, regards “Japan as a collaborating partner” (Hugill 2013). Interestingly, Romano uses the term “Japan” not to refer to a nation state but as an umbrella term for different forms of cross-cultural exchanges. The list of artists and events they have engaged with (see footnote 10) demonstrates the demand and potential for such a culturally specific cross-cultural ensemble.

The idea of *Tokaido Road: A Journey after Hiroshige* came about in 2012 when Romano was looking for a new project for the ensemble that explores questions about sound and cultures:

What’s really happening when you put two cultures together, or a mix of art forms into the same space? When do such meetings become successful and meaningful (or not)? Do disparate elements amalgamate (ugh – that word ‘fusion’ which I don’t like) or can they retain their own identity and still add meaning to the whole? (Romano 2015b)

These questions, which correspond with the central questions of this chapter, lie at the basis of the production and are reflected in the further decision-making process and final production. For Romano, the casually applied term “fusion” implies that “the individual components lose their identities” and “fails [...] to capture something of truest sense of integration”, although she admits that some composers who composed for Okeanos aimed “for a ‘fusion’ of West and East – a synthesis, a blurring

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<sup>10</sup> Anglo-Japanese programmes Okeanos have taken part in include EU-Japan Year of People to People Exchanges (2005), SPAM (Society for the Promotion of New Music)/Asian Music Circuit tour (2006), Japan-UK 150 (2008), Japan 400 (2013), and BBC Total Immersion: Sounds of Japan (2013). They have also collaborated with Junko O’Neill (fine artist), Tomie Ando (eurhythmist), Etsuko Takezawa (koto player), Kumiko Mendl (storyteller), Kazuko Hohki and The Frank Chickens (a women’s pop/cabaret group), and Taiko Meantime (drumming group).

and a homogenous whole –” and the results were very successful (Romano 2016, 36–37).<sup>11</sup> Instead, she sought something that is “cyclic” and “symbiotic”, rather than “a smudging, blurring or blending of these distinct components” (ibid., 36–38). Indeed, this idea of the “cyclic” epitomises how the opera evolved not just culturally but also in terms of different artistic media.

Romano subsequently discovered Gaffield’s award-winning collection of poems, *Tokaido Road*. She was captivated by “the journey, the images, the art, the culture, the idea of one art form [...] commenting on another” (ibid., 36), and thought that “this was something that [they] could translate into the concert hall” as “a drama, a narrative, a theatrical and musical journey” (Romano, 2015b).<sup>12</sup> To materialise the idea, in the spring of 2012, Romano first went to see Gaffield with Shaw to discuss their plan for a fifty-minute chamber opera and asked her to re-work the poems as a libretto (Harding 2014d). Romano, then acting as producer and creative director of the project, approached LeFanu, started raising money, built the creative team, organised performances across the UK, and created outreach projects (Romano 2015b). Through the process of planning and collaboration, Okeanos’s *Tokaido Road* became “a new multi-media chamber opera” for three singers, mime, and small chamber ensemble, with projection of Hiroshige’s woodblock prints and photographs of modern Tokyo.

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<sup>11</sup> Romano introduces Fujikura’s ‘Okeanos Cycle’ (2001–10), developed from *Okeanos Breeze*, as an example; in the pieces, the composer treated the Okeanos instrumentation “as a chimaera: a ‘single imaginary solo instrument’ – that is, a mythical creature sporting 17 reeds, 17 strings and 19 pipes” (Romano 2016, 37). Fujikura states that, regarding *Okeanos Breeze*, “I was asked to complete the piece at such short notice that I did not dwell much on all that clichéd ‘crossing-the-border’, ‘east-meets-west’ rubbish that I see in a lot of publicity material for performances using Japanese instruments” (Fujikura 2001). Fujikura who was born in Japan and has lived in the UK since he was a teenager would be a very interesting subject for cross-cultural discussion.

<sup>12</sup> Gaffield is a poet and a senior lecturer in Creative Writing in the School of English, University of Kent. She was born in the US, lived in Tokyo, and now resides in Canterbury. Her *Tokaido Road* won the Aldeburgh First Collection Prize 2011, shortlisted for the Forward First Collection Prize 2011, and was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation. Shaw found the book after reading a Guardian review (Etter 2011), and introduced it to Romano.

Romano describes the relationship between different media with the notion of “ekphrasis” – one artistic medium defining, describing, illustrating, or adding meaning to another (Romano 2014b).<sup>13</sup> In *Tokaido Road*, she states, the paintings, poetry, music, photography, and mime all maintain their own identity by telling the story in their own language, whilst “‘commenting on’ the other art forms around them”, all to pursue one end – to tell the story of Hiroshige’s travels (Romano 2016, 39).

### ***Tokaido Road* as a project**

This section investigates the organisation of the opera, focusing on its funding and expansion, and observes the nature of such cross-cultural projects and how they had changed since the 1960s. *Tokaido Road* was premiered at the Cheltenham Music Festival on 6 July 2014, followed by performances in the Lake District, London, Kent, Northumberland, and York up until 2016, alongside talks, workshops, study days, and ancillary exhibitions.<sup>14</sup> The project also included a sister project, *Kamishibai Tokaido Road*, premiered at the Wise Words Festival in Canterbury in September 2015 before touring in schools (*Kamishibai*, literally translated as ‘paper drama’, is a form of street theatre presented by a narrator with a set of pictures placed in a box).<sup>15</sup> This intimate theatrical story-telling version was presented by Tomoko Komura, a mime in the opera, accompanied by Holding’s *koto* and *shamisen*.

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<sup>13</sup> Ekphrasis is a Greek term whose etymological meaning is “to speak out” or “to show in full” (Rippl 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Their UK tour comprised eight performances: Parabola Arts Centre, Cheltenham Music Festival (6 July 2014), Lake District Summer Festival (6 August 2014), British Museum (1 October 2014), Milton Court Theatre, Guildhall School of Music & Drama (25 February 2015), the Gulbenkian Theatre, University of Kent (23 May 2015), Alwinton Summer Concerts, Northumberland (27 June 2015), Jack Lyons Concert Hall, University of York (28 October 2015), and Euroclassical Online Festival (streaming across Europe, 1 March 2016). Ancillary exhibitions include Wynn White’s photography exhibitions in three galleries coincided with the performances of *Tokaido Road*.

<sup>15</sup> According to Holding, *Kamishibai Tokaido Road* was an informal setting for children in which she played musical interludes and upbeat folk songs which they also sang (Holding 2019).

Romano's organisation of *Tokaido Road* exemplifies how cross-cultural events are often managed in recent years. Despite having no prior experience producing an opera, she developed her initial idea into a project and built its organisational and financial foundation almost singlehandedly. She created a detailed plan for the tour and outreach programmes, applied for funding and grants, and sought corporate donations to raise enough money to cover all the costs, while simultaneously developing the artistic side of the project. "After 12 months of blood, sweat and tears", Romano raised over £100,000 and realised a fully-funded opera (Romano 2014a).<sup>16</sup> The long list of funding bodies includes cultural and educational foundations and trusts that support performing arts in general and those that specifically fund Anglo-Japanese cultural exchange projects.<sup>17</sup> Notably, Romano also secured funding for the project expansion and rehearsal costs from JTI (Japan Tobacco International) and two private donations. The performance at the British Museum was a private event sponsored by JTI, with guests including Japanese Embassy staff, British Museum curators, and CEOs from large international corporations (Gaffield 2016, 23), demonstrating how cross-cultural works are still thought to aid political and commercial engagements.

However, even with the impressive list of funding bodies, cultural projects of this type often do not fairly compensate artists, organisers, and administrators for their time and work, unless organised by established institutions. It is almost essential for such projects to have some individuals affiliated with institutions or organisations that provide "an enormous amount of in-kind help", such as rehearsal

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<sup>16</sup> The effort and success were featured in an article in *The Guardian* where Romano notes that she had fifty-two corporate letters that had no response and five unsuccessful applications (Romano 2014a).

<sup>17</sup> The list of supporters includes Arts Council England, ACE Foundation, Britten Pears Foundation, Cheltenham Music Festival, John S Cohen Foundation, JTI, Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, Leche Trust, Radcliffe Trust, RVW Trust, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation, and the University of Kent 50 Year Fund.

spaces, technical support, facilities, instrumental loans, and sometimes small funds (Romano 2014a).<sup>18</sup>

As demonstrated in previous chapters, academic institutions offer certain privileges and freedoms to composers, which was also the case for *Tokaido Road* and other cultural projects. LeFanu acknowledges the remarkable feat of Romano raising enough money for a tour of performances with a proper rehearsal period (LeFanu 2018a). The composer dedicated the opera to Romano, recognising that “nothing would have happened without [Romano’s] imagination and tenacity” (Harding 2014b).

The process also demonstrates how differently such cross-cultural projects are organised in comparison with those from the last century (for example, in Britten’s time as explored in Chapter 1). When looking at the organisation of *Tokaido Road*, as well as some other Anglo-Japanese programmes Okeanos has been involved in, it is no longer the government or national broadcaster that directly organise an entire project. Instead, there are governmental or non-governmental organisations, such as the Japan Foundation, the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, and the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, that support cross-cultural links and offer partial grants for cross-cultural projects.<sup>19</sup> In other words, the cultural presence and perception that had been almost manufactured by the government, or related organisations, now relies on the individual’s interests (and often on time and energy invested by a producer/academic/artist or a small group of people who are willing to organise a project), supported financially or endorsed by various cultural and educational institutions, organisations, and charities. These funding bodies value – and the assessment criteria of the

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<sup>18</sup> The venues for three performances were at the institutions where Romano, Gaffield, and LeFanu were affiliated.

<sup>19</sup> Sheppard notes that, referring to the situation in the US, “in the early twenty-first century, cross-cultural musical creation has been frequently fostered by cultural institutions with a mission to commission composers, theatre directors, and choreographers” (2019, 407). These kinds of commissions seem rarer in the UK when compared to those in New York alone listed by Sheppard (*ibid.*, 407–410).

applications often include – impact and outcome factors. Consequently, how Romano organised outreach programmes and publicity online from the very beginning of the project, on ‘Tokaido Road: The Blog’, Twitter, and Facebook, seems to partially reflect the expectations.<sup>20</sup>

The libretto and the score were commercially published and used as teaching materials both in the UK and Japan, and Romano and Gaffield were invited to Kōgakkan University in Ise in November 2015 to talk about the opera, an occasion for which the Japanese translation of Gaffield’s *Tokaido Road* was published (Gaffield 2018).<sup>21</sup> In addition to the school programmes mentioned earlier, *Tokaido Road* led to wider outreach and community projects.<sup>22</sup> It is remarkable how the project branched out in different directions across genres and borders, drawing on the artistic and institutional connections of all those who involved in the project and beyond.

The artistic arrangement and planning of *Tokaido Road* developed gradually, with the team growing around the networks of Romano, LeFanu, and Gaffield, and accommodating the ideas of its members. The team began with Romano approaching the librettist and the composer, and LeFanu suggesting Caroline Clegg (director) and Dominic Wheeler (conductor). LeFanu had also been in touch with the protagonist/baritone Jeremy Huw Williams since April 2012. The production team comprised

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<sup>20</sup> The team included Daniel Harding, the Head of Music Performance at University of Kent, as an online media consultant who mainly wrote posts on ‘Tokaido Road: The Blog’ (2014–2015).

<sup>21</sup> Kōgakkan University and the Centre for English and World Languages at University of Kent initiated an academic exchange agreement in 2011, and Gaffield visited Ise in 2013 to talk about her *Tokaido Road*. In 2015, Gaffield and Romano were invited to give talks at the Japan-UK Comparative Culture Workshop (JUCCW) whose report was published in 2016 (Japan-UK Comparative Culture Workshop 2016).

<sup>22</sup> For example, on the day they premiered *Kamishibai Tokaido Road* in Canterbury, there were helium-filled balloons on which Hiroshige’s prints were projected, while three-hundred candles sailed down the river to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of Hiroshima. *Kamishibai Tokaido Road* was also featured at the Wolverhampton Art Gallery for a Japan Family Day (30 October 2015), while they exhibited Hiroshige’s *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido Road*.

British, American, and Japanese nationals with cross-cultural training and experience, including London-based Japanese designer Kimie Nakano for set and costume design, Japan-based American photographer Wynn White for images, and Brazil-born, London-based performing artist Nando Messias as the choreographer. The cast also included both British and Japanese nationals with cross-cultural backgrounds. The singers and their roles were Huw Williams (Hiroshige/Hiro, baritone), Raphaela Papadakis (Kikuyo, soprano), Caryl Hughes (Mariko, mezzo-soprano), and Tomoko Komura /Haruka Kuroda (Mime). The ensemble consisted of Romano (clarinets), Shaw (oboe), Carey (viola), Sophie Harries (cello), Thompson (*shō*), and Holding (*koto*). Nakano, Komura, and Kuroda are all UK-based, and no Japan-based Japanese artists were involved, which is expected considering the practicalities such as cost, schedule, and language. Although *Tokaido Road* appears to be an Anglo-Japanese project, there are cultural diversities within each artist involved, correlating with the findings explored in Chapter 2.

LeFanu remembers that they felt the need to have “a strong Japanese element” on stage to balance between West and East, just as the ensemble has Western instruments and Japanese instruments. She also thought that the mime or dancer should be Japanese, while having British singers for the singing roles with English poems (LeFanu 2018a). Appointing the Japanese dancer(s) as well as a Japanese designer, as a physical presence on the stage and as a “‘native’ informant” respectively, could be associated with “exotic authenticity” and “exotic realism” which “[c]omposers, filmmakers, and theatrical producers have repeatedly sought to manufacture and manipulate [...] in their representations of Japan” (Sheppard 2019, 2, 100, and 162). From this perspective, the inclusion of Japanese artists in *Tokaido Road* could be regarded as a repeated act of exoticism and one of “token representatives of

Japanese culture” who are often based overseas (ibid., 11), just as seen in Marsh’s *kabuki* project.<sup>23</sup> However, I argue that it would not be reflecting the globalised world we live in, had these artistic collaborations not happened in such a cross-cultural production.

*Tokaido Road* has sometimes been featured as a “female production” due to the producer, director, librettist, and composer all being women. Although LeFanu is known for advocating for female composers, she suggests that this was not the opera’s focus and that the team was indeed a mixed team, though the closest collaborators were all female (LeFanu 2018a). This raises gendered issues regarding cultural attitudes towards Others and cross-cultural artistic creations and collaborations, which warrant further discussion elsewhere.

### **From Hiroshige’s prints to the opera**

To enable understanding of the opera’s content, this section examines the origins of Hiroshige’s *Tokaido* prints in the nineteenth century and outlines how they were adapted into Gaffield’s book of poems and subsequently into Okeanos’s opera. It delineates the collaboration process between the librettist and the composer, while considering the similarities and differences between the three works.

Tokaido highway was established at the beginning of the Edo period when it became important as a route that connected the new political capital Edo (today’s Tokyo), and the Imperial capital

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<sup>23</sup> As examples, Sheppard mentions the modernist choreographer Michio Ito who was credited as technical adviser and dance director in the film *Madame Butterfly* (1932) and the contemporary *sho* virtuoso Mayumi Miyata who collaborated with John Cage (Sheppard 2019, 11 and 162). As mentioned previously in the thesis, Ito also lived in the UK and involved in the reconstruction of *noh* attempted by Yeats and Pound.

Kyoto.<sup>24</sup> In 1601, the first *shōgun* (*de facto* ruler) of the Edo period, Ieyasu Tokugawa (1543–1616), set about organising the infrastructure and systematic network on the Tokaido with fifty-three post stations (*shuku*) that offered lodging and stables, mid-stations (*ai no shuku*), and teahouses (*chaya*). The original purpose of the improvement was to facilitate mobility of the *shōgun* himself and feudal lords (*daimyō*) who were required to reside in Edo for a certain amount of time and travel between Edo and their provinces (called *sankin kōtai* (alternate attendance)) so as to avoid revolts by the provincial lords. It also stimulated business of merchants, entertainers, and innkeepers at post stations, and benefited commoners who travelled for pilgrimage or leisure with the “travel boom” in the late Edo period, though non-official travelling was technically restricted by the law (Traganou 2004, 67–68).<sup>25</sup> There was already a large literature as well as guidebooks and artworks on the Tokaido that fueled the “Tokaido boom” before Hiroshige, especially the series of comic novels *Tōkai dōchu hizakurige* (known as Shank's Mare in English translation) (1802–9) in which two commoners travel the Tokaido (Lane 1978, 176). The busyness of the Tokaido and post-station towns (*shukuba machi*) was noted in many literary accounts, and the Tokaido and its fifty-three stations thus became “a celebrated topic of Edo culture” (Traganou 2004, 178).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Tōkaidō* literally means eastern(*tō*) sea(*kai*) route/road(*dō*): hence, in a literal sense, the title of the poems and opera repeats ‘road’ twice. It is approximately 488 kilometers (303 miles), and, in the Edo era, people travelled on foot except for high-status travel in palanquins or on horses.

<sup>25</sup> Travel for religious and health reasons was allowed, and people used them as a “‘sound moral excuse’ for their leisure activities” (Traganou 2004, 86). The most popular was a pilgrimage to the Ise Shrine, and there were mass pilgrimages of several million pilgrims travelling from their towns and villages to Ise in 1650, 1705, 1771, and 1830, known as *okagemairi*, when there was a rumor of an apocalyptic event.

<sup>26</sup> Major Tokaido-related works at that time also included the guidebook *Pictorial Guide to Famous Places on the Tokaido* [*Tokaido meisho zue*] (1979), seven series of *ukiyo*e prints (1801–18) by Hokusai Katsushika (1760–1849), and the *kabuki* play *Ghost Story of Yotsuya in Tokaido* [*Tokaido yotsuya kaidan*] (1825).

Hiroshige, the *ukiyo-e* artist and a member of the fire brigade of Edo castle at that time, travelled the Tokaido on foot in 1832 when he joined the convoy for a shogunate mission (though some claim that Hiroshige did not actually travel the Tokaido).<sup>27</sup> It is believed that he made sketches throughout the journey and, after coming back to Edo, created fifty-five prints of the Tokaido (fifty-three post stations and terminal points), which were first sold individually then published as a complete set, *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido* [*Tōkaidō gojūsan tsugi*] in 1834; two terminal points are *Nihonbashi* (Edo) (Figure 4.1) and *Sanjō ōhashi* (Kyoto) (Figure 4.2).<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 4.1** Hiroshige, *Nihonbashi* from *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido* (ca 1833–34, Minneapolis Institute of Art)

<sup>27</sup> The claim comes from the contradiction between the story and his life circumstances and also for what he depicted in the series. For example, Hiroshige drew the wooden girder of the Sanjo Bridge though it had changed to stones in 1589.

<sup>28</sup> The prints were first jointly published by the publishers *Hōeidō* and *Senkaku-dō* but later editions were published by the former.



**Figure 4.2** Hiroshige, *Sanjō ōhashi* from *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido* (ca 1833–34, Minneapolis Institute of Art)

Hiroshige's prints gained great popularity at the time for “[giving] the viewer the feeling that he was actually seeing the localities in question [and] taking an imaginary trip down the celebrated highway” (Kondō 1960, 10). Patrick Carey, who travelled the Tokaido himself on foot in 1999, maintains that Hiroshige's *Tokaido* was revolutionary because he depicted “ordinary human beings going about their daily occupations” in landscapes that were drawn straight from nature, and that his prints “immortalized [the Tokaido] not only for contemporary and future Japanese, but also for lovers of Japan and Japanese prints elsewhere” (2000, xxiv).

Gaffield's book of poems *Tokaido Road* consists of fifty-five poems that respond to each print of Hōeidō's *The Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido*. She recalls that she first discovered Hiroshige's *Tokaido* in a small art shop in Eugene, Oregon, in 1977, and that it became one of the reasons she

decided “to go to Japan and experience the culture first-hand” (Guildhall School 2016b). She then lived in Tokyo from 1979 to 1984, though the idea to write a series of poems to Hiroshige’s prints came later when she revisited Japan in 2008. Gaffield recollects that she was staying in a *ryokan* (a traditional Japanese inn) in Kyoto and thinking about a substantial sequence of work that was needed for an MA in Creative Writing that she was undertaking at the time; she continued working on the series after she finished the course and completed it as *Tokaido Road* (Harding 2014c).<sup>29</sup>

Although Gaffield was first interested in each print as an art object, and the poems started with an observation of the print, she wondered how a poet negotiates “the borders between fact and fiction, history and the imagination”, while “objects and spaces bear trace evidence that tell their own stories” (Gaffield 2016, 16). Here, the objects were Hiroshige’s prints, and the spaces were Japan – the Japan Gaffield experienced from 1979 onwards, but also “Japan as a historical space” (ibid.). She then started “‘reading [the prints] *backwards*’ – not simply writing about them, but writing *around* them, telling their story in time, in place” (Harding 2014c; my emphasis), brought people portrayed in the prints into focus, and “[captured] the many personae, experiences and memories encountered in the journey” (Gaffield 2011, [iii]). People she depicts are those who travel the Tokaido or who are at each post-station town, from distinctive to everyday figures – men, women, *shōgun*, *daimyō*, *sumō* wrestler, *geisha*, *maiko*, monks, vendors, drifters, boatmen, travellers, *soba* chefs, customers, punters, tourists, to name a few; some are in the prints and others are not. Thus, the poems are not word pictures of

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<sup>29</sup> Gaffield also notes that the poems would not have been written without her close friends, the Japanese painter Tetsu Kurata and his wife, Nagako.

Hiroshige's prints, but rather multiple personal interpretations and imaginations which arose beyond the prints.

The time in the poems constantly jumps between the nineteenth century, the present, and in-between, with references to the author's personal experiences, Japanese legends, stories from *noh* plays, myths, ideas, language, and historical events that are associated with the places. There is "I" who speaks in most poems, and there are also characters named Hiro, Kikuyo, and Mariko who appear in some poems, though who they are is unspecified. In *Shirasuka*, for example, "I" asks:

Who is making? Who is speaking? I shuffle crab-like across the surface, lamenting my poor facility with Japanese. Who is Hiro? A painter? A lover? Whose time does he inhabit? And the women who love him? His is a history with no regret. (*Shirasuka*, poem 33, Gaffield 2011, 37)

Mentions of names of rivers, temples, castles, everyday objects, and depictions of smell and sound make the poems vivid and lively, though all the specificities of who, when, and where remain ambiguous. The cycle of poems gives the sense of a story without a coherent narrative in the poems themselves, however, they are "filled with arrivals and departures; longing, desire, and grief, and an ever-present sense of disaster, either real (earthquakes, floods, fire, war) or imagined (drownings, suicides)" (Gaffield 2016, 20).

The process of re-fashioning the poems into a libretto for the opera *Tokaido Road: A Journey after Hiroshige* was, as Gaffield notes, a composer-librettist collaborative creation (Harding 2014c). In the spring of 2012, after the meeting with Romano, Gaffield travelled to York where LeFanu resided and spent a weekend with the composer to sketch things out and talk about ideas. LeFanu believed that they needed to have a narrative and focus more on people. The composer suggested that they would

step away from the poems, draw a scenario, and decide on the characters and the pacing of the whole thing, making a set of headlines of the stories (LeFanu 2018a). Gaffield and LeFanu then took poems in which three figures (Hiro, Mariko, and Kikuyo) appeared, and developed the characters and their stories. They saw each other again in the spring of 2013 and worked on Gaffield's drafts together, shaping them and finding a structure, over three weekends in York and Canterbury (Harding 2014d). They eventually went through seven drafts, involving the director in the process, and Gaffield finished her last draft in June 2013. Gaffield describes the transition from the poems to the libretto as a change from "lyrical writing into something that was narrative and dramatic" (ibid.), and admits that she initially resisted some of the ideas, for example, to make Hiro a representation of Hiroshige (Gaffield 2016, 20). The poet who had never written a libretto found herself in a battle between poems in which things are ambiguous, suggestive, and implicit, and an opera which in LeFanu's view requires an explicit narrative and characters, though, at the same time, with "not many words for music to speak" (Harding 2014d; LeFanu 2018a). LeFanu wrote music to the libretto which was completed and sent to the musicians in March 2014, and they had a first rehearsal at Guildhall on 28 March 2014.

The resulting opera, *Tokaido Road* – "the exploration of the life of the great Japanese landscape artist and his woodblock print series" – is described by Gaffield as such:

In 1832, the young Hiroshige sets out on Japan's great Eastern Sea Road, the Tokaido, linking Edo (Tokyo) and Kyoto. The paintings he creates along the way not only make his reputation, but reveal the secrets of a hidden country. The journey was dangerous, but as the young artist, Hiro, he savours his adventures with all he meets. Hiroshige in old age is present too, reflecting on another story – the power of art to bear witness. (Gaffield 2014, 5)

Three singers portray Hiro/Hiroshige (an artist) and two women he falls in love with – Mariko (a teahouse mistress who bears Hiro’s child) and Kikuyo (a *maiko*, young apprentice *geisha*). There is also Mime who embodies Hiroshige’s memory, personifies figures depicted in the prints, and frames the opera as the Poet – a present-day traveller to Japan (Gaffield 2016, 21).<sup>30</sup> The opera consists of twelve scenes with a prologue and an epilogue, revolving around Kikuyo’s suicide (Scene 8). The libretto and score also indicate what images – Hiroshige’s prints, unspecified photos, and photographs of modern Japan by White – are to be projected throughout the piece. LeFanu notes that she and Gaffield chose the images as they wrote the libretto and the music, and “were absolutely clear what should happen when”, though it underwent several changes by the director (Guildhall School 2016b).

Comparing the three *Tokaido* in different media – prints, poems, and opera – there are some shared qualities but also aspects that were significantly changed through the adaptation process. What they have in common is, first, the romanticised idea of a journey and the Tokaido. As Jilly Traganou states, the Tokaido was not just a major transportation route in the Edo period but also “figured heavily in the popular imagination as a space of play and release” (2004, [i]); the excitement and fascination were well represented in the poems and more so in the opera, which I detail later through the music analysis. The romanticisation is also reflected in how the three *Tokaido* are perceived: just as Hiroshige’s prints have made people, Japanese or non-Japanese of the past or the present, dream of

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<sup>30</sup> LeFanu is not certain if having the present-day figure of the poet in the opera was a good idea, while understanding that it gives a frame to the piece (LeFanu 2018a).

travelling the Tokaido, the opera *Tokaido Road* presents the production itself, the creative process, and the tour as “a journey” and encourages the audience to “join them”.<sup>31</sup>

Secondly, they share accessibility and entertainment aspects. In Hiroshige’s time, *ukiyo-e* was more of a functional and commercial product for the mass market than a prestigious form of art. Similarly, the opera was planned to be “a rich and highly accessible source of pleasure, entertainment and education rather than a misunderstood and sometimes marginalized form of art” (Romano 2014b). Thirdly, they are all artistic representations of the Tokaido as well as representations of other artworks that refer to the Tokaido. Setting aside the debate whether Hiroshige actually travelled the Tokaido or not, it is undeniable that he referred to the existing prints and accounts of the Tokaido. The prints, poems, and opera all represent the creative engagement of the artists with the imagined Tokaido rather than a realistic depiction or historical account of the road.

In terms of the differences between the three works, what is notably different in the opera is the presence of a coherent narrative revolving around the distinct characters and their relations, whereas the series of poems more or less reflect the independence of each sheet of Hiroshige’s *Tokaido* with some recurring motifs such as rivers and Mount Fuji. There is also a strong thematic sense and morality conveyed in the opera; Gaffield says that “the opera deals with a timeless theme: travel, discovery, love and loss” (Harding 2014d). Hiroshige is idealised as an artist who “braved the government censor by publishing prints that show the horror of death through starvation” and “reminds us of the power of art to bear witness” (Tokaido Road: The Blog 2014–2015). In this sense, the opera is not just a

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<sup>31</sup> When the blog was launched, they presented it as “[w]elcome along the Road” and “we’ll keep you up to date on the sights, sounds and our adventures as we explore Tokaido Road in a literary, visual, musical and dramatic travelogue” (Harding 2014e), and continued to use the metaphor throughout the promotion.

representation of an imagined Tokaido but also a fictive reconstruction and reimagination of Hiroshige's life with entirely fictional female characters. One might misconceive the opera as Hiroshige's biography from the way it is described, however, such women as Kikuyo and Mariko did not exist in his life but were imagined by Gaffield from the prints and were given significant roles in the opera. The comprehensible and sympathetic drama certainly resonates with the aforementioned accessibility of the opera. Before moving on to a detailed analysis of the opera, the next section draws on the composer's background and her engagement with the opera.

### **Nicola LeFanu and the background**

LeFanu was born in Essex in 1947 and is the daughter of the Irish librarian William LeFanu (1904–95) and the Irish-English composer Elizabeth Maconchy (1907–94). She read music at St Hilda's College, University of Oxford (1965–68), and studied composition at the Royal College of Music (1968–69).<sup>32</sup> Whilst being a freelance composer and teaching music at independent schools in London after her graduation, she was awarded several prizes and a scholarship, and took up the Harkness Fellowship to study at Harvard University in 1973.<sup>33</sup> She also enrolled as a student on the music theatre course at Morley College (an adult education college) in the early 1970s, and eventually became the director of the Morley College Music Theatre. She became a lecturer, senior lecturer, and professor in composition at King's College London (1977–95), sharing the post with her husband, the composer David

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<sup>32</sup> LeFanu studied with Jeremy Dale Roberts (1934–2017), Egon Wellesz (1885–1974), Goffredo Petrassi (1904–2003), and Thea Musgrave (1928–).

<sup>33</sup> She won the Cobbett Prize for Chamber Music in 1968, the BBC Young Composer Competition in 1971, and was a Mendelssohn Scholar in 1972. She taught at the Francis Holland School (1969–72) and St Paul's Girls' School (1975–77).

Lumsdaine (1931–2024), and then took the role of Professor of Music at the University of York (1994–2008).

LeFanu recalls that her first contact with Japan, apart from two Hiroshige prints that her father hung in the hall, was through the art of Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), Henri Matisse (1869–1954), and Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) as a young student – a highly mediated conception of Japan.<sup>34</sup> She came across what she terms “Asian art” as an undergraduate and was vaguely aware of some conceptual ideas, such as “capturing something in a single brushstroke” (LeFanu and Haddon 2006, 131).<sup>35</sup> She also became familiar with Britten’s *Curlew River* (1964) in the 1960s and read Waley’s translation of *noh* plays. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that she was not knowledgeable about the culture and did not know any Japanese people as a child or teenager, nor did she listen to music from the Far East until she went to Harvard in 1973. In the US, she studied with Korean-American composer Earl Kim (1920–98), a Schoenberg pupil who, as LeFanu describes, “taught in a very European way, but [...] was very Asian [...] culturally” (LeFanu 2018b). She met Korean people through him and cultivated friendships with them, including the composer Donald Sur (1935–99). LeFanu also became acquainted with many Asian people, especially when she had a semester at Berkeley, and experienced Asian music including an LP of *shakuhachi* she listened to for the first time in the music library at Harvard. She recalls that, being conscious of the differences between Chinese, Korean, and Japanese cultures, “there were aspects of Asian culture that were quite important to me and felt very different to the way I had been

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<sup>34</sup> All quotations and background information without individual references hereafter are derived from the interview I conducted with LeFanu on 6 December 2018 in her residence (LeFanu 2018a).

<sup>35</sup> My impression from our interview is that LeFanu used the term “Asian” as generally indicating but not always limited to Chinese, Korean, and Japanese grouped together, while she acknowledged the differences and also the problematic nature of mixing them together.

brought up, and exploring some of the art and writing associated with Zen Buddhism became important too”.

LeFanu recalls that it was in the 1970s when her work started being influenced by those ideas with her experiences in the US, but also through Lumsdaine, one of whose most acknowledged works is a *noh*-inspired orchestral piece – *Hagoromo* (1977). There were, she remembers, “lots of recordings available that enabled one to hear music from other cultures in a way that had never been possible before”. She also learnt Transcendental Meditation (TM) around that time “like many other people in the 70s”, an experience she considers having influenced *Deva* (1979) in which she used mantras in the compositional process (LeFanu 2018b). Moreover, she emphasises the significance of the Durham Oriental Music Festival (DOMF) she attended in August 1979.<sup>36</sup> The two-week residential festival included performances and lectures by musicians, ethnomusicologists, and anthropologists from China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, and she remembers that she attended “every single concert”. LeFanu explains that “it did not immediately bear fruit in my music because I like years rather than months to pass before something can be my own [...] but it had an important influence on my ear”. Her experience of things Japanese and beyond here reflects the trend to which many composers of her generation were exposed in the 1970s, and how they assimilated non-Western materials into their own musical languages was the key question they posed.

LeFanu incorporates recognisably non-Western materials into her compositions in the form of texts, though non-Western influences are not limited to these. In terms of Japanese texts, she used *haiku*

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<sup>36</sup> The festival was held at the University of Durham in 1976, 1979, and 1982, in cooperation with its School of Music, Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art and Archaeology, School of Oriental Studies, and centres for other areas of study. LeFanu wrote an article on *The Musical Times* about the festival (LeFanu 1980).

in several compositions. *The Same Day Dawns* (1974) for soprano and ensemble is “a collection of miniatures to Oriental texts”. She uses Korean temple gongs in this piece, and its harmony is built from the top, the sound world of which she associates with some elements of Japanese music (I explore it shortly in relation to its use in *Tokaido Road*). *A Penny for a Song* (1981) for soprano and piano is an anthology, consisting of ten songs set to a number of different texts and a piano piece that acts as a refrain. Some texts are by English or Irish poets, such as Walter de la Mare (1873–1956) and Brendan Kennelly (1936–2021), and others are of Japanese and Chinese origin, which are mostly anonymous and translated into English. LeFanu suggests that what all these texts have in common is that they are just a brief glimpse and all share characteristics of *haiku* – its “vivid imagery, seasonal or natural, and allusive brevity” (LeFanu 1981a). She also composed *Wind among the Pines: Five Images of Norfolk* (1987) for soprano and orchestra, with poems by the Japanese Dadaist and Zen poet Shinkichi Takahachi (1901–87), translated by the American poet and translator of Buddhist literature and Zen poetry Lucian Stryk (1924–2013). She found the poems in her library and became acquainted with Stryk through Lumsdaine who had set music to a text by Stryk.

In fact, in her vocal music, except for operas, LeFanu almost always sets words that are translations from either other European languages or from Asian languages.<sup>37</sup> The composer notes that she and Lumsdaine have a sizeable library of world literature, and poetry is often the inspiration for her composition. The reason she prefers translated texts to ones by famous English poets is, she explains, that people have their own expectation of how it should be with poems they know; while,

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<sup>37</sup> When LeFanu was a student, she already set Russian texts. Ever since, she has used texts translated from languages ancient and modern, including German, Italian, French, Catalan, Latin, Russian, Tamil, Kannada, Akkadian, Japanese, and Chinese.

with ones in translation, people tend not to have this expectation. She sees the process as follows: “the poem has already had its first change into a new medium, and then there is another change to another new medium when the music comes”. However, this does not mean that she employs the texts completely detached from their original contexts. In the case of Japanese texts, for example, LeFanu tries to encompass what is behind the texts with the broader knowledge she has of aesthetics, arts, and music of the culture. These influences, such as those of the *haiku* poetic form on her music, are not musically explicit and would not be perceived had they not been explained by the composer.

LeFanu indicates that it is a slow process for her to digest and absorb something non-Western and incorporate it in her music. One example would be that she experienced the Korean art form *pansori* in the US when she studied with Kim, and it took her between seven and eight years to write *The Old Woman of Beare* (1981), a monodrama for soprano and large ensemble, that grew from what she had observed and learned. In this piece, the singer has to conjure up different states of a woman and move between speech and song, and there is “the ‘talking drum’ [that] acts as an essential foil for the soprano” (LeFanu 1981b). Some ideas she had developed in *The Old Woman of Beare* were, without her being conscious at that time, later employed in *Tokaido Road* in which the aged Hiroshige looks back at his young self, Hiro.

LeFanu’s engagement with things Japanese thus differs from the composers studied in the previous chapters, although she shares some principles regarding cross-cultural composition with them. LeFanu acknowledges that “over my whole composing career, there have certainly been musics that have affected me that are not Western” and believes that “these things have to go deep into your psyche and become a part of your general music imagination”. For her, the dangers for a composer of this

digital age when one could get information from the Internet is that it is tempting to have a quick summary of something and not to pursue it in greater depth and “digest” it. This idea of digesting is comparable to Goehr’s concept of internalising. Her stance is, “I would not want to just hear a piece of music from a different culture and then [...] adopt it like a piece of clothing [, which] would just be an appropriation”. The following sections demonstrate how LeFanu absorbs what surrounds the materials and expresses both in *Tokaido Road*.

### **LeFanu and *Tokaido Road***

By the time Okeanos asked LeFanu to compose *Tokaido Road*, they had known each other fairly well; LeFanu had written *Mira Clar Tenebras* for Okeanos in 2002, and Okeanos had performed several of her works, though none included Japanese instruments.<sup>38</sup> LeFanu, who had written more than a hundred works by this point, welcomed the opportunity to write something that would take her into a new musical and cultural place, which she believes an opera often provides (LeFanu 2018a, 2018b). From a cultural point of view, LeFanu initially thought she might be “the wrong composer for it” but felt that the poems “did speak to [her]” when she received them. She also believed she had “some reasonable knowledge of that culture” through Japanese art and literature, though it raises the question of what constitutes a “reasonable knowledge” of another culture or field – knowledge sufficient enough to adopt its music, instruments, and history. LeFanu then began researching “all about Hiroshige and the era” and thoroughly enjoyed learning Japanese history, which she considers “a necessary and

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<sup>38</sup> Okeanos released the CD, *Reflections* (LeFanu and Maconchy 2005), featuring LeFanu’s *Lament* (1988), *A Travelling Spirit* (1996), *Soliloquy* (1965), and *Mira Clas Tenebras*, and her mother Maconchy’s *Miniature* (1987) and *Morning, Noon and Night* (1976).

exciting process” when writing any opera or music theatre piece. She bought numerous books of reproductions, not just Hiroshige’s *Tokaido* but also other *ukiyo-e* prints, explored different series of *Tokaido* through books and the Internet, and tried to understand what life was like in the era to set the scene for the opera.

After some research, LeFanu came across, in her words, “the terrifying picture”, *Taira no Kiyomori’s Spectral Vision* [*Taira no Kiyomori kai-i o miru zu*] (1843) by Hiroshige, a part of which depicts branches, bushes, and trees as skulls and skeletons (Figure 4.3).



**Figure 4.3** Hiroshige, Part of *Taira no Kiyomori’s Spectral Vision* [*Taira no Kiyomori kai-i o miru zu*] (ca 1845, The Metropolitan Museum)

She decided that it would be the dramatic focus of the opera and remembered that things then began to fall into place (Harding 2014b). LeFanu interpreted it as Hiroshige's using his art to bear witness and communicating people about the famine and starvation in the countryside, while being constrained by the strict censorship of the *shōgun*'s dictatorial government later in his life. This interpretation generated the central idea to have one singer portraying old Hiroshige reflecting his journey and young Hiro actually making the journey. LeFanu was also fascinated by Hiroshige's sketchbooks in which he depicted ordinary people, despite his coming from an *ukiyo-e* tradition in which they paint people of fame or status, and decided to use the mime to bring them to life. Moreover, LeFanu noted the importance of all the rivers both in Hiroshige's prints and Gaffield's poems (LeFanu 2018a); 18 out of 55 prints of *Tokaido* have rivers (or streams) in them, and several poems feature rivers that have a voice and speaks (Gaffield 2016, 22) (the significance of rivers cannot but remind one of *Curlew River*). LeFanu also learnt what the road is like in the modern era, for example, by reading *Rediscovering the Old Tokaido: in the Footsteps of Hiroshige* (Carey 2000) Gaffield lent her.<sup>39</sup>

Musically, LeFanu was very excited to have a chance to write for Japanese instruments for the first time. She was most familiar with the *shakuhachi*, but Romano decided not to include it in *Tokaido Road* because of its strong religious and meditative associations (similar to Denyer's initial hesitation). After agreeing on the instrumentation with Romano, LeFanu visited Okeanos members Holding (*koto*) and Thompson (*shō*), to discuss and learn about their instruments through demonstrations. She also gathered information about the instruments from books and the Internet, such as the webpage

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<sup>39</sup> Carey, the author of the book, made a journey on foot "to uncover what, if anything remained of the Old Tokaido highway and of the fifty-three scenes along its way depicted by its most famous artist, Hiroshige" (2000, iv).

“Orchestration in Gagaku Music” (Kapuściński and Rose 2010–20) which Thompson recommended, and which provided details on *shō*’s *aitake* chords and fingering. LeFanu began listening to Japanese music and contemplating “the appropriate ways” to combine Japanese and Western instruments (LeFanu 2018b).

Although *Tokaido Road* was eventually labelled as “a chamber opera”, LeFanu regrets that they could not call it “music theatre” to avoid confusion with “musical theatre”.<sup>40</sup> She was actively involved in music theatre and wrote her first music theatre piece *Anti-World* for a mime/dancer, two singers, and three instrumentalists premiered in 1972 by the Morley College Music Theatre group of which LeFanu was a director.<sup>41</sup> For LeFanu, composing under the heading “music theatre” means that she writes for a theatrical context which combines visual, physical, and aural elements in equal measure. In the case of *Tokaido Road* she conceived of it as weaving diverse strands, conforming to music theatre exactly rather than opera in which everything is structured through a singing voice (Harding 2014b; LeFanu 2018a). She had already explored the links between aural/musical and physical gestures in *Anti-World*, and thought she would further explore them in *Tokaido Road* by incorporating mime or dance elements, combining singing and speaking voice, and situating instrumentalists visibly on stage. “Musical gesture” here is, according to LeFanu, a musical shape that combines a pitch and rhythmic motif, and something that implies a particular character and memorability or recognisability. I suggest that what she calls musical gesture is similar to the idea of *leitmotif*; LeFanu explains that melodic lines in her piece

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<sup>40</sup> *Tokaido Road* is also advertised as “a new multi-media chamber opera” (Guildhall School 2016b), which LeFanu thinks could cause a false assumption that it implies some digital transformations or involves an electronic element (LeFanu 2018a).

<sup>41</sup> The group performed, LeFanu remembers, works by Goehr, Kagel, and some Scandinavian composers.

“embody and engender other aspects of music” and “act as a structural lifeline of the piece” (LeFanu and Haddon 2006, 129), examples of which I give in later analysis.

She also claims that “music is a social art” (ibid., 123), and regards that offering something the audience can recognise is essential in an opera. LeFanu tries to provide obvious storytelling on the surface while embedding more serious aspects underneath. In *Tokaido Road*, the musical gestures are combined with the physical gestures of the mime, enabling the music to alternate between direct storytelling and the abstract (LeFanu 2018a). She also employed additional visual elements by projecting Hiroshige’s prints. Because of these aspects, she considers it “a hybrid form”, as with any opera or music that involves extramusical aspects.

### **Japanese instruments in *Tokaido Road***

This section explores how LeFanu incorporates the *koto* and *shō* in her music for *Tokaido Road*. LeFanu believes it is unfortunate when an instrument loses its particular associations and connotations, and, in *Tokaido Road*, aimed to weave the inherent characteristics of the *koto* and *shō* into her musical language. The composer states that she “wanted to have a music which could either bring the Japanese and the Western so close together that you would not know which it was, or a music which emphasises the difference”. The music of *Tokaido Road* moves between these two approaches.

The inherent characteristic LeFanu took notice of with the *shō* was, first, the attribute of “building harmony from the top”. The range of the *shō*, which is made of seventeen thin bamboo pipes of equal thickness and different length, is rather limited from  $a^1$  to  $f^2$ -sharp, and there are only fifteen notes that it can play (two pipes have no reeds) (Miki 2008, 64). “The sound is homogeneous over its

entire range”, Romano notes, which is unusual for a woodwind instrument and lacks the colour variety people usually expect from modern Western instruments but “compensates with bright energy and a pure tone quality” (2016, 38). LeFanu thought that Okeanos which was treble-heavy and bass-light already represents “the Japanese sound” and, in combination with the *shō*, it would help to develop a sound world that is unique to *Tokaido Road*. The composer explains that, in Japanese music, “often the line that you’re following is underneath and the colouristic harmony is above” (Stevens 2014), which I suggest comes from the *gagaku* she was familiar with, whereas “in conventional Western music the harmony is at the bottom”. In *Tokaido Road*, there are some places in which the centre of sound is very high as “one feels almost floating”, though LeFanu also felt the need to use the cello, which is not a regular instrument of Okeanos, to support the baritone in other places where “there might be slightly more traditional Western flavour”. Another feature of the *shō* she, as well as many other composers, extensively employed is the nature of the *aitake* chords. LeFanu used the *aitake* chords, “unexpected cluster chords with chromatic sounds” in her words, to bring the Japanese and Western instruments together, often by developing the harmonic language for the Western instruments based on the *aitake* chords.

The opera’s opening serves as an example of LeFanu embracing the inherent features of the *shō* and, more broadly, can be read as an opening statement conveying how Japanese and Western elements are to be brought together conceptually and musically throughout the entire work. In the first fourteen bars, what we hear is the music of the *shō* that is “transcribed into Western instruments” in the following ways. Firstly, the four Western instruments (oboe, clarinet, viola, and cello) play *aitake*-like cluster chords (Example 4.1–a); the chords are not exactly *aitake* chords but the structure and the

range of the chords, and hence the sonic impression, can be closely associated with the *shō*'s sound world (if one is familiar with it).<sup>42</sup> Secondly, they adopt *te-utsuri* (Example 4.1–b), the gradual shift in fingering position used when one *aitake* chord flows into another.

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**Example 4.1** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 1–5 (2014, 1)

LeFanu again did not use the exact *te-utsuri* patterns which are melodically and rhythmically set, but the concept is applied in its gesture. Thirdly, it employs the fundamental nature of *shō* that it produces sound both when inhaling and exhaling. In *gagaku*, one or two measures of a slow four-beat passage are played in one breath, which comprises one to three *aitake* chords, and a one-breath *aitake* phrase

<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, the performance at Cheltenham was preceded by a thirty-minute recital of “traditional Japanese music” introduced by the *koto* (Holding) and the *shō* (Thompson), which, according to a review, was “useful as a means of contextualisation but, in hindsight, something of a gauntlet thrown down to LeFanu” (Cummings 2014).

begins quiet and gradually increases in dynamics, and then diminishes with the onset of *te-utsuri* (Miki 2008, 66–67). LeFanu expresses the sense of breaths and *te-utsuri* by shaping phrases with *crescendo* and *decrescendo*. Thus, LeFanu adopts the attributes of the *shō* – its fundamental components, sound structure, and musical gesture and expression – at the very beginning of the piece, and adapts them for the Western instruments. The association is probably not too obvious to the audience, but it effectively lays the sonic foundation for the opera that are idiomatic to both Western and Japanese instruments. I regard the process as translation rather than transcription, as it does not copy or transliterate what the *shō* does, but it is converted to something that is suitable for the Western instruments. The basic idea, nuance, and atmosphere are there but the language in which they are set is different.

While the characteristics of the *shō* function as a bridge between “two sound worlds”, the instrument itself is used to emphasise the differences between these two worlds. The most notable is the transformative role it is given; the *shō* on several occasions heralds the change of time, place, and scene. For example, it appears solo playing *aitake* chords at the beginning of Scene 1 where Hiro’s journey begins (Example 4.2), and this experience embeds the *shō*’s sound in one’s mind as a marker that indicates a transformation of one state to another throughout opera.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Shō and Cor A. The Shō part is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of four chords, each with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and a breath-like phrasing indicated by a slur and a hairpin. The chords are labeled with the syllables 'ju', 'bo', 'ku', and 'otsu'. The Cor A part is written in treble clef and is marked 'change to oboe'. The score is for bars 101–7 of LeFanu's *Tokaido Road*.

**Example 4.2** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 101–7 (2014, 8)

LeFanu asserts that the distinctive colour and unfamiliarity of the sound make it more suitable than any other instrument as a signal of change, because it is notable to the Western ears and “suggests Japan”. The other example is when the *shō* carries a melodic line on its own or in the ensemble. The *shō* is essentially a harmonic instrument, and the sound is very quiet when a note is produced by a single pipe. LeFanu thought that “it needed to have a voice – a line – not only be used as a colour at the top”, to fully display its sound, though she was not entirely satisfied with the long solo section at the beginning of Scene 10 and made some cuts in the event. When it is paired up with other instruments, it still stands out, despite the quiet nature of the instrument, because of its idiosyncratic tone colour.

LeFanu’s first difficulty with the *koto* was its tuning. While the *koto* is a modal instrument in its standard tuning, LeFanu’s musical language is broadly chromatic; her music is suited to a certain modality but is not modal in the traditional sense. On the other hand, the composer finds the *koto* very sympathetic for its ability to inflect pitches and the expressivity it presents. The *koto* can be quite versatile in terms of tuning for a composer if the performer agrees to non-traditional tunings, though it makes the playing challenging for those who are accustomed to the traditional repertoire. Holding recalls spending a day with LeFanu saying “the *koto* is not a chromatic instrument” but found the resulting score very chromatic, requiring her “to make it work” (Holding 2019). Returning to the nature of collaboration explored in Chapter 2, the composer-performer relationship here is characterised as directive. Having played many new works that often include unconventional tunings and new techniques, Holding wonders what the real limitations are for the instrument and herself; she would be happy to push boundaries if the musical result has integrity, but also questions if a *koto* is still the *koto*

if not in a pentatonic mode (Holding 2019).<sup>43</sup> As evident in the later analysis, the *koto* in *Tokaido Road* alternates between modal and chromatic, bridging the two modes.

The other issue with the *koto* in an hour-long opera is, LeFanu thought, that it would keep the music in the same place harmonically for too long if it used only one tuning, while it would be almost impossible for the player to retune the instrument entirely on stage while the opera continued with the other instruments. LeFanu thought it would be crucial to change the colour and mode completely after Kikuyo's suicide (Scene 8), and decided to use two *koto* between which the player moves; in some places she also incorporated the small tuning for which the player moves the bridge between notes or within a note. There are two thirteen-string *koto* on the stage – one is tuned to a modal scale (similar to one of the traditional scales but not identical), and the other is tuned to a more chromatic scale; the performer plays the former *koto* until the end of Scene 7, tunes the same *koto* during Scene 8, moves to the latter *koto* for Scene 9, then comes back to the retuned former *koto* in Scene 10. I observed that, when returning to the first instrument, Holding further adjusts its tuning at the beginning of Scene 10 where the *shō*'s solo is accompanied by the rainstick and “fingers pattering” on the viola and cello, which camouflage the tuning.

As well as the *koto*, often being combined with Western instruments, sitting in the ensemble as part of the accompaniment or the instrumental development in contrast to the *shō*, it also takes a key role as a solo instrument in developing the character of Hiroshige and Hiro and in moving the story forward, as it is paired up with Hiroshige – the protagonist and narrator. The *koto* accompanies

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<sup>43</sup> Although these thoughts raise interesting and important questions, it falls out of the scope of this chapter. The topic of the instrument and its originating culture, which is partially connected to these questions, is explored in Chapter 2 with regard to the *shakuhachi*.

Hiroshige who frames the story in the crucial points of the drama, normally moving from spoken texts to recitative-like singing. LeFanu found the *koto*, “the resonant and expressive instrument”, most suitable because it can partner the voice that needs freedom of tempo and expression and, more importantly, it can almost imitate a vocal quality with its flexibility of pitch. When comparing it to eighteenth-century operas in which the harpsichord or other keyboard instruments support the recitative, LeFanu sees the *koto* rather as another voice that shares in the storytelling and gives a sense of a conversation. LeFanu also suggests that she uses the *koto* with Hiro to counter the “traditional Western flavour” generated by using the cello to support the baritone, although young Hiro’s journey was mostly accompanied by ensemble music with more colour from the percussion.

The process and outcome of LeFanu’s incorporation of the *shō* and *koto* in her music demonstrate that the composer intended to make the sound world of *Tokaido Road* “distinctive”, not simply by using the Japanese instruments, relying on them to *sound different*, but also by adopting their musical language and the sonic environments in which they are traditionally situated. Her approach is to then connect the two sound worlds, Western and Japanese, by finding a place where all the components sit comfortably (the umbrella term “Western” in this discussion specifically means Western art music tradition, both classical and contemporary, in which LeFanu and the instrumental players are trained). Her music does not require the musicians to use extended techniques developed for contemporary pieces or to do something extraordinary sonically, except for some microtones and the *koto*’s chromatic tuning, but it is still technically challenging.<sup>44</sup> LeFanu, on the one hand, gives a special place and role for the *shō*, keeping its representative characteristics in most places, because of

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<sup>44</sup> One might argue that forcing the *koto* in particular to do what it does not usually do indicates the cultural power dynamics.

its distinctive tone colour and a certain limitation in terms of volume and range. She makes the Western instruments come closer to the *shō* by making them incorporate its features. The *koto*, on the other hand, is used both in its conventional manner and in the more Western sound world of LeFanu. The *koto* in *Tokaido Road* acts as a thread that moves between and weaves all the musical elements together.

### **Cultural and material analysis of *Tokaido Road***

This section analyses the opera, extracting scenes and musical moments that require attention for further discussion (see Appendix 3 for scene-by-scene description of the direction and music).<sup>45</sup>

*Tokaido Road*, which has a duration of approximately fifty-five minutes, consists of the Prologue, twelve Scenes, and the Epilogue. The Scenes are divided into four sections: Journeying (i) (Scene 1–5), Journeying (ii) (Scene 6–8), Reflecting/climax (Scene 9), and Journeying (iii) (Scene 10–12). The story goes between different eras: Hiro travelling the Tokaido in 1832, Hiroshige reflecting his journey in 1857, and Poet in Tokyo in the present. In terms of the instrumentation, in addition to the *shō*, *koto*, oboe (doubling cor anglais), clarinet (doubling bass clarinet), viola, and the cello, each instrumentalist plays one or more hand-held percussion instruments: the Tibetan “singing bowl”, guiro, bamboo chimes, claves, rainstick, maracas, *kotsuzumi*, skull (large temple block), finger cymbals, waterphone, glass chimes, and belltree. LeFanu thought that she needed “a very wide range of colour in the music” when she first read the poems, and maximised the sound palette of the ensemble by adding doubling

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<sup>45</sup> The remarks on the production are based on the performance at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama on 25 February 2015 which I attended and was filmed and published on YouTube (Guildhall School 2016a). I assume that the direction was more or less the same throughout the tour, except for some adjustments which were made in the process and depending on the venues.

instruments and the percussion. The ensemble and conductor are instructed to be placed to stage left, while the singers and mime are at downstage right.

### Prologue

The Prologue opens with the cast – Hiro/Hiroshige, Kikuyo, and Mariko – coming onto the stage and sitting on *zabuton* (cushions) in *seiza* (sitting erect with legs folded) in the spotlight (Figure 4.4); the music starts with the aforementioned Western instruments’ adopting the characteristics of the *shō*, initiated by the temple-bell-like Singing Bowl (Example 4.1–c).



**Figure 4.4** Stage photo of the beginning of *Tokaido Road* (2014, taken by Greg Trezise at the Cheltenham Festival)

After Hiroshige’s recitation of Gaffield’s poem *Nihonbashi*, the *koto* makes its solo entrance with gestures that typically signify the instrument characterised by tremolo, modal-scale glissando, *yuri* (vibrato), and *tsuki-iro* (quick pressing technique) (Example 4.3), shortly joined by the viola and cello with Hiroshige speaking.



**Example 4.3** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 21–25 (2014, 3)

At the end of the recitative, the cor anglais takes over from the *koto*, and its chromatic melody leads the scene to modern Tokyo with Mime, as present-day Poet, entering on the stage with a backpack and iPad.<sup>46</sup> The Japanese Mime, wearing a denim jacket, reads English texts in which she pronounces the word “DreamLand” in an exaggerated Japanese accent, which sounds as “do-rī-mu-la-n-do”, without stressed syllables. One might interpret it as “clichés for Japanese representation” repeated in history (Sheppard 2019, 62) though, in this case, Mime is Japanese, and I suggest that the aim here is rather to present exotic authenticity.<sup>47</sup> Eventually, the Mime introduces the story of Hiro:

Who is this artist? Whose time does he inhabit?  
And the women who loved him?

<sup>46</sup> What Mime represents is indicated in the score above musical notation. For example, in this scene, “Mime, as Poet, enters, walking through the audience and onto the stage[; s]he has a backpack, with props she will use later”, though not all of them are reflected in the production (LeFanu 2014, 5).

<sup>47</sup> Sheppard maintains that manipulation of accents and particular mispronunciations of English became one of the “clichés for Japanese representation” since *The Mikado* (1885) (2019, 62). These include warping one-syllable English words into two syllables (e.g., “paint” is transformed into “pay-ain’t”) seen in *The Mikado*, adding absurdly repeated ee sounds at the end of words, and the substitution of l’s for r’s seen in Tin Pan Alley songs (ibid., 62 and 79).

The maiko? The tea master?  
 Memory carries a trace of place;  
 imagination mends the holes.  
 Travellers on the Tokaido meander between centuries.  
 Fuji doesn't change.

(Gaffield 2014, 13)

The *kotsuzumi* accompanies the speech as if it has a dialogue with Mime (Example 4.4).<sup>48</sup>

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Mime, Cor Anglais (Cor A.), and Clarinet (Clar.). The score is for bars 82-87. The Mime part consists of three lines of lyrics: "Who is this artist? Whose time does he inhabit?", "And the women who loved him?", and "The maiko? The tea master?". The Cor A. part is mostly silent, with a few notes in the first and last bars. The Clarinet part features a melodic line with dynamics of *mp* and *p*, and slurs with a '5' indicating a fifth interval. A label "Kotsuzumi (Squeeze Drum)" is placed above the Clarinet staff.

**Example 4.4** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 82–87 (2014, 7)

In this opening part of the opera, on the one hand, the audience is taken to *Japan*, even before the music starts, visually by the projected prints, singers’ gestures and costumes, props, and the presence of the *koto* at the front on the stage. They are not broadly *exotic* but Japanese by design, for which the director credited Japanese members of the production team (Guildhall School 2016b), though, as Sheppard claims, “cross-cultural presentation/representation ultimately plays out diversely in the minds of individual audience members” (2019, 9–10). On the other hand, musically, it is carefully and effectively balanced between West and Japan, modal and chromatic, and the sound of the familiar and

<sup>48</sup> LeFanu thought the sound of *kotsuzumi* would give the audience a signal that “we are on the Tokaido Road”. Indeed, unpitched percussion instruments is one of the typical signifiers of exotic locales (Locke 2009, 54), though it also means that it does not necessarily indicate Japan. In addition, the drum in the performance does not sound like *kotsuzumi* (there is a possibility that they use a beater which is not normally used with *kotsuzumi* or a similar instrument that was available).

unfamiliar. The opening strike of the singing bowl suggests the sound world of *elsewhere* (see Example 4.1), but the harmonic representation of the *shō* and the following accompaniment of the viola and cello sounds rather *Western* – the perception of which is subjective. The *koto*'s modal entrance (see Example 4.3) certainly evokes a sense of Japan (again if one makes that association), but it soon goes into music that is a mixture of modal and chromatic. When it comes to the depiction of modern Tokyo, the music tends much more towards the chromatic, although the unfamiliar sound and gesture of the *kotsuzumi* (see Example 4.4) brings the audience back to somewhere foreign and perhaps prepares them to go on an expedition to Edo Japan – an idea of “tourism” I will explore later. Thus, the Prologue sets the cultural balance that encapsulates the entire opera: the direction incorporates things Japanese much more directly and explicitly and makes the time and place of the story clear, whereas the music constantly drifts around and plays with two cultural spheres with nuanced musical references.

### Journeying (i)

Journeying (i), Scene 1–5, is a succession of short scenes in which Hiro meets Kikuyo and Mariko travelling on the Tokaido. After the last note of the cor anglais is taken over by the *shō*, Scene 1 opens with the *shō*'s *aitake* chords in solo (see Example 4.2).<sup>49</sup> The *shō*'s transforming chords fading in and out are associated with the river and water, both of which take on significance in the opera; LeFanu also sets the river and water as recurring elements that give the audience a sense of journey and continuity. The quiet but distinct sound and the musical gesture of the *shō* have a dramatic effect, just as a curtain rises in a theatre, and gives a sense of change in time and place. The stillness of the *shō* is

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<sup>49</sup> The *aitake* chords are notated on the G clef, but also have the Japanese names of the chords indicated on them.

soon brought to an end by the *koto*, and Hiro expresses a surge of excitement – “what I dreamt of always was this road” – accompanied by the *koto* and cello, two instruments that are paired with Hiro, and the *shō*. While Hiro was singing, Kikuyo stands up and wears a *kimono*-like robe with black and vivid red on her black clothes (Figure 4.5), which is designed to be “flamboyant” and “flirtatious” (Guildhall School 2016b).<sup>50</sup>



**Figure 4.5** Stage photo of Kikuyo, *Tokaido Road* (2014, taken by Greg Trezise at the Cheltenham Festival)

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<sup>50</sup> The *kimono*-like robes of Kikuyo and Mariko were designed by Nakano and made in Japan. The director states how important the fluidity and texture of the *kimono*, especially of Kikuyo.

After Hiro disembarks, Kikuyo starts singing a melismatic phrase led by ascending phrases of the solo clarinet – an instrument which is paired with Kikuyo (Example 4.5).

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for Kikuyo (Kik.), the middle for Hiro (Hiro.), and the bottom for Clarinet (Clar.). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins at bar 144. Kikuyo's vocal line starts with a melismatic phrase marked 'to herself, freely, pp' and 'wordless (ah)'. The Clarinet accompaniment features triplets and is marked 'p' and 'pp'. A '7:6' ratio is indicated above the final measure of the vocal line. The Hiro staff is mostly silent, with a few notes in the final measure.

**Example 4.5** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 144–47 (2014, 13)

The musical gesture at the beginning of the phrase is memorable because of the repeated segments and simplicity, and the melismatic entrance of Kikuyo also musically establishes the mesmerising and seductive character.

When Hiro joins Kikuyo and forms a sensual duet that leads to “a radiant night”, the whole ensemble accompanies them, except for the *shō*, with the *koto* paired with the string instruments in *pizzicato* (a) which provide harmony and rhythmic accent (Example 4.6). Hiro and Kikuyo then embrace, with Kikuyo welcoming Hiro into her *kimono* robe, accompanied by static music until Mime – acting as the pilgrim in the print, *Numazu*, with the *tengu* mask (red face with a long nose that could be indicating masculinity here) – comes in with the *koto* and *shō* and distracts Kikuyo. The *shō* heralds the change of scene again, and Hiroshige states, “I am an old man seeking a memory. Beautiful Kikuyo! [...] I wanted to tarry but I knew Mariko was waiting”, accompanied by the *koto*. After Hiroshige’s soliloquy, the *koto* plays the slowly accelerating *arpeggio*-like phrase that is handed over to the viola

while Mariko stands up and puts on her robe. The music often aids the seamless shifts from one scene to another in a similar manner.

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.6, starting at bar 170. It features vocal lines for Kik. and Hiro. and instrumental lines for Koto, Ob., Clar., Vla., and Vc. The lyrics are: "shad - ows the pines. Who is he? A paint - er? Girl, en - twined." The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, and *fpp*. A blue box highlights the instrumental accompaniment in the Koto, Vla., and Vc. parts, and a red letter 'a' is placed in the Koto part.

**Example 4.6** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 170–2 (2014, 15)

Scene 2 depicts Mariko in her tea house, remembering her affair with Hiro. Mariko wears a dark-green robe and sings an aria, accompanied by the viola followed by the cello. The modal *arpeggio*-like but also melodic accompaniment that constantly returns to a root note in the low range gives stability to the aria (Example 4.7), but the irregular metre and the chromatic development of the melody that suddenly explodes with the oboe responding to the voice demonstrates Mariko’s emotion and frustration (Example 4.8). The very beginning of the viola’s melodic accompaniment is another example of musical gestures that are repeated throughout the opera as Mariko’s motif.

228  $\text{♩} = \text{c.96}$  *mp*

Mar. *mp*  
 Hi-ro, Hi-ro my love-ly pain-ter

Mariko is in her tea-house.

Vla. *p*

**Example 4.7** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 228–35 (2014, 23)

24 **Poco più mosso**  
 $\text{♩} = \text{c.108}$

254 (3+2) *poco f*

Mar. *f* *mp* *pp*  
 clouds... You dis-ap-peared like a flame... in sun - light.

Ob. *f* *mp* *pp*

Vla. *sfpp* (non trem.) *mp* *pp* *mf*

Vc. *sfpp* *sfpp* *sfpp* *sfpp* *sfpp* *sfpp* *sfpp*

**Example 4.8** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 254–58 (2014, 24)

The image of camellia flowers is projected with pale pink lights, and Mime dances in *nihon buyō* (Japanese dance) style with a fan (Figure 4.6).

Following Scene 3 (an instrumental section) in which singers and the Mime enact scenes from Hiroshige’s prints, *Okitsu* (Figure 4.7) and *Hamamatsu* (Figure 4.8), and Scene 4 (Hiro and Mariko’s

duet) where Hiro and Mariko spend a night in her tea house, the opera enters Scene 5 with Hiroshige reflecting on his youth accompanied by the *koto*.<sup>51</sup>



**Figure 4.6** Stage photo of Mime, *Tokaido Road* (2014, taken by Greg Trezise at the Cheltenham Festival)

The *koto* playing repeated notes slowly with pitch changes musically indicates the transition of time, and Hiroshige reminisces about his journey with a sketch of people travelling projected on the screen (Figure 4.9). The *koto* presents some techniques that are distinctive to the instrument, such as glissando, *yuri* (vibrato), *tsuki-iro* (quick pressing), *oshibiki* (glissando pressing), and tremolo simultaneously played with a melody (Example 4.9).

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<sup>51</sup> LeFanu believed that the opera needed a balance between light-hearted scenes and traumatic ones, and saw the opportunity for humour in the print and poem *Okitsu*. In Scene 3, singers acting as *kagokaki* (palanquin bearers) carry Mime as the *sumō* wrestler with the shout “*yoisho* [heave-ho]!”, and Mime falls down at the end; they all dry themselves around the fire.



**Figure 4.7** Hiroshige, *Okitsu* from *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido* (1833–34, Tokyo Fuji Art Museum)



**Figure 4.8** Hiroshige, *Hamamatsu* from *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido* (ca 1832–33, Minneapolis Institute of Art)



Figure 4.9 Hiroshige, Sketch of people travelling (1845–50, British Museum)

446  $\text{♩} = \text{c.60}$

Aged Hiro

Feudal lords and statesmen  
were only one part of the landscape

walking hats, no faces

Koto

independent accel. in tempo

$p$   $lh$   $lh$   $p$   $sf$   $sf$   $p$   $f$   $p$   $f$   $p$   $f$

449

Aged Hiro

Those travellers met obstacles, made choices

but followed their hearts

Koto

$p$   $f$   $p$   $f$   $f$   $p$   $f$

Example 4.9 LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 446–51 (2014, 43)

However, they are not modal except the glissando at the end of Hiroshige's monologue. Following that, there is an insert of a scene in which Kikuyo departs for a journey accompanied by the *kotsuzumi* and ascending clarinet. The scene again returns to Hiroshige accompanied by the *koto*, repeating the same phrase Kikuyo sings: "miles from anywhere". Hiroshige concludes the scene by describing the two women:

Oh, Kikuyo! You gave your heart to everyone.  
You lived for love. And Mariko, always beyond my reach.  
You chose a different path.  
For me, the road and all it offered. I was the traveller,  
I am because of that road.

(Gaffield 2014, 20)

The texts summarises Journeying (i), which sets the scene and characters, and now the story begins to develop towards the climax – Kikuyo's suicide.

The music in these first scenes demonstrates some of LeFanu's compositional strategies for bridging the sound worlds of Western and Japanese instruments by pairing instruments with similar sonic characteristics. For example, in the transition from the Prologue to Scene 1, the cor anglais plays the ascending melody in *crescendo* then repeats the same note,  $f^{\sharp}$ -sharp, in *pianississimo*, which is then taken over by the *shō*'s chord with  $f^{\sharp}$ -sharp, its lowest note. As both the cor anglais and *shō* are reed instruments, their timbres are so close when the cor anglais plays a quiet, high range note without vibrato that the changeover is seamless. Other conjoined instruments include the *koto* and the string instruments in pizzicato. In Kikuyo and Hiro's duet, these plucked instruments correspond to each other and form inserted chords together (see Example 4.6). Moreover, in Scene 3, I suggest that the string instruments moving between pizzicato and arco serve as a go-between for the *koto*'s plucking

and the *shō*'s prolonged notes. By pairing the Western and Japanese instruments based on their physical mechanism and comparable sonic attributes, a common practice in cross-cultural composition as seen in the previous chapters, LeFanu realises “a music which could [...] bring the Japanese and the Western so close together that you would not know which it was”.

Furthermore, what is notable in the Journeying (i) is the way in which the two fictional women are depicted in terms of direction and music. The contrast in character between Kikuyo and Mariko is somewhat expected: 1) in the conventional choice of the voice range – soprano for a vivacious woman and mezzo soprano for a subdued woman; 2) in their labels – “*maiko*” and “tea master”; and 3) in the design of the costumes – Kikuyo wearing her black and red *kimono*-like robe front open, seemingly implying impropriety or loose morals, and Mariko in dark green with front closed.<sup>52</sup> Musically, their singing and accompanying instruments bring out and develop the contrasting characters in their gestures and ranges, and when it comes to the unavoidable question of exoticisation of Asian female roles, it neither exoticises the two women by overtly adopting non-Western musical elements which would be a cliché of typical exoticism, nor completely dismisses Japanese aspects. The arias of both singers begin modally, which could be heard as an indication for the *exotic*, but they soon dissolve into the chromatic sound world with fractions of the modal segments that are recognisable and reappear occasionally as signposts.

In contrast, what is inherently clichéd in *Tokaido Road*, and could attract major criticism of the opera's being another *Madama Butterfly*, would be the fact that Kikuyo who is depicted as a seductive

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<sup>52</sup> The mezzo-soprano in opera has frequently been cast as nurse, confidante, or the mature married woman (Jander et al. 2001); whereas soprano often plays the dramatic heroine.

and sexually desirable woman is described as a *maiko* (apprentice *geisha*). She first flirts with the ferryman, then spends a night with Hiro, singing lines such as “take my hand, I will be anything you want” and “I long for his hands to touch my breasts”, and leaves with the pilgrim. I do not argue that the characterisation is problematic, but the labelling is. Naomi Matsumoto points out that what is unsettling for the Japanese in *Madama Butterfly* is the characterisation of the title role, Cio Cio san, as a *geisha*, because *geisha* is a much more respectable, highly skilled profession in Japan than is indicated in the opera, and is clearly different from “an unskilled busker” or “a prostitute” (2020, [4]). In reality, there are exceptional circumstances where some of those who are called *geisha* served as prostitutes, however, the term primarily indicates someone, regardless of gender, who excels at one’s skills; hence, what *geisha* or *geisha* girl means in Western contexts does not reflect the reality appropriately. In fact, one of the definitions of *geisha* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* also reflects the Western construction, “A Japanese girl whose profession is to entertain men by dancing and singing; loosely, a Japanese prostitute”, whereas *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten* (the largest Japanese dictionary) does not include any definition related to prostitution with the word *geisha*.

Sheppard states that “systems of exotic representation rely on repetition”, and “by far the most influential and long-lived narrative in the shaping of popular perceptions of Japan has been the tale of Madame Butterfly” (2019, 150).<sup>53</sup> Setting the profession of a woman, by whom the protagonist was mesmerised and who eventually committed suicide, as *maiko* in *Tokaido Road* is not just misleading but also allows the opera to reinforce the Western associations and imaginations of *geisha* – a

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<sup>53</sup> Sheppard details the narrative constructed around *Madame Butterfly*, *geisha*, and operatic and cinematic representation of them in operas, films, and theatre productions in his chapter “Two Paradigmatic Tales, between Genres and Genders” in *Extreme Exoticism* (2019, 150–96).

representation constantly repeated ever since *Madama Butterfly*. In fact, there were maids called *meshimori onna* or *meshiuri onna* (meal-serving woman) in inns in post stations on the Tokaido in Edo era, some of whom were engaged in prostitution; and Hiroshige depicts them in his print *Goyu*, and Gaffield names one of them Kikuyo in her poem of the same name (Figure 4.10).



**Figure 4.10** Hiroshige, *Goyu* from *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido* (ca 1833–34, The Metropolitan Museum)

I understand that, in the process of making the story more explicit, they labelled Kikuyo as a *maiko*, which would give an immediate characteristic association for the Western audience, as “there is certain comfort and pleasure in experiencing representational repetition” (ibid.). However, it would be much less problematic and would not even affect the story had she not been labelled as *maiko*.

The characterisation of Mariko is not as problematic but also requires some unpacking. The character Mariko seems to be derived from Hiroshige’s print *Mariko* (Figure 4.11), deduced from the

name (though the print *Mariko* simply refers to the name of post station Mariko in Shizuoka prefecture) and the fact that the print is projected in her focal scene (Scene 11).<sup>54</sup>



**Figure 4.11** Hiroshige, *Mariko* from *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido* (ca 1832–33, Minneapolis Institute of Art)

In the print, a woman carries her baby on her back and serves the house’s specialty, grated yum soup [*tororo jiru*] in a teahouse, to two male customers in the teahouse (*chaya*), portraying a scene from the famous novel of the time, *Hizakurige*.<sup>55</sup> Teahouses (*chaya*) in post stations were open-shed houses where travelers could stop for a quick tea and light refreshment “while a few words of gossip or innocent banter are exchanged with [one’s] hostess or her attendant smiling damsels” (Chamberlain

<sup>54</sup> It seems quite natural to associate the particular name of the place with a female name because a name ending with *ko* is very common, except that it is only used for commoners’ names since around 1900.

<sup>55</sup> In *Hizakurige*, the two main characters, Yajirobeē and Kitahachi, ordered the soup in a tea house where there was a woman with a baby. The tea house still exists in Mariko, Shizuoka.

[1890] 1905, 453), whereas, in Gaffield's poem, Hiro seems to receive a formal tea ceremony which is normally held in a teahouse (*chashitsu* – tea room).<sup>56</sup> Thus, the character is transformed from a hostess in a teahouse to a “tea master” which suggests a high social standing. These female characters are fictional, hence allow for freedom of imagination. However, as long as they are based on those who were in Hiroshige's prints and the audience is led to make the association, it would be important to be mindful of these historical and cultural details.

### Journeying (ii)

Journeying (ii), Scene 6–8, depicts a sequence of nightmares that evolves around the River, foreboding an earthquake and flood, and then Kikuyo's suicide. LeFanu believed rivers and a sense of river were actually much more important than the path itself in Hiroshige's prints, thought “a river had to run through the score” and, with Gaffield, decided there would be instruments representing a river but also singers coming together like a little consort and create “sheer beautiful words [...] for a river” (Guildhall School 2016b). Gaffield considers the River as a fifth character in the opera (Gaffield 2016, 22). The intention is also expressed in the libretto, direction, music, and visual presentation of the stage. The importance of rivers naturally reminds one of *Curlew River*. The most direct representation of the River in *Tokaido Road* are the Scenes 6 and 8 in which singers' chant as “Voice of the River” and Mime enacts and speaks as the River.

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<sup>56</sup> The poem illustrates the serving of tea as: “[...] A wooden well, / bamboo lid, tabi slide / across tatami, water / simmers, tap / of tea spoon, whisking. / Hiro tastes the tea with his ears, / Mariko enjoys the privilege / of service. *The tea is very nice,* / he wipes the lip of his cup once / with two fingers, / places it upside down” (Gaffield 2011, 22).

Scene 8, the only scene in the opera in which all the players and singers play together, begins with a two-minute-long instrumental section. Mime vigorously enacts the River with the images of storm and whirlpool projected on the screen, and eventually catches Kikuyo. The basic formation of the instrumental section is thus: the oboe plays the expressive melody in the high range, which is responded to by the *shō* that carries a single-note phrase; the bass clarinet provides countermelodies to the oboe and an understructure that is unusually low in range in the opera; and the cello and viola fill the middle range with constantly changing harmony and dynamics (Example 4.10) (The *koto* part is notated in the score but the *koto* player does not play the part and tunes the instrument instead).<sup>57</sup>

The musical score for Example 4.10, LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 765-68, is presented in a multi-staff format. The instruments are Sho, Koro, Ob., Bass Clar., Vla., and Vc. The Sho part is a single-note melody in the high range. The Koro part consists of triplets. The Ob. part is a melodic line in the high range. The Bass Clar. part is a low-range counter-melody. The Vla. and Vc. parts provide harmonic support in the middle range. Dynamics range from *p* to *ppp*.

**Example 4.10** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 765–68 (2014, 71)

<sup>57</sup> I suggest that it was a decision made during the rehearsal. The *koto* player needs to change the tuning of the instrument to which she/he comes back after playing the other instrument for Scene 9. The *shō*, in the performance, comes in one bar behind with the phrase in the bar 776, and seems to play slightly different from what is notated until the bar 781.

The noticeable segments that recur across instruments are the pitch slide, either with the glissando or with microtones, slurred two notes whose intervals are the major or minor second. At one point, Kikuyo is injured by Mime and falls on the stage. The density and dynamics of the music are intensified, and it peaks at the bar 791 where all the instruments are in their high range and accented in *fortissimo*; the cello and viola forms rapidly changing cluster chords (Example 4.11).

**Broadly** ♩ = 72-80

791

Mime     The mime effects Kikuyo's disfigurement.

           Kikuyo is injured and disfigured

Sho

Koto

Ob.

Bass  
Clar

Vla

Vc

**Example 4.11** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 791–93 (2014, 76)

It is indeed a replication of the very beginning of the opera (see Example 4.1) in its harmony and gestures, though the atmosphere differs considerably. The music retains its tension with strong

prolonged notes of the *shō* that respond to the string instruments changing their harmony with wide-range pitch slides, and with quick ascending and descending phrases of the oboe and clarinet.

When the instruments reach the perfect fifth, *c*-sharp and *g*-sharp, in *fortissimo* (a), Mariko and Hiro sing “[t]ide flow! [i]t’s time” as Voice of the River (b) and form *c*-sharp major triad, which gives the impression of strong conclusive statements (Example 4.12).

**Faster** (♩ = c. 108)

801

Mar. *ff* Tide flow! It's time,

Hiro. *ff* Tide flow! It's time,

Mime The mime enacts the river *spoken* I am a river I remember

Sho *f* *mp* *ff*

Koto *ff* *f*

Ob. *f* *ff*

Bass Clar. *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

**Example 4.12** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 801–6 (2014, 79)

The instruments first echo Voice of the River, then diverge: the *shō* now plays an *aitake* chord, the cello and viola develop the harmony with microtones and glissandi, and the bass clarinet carries its own metre that divides a bar into  $\frac{5}{6}$  while other instruments are in  $\frac{3}{4}$  (Example 4.13).

807

Mar. *sfp* *f* *f*

Hiro. *sfp* *f* *f*

Mime *I will take you away / To the blue-green waters / Of Suruga Bay.*

Sho

Koto *mf*

Ob. *p* *f*

Bass Clar. *mp* *f*

Vla. *fp* *f* *fp* *f*

Vc. *f* *fp* *f* *fp*

**Example 4.13** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 807–11 (2014, 80)

Mime and Voice of the River repeat the texts from Scene 7, speaking and singing:

I am a river, I remember.  
 Lose your footing now and you are mine.  
 I will take you away.

[...]

Who's this moving towards me?

(Gaffield 2014, 24)

During the last sentence, Mime approaches Kikuyo and gestures to scoop up water from the River to show Kikuyo the reflection of her face, and Kikuyo takes over the Voice of the River repeatedly asking “[w]ho’s this?” in fright. Kikuyo is shocked by her disfigured face and continues “[a]h, I am no longer the woman they loved”, while Voice of the River and Mime chorus to tempt her to come into the River: “So easy to sink down until your last breath glimmers”. The ensemble is reduced to the bass clarinet and cello in the low range towards the end; Voice of the River keeps singing but fades away; and Kikuyo goes into the River, leaving the words “*osoroshii* [terrifying]!” and “[l]ie down...at last...” with Mime taking her hand. After everything disappears, the eerie sound of the waterphone lingers on.<sup>58</sup>

The instrumental parts of Scene 8 demonstrate the intention and ability of LeFanu to fluently integrate Japanese instruments with Western instruments to intensify the drama. For example, the *shō*, whose sonic and gestural particularity is emphasised in previous scenes, provides both a countermelody of the woodwind instruments and harmony paired with the cello and viola in Scene 8. The *koto*, on the other hand, would have been more decorative here with sporadic short phrases and glissandi, had it been played.

### Reflecting/climax

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<sup>58</sup> The waterphone, invented in 1967, consists of a stainless-steel bowl resonator containing water, the dome-shaped top of which opens into a vertical unstopped, cylindrical tube that serves as a handle, and between 25 and 55 nearly vertical bronze rods attached around the edge of the resonator, which are tuned in equal or unequal twelve-note or microtonal systems (Davies and Libin 2011). In this opera, it is played by the viola player, rubbed by a bow.

Scene 9 opens with a long and desultory spoken monologue of Hiroshige preceded by the *koto*. The *koto* player has moved to the other *koto* tuned differently from the previous scenes, and slowly and quietly emerges from the sound of waterphone before Hiroshige starts his soliloquy. He reflects how Hiro mourned Kikuyo and despaired of painting, and grieves for all who died in the famine, accompanied by the *koto*. The dissonant and chromatic harmony that the *koto* creates with the uncustomary tuning, such as a gesture with four perfect-fourth chords (a) (Example 4.14), changes the harmonic field from previous scenes as LeFanu intended, and the unsettling sound of the percussion, the waterphone and skull, in addition to the *koto*, portrays the sombre state of Hiroshige/Hiro.

888

Aged Hiro

My work, my pictures meant nothing now

I put down my brush.

So much had gone

Koto

*p*

*pp*

*mp*

*gliss.*

3

3

**Example 4.14** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 888–92 (2014, 91)

After the pondering, a new sound unfolds for the scene in which Hiro picks the brush again as he “realises the power of his art to bear witness” – the theme of the opera LeFanu wanted to convey. The music is suddenly laid out by the moving *koto*, the cello’s expressive melody in its high range, and quickly permeating harmony by the rest of the ensemble (Example 4.15). It also represents the characteristics of the sound world that is unique to *Tokaido Road*. This would be an example where Japanese and Western instruments are successfully brought “so close together that you would not know



layer with the characters and moods on the surface which the audience can be entertained by and empathise with, and a more serious layer underneath which the audience can bring home and think about”. This scene adds the latter to the opera. As mentioned earlier, LeFanu wanted to incorporate the print *Taira no Kiyomori’s Spectral Vision*, because, she thought, it expresses Hiroshige’s commitment to bear witness and convey people about famine against the censorship of the government. In other words, the opera let the idolised Hiroshige carry the imagined ethos.

### Journeying (iii)

In Journeying (iii), Scene 10–12, Hiro continues to travel on the Tokaido, visits Mariko on his way, and, at the end, “all reach their destination” (Gaffield 2014, 6). Scene 10 represents a new beginning, initiated by slowly fading-in *shō*’s *aitake* chords as if the curtain opens again. The quiet and static characteristics of the *shō* bring a calm and serene atmosphere, and the following non-*aitake* major chords that are harmonically more familiar to Western ears offer the audience a sense of comfort after the dramatic and dissonant scenes. The *shō* then plays slow arpeggio-like solo melodies which are very unusual for the instrument, accompanied by the rainstick and the finger pattering on the viola and cello, which represent the rain in the print (Example 4.16) (the *koto* player returns to the first instrument that is now tuned differently and checks the tuning here, which adds some extra background harmony to the *shō*’s melody).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The middle of the *shō*’s long solo, from bar 988 to 995, was cut for the production.

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Proj., Sho, Ob., Vla, and Vc. The Sho part is in 6/8 time and features a melodic line with dynamics *mp*, *p*, and *f*. The Ob., Vla, and Vc parts are marked with 'fingers pattering, anywhere on instrument (raindrops)' and 'continuous but irregular'.

**Example 4.16** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 982–87 (2014, 108)

After a *shō*'s chord in fermata, the music then suddenly is spurred on by the bright bell tree, glass chimes, and ascending clarinet. Hiro starts singing, accompanied by the *shō* – playing non-*aitake* chords and melodies – and the animated Western instruments. What is musically intriguing about this section is that the *shō* is in focus, though not in a way that emphasises its Japaneseness with its *aitake* chords or conventional gestures, but both as a solo and melodic and harmonic instrument in the ensemble. It is integrated in the ensemble in neither specifically Japanese nor Western idioms. This is also the case when the *koto* comes in in the next part of the scene, the transition to Scene 11, another completely different sound world.

After the *shō* disappears and Hiro stops his monologue, the *koto* enters with a very *koto*-like gesture as in the Prologue, despite the fact that the instrument is now tuned in a diatonic scale, which is emphasised by the repeated glissandi. After that, the moving elements shift to the oboe and clarinet, then the cello and viola, playing descending phrases intertwining each other. The *koto* holds prolonged

notes in tremolo and plays the fragment of a melody from the next scene in the background, and at the end, is left in solo with melodies that are not in a familiar idiom but are gesturally and sonically very *koto*-like.

Scene 11 depicts Mariko who has now established herself in a new tea house with a baby. The first part of the scene is musically unique and isolated in this opera because of *Edo Lullaby* [*Edo komori uta*], an actual Japanese lullaby, that LeFanu incorporates. Because of the tune, LeFanu notes, this scene provides “a moment of relief and tenderness” after the trauma of Kikuyo’s death and Hiroshige’s grief. Clearly, no matter how the lullaby is incorporated musically, the concept of a baby and a mother who waits for the baby’s father cannot but remind one of *Madama Butterfly*; in fact, Japanese lullabies, or imagined Japanese lullabies, are other sought-after things Japanese in musical exoticism (Sheppard 2019, 61).<sup>60</sup>

LeFanu recounts that Gaffield was very keen that they would have a real lullaby in this scene, and a Japanese person who supported the project introduced “the traditional lullaby that everyone in Japan would know”. Some think *Edo Lullaby* originated in Okazaki and brought to Edo by Ieyasu Tokugawa when he moved to Edo; others consider it to have started in Edo and that it was disseminated to other districts by people travelling. Either way, this lullaby seems to be a good fit for this opera as it is from the Edo period, and these theories suggest that it also *travelled* the Tokaido. When LeFanu listened to the song on YouTube with a link sent to her, she “found it funny as it did not sound

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<sup>60</sup> Sheppard states, in the chapter on Tin Pan Alley songs, that “the American experience of musical representations of Japan can be said to have begun at the cradle”, referring to Eugene Field’s poem, the most successful version of “Japanese Lullaby” to which many composers write music (Sheppard 2019, 61).

traditional at all”: it was accompanied by the piano in nineteenth-century Western style.<sup>61</sup> She thought that she could use the tune and develop it with the *koto* and plucked viola to create a harmonic field that is not like nineteenth-century Western music. In a similar way, Gaffield had her own view of how she wanted to use the original texts and then put them into her own words. Indeed, the way in which LeFanu and Gaffield incorporate *Edo Lullaby* in this scene demonstrates the process of how they adopt things Japanese in the poems and music. They neither simply juxtapose glimpses of things from two cultures by directly quoting something Japanese in the Western context, like Holst did in his *Japanese Suite* in which he used the same lullaby, nor deconstruct both and create something completely new. Instead, they take the essence of both and create something new without losing the characteristics of the original.

After the tonal glissando of the *koto*, Scene 11 begins with the musical gesture of Mariko played by the viola’s pizzicato. The *Edo Lullaby* LeFanu adopts, although there are many variants, is in an *in* scale – one of the pentatonic scales that are typical to Japanese tunes.<sup>62</sup> Because of the idiosyncrasy and explicitness of the melody, even if one does not know the tune, it would immediately be recognisable as a reference to something Japanese, especially with the sonic characteristics of the *koto* and the Japanese texts in Mariko’s singing. When the first line is played by the *koto* to the viola’s accompaniment, it enters the lullaby section that is structurally in ABA'B' form, consisting of the

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<sup>61</sup> *Edo Lullaby* was, as many other lullabies, originally unaccompanied. However, it had a piano accompaniment in the score when it was printed in the national music textbook in 1941, and it came with a SP record in which the lullaby was sung by a soprano singer with an orchestra accompaniment (Suzuki 2010, 16–27). This reflects the standardisation and Westernisation of folk tunes at that time.

<sup>62</sup> There were many variants of the lullaby that differ in melody, metre, rhythm, and lyrics. LeFanu used the variant that has minor intervals in the scale. Other variants are mostly in a *yo* scale which does not have minor intervals.

arrangement of the lullaby (A) with the elements that are close to the original, and the development section (B) whose melody, lyrics, and harmony depart from the original context. When looking at A'B' which are structurally very similar to AB, but harmonically and melodically more developed, A' opens with introductory phrase played by the *koto* and Mariko starts singing the lullaby (Example 4.17):

*Nen, nen, ne*  
Sleep my baby  
*Nen nen ne*  
*Shizukani, shizukani*

(Gaffield 2014, 28)

The melody here is very close to the original tune (the second part of the first line is played by the *koto*). The basic metre is in  $\frac{4}{4}$ , while the rhythm is slightly modified with the insertion of irregular metres. The viola's arpeggio-like phrases that consist of minor triads, and the *koto*'s modal harmony that accompanies Mariko, provide harmonic stability. The texts are by Gaffield, but “*nen, nen, ne*” is derived from the beginning of the original tune “*nen nen korori yo*”, a phrase that is used to lull a child, and the verse captures the essence of the original song. The music then deviates from the *Edo Lullaby* with the ascending *koto* melody that opens B'.

At the beginning of B' (see Example 4.17), the climax of the section, the melody departs from the Japanese mode and the viola's baseline no longer lingers around triads, while the *koto*'s harmony stays in the lullaby's mode. The dominant metre here is  $\frac{9}{8}$ , and it gives a sense of moving with smooth and fluent English lyrics in quavers and the cyclic segments of the viola and sung texts. Subsequently, the song ends in the mood that reflects that of the lullaby with the repetition of “*shizukani*”, but in a harmonically different mood.

**primo tempo** (♩ = c. 104) (2+2+3)

1083 *p mezza voce*

Mar. *A'* road. Nen, nen, ne, Sleep my ba - by Sleep

Koto *p* *accompanying voice*

Vla *p* *accompanying koto* *accompanying voice*

1088 *mp* *p*

Mar. ba - by Nen, nen, ne\_ shi\_ zu - ka, shi\_ zu - ka - ni.

Koto

Vla

1093 (3+2) ♩ = c.72 *poco f* *meno f*

Mar. *B'* Where\_ did my ba - by's fa - ther go?\_ He's tra - vell - ing, tra - vell - ing, tra - vell - ing

Koto *f* *meno f*

Vla *mp* *poco f* *insistent*

**Example 4.17** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 1083–109 (2014, 120)

The scene then enters a duet of Mariko and Hiro, that is enriched by the colourful and animated instrumental accompaniment, initiated by the buoyant outset where the music is built up from the repeated minor second in demisemi-quavers (a) – the segment from the very beginning of the opera; however, the minor second is combined with a major-third counter-melody here (b), and it generates a sense of major chords (Example 4.18).

Flowing ♩ = c.56

1110

Mar. *f* Hi - ro!

Hiro. *f* Ma - ri - ko! the child!

Hiro comes to greet Mariko

Ob. *f* *fp*

Clar. *f* *fp*

Vla. *f* *fp*

Vc. *f* *fp*

**Example 4.18** LeFanu, *Tokaido Road*, bars 1110–113 (2014, 122)

After a tender greeting, Hiro proudly sings the phrase starting with “I am the father” from the Prologue. Mariko then asks Hiro to stay with them in the tea house; Hiro in response asks Mariko to come with him as he has “so much [...] to paint”. Hiro’s part is supported by the expressive leaping cello and *koto*, and Mariko’s part is accompanied by the phrases developed from Mariko’s motif in the viola and cello.

After Mariko tells Hiro that he must go to “the city of dreams” alone, the dramatic emotional exchanges culminate with Hiro urging Mariko to come with him. All the instruments (except the *shō*) create tumultuous music. Mariko says “no” and states that “[i]t is the nature of the river to divide” – another reference to a river. The *shō* changes the mood by coming in with *aitake* chords accompanied by the *koto*, transforming the sound world to one that “emphasises the different between the Japanese and the Western” as indicated by the statement of Mariko, and then the viola plays a solo developed

from the motif. Mariko and Hiro sit together, letting themselves “linger a while in the beauty of fleeting things”, and Mariko serves Hiro sake.<sup>63</sup> The string instruments and the *koto* then generate music for them to depart; Mariko bows to Hiro and he travels on. After Hiro reached Kyoto (Scene 11), Scene 12 concludes the opera with the Mime as Poet in today’s Kyoto with music reflecting that of the Prologue.

The analysis demonstrates the way in which different art forms – music, drama, mime, and poetry – are incorporated and interconnected in *Tokaido Road*, and that the music is at the centre of their evolvment. The sense of a coherent narrative they set as a foundation of the opera is attained by the well-structured music that flows within and between scenes, with melodic gestures and musical attributes that characterise ideas and the characters. When “the balance between the West and East” is concerned, what is visually presented on the stage is incontrovertibly the depiction of an imagined Edo Japan (and very briefly of modern Japan); in his review, Simon Cunnings points out that the presentation of the opera “did not feel that removed from a kind of stylized temple setup” (2014). The cast members are not Japanese (I will briefly come back to discussions on issues around race in operas’ casting shortly), and some visual components, such as the costumes, are not designed to look how they exactly were, but it is evident that they act out Japanese characters in Japan, and there are neither cultural mix-ups with other non-Western cultures – typical of Orientalist representations – nor novel interpretations and twists.

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<sup>63</sup> In the score, it is instructed that “Mariko pours Hiro sake”, but in the production Mariko just hands a cup to Hiro. I wonder if the director or choreographer intentionally avoids a stereotypical image that is often associated with Japanese women.

Romano explains this standpoint as their enjoying Japan like “the curious tourist”, and they share with Britten “a tourist’s fascination with Japanese culture and a desire to get beyond the merely superficial *Japonaiserie*” (Romano 2016, 41–42). While Britten and Goehr translated Japanese stories into what is more sympathetic to them in their operas in order to avoid pastiche or “cultural tourism”, *Tokaido Road* consciously retains the tourists’ fascination, keeping the stance as *outsider*, and produce the stage to “take the audience to Edo Japan” depicted in and beyond Hiroshige’s prints. In its direction, the historical and cultural spaces presented in the opera are undeniably imagined nineteenth-century Japan. On the other hand, this is not the case in what we hear. The music, including the texts, do not, and do not intend to, represent Edo Japan explicitly, hence making the opera more nuanced and complex; Japan and Hiroshige’s prints are where it began but was not the end. It is the music that makes the discussion of “a place in-between” possible as it takes the story away from the fixed historical and cultural space.

Romano explains, when composers write for Okeanos, some “[treat] the Japanese sounds rather like Western ones, enjoying new flavours in a familiar dish”, and the others aim at “integration and blend” (Romano 2016, 37), both of which reflect the common practices of compositions for culturally mixed ensembles. The former makes instruments from one culture come close to those from the other; the latter considers all the instruments as culturally neutral and equal contributors to a sonic outcome. In relation to the former, there was a review that described the Japanese instruments in *Tokaido Road* “colouring the sound-world quite discreetly” (Clements 2014), which is not what my analysis suggests LeFanu does. The Japanese instruments are used not as decorative elements to *flavour* the music, but

rather as the vehicle to build the drama and move the story forward as much as the Western instruments do. Her music does not fall into the latter category to aim for integration and blend either.

In *Tokaido Road*, both Japanese and Western instruments overall maintain their inherent sonic and idiomatic characteristics, and are combined in the music that moves between modal and chromatic with some tonal allusions – the sound worlds that seem to be agreeable to all the instruments (though the chromatic aspects pose technical challenges to the *koto* player). The music does not stay in one place but keeps moving and presents the different shades of cultural balancing between musical language of LeFanu, and musical attributes and contexts of the Japanese and Western instruments. There is the presence of things Japanese – the “two instruments, so instantly evocative of place and tradition” (Cummings 2014) – but, musically, they are subtly embedded. In this regard, it is true that “they have created a new place – not Western, not Eastern, but somewhere unique to the story” in *Tokaido Road*. LeFanu achieves this not by incorporating what was foreign to her in her music but by letting it broaden her musical language to accommodate them. The mutuality that has been observed in the creative process and the end product is, I suggest, what makes such cross-cultural composition meaningful and worth attempting for composers, creators, and performers.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored Okeanos’ chamber opera, *Tokaido Road*, not just as a work of art but also as a socio-cultural project, from its prehistory to production. When considering the opera as an artwork, the story and direction evolve around imagined Edo Japan, while the music and texts certainly explore the balance between the past and present, and between two cultures; hence, I concluded that the opera

as a whole offers an experience that cannot be culturally pinned down, but successfully suggests somewhere between Japan and the West. At the same time, what has been discussed in the chapter raises questions about what defines the West and Japan socially, culturally, and musically, and whether it is meaningful to constantly discuss it as polarities. For example, when considering the opera as a project with people who are involved, this becomes more complicated. The project team appears to be mainly a mix of British and Japanese when the production is advertised as “a bridge between two cultures”; however, “British” includes two musicians who play Japanese instruments and are trained in Japan; the poet, who was born in the US, lived in Japan and now lives in England; “Japanese” are those who live in the UK; to name a few examples of the complexity. This opera is cross-cultural not in the sense that they have a mix of people *from* two cultures, but rather in a sense that every person has different multiculturality *within* them. Japan and the West are not polarities but cultural spheres within and between which people move both as insiders and outsiders, which sometimes does not correspond to where they are from or how they look. Daniel Harding, the media consultant of the opera, states that “exploring the intersection between Western and non-Western culture is a key concept for *Tokaido Road*” (2014a), and I suggest that it rather creates a space where a number of roads, which do not fall into the binary central and peripheral, meet and depart for different directions.

When asked if she saw *Okeanos* as a “Japanese-Western ensemble”, as it is sometimes described, Holding answered that she “does not really think of it as those polarities” and that “so many years ago you have one tradition, and you stay in that tradition, but now it is much more egalitarian[, and] you can do lots of different things” (Holding 2019). Williams, the baritone who played Hiro/Hiroshige, also states, “this opera [...] is a reflection of the increasing diversity in the culture of

the United Kingdom, and many other parts of the world today” (Romano 2015c). While suggesting that things are egalitarian might be an overstatement, and such comfortable and idealistic views tend to be condemned in current political climate, these perspectives represent certain multicultural aspects of art and music industries and artistic collaborations in our time.

Lastly, I return to the question I asked in the introduction: what it means for a British opera to depict Edo Japan in the twenty-first century. Has it moved on from nineteenth-century Orientalist operas, such as *Madama Butterfly*? I suggest the answer is yes. I commented earlier on the labelling of Kikuyo as *geisha* and how it could be an issue with the reinforcement of typical exotic representations; if one actively searches for such *crimes* through a particular lens, they will find several more which I have indicated as potential readings throughout the chapter. However, when the opera as a whole is considered, from my perspective, there are no extreme or stereotypical exoticisations of things Japanese or Orientalist representations that can be seen in many opera productions and elsewhere. There are representations of the exotic in this opera, as it is intended, but they are essentially different from a typical exoticisation or Orientalisation; the exotic here means something foreign, and most certainly many Japanese people also exoticise Edo Japan and romanticise the Tokaido and the idea of journey. In a way, *Tokaido Road* was an extremely courageous attempt to pursue a project that depicts Japan with mostly non-Japanese creators and performers in the twenty-first century when such things can be easily criticised as cultural appropriation and discussed in the context of political correctness, both of which have become one of the most sensitive issues in opera productions. To avoid the risk, for example, some recent productions of nineteenth-century operas completely remove exotic or Orientalist representations from its directions. There are also discussions regarding who could play

which characters. Is it more appropriate if Japanese characters are played by Japanese singers? Or is it problematic because, in reverse, it would take away freedom from non-white classically trained singers to represent white characters in operas? If so, how should we think about three British singers playing Japanese roles in *Tokaido Road*?

It is important that these issues are repeatedly discussed and reflected in the contemporary productions, however, at the same time, reproducing the existing operas by eliminating their problematic aspects would neither represent the essence of the operas nor teach history correctly. This is why new operas that reflect our time with cultural sensibility and invite new conversations are needed. *Tokaido Road* on the surface seems to be another opera that depicts an exotic Japan, however, it is in fact a carefully balanced and culturally nuanced opera that in certain ways represents the world we live in. For example, Mime framing the opera as modern-day Poet was, despite the controversy about whether it is necessary or not, an effective reminder that what is depicted in the opera is not what Japan is but what an imagined Japan was – avoiding another typical instance of Orientalism, the illusory mixing of the past with the present of a culture. LeFanu once explained that one of her works, *Anti-World*, is “about barriers - the invisible, irrational barriers which we imagine between people; and about freedom - or the way we restrict freedom in order to ‘control’ each other” (LeFanu 1972). This statement happens to convey a message similar to Denyer’s view quoted at the end of Chapter 2. I hope that such an opera as *Tokaido Road* becomes a starting point to discuss what is possible, to go beyond “the barriers” that we somehow enforce upon ourselves.

## Conclusion

This thesis has examined post-1945 British musical representations of Japan, focusing on four composers: Alexander Goehr, Frank Denyer, Roger Marsh, and Nicola LeFanu. By setting Benjamin Britten's *Curlew River* as a starting point, this study has traced how British composers' engagement with things Japanese has transformed over the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Through detailed case studies, this research has illuminated the processes underlying cross-cultural composition, from initial inspiration to final realisation.

Central to this investigation were two questions: 1) why, how, and under what circumstances these composers have adopted cross-cultural practices; and 2) how shifting historical conditions and access to things Japanese have shaped their artistic approaches. Over four thematic chapters, the thesis provides contextualised readings of cross-cultural musical creation that go beyond notions of musical exoticism or Orientalism, proposing alternative readings, grounded in the principles of cross-cultural interpenetration, interconnectedness, and interaction. These perspectives align with recent scholarship offering more culturally specific interpretations of creative representations within a global context.

This research has yielded several findings. Firstly, it demonstrated that these composers' works constitute individual responses to the historical, social, and political moment in which they lived and created. Their engagement with things Japanese was not merely aesthetic but deeply intertwined with broader cultural currents and personal experiences. The insights drawn from the interviews corroborate the complexities of cross-cultural composition, as well as underscoring the

importance of considering the personal experiences and contexts that inform these creative processes. Secondly, the study has highlighted the crucial role of cultural intermediaries – from exhibitions and performances to recordings and academic institutions – in shaping composers’ perceptions and access to things Japanese. These structurally engineered perceptions often mediated composers’ understanding and representations of another culture.

Moreover, this thesis has uncovered a set of multi-layered relations around cross-cultural musical practices, with each chapter revealing a number of different perspectives. The deeply researched, collaborative approaches of the composers reflect not only changing artistic priorities but also broader transformations in global cultural exchange in the latter half of the twentieth century and beyond. By both considering history as a series of events that construct cultural and social meaning, and recognising the significance of cross-cultural contacts between individuals, this study has offered fresh perspectives on enduring questions surrounding musical exoticism and the power of cross-cultural artistic engagement.

### **Key themes and findings**

Chapter 1 reveals a clear evolution in how British composers approached things Japanese over time. Britten’s engagement with Japan, while ground-breaking, first exhibited a somewhat touristic quality; his 1956 trip to Japan was relatively brief and fully curated under the scheme of cultural diplomacy, though profoundly influential on his works. In contrast, Goehr’s approach represents a significant shift towards deeper immersion. His two-month stay in Japan in 1968 allowed for more hands-on engagement with *noh* and Japanese culture, reflected in the integration of Japanese

elements in his music. This exemplifies a growing trend among composers to seek more substantive, long-term engagement with other culture(s), fostering new modes of cross-cultural compositions of today.

Later case studies also show an emphasis on research and collaboration. Denyer's decades-long partnership with *shakuhachi* player Yoshikazu Iwamoto, and Marsh's extensive study of various Japanese musical forms, demonstrate a commitment to understanding and engaging with Japanese culture that goes far beyond surface-level appropriation. The generational transition from Britten to post-war composers reflects broader changes in artistic and academic approaches to cross-cultural subjects, partly influenced by the composers' affiliations with academic institutions encouraging interdisciplinary approaches and collaborations, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s.

The changing approaches of these composers mirror dramatic shifts in British perceptions of Japan in the post-war period. Lingering wartime animosities gradually gave way to renewed curiosity and cultural exchange, as explored in Chapter 1. While British ideas of Japan in the pre-WWII period mostly took shape through limited artifacts and mediated narratives, post-war impressions centred around Japanese-curated representations tailored for export. Japan's efforts to restore its international reputation through cultural diplomacy, particularly through the promotion of traditional art forms, resonated with the Western longings for *Old Japan* and played a crucial role in reshaping British ideas of Japan. By the 1980s, these strategically filtered cultural exports commingled with views of Japan as an ascendant economic juggernaut and high-tech innovator. The resulting fusion of carefully preserved tradition with globalised futurism and material success distinguished Japan in

the contemporary Western imaginations, though the interests of many composers continued to develop around the traditional parts of the culture.

Technological advancements significantly influenced these changing perceptions and compositional practices. The rise of commercial air travel made direct experiences of Japan more accessible to British composers. Equally important was the increasing availability of resources and a surge in Japanese cultural presence in the UK, from recordings of Japanese music and theatrical performances to musicians trained in Japanese traditions. This increased exposure provided rich soil for creative inspiration and cross-cultural exploration, and allowed composers to engage more deeply and consistently with things Japanese, even without traveling to Japan (as proved by the fact that Goehr was the only one who went to Japan to study extensively among the four composers).

While each composer's journey was unique, several common motivations and inspirations emerged across the case studies. Personal curiosity and aesthetic interests often served as initial driving forces; Japanese culture offered a fascinating alternative to Western artistic traditions, providing new perspectives on form, sound, and expression. A recurring theme was the desire to expand musical language and techniques, and Japanese musical and theatrical forms, with their distinctive timbres, rhythms, structures, and aesthetics, provided fertile ground for compositional experimentation. *Noh* theatre, in particular, proved to be a rich source of inspiration, influencing not only musical elements but also broader approaches to drama and stagecraft. Goehr's and Marsh's engagement with *noh*, for instance, greatly influenced their approach to theatrical and musical gesture, extending beyond their explicitly Japan-inspired works. *Gagaku* also featured prominently, with its unique instrumental timbres and harmonic concepts inspiring composers.

The particular fascination with *noh* can be traced back to British images of Japan constructed by intellectuals in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, though Britten's *Curlew River* was a more immediate influence for the generation of composers studied in this thesis. As the work is repeatedly mentioned as one of initial encounters with things Japanese, it is worth considering what might have transpired without it. Japan attracted the attention of Western modernist composers after the 1950s, and *Curlew River* was, in a way, merely one of many Japan-inspired works written by acclaimed composers at that time. Indeed, Goehr's engagement with Japanese culture seemed to be independent from Britten, and Denyer's involvement and LeFanu's interest (in the Far East in her case) were cultivated in the US. While initial interests are given some weight in musical exoticism studies, motivations are often generated by a series of chance encounters, and Anglo-Japanese cross-cultural composition would likely have developed without *Curlew River*. Nevertheless, as Marsh states that "when one considers the burgeoning of a British school of music theatre [...] from the late sixties onwards, one can see how influential the Britten model may have been" (Marsh 1997), I argue that the development of the compositional practices around *noh* and music theatre still owes much to Britten's seminal piece.

Reflecting on themes in the chapters, the Denyer-Iwamoto collaboration stands out as an exemplar of productive cross-cultural musical interaction. Their partnership, spanning nearly three decades, transcended simple composer-performer dynamics to become a true meeting of musical minds. This collaboration allowed for a deep exploration of the *shakuhachi*'s possibilities, pushing the boundaries of both contemporary composition and traditional performance practices. Moreover, their partnership highlights the crucial importance of individual relationships and cultural

backgrounds in cross-cultural composition. Both brought their unique musical heritages and personal experiences to the collaboration, creating a rich dialogue that transcended simplistic notions of ‘East meets West’. Their work together exemplifies how cross-cultural composition at its best can be a process of mutual learning and artistic growth.

Central to their collaboration, and indeed to many of the cross-cultural compositions examined in this thesis, was a constant negotiation between tradition and innovation. Denyer’s works for *shakuhachi* sought to honour the instrument’s rich heritage while exploring new sonic territories. This delicate balance between appreciating tradition and pushing boundaries emerges as a key challenge and opportunity in cross-cultural composition.

Marsh’s approach, characterised by deep, scholarly engagement with Japanese musical forms, exemplifies the concept of research-led composition that emerged as an important theme throughout this study. Marsh’s practice goes beyond mere inspiration, involving rigorous study of Japanese musical traditions that then informs his compositional process. His work demonstrates a seamless integration of scholarly and artistic investigations, adding layers of meaning to the resulting compositions, while also contributing to broader academic and musical understandings of these traditions. The educational and institutional aspects of research-led composition also came to the fore in Marsh’s case. His position within academia allowed for sustained engagement with things Japanese, often intertwining his teaching, research, and composition. This underscores the important role that academic institutions can play in fostering cross-cultural musical exploration.

A key finding of this thesis has been the need to move beyond simple East-West binaries when discussing cross-cultural composition. The works studied demonstrate approaches to Japanese

culture that are far more nuanced than earlier examples of musical exoticism, challenging us to develop more sophisticated frameworks for understanding cultural crossing in music. The case studies in Chapters 2 and 4 highlight the complex, multi-layered cultural identities of artists engaged in cross-cultural collaborations. Denyer's statement about finding "a voice in an age of migration" encapsulates a growing recognition among composers of the multi-layered nature of cultural identity. This perspective acknowledges that both composers and the cultures they engage with are dynamic and multifaceted, rather than fixed and monolithic.

Ethical considerations in cross-cultural composition also emerged as a major theme, particularly in more recent works. LeFanu's *Tokaido Road*, for instance, musically demonstrates a heightened awareness of the potential pitfalls of cultural representation, carefully balancing Japanese inspiration with contemporary Western musical language. This growing ethical consciousness reflects broader societal discussions about cultural appropriation.

The transformation from Britten's *Curlew River* to LeFanu's *Tokaido Road* charts not just a change in compositional approaches, but also a shift in how composers conceptualise their relationship to other cultures. There is a move from viewing things Japanese as a source of exotic inspiration to engaging with these *things* as fragments of a complex, living tradition worthy of substantive study. This shift urges us to reconsider traditional notions of musical exoticism.

### **Theoretical and methodological reflections**

This study has suggested significant limitations in applying traditional theoretical frameworks, including Orientalism, exoticism, and post-colonialism, to contemporary cross-cultural

compositional practices. While these concepts remain valuable for understanding historical representations of non-Western cultures in Western music, they prove inadequate for capturing the approaches of post-war British composers to things Japanese. The work of composers like Goehr, Denyer, Marsh, and LeFanu demonstrates a level of cultural engagement that goes far beyond the superficial borrowing or stereotypical representations often associated with musical exoticism. Their compositions reflect sustained study, collaboration, and a genuine attempt to understand and engage with things Japanese on their own terms. This calls for more nuanced, culturally specific readings that can account for the complexities of these cross-cultural interactions. Moreover, the binary oppositions often implicit in Orientalist discourse – East vs. West, Self vs. Other – fail to capture the multifaceted nature of cultural identity and exchange. As seen in Denyer’s collaboration with Iwamoto, or LeFanu’s work with Okeanos, contemporary cross-cultural composition often involves multiple, intersecting cultural identities and influences that defy simple categorisation.

This thesis has also demonstrated the value of a process-oriented analytical approach in understanding cross-cultural composition. Examining the full spectrum of compositional practice – from initial inspiration through research and collaboration to final production – offers a rich understanding of how cultural elements are engaged with, interpreted, and transformed. This approach enables a balance between musical analysis and contextual interpretation, providing a wider perspective on the nature and significance of the cultural exchange taking place. The process-oriented approach also allows one to see cross-cultural composition not as a fixed product but as a dynamic process of cultural negotiation and artistic creation. It portrays the intricate decision-making

processes involved in integrating elements from different musical traditions, and shows how composers navigate the challenges of cultural representation and authenticity.

A key methodological feature of this research has been the emphasis on composers' own voices and personal narratives. The insights gained from the interviews have proven invaluable in understanding the motivations, challenges, and creative processes behind these cross-cultural compositions. These personal accounts present a level of detail and nuance that cannot be gleaned from the musical scores or performances alone. They reveal the thought processes behind composers' research, compositional choices, the nature of collaborative relationships, and the personal and cultural experiences that shaped each composer's engagement with things Japanese. Moreover, by preserving elements of oral history, this approach contributes to a more multifaceted historical record of British musical modernism and its engagement with non-Western cultures. It captures not just the end products of cross-cultural composition, but the lived experiences and personal journeys of the composers involved.

Furthermore, the elaborate nature of cross-cultural composition necessitates an interdisciplinary approach to research. This thesis has drawn on methodologies and insights from musicology, cultural studies, and history, among other fields, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. Musicological analysis establishes the foundation, allowing for detailed examination of how Japanese elements are integrated into Western compositional frameworks. This is complemented by insights from cultural studies to understand the broader implications of these cross-cultural exchanges, and how they reflect and contribute to changing perceptions of cultural identity and difference. Historical contextualisation is crucial for recognising

how these compositional practices evolved in response to changing social, political, and technological conditions. This historical perspective helps illuminate the shift from earlier forms of musical exoticism to the more engaged, research-based approaches of contemporary composers. The interdisciplinary nature of this research indeed connects it to broader discussions of cross-cultural exploration. Examining how individual composers handle the issues around cultural representation offers perspectives that are relevant not just to music but to wider debates about cultural interaction and the ethics of artistic borrowing across cultural boundaries.

### **Contributions, implications, and prospects**

This thesis makes several contributions to musicological scholarship. Firstly, it offers new perspectives on post-war British musical modernism by highlighting the important role that engagement with things Japanese played in shaping compositional practices and aesthetics. While the influence of non-Western music on modernist composition has been widely acknowledged, the specific impact of Japanese cultural elements on British composers has been underexplored. This research helps fill that gap, demonstrating how composers like Goehr, Denyer, Marsh, and LeFanu drew inspiration from and engaged with Japanese forms such as *noh*, *gagaku*, and *shakuhachi* music in ways that profoundly influenced their artistic development.

In addition, this study expands our understanding of Japan's influence on Western composers beyond the well-known examples of Claude Debussy (1862–1918), Messiaen, or Britten. By tracing the transition of this engagement from the 1950s through to the early twenty-first century with case studies, it constructs a detailed picture of how Japanese cultural forms have been interpreted, adapted,

and integrated into Western art music. This longitudinal perspective reveals the persistence of Japanese influence, as well as how it has transformed over time in response to changing socio-cultural conditions.

The case studies presented in this thesis offer valuable lessons for contemporary artists navigating the complexities of cross-cultural creation. The ethical considerations that emerge from these examples – such as the importance of acknowledging sources, the value of sustained engagement, and the need to balance innovation with respect for tradition – provide useful guidelines for artists working across cultural boundaries. Moreover, the collaborative practices examined in this research, notably the long-term partnership between Denyer and Iwamoto, offer models for valuable engagement across traditions. These examples show how cross-cultural collaboration can lead to genuine artistic innovation, suggesting ways of working that could be applied across various forms of cross-cultural artistic practice.

The transformation of British composers' engagement with Japanese culture from the 1950s onwards also reflects broader changes in East-West dynamics during this period. A shift from exoticised, often superficial representations, to more nuanced, deeply engaged approaches mirrors wider trends in cultural globalisation, where increased contact and exchange have led to more sophisticated understandings of cultural difference and similarity. The case studies in this thesis demonstrate how individual artists deal with the tensions between global and local, tradition and innovation, self and other in an interconnected world. These examples question simplistic notions of cultural authenticity or purity, instead uncovering the creative potential of cultural interplay.

As regards potential directions for future research, a key limitation of this thesis is the number of case studies. While the four composers were chosen to represent specific generations and cross-cultural engagements, expanding the research to include more composers born between the 1930s and 1960s, such as Birtwistle, Harvey, Tavener, Finnissy, Poole, Wiseman, Knussen, Vaughan, MacMillan, Turnage, Toovey, and R. Panufnik, would provide a more comprehensive picture of Anglo-Japanese cross-cultural composition since Britten. The scope could also be broadened beyond British composers born in the UK studied in this thesis (except for Goehr who was born in Germany) to include figures like Lumsdaine and Fujikura – an Australian composer who moved to the UK in his twenties, and a London-based, Japanese-born composer respectively – reflecting the cultural diversity within contemporary British music. Comparative studies examining composers from other national or cultural contexts could further advance an understanding of these cross-cultural dynamics.

Another potential direction for future research is the exploration of reception and audience perspectives. This would complement the composer-focused approach of the current study by investigating how audiences respond to these cross-cultural compositions, whether perceptions differ between those familiar with the referenced traditions and those encountering them for the first time, and who has the right to judge the value and validity of such works. It could illuminate the broader cultural impact of these compositional practices and their role in shaping public perceptions of another culture.

Further research could also investigate collaborative practices in cross-cultural music-making, examining how these collaborations function, challenge, and impact on both the music

produced and the participants involved. Exploring new forms of cross-cultural art, such as English Noh by Emmert, would also broaden the horizons of the cultural interaction.

This thesis has demonstrated that post-war British musical representations of Japan reflect an intricate, evolving engagement that transcends simple Orientalism and musical exoticism. The work of these composers is significant beyond its artistic merit, representing a crucial chapter in British musical modernism and illustrating how engagement with non-Western traditions expanded compositional language. Their approaches offer valuable models for meaningful cross-cultural engagement.

In closing, I echo Denyer and LeFanu's reflections on imagined cultural barriers we imagine between people and cultures. While some scholars might interpret the works studied here as appropriation or exploitation, such postcolonial readings risk reinforcing binary relationships and freezing cultures in time in the name of cultural appreciation. This raises questions about the possibility of truly *neutral* cross-cultural artistic practices and the persistence of victimhood narratives. The composers examined in this thesis, through their thoughtful and deeply engaged approach to things Japanese, suggest more equitable and mutually enriching forms of cross-cultural music-making. Their work challenges us to overcome theoretical barriers and embrace the transformative potential of cultural dialogue in music and beyond.

## Appendix 1: List of Japan-Inspired Compositions by British Composers

Sullivan, Arthur (1842–1900)	<i>The Mikado</i>	1885
Woodforde-Finden, Amy (1860–1919)	<i>Five Little Japanese Songs</i>	1906
Jones, Sidney (1861–1946)	<i>The Geisha, A Story of a Tea House</i>	1896
Bell, William Henry (1873–1946)	<i>Komachi</i>	1925
	<i>Tsuneyo of the Three Trees</i>	1926
	<i>Hatsuyuki</i>	1934
	<i>The Pillow of Kantan</i>	1935
	<i>Kageyiko</i>	1936
Holst, Gustav (1874–1934)	<i>Japanese Suite</i>	1915
Coleridge-Taylor, Samuel (1875–1912)	<i>A Tale of Old Japan</i>	1910–11
Raybould, Clarence (1886–1972)	<i>The Sumida River</i>	1916
Lutyens, Elisabeth (1906–83)	<i>The Valley of Hatsu-se</i>	1965
Britten, Benjamin (1913–76)	<i>Sinfonia da Requiem</i>	1940
	<i>Curlew River</i>	1964
	<i>The Burning Fiery Furnace</i>	1966
	<i>The Prodigal Son</i>	1968
Goehr, Alexander (1932–2024)	<i>Four Songs from the Japanese</i>	1959
	<i>Noboth's Vineyard</i>	1968
	<i>Nonomiya</i>	1969
	<i>Shadowplay</i>	1970
	<i>Sonata about Jerusalem</i>	1970
	<i>Kantan and Damask Drum</i>	1997–98
	<i>Promised End</i>	2008–9
Birtwistle, Harrison (1934–2022)	<i>The Sadness of Komachi</i>	2000
	<i>Today Too</i>	2004
	<i>dear dusty moth</i>	2017
Harvey, Jonathan (1939–2012)	<i>Haiku</i>	1997
	<i>80 Breaths for Tokyo for orchestra</i>	2010
Denyer, Frank (1943–)	<i>Melodies</i>	1974–77
	<i>Piece for Koto</i>	1975
	<i>'Play' from A Book of Emblems and Songs II</i>	1973
	<i>ON, ON, - It must be so</i>	1977–78
	<i>Wheat</i>	1977–81

	<i>Quite White</i>	1978
	<i>After the Rain</i>	1983/1998
	<i>Winged Play</i>	1984
	<i>Stalks</i>	1986
	<i>The Tender Sadness of Tyrants as They Dance</i>	1991
	<i>Unnamed</i>	1997
	<i>Woman with Jinashi Shakuhachi</i>	2008
	<i>A Linear Topography</i>	2015
Tavener, John (1944–2013)	<i>Sixteen Haiku of Seferis</i>	1984
Finnissy, Michael (1946–)	<i>Thuru-Kame [The Crane-The Tortoise]</i>	1971–73
	<i>Goro</i>	1978
	<i>Alongside</i>	1979
	<i>Kagami-Jishi [Mirror of Lion Spirit]</i>	1979
	<i>Hinomi [The Fire Watch-Tower]</i>	1979
	<i>Jisei [Aerial spirit]</i>	1981
	<i>White Rain</i>	1981
	<i>Motets</i>	1991
	<i>A Cambridge Codex</i>	1991
LeFanu, Nicola (1947–)	<i>The Same Day Dawns</i>	1974
	<i>A Penny for a Song</i>	1981
	<i>Wind among the Pines: Five Images of Norfolk</i>	1987
	<i>Tokaido Road</i>	2014
Poole, Geoffrey (1949–)	<i>Crossing Ohashi Bridge</i>	1995
	<i>Kakemono</i>	2004
	<i>Hanami Sanjo</i>	2010
	<i>Shumei Shumei</i>	2011
Marsh, Roger (1949–)	<i>Samson</i>	1983/92
	<i>Kagura</i>	1991
	<i>Black Hair</i>	1992/95
	<i>Hoichi</i>	1992
	<i>Sozu Baba</i>	1996
	<i>Sukeroku</i>	2000
	<i>Atsumari</i>	2003
	<i>Sankyoku</i>	2004
<i>Kinshi</i>	2015	

Wiseman, Beth (1951–2007)	<i>Brothel Song</i>	1976
	<i>Two Songs from the Japanese</i>	1978/2003
	<i>Silent</i>	1999
	<i>October</i>	2001
	<i>Ama no Gawa</i>	2006
Knussen, Oliver (1952–2018)	<i>O Hototogisu!</i>	2017
Vaughan, Mike (1954–)	<i>Jo-Ha-Kyu</i>	1985
	<i>It Moves..., It Moves Not...</i>	1986
	<i>Nāda</i>	1987
	<i>Darkening Horizons</i>	1990
	<i>Infinite Skies</i>	1997/2000
Turnbull, Michael (1959–)	<i>Blue Lines</i>	1985
	<i>Tribute</i>	1986
	<i>Smoke</i>	1990
MacMillan, James (1959–)	Symphony No. 3 ‘Silence’	2002
Turnage, Mark-Anthony (1960–)	<i>Silent Cities</i>	1998
	<i>Hibiki</i>	2016
Toovey, Andrew (1962–)	<i>Winter Solstice</i>	1984
	<i>Noh</i>	2000
Panufnik, Roxanna (1968–)	<i>Wild Ways</i>	2007
	<i>Spring in Japan</i>	2008

## Appendix 2: Marsh, *Black Hair*, Full Texts

(1992b; stanza numbering by me)

1. We fell in love Years ago,  
  
the happy times I'd ever known.  
  
I swore to serve, you swore to care,  
  
I loved your eyes, you loved my black hair
  
2. We found a clearing In the wood,  
  
we built a house and made it good.  
  
By day we worked 'til the sun was gone  
  
by night you sat and combed my long black hair
  
3. You often said I made you strong  
  
how with my help you'd soon get on.  
  
And as you rose I watched with pride,  
  
you needed me to be there by your side
  
4. You said goodbye without a tear  
  
"A man must think of his career."  
  
I begged you stay you pushed me back  
  
you left me crying through my long black hair

5. One day, you'll be sad  
you'll remember what we had.  
Thoughts of me left alone  
memories will lead you home
  
6. Through darkness, in one day  
years of sadness washed away  
I will be here as before  
sweetly smiling as you reach the door.
  
7. You'll beg forgiveness, I'll stay your lips,  
you'll gently kiss my finger tips.  
We'll live that scene for which you long,  
a night of love Back where you belong
  
8. And with the dawn, you'll lift your head,  
and with a smile, you'll turn to me in bed  
and by your side you'll find I swear a pile of bones,  
and wrapping round your throat my long black hair.

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