French Symbolist affinities in a late work of Toru Takemitsu: an analysis of *And then I knew ‘twas Wind* for flute, viola and harp

Philip Murray
Bachelor of Music (Performance), Edith Cowan University

This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts of The University of Western Australia

School of Music

2018
THESIS DECLARATION

I, Philip Murray, certify that:

This thesis has been substantially accomplished during enrolment in the degree.

This thesis does not contain material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution.

No part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of The University of Western Australia and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

This thesis does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

The work(s) are not in any way a violation or infringement of any copyright, trademark, patent, or other rights whatsoever of any person.

This thesis does not contain work that I have published, nor work under review for publication.

Signature:

Date: 20/01/2018
ABSTRACT

This thesis undertakes a detailed structural and motivic analysis of *And then I knew 'twas Wind* (1992) for flute, viola and harp by Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996), with the aim of examining the influence of Claude Debussy (1862-1918) on Takemitsu, and exploring the nature of this influence on the style of Takemitsu's later works in particular. Takemitsu acknowledged Debussy as a lifelong influence, but while a stylistic affinity between the two composers tends to be widely accepted, this idea has received little detailed critical attention. *And then I knew 'twas Wind* invites closer study as an instance where exploration of this question may be particularly useful, since it makes direct reference to a specific work of Debussy: the Sonata for flute, viola and harp (1915).

As a background to the analysis, the issue of temporality in Takemitsu's work is examined, since the differences between traditional Japanese and Western concepts of time were a preoccupation of the composer, and have received attention from a number of other scholars. Through an examination of the role of the French Symbolist poets, particularly Stéphane Mallarmé, in the development of Debussy's musical language (especially in relation to the move away from functional harmony and conventional goal-oriented forms), it is argued that the non-linear temporal dimension of *And then I knew 'twas Wind* – an aspect of Takemitsu's aesthetics that has tended to be viewed as especially 'Japanese' – offers a point of intersection with French Symbolism. The analysis of the work demonstrates that Takemitsu employs a high degree of ambiguity, mystery and multi-dimensionality that is reminiscent of the aesthetic goals of the Symbolist movement. It is suggested that it is in these respects, rather than in obvious audible similarities alone, that Debussy's influence particularly manifests itself.

The final chapter of the thesis proposes a Symbolist (or 'Mallarméan') reading of Takemitsu, through a discussion of such parallels as the spiritual dimension of art, the role of the artwork as a mediator between subjective experience and objective reality, and questions of function and meaning arising from the intersection between music and language.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**THESIS DECLARATION**.......................................................................................................................... iii

**ABSTRACT** ......................................................................................................................................................... v

**LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES** ......................................................................................................................... ix

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** .................................................................................................................................. xiii

**CHAPTER 1 – Debussy and Takemitsu: a case of ‘obvious’ influence?** ......................................................... 1
  - Introduction.................................................................................................................................................... 1
  - Takemitsu and Debussy in the current literature ......................................................................................... 4
  - Takemitsu’s early French influences ........................................................................................................... 6
  - Takemitsu on Debussy .................................................................................................................................. 10
  - Seeking other connections: temporality and symbolism ............................................................................. 18

**CHAPTER 2 – Temporality and interpretive issues in the music of Takemitsu** ........................................... 23
  - Music and time in the 20th Century .............................................................................................................. 23
  - Takemitsu and ‘the Japanese concept of time’ ............................................................................................... 25
  - The Japanese garden as a musical model ....................................................................................................... 29
  - Musical Space ................................................................................................................................................ 31
  - Aesthetic problems in interpreting Takemitsu’s ‘garden’ forms as projections of a Japanese sensibility ......................................................................................................................... 33
  - The non-finality of musical perception .......................................................................................................... 35
  - Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................... 41

**CHAPTER 3 – Wagner, Mallarmé, Debussy: the French Symbolist movement and its resonances in the music of Debussy** ................................................................................................................. 43
  - Introduction ................................................................................................................................................... 43
  - Language and music: points of intersection ................................................................................................. 46
  - Mallarmé and Wagner .................................................................................................................................. 49
  - Mallarmé, poetry and the musicalisation of language ............................................................................... 53
  - Debussy, Symbolism and escaping musical conventions ........................................................................... 57

**CHAPTER 4 – An analysis of And then I knew ’twas Wind** ......................................................................... 67
  - Introduction ................................................................................................................................................... 67
  - Formal outline ............................................................................................................................................... 68
  - A thematic catalogue .................................................................................................................................... 75
  - Commentary .................................................................................................................................................. 95
    1. Pitch and harmony ................................................................................................................................. 95
    1a. Pitch material ...................................................................................................................................... 95
    1b. Harmonic colouration and modal nuance .......................................................................................... 100
    1c. Prevailing pitches .............................................................................................................................. 103
    2. Treatment of thematic material ........................................................................................................... 106
    2a. Melodic forms in the fragments ......................................................................................................... 106
    2b. Repetition ........................................................................................................................................... 108
    2c. Variation .............................................................................................................................................. 110
    3. Form at the medium range level ........................................................................................................... 115
  - Some preliminary conclusions ..................................................................................................................... 118

**CHAPTER 5 – And then I knew ’twas Wind as a response to the Sonata for flute, viola and harp** .......... 123
  - Introduction ................................................................................................................................................ 123
Moments of audible similarity........................................................................................................ 124
'Many points of focus' – shifting background and foreground............................................. 131
Instrumental colour .................................................................................................................. 139
Embedded connections – shared pitch material ................................................................. 141
Time and space revisited .......................................................................................................... 151

CHAPTER 6 – Takemitsu the 'Symbolist'? .............................................................................. 157
Symbolism and the spiritual in art .......................................................................................... 157
Language, meaning, poetry, and the spiritual ........................................................................ 159
Freeing sounds to 'be themselves' ......................................................................................... 161
Art as mediator between the self and the world ................................................................. 163
Poetry and symbolism in *And then I knew 'twas Wind* .................................................... 166
Sound and meaning; music and language ............................................................................. 171
Meaning and function, end-rhyme and cadence: a ptyx in D flat ...................................... 173
Postscript ................................................................................................................................ 179

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................... 181
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Chapter 4
Ex. 1 Fragment i (harp, bars 1-2), Fragment ii (harp, bars 3-4), Fragment iii (harp, bars 5-6) ................................................................. 76
Ex. 2 Fragment iv (harp, bar 7) ........................................................................ 76
Ex. 3 Fragment iv, variation (harp, bar 7) ......................................................... 76
Ex. 4 Fragment v (harp, bar 8) ........................................................................ 77
Ex. 5 Fragment vi (flute and viola, bar 18) ......................................................... 77
Ex. 6 Fragment vii (viola, bar 22) ................................................................... 78
Ex. 7 Fragment viii (harp, bar 23) .................................................................. 78
Ex. 8 Fragment ix (flute, bar 27) ..................................................................... 79
Ex. 9 Fragment x (harp, bar 27) ..................................................................... 79
Ex. 10 Fragment xi (viola and harp, bar 28) ..................................................... 79
Ex. 11 Fragment xii (flute, bars 33-35) ............................................................. 81
Ex. 12 Fragment xiii (flute, bars 35-36) ............................................................. 81
Ex. 13 Fragment xiv (flute, bars 37-38) ............................................................. 81
Ex. 14 Fragment xv (flute, bars 39-40) .............................................................. 81
Ex. 15 Fragment xvi (flute, bars 41-42) ............................................................. 81
Ex. 16 Fragment xvii (harp, bar 42) ................................................................. 82
Ex. 17 Fragment xviii (flute, bar 44) ................................................................. 82
Ex. 18 Fragment xix (flute and harp, bar 51) ................................................... 83
Ex. 19 Fragment xx (flute, bar 52) .................................................................. 83
Ex. 20 Fragment xxi (harp and viola, bars 53-54) .......................................... 84
Ex. 21 Fragment xxi (flute, bar 55) .................................................................. 84
Ex. 22 Fragment xxi (harp, bar 56) .................................................................. 84
Ex. 23 Fragment xxiv (flute and viola, bars 57-58) ........................................ 85
Ex. 24 Fragment xxv (viola, bar 64) ................................................................. 85
Ex. 25 Fragment xxvi (flute, bar 65-66) ............................................................. 85
Ex. 26 Harp ostinato, bars 75-77 (incorporating Fragments iii and x) ............. 86
Ex. 27 Fragment xxvii (viola, bar 78) ............................................................... 86
Ex. 28 Fragment xxviii (flute, bar 80) ............................................................... 86
Ex. 29 Fragment xxix (flute, bar 81) ............................................................... 87
Ex. 30 Harp, bar 88 ......................................................................................... 87
Ex. 31 Fragment xxx (viola and harp, bar 94) ................................................. 88
Ex. 32 Fragment xxxi (harp, bar 103) ............................................................... 88
Ex. 33 Fragment xxxii (harp, bar 112) .............................................................. 89
Ex. 34 Fragment xxxiii (viola, bar 112) ............................................................. 89
Ex. 35 Fragment xxxiv (flute bars 112-113) .................................................... 90
Ex. 36 Fragment xxxv (flute, bars 114-115) ..................................................... 90
Ex. 37 Variation of Fragment xxix (flute, bar 115) .......................................... 90
Ex. 38 Fragment xxxvi (harp, bar 134) ............................................................. 91
Ex. 39 Fragment xxxvii (flute, bar 136) ............................................................. 91
Ex. 40 'Fragment' xxxviii (flute, bars 137-144) ............................................. 92
Ex. 41 Final phrase of fourth melodic episode: Fragment xxix repeated (flute, bars 145-146) ................................................................. 92
| Ex. 42 | Fragment xxxix (harp, bars 146-147) | 92 |
| Ex. 42a | Descending variant (harp, bar 150) | 92 |
| Ex. 43 | Fragment xl (harp, bars 152-153) | 93 |
| Ex. 44 | Fragment xli (flute, bar 154-155) | 93 |
| Ex. 45 | Fragment xlii (flute, bars 157-159) | 93 |
| Ex. 46 | Fragment xliii (Flute, viola harp, bar 102) | 94 |
| Ex. 47 | Flute melody, bars 154-159 (Fragments xli and xlii) | 103 |
| Ex. 48 | Flute melody, bars 67-68 | 103 |
| Ex. 49 | Fragment ii (harp, bars 3-4) | 110 |
| Ex. 50 | Fragment vi (flute and harp, bar 18) | 111 |
| Ex. 51 | Extended form of Fragment vi (flute, bars 25-26) | 111 |
| Ex. 52 | Bars 28-31 | 111 |
| Ex. 53 | Flute melody, bar 33 (Fragment xii) | 112 |
| Ex. 54 | Fragment xx (flute, bar 52) | 113 |
| Ex. 55 | Fragment xviii (flute, bar 44) | 113 |
| Ex. 56 | Fragment xiii (flute, bar 36) | 114 |
| Ex. 57 | Fragment xxviii (flute, bar 80) | 114 |
| Ex. 58 | Fragment xxxiii (viola, bar 112 etc.) | 114 |

**Chapter 5**

| Ex. 59 | Takemitsu, *Wind*, Fragment vii (viola, bar 22) | 124 |
| Ex. 60 | Debussy, Sonata (harp, 1st movement, bar 1) | 124 |
| Ex. 61 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, bar 60) | 125 |
| Ex. 62 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, bars 98-99) | 125 |
| Ex. 63 | Debussy, Sonata, (flute, 1st movement, bars 2-3) | 126 |
| Ex. 64 | Debussy, Sonata (flute, viola, harp, 1st movement, bar before Fig. 1) | 126 |
| Ex. 65 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, viola, harp, bars 176-177) | 127 |
| Ex. 66 | Debussy, Sonata (viola, harp, 3rd movement, bars 1-2) | 127 |
| Ex. 67 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, bars 65-66) | 128 |
| Ex. 68 | Debussy, Sonata (flute, 2nd movement, 5 bars after Fig. 15) | 128 |
| Ex. 69 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (viola, bars 184-187) | 129 |
| Ex. 70 | Debussy, Sonata (flute, 2nd movement, bars 1-4) | 130 |
| Ex. 71 | Debussy, Sonata (flute, 1st movement, bars 1-2) | 130 |
| Ex. 72 | Debussy, Sonata (flute, 1st movement, Fig. 6) | 130 |
| Ex. 73 | Debussy, *Prélude à l’après midi d’un faune* (oboe, bars 103-106) | 131 |
| Ex. 74 | Debussy, Sonata (flute, viola, harp, 1st movement, bars 8-15) | 132 |
| Ex. 75 | Debussy, Sonata (flute, viola, harp, 2nd movement, from 4 bars before Fig. 9 to 2 bars after Fig. 10) | 134 |
| Ex. 76 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (viola, bars 108-109) | 135 |
| Ex. 77 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, viola, harp bars 112-113) | 136 |
| Ex. 78 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (harp, bars 5-6) | 137 |
| Ex. 79 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, viola, bars 25-27) | 137 |
| Ex. 80 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (viola, bars 78-79) | 137 |
| Ex. 81 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, viola, bars 86-89) | 138 |
| Ex. 82 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, viola, harp bars 118-20) | 138 |
| Ex. 83 | Debussy, Sonata (flute, viola, 1st movement, Fig. 6) | 140 |
| Ex. 84 | Debussy, Sonata (flute, viola, 2nd movement, 8 bars after Fig. 10) | 140 |
| Ex. 85 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, viola, bars 119-120) | 140 |
| Ex. 86 | Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, bar 108) | 142 |
Ex. 87 Debussy, Sonata (flute, 1st movement, bars 1-3) ........................................ 143
Ex. 88 Debussy, Sonata (harp, 1st movement, bar 3) ........................................ 143
Ex. 89 Takemitsu, Wind (flute, bar 26-27) .......................................................... 143
Ex. 90 Takemitsu, Wind (flute, viola, harp, bars 32-39) ..................................... 150
Ex. 91 Debussy, Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune, (piano reduction, bars 79-82) .............................................................. 150

Chapter 6
Ex. 92 Takemitsu, Wind (viola, bar 186) .............................................................. 168
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship.

I would particularly like to thank my Coordinating Supervisor, Dr. David Symons, for his expert guidance, assistance and encouragement throughout my degree. Thanks also to Dr. Christopher Tonkin for his helpful advice and encouragement.

I would also like to thank Luke Iredale for his assistance with proof-reading, and helpful comments.
CHAPTER 1 – Debussy and Takemitsu: a case of ‘obvious’ influence?

Introduction

Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996) referred to Claude Debussy (1862-1918) as ‘my great mentor’, and stated that ‘I learned much from the music of Debussy’. What did he mean by these statements, and how well do we understand the nature of the influence of Debussy on Takemitsu’s music? Many critics seem to agree that, in the sound world of Takemitsu, the music of Debussy ‘is never far off’, as Timothy Koozin has put it. While this may be less true of the works of his mid-career, when he was becoming engaged with the latest developments of the European and American avant-garde, the presence of Debussy has been noted in his very earliest and latest works, suggesting a lifelong connection. The frequency with which the two composers are placed side by side in concert programmes and on CD recordings today suggests that the notion of a particular affinity between them has become widely accepted. Nevertheless, while major Takemitsu scholars Noriko Ohtake and Peter Burt have written of the ‘unmistakeable’ and ‘obvious’ influence of Debussy respectively, one receives the impression from the current literature that this is a fact taken somewhat for granted. The questions of where this influence is to be

---

found, and what form it takes in practice, have been the subject of virtually no
detailed critical examination in their own right.

Despite the frequency with which the influence is remarked on,
Takemitsu’s music is never derivative, and clear models or references are rare.
His earliest performed work, *Lento in Due Movimenti* (1950), contains a passage
in the second movement that Ohtake has identified as a reminiscence from
Debussy’s ‘Movement’ from Book 1 of *Images* for piano.5 A much later work,
*Quotation of Dream* (1991) for two pianos and orchestra, unusually makes use of
direct borrowing on a substantial scale, quoting extensive passages from *La Mer.
And then I knew ‘twas Wind* (1992), for flute, viola and harp6, represents the only
other known significant instance of a deliberate reference. This work, intended
for performance as a companion work to Debussy’s Sonata for flute, viola and
harp of 1915, makes a direct but subtle quote from the sonata, and in its use of
the same distinctive instrumentation it unmistakeably calls attention to its
relationship to the earlier work, and invites us to hear it as some sort of homage.
It provides one of the closest instances we have of a work by Takemitsu
modelled after a specific work of Debussy, and offers an opportunity for
examining the question of influence in more detail.

Debussy’s influence on twentieth-century music in general is so extensive
that it may seem questionable to view Takemitsu as a special case. Furthermore,
Takemitsu was a composer of such eclectic interests that the range of sources
and ideas to be found in his music is very large, and his engagement with other
creative sources, such as with traditional Japanese music, and with the music of

---

5 Ohtake, p. 77. The original score of *Lento in Due Movimenti* was lost and later reconstructed from a recording.
6 The title is a line from the poem *Like Rain it sounded till it curved* by Emily Dickinson; see
Chapter 6 for a discussion of the significance of the poem and title in relation to the work.
Messiaen and Cage, have tended to receive more critical attention. However, Takemitsu seemed to see in Debussy something of a kindred musical spirit: there is arguably a shared aesthetic sensibility that goes beyond influence at a mere technical level. As well as sharing an exceptional gift for instrumental colour, both composers sought to create music in which the free play of the human imagination takes precedence over systematic structures or rational design. In a statement particularly reminiscent of Debussy, Takemitsu declared: ‘I wish to free sound from the trite rules of music, rules that are in turn stifled by formulas and calculations. I want to give sounds the freedom to breathe’.7 In his avoidance of ‘trite rules’ Takemitsu composed music that has often puzzled critics in its unsystematic approach and avoidance of clear goal-oriented forms. However, as Burt argues, these characteristics need not be viewed as a deficiency but rather as an invitation to search elsewhere than among conventional Western musical expectations for clues to the composer’s particular aesthetic priorities.8

And then I knew ‘twas Wind embodies many of the puzzling analytical and aesthetic characteristics particularly evident in Takemitsu’s later music, as well as offering an opportunity to consider the role of Debussy’s influence. This thesis therefore has three distinct but overlapping aims: 1) to undertake a close analysis of And then I knew ‘twas Wind, in order to contribute to a deeper understanding of aspects of the aesthetics of Takemitsu’s later music, as revealed in this work; 2) to use the results of this analysis as a basis for examining the nature of Debussy’s influence, by exploring the relationship of And then I knew ‘twas Wind to Debussy’s Sonata for flute, viola and harp; and 3) to place these

questions in a broader aesthetic context by examining the extent to which the echoes of Debussy in Takemitsu’s later music represent not just imitation at a technical level, but reflect to some degree the aesthetic influences that played a role in the development of Debussy’s own musical language, particularly those of the French Symbolist movement.

It must be stated at the outset that Takemitsu’s *And then I knew ’twas Wind*, and its relationship to Debussy’s Sonata, has already been the focus of a previous study by Shuri Okajima. However, it is the view of the present author that although many useful details are identified, Okajima’s analysis is limited in scope and does not succeed in revealing a great deal about the work’s inner dynamics or structure in a coherent way. Crucial aspects of the work seem to be overlooked: for instance Okajima broadly characterises the work as ‘atonal’, ignoring its distinctive quasi-tonal qualities. While one of Okajima’s stated aims is to place the two works in the context of their composers’ broader aesthetic outlook and cultural background, the relationship between musical and extra-musical ideas is not well explicated. It is therefore felt that a more thorough and searching analysis of this complex and multi-dimensional work is justified.

**Takemitsu and Debussy in the current literature**

Significant remarks on the importance of Debussy’s influence occur in Takemitsu’s own writings, and these are naturally much relied upon as the

---

10 Ibid., p. 84.
main source on this subject in such biographical and historical accounts of
Takemitsu's artistic development as are available. A substantial biography of
Takemitsu is yet to be written, but the biographical sketches that emerge from
major studies by Ohtake\textsuperscript{12} and Burt,\textsuperscript{13} from James Siddons' bibliographical
work,\textsuperscript{14} and in the anecdotal evidence of interviews with the composer's
widow,\textsuperscript{15} paint a picture of the importance of late nineteenth- and early
twentieth-century French composers, Debussy among them, in Takemitsu's early
musical development. However, while numerous analytical studies have
examined other aspects of Takemitsu's compositional methods and style, little
attempt has been made to pursue Takemitsu's own remarks on Debussy as a
starting point for serious analytical or comparative study of this particular issue,
other than the study by Okajima discussed above. Burt's major survey of
Takemitsu's work is of too broad a scope to allow for a specific examination of
this question in depth, although he goes into some detail on a few occasions in
order to make specific points. Ohtake, in her broad exploration of Takemitsu's
many creative sources and influences, discusses the importance of Debussy in a
general way; but again the scope of her work does not permit a specific focus on
this issue, except as one among many topics, and she draws largely on
Takemitsu's own remarks, rather than analytical evidence. An article by Timothy
Koozin\textsuperscript{16} examines Debussy's influence in more depth than any other; but

\textsuperscript{12} Noriko Ohtake, \textit{Creative Sources for the Music of Toru Takemitsu}.
\textsuperscript{13} Burt, \textit{The Music of Toru Takemitsu}.
\textsuperscript{15} Asaka Takemitsu, \textit{A Memoir of Toru Takemitsu} trans. Tomoko Ishiki (Bloomington: iUniverse Inc., 2010).
\textsuperscript{16} Timothy Koozin, 'Traversing Distances: Pitch Organization, Gesture and Imagery in the Late Works of Toru Takemitsu'.
significantly, as shall be seen, Koozin treats the question from a more symbolic angle.

The survey that follows will begin with a summary of Takemitsu’s early musical development, with a focus on the role of French music in general. This will be followed by a more specific examination of the importance of Debussy, through a close look at Takemitsu’s own remarks on Debussy in his writing, and a survey of the ways these remarks have informed, or been commented on by, various critics. This will lead to an examination of two particular lines of enquiry suggested by the work of several researchers, Koozin in particular, that seem to offer the most fruitful starting point for a deeper exploration of this question.

**Takemitsu’s early French influences**

Although exposed early in life to both Japanese and Western music, including jazz, Takemitsu received little formal musical training in childhood; but he cited two vivid experiences from his later youth, both involving music of French origin, which were particularly decisive in awakening his musical awareness. The first of these was a gramophone recording of the chanson *Parlez-moi d’amour*, which Takemitsu encountered as a teenager during his military service. He found the experience revelatory, hearing as if for the first time ‘the splendid quality of Western music’. Given that the playing of European and American music was banned in Japan during World War Two, it is perhaps understandable that this experience had such an impact. The second, and perhaps more significant, experience occurred a few years later: hearing a radio broadcast of *Prélude, Chorale et Fugue* by César Franck apparently conveyed to

---

17 Ohtake, p. 2.
Takemitsu such an overwhelming sense of the power of music, instrumental
music in particular, that it inspired his choice of composition as a career, despite
at that stage having virtually no formal musical education.\textsuperscript{18}

Takemitsu's first real music education began shortly after the war, during
his mid-teens. In Tokyo in 1946 he joined an informal choral group at the home
of Noriteru Hamada, where he met other young composers and had the chance to
study Hamada's collection of scores by Fauré, Franck and Roussel.\textsuperscript{19} In 1948 he
began lessons with Yasuji Kiyose, his only formal teacher, who, though a
composer in the ‘folkloristic’ style that represented one of the first Japanese
attempts to create a national music in Western style, was also a devotee of
Debussy, Fauré and Franck.\textsuperscript{20} Around this time Takemitsu also obtained his first
piano, on which he played a great deal of Debussy and Fauré, apparently sensing
an affinity between the music and the Pleyel instrument's somewhat nasal
French sound.\textsuperscript{21} It was with the help of this instrument that he composed his first
performed work, \textit{Lento in Due Movimenti} (1950), which as mentioned above
contains a passage reminiscent of Debussy's \textit{Images}. Burt also notes in this work
the unmistakable influence of Messiaen, of whose \textit{8 Preludes} Takemitsu had
recently come into possession, and who was also to become a major influence.\textsuperscript{22}

Another important influence also arose through Takemitsu's early
interest in and exposure to film score composition.\textsuperscript{23} In his early twenties
Takemitsu worked as an assistant and copyist for composer Fumio Hayasaka,
whose work in the inter- and post-war years, particularly with director Akira Kurosawa, was influential in the development of Japanese film music.\textsuperscript{24} Takemitsu’s widow recalls in an interview that working for Hayasaka provided an extremely important education for the composer, as he was able to witness first-hand the process of transferring a written score into sound, even though working with someone else’s music: ‘He was able to see that, “If the notes are layered this way” then, “Aha, it will sound like this when it is performed”. Toru said that since he didn’t attend any formal music school, his true study of music began with Mr. Hayasaka’.\textsuperscript{25} Hayasaka’s cross-cultural blend of Japanese and European sound elements provided Takemitsu with important models for his own film scores, and, significantly, Hayasaka was also ‘very familiar with music of Debussy and Ravel that utilised musical materials to depict symbolist expressions of dreamlike states, mythical narratives of eroticism, and nostalgic landscapes’.\textsuperscript{26} For instance, passages in one of his scores borrow deliberately from Debussy’s \textit{Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune}.\textsuperscript{27}

The interest in French music that was a part of the milieu in which Takemitsu’s early musical education took place can be seen as part of a trend in the history of the assimilation of Western music in modern Japan. The initial adoption in the late nineteenth century of German music and education systems, as representative of Europe’s best, had been gradually rivalled by interest in French music, with increasing numbers of Japanese studying at the Paris

\textsuperscript{24} Siddons, p. 6.  
\textsuperscript{25} Asaka Takemitsu, \textit{A Memoir of Toru Takemitsu} trans. Tomoko Isshiki (Bloomington: iUniverse Inc., 2010), p. 43.  
\textsuperscript{26} Siddons, p. 6.  
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
Conservatoire for instance. Yoko Narazaki remarks that when Takemitsu began composing his first pieces 'he felt no affinity for the German and Austrian styles of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, upon which the Japanese "classical" music world had modelled its activities'. Siddons notes the tendency in mid-twentieth-century Japan of composers and artists to form collectives, in imitation of French groups such as The Parnassians and Les Six. Takemitsu himself became a member of the Shinsakkyokha ('New Composer’s Group') while studying with Kiyose, and later was a founding member of the rather more forward-looking Jikken Kobo ('Experimental Workshop'), a significant group of artists, writers and composers who were pioneers in the establishment of a uniquely Japanese post-war avant-garde movement. The experience of World War Two also caused many younger Japanese to view with distaste the nationalistic politics of their own country and to seek alternatives in English, French and American models. Takemitsu himself first learnt to speak some English and French while working at an American military facility in Yokohama shortly after the war.

As Burt discusses, the influence of Japanese culture in France (for instance in the case of the Impressionist painters, who were strongly influenced by the visual style of Japanese woodcut prints) was also an important part of the Japanese interest in French art: the Japanese could see their own culture reflected back at them through European eyes. Burt suggests that the same

---

30 Siddons, p. 5.
32 Ibid., p. 39.
33 Siddons, p. 3.
34 Ibid.
principle applies to the reception in Japan of ‘impressionistic’ French music, in which encounters with Asiatic music (the case of Debussy at the Paris Exposition of 1889 is a famous instance) had led to the development of a non-functional, modally based harmonic idiom which many Japanese composers found congenial precisely because it reflected back ‘deep structures to be found within their own culture’.35

Takemitsu was deeply aware of this process of cultural reflection, referring to music that was ‘reimported to Japan’ in a ‘reciprocal action’.36 He came to realise that there was something in the Western music he was drawn to (including that of Debussy, Messiaen and later Cage) which was in fact a reflection of ‘Eastern’ qualities that he recognised in his own cultural background. This realisation was a major motivation in his exploration, in the 1960s, of traditional Japanese music and instruments, and his lifelong reflection on the nature and differences of East versus West, and Japanese versus Other.

**Takemitsu on Debussy**

Takemitsu published numerous articles and essays during his life and wrote at length about his musical and aesthetic preoccupations;37 and while often rather vague about specific details of compositional technique, his writings contain many suggestive remarks. Two passages in particular make direct reference to the importance of Debussy, and are quoted frequently in accounts of Takemitsu’s life and work. A discussion of the significance of these passages will form the basis of the following survey of the extent to which Debussy’s influence

36 Ohtake, p. 6.
37 See note 10 above for a list of writings published in English.
has been examined and commented on in analytical terms in the available literature to date.

In a well-known anecdote, Takemitsu describes how, when staying in a mountain villa in 1967 to work on the pieces that became November Steps (the work for biwa, shakuhachi and orchestra, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, which first brought Takemitsu international acclaim) and Green (a thematically related work, originally to have been entitled November Steps II), he took two Debussy scores, Jeux and Prélude à L’après midi d’un faune, with him for study, ‘from a wish to enter into the secrets of Debussy’s music, which never ceases to exert a strong influence on my music’. Elsewhere he says Debussy’s ‘greatest contribution was his unique orchestration, which emphasises colour, light and shadow... that is what I learned from him’. While less apparent in November Steps, Green, a work for more conventional orchestral forces, shows strong evidence of a study of Debussy’s orchestration techniques. Burt has noted for instance such features as the prominent use of antique cymbals, a B natural pedal point reminiscent of the opening of Jeux, and a layered scoring approach characteristic of Debussy.

This anecdote of score study in the mountain villa acquires another dimension, which seems to have gone unremarked by other commentators, in the version of the story that Takemitsu relates in his ‘Notes on November Steps’. Here he mentions that the score of Debussy’s Prélude in question was a

---

38 Toru Takemitsu quoted in Roger Dettmer, liner notes for original recording of November Steps (RCA SB 6814), quoted in Burt, p. 118.
facsimile of a piano reduction in Debussy’s own handwriting. He seems to have been fascinated as much by the physicality of the score as the music. Remarking on the soft colours of the inks, the quality of the paper, the fine pink lines of Debussy’s marginal notes, the way the symbols on the page took on a ‘vivid life of their own’, he ponders enigmatically on the ‘hypothetical’ nature of the musical notation. These reminiscences then become the starting point of a philosophical reflection on the relationship between music and notation, between speech and writing, and between sound and meaning. No mention is made of the significance of the music of the Prélude itself as music. This seems to suggest that more was associated in Takemitsu’s mind with these scores than merely their usefulness for the study of orchestration.

The other passage of significance in Takemitsu’s writings, which contains remarks even more suggestive of the significance of Debussy, occurs in the 1987 essay ‘Dream and Number’.42 Takemitsu makes a comparison between the structure of Germanic music, in which a change in orchestration or instrumental colouring does not alter the abstract structure of the musical idea, and that of French music, where tone colour is an essential part of the conception. He notes as an example the importance of specific registrations in French organ music, in contrast to a Bach fugue, where changes to the registration leave the fundamental musical structure unchanged. He also remarks that it is no accident that the first treatise on orchestration was written by a Frenchman (Berlioz’s Treatise on Instrumentation of 1843). Takemitsu understands Debussy as a natural heir of this colouristic tradition, but goes further, saying that in Debussy’s music the orchestration ‘has many musical focuses’, and that his

uniqueness lies in the fact that ‘rather than emphasising one principal theme, it displays multiple aspects of sound.’ Furthermore, he goes on to compare the sensitivity to tone colour in Debussy’s music to that in traditional Japanese music, stating that ‘the effort to perceive such minute differences [of tone colour] characterises both the sensitivity of Debussy and of Japanese music’.43

The ideas contained in this passage reveal crucial elements of Takemitsu’s conception of music, and the importance of Debussy in the formation of that conception. In the first place, the sensory qualities of sounds themselves are of fundamental importance: Takemitsu emphasises (not only here but in many other places44) the importance of sound ‘as experienced’, rather than musical theories which organise sounds according to some abstract system. His exploration of traditional Japanese music convinced him that an appreciation of complex but highly individual sound events was a feature that separated Japanese music from the traditional Western theoretical system. As Burt has put it, for Takemitsu the individual sound has greater importance than the relationships between sounds, and misunderstandings of his music arise when this aspect of his musical thought is not taken into account.45 Jarocinski has written in almost the same terms of Debussy, claiming that earlier musicologists had failed to understand Debussy’s innovations because they did not recognise that an unprecedented emphasis on sound colour was an essential feature of his musical language.46 It appears that Takemitsu recognised this as a shared quality

43 For example, see Toru Takemitsu, ‘One Sound’: 3.
that was present both in the music of Debussy and in the traditional music of Japan; he was drawn to both because of this quality.

The other striking element in the quoted passage is the notion of ‘many points of focus’, or ‘pan-focus’ as Takemitsu has also referred to it. It is not clear from his own remarks exactly what it was that he heard in Debussy that gave rise to this term, since he does not provide specific instances; but it seems to refer to a quality both of the orchestration and of the arrangement of the musical ideas themselves. In his own works the ‘pan-focus’ concept seems to relate to an approach to form that might be considered spatial rather than temporal, in which musical events or instrumental groupings are layered without necessarily relating strongly to one another in the usual vertical/harmonic way typical of Western music. Such an approach is discussed explicitly in relation to those works that Takemitsu related to his much-loved garden metaphor, where the form of the works is described as being conceived like a walk in a Japanese garden.\footnote{For discussion of the garden metaphor, see Belinda Takahashi, ‘Japanese Aesthetics and Musical Form: A Walk Through Takemitsu’s “Spirit Garden”’ (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Rochester, 2001), and Hideaki Onishi, ‘Toru Takemitsu’s Japanese Gardens: An Application of Superset/Subset Networks to the Analysis of Three Orchestral Compositions’ (DMA Dissertation, University of Washington, 2004). This concept will be discussed further in Chapter 2.} However, the exact conceptual link to Debussy is not clear. Once stated, Ohtake seems to accept the term ‘pan-focal’ rather uncritically, and any number of writers have followed suit in referring casually to Takemitsu’s ‘pan-focal orchestration’ without the term being adequately explained. Burt is more explicit in describing sections of the work \textit{Coral Island} (1962), in which the orchestra is divided into six groups which each have a clearly delineated textural and timbral role, as ‘pan-focal’.\footnote{Burt, \textit{The Music of Toru Takemitsu}, p. 98.} However, despite Takemitsu’s own comments, Burt sees Debussy as only a distant precursor to such an approach. Clearly this
term contains some important ideas about spatial versus temporal concepts of form, to which we will return later for closer examination.

Comparisons with Debussy have also been made in relation to Takemitsu's melodic and harmonic style, particularly that of his later period from the late 1970s, when a stylistic shift away from the avant-garde techniques of the previous decades has been identified by most scholars. From his earliest works, Takemitsu favoured an essentially modal approach to melodic and harmonic construction; Burt notes that this modal approach becomes much more transparent and to the fore in this later period. Australian composer Barry Conyngham, who studied with Takemitsu in the 1970s, remarks on the ‘obsession with Debussy’, linking it to ‘the slow but strong shift in the music from the mid ‘80s, to very expressive, very tonal motifs, high simple melodies, and to lush added-sixth harmonies’. Burt comments on the shift to more sustained and lyrical melodic lines, citing *Orion and Pleiades* (1984) as a work which exemplifies this transition in style, and draws a link between the melodic style of the work and Debussy's melodic ideal of the arabesque. Narazaki also comments on the shift towards textures ‘dominated by song-like writing’ with an increasing preference for sustaining instruments rather than piano and percussion.

This stylistic shift coincides with a trend among many composers, during this period of the twentieth century, away from the extremes of modernism towards music that was simpler, more tonal, or that engaged more readily with the more conventional roots of the musical past. For Takemitsu however it is

---

51 Yoko Narazaki quoted in Burt, p. 204.
clear that his compositional practice was essentially modal and melodic, even vocal, from the beginning. Burt has shown how, even in the densely chromatic textures of his most modernist works, the harmonic constructions are often still essentially modal, with the seemingly ‘atonal’ effect produced through the overlaying of multiple strata. Takemitsu clearly positioned himself against the total serialism of Stockhausen and the Darmstadt school, (or any other constructivist approach); yet at the same time he was willing to engage with virtually everything that the modernist era had to offer (see for instance Richard Toop on Takemitsu’s important place in the twentieth century avant-garde). The essence of Takemitsu’s thinking seems to lie in his desire to ‘free sound from the trite rules of music’, as quoted earlier, rather than adhering to any particular theory or method.

It is this comment about giving freedom to sound that brings us back to the central questions of this thesis, and which suggests lines of enquiry where exploring the particular question of Debussy’s influence may be most relevant. While acknowledging his debt to Debussy, Takemitsu’s disinterest in adhering to any particular theory or ‘trite rules’ suggests that sounding like Debussy was no more a priority than sounding like anyone else; the influence of Debussy therefore is to be found elsewhere than on the obvious musical surface.

As mentioned above, Takemitsu’s apparent lack of systematic method and ambiguous approach to structure has often puzzled critics. Burt articulates this puzzlement in an article in which he discusses the ‘limits of analysis’ in relation

---

52 See for instance the discussion of November Steps in Burt, The Music of Toru Takemitsu, p. 115.
to Takemitsu’s music, focusing in particular on those instances where serial procedures derived from Webernian dodecaphonic technique are evident, but are not employed systematically.\textsuperscript{55} Virtually any organisational plan hinted at by Takemitsu with regard to a particular work seems almost always undermined by a lack of consistency or rigour, at least if one approaches the work with the assumptions of conventional Western musical analysis. We have also seen that, for Burt, it is Takemitsu’s emphasis on the unique experiential qualities of individual sound events, rather than on abstract relationships between sounds, that provides the key to a fuller understanding of Takemitsu’s aesthetics.\textsuperscript{56} Such a premise clearly has implications for a composer’s approach to form, since the unfolding of events through time is less likely to be governed by cause-and-effect relationships, or progression towards a goal.

\textit{And then I knew ‘twas Wind} exemplifies many of these issues. The tantalizingly not-quite-tonal harmonic flavour; the unsystematic use of such organisation of pitch materials as can be identified underlying the harmonic and melodic ideas; the seemingly free, fragmentary construction which frustrates the search for long-range plans or background-level structures; and the numerous small melodic ideas which are left hanging in stasis as isolated gestures: all of these contribute to the puzzlement of the analyst seeking a clear formal structure or sense of logical goal. Certain points of departure proposed by the work of other scholars suggest that an examination of two particular dimensions, the temporal and the symbolic, may offer the most fruitful means to more successfully interpret these ambiguities.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p.172
Seeking other connections: temporality and symbolism

As suggested above, an emphasis on the immediate experience of sound rather than long-range relationships will have important implications for the temporal unfolding of musical form. The temporal dimension of Takemitsu’s work has been particularly explored by Deguchi, Wilkins and Koh, who have all inclined towards the view that Takemitsu’s rather non-teleological approach to form reflects an ‘Eastern’ conception of time as being cyclical or eternal, in contrast to the ‘Western’ linear, progressive concept. Takemitsu himself has written about his understanding of the perception of time in relation to Japanese music, and also discusses form in some of his works in terms that are more spatial than temporal. However, while a Japanese or Eastern conception of time cannot be denied as an influence on Takemitsu, the problems of form encountered in his works are very much the problems of Western art music of the twentieth century generally, and coming to an understanding of the various theoretical ideas of form in relation to time and space is clearly essential if we are to properly appreciate the position that Takemitsu’s work occupies within the broader context of twentieth-century music. The music of Debussy in particular, through his emphasis on harmonic colour and timbre above functional harmony, had a profound impact on ideas of temporality in Western music at the start of the 20th century, not least as a result of his encounter with music of non-European cultures.

---

Koozin offers a different point of departure, suggesting that Takemitsu’s music is to be fully understood only if considered in more than absolute musical terms. Crucially, he does so by linking Takemitsu to Debussy, going further than anyone so far towards exploring the link between the two. An essential dimension to Debussy’s music is its interrelatedness with other arts, literature in particular. Similarly, Takemitsu’s writing shows his constant concern not with abstract musical problems but with the multiple dimensions of music in its interaction with the other arts and ideas. Both composers wrote music that is often heavily loaded with extra-musical content. In an article that traces the influence of both Debussy and Messiaen in Takemitsu’s music, Koozin discusses Takemitsu’s adoption of certain pitch groupings and types of gestural phrase derived from Debussy. Koozin argues that these elements are not simply borrowed as raw material, but are employed for their referential and associative qualities. He suggests it is the use of musical imagery and metaphor in particular that Takemitsu borrows, which, like both Debussy and Messiaen, he exploits to project certain poetic and spiritual ideas. In another article that explores similar territory, though with a predominant focus on Messiaen, Koozin goes so far as to characterise Takemitsu’s music as ‘essentially metaphorical’. Koozin proposes that musical materials in Takemitsu function as much through their referential and associative qualities as through abstract, purely musical relationships.

This suggests that an important key to making sense of the seeming inconsistencies and ambiguities – those qualities resistant to purely musical

---

62 Ibid.
analysis in Takemitsu’s works – is to be found in the realm of symbol, where musical and extra-musical elements intersect. As Kawaguchi has said, it is often a poetic term or image that seems to provide the ‘controlling concept’ in Takemitsu’s works. Many writers have looked, justifiably, to the composer’s Japanese cultural heritage for clues to his metaphorical language, but Koozin’s discussion, in addition to the evidence of Takemitsu’s early influences and interests that we have already surveyed, suggests that its roots may be found in French music as well.

Koozin’s ideas seem unmistakeably reminiscent of those writers who have discussed the influence of the French Symbolist poets on the music of Debussy. As the foundational biographical works of Lockspeiser and Dietschy for instance have revealed, Debussy’s engagement with the poets and writers of his time was at least as significant in the development of his artistic sensibility as his (relatively conventional) musical education. Scholars such as Jarocinski, Arthur B. Wenk, David M. Hertz and Elizabeth McCombie have argued that the aesthetic ideas of the French Symbolist poets, especially Stéphane Mallarmé, with their breakdown of traditional poetic forms and loosening of the laws of syntax and meaning, were influential on Debussy’s musical language and concept of form. Given that those qualities of Debussy’s music that are most often associated with Symbolism also seem often to be found in late works of

---

Takemitsu, the Symbolist movement (and the poetics of Mallarmé in particular, in which the musical and literary realms so closely intersect) may be considered a useful prism through which to also view aspects of Takemitsu’s aesthetics. The loosening of the restrictions of linear narrativity that Symbolist poetry proposed suggests a point of intersection with the temporal dimension of Takemitsu’s music and its questioning of the bounds of goal-oriented form.

Chapter 2 of this thesis will therefore survey the ways in which the musical-temporal field has been questioned and reinvented by composers since the decline of tonality, and will critically examine the ways in which aspects of Japanese aesthetics have been invoked to explain Takemitsu’s approach to form, in order to establish a theoretical framework within which to consider the formal and temporal dimensions of And then I knew ‘twas Wind; while Chapter 3 will consist of a study of the French Symbolist movement, the derivation of many of its aspirations from ideas about music (especially from the theoretical writings of Wagner), and its influence on the music of Debussy. These discussions will form a contextual background to a detailed analysis in Chapter 4 of And then I knew ‘twas Wind, which will focus on motivic and thematic relationships, pitch materials and their relationship to the form of the work. Chapter 5 will draw on this analysis and contextual background to examine in detail the relationship between And then I knew ‘twas Wind and Debussy’s Sonata for flute, viola and harp, in order to reveal connections between the musical language and aesthetic concerns of Debussy and Takemitsu. Chapter 6 will examine the extent to which features of their works can be shown to reflect the aesthetics of the Symbolist movement, through the intersection of both musical and extra-musical dimensions. Ultimately this thesis will argue that the legacy of
certain aesthetic ideals of the Symbolist movement, and of Mallarmé in particular, as mediated through the music of Debussy, can be traced in Takemitsu’s music, and that these aesthetic ideals provide a useful prism through which to interpret the music of Takemitsu’s later period.

Burt has noted a general divide within the field of Takemitsu studies between an analytical approach focusing on ‘musical specifics such as pitch organization and global formal patterning’ and a more abstract approach tending towards ‘discussion of philosophical and poetic issues’. In demonstrating the limits of the analytical approach, Burt suggests that the most fruitful investigative methods for future Takemitsu studies may involve an ‘imaginative mixture of both these lines of enquiry’. It is hoped that by combining a detailed technical analysis of Takemitsu’s compositional procedures in And then I knew ‘twas Wind with an exploration of the work’s temporal and symbolic dimensions, and by simultaneously linking it to the influence of Debussy and the poetics of Mallarmé, this study may offer one such ‘imaginative mixture’.

72 Ibid., p. 175.
CHAPTER 2 – Temporality and interpretive issues in the music of Takemitsu

Music and time in the 20th Century

Music, as a fundamentally temporal art, forces us to confront that most intangible aspect of consciousness, our perception of time. As Eugene Narmour has written, research in the modern era has led to ‘the inescapable empirical conclusion that time is an actively shaping, fundamental variable inherent in all natural and artifactual phenomena – rather than just an idealised, passive medium within which events occur’.1 Such a conclusion has had a considerable impact on contemporary understandings of how music is perceived and understood. Theorists and analysts have been forced to reconsider the concept of musical form as a static object, fixed by the composer in the written score, since the listener is now understood to participate in the creation of structure and meaning in an active way, both through the mental construction of relationships between sounds heard in real time, and through reflection on those relationships over time, through memory and repeated hearing. This participation may be regarded as being as much a part of the ‘text’ of the musical work as the composer’s score. As Nattiez writes:

The musical work is not merely...the ‘text; it is not merely a whole composed of ‘structures’...Rather, the work is also constituted by the procedures that have engendered it (acts of composition) and the procedures to which it gives rise: acts of interpretation and perception. These three categories define a total musical fact.2

---

This new understanding of time, and therefore musical structure, as a function of consciousness, coincides with a change in concepts of musical form brought about by the shift away from tonality as the dominant unifying paradigm in Western music at the beginning of the twentieth century. Without a common unifying system, the linear, discursive process considered fundamental to musical coherence for the previous two centuries could no longer be taken for granted. Musical forms began to show an increasing tendency towards discontinuity, reaching an extreme in the complete denial of continuity or coherence in Stockhausen’s ‘moment form’ and Cage’s chance experiments. Attempts were made to replace tonality with an equivalent system. Serialism in its various forms is of course one of the more notable and systematic of these attempts, reaching its pinnacle in Stockhausen’s attempt to develop a ‘relativity’ of music in which the parameters of pitch and duration could be conceived as part of a continuous spectrum, and in which a total system of relationships encompasses every note. The principle of total serialism could be said to reinvent the concept of musical time, since it presents a matrix of interrelationships at every level within the work, which are not dependent on temporal succession. Despite such attempts, however, composition in the twentieth century can probably best be understood as arriving at a state of plurality, in which composers found themselves having to invent a new set of assumptions for virtually every work, and to write music that functioned according to its own internal logic rather than an externally imposed or preordained conception of form. It need hardly be added that the realisation in

the West that concepts of time and form could differ greatly between cultures
has played a significant part in the breakdown of conventional musical structure.

**Takemitsu and ‘the Japanese concept of time’**.

Takemitsu perceived a fundamental difference between Western and
Japanese music, as he discusses frequently in his writings. The main basis of this
difference, as he perceived it, seems to be the concept of musical time, as the
following statement expresses:

> Westerners, especially today, consider time as linear and continuity as a steady and unchanging state. But I think of time as circular and continuity as a constantly changing state. These are important assumptions in my concept of musical form.  

We need not concern ourselves with the question of whether this view of time
has any factual basis; what is important is that Takemitsu himself perceived a
difference of this kind. Such a statement by a composer about their own work
cannot be ignored; but nor do we need to accept uncritically the implications it
suggests for understanding the composer’s music. In examining these questions
it may be helpful to take as a starting point a theory of musical time proposed by
Langer: that works of music create their own ‘virtual’ time, through interaction
with the listener’s imagination, as distinct from literal, clock-measured time. As
Langer says, ‘Music makes time audible, and its form and continuity sensible’. If
we can accept this, then the particular way musical time is manipulated by the
composer must be a defining aspect of the effect of a musical work, and
ultimately of a composer’s style. At the same time, a crucial distinction must be

---

maintained between the composer's intent to project some concept or philosophical idea about time through some musical representation or metaphor, and the direct manifestation of such a concept or idea through the temporal structure of the work itself. This chapter will not attempt to set out a theory of temporality in Takemitsu's music as such, but will attempt to place Takemitsu's work in relation to debates about musical temporality, in order to identify issues that may influence the kinds of critical interpretations that may be arrived at.

The relevant features of temporality in traditional Japanese music which seem to distinguish it from Western music, as identified either directly by Takemitsu or inferred by those writers who have examined the role of temporality in his musical thought, may be summarised as follows: an avoidance of goal-oriented form; a conception of form that is to some degree spatial as well as temporal, due to the lack of goal; the potential for a degree of looseness of relationship between simultaneous or overlapping events; a non-metrical conception of rhythm, in which the temporal structure is not created by a pulse or counting of time units, but through the tension between sound events and silences; and a consequent emphasis on these individual events or moments, brought into relief by their interaction with silence, rather than an overall structural relationship between events on a larger scale.

The degree to which such 'Japanese' concepts of musical time are manifested in Takemitsu's works is a question that many scholars have necessarily found themselves addressing, since Takemitsu himself draws attention to it. Many have argued or concluded that it is 'Japanese' temporal elements that provide the key to the comprehensibility of many of his works (or
that, perhaps more frequently, explain the lack of comprehensibility according to Western expectations).

However, this approach might also provide too easy a way out for the analyst who approaches a work with Western theoretical expectations and discovers much that he cannot understand. It also begs a number of questions, given the Western influences on Takemitsu’s early musical education and his thorough assimilation of many of the ideas and techniques of Western contemporary music. On the one hand, accepting Takemitsu at his word, and applying literally some of his thoughts about Japanese musical aesthetics, might seem at some level to be honouring the composer’s intentions. On the other, such an approach can be deceptive, in seeming to offer an explanation while, in reality, only providing illustrative analogy without real musical substance.

Two studies, by Deguchi⁷ and Koh,⁸ provide perhaps the most thorough examination of the question of temporality in Takemitsu’s music, and demonstrate different but intersecting points of view. Koh tends to emphasise the Eastern or Japanese view of time as it relates to Takemitsu, drawing on concepts such as Zen Buddhism⁹ and traditional Japanese Zen-inspired art forms¹⁰ to illuminate aspects of form in the works examined, while Deguchi tends toward Western interpretations, despite identifying a number of similar features. Koh identifies an approach to form characteristic of traditional Japanese music, in which form is created cumulatively through a succession of events. While a connection between events is not lacking, individual moments in

---

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 48.
the music tend to relate most strongly to those immediately preceding or following. Form can then be understood as a process of unfolding, in a series of connected thoughts, without a tightly structured long-range pattern governing the work as a whole. Koh relates this experience of form both to the viewing of successive scenes on a Japanese picture scroll or ornamental screen, and also to the idea of walking through a landscape, an important concept for Takemitsu, as we shall examine further below.

Deguchi identifies a similar process of form as accumulation of successive events, but interprets it differently, as evidence of a Western musical sensibility. Deguchi takes a particular interest in the question of linearity versus circularity, or the extent to which musical events proceed to a goal, and borrows from Jonathan Kramer's taxonomy of degrees of directionality. He concludes, generally speaking, that while the works looked at are not goal-oriented, they nevertheless display a linearity, which he interprets as Western in character. This position seems somewhat contradictory, but Deguchi argues that form in the works studied is based on causal relationships between events, and can be conceived of as linear insofar as form is built through a dynamic process of succession and accumulation of ideas, without this necessarily implying a logical endpoint to that succession or a strong overall structure. Deguchi therefore characterises Takemitsu's works as frequently having a clear beginning, but not necessarily a definitive ending – they remain somewhat open-ended. For Deguchi, this open-ended linearity stands in opposition to an Eastern concept of

11 Ibid., p. 230.
12 Deguchi, pp. 29-31.
time, which he believes would result in a stronger sense of stasis, constancy and circular return.

**The Japanese garden as a musical model**

Takemitsu's reference to traditional Japanese gardens as a metaphorical model for the form of some of his works provides an interesting opportunity to examine the intersection of several issues of temporality, Japanese aesthetics and musical form. (While the garden metaphor may not be explicitly relevant to *And then I knew ‘twas Wind*, it will be shown that the issues it raises are of sufficient general importance to be able to shed useful light on that work as well). As a number of writers have discussed, the various types of traditional Japanese ‘stroll garden’ are designed to create a particular aesthetic experience. A carefully designed path leads the viewer through a series of varied vistas and points of view. As Koh writes, the intention is that no single element should dominate, and that the design of the garden is grasped not as a totality from outside, but is revealed through a gradual unfolding and succession of moments, each of which is somewhat self-contained, but never complete or final in itself.

Takemitsu wrote on numerous occasions about his love for Japanese gardens and their unique aesthetic qualities, and described the structure of a number of his works as being directly related to the experience of walking around such a garden, even to the extent of providing, in some instances, a description of how various musical materials represent certain elements in the landscape, suggesting a surprising degree of precision in the working-out of the

---

13 Koh, pp. 230-235, goes into particular detail on this subject.
model into music. However, as Burt has remarked, ‘Takemitsu’s commentaries on the subject only go part of the way towards elucidating fully the manner in which his metaphor is translated into sound’.  

But as he also says, in relation to the work *Arc* (1976), ‘it is at least clear that Takemitsu was using the elements of a Japanese garden as metaphors for various kinds of spatially and texturally differentiated musics which, in combination, could produce an overall “pan-focal” texture’. The basis of attributing various musical strata to specific landscape features such as rocks, trees, etc. seems to be their unique time cycles: different elements in nature possess their own temporality, according to their longevity and rate of change. It would seem to be one of Takemitsu’s goals in these works to create music in which multiple temporal levels exist simultaneously. The possibility of levels of activity coexisting in a musical structure, but moving or changing at different rates without necessarily relating, is a feature of several of genres of traditional Japanese music, such as that of the *bunraku* puppet theatre and of *noh* drama, an idea Takemitsu explicitly discussed. Therefore, the coincidence of sounds occurring together cannot necessarily be understood as a form of harmony in the Western sense. At the same time, it could not be said that Takemitsu’s music is devoid of harmonic intent. Clearly, this question will present major issues to the analyst trying to understand the arrangement of pitch material in a work of Takemitsu.

The other point of relevance in the garden metaphor is the relation of the parts to the whole. The description of Takemitsu’s music as being formed from a

---

16 Ibid.
succession of only loosely related events, according to the views of Koh and Deguchi discussed previously, may call to mind Stockhausen’s moment form, and indeed at least one writer has made this connection. However, the garden metaphor, with its conception of form as a journey through a landscape, suggests this is not an appropriate view of form in Takemitsu. An essential point of the ‘stroll garden’ experience is the duality between the garden itself as an integrated, designed whole, and the viewer’s experience of the landscape as a succession of different points of view, of the same elements from different angles. There is an underlying unity in the overall design, of which each moment is an essential but partial glimpse. In musical terms this can mean that a series of musical events that may not seem causally linked, according to Western principles of development, may nevertheless be related as facets of a larger unity of material. The temporal succession of events, therefore, is not the principle that unites them. This conception suggests a spatial concept of form – a fixed musical ‘landscape’ through which the listener ‘moves’.

**Musical Space**

This spatial conception of music links Takemitsu to other twentieth century composers, such as Rochberg, Ligeti and Stockhausen, who have discussed the spatialisation of music as developing out of new kinds of internal structures, made possible in part by the move away from tonality, and towards

---

18 Blake Matthew Wilkins, ‘An Analysis of Musical Temporality in Takemitsu’s *Rain Tree* (1981)’, (DMA Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1999). (Full dissertation not available, but this point is referred to in the abstract.)
19 Pierre Boulez draws on a similar metaphor in likening some of his ‘mobile’ forms to the experience of travelling through a village by different routes. The difference though is that Boulez creates this experience by allowing the performer to rearrange sections of the piece differently in different performances. Takemitsu’s ‘garden’ works are fixed works which do not grant freedom to the performers in this way.
integral serialism. Where all relationships between the notes of a work are determined by a pre-compositional matrix, the music can be seen to create a ‘musical space’ in which the relationships between material are not dependent on temporal succession, but exist across and through time, in both directions. This view also forms the basis for such experiments as ‘mobile’ forms, in which the real-time manifestation of the work can be structured in multiple ways at the performer’s discretion. Stockhausen’s moment form goes a step further in denying any relationship between elements, temporal or otherwise. Such ideas clearly have major implications for the listener, whose experience of the work can no longer be assumed to be the most ‘true’, or at least not in a single hearing.

However, Christopher Hasty points out that such concepts of form and musical space struggle against the reality of the way music is in fact heard by the listener – relationships according to temporal succession tend to be perceived whether the composer intends them or not, since that is the only way the listener can apprehend the work.²⁰

Hasty’s critique has implications for Takemitsu’s interest in non-simultaneous events arising from multiple temporal levels. However thoroughly musical events may be genuinely unrelated, it is in the nature of musical listening, for Western-trained ears, to hear relationships between sounds occurring vertically together. If, as Takemitsu seems to suggest, Japanese musical listening is genuinely different in this way, then clearly this would be a significant factor in a listener’s interpretation of coherence or lack thereof.

Aesthetic problems in interpreting Takemitsu’s ‘garden’ forms as projections of a Japanese sensibility

Is there anything truly Japanese about Takemitsu’s ‘garden’ forms? While an actual Japanese landscape garden clearly projects a certain aesthetic sensibility, how this aspect of the landscape might be literally manifested in musical terms is not at all clear – the idea of translating qualities of a certain spatial environment into a musical ‘illustration’ is not an idea that, in itself, could be regarded as especially Japanese, and it is hard to see how anything other than a generalised suggestion of objects in space could be conveyed musically (at least not without an elaborate system of labels and explanations). Such a metaphorical concept of form would seem to function in some way like a musical programme, in the nineteenth-century sense, providing an external explanation of the structure but leaving unanswered the question of coherence at a musical level. While a Japanese garden may have provided initial inspiration, it does not necessarily follow that there is any especially Japanese aesthetic at work in the musical material or structure.

This suggests, then, that we might understand the garden model as an instance of musical ‘representation’. Peter Kivy offers a useful typology of the ways that music might be said to represent non-musical things: from obvious imitation of real-life sounds, to more indirect or partial ways that music can be ‘like’ the thing it represents, to purely symbolic or associative forms of representation. According to Kivy’s formulation, we could say of Takemitsu’s garden forms that an aspect of the object represented is imitated in some way.

through the form of the music, but music and object are not directly similar in any way that could be recognisable to an observer unaware of the connection. That music can indeed ‘represent’ would seem to be a concept belonging more to Western than traditional Japanese music. While this view supports what Koozin calls the ‘essentially metaphorical’ nature of Takemitsu’s music, it does not help to understand how or if it projects ‘Japanese aesthetics’ in its actual musical materials.

However, it would seem that what Takemitsu is trying to create is not a representation so much as an analogous experience: listening to the piece will induce some emotional or spiritual state similar to the walk around the garden: it will be a musical equivalent, not an imitation. Therefore, is it necessary to know that the garden is the inspiration? The aesthetic goal is presumably not dependent on the listener knowing explicitly that their experience of the piece is intended to be analogous to the garden walk. Why should not the listener be free to interpret the experience undirected? This freedom and openness seem in fact more in keeping with Takemitsu’s goals as an artist (and in fact with the very things he appreciates about the experience of gardens in the first place). Takemitsu does not seem to intend that the listener must be told: ‘You are walking through a garden – here are trees, here are stones’, as a 'key' to unlock the work. While it is true that he did discuss the garden model explicitly, this was only as a general explanation of his compositional methods; he does not supply an explanatory programme to accompany his works. Rather, it is Debussy’s

---

'mysterious correspondences of Nature and the imagination' that are Takemitsu's territory. As he stated, like Debussy, he did not like to emphasise compositional schemes and formulas.

It is arguable therefore that the garden metaphor, while providing an interesting analogy that provides some insight into the way long-range structures in Takemitsu's music are planned, does not in itself help us to hear what is or is not 'Japanese' about Takemitsu's music, since the translation from one form to another can never be specific enough. It does however emphasise the complexity of the relationship between a composer's conception of their work and the listener's experience, by bringing into focus the interplay between the spatial and temporal dimensions of music.

**The non-finality of musical perception**

As composer Roger Reynolds reminds us, the temporal grasp of a work by composer and listener may be very different, since the composer is in the privileged position of being able to hold the entire work in their mind at once, in a way that the listener cannot: '[The composer] can move forwards or backwards through the time he envisions and is not tied to the inexorability of the actual experience that will result from his planning'. For the composer, the work may indeed come to feel like a spatial environment in which he or she can 'walk around', manipulating the form from within as the compositional process develops, while the listener can perceive the final work only as a series of events.

24 Toru Takemitsu, 'Dream and Number', in *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, p. 106.
unfolding through time. The idea of ‘musical space’ therefore challenges us to question whether it is ever possible to arrive at a single, complete understanding or interpretation of a musical work, or even a single musical event within a work. For instance, there may be structures demonstrably present within a work that make sense from a compositional point of view, but that are beyond the reach of the listener’s perception. Narmour, in the context of a discussion about the problem of analysing hierarchical structures in music, comments that, while the assumed link between what the composer intends us to hear and what the listener perceives is ‘one of our fondest aesthetic-cultural beliefs’, there is little reason to be certain that composed structures and perceptual structures should be identical.26

The objection can of course be made that, in the age of recording a listener may easily choose to rehear a work many times, and may therefore develop sufficient familiarity with it to be able to grasp its structure on more complex levels; similarly a performer may develop so deep a familiarity with a work that their grasp of the work as a whole may even be comparable to that of the composer. However, we should bear in mind once again Nattiez’s point quoted at the beginning of the chapter: that the musical work is in the end an act of construction shared between composer, performer and listener. There will always be aspects of the listener’s experience over which a composer has no control. Therefore it becomes impossible to say what perception of the work a listener ‘should’ have: no single hearing or perception of a work is complete or final.

26 Narmour, ‘Some Major Theoretical Problems Concerning the Concept of Hierarchy in the Analysis of Tonal Music’: 132.
While traditional forms of analysis that rely on conceptualising the musical work as a self-contained entity ‘frozen in time’ may struggle to come to terms with this non-finality, various twentieth-century theorists have deliberately engaged with it in their attempts to develop models of musical structure and meaning that incorporate temporal experience as an active force. Many have done so by drawing (whether explicitly or implicitly) on Husserl’s phenomenological theory of human consciousness and time perception. Husserl proposed that the sensation that our conscious awareness is always focused in the ‘present moment’ of a constant, river-like flow of time is an illusion or construct; the ‘present’ of our awareness is better understood not as a single point, but as an ‘envelope’ constructed from memory of the past and expectation of the future, as well as immediate sensory experience.\(^{27}\) It is this envelope that allows us to experience a sense of continuous identity, the ‘I’ that is observing the ‘flow’ of time. What we are actually perceiving, at a given single instant, is in fact a complex network of relationships between immediate sensory input, remembered perceptions, and expectations of what is likely to come next. David Lewin develops a detailed theory of musical perception based on Husserl’s theory, the starting point of which is that a musical event within a work (such as a single chord) is in fact perceived multiple times as its context changes through time, and is therefore constantly re-interpreted. For instance, the expectation that a certain chord is about to occur in a passage, the actual performance of that chord, the reflection on whether the chord fulfilled or thwarted the expectation created by what came before it, and the re-evaluation of the significance of that

chord as the unfolding of the work gradually provides a larger context, all
represent different perceptions of the single chord. Furthermore, the
awareness of relationships between all of these perceptions also forms another
level of perception. The point for the purpose of this discussion is that no single
perception of an event is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ but rather that the unfolding
multiplicity of perceptions of any one event is inherent in our experience of
music.

Narmour makes a broadly similar point in his critique of Schenkerian
analytic theory. For Narmour, one of the faults of Schenkerian analysis is that it
does not allow for the possibility of showing multiple, equally valid readings of a
work, or part of a work, within a given analysis. The symbological apparatus and
methods of reduction demand that a choice must be made regarding the
interpretation of, for instance, a harmonically ambiguous passage, whereas a
more intuitively satisfying solution might be one that acknowledges multiple
readings as equally valid. Furthermore, more than one aspect or function of a
passage may be heard simultaneously. Again the point here is that, according to
Narmour, the experience of ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning plays a more
necessary part in our perception of music than traditional theories of musical
coherence have acknowledged.

For Narmour, the alternative to the Schenkerian model of musical form
based on an archetypal background structure is an ‘implication-realisation’
model in which the tension between expectation created by musical events, and
whether those expectations are realised or thwarted by subsequent events,

28 Lewin: 332.
29 Eugene Narmour, Beyond Schenkerism: The Need for Alternatives in Music Analysis (Chicago:
forms the dynamic which drives musical structure. Narmour’s theory draws on that of Leonard B. Meyer, who develops a similar model in his attempt to explain how musical material generates expression and meaning. The implication-realisation model resonates closely with Husserl’s phenomenology of time perception in that it relies on the same self-reflexive envelope of interaction between memory and expectation, through which events or stimuli are constantly reinterpreted. This approach suggests a model of musical form that is generated from within; a long-range form is therefore best understood as the cumulative result of numerous foreground events interacting and unfolding through time, rather than a frozen, architectural entity. Implied by this model is that, from a listener’s point of view, relationships between elements of a work are created in the mind of the listener as the work is experienced.

Although the implication-realisation model of theorists such as Meyer and Narmour was developed within the context of the Western teleological framework of ideas about musical form, the idea of form as being generated by the moment-to-moment dynamic of unfolding events also resonates with the cumulative process of form in Takemitsu that Koh proposes (see above). This reminds us of a feature of Takemitsu’s musical language that is quite different from the spatial concept of form discussed earlier. To the listener one of the most distinctive (and often most difficult) aspects of the musical surface in many of Takemitsu’s late works is its fragmentary nature; the music is often built from a large number of brief gestural phrases, frequently separated by pauses or

---

30 Ibid., p.122.
silence. In much traditional Japanese music, as Takemitsu was acutely aware, a tension between silence and sound is the principle that defines the temporal experience, rather than the ‘measuring’ of time through a regular pulse. The expectancy and sense of being ‘present’ brought about by this tension is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the ‘Japanese’ sense of time that Takemitsu suggests is embodied in his music. One effect of this process is that the conscious awareness of the intangibility of time perception is brought to the foreground: the conjunction of sound and silence continually invites contemplation of the tension between memory and expectation, which form the framework, or envelope, of the intangible present moment. It seems reasonable to infer that the deliberate directing of the attention towards this intangibility is, for Takemitsu, one of the purposes of music itself. An important result of the foregrounding of the intangibility of time perception in this way is that any sense of goal or long-range structure in the music becomes secondary – the consciousness of the present moment becomes the focus. However, in contrast to the spatial concept of form, this process necessarily depends on the experience of events through time, rather than a spatial appreciation of the musical architecture outside of temporal experience.

The main point to emphasise is that the sense of time Takemitsu’s music attempts to convey in this way is experiential – it is an experience created in the listener by the music, not a depiction of a concept of time through musical analogy, or expressed through an attached programme. An awareness that this

---

experience may originally derive from a Japanese cultural sensibility is not necessarily essential to the listener’s perception or appreciation of the work.

**Conclusion**

Broadly speaking, in the course of the above discussion two possible approaches to examining the structure of *And Then I Knew ’Twas Wind* have emerged: the spatial concept of form, derived from Takemitsu’s garden metaphor, which suggests that the work might be viewed as a structure that can be viewed from multiple angles but is not fully explicable through temporal experience; and the temporal view that regards the immediate perception of events unfolding in time as more predominant in the listener’s experience of the work than a sense of long-range structure. Both these concepts can be seen as deriving from aspects of Takemitsu’s engagement with Japanese cultural concepts, but as has been argued, a knowledge or understanding of these concepts as specifically Japanese is not necessarily essential to the listener’s perception of the musical experience that is intended.

Which approach then is more relevant or useful in arriving at an analysis of *And Then I Knew ’Twas Wind* that will be useful in elucidating something of Takemitsu’s aesthetic intentions? As will be argued in more detail in the following chapters, it seems that an approach to the work that is open to a multiplicity of views and interpretations, none of which is complete or final, is most true to the nature of the work. The relationship between the spatial and temporal dimension seems in fact to be constructed so as to be deliberately ambiguous; many connections and relationships can be detected across various levels of the work, but there is little basis for making decisions about which
relationships are more dominant in defining the structure of the work. It seems rather that a deliberate uncertainty and open-endedness is a defining feature of the work.

It can be seen from the above discussion that the temporal dimension of Takemitsu's music can possess a certain symbolic quality. It will be recalled that in the introduction two points of departure, the temporal and the symbolic, were proposed as ways of approaching the question of Debussy's influence on Takemitsu, and of the interpretation of Takemitsu's later works. The second of these two points will be the focus of the next chapter, which explores the role of Symbolist poetics on the development of Debussy's musical language; and, as will be seen, temporality is an element that provides a link between music and poetry. These two chapters, with their examination of parallel but interlinked subjects, will provide background to the analytical discussions which follow in Chapters 4 and 5.
CHAPTER 3 – Wagner, Mallarmé, Debussy: the French Symbolist movement and its resonances in the music of Debussy

Introduction

While it is in Takemitsu’s use of tone colour and orchestration that Debussy’s influence is usually regarded as most self-evident, it will be argued that it is in the parallels between each composer’s search for freedom from the conventions and restrictions of their respective musical environments that some of the strongest affinities can be found. The colouristic, ‘quasi-tonal’ harmonic world of Takemitsu’s late works can be heard as an extension of the earlier loosening of the restrictions of functional harmony that Debussy’s music achieved through its own questioning of the musical conventions of his time; however, Takemitsu’s quest to ‘free sound from the trite rules of music’¹ in his later music must also be understood as a response to many later advances in twentieth century music. Somewhat paradoxically, Takemitsu seems to reach the point of greatest freedom in the works of his later period, where the musical materials become more conventional.

While Burt may not be incorrect to insist that, as a broad aesthetic stance, Takemitsu tends to give priority to individual sound events rather than relationships between events,² in the quest for further elucidation a slightly different emphasis might be suggested. Burt is in part offering a defence against

---

those critics who have found Takemitsu’s music ‘aimless’ or lacking in structure, and the force of his argument in that respect should not be diminished. Nevertheless this aspect of Takemitsu’s music seems to exist as much as an outcome of a process as it does as a starting point; and the deliberately composed ambiguity that Takemitsu’s works appear to exhibit (with their range of subtle and often puzzling relationships at many levels throughout the matrix of a work) seems a rather different effect from what one might expect from a composer with a greater interest in the immediate experience of sound over higher-level musical structures. Deliberately composed ambiguity, as opposed to absence or denial of syntax or structure, seems also a feature that Debussy’s music tends to share, in some of its dimensions at least. For both composers, it seems this ambiguity is the product of a search for a freedom of form that could give a more natural and instinctive expression to the full range of their musical imagination – even though they achieve it through very different means.

While technical elements form one aspect of the resonances and parallels between Debussy and Takemitsu, it has also been suggested in the introductory chapter that those aspects of Takemitsu’s later style that seem most reminiscent of Debussy need a wider context than a mere comparison of musical material can provide, if their significance in the interpretation of his aesthetic intentions, and consequently his place in the history of twentieth-century music, is to be fully understood. Following Koozin’s remark that Takemitsu’s music is ‘essentially metaphorical’, it has been suggested that his works cannot be fully appreciated without reference to the intersecting territory between the musical and extra-

---

musical elements of his compositional thinking. That there are various philosophical, poetic, and spiritual dimensions to his work is evident if one only looks at his titles. In the previous chapter it was proposed that Takemitsu’s deliberate engagement with the intangibility of time perception lies at the heart of his apparent lack of goal-oriented formal structures; yet at the same time it was argued that the extra-musical concepts that may have informed his concept of musical time (the Japanese concept of cyclical time, the Japanese garden) do not themselves constitute the ‘meaning’ of the work. It is the work itself that embodies its own idea, rather than acting as a signpost to some idea outside of itself. This presents an apparent paradox: how does this music work as music, if it incorporates musical ideas that are referential rather than functional?

The relationship between Takemitsu and Debussy arguably lies partly in the parallels between this aspect of their musical thought – that is, in the manner in which their music relates to the world outside itself; or perhaps more precisely, the manner in which their compositional processes translate those non-musical aspects with which their works engage into actual musical experiences. To this extent both Debussy’s and Takemitsu’s music appears to share some common ground with the poetry of the Symbolist movement, particularly that of Stéphane Mallarmé. The Symbolists, in their search for poetic language of greater freedom and expressive force, drew attention to the imprecise overlap between sound and meaning in language, and in so doing called into question the nature of, and relationships between, language and music.4

---

Language and music: points of intersection

That Debussy had close associations with the writers and literary movements of his time has been well established. Apart from his song settings and various theatrical projects, many of his purely instrumental works are also saturated with literary references. His music therefore provides ample opportunity to explore the ways in which musical and literary thought may intersect or converge. This provides an important parallel with Takemitsu, who also enjoyed relationships and collaborations with a wide range of artists throughout his life, and who, like Debussy, would likely have been a very different artist without them.⁵ As with Debussy, Takemitsu often employed literary or extra-musical references in his titles. As he wrote: ‘For me composition always involves a strong interaction between music and words. To find an appropriate title for a composition I move back and forth between sounds and words’.⁶

Interdisciplinary and comparative studies attempting to develop a critical language in which both literature and music may be discussed on equal terms have been a feature of new trends in musicology that have developed since the 1980s. Work by Lawrence Kramer in this field has established some important foundations. In his Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After, Kramer is concerned with developing a critical basis for discussing the common ground that exists between poetic and musical works, particularly in the Romantic and modern periods. The debate about the relationship between music and words obviously has a much longer history, but as Kramer argues, in the nineteenth

---

⁵ Asaka Takemitsu, A Memoir of Toru Takemitsu (Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2010), p.150.
century a view emerged of music and poetry as arts that were deeply interrelated. Kramer’s main interest in this study is not the immediate interaction of words and music, as in the musical setting of texts or in dramatic works where musical form is determined by dramatic action, but the convergences between musical and poetic texts not necessarily directly related to one another but which display similar underlying structural patterns. For Kramer, music and poetry share a gestural language in that they ‘define their formal shape as a function of rhythmically integrated time’. Their common ground therefore lies in their structural rhythm, or in the way they ‘shape’ the experience of time through the accumulation and release of tension:

Music and poetry share a kind of temporality in which the experience of passing time is concretised and perceptually enriched between a definite beginning and a definite ending.

Poetic and musical works may therefore be interpreted in tandem on the basis of a shared structural rhythm, and may shed light on one another as products of similar aesthetic premises. Kramer’s approach offers us an entry point for considering the various forms of parallel and overlap between the poetry of the Symbolists and the music of Debussy, and ultimately of Takemitsu.

Elizabeth McCombie uses a similar interdisciplinary approach in her more recent work *Debussy and Mallarmé: Unseen Music, Unheard Text*. Through detailed side-by-side analyses, McCombie not only attempts to shed light on the works of both artists, but also uses the interrelationships between them as a case study for both examining the intermediary ground between music and poetry. While she acknowledges that such relationships are not found between

---

8 Ibid., p.8.
Mallarmé and Debussy alone, these two artists, both equally revolutionary in their own fields, do provide a rich opportunity to examine the intersection between music and poetry, given their close interaction within a particular artistic milieu, and their mutual influence. McCombie takes as her starting point the constant and all-pervasive presence of musical ideas in Mallarmé’s works, in which ‘textual-musical tension is a continuous impulse on a specific and detailed level’; she goes so far as to characterise Mallarmé’s work as a ‘profound working out of the overlap between poetry and music’ which has had significant repercussions in the modern development of both arts.

The role of music in Mallarmé’s work, and his explicit project to ‘musicalise’ poetic language, has long been recognised, if not always well understood. Indeed music, and specifically the music of Wagner, has been acknowledged not only as a major inspiration for Mallarmé, but the progenitor of the Symbolist movement as a whole. This subject is the focus of a study by Heath Lees, in which the author argues that the debt that Mallarmé’s works owe to music and to Wagner’s ideas is even greater than has so far been appreciated. Furthermore, towards the end of his study, Lees looks ahead to later developments in the history of music, and concludes that ‘in a satisfying historical reciprocity, musicians were themselves to become much indebted to Mallarmé’; his work ‘led composers to seek similar freedom for the individual sounds of music.’ The difficulty of Mallarmé’s writing, however, is such that it is
by no means obvious why he might be viewed as such a crucial figure in the history of music. It will therefore be worthwhile to explain this subject in more detail as background to the discussion that follows.

**Mallarmé and Wagner**

As Lees describes, Wagner developed a following among literary circles in France as early as the 1860s. Although his attempts to win over the musical establishment of Paris were largely a failure at that time, a circle of devoted literary followers formed, through whom the young Mallarmé was first brought into contact with Wagner’s ideas.\(^{14}\) It was the poet Charles Baudelaire who was among the first to respond to the emotional power and immediacy of Wagner’s music, and also to appreciate the significance of his ideas for the writing of poetry. His brochure *Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris* of 1860 became one of the most important early sources of information on, and informed appraisals of, Wagner’s work.\(^{15}\) It is important to note that, although Baudelaire was initially inspired by a performance of the overture to *Lohengrin*, it was not so much Wagner’s music itself (to which many of his early French devotees in fact had very little exposure) but rather his theoretical writings that were to prove so influential. It was Wagner’s ideas about poetry and music, and in particular his vision of an ideal art form in which the two arts would be perfectly fused, as expressed principally in his prose work *Opera and Drama*, that had such an impact on his French devotees.\(^{16}\) Wagner’s main objects of attack were the shallow, frivolous entertainment that French and Italian opera had become, and

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 97.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 69.

\(^{16}\) Wagner also saw the ‘mime’, or stage action of the performers, as an equal pillar in this fusion, though this is less relevant to the current discussion.
the poverty of purely literary drama in its ability to arouse emotion only through the intellect and not directly through the senses. Wagner sought to create dramatic works that would be serious, even sacred in intent, through their exploration of mythical themes of universal human concern. To achieve this, he required a form of drama that could properly fuse language, with its ability to convey meaning directly through the intellect, with the more mysterious power of music to communicate with the emotions directly.

A fusion of poetry and music therefore meant a fusion of feeling and understanding; but for Wagner, in any artwork it was the initial response through feeling that should lead the way. As Lees writes, ‘Throughout Opera and Drama Wagner was adamant that the first stages of a response to art must always be through the senses and the emotions, with the understanding following second...’ The understanding was equally necessary, but the initial feeling response ‘must remain active and resonant within the overall process of that understanding’. In order to generate this feeling response adequately, it was the almost magical power of music to communicate subconsciously – to express that which was inexpressible through language alone – that was the key. However, a new kind of dramatic music would be necessary; the conventional, periodic patterns of musical structure that dominated opera at the time were mere formulaic vehicles for displays of vocal virtuosity, and were unsuitable for conveying deep emotional and psychological truths. Wagner instead conceived of a continuously developing, quasi-symphonic musical accompaniment driven by a web of short themes, or *leitmotivs* – small musical cells that, because of their

17 Lees, p. 74.
18 Ibid., p. 75.
open-endedness and potential for development in multiple musical contexts, carried limitless possibilities of emotional and psychological expression.¹⁹

It can be difficult for the modern student of music history to grasp exactly how Wagner's concept differs in essence from the practice of writing expressive accompaniments to support the meaning of texts that had broadly prevailed in European vocal music since the Renaissance. The answer to this question is to reiterate that it was largely the force of Wagner’s theoretical writings that had an impact, more than the effect of his actual works (or their success or otherwise in embodying his theories). He offered a prophetic vision of a new kind of artwork that would be overwhelming and immersive in its arousal of both the emotions and the intellect, and that could transport the viewer into a kind of aesthetic ecstasy. The seduction of this vision to French poets in particular is better understood if it is remembered that French poetry at the time was governed by very strict conventional rules of versification, even to the extent that, if the rules were followed, perfectly ‘correct’ poetry could be constructed almost mechanically.²⁰ By contrast, Wagner's passionate vision must have seemed to offer an immense injection of new energy into art. From a technical point of view, his willingness to break down the walls of conventional and periodic musical structures in favour of a fluid surface of constant organic development offered an invitation to break free from the limits of classical poetic forms and rules.

On the other hand, Wagner’s conception of the music drama as the ultimate work of art also presented a significant challenge to the art of poetry itself. The necessity for a fusion of music and poetry implied that poetry alone

---

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 76.
was somehow incomplete; that language needed the added emotional power of music in order to achieve its full potential. As Lees writes:

In a discussion [in *Opera and Drama*] that was to offer much to the later Symbolists, Wagner insisted that Drama in performance must rely for its effect on a number of human communicative features that cannot normally be transferred into the medium of writing.\(^{21}\)

The challenge to poetry therefore became: could poetry achieve the same effects with language alone? The challenge of Wagner seems to have inspired the Symbolist poets to try to make poetic language ‘work harder’, in search of a power of expression for poetry alone that could equal Wagner’s vision of a musico-poetic fusion. This challenge seems particularly to have driven Mallarmé’s entire poetic career. As McCombie says, referring to the view of Mallarmé biographer Gordon Millan: ‘The suggestion here is that Mallarme’s entire literary effort stemmed from the desire to set the record straight with Wagner, and can be read as such’.\(^{22}\) Scholars differ in their interpretation of Mallarmé’s exact position with respect to Wagner. Lees argues that the works in which Mallarmé refers to Wagner directly (the sonnet *Hommage (à Wagner)* and the critical prose poem *Rêverie d’un poète français*) can be read as detailed and highly sympathetic appreciations of Wagner’s artistic aims. Others have read into these works a deep ambivalence and a desire to repossess for poetry some of the power that Wagner claimed for music. Certainly in the *Rêverie*, Mallarmé seems to be saying that while Wagner’s works achieve a remarkable power of expression, his attempt at a fusion of arts fails to be more than a juxtaposition;

\(^{21}\) Lees, p. 75.
\(^{22}\) McCombie, p. 20.
and furthermore that the attempt is true neither to the spirit of musical or of poetic art.²³

**Mallarmé, poetry and the musicalisation of language**

For Mallarmé, the true goal of all art was the quest for some Ideal or Absolute: an intangible notion, but which might be understood as an ideal of beauty so perfect that it could connect the human mind to the spiritual or metaphysical realm.²⁴ As Jarocinski discusses,²⁵ something of a spiritual crisis had occurred among many French artists and intellectuals in the latter half of the nineteenth century, as the promises of scientific discovery and the philosophy of Positivism that had seemed to offer so much in the early half of the century were proving unsatisfying in answering the ultimate questions of existence. The Symbolist movement, with its desire to engage with the ‘inexpressible’ dimensions of reality, and to restore for art an element of mystery and ‘otherness’, can be seen as a response to this crisis; and the appeal of Wagner’s vision of an all-consuming and ecstatic aesthetic experience can be understood as a part of this response. The Symbolist movement was also a reaction against Naturalism in art, as exemplified by, for instance, the Impressionist painters, and novelists such as Emile Zola.²⁶ For Mallarmé, the aesthetic Ideal could be found in poetry, even without the help of music’s power to ‘express the inexpressible’

---

²⁶ Ibid., p. 64.
that was so admired in Wagner, because language was already in a sense a form of music.

It is of course the sonic dimension of language that allows it to inhabit some of the same territory as music: the sound patterns of language always have at some level a ‘musical’ quality of their own. Poetry also shares with music a temporal dimension: even though a written text may be fixed on the page and read silently, it still functions to some extent temporally in the reader’s mind as it is read from beginning to end. As Theodor Adorno has said, music may be said to share features of language precisely because of its temporal dimension: ‘Music resembles a language in the sense that it is a temporal sequence of articulated sounds which are more than just sounds’.27 The ‘musicalisation’ of language for the Symbolists therefore meant bringing into full realisation, in the service of poetry, the sonic and temporal dimensions that language already possessed. Wagner’s vision of a fusion between language and music was an inspiration, but largely because it brought into focus the more perfect fusion between language and its own music that already existed. The goal was for language to transcend the limits of literal meaning and everyday usage, through a process of exploration and questioning of the connections between sound and sense, to become Poetry28 – an art of pure language that was simultaneously a form of music.

It can of course be objected that, however sonorously pleasing a collection of words might be, there will always be an inherent separation between language, with its denotative capability, and music which can only communicate

---

27 Theodor Adorno, quoted in McCombie, p. 24, footnote 34.
28 Mallarmé tended to capitalise the word Poésie when speaking of poetry in the sense of an ideal literature.
imprecisely at the level of feeling and suggestion. It might also be pointed out that the sounds of language are essentially arbitrary, while music is an art of deliberate sonic composition. However, it is precisely these distinctions that Mallarmé’s poetry calls into question; it is this more than anything that accounts for his significance as an influential figure in the history of both music and literature, and even linguistics and semiotics.

An important key to the musical dimension of Mallarmé’s poetry is expressed by translator Barbara Johnson:

When Mallarmé speaks of Music, he refers simultaneously to two different things: a system of sounds that appeals directly to the senses and emotions, and a system of pure relations and intervals that has no referential but only a structural existence.29

McCombie also highlights this point:

Mallarmé’s music is not based simply on the sonorous euphony of words placed together in poetry, but rather on the superior, calculated relations created by ‘certaines dispersions de la parole’ which give rise to a magical ‘au-delà’.30

It is through the interplay between these two dimensions that Mallarmé’s poetry achieves its effect. On the one hand, poetic idea or feeling not referred to directly by the poem itself may be suggested or aroused by the patterns of sound of which it is constructed. On the other hand, the apparent concrete meanings or images contained in the poem can be secondary to the poem as a self-referential abstraction.

In order for language to achieve the suggestive, mysterious quality of music, it needed to escape the directness of meaning that we generally take for granted in everyday communication and to be ‘shrouded in a veil of obscured

30 McCombie, p. 24.
meaning’. As McCombie reminds us, ‘Mallarmé’s well-known aim is to free linguistic objects from their ordinary, contingent relations to material objects’. This freedom brings language closer to a state of abstraction, permitting it to suggest and evoke in a way that is more akin to a musical effect than a linguistic one. Mallarmé’s poetry therefore abounds in deliberate ambiguities which blur meaning: words with double or multiple meanings; rare or archaic words whose meaning is left to be inferred; complex rhymes and homonyms where one word or phrase can be interpreted aurally as another; unexpected or dissonant combinations of words (such as unlikely parings of adjectives and nouns); and syntactical ambiguities, where the sentence structure, punctuation or lack thereof, and sometimes the grammatical ambiguity of a word, are deliberately employed to allow a sentence to be read in multiple ways. Robb also refers to how the process of obscuring meaning can occur in reverse, when he discusses how ‘the foregrounding of the material aspects of words eats away at their capacity to refer to things’. For Robb, Mallarmé’s play with complex and ‘difficult’ rhymes is a way of drawing attention to the sounds of words rather than their meaning.

David Hertz identifies Mallarmé’s break from conventional periodicity (or symmetrical patterns of closure) as a structural principle, through his stretching of the limits of syntax, as one of the most significant aspects of Symbolist poetic

31 Ibid., p. 27.
32 Ibid., p. 23.
33 Robb, p. 66.
34 Complex (i.e. multi-syllabic) rhymes were important in classical French poetry, and often exploited to surprising effect by Mallarmé. His pairing of désir, Idée and des idées in Prose (pour des Essentiel) is a famous example. As Robb argues throughout Unlocking Mallarmé, the significance of rhyme is further emphasised by the frequency with which Mallarmé deliberately chose words with limited rhyming possibilities. The famous ‘Sonnet en-xy’, which exploits the –yx ending, rare in French, forms part of the discussion in Chapter 6 below.
language that can be related to music. For the non-specialist it can be difficult to recognise this feature in Mallarmé’s poems, as his verse on the surface level still almost always remains within the strict syllable and rhyme schemes of classical French poetry. However, as Hertz illustrates, the syntactic structure often pulls strongly against the apparently regular rhythm of a poem in ways that undermine the classical periodicity from within.35 Hertz likens this to the avoidance of periodicity in the opening to Wagner’s prelude to Tristan, in which the music grows from a series of small ideas which keep developing sequentially, and never provide the closure that classical periodic structures demand.36

**Debussy, Symbolism and escaping musical conventions**

Henry Weinfield points out, in the introduction to his translation of Mallarmé’s *Collected Poems*, that despite Mallarmé’s fascination with music, poetry was the art that his aesthetic goals were best suited to, precisely because music, due to its inherent abstractness, already possessed in some sense the quality of the Absolute, or spiritual otherness, he sought in art.37 It was precisely the process language needed to undergo in order to overcome its mundane dimensions and transcend itself that became for Mallarmé the subject of poetry: the quest for self-transcendence in search of the Ideal in the poetic process could be a metaphor for the same process in life. In music, to Mallarmé’s way of thinking, the work was already done. What is the relevance therefore of Mallarmé’s influence in the music of composers of his time? It makes sense that,

36 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
although from Mallarmé’s point of view music might seem to have an inherent freedom or transcendence that language lacked, for a composer in late nineteenth-century France the situation may have seemed rather different. For a composer such as Debussy, the conservative attitudes towards new composition that prevailed among the senior figures of the Parisian musical establishment were as restrictive as the limits of classical French literature must have seemed to the Symbolist poets. (For Debussy, winning the much-coveted Prix de Rome, which for most French artists represented the pinnacle of establishment acceptance, was more a burden than a gift, since it placed on him the expectation of continuing to produce music in accordance with acceptable standards, rather than allowing him to follow his own vision.) The breaking down of the limits of language in Symbolist poetry therefore offered a considerable source of inspiration to seek similar freedoms for musical language.

Debussy of course composed numerous songs to texts by some of the most important Symbolist poets, including Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé and Louÿs. McCombie points out, however, that Debussy criticism has been slow to examine as well as it could the extent and nature of the cross-fertilization between Debussy and the poets of his time, and argues that this is partly due to a lack of adequate cross-disciplinary critical apparatus capable of discussing literature and music simultaneously.\textsuperscript{38} It is not simply the mechanics of song setting that is of interest here (as is the subject of a study such as Wenk’s \textit{Debussy and the Poets}\textsuperscript{39}), but rather the ways in which the ideals of the Symbolist poets had an impact on Debussy’s musical language more broadly.

\textsuperscript{38} McCombie, p. xviii.
Jarocinski attempted in the 1970s to show that Debussy can be better understood if he is viewed as having closer affinities with the Symbolist movement rather than with the Impressionist painters, as was still the persistent view. Although his study is largely philosophical in tone and light on technical detail, one of Jarocinski’s main observations is that it is through Debussy’s focus on in-the-moment sonic experience over long-range form that his music can be seen as analogous to Symbolist poetry: as Mallarmé created a poetic language in which the sonorous qualities of words was emphasised, and their meaning diluted, Debussy similarly created a musical language based on the sonorous qualities of musical sounds, in which the sensuous qualities of a chord became more important than its function in an abstract system of relationships. In a similar way, therefore, both freed themselves from the conventional forms of their respective arts and created art of a new sensuous immediacy. In the focus on sound ‘in itself’ we are of course reminded of Takemitsu’s similar interest.

Hertz’s study *The Tuning of the Word: The Musico-literary Poetics of the Symbolist Movement* is one of the first to discuss in more specific detail the ways that many technical innovations of the French Symbolist poets, such as the breakdown of traditional poetic forms and loosening of the laws of syntax and meaning, were profoundly influential on Debussy’s music. His discussion of *Prélude à l’après midi d’un faune* provides a concrete example. Both the *Prélude* of Debussy, and the poem by Mallarmé to which it is a response, are recognised as landmark works which achieved equivalent revolutions in their own arts, largely through the development of techniques in which periodic phrasing and

---

40 Jarocinski, pp. 50-53.
specificity of meaning are both undermined or avoided.\textsuperscript{41} Debussy’s \textit{Prélude} is for instance one of the first Western musical works to use constantly varying time signatures, which he employs to create a fluid rhythmical structure in which metrical pulse is under-emphasised and irregular. As Hertz says, ‘Debussy is revolutionary in that he has fashioned his measures to fit his musical ideas, instead of the older method of forming ideas to fit the standards of conventional musical measures’.\textsuperscript{42} In this musical practice he reflects Mallarmé’s metrical revolution in his poetry: while \textit{L’après midi d’un faune} is written in strict rhyming alexandrines, Mallarmé does everything possible to break up the regularity of the conventional rhythm, through enjambment, playing with the spatial disposition of words or lines on the page, and the breaking of sentences across lines in ways that contradict and undermine the proper use of the alexandrine pattern according to the rules of traditional French versification.\textsuperscript{43} Further, Debussy’s so-called ‘faun’ chord, (the horn/harp chord after the opening flute solo) is deliberately ambiguous; not only because of its lack of harmonic context, but because of the background of rhythmic non-periodicity in which it is placed, which removes any clue to the chord’s directional purpose or its relationship to the musical events around it – it just hangs there, just ‘is’, both harmonically and temporally. It thereby sets up a multiplicity of possibilities, but also draws attention to itself purely as sound. Hertz likens the use of this chord to Mallarmé’s use of deliberately ambiguous words or syntax, which ‘suggest and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{41} Hertz, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 72.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 81.
\end{flushleft}
evoke in a newly free and open-ended way’.\textsuperscript{44} In making this connection Hertz implies an equivalence between meaning in language and function in music.

McCombie offers a similar parallel analysis of two works: Mallarmé's \textit{Un coup de dés} and Debussy’s \textit{Jeux}. Though these works are not directly related, McCombie finds a similarly radical reorganisation of syntax (linguistic and musical respectively) in both works. She argues that both contain radical discontinuities and multi-layered temporalities, resulting in works that ‘do not follow a single course. They do not offer themselves as single objects of contemplation in relation to which a reader or listener assumes a fixed position’.\textsuperscript{45} Both works (though of course very different in many ways) present forms that are so discontinuous as to seem virtually random in their organisation at times, yet at the same time offer multiple interweaving threads of possible sense or meaning. While, as McCombie says, Pierre Boulez has likened these structures to a maze or labyrinth, she prefers the analogy of the arabesque, an image to which both Mallarmé and Debussy refer.\textsuperscript{46} This ornamental figure offers as a guiding structural principle the intertwining of multiple lines and forms, which can emerge from and disappear into the texture in seemingly random yet organic ways, providing an interconnectedness without a single focus. We can perhaps see here again echoes of the ‘pan-focus’ quality that Takemitsu claimed to find in Debussy.

In a third example of direct comparison between the two artists, Marie Rolf examines an instance of direct interaction in Debussy’s song settings of Mallarmé texts: his early setting of ‘Apparition’ from 1884, and ‘Soupir’ from the

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 71.
\textsuperscript{45} McCombie, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé of 1913. Rolf’s interest is in the way Debussy responds musically in subtle ways to the complex syntax and imagery of the poems in the later settings, and contrasts this to the rather more conventional earlier setting. For example, Rolf demonstrates that in ‘Soupir’ Debussy’s musical structure does not try to convey the symmetry of the line lengths and end-rhymes that the poem is notionally built around, but rather follows the underlying complexity of sentence structure that cuts across the poetic lines, through enjambment and obscure syntax; the result is a shifting, irregular musical surface of metres and rhythms that follows the internal energy of Mallarmé’s sentences, rather than the rigid pattern of regular alexandrines that the poem exhibits at the surface level. Rolf also suggests Debussy’s approach to tonality in the setting, which is established not through functional tonic-dominant relations but through static, non-functional means such as sustained pedal notes, reflect the poem’s impersonal, static image of a pure idea – ‘that of the soul striving for oneness with the universe’. Rolf contrasts ‘Soupir’ to the earlier setting of ‘Apparition’, which while also sensitive to Mallarmé’s poetic structure, is much more romantically conceived and more conventional in its melodic and harmonic language. Rolf concludes that the later setting of ‘Soupir’ is much more attuned to Symbolist ideals. ‘Debussy composed a vocal line that adhered closely to the syntactic and semantic structure’ of the poem, and ‘then created an appropriately abstract harmonic – or, perhaps more accurately, linear – backdrop for the delivery of the text’. The resultant melody

48 Ibid., pp. 196-197.
49 Ibid., pp. 198-199.
50 Ibid., p. 199.
is far more flexible in rhythm and metre, and the song very sparse in texture – features that as Rolf points out are characteristic of other late works of Debussy, such as *Jeux* and the Sonata for cello and piano. Overall the implication is that the more mature Debussy had a serious interest and some intelligent insight into the complexities of Mallarmé’s poetry, choosing deliberately to set these difficult poems in ways that musically reflect their linguistic complexity; but also that, significantly, the stylistic developments these songs exhibit feed through into other works not directly based on text settings.

While dealing with purely technical matters, Richard Parks’ major analytical study, *The Music of Claude Debussy*, offers a different line of evidence for the ways in which Debussy’s style evolved over his lifetime and moved away from conventional means of defining musical structure towards freer, more original models. In considering the question of whether Debussy’s music is tonal, Parks uses a Schenkerian approach to reveal the ways in which many of Debussy’s works exhibit certain structural features in keeping with traditional tonality, but depart from or undermine them. For instance, in his discussion of Debussy’s String Quartet, Parks shows that the background and middle-ground structural levels are quite sparse, yet there is a great deal of rich chromatic movement at the foreground level, which tends towards an impression of the work as having a reduced sense of forward motion in favour of a rich surface sonority. In another example, ‘La fille aux cheveux de lin’ (from the *Préludes* for piano, Book 1), Parks demonstrates that while tonic-dominant closure occurs at the foreground level, in the background it is avoided – the *Urlinie* descent and the

---

51 Ibid., p. 200.
bass arpeggiation of the *Ursatz* that Schenker's theory demands are absent. On the other hand, through pitch-class set analysis, Parks goes on to show that a strong impression of tonality is conveyed by other means, largely through quantitative emphasis of certain pitches and pitch groupings, resulting in a more static tonality, as Rolf identifies in 'Soupir'. Parks observes that the departure from traditional tonality by means such as these becomes more pronounced in later works. In his discussion of form, Parks also shows that more conventional or classical forms are more common in Debussy's earlier works, whereas later works exhibit increasingly original or idiosyncratic variations on conventional forms. For example, form types based on a ternary pattern evolve in later works to a point where the majority of the work consists of a continuous development of new material, which is truncated by only the briefest, almost token, reprise of opening material. Parks cites two late works, 'Eventail' (from *Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé*) and the ballet score *Jeux*, as examples of this modified ternary form taken to an extreme. Rondo-like variants are also common, in which the reprise occurs more than once. One of the main features of the evolution of these modified forms in Debussy's later works is the way the returning material, which supposedly defines the structure, becomes increasingly less significant, in favour of longer periods of change or variation, therefore undermining a strong sense of long-range architecture.

While technical elements of Debussy's works such as Parks reveals do not in themselves constitute direct evidence for the influence of poetry or Symbolism on his musical evolution, they nevertheless support the idea that Debussy was

---

54 Ibid., p. 22.  
55 Ibid., pp. 220-221.
breaking away from the restrictions of conventional tonality and form in ways that are analogous with the changes occurring in French poetry at the same time. Parks’ analyses specifically show how Debussy moved away from the goal-oriented logic of traditional tonality and the formulaic working-out of conventional structures towards a freedom that allowed music to develop a new kind of expressivity, through a greater emphasis on the immediate sensory experience of musical sonorities. The implications of this in considering the nature and extent of Debussy’s influence on Takemitsu will be examined in the analytical discussion and comparison undertaken in the following two chapters.
CHAPTER 4 – An analysis of *And then I knew ‘twas Wind*

**Introduction**

As stated in the introductory chapter, Takemitsu’s *And then I knew ‘twas Wind*, and its relationship to Debussy’s Sonata, has already been the subject of a previous study,¹ but it was felt that the scope of its analysis and its aesthetic interpretation were limited, and that a more searching study of this complex and multidimensional work was justified. Burt has also made passing reference to *And then I knew ‘twas Wind* (hereafter abbreviated to *Wind* for convenience) as part of his survey of Takemitsu’s œuvre, but does not attempt to analyse the work as a whole, his primary aim being to place the work in the context of the style of Takemitsu’s later works. He draws attention to several stylistic features of the work which are shared with other works of the same period, such as some of the underlying pitch material on which it is based,² the quotation of melodic material from other Takemitsu works,³ and a tendency towards major triad sonorities.⁴ In the following discussion, insights from both Okajima’s and Burt’s analyses will be incorporated where relevant.

Connections between the following analysis and the contexts provided by the two preceding chapters may not immediately reveal themselves, since the earlier stages of the analysis will necessarily be more descriptive than interpretative, and will focus in fairly conventional terms on technical details such as pitch material, motivic and thematic relationships, and their relationship

---

³ Ibid., pp. 220-222.
⁴ Ibid., p. 218.
to form. As inner processes of the work become more apparent, and a bigger picture is revealed, the analysis will eventually provide the basis for a more interpretative discussion.

Formal outline

To begin with, a description of the work’s outline in terms of thematic ideas and broad formal sections will be attempted, although as will rapidly become clear, such a description is largely inadequate to convey the essence of the work’s elusive nature. It is hoped however that it will provide an initial framework that can form the basis for further elaboration. Okajima attempts such a description\(^5\), though the reasoning behind decisions about sectional divisions and the relationships between sections of the work is not thoroughly explained, and arguably significant features are overlooked. (In particular, the repetition of a striking melodic passage, which seems to play a significant structural role, is not recognised). Such difficulty in arriving at a broad-brush analysis of the work is hardly surprising, however. The work is constructed from numerous small motivic fragments, which are often repeated verbatim or in variant forms, and are combined or juxtaposed in various ways without any clear pattern or continuity, creating an initial impression of a rather arbitrary mosaic. More than forty distinct motivic cells and short melodic ideas can be identified.

Establishing parameters to identify which elements are most significant in terms of long-range form is challenging. Given the work’s fragmentary quality, variation in the degree of fragmentation versus continuity stands out as the feature most useful in providing some orientation for the listener. Several

\(^5\) Okajima, pp. 70-72.
episodes of slightly more continuous melodic material provide a contrast with sections made up of shorter fragments. These more continuous episodes also usually feature a textural change in the harp part, from short motives to ostinatos or arpeggiated accompaniment patterns, which emphasises the contrast. They also occupy longer periods of constant tempo, in contrast to the frequently fluctuating tempi of the fragmentary sections. This pattern of contrasts provides the basis for identifying formal sections in the outline presented in the table below. As shown in the left-hand column, the work can be heard as falling broadly into two halves, as defined by the repetition of a distinctive melodic phrase.

(Bar numbers refer to the published score of And then I knew 'twas Wind,\textsuperscript{6} and all musical examples are extracted from this edition. The examples are provided mainly for identification purposes; the full score should be referred to throughout. Note that the published score does not include printed bar numbers, and it is recommended that the reader insert their own for ease of reference.\textsuperscript{7} For the purpose of this analysis, rehearsal letters in the score should be ignored. Sub-sections in the table below are labelled by upper-case letter, but these should not be confused with the rehearsal letters in the printed score, with which they do not coincide.)

\textsuperscript{6} Toru Takemitsu, \textit{And then I knew 'twas Wind, for flute, viola and harp}, SJ1071 (Tokyo: Schott Japan, 1992).
\textsuperscript{7} Two short passages occur in which there is a discrepancy of barring between parts: bars 80-83 and 178-182. In both instances the barring of the harp part is followed, and the numbering of the upper parts is made to coincide with the harp in the bar immediately following each passage, so that subsequent bar numbers continue to match. Rehearsal Figure H is therefore counted as Bar 84 in all parts; similarly, the ninth bar before Figure R is counted as Bar 183 in all parts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-16</td>
<td>Harp introduction; several motivic fragments are presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>17-32</td>
<td>The flute and viola enter together at bar 17, with a new melodic fragment. A series of motivic fragments are presented, including a quote from the Debussy Sonata in the viola part, bar 22, acknowledged with a note in the score. New fragments are interspersed with repetitions of fragments already heard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>33-46</td>
<td>First melodic episode. Melody in the flute, accompanied by an arpeggio figure in harp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>47-74</td>
<td>A return to fragmentary texture. The section starts with a return of the first flute/viola melodic idea from bar 17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>75-83</td>
<td>Second melodic episode. A melody begins in the viola part, with the flute following in a quasi-canonical manner. The harp accompanies with a three-bar ostinato throughout, but is instructed to play in constant tempo, while the flute and viola ‘accelerate freely’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>84-102</td>
<td>A return to fragmentary texture, initially with repetition of fragments extracted from the second melodic episode, then several new ideas. A new idea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the harp occurs in bar 103. An abrupt return of the original harp motives from Section A precedes the next episode.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>112-116</td>
<td>Third melodic episode. Melody in the flute, with quaver arpeggio accompaniment figure in the harp and fragmentary semiquaver figures in the viola. There is a strong suggestion of D flat major – the first distinct sense of a tonal reference. In contrast to most of the work so far, this melody has a distinctively lyrical quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>117-135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>136-153</td>
<td>Fourth melodic episode. This is the longest continuous melody so far, beginning in the flute, with the viola following in quasi-canon in bar 141. However, the harp does not provide a regular accompaniment pattern in the same way as occurs in other melodic episodes (though there are suggestions of this in bars 139-40). Bars 150-153 suggest a moment of transition before the next section.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This section is better seen as two separate halves from a textural point of view, but they are connected by a repeated melodic phrase. The section begins with this phrase in bar 154,\(^8\) presented initially by the flute and viola alone; repetitions of this brief melody, and a falling answering phrase, dominate the entire section, though with occasional recurrences of earlier motivic ideas also interspersed. From bar 164 the harp enters with agitated figures that continue to bar 179, generating a sense of continuity and busier activity. Bars 181-191 present a return to a less busy texture after the extended section of increased activity, with a solo viola melody acting as a transition to the next section. Repetition of fragments from the introduction precede the next episode, in a manner reminiscent of the bars preceding the third melodic episode.

Fifth melodic episode. This is an exact repeat of the third episode, with its strong flavour of D flat major. The repetition suggests that this brief passage, with its distinctive lyricism and more transparent tonal

---

\(^8\) This short melody ‘in’ C major is also used by Takemitsu in two other works: Archipelago S. (1993) for 21 players, and How Slow the Wind (1991) for orchestra. Like And Then I Knew ’Twas Wind, How Slow the Wind also derives its title from a line of an Emily Dickinson poem. These connections will be discussed further in Chapter 6.
flavour, is to be heard as especially significant – a refrain or recapitulation, providing the work with a structural frame or referential anchor.

| L   | 198-205 | Coda. There is firstly a repeat of the harp fragment from bars 3-4; the final bars are then seemingly derived from the same motivic fragment, but with several pitches removed, leaving only those that form the D flat major triad. |

The above description is deliberately limited, relying on the contrast between fragmentation and continuity to distinguish sections, so far as is possible, with only minimal information about the content or function of each section. What is apparent is that on this basis alone, a suggestion of an overall formal plan (albeit a loose one) is revealed. The work falls broadly into two equal halves, as defined by the lyrical ‘refrain’ passage that closes each half and which comes to ‘rest’ on a D flat major sonority both times (bars 112-116 and bars 192-197). While the first half contains a gradual aggregation of musical ideas, there is no strong sense of development or forward motion. In the second half a greater sense of continuity is created with the longer melodic passage at Section I, which is followed by increased activity and the rather insistent repetition of a short but distinctive melodic phrase in Section J; together these provide something of a sense of climax, which is then given closure by the return of the refrain in Section K. The principles of climax and closure that seem to be at work in this formal outline suggest a relatively conventional narrative arc.
Another possible conventional formal outline is suggested by the repetitions of material from the opening bars (or variations thereof) at certain key moments – most particularly just before each melodic episode, and again at the end. This pattern of repetition functions as a subtle framing device to distinguish the episodes, and might suggest some resemblance to a ‘rondo’ form – although the recurring material always feels transitional and is not emphasised like a returning ‘theme’.

Further examination suggests that other aspects of the work do not necessarily reinforce these underlying plans. In particular, any sense of continuity in the work as a whole is undermined by a constant return to periods of silence or stasis, creating an overall impression of fragmentation. The apparent sense of culmination or climax in the second half of the work is diluted by the fact that sections I and J, like every other, arise from and return to the same state of relative stillness. Similarly, a closer examination of thematic material shows that, despite the apparent framing of sections with recurring motives, any process of overall development or change in the longer term is undermined by the seemingly arbitrary recurrence of other material throughout the work, and by a lack of any clear pattern of build-up and release of tension at the medium-range level within the sections identified above. The recurring material that might suggest a ‘rondo-type’ form is in fact too insignificant to support this interpretation – it is the longer episodes in between that seem to carry more weight. At the same time, complex interrelationships are apparent between different thematic material, but not in a way that suggests an obvious overall evolution that reinforces the formal outline.
Contradictions of this sort, between continuity and stasis, and between variation and repetition, suggest that there are internal dynamics at play within the work that a linear narrative description of the form cannot encompass. More detailed examination of other dimensions of the work is necessary in order to uncover principles of Takemitsu’s compositional technique, and how these relate to the work as a whole.

A thematic catalogue

A more detailed description of the thematic material of the work may now be attempted, with the rough formal outline described above providing a framework. The purpose here is to identify and catalogue the various thematic ideas and motivic fragments in the order that they occur, to give an idea of their extent and variety, and to allow for easy comparison. Fragments are numbered in lower-case Roman numerals.

PART 1 - Section A:

Three important opening statements appear in the first line of the harp part (Ex. 1). Each is based on the same hexachord (F, G sharp, A, C, D flat, E). The first two statements are repeated, and each is separated by a pause or silence.

Fragment i (bars 1-2), contains several overlapping groups of three rising notes.

Fragment ii (bars 3-4), is a condensed variant of Fragment i. The rising three-note groups in each fragment become a feature of the work.

Fragment iii (bars 5-6) consists of three notes extracted from the hexachord. This motive recurs in exactly this form numerous times. It can be
reduced to Fortean pitch-class set [014], which (along with its inversion [034]) becomes one of the most prominent intervallic structures throughout the work.

Fragment iv (Ex. 2) consists of a pair of chords: parallel augmented triads descending by a minor third. This is immediately followed by a variant of the same idea, with different grouping and spacing of pitches but the same effect, and also with a falling minor third in the top voice (Ex. 3). (It is possible to hear these two versions of Fragment iv as a single gesture: together they have the effect of another variant of Fragments i and ii.)
Fragment v in bar 8 (Ex. 4) is a rising, rhythmically regular arpeggio figure. In this fragment the first pitch foreign to the original hexachord appears (B natural), although its arrival receives no emphasis whatsoever.

Ex. 4 Fragment v (harp, bar 8)

The remainder of Section A consists of variants of either Fragments iv or v. E flat appears for the first time in bar 12, again with no attention drawn to it.

Section B:

The flute and viola enter in bar 18 with a new idea, Fragment vi, which introduces another new pitch, D natural (Ex. 5).

Ex. 5 Fragment vi (flute and viola, bar 18)

The rising motive at the end of Fragment vi, with its augmented triad, is reminiscent of the opening harp statements. This rising gesture is developed in
bars 19-21 without quite taking on the identity of a new idea. New pitches, F sharp and A sharp, are added in bar 20. This leads to Fragment vii (bar 22) – a brief quote from the harp part in the opening bar of Debussy’s Sonata, but transferred to the viola, transposed, and with a different metrical pattern and added timbral variations, making it almost unrecognizable from its original form (Ex. 6).

![Ex. 6 Fragment vii (viola, bar 22)]

In order to complete the Debussy quote, an additional pitch (G natural) that has not yet occurred makes its appearance in Fragment vii. Once this fragment has appeared, all twelve notes of the chromatic scale have been introduced. However, those pitches foreign to the original hexachord have not been strongly emphasised, or given a clear identity as a ‘rival’ group; they occur infrequently and merely in passing, providing added richness to the initial set.

The Debussy quote in Fragment vii is followed by a repeat of Fragment vi in the flute, which is accompanied by a new Fragment viii in the harp in bar 23 (Ex. 7).

![Ex. 7 Fragment viii (harp, bar 23)]
Another repetition of Fragment vi in bars 25-26 is accompanied by a repeat of Fragment iii in the harp.

A new flute theme, Fragment ix, is introduced in bar 27 (Ex. 8). This is accompanied by Fragment x, a two-chord motive in the harp, reminiscent of Fragments iv or v, but in a rising pattern (Ex. 9).

Ex. 8 Fragment ix (flute, bar 27)

Ex. 9 Fragment x (harp, bar 27)

In bar 28, a new rising triplet figure, Fragment xi (Ex. 10), is introduced in the harp and viola.

Ex. 10 Fragment xi (viola and harp, bar 28)
This is reminiscent of Fragment ii from the harp introduction – the link is immediately emphasised by an exact repeat of Fragment ii in bar 29. However, the fourth and sixth notes of the original form of Fragment ii (F and E) are shifted down by a semitone to E and E flat – introducing the foreign E flat to the hexachord motive, thereby offering a subtly different modal flavour. Fragment xi is repeated in bar 31.

Section C:

In bar 33 an extended melodic passage in the flute begins, defining the first melodic episode (as identified in the original formal outline). However, despite a greater sense of continuity than has thus far been present, reinforced by continuous semiquavers in the harp, the flute melody can still be broken down into shorter fragments which have their own identity (Examples 11-15). Fragments xii and xiii share a distinctive rise-and-fall contour, returning to the starting note each time.

While a gradual process of pitch accumulation has been occurring up to this point, the beginning of Section C represents a return to the original hexachord in Fragment xii (and in its harp accompaniment). However, from Fragment xiii onwards the melody shifts suddenly to the octatonic scale for the first time, with the G sharp in bar 35 acting as the pivot between the two pitch sets. A pure octatonic set is maintained until the arrival of E flat in Bar 40, which brings about a shift to another transposition of the octatonic for the remainder of the episode.
In the opening notes of Fragments xiii, xiv, xv and xvi, Takemitsu’s signature ‘S-E-A’ motive (i.e. a rising semitone, then perfect fourth, in various transpositions – derived from the German spelling Es–E–A.) appears for the first
time. This motive, which recurs persistently in some sections of the work, tends to be associated with octatonic material, as it cannot be yielded by the notes of the hexachord.

On the final note of the extended flute melody in bar 42, another brief rising flourish in the harp presents a new motive, Fragment xvii (Ex. 16), consisting of a juxtaposition of two major triads a tritone apart (F major and B major), a motive that appears again later in the work.

Ex. 16 Fragment xvii (harp, bar 42)

Fragment xviii in bar 44 (Ex. 17) is a new motive in the flute, with a rise-and-fall contour similar to Fragments xii and xiii. This is immediately followed in bar 45 by a slightly varied repeat of Fragment xiii (see Ex. 12).

Ex. 17 Fragment xviii (flute, bar 44)

---

9 This motive was frequently employed by Takemitsu as a kind of musical symbol in many of his later works that were associated with water imagery; its symbolic dimensions and their relevance to Wind will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.
Section D:

This section begins in bar 47 with a repetition of Fragment vi (see Ex. 5), but in the viola alone. This is followed by a motive in bar 49 in the flute and viola derived from Fragment ii (see Ex. 1).

Fragment xix occurs in bar 51, in the flute and harp (Ex. 18), and is a straightforward rising statement of the original hexachord, laid over an F major arpeggio in the left hand of the harp: in this way the hexachord is given an emphasis of F major without any pitches being altered.

Ex. 18 Fragment xix (flute and harp, bar 51)

Fragment xx, bar 52 (Ex. 19) is a rising figure in the flute reminiscent of many earlier ones, but with a pitch content in which the E of the original hexachord is replaced by E flat (similar to Fragment xi in bars 28-31 – see Ex. 10).

Ex. 19 Fragment xx (flute, bar 52)
Fragment xxi is a harp motive in bar 53 (echoed by the viola) derived from the original hexachord (minus D flat), but again with a clear suggestion of F major (Ex. 20).

Ex. 20 Fragment xxi (harp and viola, bars 53-54)

Fragment xxii is a new flute melody in Bar 55 (Ex. 21).

Ex. 21 Fragment xxii (flute, bar 55)

This is followed by Fragment xxiii (bar 56, Ex. 22), a three-chord motive in the harp reminiscent of Fragment iii but with fuller chords, derived from the hexachord with additional G and B.

Ex. 22 Fragment xxiii (harp, bar 56)
A new melody, Fragment xxiv (Ex. 23), then appears in bars 57-58, in parallel in the flute and viola.

Ex. 23 Fragment xxiv (flute and viola, bars 57-58)

Fragment xxv appears in the viola, bar 64 (Ex. 24).

Ex. 24 Fragment xxv (viola, bar 64)

Fragment xxvi appears in the flute, bar 65 (Ex. 25).

Ex. 25 Fragment xxvi (flute, bar 65-66)

The end of Section D bars (bars 69-73) consists of a number of repetitions of fragments from the original harp statements (see Ex. 1).
**Section E:**

The second melodic episode begins in bar 75 with a return of Fragment iii (see Ex. 1), now extended by the addition of Fragment x (see Ex. 9), plus a new figure of two rising sevenths, to create a three-bar ostinato theme which prevails for the next nine bars (Ex. 26).

![Ex. 26 Harp ostinato, bars 75-77 (incorporating Fragments iii and x)](image)

Over this ostinato, the viola and flute have an extended melody in canon, reminiscent of the first melodic episode, but again reducible to several shorter distinct melodic fragments (Examples 27-29).

![Ex. 27 Fragment xxvii (viola, bar 78)](image)

![Ex. 28 Fragment xxviii (flute, bar 80)](image)
Fragment xxviii once again introduces the ‘S-E-A’ motive; its melodic continuation in Fragment xxix also repeats this motive, with the addition of an interpolated note (E natural), another instance of Takemitsu’s practice of enriching his pitch material with the addition of extra notes, as already observed in the opening 22 bars of the work (see Examples 1-6 above). (This aspect of Takemitsu’s pitch organisation will be discussed further in the commentary below). As with the first melodic episode in Section C, there is also a clear presence of the octatonic scale in this melody.

**Section F:**

This section consists predominantly of themes heard already, and is particularly dominated by repetitions of Fragment xxviii (featuring the ‘S-E-A’ motive).

In bar 88 (Ex. 30) there is a motive suggestive of the falling minor third chords of Fragment iv (see Ex. 2), although with a different harmonic makeup.
Fragment xxx (Ex. 31), appearing in bar 94, is clearly related to Fragment xxviii (see Ex. 28) but has a distinctive rhythmic character not heard before, and is enhanced with an additional layer of harmonic material in the harp.

Fragment xxxi, in the harp, appears in bar 103 (Ex. 32), and is repeated in all three instruments in bar 106. While not quite like any other fragment so far presented, Fragment xxxi continues the six-note pattern that so many of the rising fragments share, and is also suggestive of three repetitions of Fragment iv (a pair of falling chords; see Ex. 2 and 3). This fragment also presents an entire octatonic scale set. This new idea however is interrupted immediately by a return of the opening hexachord motives of the harp introduction, which prepares the way for the next melodic episode.
Section G:

Fragment xxxii (Ex. 33) and Fragment xxxiii (Ex. 34) are accompaniment figures in the harp and viola respectively, which continue from bar 112 to bar 115. Fragment xxxiii is derived from Fragment xxviii (see Ex. 28) and similarly features the ‘S-E-A’ motive in its first three notes.

Ex. 33 Fragment xxxii (harp, bar 112)

Ex. 34 Fragment xxxiii (viola, bar 112)

Above these two repeating accompaniment fragments, the important ‘refrain’ melody in the flute (as identified in the original formal outline) makes the first of its two appearances, in bars 112-116. (It returns at bars 192-196).

As with the previous extended melodic sections, this melody can also be broken down into smaller discrete fragments (Examples 35-37). Fragment xxxiv and xxxv both begin with the same falling G sharp-F sharp figure, but Fragment xxxv continues its fall in a gesture reminiscent of Fragment ix (see Ex. 8). The final afterthought of this melody (Ex. 37) is a rhythmically altered version of
Fragment xxix (see Ex. 29), repeating its use of the ‘S-E-A’ motive plus an additional note.

Ex. 35 Fragment xxxiv (flute bars 112-113)

Ex. 36 Fragment xxxv (flute, bars 114-115)

Ex. 37 Variation of Fragment xxix (flute, bar 115)

PART 2 - Section H:

Repetitions of previous fragments (especially ii, iii, ix, x) continue until bar 123. From bars 124-132 there is an emphasis on D flat as a prevailing pitch, and a sense of transition, without much activity. Despite a few harp flourishes, no moment stands out as deserving identity as a unique fragment until bar 134 (Ex. 38).
This harp fragment contains an anticipation of the next significant melodic idea in bar 136.

**Section I:**

This section begins with a new melodic idea, Fragment xxxvii, in the flute in bar 136 (Ex. 39).

The introduction of this fragment begins the lengthy fourth melodic episode, bars 137-146, which yields less easily to breakdown into smaller fragments than previous episodes (although the final phrase bars 145-6 (Ex. 41) is another repeat of Fragment xxix). The melody from the flute part, presented here in full (Ex. 40), is labelled Fragment xxxviii for convenience. Both viola and harp imitate sections of this melody in canonical fashion.
Fragment xxxix in the harp (bars 146-147) presents a juxtaposition of G flat and C major triads (Ex. 42) – this juxtaposition was also present earlier in Fragment xxxvii, bar 137 (the opening notes of this melodic episode; see Ex. 40). Fragment xxxix is repeated in a descending version in bar 150 (Ex. 42a).
Fragment xl, bars 152-153, is suggestive in its contour and rhythmic pattern of the ostinato pattern of bars 75-77, though harmonically quite different (Ex. 43).

Ex. 43 Fragment xl (harp, bars 152-153)

Section J:

This section opens with a new melodic theme, Fragment xlii, in bar 154 (Ex. 44), although the falling C-G opening is anticipated in Fragment xxxvii (see Ex. 39).

Ex. 44 Fragment xli (flute, bar 154-155)

This is followed by a falling answering phrase, Fragment xlii, in bars 157-159 (Ex. 45), reminiscent of the falling phrase of Fragment xxxv (see Ex. 36).

Ex. 45 Fragment xlii (flute, bars 157-159)
The remainder of Section K, until bar 180, is taken up with repetitions of this theme, interspersed and sometimes combined with earlier fragments into longer phrases. From bar 164, the harp plays a series of rapidly arpeggiated accompaniment figures, none of which are exact repetitions of previous material but do not quite acquire the status of new motives.

A repeat of Fragment ii (see Ex. 1) in the harp in bars 188-190 acts a transition to the next section.

**Section K:**

This passage is an exact repeat of the lyrical melodic section from bars 112-116 – the ‘refrain’ melody identified in the original formal outline (see Ex. 33-37).

**Section L:**

A new motive, Fragment xliii (Ex. 46) appears in bar 102, three bars from the end of the work. Suggestive of the falling pairs of chords from Fragment iv in the harp introduction (see Ex. 2), it contains two notes foreign to the original hexachord (B flat and D). This new fragment precedes a ‘resolution’ to D flat major in the final bar of the work.

Ex. 46 Fragment xliii (Flute, viola harp, bar 102)
Commentary

If the above catalogue reveals anything, it is that the thematic material is extensive and complex. While patterns of repetition and relationship between ideas are clearly present, there are also substantial passages seeming to consist of one new idea after another, virtually bar by bar, with little to connect them. On experiencing the work as a listener, even on a first hearing, the impression of overall unity is strong, yet tracing a coherent path through the maze of fragments seems an elusive task. A number of observations on the ways in which the pitch material and thematic ideas are organised will follow, which will illuminate some of the principles and processes that are at play.

1. Pitch and harmony

1a. Pitch material\(^{10}\)

Two sets of pitches dominate the work: a hexachord consisting of alternating semitones and minor thirds (F, G sharp, A, C, D flat, E);\(^ {11}\) and the octatonic scale, consisting of alternating tones and semitones.

The hexachord is presented by the harp in the opening bars (Fragments I and ii; see Ex. 1 above) This set of pitches has a number of properties that are exploited in the composition:

a) The set is notable for its symmetry: the repeating pattern of intervals does not allow any note in the set to stand out as a focal point or ‘tonic’. This symmetry also means its possible transpositions are limited to four. However,

---

\(^{10}\) Enharmonic equivalence for all pitch names is assumed; Takemitsu's spelling of pitch names is clearly determined more by the requirements of writing for the pedal harp, or for ease of reading, than by any traditional harmonic functionality.

\(^{11}\) Pitch class set '6-20' in Allen Forte's categorisation.
the hexachord never appears in transposed form but always retains its identity as the original set.

b) The set yields a number of major, minor and augmented triads. The triadic properties of the set are exploited throughout the work, with a particular emphasis on major-minor ambiguity or conflict: the set yields both major and minor triads on F, A and D flat. It can also be read as a combination of various pairs of triads: for instance two augmented triads a semitone apart, or a D flat major triad plus an A minor triad. The set also allows subtle movement from one triad to another by the movement of one note by a semitone. The symmetrical nature of the hexachord means that no triad (or other subset) can be heard as taking precedence or forming a tonal centre of gravity, except insofar as the composer chooses to emphasise one or other at will. The augmented triad, itself a symmetrical formation with no tonal centre, is also used frequently.

c) If the hexachord is cut in half it produces two [034] tri-chords. This small cell, and its inversion [014], consisting of a combination of a minor third and semitone, are used frequently, both as melodic cells and in chords. (Fragment iii is a clear instance; see Ex. 1 above). A similar tri-chord [035]/[015] (major third plus semitone) can also be derived from the hexachord, and is used similarly, though it is less prominent.

d) The initial hexachord set is hexachordally combinatorial: i.e. the six unused pitches form a transposition of the same set. This suggests the potential for serial procedures, or for use of the complementary set as an alternative pitch group, but in fact Takemitsu does not use the pitch material in this way. The complementary hexachord never appears exclusively in full, but notes from it are added to the original set to create richer harmonic possibilities, as Burt has
The complement does not really have an identity as a group of heard pitches, but exists by implication through its absence from the original set. (Interestingly, in relation to another work that makes similar use of a hexachord and its complement, *From Far Beyond Chrysanthemums and November Fog* (1983), Takemitsu referred to the complement as the ‘shadow’ of the original hexachord13).

The octatonic scale is the other pitch set which predominates in the work. One of Messiaen’s ‘modes of limited transposition’, it is also used frequently by Takemitsu in other works. The relationships between these two main pitch groups and the way they are used are complex. However, a number of general points can be made:

a) Like the hexachord, the octatonic scale is symmetrical, avoiding any hierarchy of pitches or sense of tonic. It also yields a number of triadic possibilities, including multiple major and minor triads and the symmetrical diminished triad and diminished seventh. The hexachord is not a subset of the octatonic; the two have distinctive triadic and interval content, which give them a different sonic ‘colour’. In particular, the hexachord can yield the symmetrical augmented triad, but not the diminished triad; while the octatonic can yield the diminished triad and diminished seventh chord, but not the augmented triad. However both contain the [014] set, which acts as a link or pivot between the two.

---

13 Ibid., pp. 205-206.
b) While as mentioned above the hexachord always maintains an identity as a specific group of pitches that is not transposed, the octatonic scale appears in its various possible transpositions.

c) The octatonic scale tends to be prominent in the melodic episode sections, sometimes almost exclusively.

d) The octatonic scale yields Takemitsu's signature 'S-E-A' motive [016], which appears many times throughout the work. (Its first appearance is identified in Fragment xiii, Ex. 12 above). This motive is associated with passages of prevailing octatonic material. However, in its interval structure of a semitone plus wider interval it has some resemblance to the [014] and [015] sets highlighted above. As a rising three-note figure it also shares some motivic similarity to the many other rising fragments that occur so frequently. In this way it provides a point of intersection between the hexachordal and octatonic regions of the work.

e) The hexachord rarely predominate exclusively for any length of time as the octatonic does. Rather, pitches from its complementary set are added or subtracted freely to provide a richer harmonic palette. For example, in the harp introduction of Section A, after several clear statements based on the hexachord (Fragments i-iv), two new pitches (B natural and E flat) have been added fleetingly by bar 12; three more (D, F sharp, A sharp) appear within the first few bars of the flute and viola entry. Despite this rapid change, fragments based on the hexachord from the opening of the work recur frequently, often in their original form; the original hexachord maintains an identity that provides reference points throughout the work. Interestingly, while transposed forms of the original hexachord never appear, the various transpositions of the octatonic
are used freely, and a passage may move seamlessly from one to another (e.g. in
the flute melody of Section C, bars 33-42). There appears to be a deliberate
contrast between the unchanging hexachord motives and the more fluid use of
the octatonic scale.

f) Even in passages where a single octatonic set is clearly predominant for
some length of time, this may also be varied with the addition or subtraction of
pitches. A common occurrence is the addition of one extra pitch not belonging to
the octatonic set. For example, in the third melodic episode in Section G, (the
‘refrain’ melody, bars 112-116), the pitch material is exclusively a single form of
the octatonic, with the addition of the foreign note D flat. This is perhaps
especially significant, given that it is this ‘refrain’ passage that particularly seems
to establish the sense of D flat major with which the work ends, and that the D
flat is established at the beginning as a ‘root’ of the opening harp fragments.

g) A result of the unsystematic addition and subtraction of notes to and
from the hexachord and octatonic sets is that the music can shift freely from one
to the other, or incorporate both at once. Ultimately this means that the full
chromatic scale is potentially available to the composer at any time, and that
contrast may be created between areas of different pitch emphasis and
chromatic density, without any consistent pull or impetus towards any particular
pitch or group of pitches as a stable centre. One might view the process as a
cutting away of parts of the total chromatic palette to reveal certain elements.
**1b. Harmonic colouration and modal nuance**

An important feature of the work is the way that its harmonic dimension seems constantly to hint at, and shift between, various triadic sonorities. This is to some extent an inevitable result of the initial hexachord Takemitsu uses as a basis for much of the pitch material, since it contains a number of triads – major, minor and augmented. The octatonic scale similarly contains multiple triadic possibilities. It seems though that Takemitsu deliberately exploits and emphasises these triadic sonorities throughout the work, even during passages of much greater chromatic saturation, precisely for the effect they create of hinting at a more tonal dimension underneath the often richly chromatic surface. As Burt points out, a favouring of major triads seems to be something of a feature of Takemitsu's late works, and there are moments where major triads are stated unambiguously e.g. F major in bar 56; C major and F sharp major in bar 146; D flat major in the final bars. Interestingly, while the augmented triad is also prominent, minor triads occur much less often. On the other hand, the minor third frequently occurs at the top of a rising fragment, or at the peak of a rising and falling phrase.

The [014] subset of the hexachord, which can also be found in the octatonic scale, is a constant presence. One effect of this pitch set is that its major and minor third combination constantly invites the ear to extrapolate more complex chords and often to infer a fluctuation or conflict between major and minor harmony.

This is immediately apparent in the first two bars of the work (Fragment i; see Ex. 1) where the ear may choose to hear, for instance, an F minor or D flat

---

major implication in the first three quaver beats; F major in the middle of the bar; and possibly E major or C sharp minor in the falling third at the end. Of course the point is that all of these are simultaneously present; but the nature of the hexachord, and the way it is distributed here, invites the ear to chase after a particular triad in the mix, where none is predominant; and, as with an optical illusion (such as the famous faces/vase or rabbit/duck designs), the brain can flip between different perceptions of the same information.

Fragment iii (bars 5-6; see Ex. 1) offers a more transparent instance, in which D flat, C, E are presented in a slow rising statement. The D flat is inevitably heard as the root of the chord (especially as this pitch has already been emphasised in the preceding bars), and therefore the C as a major seventh. The E however conflicts with this hearing, and because of its closer proximity to the C, these two notes suggest the possibility of C major instead. Again the perception fluctuates between the two possibilities, with the C acting as a kind of pivot. In this way the [014] set, with the various combinations of thirds, semitones and sevenths it provides depending on octave distribution, saturates the work with a particular harmonic ambiguity.

Another type of occurrence of this feature is when a sustained pitch lends a particular tonal context to a melodic phrase – for instance at bar 62, where the repeat of Fragment vi is coloured by a prevailing C, emphasising first of all the suggesting of C minor (C plus E flat) and then F major (C plus F, A).

Obviously a great deal of projection of the listener’s expectations is involved here, so it is impossible to be definitive about what this apparent quality really amounts to. At one level, it is simply an inherent quality of the pitch relationships on which the work is based – the harmonic language is following
the conditions imposed on it from the outset. On the other hand, the modern ear is inevitably drawn to sounds that imply more traditional tonal relationships, however fleetingly. To what extent does Takemitsu intentionally invoke tonal sonorities as a reference to older musical languages, as opposed to simply exploiting triads as equally available sounds among the infinite possibilities? The final arrival at a major triad certainly suggests retrospectively to the listener that the implication of triadic harmonies is important to Takemitsu's concept of the work. Yet the major triad is only one harmonic sonority among the many permitted by the work's pitch material; arguably the final D flat major chord is as arbitrary as any other possibility. In this sense there is an ambiguity at the heart of the work's pitch structure. Takemitsu's approach suggests a deliberate willingness to engage with and exploit the expressive dimensions of tonal sonorities, while eschewing any approach so systematic as tonality. The ambiguity lies in the fact that the degree to which the work is heard as 'tonal' (or the extent to which major triads are granted a special status) is subjective and dependent on the individual listener's experience. Indeed, one can hear the work many times and interpret its harmonic language differently each time.

This triadic suggestiveness manifests melodically as a constant, subtle variation of modal shading and nuance. For example, the extended flute theme at bars 154-159 (Ex. 47), incorporating fragments xli and xlii, plays strongly with a C major/C minor contrast, and finishes with a shift to F sharp (a tritone relationship established earlier, in places such as Fragment xvii (see Ex. 16) and Fragment xxxix (see Ex. 42)).
Another more tonally ambiguous instance of a similar effect, which is also typical, comes in the flute part at bars 67-68 (Ex. 48). Here, the accumulation of thirds offers many ambiguous triadic hints and modal shifts, while confirming none.

**1c. Prevailing pitches**

Another technique used to provide a greater sense of apparent continuity is the use of a sustained pitch in one part, or passed between parts over several bars, to provide a background or stable reference pitch against greater activity or fragmentation in other parts. One of the most distinct moments occurs in bars 42-52, where a continually repeated A is passed around between all three instruments to provide a prevailing pitch that anchors or connects the entire passage, despite the fragmentary construction. The effect is also to create a sense of stasis at this point, despite the varied activity that continues around the prevailing pitch. Shorter instances include the flute D flat in bars 29-30.
underpinning the harp and viola motives, which is then taken over by the harp in bar 31, and maintains its presence as the ‘root’ of the harp accompaniment figure in bar 33; the flute F in bars 53-54, which is hinted at by the F triad in the harp in bar 51, then develops into the flute’s own melody in bar 55 and is re-emphasised by the harp in bar 56; and the C that is passed between viola and harp in bars 60-63.

One of the effects of these different prevailing background pitches is to present a melodic fragment in a new context, thereby lending it a different harmonic emphasis or colouring. For example, the last two instances listed above are associated with a repeat of the opening flute and viola theme (Fragment vi; see Ex. 5) in bar 47 and then bar 62, which is presented in a new light each time because of the changing context in which it appears.

If these areas of prevailing pitch are mapped for the work as a whole, the following structure emerges:

D flat: Bars 1-17
D flat: Bars 28-36
A: Bars 42-52
F: Bars 51-56
C: Bars 60-62
D flat: Bars 70-84
D flat: 108-132 (first refrain)
C: 136-162
D flat: 168-end (second refrain 143)
These are all pitches from the original hexachord, which suggests that the work can be seen as a projection of the original set of six notes over time; in this way the hexachord provides a tonal field or background matrix against which the music is projected, as well as providing pitch material at the micro level. However, this does not automatically generate a process that has any linear necessity or overall goal. The degree of emphasis and duration of the prevailing pitch varies in each case, as does the relationship to other musical activity around it; and furthermore only four of the six pitches are represented. It might be argued then that the strength of this scheme as a basis for describing the long-range structure of the work is debatable, and that the effect is more significant to the experience of the music at a local level.

What is clear is that a prevailing D flat is present both at the opening of the work and during the refrain sections in the middle and end; these D flat sections are also associated with returns of fragments from the harp introduction, particularly Fragments ii and iii (see Ex. 1) or closely related variations. In the combination of pitch and thematic elements these sections clearly provide a strong reference point and framing device, which do support the large-scale formal divisions of the work in a quasi-tonal way by contributing to a sense of return and resolution. On this basis, as has been remarked, the work might tentatively be described as some kind of ‘rondo’ form. However, it could not be said that this pitch reference provides the foundation for, or is the necessary outcome of, a harmonic process in any traditional sense, and therefore cannot be accorded the status of a ‘tonality’. Given the process of free addition and accumulation of pitches used throughout the work to create areas of greater and lesser chromatic density, the effect is as much as though the D flat is
'revealed' from the background of all available pitches, rather than being logically required.

2. Treatment of thematic material

2a. Melodic forms in the fragments

In the first instance it is noteworthy that virtually all of the motivic ideas identified have a self-contained quality and tend to appear as clear and discrete units, of roughly similar length, which have a clear beginning and end. It is this feature that particularly lends the work the quality of a conglomeration or mosaic of fragments. Most fragments feature a distinctive gestural shape. Okajima has noted that there is a clear contrast between motives that rise, fall or do a combination of both.\(^\text{15}\) The brevity and self-contained quality of the fragments tends to draw attention to their gestural morphology. Rising fragments form the majority by a considerable proportion. Many of the rising fragments have a distinctive ending characterised by a leap to a much higher final note (often a harmonic) combined with a diminuendo, which gives them a fleeting, open-ended quality. Falling fragments are much rarer; the flute theme, Fragment ix, in bar 27 (see Ex. 8) seems to provide the archetype, which is extended in instances such as the answering phrase of the ‘refrain’ passage in bars 114-115 (Fragment xxxv, Ex. 36), and of the theme at bars 157-158 (Fragment xlii, Ex. 45). A third notable melodic form occurs in instances such as Fragments xii and xiii (see Ex. 11 and Ex. 12), in which the melody begins and ends on the same note; this shape is quite prevalent and seems to be a feature of those moments in the work when a more lyrical character is intended.

\(^{15}\) Okajima, pp. 64-68.
Another aspect of this gestural quality is that many fragments feature a swell and decay in volume, often arising from and disappearing into silence. Some fragments do begin louder, but almost without exception all end with a decrescendo – frequently with the added instruction \textit{al niente}. The impression is often given of ideas appearing out of, and melting back into, a featureless background.

Larger units are formed through the joining of fragments into longer phrases, as in the melodic episodes. For example, the flute melody of the first melodic episode in bars 33-43 (see Examples 11-15), while giving the impression of a long melodic phrase, is easily divisible into several shorter units, some of which make appearances on their own in other contexts. Fragment xiii for instance reappears in isolation at bar 45; Fragment xv reappears at bar 52 in another guise. In Section J, at bar 173-175, Fragment xli is joined with forms of Fragments xxi and xi to make an extended melody; in the process the fragments that were previously self-contained are given a new character as part of a larger whole.

In addition to the joining of melodic fragments into larger units, longer periods of continuous activity are created by the layering and overlapping of fragments in different instruments, which counteracts the separation between fragments that tends to occur within the one part. Bars 18-27 are a particularly rich example of this, where the musical material is highly fragmented, yet there is virtually no break in the flow of sound from the ensemble as a whole due to the overlapping of fragments from one instrument to another. Indeed, most of the sections labelled as fragmentary in the original formal scheme above are
constructed in this way, so that there is a continuity of musical activity even when the thematic material within that activity is made up of isolated units.

2b. Repetition

A striking feature of the work is the way certain fragments are repeated exactly, some of them many times throughout the work. The main instances of these are worth pointing out:

a) Fragment iii (see Ex. 1) is one of the most apparent cases; this slow three-note motive in the bass register of the harp is repeated nine times throughout the piece. It always appears unchanged, and has a distinct and ponderous quality, which is often allowed to emerge in isolation, with the result that it seems to take on some sort of punctuating function. There are also two fragments (Fragment xxiii in bars 56, and Fragment xl, bar 152) that have a similar contour and punctuating effect, even though their pitch content is quite different.

b) The six-note rising motive of Fragment ii (bars 3-4, Ex. 1) is one of the most frequently repeated fragments, occurring at least some twenty times, if all of its varied forms are included. It appears in all instruments and is subject to various changes of colour, but the contour and pitch content generally remain constant. It often appears in pairs, in imitation of the original repeat of bars 3-4. It continually recurs throughout the work, providing one of the strongest points of reference to which the music returns. As mentioned above, this motive tends to recur in association with a sense of D flat as a prevailing pitch, adding to its effect as a structural reference point and inviting a possible interpretation of the work as a ‘rondo’-type form. Other fragments suggest a derivation from this
motive but are more loosely related: this hints at deeper layers of relationship between musical ideas.

c) The flute and viola theme, Fragment vi in bar 18 (see Ex. 5) appears six times, though all within the first third of the work.

d) The ‘S-E-A’ motive, appearing first in bar 36, is repeated many times, though always as an opening element in a longer fragment rather than a fragment in itself. Multiple repetitions are often clumped together in a relatively short section e.g. there are nine occurrences between bars 80-96.

e) Fragment xli (Ex. 44) appears 6 times, though only within the extended melodic episode of Section J.

There is significant variety in the extent and placement of the various repeated fragments; some encompassing the entire work while others remain localised. In the context of this extensive use of repetition, the return of the ‘refrain’ section of bars 112-116 at 192-196 takes on a greater significance, as a larger-scale instance of a smaller-scale structural principle.

While the scattering of these repetitions throughout the work might on the face of it seem to undermine a sense of forward motion or development, another result is that familiar materials reappear in changing circumstances, and thereby evolve in a different sense as different aspects are revealed. The unchanging Fragment iii, for instance appears sometimes alone, as at bar 122, and sometimes overlaid by events in the other instruments, as at bars 25-26, or bars 119-120. In these instances the overlapping of events seems arbitrary – it is as if the different musical ideas have no effect on each other. On the other hand, at bar 75 the same fragment takes on a more dynamic energy as it is incorporated into a larger phrase.
2c. Variation

While repetition is clearly a significant aspect of the work, another essential feature of the fragmentary material is the degree of interconnectedness between fragments. Clearly there are many close relationships, in terms of pitch content, melodic and gestural shape, so that deciding which are merely variants of each other and which deserve the title of an individual idea is not necessarily straightforward. The further one looks, the more interconnected all the fragments seem, and the more they seem capable of blurring into one another.

Many thematic ideas clearly derive in one way or another from the opening harp fragments. Tracing one particular motive through its various forms in the early stages of the work will serve as an illustration of the depth of interconnectedness between the musical ideas.

Fragment ii contains two pairs of three rising notes, the first forming an augmented triad, the second a perfect fifth plus major third (Ex. 49):

![Ex. 49 Fragment ii (harp, bars 3-4)](image)

When the flute and viola enter in bar 18, the end of their first fragment (Fragment vi) consists of the same rising augmented triad, now extended with the use of higher octaves and harmonics on the last note (Ex. 50):
The flute repeats this motive in bars 23-24, and then again in bars 25-26. The third time, the ending is extended (Ex. 51):

Ex. 51 Extended form of Fragment vi (flute, bars 25-26)

The motive now contains both the augmented triad and the second group of three rising notes from the original harp motive, Fragments i and ii (with added timbral variation in the use of flutter tonguing). In this statement, the six-note figure has the effect of a thrown-away flourish. In the following bars 28-31 however it is developed further into a more distinct melodic idea (Ex. 52):

Ex. 52 Bars 28-31
The four occurrences of the six-note figure here are all slightly different. The first one begins with a rising fifth to G sharp, instead of the third to F; however a glance back at Fragment ii will remind us that this G sharp was present in this motive all along, as a harmonic played by the left hand but sounding above the initial D flat. The second group of three notes on this occurrence has been altered however: the F and E have both been flattened. The second occurrence in bar 29 is a direct repeat of Fragment ii, as if to remind us where this idea first came from. The third is a version of bar 28 with the original F and E restored; the fourth, in the flute, is a repeat of the flattened version of bar 28. By now the rising gesture of six notes is very familiar, but has been subtly varied every time. Then the first melodic episode commences in bar 33, with a flute melody (Fragment xii) also derived from the same six-note figure (with the missing initial D flat supplied by the harp accompaniment): so clearly related, yet suddenly so different in character that the connection is easily missed by the listener (Ex. 53).

Ex. 53 Flute melody, bar 33 (Fragment xii)

This degree of interconnectedness and variation is typical throughout. Small cells of apparently unimportant material constantly reappear in new guises. For example, the brief harp flourish of Fragment xvii, (see Ex. 16), with its pair of major triads a tritone apart, goes by barely noticed in bar 42. However in Section I, this fragment takes on a new resonance, with the tritones outlined by
the F-G-C sharp-F sharp melodic opening and reinforced by the juxtaposition of C and F sharp major triads in bars 146-151.

Many fragments are clearly slight variations of each other. For instance, consider Fragment xx in bar 52 (Ex. 54):

Ex. 54 Fragment xx (flute, bar 52)

This rising figure is reminiscent in rhythmic shape of the fragments in bars 30 and 31 discussed just above (see Ex. 52); however in its pitch content it is a repeat of the harp figure in bar 14, itself part of a longer arpeggiated flourish which at this early point in the work isn’t clearly characterised enough to be heard as thematic material. This grouping of notes appears also in a different guise in bar 44 as part of Fragment xviii, a longer melodic figure in the flute (Ex. 55):

Ex. 55 Fragment xviii (flute, bar 44)

which is developed further in a series of similar flourishes in bars 60 and 66, with changed pitch content.

Another instance can be seen in the transformation of Fragment xiii in bar 36 (Ex. 56):
In bar 80 this becomes Fragment xxviii (Ex. 57):

Ex. 57 Fragment xxviii (flute, bar 80)

This is further transformed into the viola figure, Fragment xxxiii, that accompanies the refrain sections (Ex. 58):

Ex. 58 Fragment xxxiii (viola, bar 112 etc.)

The pitch content changes, but there is enough of a reminiscence in the rising opening sequence to suggest the fragments are related.

Through this process of shifting between rhythmic and pitch similarities, fragments seem to arise from and dissolve into each other throughout the work, and defining which ideas are distinctly individual and which are variations of the same thing becomes almost impossible. To outline exhaustively every such relationship would be a mammoth task; but clearly there is a principle of constant, subtle variation at the heart of Takemitsu’s compositional technique in this work, which goes some way to accounting for the sense of overall unity.
However, this does not occur as a straightforward linear process of unfolding. The above examples suggest something of a process of mutation and development, yet as alluded to already, motives which previously have been varied often reappear in their original state, undermining a sense of forward development. Furthermore, fragments often reappear arbitrarily, whether in original or altered form, in ways that cannot be predicted by the context.

3. Form at the medium range level

Thus far two seemingly irreconcilable views of the work have emerged – a long-range form consisting of two halves defined by a repeated refrain section, with a more climactic point reached in the second half (or perhaps a ‘rondo’ form defined by the return of the opening fragments); and a mosaic of short fragments, scattered throughout the work with little discernible overall plan. To what extent then do the medium-range subsections contribute to the sense of long-range form?

At the medium-range level within each section there is an impression of form-building apparent at times, in the sense of a build up of material or activity towards a semi-climax. However it is this process that is so frequently undermined by a failure to lead anywhere, or by a sudden return of a familiar fragment in its usual form.

For example, the first melodic episode (Section C, bars 33-42) does gather some forward momentum with the regular harp accompaniment pattern, the harmonic movement in bars 37-41, and the flute melody rising to a peak in bar 40; however, this momentum quickly dissipates in bars 42-43 with the breaking-off of the harp pattern, a sudden silence, a return to fragmentary texture, and the
arrival of the prevailing A natural which creates a sense of stasis until the
unannounced return of Fragment vi in bar 47. In a sense, despite the illusion of
forward momentum this passage temporarily generates, this section (and other
similar melodic passages, such as the two refrains) might be seen as ‘extended
fragments’, due to their self-contained quality.

In the long fragmentary section from bars 47-74, the seemingly arbitrary
scattering of ideas again seems to undermine any overall shape or direction, and
defies the further division of this lengthy passage into smaller subsections. While
a brief peak of tension occurs in the flute flourishes in bars 60 and 67, once again
this is dissipated in each case by a breaking-off of the forward momentum, and
the immediate return of an earlier fragment.

This avoidance of a goal-oriented formal process at the medium-range
level is typical of the work, and it seems almost impossible to identify how ideas,
phrases or passages relate to each other at a functional level in Western musical
terms. Are there ideas that have a more accompanying or background role
compared to those that are more thematic or in the foreground? When a passage
drifting off into silence, does it create a sense of closure or of anticipation? When a
fragment reappears, does it provide a sense of return, of transition or
interruption? The difficulty of applying such categories (or the irrelevance of
such categories) means that the particular expressive and gestural qualities of
the individual fragments are more strongly highlighted at the local level: the
listener's attention becomes more focused on the moment-by-moment
experience.

The difficulty of defining elements of the music in terms of functional
relationship to each other calls into question how reliably large-scale formal
sections can be identified. While the distinction between fragmentation and continuity, selected above as the main criteria for defining formal sections, offers one possible approach, this approach can often be seen to fall short due to the overlapping of different dimensions, which tend to blur the divisions between sections.

For instance, Section E (beginning at bar 75) initially stands out as a distinct section due to the harp ostinato, over which the flute and viola have a similar rising phrase in canon; however, after the ostinato ceases, the flute and viola continue for many more bars with similar melodic fragments. Which parameter defines the end of one section and beginning of another?

Another more striking case occurs at bar 168 in the flute part, where the flute continues to repeat the same melody (Fragment xli) that has been the predominant thematic idea for the previous 14 bars, but now does so on C sharp instead of C natural. This shift to C sharp is significant in that it represents a return to the original prevailing pitch from the beginning of the work, which was also emphasised at the first ‘refrain’ melody; and from this moment in the work it continues to prevail to the end. In this sense therefore it represents a significant ‘recapitulation’. This is reinforced by the return soon after of versions of Fragment ii, in bars 172 and 175. However, at the moment of its arrival the return of the C sharp/D flat is not supported by the recapitulation of any other element of the music – melodically, it continues to repeat a theme only recently introduced, and texturally there is no change. This return of the reference pitch anticipates a return of more familiar harmonic and melodic material, which does indeed occur, but only gradually over many bars.
Through such blurring of the articulation of formal sections, the large-scale form is frequently not supported at the medium-range level; consequently the work plays both with and against conventional expectations.

**Some preliminary conclusions**

A passing comment by Burt offers a key to how we might interpret the fragmentary treatment of thematic material. In discussing Takemitsu's use of his opening hexachord, Burt notes that the composer seems to 'delight in deriving as many permutations as possible' from the group of six notes. This is especially apparent in the harp introduction, which presents the basic thematic ideas that serve as a basis for much of rest of the work. In this introduction alone, a simple set of notes is presented in a dazzling variety of ways; however, the interest lies not so much in the sequential unfolding of events, but in the way each presentation of the hexachord reveals different qualities and potentialities of the internal relationships inherent in that set of pitches. The six repetitions of Fragment iv for instance are all very similar gesturally, but each one presents a different possible arrangement and spacing of the six pitches, and consequently has a subtly different colouristic effect as the various tensions and attractions between the internal relationships within the pitch set are brought to light. It is as though we are being shown an object or group of objects from many different angles. Such an approach to variation might be likened to the movement of a hanging mobile, or the patterns created in a kaleidoscope.

If this 'kaleidoscopic' approach is understood to be a basic principle of Takemitsu's technique of variation, it provides a clearer way to interpret his

---

approach to his thematic material. The apparently haphazard arrangement of repetition and layering of ideas, and the constant variation of many of the fragments, can be understood as the presentation of ideas from different points of view. We are being shown a series of objects from multiple angles, to reveal as many of their internal features as possible. This means that the exact repetition of a fragment in a new context also represents a form of variation.

Clearly there is something spatial, as much as temporal, about this element of the work’s construction, which recalls the discussion of Takemitsu’s conception of time and form in Chapter 2. The linear succession of events is not necessarily the most interesting result; rather a web or matrix of interrelationships is built up at every level of the work, creating an overall sense of coherence despite a constantly changing surface. The fragmentary, modular nature of the thematic ideas lends itself to this concept of the work, as parts can be fitted together or separated at will, like Lego, allowing for an extreme flexibility of formal construction. Recognition of this principle frees us from the necessity of seeking a logical or linear process of evolution at every level of the work. At the same time, this does not prevent Takemitsu from appearing to choose a framework on the larger scale, which does rely on the temporal principle of return of familiar material.

The ‘kaleidoscopic’ principle is further significant in relation to the use of the pitch material, in that by exploring the hexachord and octatonic scale in as many combinations and arrangements as possible, a matrix of intervallic relationships is projected, while a centre point of gravity is avoided, as there is no hierarchy of pitches or intervals in the symmetry of the sets. It is difficult to see any distinction between the ways harmony and melody are generated from
the pitch material. This can be seen in the harp introduction, where a distinction between melodic and harmonic treatment of the hexachord seems irrelevant – the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the music function equally as projections of the same pitch matrix, in all its permutations. It cannot be said that there is a harmonic process that functions on a separate level from the melodic surface. The principle is essentially combinatorial. (Perhaps we can see here Takemitsu’s debt to serial procedures.)

But, importantly, as we have seen, this does not necessarily mean that Takemitsu tries to prevent individual pitches, intervals or chords from predominating – rather, the uncentred nature of the basic pitch material precisely allows him the freedom to shift the emphasis as he chooses. Furthermore, his method of free addition and subtraction of pitches to an established set means that the matrix of relationships can also be expanded or subtracted at will. This all points to a decidedly colouristic rather than functional approach to harmony, and further erodes any sense of movement towards a goal.

Another of the distinctive but elusive qualities of the work is the way that many of the more lyrical melodic fragments suggest that they might lead somewhere, or be subject to development or periodic phrasing in some more conventional sense. This impression is further reinforced when shorter fragments combine into longer melodies. The result is that even the most fragmented passages create a sense of constant but non-specific anticipation – an anticipation which can neither be thwarted nor fulfilled, since there is no clear logical process that can form the basis for predicting what will come next.

Perhaps it can be said that Takemitsu deliberately sets himself parameters that allow for the greatest freedom possible in all dimensions of the
work – pitch material that is symmetrical and avoids a tonal centre; processes of combination/conglomeration which are free of rules and allow the pitch material to transform itself however he wishes; a harmonic language that both invites and discourages the ear to interpret tonally; and a modular construction method based on small fragments that can be combined and separated at will – while nevertheless allowing himself to make use of such traditional musical conventions as seem useful, or perhaps which simply appeal to him. This apparent dichotomy or paradox accounts for much of what seems puzzling in the work. There is an inherent ambiguity in such an approach, since in setting such free parameters no outcome is pre- or over-determined; no choice precludes other choices – in short, nothing is predictable – yet as a result, every choice is in some sense a mystery. In particular it is the intersection of the spatial and temporal concepts of the work that create the greatest ambiguity. The projection of the work as a spatial matrix or static form on one hand undermines any sense of predictability of events in terms of temporal succession or linear relationship. On the other hand, the work’s surface activity generates an effect of forward motion, and events are placed into relationship to each other by virtue of their temporal succession. The constant ambiguity creates a void onto which the listener is free to project their own expectations. For this reason, even after multiple hearings, the listener can continue to interpret the work on many levels and in many ways simultaneously.
CHAPTER 5 – *And then I knew ‘twas Wind* as a response to the Sonata for flute, viola and harp

Introduction

The analysis of the previous chapter has described some of the features of *And then I knew ‘twas Wind* on the work’s own terms, but it remains to be examined whether anything might be learned from its relationship to Debussy’s Sonata for flute, viola and harp. Commissioned for Swiss flautist Aurèle Nicolet and first performed in 1992, *Wind* was intended for performance alongside Debussy’s sonata. While to a casual listener there may not appear to be any particularly striking connection, Takemitsu makes it clear that we are to hear his work as at some level a response or homage to Debussy’s sonata. This is indicated by the brief but clearly labelled quotation in his score, and by the unusual instrumental combination itself, employed for the first time in Debussy’s sonata, and so distinctive that no composer could write for the same ensemble without an awareness of the presence of Debussy’s work in the background to some degree.

It is not difficult to pastiche superficial aspects of Debussy’s style and harmonic language, but clearly Takemitsu’s music is never derivative in this way. On the contrary, it is at first striking that there is so little obvious similarity between the two works; though on reflection this should not surprise us, since *Wind* is a work of Takemitsu’s mature years, when his own compositional voice had been firmly established.

Nevertheless, as one grows familiar with both works, especially through the process of preparing them for performance, it is difficult to escape the feeling
that Debussy’s sonata is always hovering in the background of Takemitsu’s work, even while it remains difficult to pinpoint exact points of obvious similarity. A number of moments of connection can be identified that go some way to account for this impression. While in a sense these are the most trivial, since they are the most audible, they are nonetheless also intriguing for their subtlety.

**Moments of audible similarity**

The most obvious point of connection (Ex. 59) is the deliberate quote from the sonata, which occurs in bar 22 of the viola part (identified as Fragment vii in Chapter 4 – see Ex. 6), and is labelled in the score:

Ex. 59 Takemitsu, *Wind*, Fragment vii (viola, bar 22)

This is a transposed and modified version of the harp’s opening six notes from the sonata¹ (Ex. 60):

Ex. 60 Debussy, Sonata (harp, 1st movement, bar 1)

---

¹ All extracts from the sonata are taken from Claude Debussy *Sonata pour Flute, Alto et Harpe*, Paris: Durand S. A. Editions musicales, 1916.
The fleeting understatement of this quotation is notable – it is so disguised from its original form that it is barely recognisable aurally, and the phrase never reappears exactly anywhere else; although as will be discussed in more detail below, it does provide a point of departure for some of Takemitsu’s ideas.

Another clear reminiscence, also identified by Okajima\(^2\), is the rapid rising-falling figures that occur in the flute part, in Sections C and D, at bar 60 (Ex. 61) and at bars 98-99 (Ex. 62). (These figures are all variants of Fragment xviii, identified in Chapter 4, Ex. 17).

![Ex. 61 Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, bar 60)](image1)

![Ex. 62 Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, bars 98-99)](image2)

These passages invoke the flute figures at the opening of the first movement of the sonata (Ex. 63), and also the harp and viola accompaniment figures just before Figure 1 (Ex. 64).

A moment from bar 176 of *Wind* (Ex. 65) recalls the oscillating harp notes and the repeated attack-diminuendo pattern at the opening of Debussy’s third movement (Ex. 66):
In a similar way, despite sharing no content in common, the long climactic passage of *Wind* from bar 165 (within Section J), with its rapid harp figures, seems somewhat similar in expressive effect to a moment from the second movement of the sonata (the *Animare* passage after Figure 14), where a soaring melody rises over a continuous harp arpeggio.
The melodic writing for the flute is also a point of contact between the two works, although it is hard to point to specific moments of similarity. The languid, melancholic phrases from the beginning of the first and second movements of the sonata in particular, with their emphasis on the low register, are suggestive of some of Takemitsu's more lyrical moments (such as the first melodic episode, Section C, from bar 33), and indeed the same could be said of the viola writing: in the most lyrical viola passages in Wind, such as at bars 62-64, or 78-80, there is a similar dreamy melancholy to the opening viola theme of the sonata (bars 4-6 of the first movement). However, the connection is largely one of mood rather than melodic similarity.

One small fragment from Wind, Fragment xxvi in bars 65-66 (Ex. 67) does recall a moment from the sonata, six bars from the end of the second movement (Ex. 68):

Ex. 67 Takemitsu, Wind (flute, bars 65-66)

Ex. 68 Debussy, Sonata (flute, 2nd movement, 5 bars after Fig. 15)

One of the most ‘Debussy-esque’ melodic moments occurs towards the end of the work in the viola part, just before the end of Section J (Ex 69):

128
This solo passage is one of the few moments of melody that genuinely feels like an organic continuation of something that has come before – it functions as a winding-down of the previous extended melodic episode, and a transition back to opening material in preparation for the final section of the work. The rising minor thirds followed by appoggiatura-like falling major seconds give a strong implication of harmonic movement, while the chromatic contradictions on the surface (C sharp-C natural, B flat-B natural) are an example of the shifting modal nuance inherent in the harmonic ‘flavour’ of the work as discussed in Chapter 4. (The sense of harmonic movement is an illusion, since the phrase begins on and then leads back to the same C sharp/D flat pitch centre that has already been re-established bars before. As in many other instances, the result is circular. Takemitsu also does not support the implied harmonic movement with any actual harmony).

While it might be a stretch to argue for a direct comparison, the expressive effect of the chromatic alterations in such a phrase, or in the extended theme from Section J in bars 154-60 (see Chapter 4, Ex. 44 and Ex. 44), is not dissimilar from moments in the Debussy sonata, such as the change to E natural at the end of opening theme of the second movement (Ex. 70):
or from the way the opening flute theme of the first movement is modally altered on its return (Ex. 71 and Ex. 72):

Subtle shifts of modal colouration such as these are a feature of Debussy's melodic language. As he famously wrote of *Prélude à L'après midi d'un faune*, ‘Then again, it has no respect for tonality! Rather it's in a mode which is intended to contain all the nuances’. The oboe melody from near the end of the *Prélude*, bars 103-106, (Ex. 73), illustrates more clearly a similar sense of modal shift, and suggests itself as a possible model for Takemitsu's viola melody quoted above, although Takemitsu's rising third/falling second inverts Debussy's melodic pattern.

---

Takemitsu employs completely different procedures of pitch organisation, but his melodic style in later works invokes a similar quality of modal ‘shading’ for expressive effect, especially at more lyrical moments.

In a final point on the melodic connections between the works, it is perhaps worth noting that the circular tendency of many of Takemitsu’s phrases to begin and end in the same place also seems like a possible echo of the opening theme of the sonata’s second movement, quoted above. Curiously this is a feature that appears in other Debussy works for flute: for example, the opening phrase of *Syrinx*, and the first two bars of the flute solo of *Prélude à l’après midi d’un faune*, have a similar self-circling quality.

‘Many points of focus’ – shifting background and foreground

Another less specific but not insignificant point of connection is the way in which both composers are able to subtly shift focus between different aspects of the musical surface, through the way relationships between different motives are layered. Debussy’s sonata frequently features moments in which motives seem to shift imperceptibly from foreground to background or vice-versa.

Consider the second page of the first movement, bars 8-15 (Ex. 74):
The unassuming four-note falling bass in the harp, at the cadential point at the end of the first bar, gradually takes on melodic status in the last bar of the second system, and then is fully foregrounded in the flute melody in the last bar.

Similarly the rippling harp and viola accompaniment figures at the end of this
excerpt are a background echo of the earlier flute solo passages in bars 2-3 and bar 16. Small motivic cells that are developed in this way, at different levels of foreground and background, are a frequent feature of Debussy’s sonata (and indeed of other works).

In another extended passage from the second movement, these background/foreground shifts are even more apparent (Ex. 75). In this transition section, the music is coming out of a passage of dominant flute melody, and the ostinato-like dotted rhythms in the second bar barely register as a motivic idea; however, they gradually come more into the foreground as they are repeated in the viola. The flute semiquavers in the first two systems, which are the dying strains of the previous foreground material, eventually fade into a background accompaniment at Figure 9, while the viola’s dotted rhythms transform into a recapitulation of the movement’s opening melody. However the semiquaver figures once again rise out of the background to become the dominant melodic idea in the flute solo passage before Figure 10. It is perhaps partly to shifts of focus of this kind that Takemitsu is referring, when he writes of the ‘pan-focal’ quality of Debussy’s music.
Ex. 75 Debussy, Sonata (flute, viola, harp, 2nd movement, from 4 bars before Fig. 9 to 2 bars after Fig. 10)
In *Wind*, a similar focal shift can be seen particularly at the moments of transition into the two ‘refrain’ episodes identified in Chapter 4 (Section G, bar 112-116, and Section K, bars 192-195). In each case these ‘refrains’ are preceded by repetitions of a rising fragment – for example, at bars 108-111, just before the first ‘refrain’ melody of Section G (Ex. 76).

This rising figure, one of the most prominent and frequently recurring fragments, is fully foregrounded in the bars preceding the ‘refrain’ passage, but transforms effortlessly into the background harp arpeggio accompaniment figure underneath the flute melody (Fragment xxxiv) in bar 112 (Ex. 77), thanks in part to the continuation of the D flat/C sharp tonal centre the fragment has implied; the viola accompaniment fragments at this point are also yet another version of the predominant rising fragment.
In an earlier passage, the transition to the first melodic episode, Section C at bar 33 a similar process happens almost in reverse, in which the rising figures preceding the melodic episode provide the material for the flute melody itself (already discussed in Chapter 4 – see Ex. 52 and 53).

For Takemitsu the shift of focus between motivic ideas and between foreground and background does not necessarily happen in a sequential fashion, as with the second Debussy passage above, but may be scattered across larger time-spans. This shifting of focus forms part of the process of variation of fragments through their changing context, as previously discussed in Chapter 4. For example, the five excerpts in Examples 78-82 display various combinations and layering of Fragments iii, vi, ix, x, xi, xxvii and xxviii.
Ex. 78 Takemitsu, *Wind* (harp, bars 5-6)

Ex. 79 Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, viola, harp, bars 25-7)

Ex. 80 Takemitsu, *Wind* (viola, harp, bars 78-79)
The procedure here is not the same kind of organic transformation as in the Debussy examples; however, the way the recurring fragments are placed in different relationships to each other (or to new material) implies that the various elements have an equal independence. As a result, the concepts of foreground or background become less definable, but the listener is freer to project an interpretation of their own, according to where their perception shifts at a given moment, or in a given hearing. At moments such as these in Takemitsu, the
temporal relationship between musical ideas is loosened, which, while employing different means, creates a similar ‘pan-focal’ quality to that which can be identified in Debussy.

**Instrumental colour**

The question of instrumental colour cannot be ignored, since this is a point of influence between the two composers that is so often remarked on. Yet once again it is striking that Takemitsu does not appear to take Debussy as his guide in any obviously derivative ways in his technique of writing for the unusual combination of flute, viola and harp. Again, we are seeing the work of a mature composer with a well-formed language of his own. Takemitsu has an idiosyncratic way of using delicate shadings of dynamics and timbre (taking advantage of modern instrumental techniques) to provide great variety of shape and expressivity within a short gestural phrase. In his flute writing, harmonics, flutter-tonguing, alternate fingerings, variation in vibrato and ‘colour trills’ are all used extensively: not for ‘special effect’ however, but always within the context of expressive line. The viola part makes similar extensive use of tonal variety, particularly harmonics and tremolo. Advanced techniques are less common in the harp; harmonics are widely employed, and occasional use is made of varieties of plucking method to provide altered timbres.

Although used sparingly, a feature of Debussy’s sonata is the unusual timbre of the viola and flute playing in unison or octaves; for example, in a passage at Figure 6 in the first movement (Ex. 83), and after Fig 10 in the second movement (Ex. 84).
Ex. 83 Debussy, Sonata (flute, viola, 1st movement, Fig. 6)

Ex. 84 Debussy, Sonata (flute, viola, 2nd movement, 8 bars after Fig. 10)

This particular colour seems to be reserved for moments of growing intensity or emotional climax.

Takemitsu similarly employs this combination sparingly at moments of expressive intensity, such as at bar 120, a reappearance of Fragment ix (Ex. 85), and also several times during the climactic melodic episode from bars 154-180 in Section J, where the viola and flute parts weave in and out of unison.

Ex. 85 Takemitsu, Wind (flute, viola, bars 119-120)
Embedded connections – shared pitch material

Apart from the few examples above, other moments of obvious influence or direct reminiscence are difficult to detect. Indeed these few points are tenuous enough, and even the most unmistakeable of them suggests playful reference rather than deep significance. It might be considered striking just how little audible connection there is, given the frequent references to Takemitsu’s lifelong obsession with Debussy. However, if we return to the quotation passage, Fragment vii, from bar 22 (see Ex. 59) and look a little deeper beneath the surface, some other points of contact reveal themselves.

Debussy’s original rising six-note gesture (see Ex. 60) is clearly similar to the rising fragments that form one of the most persistent recurring gestural figures in Wind; the similarity is reinforced by the fact that Takemitsu’s quotation appears seamlessly in the midst of several bars of similar rising fragments. This suggests that perhaps this motive forms the basis for one of Takemitsu’s main thematic ideas. Fragment vii itself never reappears exactly in its original form; and Takemitsu’s rising motives, even at their most similar (e.g. those in bars 30-31 are strongly reminiscent), almost always adopt a distinctly different shape: they are usually divided into groups of three, with the second group starting at a lower pitch than that with which the first group ends. It is also notable that Fragment vii cannot be derived from either Takemitsu’s opening hexachord or the octatonic scale. However, when Fragment vii is broken down into two halves, and the interval content looked at more closely, the connection to Takemitsu’s thematic material becomes more apparent. The last three notes of Takemitsu’s most frequently repeated rising phrase, derived from Fragments i and ii from the opening bars, form a perfect fifth and major third – as do the last
three ascending notes of the quotation, Fragment vii (C, G, B). Takemitsu varies the first three notes of his rising figures more, but they most often occur in an arrangement that forms a perfect fifth plus semitone; this is only a slight shift of the middle note from Debussy first three notes, which form a tritone plus a major second. The version of this rising figure in bar 108, which is a derivation of Fragment ii, makes this clear (Ex. 86).

The interval content of this fragment is therefore only one slight shift away from the Debussy quotation of Fragment vii, but with the two three-note halves transposed in relation to each other. The effect of these changes is to disguise the connection considerably.

When the five pitches of the quotation fragment are rearranged into their closest position (G, A, B, C, E flat in ascending order) it also becomes apparent that an augmented triad can be formed (G, B, E flat) – another interval pattern, common to Fragments i and ii from the opening bars, which frequently reappears throughout the work. The all-pervasive semitone plus minor third group – the [014] pitch class set, discussed in the previous chapter – can also be found (B, C, E flat); and of course, this set, combined with its inversion, gives us Takemitsu’s hexachord.
As Okajima has pointed out\(^4\), the \([014]\) set is also highlighted several times in the opening of the first movement of Debussy’s sonata (Ex. 87 and Ex. 88): in the first bars of the flute part, (the A, C, A flat of the first phrase, and in the C, E flat, E natural of the quintuplet figure), and also in the harp in bar 3 (where it reinforces the pitches in the flute part).

![Ex. 87 Debussy, Sonata (flute, 1st movement, bars 1-3)](image)

![Ex. 88 Debussy, Sonata (harp, 1st movement, bar 3)](image)

The quotation figure, Fragment vii, makes one other notable appearance in *Wind*, in a new form as Fragment ix, the falling flute phrase of bar 26-27 (Ex. 89):

![Ex. 89 Takemitsu, Wind (flute, bar 26-27)](image)

\(^4\) Okajima, p. 75.
When compared with the close-positioned arrangement of the quotation pitches noted above, this fragment can be seen to be an exact (though transposed) inversion. This fragment reappears only one other time in this form, at bars 119-120, but it seems to provide a model for the various descending melodic fragments that occur throughout the work, in the way that the quotation resembles the many various rising figures. Arguably the connection between this phrase and the quotation fragment could almost be accidental; yet this phrase is given a prominence which invites attention – it stands out as the first descending fragment, and is also the loudest, highest and most distinctly melodic moment in the work so far.

It may also be noteworthy that while Takemitsu removes the tritone from his modified version of the quotation, the tritone is given some isolated prominence later – such as in the highlighted A-E flat relationship in bars 44-47 (A and E flat being the first two pitches of the quotation); the juxtaposed major triads a tritone apart in bars 42 and 147; and the C-F sharp relationship highlighted in the melodic fragment in bar 136.

It would appear from all of the above therefore that Takemitsu has deliberately borrowed some small three-note cells from Debussy to use as a starting point for generating his own motivic ideas. He takes great care however that these points of connection are hidden, deliberately avoiding making the thematic gestures too audibly similar, and uses the connections between the pitch material only as a point of departure, to which he applies compositional processes that are entirely his own. It could not be said that these connections of pitch material contribute greatly to any obvious aural similarity between the works: those pitch sets Takemitsu chooses to highlight are not nearly so all-
pervasive in the sonata, and nor does Debussy generate his melodic and harmonic ideas from the combinatorial processes that Takemitsu seems to favour. Nevertheless it seems fair to suggest that Takemitsu seems to have built a subtle reference to Debussy’s sonata into *Wind* at a deep level.

However, this does not reveal the full picture. Koozin has pointed out the prevalence of the [014] set as a frequently occurring collection in other works of Takemitsu, usually in the context of octatonicism.\(^5\) Burt notes Takemitsu’s favouring of the *Wind* hexachord, which is formed by a combination of two [014] sets, and also can be understood as a combination of two augmented triads a semitone apart, in numerous other works.\(^6\) In other words, the very pitch materials in *Wind* that seem to derive from the small Debussy quote were in fact already frequently favoured by Takemitsu, and a familiar part of his musical language, and therefore do not necessarily represent a deliberate reference to Debussy’s sonata. Yet the presence of the quoted fragment and the way it relates to Takemitsu’s material suggests this is still a valid conclusion. Perhaps Takemitsu recognised, or even searched for, an instance of some of his own preferred pitch sets in the sonata, in order to employ them as a point of connection. Probably both interpretations are true; but, as with so many aspects of this work, the question leads us to an inherent ambiguity.

**Wind and other Debussy works**

Certain aspects of the way *Wind* is constructed also invite comparison with other of Debussy’s works – most notably *Jeux*. Hebert Eimert’s analysis of

---


Jeux shows that the work is constructed from a large number of short thematic fragments, ‘considerably larger than in usual formal practice,’ many of which are immediately repeated once or twice on their appearance but don’t return; they do not function as themes in a traditional sense, since rather than motivic ‘working out’ there is always new material appearing. There is sufficient recurrence of material that some critics have attempted to describe the work as a rondo-type form; however Eimert argues against this on the grounds that the episodic material between the returns of the ‘rondo theme’ are so much more significant in terms of length and complexity that one barely notices the returning passages. He also points out that even the division into clear motives and themes that the rondo argument relies on is problematic, since there are so many inner connections between many of the materials.

This description of the structure of Jeux has similarities with many of the observations of Wind in Chapter 4 above – the work is constructed from a large number of short thematic ideas, containing many interconnections, that are held together in a loose framework by the repetition of some motives, but in which the overall impression is of long episodes of constant change rather than of a clear formal structure. It has been noted earlier that a similar ‘rondo-type’ formal description might be applied to Wind – although it is equally dismissible on the same grounds.

Eimert’s description of Debussy’s melodic or motivic ideas is also suggestive; he speaks of simple, ornamental motives, which circulate or move in waves through patterns of repetition, but never ‘go’ anywhere, since there is no

---

8 Ibid., 7.
m motivic development as such. Rather there are patterns of motivic association, which result in endless variation but with a degree of inexactness comparable to natural organic variation in the growth patterns of plants. ‘His method is to avoid being methodical, and let his line grow in endless variation’.

Again, these comments resonate in a striking way with Takemitsu. The sense that the many relationships between ideas, in their constant variation and transformation, gives the work its unity, rather than a process of working-out or linear development, has been observed in Chapter 4. It has also been observed that the great majority of Takemitsu’s fragments either circle back on themselves or trail off into silence, in a way that undermines a sense of ‘going anywhere’: it is the overall accumulation of fragments and the continuous but unsystematic process of variation that creates the form, rather than the internal drive of the motivic ideas themselves to lead the music onwards.

A crucial aspect of Eimert’s analysis is the way he shows that the brief recurring ‘rondo theme’, which is not aurally significant enough to deserve that label (or to justify the rondo form), provides a much deeper level of unity in the way its pitch content and gestural shape provides an archetype (though an inexact one) for virtually all of the other motivic ideas in the work. We can see here a parallel with Takemitsu’s use of the pitch content and gesture of his Debussy quote to derive his main recurring motivic fragments, in a way that does not result in an audible ‘thematic’ relationship.

Eimert also remarks on the absence of traditional four- and eight-bar phrase patterns of antecedent and consequent, arguing that in Jeux such

---

9 Ibid., 14.
10 Ibid., 15.
categories no longer apply; if anything, every theme is an antecedent. This point recalls Hertz’s comments on the opening to Prélude à l’après midi d’un faune discussed in Chapter 3, in which the fluid flute solo, followed by the unresolved ‘faun chord’ and then silence, undermines any sense of antecedent-consequent periodicity of phrasing, and leaves the music hanging in ambiguity between a sense of anticipation or of suspension in time. This same suspension/anticipation, and the way it erases any possibility of periodicity, is central to Takemitsu’s work, and along with ‘endless variation’ is one of the most Debussy-esque qualities it possesses. To consider again the opening harp fragment: its harmonic ambiguity, resulting from the symmetrical pitch structure of the hexachord, is left suspended in silence by the following bar; and is then immediately repeated, exactly as the silence at the opening of Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune is followed by a repeat of the same ambiguous chord which preceded it – the repetition further compounding the ambiguity, since the anticipation has not been fulfilled. Of course in Takemitsu’s opening bars, this process happens in miniature, so the effect is somewhat different; on the other hand it is in a sense reinforced by the fact that the next two bars, a variant of the first two, continue the same pattern of ambiguous chord and silence.

In case this connection should seem too spurious, consider the way the same effect is exploited at other crucial moments in the work: specifically in the bars immediately preceding both ‘refrain’ passages. Here, Fragment ii is again followed by silence to create a sense of ambiguous suspension, in a way that invokes Debussy’s silence. The open ‘antecedent’ of the fragment is followed not by a ‘closure’ but by another antecedent in the new ‘refrain’ melody.

11 Ibid., 10.
As has already been observed, the dynamic tension between sound and silence is one of the most distinctive features of Takemitsu's musical language generally, and an almost constant feature of *Wind*. This use of silence has often been remarked on in the context of Takemitsu's engagement with Japanese aesthetics and the concept of *ma*, but it also aligns with an aspect of Debussy's music that Takemitsu simultaneously seems to be invoking – perhaps another instance (comparable to Takemitsu's use of certain pitch sets that are both part of his language but also to be found in Debussy's sonata, as discussed above) of the 'shared sensibility' of the two composers.

Once we begin to hear the same gesture of silence from *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* in *Wind*, it becomes possible to believe that the languid, melancholic mood of Takemitsu's flute writing derives equally from the *Prélude* as from the sonata. Might the opening three or four bars of the first melodic episode, Section C (Ex. 90) be intended to evoke the texture and mood of this E major return of the flute theme towards the end of the *Prélude* (Ex. 91)?
Ex. 90 Takemitsu, *Wind* (flute, viola, harp, bars 32-39)

Ex. 91 Debussy, *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* (piano reduction, bars 79-82)
Time and space revisited

The conclusion of Eimert’s analysis of *Jeux* is that it is the dimension of time that is the key: ‘One is faced by an image of ceaselessly fluctuating time, a permanent tempo rubato which brings the stream of time into the basic wave form of *Jeux*.’\textsuperscript{12} He concludes that it is in ‘methods of musical time, not introduced as ornament and colour but engendered from within the work itself’ that the work’s striking modernity and originality lies.\textsuperscript{13} Pasler argues that *Jeux* is best understood in terms of ‘kinetic’ form – in which the pattern of changes between different parameters is the main form-defining quality. Form, therefore, is a longer-range expansion of rhythm. Pasler points out that ‘kinetic’ form is essentially a linear process, which is experienced in real time and does not make sense if conceived as a spatial form ‘frozen’ in time.\textsuperscript{14} This temporal dimension is what makes it difficult to describe the form in terms of conventional formal categories, which rely on morphological descriptions of form, and hence on spatial metaphors.

The rhythmic surface of *Jeux*, with its patterns of repetition and dance rhythms, does not immediately evoke *Wind*, even if its state of constant change might do so. Pasler suggests the key to unity in *Jeux* is an underlying rhythmic relationship or constant pulse that links the many changes of tempo and time signature between sections.\textsuperscript{15} Takemitsu’s work on the other hand has an exceptionally fluid and ever changing rhythmic surface that rarely allows any regularity of metre to be audible, and gives an impression of constant

\textsuperscript{12} Eimert: 17.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 71.
improvisation. Okajima observes that both Debussy’s sonata and Wind contain a similarly high frequency of changes of tempo and time signature,\(^{16}\) and indeed there is a similar fluidity, in the sonata as a whole, in the way in which Debussy’s musical ideas freely take on whichever metre and tempo they require (to echo Hertz’s point\(^{17}\)). There are also passages of similar improvisatory quality, such as the opening and closing material of the first movement.\(^{18}\) However, Debussy’s use of dance-like rhythms and regular metres have no equivalence in Wind.

If we compare the kinetic form of Jeux as a linear process with Takemitsu’s tendency to think of form in spatial terms, we appear to arrive at another important difference between the two composers. There are clear indications in Wind that Takemitsu is indeed thinking spatially. If we recall the way many fragments retain an independent identity while they are subject to different processes of combination and repetition across the work, it is easy to feel that they undergo different rates of change, or occupy different temporal ‘realms’ – this layering of time scales implies a spatial dimension that does not follow a single line through time. The ‘matrix’ of relationships that intersperses the work without following a linear development process also implies a spatial conception. However, while Pasler refers to the linearity of the kinetic form, other writers have pointed to the multi-dimensionality of Jeux. McCombie speaks of how the work does not offer itself as a ‘single object of contemplation, to which a listener assumes a fixed position’. Boulez speaks of the work as having

\(^{16}\) Okajima, p. 79.
\(^{18}\) In Wind, Takemitsu’s tempo instructions are dauntingly frequent and precise; however, in practice, the experience for the performer is actually of a natural ebb and flow of subtle rubato, in which finding the organic breath of the music is the essential aim. This process feels strikingly similar to negotiating the rubato of Debussy in order to arrive at a flexibility that feels natural and unforced.
qualities of a maze or labyrinth. Both these comments imply the simultaneous possibility of a spatial and a linear view of the form.

We can see in Wind that, whatever spatial elements may be detectable in Takemitsu's thinking, there are also aspects of the piece that rely on linear temporal unfolding for their effect. If we consider the two 'refrain' passages again, it is instructive to examine the implications of viewing these either from the perspective of a form that is 'frozen in time' or as part of a temporal unfolding. These passages can certainly be viewed spatially as structural 'pillars' that balance the overall form and provide a connection between its two halves. However, this ignores the real-time experience. The first of these passages, arriving after a suspension in silence, is unexpected in its presentation of this new and uniquely lyrical, quasi-tonal material. When this occurs for the second time, it ought to be less of a surprise, since the same figure and moment of silence precede it; but the music has given us so little clue of what to expect at each moment that the repetition itself is the surprise: the sense of return is not inevitable. To view the form as frozen and static suggests the return is somehow more predictable than it actually is, and robs this moment of much of its beauty. (Indeed, the labelling of these passages as a 'refrain', employed throughout as a useful shorthand, is clearly inappropriate, since it implies a simplistic return of familiar material).

When we consider the approach to form more generally, the connection between the two composers becomes clearer. What each is seeking, in their own

ways, is a freedom and naturalness of form that cannot be pinned down to a
predetermined formula or a single dimension. As Pasler says of Debussy:

> Inspired by the time of nature and of the universe, which he found
> multiple and characterized by a different quality from moment to
> moment, Debussy did not wish his music to capture just one instant, as a
> painting or a piece of sculpture might.\(^{20}\)

Deliège points out that Debussy appears to use relatively simple external forms,
but

> only to assure a certain level of conventionality. For the essence of his
> work is never found in the order of thematic contrasts and reprises, this
> order being simply a sort of mold into which the wealth of substance
> comprising all inventive and original elements could be poured.\(^{21}\)

Parks also demonstrates that Debussy’s forms are often based on relatively
simple outlines (e.g. ABA patterns are common), but that as his style evolved
over his lifetime, these patterns become increasingly modified into more unique,
non-traditional models.\(^{22}\) The picture of *Wind* that has been built up matches
these descriptions very well – a relatively simple formal ‘frame’ based on some
repetition of material is filled with a remarkably free and diverse collection of
materials that do not generate the necessity of the frame itself.

The other point of connection, while manifested in different ways, is the
foregrounding of time as a conscious element in the musical experience.
Debussy, in late works such as *Jeux* in particular, uses spans of ‘rhythmicised
time’\(^{23}\) and their proportional relationships as his ‘raw material’. Takemitsu, as
we have seen in Chapter 2, foregrounds time in a different way, by using the
juxtaposition of brief sound events and silences to constantly call attention to the

\(^{20}\) Pasler: 63.
\(^{22}\) See the chapter on morphological form in Richard S. Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy* (New
\(^{23}\) Debussy’s own term for the way many of the motivic materials in *Jeux* function – see Eimert: 4.
conscious experience of time, and by loosening the temporal relationship between different musical elements. Common to both procedures is a departure from form as logical ‘argument’, and a consequent focus on the innate qualities of sound. Of course, Takemitsu is only one of many composers to follow in Debussy’s footsteps in this respect; arguably what links them further is a common degree of working within ‘a certain level of conventionality.’ But the link becomes stronger when their similar engagement with the poetic and symbolic dimensions of music is taken into consideration, as will be examined in the final chapter.

---

CHAPTER 6 – Takemitsu the ‘Symbolist’?

Symbolism and the spiritual in art

We have seen that Symbolism formed part of the artistic milieu in which Debussy was immersed, and that Symbolist poets such as Stéphane Mallarmé had an influence on Debussy’s compositional style. It has been suggested that, via Debussy, some of the same influence may be detectable in Takemitsu’s music as well; but could we call Takemitsu a ‘Symbolist’ composer? What does this mean, and why would such a label be useful?

An attempt to link Takemitsu more directly with a specific art movement some hundred years before his time might seem historically dubious. However, Daniel Gerould has recently argued that the legacy of Symbolism can be seen in the return in recent times to an emphasis on the spiritual dimension in the visual and performing arts. This trend specifically links art at the turn of the twenty-first century to the ideals of nineteenth-century Symbolism, which saw art as a means of seeking a deeper spiritual reality below the materialistic surface of life. For Gerould, both nineteenth-century Symbolism and the more recent emphasis on the spiritual in art are manifestations of a recurring pattern – ‘a periodic need to go back to eternal sources and re-establish contact with the deepest well-springs of human creativity in the sacred, however that may be defined’. The unquestionably spiritual dimension of Takemitsu’s musical thought suggests his work can be linked to this Symbolist legacy, as part of the same recurrent interest in the ‘sacred’ origins of art.

---

2 Ibid., 81.
It is not only this broader spiritual dimension that links Takemitsu to Symbolism, however. As was touched on in the introductory chapter, Koozin has attempted to address some of the ways in which Takemitsu’s music reaches beyond itself to intersect with various symbolic and extra-musical dimensions, through its referential quality and use of musical metaphor. Koozin does not make a connection to Symbolism as such, but his analysis suggests Takemitsu’s use of technical means to mediate between his imaginative vision and the concrete sensory experience of the artwork can also be compared to Symbolist aesthetics and particularly to Mallarmé’s conception of poetry.

It is not the intention here to argue that Takemitsu knowingly aligned himself with Symbolism as a specific art movement or philosophy, and the evidence of the analysis and comparison of And then I knew ‘twas Wind and the Sonata for flute viola and harp, while suggesting many parallels, is certainly not strong enough to support such a specific claim. There is no evidence that Takemitsu read Mallarmé or responded to him directly, and his own writings do not discuss Symbolism as such; but, as the following discussion argues, they do often demonstrate an engagement with aesthetic concerns that intersect with those of both Debussy and Mallarmé. Rather than claim a direct link or influence, the aim here is to offer a Mallarméan, or Symbolist, reading of Takemitsu, to illustrate how he may be understood from the perspective of a particular stream of aesthetic thought.

---


4 Although he certainly had an interest in modernist writers, such as James Joyce, who themselves were influenced by Mallarmé.
Language, meaning, poetry, and the spiritual

An important source of Mallarmé’s poetics was the apparent existential crisis he suffered in his early adulthood. As biographer Gordon Millan explains, this crisis involved the rejection of his traditional Catholic faith, but also arose out of a realisation about the arbitrary nature of language – that words themselves are no more than ‘rhythmic vibrations in the air totally devoid of any intrinsic meaning’\(^5\) and that language, so central to the nature of human consciousness, and in which he had invested so much as a poet, was ‘in reality nothing more than a collection of meaningless conventional signs’.\(^6\) Mallarmé experienced this discovery in a deeply personal way, as the opening up of an abyss of meaninglessness at the heart of human experience. Yet it was also this sense of meaninglessness that led him to a new vision of the nature of poetry. If the sounds of language are mere arbitrary signs, then the attempt to bring together words into meaningful relationships of sound and sense through poetry is a transcendent process. For Mallarmé this striving for transcendence represented nothing less than the struggle of the human condition to reconcile itself with the apparent meaninglessness of existence. The project of Poetry (and by implication art in general) was therefore a deeply serious one, engaged with expressing universal truths, and could also provide a substitute for, or alternative to, traditional religious beliefs.\(^7\) What is significant in this conception is that it is the poetic or artistic process in itself which conveys its own spiritual dimension; the artwork is not merely an image of some external truth, but

---


\(^6\) Ibid., p.135.

\(^7\) Ibid., p.139. As we saw in Chapter 3, Stefan Jarocinski points to a similar loss of faith and turning to art for an alternative as a broad philosophical trend in nineteenth century Europe.
embodies that truth. Therefore in Symbolism, not only is aesthetic experience granted a special quasi-religious status, but it is the work of art itself that is the experience. One important implication of this is that the material of the work of art is strongly foregrounded. While the goal of the work of art might be to point beyond itself to a higher reality outside the illusory material world, in the end it is only through the inescapable concrete fact of the work that an audience can experience the artist's vision. This paradox is the essential mystery of all art, which art itself both embodies and tries to reconcile. (It is for this reason that Mallarmé's poems are principally about the poetic process itself).

For Takemitsu, it is clear that music was a serious endeavour that had a spiritual significance beyond mere entertainment: ‘As a composer I think about music not as a mere recreation or pleasant pastime, but as something that is part of a larger human experience’. His spiritual view of music is made explicit in another passage:

But our [i.e. the composer’s] task, not limited only to music, is to reveal things that come to us through our spiritual efforts. Art is nothing but the actualisation of the creative spirit. Pieces of music are facts captured by the spirit, using sound as a medium. In that sense pieces of music are concrete things.

This passage appears in the context of Takemitsu’s view that modernist music in the twentieth century had lost its connection to humanity, through its extreme abstraction. In pursuit of a re-humanising and universalisation of music, Takemitsu, inspired by his contact with traditional music of various cultures,

---


considered that it was important to return to the power of ancient cultural sources, in order to escape the staleness of convention and rejuvenate the basic artistic impulse: ‘Unless based on a deeper experience of the old, confronting the new will not result in a universal world of new sound’.10 This interest links also Takemitsu to Mallarmé, who was preoccupied with ‘the complex relationships between religious ritual, mythology, art and magic’, in his search for a foundation for the universal validity he sought to achieve in his poetry.11 We can see in Debussy a similar urge to recapture the primal artistic impulse as a means of escaping the stultifying effects of tradition: as his literary alter-ego ‘Monsieur Croche’ says, ‘I prefer the simple notes of an Egyptian shepherd’s pipe; for he collaborates with the landscape and hears harmonies unknown to your treatises’.12 Gerould points out that the desire to reclaim ancient or forgotten wisdom is a common element of that impulse towards the spiritual in art which Symbolism represents.13

The relevance of the above remarks to the main subject of this study, as will be shown below, is the way Symbolism brings to the fore the connection between the spiritual or transcendental dimension of art and the material expression of that dimension through the concrete work of art.

Freeing sounds to ‘be themselves’

Clearly, as we have already seen, one of the most important discoveries for Takemitsu from his encounters with music of ancient cultures, especially

---

11 Millan, pp. 142-143.
13 Gerould: 81.
with Japanese music, is the emphasis on the qualities of sounds in themselves rather than as part of a system. In a much-quoted passage he writes:

I wish to free sounds from the trite rules of music; rules that are in turn stifled by formulas and calculations. I want to give sounds the freedom to breathe. Rather than on the ideology of self-expression, music should be based on a profound relationship to nature – sometimes gentle, sometimes harsh. When sounds are possessed by ideas instead of having their own identity, music suffers.14

This statement contains an echo of Mallarmé's famous comment to Degas that poems are made of words, not of ideas. It also recalls a passage from Mallarmé’s ‘critical poem’ Crisis of Verse: 'The pure work implies the disappearance of the poet speaking, who yields the initiative to words, through the clash of their ordered inequalities...'15 There is a similarity not only in the way both artists give primacy to their raw material (sounds and words), but also in the suggestion of the impersonality or absence of the artist in the finished work – the escape from ‘self-expression’. This was a major theme in Mallarmé's poetics, which had a significant impact on modernist poets such as Eliot and Yeats,16 and also upon literary theorist Roland Barthes’ concept of the 'death of the author'.17

Takemitsu's interest in giving freedom to sound is one of his strongest links to Debussy, whose acerbic comments in his letters express his impatience with musical rules and conventions, particularly of the stale language of conventional harmony and of standard formulaic structures. For example in 1894 Debussy wrote to his friend, poet Pierre Louys:

No one’s ever really pointed out how few chords there are in any given century! Impossible to count how often since Gluck people have died to the chord of the sixth and now, from Manon to Isolde, they do it to the diminished seventh! And as for that idiotic thing called the perfect triad, it’s only a habit, like going to a café!18

As late as 1915 (the year of the Sonata for flute, viola and harp) he writes to another friend: ‘What beauties there are in music “by itself”... We’re still in an age of “harmonic progressions” and people who are happy just with beauty of sound are hard to find.’19

Art as mediator between the self and the world

The emphasis on music as ‘just sound’ links both Takemitsu and Debussy to Symbolism, in its emphasis on the material of the art form. But of course the point is the way in which the basic raw material is transformed or transcend in the quest for the artistic vision. As we have seen, both Takemitsu and Debussy employ poetic or descriptive titles, often containing nature imagery; but both are at pains to reject the idea that music is meant merely to ‘illustrate’ in a trivial way; rather their concern is with how music can translate a subjective experience or vision. As Takemitsu says, ‘Although I think constantly about the relationship of music to nature, for me music does not exist to describe natural scenery’.20 Rather than illustrating nature, both speak of a desire for music to respond directly to nature, and to have the same freedom, beauty and power of natural phenomena. Debussy, comparing music to painting, wrote in 1913:

music is the art that is in fact closest to Nature...It is the musicians alone who have the privilege of being able to convey all the poetry of day and

---

19 Ibid., p. 303.
night, of earth and sky. Only they can recreate Nature’s atmosphere and give rhythm to her heaving breast.  

In the liner notes to a recording of Quotation of Dream, Takemitsu speaks of a certain melodic idea moving in a repetitive cycle but undergoing a subtle change each time ‘like waves, or wind’. For both composers, the temporal dimension of music is one of its closest points of connection with nature and with lived experience. In the quote above about music as the closest art to nature, Debussy is not concerned with ‘illustration’ – he goes on to suggest that music is able to capture something of the dynamic temporal experience of life, compared to which painting can only capture a single frozen instant. Takemitsu’s ‘garden’ metaphor might be most usefully interpreted from this point of view, not as a simplistic illustration but as an attempt to create a musical analogue of a subjective temporal experience. The temporal dimension provides the common ground that makes a translation between the two possible.

While Takemitsu’s titles frequently evoke nature (Winter, Eclipse, Rain Spell), or are drawn from literary sources (Far Calls, coming Far!, How Slow the Wind), they also commonly take us out of the everyday and point to some subjective or other-worldly experience (A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden, From Me Flows What You Call Time, Spirit Garden); dreams are a common reference (Dream/Window, To the Edge of Dream, I Hear the Water Dreaming). Furthermore, his titles often contain unusual conjunctions of ideas that combine musical and non-musical ideas (Spectral Canticle, Le Son-

---

Takemitsu makes clear that his titles are an integral part of the composition:

For me composition always involves a strong interaction between music and words. To find an appropriate title for a composition I move back and forth between sounds and words. Many of my titles are strange; some critics think they are simply the result of a poetic whim. But when I decide on a title, it is not merely to suggest a mood but a mark of the significance of the music and the problems encountered in its general construction.\(^{23}\)

Numbers also play a role in Takemitsu’s creative process. In his essay *Dream and Number*, Takemitsu goes further than elsewhere in attempting to describe some of his methods. He explains the importance that numbers play in translating his ideas into musical form, since numbers have both symbolic and concrete qualities, and can also be used to generate musical structures:

My interest in manipulating numbers is not directed at creating music theory. On the contrary, by using numbers I want to integrate music with the real, changing world.... through the absolute simplicity of numbers I want to clarify the complexities of the dream.\(^{24}\)

What is clear is that the concern with numbers is not aimed at structural abstraction for its own sake; there is no clear ‘method’, but rather an interest in seeking, through an intuitive process, connections and correspondences that will permit a translation between the idea or dream and its musically concrete manifestation.

The above comments on Takemitsu’s creative sources, with the interest in dreams, nature, and mysterious experiences beyond the everyday as the sources of the aesthetic experience, again suggest resonances with the Symbolist movement.

---


\(^{24}\) Toru Takemitsu, ‘Dream and Number’, in *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, p. 102.
Poetry and symbolism in *And then I knew 'twas Wind*

Let us now revisit *And then I knew 'twas Wind*. The title is taken from an Emily Dickinson poem:

> Like Rain it sounded till it curved  
> And then I knew 'twas Wind –  
> It walked as wet as any Wave  
> But swept as dry as sand –  
> When it had pushed itself away  
> To some remotest Plain  
> A coming as of Hosts was heard  
> It filled the Wells, it pleased the Pools  
> It warbled in the Road –  
> It pulled the spigot from the Hills  
> And let the Floods abroad –  
> It loosened acres, lifted seas  
> The sites of Centres stirred  
> Then like Elijah rode away  
> Upon a Wheel of Cloud.25

Dickinson’s poems are rarely straightforward; the uncertainty of the subject, and the biblical imagery, make clear that this is no mere pictorial depiction of weather. The relationship of the poem to the Takemitsu’s musical work is not something that can be determined with any certainty; as is the case with Debussy’s piano preludes, Takemitsu’s choice of title is evocative but not specific. (In his literary references, Takemitsu tends to favour ‘difficult’ writers, such as Dickinson and James Joyce, whose language is both obscure and suggestive). The title of *And then I knew 'twas Wind* is notable for several reasons: it is the second line of the poem; it combines an image from nature that might seem straightforward enough with a poetic reference that reveals it is not; it is not the only work of Takemitsu to reference the poetry of Dickinson; and the other major work to do so is linked by similar imagery, and contains musical material

---

in common.

Takemitsu's other Dickinson work, *How Slow the Wind* for orchestra (1991), takes its title from the short poem or fragment:

How slow the Wind –
How slow the sea –
How late their feathers be! 26

There is a clue in the first two lines, when compared with the other poem: both opening couplets juxtapose wind and water. Both of Takemitsu's works employ the ‘S-E-A’ motive extensively – a frequently occurring motive in his later works that is associated with water imagery.27 There is another connection in the melody in bar 154 of *And then I knew ‘twas Wind*, which is also used in *How slow the Wind*. This melody does not have the same obvious notation symbolism as the ‘S-E-A’ motive, so it is not possible to ascribe a definitive meaning to it. However, given that both titles invoke wind, but suppress a paired line from their respective poems that invokes water, the prominent presence of the water-associated ‘S-E-A’ motive hints we might infer a similar symbolic connection with their other shared motive. Burt therefore suggests that by association we might think of this melody as Takemitsu’s ‘wind theme’.28

What is striking about the ‘S-E-A’ motive is its multi-dimensionality as a referential motive. Through its ‘spelling’ it obviously represents the sea, and by association water, and many of Takemitsu's works specifically invoke water imagery (especially rain) in their titles; but these concepts have for Takemitsu a musical meaning as well. In relation to his later works he often spoke of the 'sea

27 This motive is identified and discussed in Chapter 4; see Examples 12-15.
of tonality’, and of the ‘stream of sound’, ambiguous metaphors that suggest a symbolic connection between water and music itself. The ‘sea of tonality’ in one sense seems to suggest a kind of pan-tonality, or a primordial reservoir of all possible sounds from which music is drawn. As Burt suggests, the idea of music ‘flowing’ towards the ‘sea of tonality’ also might imply the gradual stylistic shift towards a more tonal sound in Takemitsu’s later works.\textsuperscript{29} The frequent occurrence of this motive in so many works also implies an interconnection between them all – perhaps the connected works are not to be thought of as separate but part of a total ‘sea’ of one great work.

Burt notes the ‘sea’ and ‘wind’ motives as instances of a common procedure of self-quotation in Takemitsu’s late works; he also identifies another short fragment in \textit{Wind}, in bar 186 in the viola (Ex. 92):

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Ex92.png}
\end{center}

\textbf{Ex. 92} Takemitsu, \textit{Wind} (viola, bar 186)

which occurs in at least three other works.\textsuperscript{30} There are not enough clues to ascribe a specific association in this instance, but the practice of self-quotation suggests this motive might also carry some symbolic association in Takemitsu’s mind.

Koozin also draws attention to shared materials between many of Takemitsu’s works, at the level of pitch collections or pitch-organisation procedures rather than melodic self-quotation. For Koozin this also forms part of the way Takemitsu’s music functions referentially or metaphorically, and he tries

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 176.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 222.
to demonstrate how technical procedures reflect Takemitsu's broader philosophy. For instance, in discussing *Quatrain II* (1977), Takemitsu's response to Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, he argues that both composers employ musical metaphors in similar ways to project their particular concept of time. For Koozin, the use of symmetrical pitch collections such as the octatonic scale and the whole-tone scale provide an undifferentiated, uncentred pitch field which provides a metaphorical musical background that both composers employ in an attempt to invoke eternity or infinity.\(^{31}\) This use of pitch organisation suggests another instance of the kind of connection between symbolic and musical dimensions that the ‘wind’ and ‘sea’ motives display, though at a deeper level. It also recalls the way in which Takemitsu appears to embed a subtle reference to Debussy's sonata in his pitch material in *Wind* (see Chapter 5).

The presence of such interconnected motives and materials between works, the frequency of shared imagery or ideas between the titles of groups of works, and the use of elements such as pitch organisation to carry extra-musical associations, suggests a deep and complex level of symbolic connection functioning both within and between many of Takemitsu's works. However, it must be remembered that even the most recognisable recurring melodic fragments are not labelled as 'standing for' something in a literal way (it is analysts and critics who do this). Rather it is the patterns of relationship and association that build up across the different works that gives them their

---

\(^{31}\) Timothy Koozin, ‘Spiritual-Temporal Imagery in Music of Oliver Messiaen and Toru Takemitsu’; 186. Allen Forte also discusses the metaphorical or referential dimensions of the octatonic and whole-tone scales in Debussy: ‘It seems clear – to me, at least – that the octatonic in Debussy's music always connotes the sublime, the exalted, in contrast to the whole-tone, which represents the indeterminate, and in opposition to the diatonic, which seems always to be a means of expressing the world of the immediate and pictorial.’ Allen Forte, ‘Debussy and the Octatonic’, *Music Analysis*, 10/1-2 (1991): 153.
'meaning' – a meaning which functions in a suggestive but non-specific way. In this sense they function rather like Wagnerian leitmotivs, whose associations with the drama are meant to be ‘felt’ subconsciously. Perhaps even more clearly they suggest the kind of hermetic language of recurring symbols that can be found in Mallarmé’s poetry. For example, the word Azure occurs in multiple poems. While literally the colour of the sky, the word can be used to represent the sky itself; Mallarmé’s usage suggests that for him the word symbolises an absolute that is at once perfection and nothingness. Similarly Mallarmé frequently employs images of whiteness (birds, flowers) to explore the paradox of presence and absence that is central to his poetics. Such images gain their significance from their various and repeated manifestation within a self-contained vocabulary, rather than a specific instance in any one poem. The meaning is not concretely defined, but rather is allowed to form in the mind of the reader through the various associations the poems invite. In Takemitsu the example of the ‘sea’ and ‘wind’ symbols suggests we can assume many other ideas carry similar symbolic significance in his mind. The point, and the paradox, is that these ideas are translated into musical form, and therefore function at the purely musical level; however directly a musical idea may arise out of a non-musical one in the composer’s mind, if we were to trace, in the act of listening, the extra-musical associations of every musical idea, we would no longer be hearing the music as music. Even the ‘S-E-A’ motive, which seems to carry the most literal association in its very spelling, is not as simple as it seems, since by translation into a set of musical notes, whatever complex of associations Takemitsu is calling to mind has been specifically transformed into a purely

musical object (which can then be transposed to other pitches, so that even the direct association no longer exists). This is the same paradoxical issue with which we were faced in considering the musical significance of the ‘garden’ metaphor in Chapter 2. While the form of experience that the walk through a Japanese garden offers may provide the inspiration or idea, this experience is transformed into a musical experience, which does not ‘depict’ the garden.

It is for this reason that Symbolism gives us a useful lens through which to understand the musical and extra-musical dimensions of Takemitsu. Although the equivalence between music and language is not exact, Mallarmé shows us how closely they can overlap. While language, especially in the context of a poem, may function to some extent as ‘music’, music may also function in some sense like language.

**Sound and meaning; music and language**

Mallarmé, anticipating modern linguistic theory, realised that if language was made up of arbitrary sounds, it functioned as a system of signs that acquired meaning only through agreed usage, and therefore could ultimately only refer to itself. This meant that there was an inherent absence at the heart of the poetic act – the apparently meaningful, denotative qualities of words draw attention to the absence of the things that they name, since the word is not the thing itself, but merely a sound.

In a Symbolist poem, whatever imagery the literal meaning of the words may convey, the poem itself ‘is’ ultimately a pattern of sounds, which is governed by its own system of internal linguistic relations. It is in this sense that Mallarmé thought of poetry as a form of music, in that it is an imitation of the abstraction of
music. This reminds us that music too, however much it might reach outside of its abstraction in an attempt to represent something, or to draw on external or extra-musical inspiration, is still ultimately a self-contained system of relationships that we experience only as sound.

Yet, as a sign, the word also conjures up the idea of the thing it names – the equivalent in our imagination, which carries with it all the associations and emotional content that we bring to it. It is this dual nature of words – sound and meaning – that for Mallarmé gives poetry its power. The meaning dimension also forms part of the poem – in fact is a part of the system of relationships governing the poem as a whole, since it is the way meanings, associations, feelings and sounds all bounce off each other that creates the effect of the poem. It is when all these dimensions come together in a perfectly balanced fusion in the ideal poem that the language of the poem ‘transcends’ itself, by becoming something greater than the limits of its raw materials. For Mallarmé this transcendence is both the goal and the subject of Poetry. To quote another famous passage from Crisis of Verse:

> I say: a flower! And, out of the oblivion where my voice casts every contour, insofar as it is something other than the known bloom, there arises, musically, the very idea in its mellowness; in other words, what is absent from every bouquet.\(^{33}\)

Music possesses the potential for the same duality of sound and meaning. The referential dimensions of musical ideas can become part of the musical structure through a similar kind of correspondence to that which the sounds of words have to their denotative meaning. Takemitsu’s comment that ‘to find an appropriate title for a composition I move back and forth between sounds and

words’ has a striking resonance with the duality of sound and meaning so central to Mallarmé’s poetics. The ‘S-E-A’ motive (since it literally is a word, spelled in musical note-names) provides an interesting example. As we have seen, a complex combination of ideas adheres to this short motive; but the ‘meanings’ that the ‘word’ possesses are built up through its usage in the variety of contexts the composer places it, across numerous works – much as the meaning of an actual word can only ultimately be defined by analysing its relative place in the total system of linguistic usage in which it occurs. The ideas with which the motive associates itself function like the layers of associations carried by words in a poem, and give it a multi-dimensional aspect far greater than its purely musical identity; yet the motive also functions on purely musical terms within the musical fabric of the works in which it appears.

It also must not be forgotten that the ‘meaning’ we attach to a musical object can also arise out of its function within the specifically musical system – e.g. the role of a cadence to provide ‘closure’ at the end of a section or period. This structural meaning of a musical device is reflected in poetry by, for example, the function of a rhyme at the end of a line. A more detailed example of this kind of ‘structural’ meaning may help further illustrate the intermediary ground between language and music that Takemitsu’s music may be said to inhabit.

**Meaning and function, end-rhyme and cadence: a ptyx in D flat**

The sonnet *Se purs ongles*, also known as the *Sonnet en -yx* because of its play on the difficult -yx rhyme, one of the least common sounds in French, is one

---

of Mallarmé’s most analysed poems. Of interest here is the curious word *ptyx* at the end of the fifth line:

Ses purs ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx,
L’Angoisse, ce minuit, soutient, lampadophore,
Maint rêve vespéral brûlé par le Phénix
Que ne recueille pas de cinéraire amphore

Sur les crédences, au salon vide: nul *ptyx*,
Aboli bibelot d’inanité sonore,
(Car le Maître est allé puiser des pleurs au Styx
Avec ce seul objet le Néant s’honore).

Mais proche la croisée au nord vacante, un or
Agonise selon peut-être le décor
Des licornes ruant du feu contre une nixe,

Elle, défunte nue en le miroir, encor
Que, dans l’oubli fenné par le cadre, se fixe
De scintillations sitôt le septuor.

[Her pure nails on high displaying their onyx,
The lampbearer, Anguish, at midnight sustains
Those vesperal dreams that are burnt by the Phoenix
And which no funeral amphora contains

On the credenzas in the empty room: no *ptyx*,
Abolished shell whose resonance remains
(For the Master has gone to draw tears from the Styx
With this sole object that Nothingness attains).

But in the vacant north, adjacent to the window panes,
A dying shaft of gold illumines as it wanes
A nix sheathed in sparks that a unicorn kicks.

Though she in the oblivion that the mirror frames
Lies nude and defunct, there rains
The scintillations of the one-and-six.]35

The word is significant because it has no literal meaning. While attempts have been made to infer various meanings from the context, Mallarmé makes clear that he chose, or invented, the word because of the need for a rhyme at the end

of the line, but that it had no ‘real’ meaning. In a letter he suggests the word has been brought into being through the ‘magic of rhyme’.36 The word therefore takes on a purely structural meaning, because it completes an element of the sonnet form through its function as a sound, while having no external meaning of its own. In the context of the poem this is significant in that the sonnet, built around images of absence, emptiness and negation, can be analysed as being ‘about’ its own emptiness of meaning.37 The nonsense word *ptyx* embodies the emptiness of the poem’s language through its very nature as a word.38 As Robb says, the paradox of language at the heart of Mallarme’s poetry is made clear both through the ‘meaningless’ use of the sonnet form, traditionally thought of as particularly suited to developing a logical argument; and through ‘the use of a word (*ptyx*) which supposedly has no conventional meaning, but which, when used as a rhyme, acquires a sense in relation to the rules of versification, contributing as it does to the audible and visible unity of the sonnet.’39 Moreover, the dissolving of literal meaning draws attention to the material qualities of the word as a sound-object.

Let us compare this to Takemitsu’s final chord of D flat major in *Wind*. As has been discussed, the arrival on this chord is in one sense anticipated, in that the D flat triad forms part of the original hexachord from the beginning and reappears at certain moments throughout the work; but it is also arbitrary in that it is only one harmonic sonority among the many possibilities that the

---

37 In an earlier version it was titled *Sonnet allégorique de lui-même*, ‘Sonnet allegorical of itself’, which suggests the kinds of play with poetic language that Mallarmé was engaged in.
38 It also does so through its implied meaning, as seemingly some kind of vessel or container – an object whose purpose is defined by the empty space it contains (and therefore its ability to contain something else), which is itself absent from the scene which the poem describes.
39 Robb, p. 63.
work’s pitch material allows, and there is no harmonic process that requires such a resolution. The appearance of D flat with the recurrence of the opening motives at certain key moments creates a formal outline that functions purely as a sonorous frame of reference, which might be likened to recurring rhymes in a poem. The final chord has no meaning as ‘the tonic chord’, but, like the ptyx, has a meaning conferred on it by its place in the structural context – its appearance at the end of the work conveys or stands in for the idea of tonality, even though the work is not tonal. The chord is ‘referentially’ rather than ‘musically’ tonal.

The quality that the poem and the music share, in these two moments, is the similar way in which they exploit familiar conventions even as they contradict them. Mallarmé’s sonnet plays against its own meaning in a way that is possible only because of the traditional expectations and limitations of the sonnet form. The illusion of tonality in Wind is possible because it plays on the Western listener’s expectation of harmonic resolution or closure; but the absence of tonal logic simultaneously works against the convention that is being invoked. Takemitsu exploits an essential means of expressivity from Western music, but dissolves its meaning in the process. The result is to highlight the major triad as a purely sonic experience: one chord among an infinity of equally valid options. Yet this is effective precisely because there is an awareness of the convention that is being contradicted or transcended.

Both these cases reveal the profound ambiguity that is fundamental to the effect of the work of both artists. Both the ptyx and the D flat chord contradict or transcend the conventions that also define their function. By removing literal meaning and loosening the bonds of structural logic, the work becomes more impersonal and the artist more distant, since the reader or listener is left to infer
or project more of themselves into the space left by the absence of precise meaning.

Certain aspects of Takemitsu’s music suggest it can also be interpreted in terms of Mallarmé’s paradox of presence-absence, at several levels. For example, a musical symbol for some external object or thought (such as the sea) immediately shows us that the ‘real’ sea is something different, that cannot be ‘present’ in the musical object; but it also similarly draws attention to itself as a musical object, through the absence of the thing it stands for. Also, Takemitsu’s arrangement of his pitch material, which as we have seen might sometimes be understood as containing symbolic meaning, also conveys a consciousness of presence-absence. The original hexachord, because its complement is a transposition of the same set, draws attention to the absence of the complement notes; it is also defined by the absence of those notes. Takemitsu enjoyed playing with complementarity in this way, and in the context of another work using the same hexachord, referred to the complement as the ‘shadow’ of the original notes.\(^{40}\) Koozin’s analysis of Takemitsu’s use of octatonic scales also discusses how the method of free addition and subtraction of complementary notes both highlights and disguises the identity of both the set and its complement.\(^{41}\) An interesting instance of this occurs in the ‘refrain’ sections of Wind (bars 112-116 and bars 192-196). These passages are constructed completely from an octatonic set, with the addition of one note – the all-important D flat, which reveals itself as the central prevailing pitch at the end of the work. The highlighting of the D flat as both the ‘foreign’ note and the asserted ‘tonic’ suggests a contradiction.

\(^{40}\) Burt, The Music of Toru Takemitsu, p. 223.
between function and identity that seems to carry some symbolic significance. We might also consider the final chord of D flat major as a result of the ‘absence’ of the other notes of the hexachord – it is the removal of notes from the original statement of the work that reveals the ‘tonality’ of D flat. The capacity for the hexachord to yield various other triads might be understood in a similar way – the emphasis on any particular triadic sonority occurs as the result of the absence of the other notes from the hexachord. As one follows this train of thought, an uncanny sense arises that perhaps all of Takemitsu’s pitch materials are defined by what is left out – the music is revealed by the carving away of all the parts of the infinite ‘sea of tonality’ or ‘stream of sound’ that the composer does not require.

The confrontation of sound and silence that is so central to Takemitsu’s music, and which is an expression of ma, the Japanese aesthetic concept of the tension between objects and space, or events and time, also echoes the way in which the duality of presence-absence becomes concretised in some of Mallarmé’s poems through the exploitation of the white space of the page. The visual layout and spacing becomes highly significant in L’après midi d’un faune, in which traditional poetic structures are undermined and transcended even as they are being exploited; but especially in Un coup de dés, where traditional form dissolves completely and the physical layout of words on the white page becomes as vital an element in its construction of meaning as its language.

The physical layout of Un coup de dés makes a straightforward linear reading impossible; instead sound, meaning and the spatial element of the text together form a matrix of intersecting dimensions. In its similar multi-dimensionality, Takemitsu’s work echoes that of Mallarmé, and his concepts of
non-linear time that seem especially Japanese can also be seen to be the very thing that connects him most deeply to French Symbolism and to Debussy. Perhaps a walk through *Un coup de dés* is in some respects not unlike a walk through one of Takemitsu’s musical ‘gardens’, in that one can never take in the whole multi-dimensional picture in a single hearing or reading, yet each view is part of a completely conceived whole.

**Postscript**

On a final note, we might now speculate further regarding Takemitsu’s reflections on the handwritten score of Debussy’s *Prélude à L’après-midi d’un faune* that he took with him to his mountain retreat, while working on *November Steps* in 1967: ‘Although a score is, in the usual sense, a hypothetical plan, as I looked at the composer’s marks on that score they took on a vivid life of their own. I wonder... were those handwritten symbols that appeared as half-erased stains on the paper really only hypothetical?’

We can take the ‘hypothetical’ nature of the score to mean that the notes on the page are not the music itself, but merely a symbolic code. Through their silence they point to the music’s absence. Yet Takemitsu seems to be saying that he began to also experience the handwritten score as a material object in its own right, as a direct vehicle of Debussy’s thought, not merely a symbol for it. What therefore is the ‘music’? This brief comment seems to capture Takemitsu’s constant concern with the relationships between sound and silence, symbol and

---

meaning, language and music, and the ways the human experience is reflected through the work of art. In this respect Takemitsu can be placed within a stream of twentieth-century artistic consciousness arising out of the nineteenth-century Symbolist movement, and his work can be seen as inhabiting that ‘intermediary’ ground between music and language ground that McCombie identifies as also inhabited by Mallarmé and Debussy.
REFERENCES


Okajima, Shuri, ‘A Comparison Between the Two Works for Flute, Viola and Harp by Toru Takemitsu and Claude Debussy; Influences of Debussy on Takemitsu and Similarities Between the Two Composers’ (DMA Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2007).


Scores


Takemitsu, Toru, And then I knew ‘twas Wind, for flute, viola and harp, SJ 1071 (Tokyo: Schott Japan, 1992).