The Music of Tōru Takemitsu

Tōru Takemitsu (1930–96) was the best known Japanese composer of his generation, bringing aspects of Eastern and Western traditions together, yet he remained something of an elusive figure. The composer’s own commentaries about his music, poetic and philosophical in tone, have tended to deepen the mystery and much writing on Takemitsu to date has adopted a similar attitude, leaving many questions about his compositional methods unanswered. This book is the first complete study of the composer’s work to appear in English. It is also the first book in this language to offer an in-depth analysis of his music. Takemitsu’s works are increasingly popular with Western audiences and Peter Burt attempts for the first time to shed light on the hitherto rather secretive world of his working methods, as well as place him in context as heir to the rich tradition of Japanese composition in the twentieth century.

Peter Burt is Vice-Chairman of the Takemitsu Society in the United Kingdom and editor of the Takemitsu Society Newsletter. He is currently editing a special commemorative issue of Contemporary Music Review devoted to Tōru Takemitsu.
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The Music of
Tōru Takemitsu

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Contents

Acknowledgements   page ix
Note on conventions   xi

Introduction  1
1 Pre-history: how Western music came to Japan  4
2 Music and 'pre-music': Takemitsu's early years  21
3 Experimental workshop: the years of Jikken Kōbō  39
4 The Requiem and its reception  50
5 Projections on to a Western mirror  73
6 ‘Cage shock’ and after  92
7 Projections on to an Eastern mirror  110
8 Modernist apogee: the early 1970s  132
9 Descent into the pentagonal garden  160
10 Towards the sea of tonality: the works of the 1980s  175
11 Beyond the far calls: the final years  216
12 Swimming in the ocean that has no West or East  234

Notes  254
List of Takemitsu’s Works  269
Select bibliography  281
Index  288
Acknowledgements

So many have helped me in some way or another over the course of the seven years that I have been working on Takemitsu’s music that there are bound to be some omissions in the list of names that follow. In particular in Japan, where fabulous largesse seems to be a cultural norm, I have received such generous assistance from so many people that I am certain to have forgotten to mention one or two here, and I apologise in advance to anyone who feels they have been left out.

Although wholly rewritten, this book has its origins in my doctoral thesis, and in the first place thanks are therefore due to my supervisor, Peter Manning, and other members of the music department staff at Durham University who assisted me in various ways – in particular my benefactor Michael Spitzer, who offered magnanimous hospitality whenever I needed to seek shelter in Durham during my two years of exile in London. Thanks are also due to Professor Manning for his assistance in procuring me two valuable scholarships – from the Japan Foundation Endowment Committee, and the Gen Foundation – and of course to the staff of those institutions themselves for enabling me to make the two trips to Japan without which my knowledge of Takemitsu would have remained vague and incomplete indeed.

In Japan, my sincere appreciation is due to the former Principal of Kunitachi College of Music, Dr Bin Ebisawa, as well as staff members Cornelia Colyer and Hitoshi Matsushita, the librarian, for providing me with such a royal welcome during the disorientating early days of my first visit. I would also particularly like to thank the fellow researchers in my chosen field who have been so generous in sharing with me the fruits of their knowledge: Yoko Narazaki, Noriko Ohtake and above all Mitsuko Ono, a sort of walking encyclopaedia on Takemitsu who has been of invaluable help in correcting my many factual errors. Further gratitude is due especially to the flautist Hideyo Takakawa for introducing me to his teacher Mr Hiroshi Koizumi, and to him in turn for first introducing me to the composer’s widow Mrs Asaka Takemitsu and daughter Maki. I would also like to thank the composer Mr Jōji Yuasa for granting me the time to interview him about his early years with Takemitsu in the Jikken Kōbō, and Fr. Joaquim Benitez of Elisabeth University, Hiroshima, who kindly agreed to meet me in London and look over my thesis three years ago. Takebumi
Itagaki, Kiyonori Sokabe, Masato Hójō and Yuji Numano have also all been of invaluable assistance, and above all, perhaps, I must express my deepest gratitude to Ms Sumine Hayashibara and her mother Kiku on the one hand, and Ms Emiko Kitazawa and her mother Etsuko on the other, without whose offers of hospitality on, respectively, my first and second visits to Japan I would have been unable to come here at all.

I must also mention here my friend Junko Kobayashi, Chairman of the Takemitsu Society in London, who has been so helpful in checking over Japanese proper nouns with me; as well as Sally Groves of Schott’s and her Tókyō counterpart, Nanako Ikefuji, for lending me scores of Takemitsu’s music. And finally, I must thank the music books’ Editor of Cambridge University Press, Penny Souster, for having sufficient faith in the potential of my thesis to undertake a book on Takemitsu. I hope what follows will in some small measure repay the trust she has invested in me.

Tókyō, July 2000

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Throughout this book, Japanese personal names are rendered according to the Western rather than Japanese convention, in which the family name follows the given name (Tōru Takemitsu, not Takemitsu Tōru). Transliteration of Japanese words follows the Hepburn system, and in the interests of consistency – albeit at the risk of appearing pretentious – this has been applied even to words generally given in English without diacritical marks (Tōkyō, Ōsaka, etc.).