

Register and Remembrance in Brahms's 'Frühlingslied', Op. 85, No. 5

Brahms's song 'Frühlingslied' appears to be a naïve celebration of nature, but a prominent melodic issue—an ascending major seventh in the voice part—reveals a deeper interpretation than the poem alone communicates. This unusual interval remains unresolved in any true sense for the duration of the song in the voice part; in fact, the voice purposefully avoids the very pitch that would resolve this dissonant leap. The piano's uppermost line, which hovers above the vocal line, represents the protagonist's lost youth. Fleeting moments in which the voice crosses the piano's uppermost line represent exceptionally vivid moments of remembrance.

Introduction

Brahms met the young German contralto Hermine Spies in 1883; while his fondness for her was well known, Brahms was fifty years old, and it was understood that marriage was no longer an option for him. Several years after they initially met, Spies wrote of the fifth song in the Op. 85 collection, 'Frühlingslied', in a letter to her sister:

Look at that marvelous song soon! Oh, how it sings and rings and rejoices, that is to say in the accompaniment, while the vocal part moans and weeps above it. That is the sad, melancholy Brahms all over. And I cannot sing the *Lied* for long without tears choking my voice (van Rij 2006: 184).¹

As Spies describes, Brahms's setting of Emanuel Geibel's poem conveys, at least in its accompaniment, an atmosphere of joyous celebration; the rapidly arpeggiated polyrhythms, major mode, and performance indication *Lebhaft* suggest that 'Frühlingslied' is simply a carefree song about spring. Beyond the effervescent accompaniment, however, the voice betrays that the protagonist may not be quite as blithe as the piano part initially suggests. A prominent melodic gesture in the voice demonstrates this dual nature at the outset, and as the song unfolds, a number of other factors deepen the sense that the protagonist's joy is somehow tarnished. Taking Spies's comment as a point of departure, this essay identifies expressive musical devices in 'Frühlingslied,' and relates them to Geibel's poem through voice-leading and motivic analysis.

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- 1 Hermine Spies's letter to her sister, cited, excerpted, and translated by Inge van Rij (2006: 184), was originally published in Minna Spies's book about her sister (Spies 1905: 274–275).

The poem

Geibel's poem is constructed in three stanzas, each with an ABAB rhyme scheme (Figure 1).² The first two stanzas provide no overt clue that the protagonist's exhilaration might be blemished by any other emotion, although two images imply a general character of yearning. The text 'above me, high in the sky, soars the first note of the lark' ('Über mir in hohen Lüften/Schwebt der erste Lerchenton') refers to something that is out of reach, although the actual emotion of yearning is not present in the text itself. The poem also speaks of a field of grain that 'gently swells toward the daylight' ('Wall' ich hin durchs Saatgefeld,/Das noch halb vom Schlummer trunken/Sanft dem Licht entgegenschwillt')—another image that suggests yearning, as the grain reaches toward the sky. A state of yearning is not made explicit in the text until the beginning of the third stanza, when the word 'yearning' ('Sehnen') actually appears. The rest of the poem confirms that the protagonist's happiness is tempered with the contemplative wisdom of maturity; knowing that his heart has already enjoyed its most youthful and productive blossoming, he exclaims, 'Ah, before you burn out, old heart of mine, you would like to blossom one more time with the flowers, with the trees, to blossom one more time, old heart' ['Ach, du möchtest vorm Verglühn/mit den Blumen, mit den Bäumen,/Altes Herz, noch einmal blühn'].

Interpreted literally, the poem appears to be a celebration of nature in which the natural beauty described in the poem physically surrounds the protagonist. Aside from the pastoral topic, one is also struck by the frequent and vibrant sensory perceptions invoked in the poem, which heighten the sense that the protagonist literally experiences these sensations. Line 1, for example, refers to the forest's mysterious fragrances; lines 3 and 4 (and line 1 of the second stanza) mention hearing a lark's song; and, of course, sight is referenced throughout with the pervasive use of bucolic imagery.

Another perspective is possible; the protagonist may not be physically in nature at all. The natural images occurring in the text might exist only in the protagonist's memory as he contemplates the past. While these memories appear to be happy ones, the appearance of the word 'yearning' at the beginning of the third stanza confirms that the happiness elicited by his reminiscence is mitigated by the bittersweet knowledge that youth is over.³

The frequent vivid references to sensory perception might seem to suggest that a literal interpretation of the poem is the most logical choice, and if one interprets the poem with no musical setting, this seems a sensible conclusion. This essay will argue, however, that it is possible to hear Brahms's setting of 'Frühlingslied' as interpreting the poem as existing only in the protagonist's memory—that it should not be interpreted as literally occurring in the present, but should instead be understood as the protagonist's

2 Translation by Stanley Applebaum (1980: xiv). The text of 'Frühlingslied' originates from Emanuel Geibel's collection *Spätherbstblätter*, in a section titled 'Lieder aus alter und neuer Zeit' (1877). As is typical practice for Brahms, 'Frühlingslied' is the only song in Op. 85 that sets a poem by Geibel; Nos. 1 and 2 are settings of poems by Heinrich Heine, Nos. 3 and 4 are settings of traditional texts in translation, and No. 6 is a setting of a poem by Karl von Lemcke. For more on the nature of Op. 85 as a collection, see Stevens 2008: 171–232.

3 Van Rij notes that Brahms began to identify with texts that 'expressed a grim renunciation of the hopes of youth' as early as 1867, and cites Spies's comment about 'Frühlingslied' as a typical example of Brahms as a tragic bachelor who has given up on youth (2006: 184). I would argue that Brahms's setting of 'Frühlingslied' does not so much depict one who wishes to renounce the hopes of youth as it depicts one who attempts to relive or re-experience youth; although this reliving of the past is infused with the knowledge that the hopefulness of youth can never be regained, it is a subtler shading of melancholy than simply grimness or bitterness.

remembrance and occasional vivid re-experiencing of youth.⁴

Figure 1

Text and translation of Emanuel Geibel's poem 'Frühlingslied'.

Mit geheimnisvollen Düften
Grüßt vom Hang der Wald mich schon,
Über mir in hohen Lüften
Schwebt der erste Lerchenton.

With mysterious fragrances,
the forest already greets me from the slope;
above me, high in the sky,
soars the first note of the lark.

In den süßen Laut versunken
Wall' ich hin durchs Saatgefeld,
Das noch halb vom Schlummer trunken
Sanft dem Licht entgegenschwillt.

Enraptured by that sweet sound,
I wander through the field of grain that,
still half-dazed with slumber,
gently swells toward the daylight.

Welch ein Sehnen! welch ein Träumen!
Ach, du möchtest vorm Verglühn
Mit den Blumen, mit den Bäumen,
Altes Herz, noch einmal blühen.

What a yearning! What a dreaming!
Ah, before you burn out,
old heart of mine, you would like to blossom
one more time with the flowers, with the
trees.

Brahms's setting: the A section

Brahms's setting adds layers of meaning to Geibel's poem through a combination of musical factors: a conspicuously large and dissonant leap at the beginning of the vocal melody; careful manipulation of the registral relationship between the voice and the piano's upper line; and specific musical-poetic figures that paint the text more directly.

The song begins with a G-major tonic arpeggio in the piano, which quickly wedges outward as the voice enters, arriving on a fully-diminished leading-tone chord embellishing the dominant in m. 2. The bass line's rising $\sharp_4\text{-}\hat{5}$ (C \sharp 2–D2) heightens the sense of optimism that characterizes the accompaniment; however, the $\flat_3\hat{3}$ (B \flat) that occurs along with the C \sharp calls the initial optimistic mood into question, foreshadowing darker elements that will later be revealed.

The vocal entry belies the piano's early optimism, as it enters on $\hat{1}$ (G4) in m. 1, and, unpredictably, leaps upward via the interval of a major seventh to an appoggiatura on $\hat{7}$ (F \sharp 5).⁵ Brahms adds to the intrigue of this already suggestive opening interval by accompanying it with the word 'geheimnisvollen,' which translates as 'mysterious,' but

- 4 Many authors have commented on Brahms's proclivity for setting the work of less well-known (some would say less successful) poets; see, for example, Stohrer 1974. Brahms's tendency to choose poems whose descriptions are less precise or subtle in their subtexts often results in a musical setting that is able to add layers of meaning to the text, to fully interpret a song musically in ways that move well beyond the meaning of the poem itself. 'Frühlingslied' is an example of such a poem; because the details of its interpretation are less precisely determined, there is room for Brahms's setting to make a musical argument that will not only more deeply paint words of the poem, but which will actually interpret the poem's meaning. While we cannot, of course, know Brahms's true interpretive intentions in the case of 'Frühlingslied', the general idea of musical setting as poetic interpretation can be compelling and useful for listener and performer analysis.
- 5 Pitches are identified by a capital letter, a sharp or a flat if so required, and by the number of its octave range. Octave ranges cover the pitches from any C through the next higher B, and are numbered from low to high. Middle C is C4.

which, as it unfolds in song at a pace that allows its semantic components to be heard separately, is understood as 'secret-filled'.⁶

Almost as startling as this large and dissonant leap is where $\hat{7}$ (F#5) leads: not, as most leading tones would, up to the tonic, but instead down to $\hat{6}$ (E5), where the line continues downward until it arrives at $\hat{2}$ (A4).⁷ Although this leading tone is treated as a typical appoggiatura (that is, it is approached by leap and left by step in the opposite direction), there is still some residue of leading-tone resolution tendency created by its prominent appearance in the voice part.

The recompositions in Example 1 demonstrate that Brahms could easily have composed a melodic line that avoided such an awkward leap while still preserving its basic contour. The first recomposition demonstrates a hypothetical version of the melody that begins on $\hat{8}$ (G5), and descends in a stepwise fashion from that point. The second recomposition shows another hypothetical version of the melody that leaps an octave, from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{8}$ (G4 to G5), and then descends through $\hat{7}$ (F#5); this approach removes the opening major seventh leap, and de-emphasizes the leading tone by reducing it to an unaccented, submetrical passing tone. The recompositions in Example 1 are, of course, bland compared with Brahms's original, and clearly illustrate the function of the voice's opening major seventh leap: to crystallize the emotional yearning underlying the otherwise joyful-sounding text and piano accompaniment that characterize the song's beginning.

This major seventh (and the leading-tone implication resulting from it) is the first and most obvious musical issue in 'Frühlingslied'. Following this opening gesture, additional chromatic pitches in the vocal line intensify the yearning character established by the opening major seventh; for instance, the prominent vocal $\flat\hat{6}$ (Eb5) in m. 2 deepens the sense of wistful melancholy already established in the voice part.⁸ The next chromatic pitch, $\sharp\hat{2}$ (A#4) in m. 3, maneuvers an avoidance of $\hat{1}$ (G4) at the lower end of the octave, just as the $\hat{7}$ (F#5) in m. 2 avoided resolution to $\hat{8}$ (G5). Shortly thereafter, $\hat{7}$ (F#5) reappears, this time as an upper neighbor to the prevailing $\hat{6}$ (E5) (m. 4); again, despite reawakening the leading-tone implication from m. 2, there is no leading-tone resolution in the voice. Closely related to the lingering unresolved leading tone is a special registral relationship

- 6 I am not the first to comment on this extraordinary opening gesture; Heather Platt remarks: 'One might expect the voice to open with an octave leap culminating on a strong tonic chord, but instead it leaps a seventh, forming an appoggiatura over a diminished seventh. In this way the music creates the mysteriousness of the fragrances described in the text' (1999: 271). Similarly, Eric Sams observes that 'the voice's rising major seventh, unique in Brahms, stands for the feeling embodied in the words "geheimnis (voll)" (mysterious) and "Sehnen" (yearning) with which Geibel artfully begins his first and third verses' (2000: 259).
- 7 The persistent descending motions in the vocal line call to mind Robert Hatten's general correlation between descending musical gestures and the Romantic concept of resignation; according to Hatten, this correlation is particularly strong when reversal of an implied resolution is involved (1994: 56–63). The denial of implied resolution in 'Frühlingslied' is an extreme case; not only does the denial involve the strongest of all tendency tones, but the leading tone's denial is also followed with a lengthy descent, as if to dramatize the denied resolution. Prominent descending motions recur throughout, coloring the song with a general sense of resignation – contented resignation perhaps, but resignation nonetheless. (Example 4 will summarize a specific motivic descending motion that occurs throughout 'Frühlingslied', but descending motions persist throughout the right-hand piano figurations as well.)
- 8 Carl Schachter and Walter Everett have described $\flat\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ as a marker of grief (Schachter 1983: 70; 1995: 151–152; Everett 1990); this scale-degree pattern appears prominently in 'Frühlingslied', with $\flat\hat{6}$ (Eb5) as the first chromatic pitch in the vocal line (m. 2). $\flat\hat{6}$ is accented metrically and durationally in this early appearance, and does much to darken the mood of what at first may appear to be a naïve spring song. The pattern $\flat\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ also reappears at deeper levels of structure in the bass line of the B section, and plays an important role in developing the sense of melancholy that undermines the piano's relentlessly animated figuration.

between the voice and uppermost piano line that becomes increasingly apparent as the song progresses.⁹ In Example 2, the boxes indicate the areas where the voice and piano either share the same pitch, or the voice emerges above the piano's uppermost line. The piano's right-hand part is placed above the vocal part in order to reflect how the two parts are most often arranged. As shown in this Example, the uppermost pitches in the piano remain, for the most part, above the vocal line. For instance, immediately after the voice arrives on $\hat{7}$ (F#5) in m. 2, the piano part supplies the $\hat{8}$ (G5) on the second half of beat 1, a mere minor second above the voice. The piano part maintains a similar relationship with the voice throughout mm. 2 and 3: that is, hovering above the voice by a small, dissonant interval, so that the voice continually strives upward toward it.

Example 1

Hypothetical recompositions of vocal line in 'Frühlingslied' (mm. 1-3).



Example 2

Relationship between piano and voice in A section, 'Frühlingslied'.

- 9 The issue of register is central to some of the musical arguments made in this essay. A woman (Hermine Spies, for instance) would sing in the original notated register, which is represented in Examples 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8; however, the sounding range would be an octave lower if a man performed the song. 'Frühlingslied' does not seem to be affiliated specifically with either a male or female voice; both men and women have performed and recorded this song. On this basis alone, I would argue that it is a defensible position to consider the vocal part in its notated register for analytical purposes. A similar issue arises in Swent 1984, in which the author maintains that even if the vocalist is assuredly male, as in *Die Winterreise* and *Die Schöne Müllerin*, she feels 'justified in assuming that the vocal part is normally to be considered as functioning in the written register' (12–13). Swent gives several reasons for her stance, principally that the piano part often doubles the voice in the written register, even if the character sings down an octave. When the piano does something other than double the voice in the written register, Swent observes, 'there is usually a clear dramatic reason to regard this other relationship as "abnormal"' (13). This is certainly the case throughout 'Frühlingslied', in which the piano's upper line purposefully avoids doubling the voice throughout most of the song, for what I argue are important textual reasons. Walter Everett adopts Swent's attitude toward register in his article on *Die Zauberflöte* (1991: 123–124).

Example 3

Voice-leading graph of A section, 'Frühlingslied'.

The image shows a musical score for the A section of 'Frühlingslied'. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. Below the piano part is a voice-leading graph showing scale degrees. The graph is divided into two lines: an upper line for the voice and a lower line for the piano. The upper line starts at 1, goes to 9, then 8, then 6-5, then 4, then 3, then 6, then II, then 7, then 5, then 23, then 9, then V, then 27, then 3, then IV, then 5, then 25, then 6, then 5, then V. The lower line starts at 1, goes to 9, then 8, then 6-5, then 4, then 3, then 6, then II, then 7, then 5, then 23, then 9, then V, then 27, then 3, then IV, then 5, then 25, then 6, then 5, then V. A 'N' is placed above the vocal line in the first measure.

The voice only crosses above the piano twice: in mm. 4–5, and in mm. 7–8. Mm. 7–8 also feature the only sung G5 in the entire A section—a pitch that has been conspicuously avoided in the vocal part to this point, despite the strong leading-tone resonance heard earlier in the vocal line.

Example 3 provides a voice-leading graph of the A section; like Example 2, this graph maintains a division between the voice and the piano, as the two lines emphasize different scale degrees.¹⁰ Also, Example 3 shows the beginning of a line from $\hat{8}$, the least common of the *Ursatz* forms. While this framework is most suitable for clarifying the voice-leading structure of 'Frühlingslied' for a number of reasons, perhaps the most compelling reason of all is shown in Example 4, which summarizes the numerous stepwise descending motions from $\hat{8}$ (G5) down to $\hat{3}$ (B4) that occur throughout the song. The prominence of this motive, which will be shown to recur at various structural levels, suggests that descent from $\hat{8}$ is an important force in 'Frühlingslied'.¹¹ The basic trajectory of the upper line is mostly straightforward, but parts of the harmonic progression are quite subtle, and interact in compelling ways with the vocal G5 in m. 7; the melodic and harmonic characteristics of this passage will receive further analytical attention later in the essay.

Two principal musical issues in the A section of 'Frühlingslied' have now been exposed: (1) the leap from $\hat{1}$ (G4) to $\hat{7}$ (F#5) in mm. 1–2, followed by a stepwise descent; and (2)

¹⁰ The reader will undoubtedly notice that the piano is responsible for many of the structural upper-voice tones at the beginning of the song (Example 3). Some authors feel strongly that the vocal line of a song or aria should always embody the structural upper voice, regardless of how prominent the accompaniment's upper voices appear to be (see, for instance, Everett 2004). While I agree with this perspective under most circumstances, I believe that the piano's presentation of the *Ursatz* throughout most of 'Frühlingslied' is representative of its role in the song's narrative, and that when the voice does overtake it, it does so for text-related reasons.

¹¹ While a line from $\hat{5}$ or $\hat{3}$ would be possible, choosing $\hat{8}$ as the *Kopftone* is musically important for two additional reasons. First, there persists throughout the song a marked emphasis on $\hat{8}$ (G5) and $\hat{7}$ (F#5); this is the case not only in the A section, but also in the B section, which begins with a restatement of these two scale degrees, (though with $\hat{7}$ [F#5] appearing as $\hat{47}$ [F#5] at the beginning of the B section). Also, support for $\hat{8}$ (G5) is found not only in the original tonic harmony of m. 1, but also in the fully-diminished seventh chord embellishing the dominant in m. 2. This alternative support for $\hat{8}$ (G5) motivates $\hat{8}$ to descend to $\hat{7}$ (F#5) as the diminished seventh embellishing the dominant resolves, thus initiating the octave descent on a formal scale.

the registral relationship between the piano and voice, where the uppermost piano line frequently covers the voice by a small, dissonant margin.

Brahms's setting: the B section

A voice-leading graph of the B section (mm. 11–19) highlights the essential bass-line motion from $\hat{8}$ down to $\hat{5}$ in this passage, which can be heard as a chromatic version of the upper-line descent that took place in the A section (Example 5). This stepwise descent leads the music to luxuriate momentarily on $\flat\hat{6}$ (Eb6) in mm. 15 and 17, a move which echoes the first chromatic passing tone heard in the voice part. Additionally, the issue of accented dissonance remains constant from the A section, particularly on strong beats, and most notably between G5 in the piano and F \sharp 5 in the voice in m. 11, a pairing which resonates with the G5/F \sharp 5 between the piano and voice in m. 2. The reappearance of this relationship in the B section prolongs the conflict during the song's middle section.

Example 6, which offers a synopsis of the relationship between the voice and the piano's uppermost line, shows that the piano remains consistently above the voice in the B section. As in the A section, there is a deliberate separation between the pitch content of the piano part's uppermost line, which features a number of prominent G5s, and the pitch content of the voice part, which avoids G5 throughout the B section.

Brahms's setting: the A' section and conclusion

It is significant that Brahms set this through-composed poem with a rounded-binary form, so that the returning musical material is heard with new text. This choice of form—and it certainly was a choice for Brahms, as he also wrote modified strophic and through-composed songs—can be heard as representing an intensification of the protagonist's wistful emotional state, which does not change, but grows as the song continues; although the pitches and rhythms return, the accompaniment in the A' section is marked both *forte* and *animato* as the protagonist sings, 'What a yearning! What a dreaming!' ('Welch ein Sehnen! welch ein Träumen!'). The accompaniment also features more rhythmic activity in the A' section, and the material originally heard in mm. 7–8 is expanded through deceptive motion in mm. 27–32. While not structural in the traditional sense, these changes demonstrate the protagonist's increasing sense of yearning and nostalgia.

Example 7 provides a middleground voice-leading graph of the whole song, the most unusual aspect of which is the lack of complete *Urlinie* descent ($\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$).¹² In the case of 'Frühlingslied', allowing the *Urlinie* to rest on $\hat{3}$ (B4) is more appropriate than forcing a descent to $\hat{1}$ (G4), as $\hat{1}$ is not convincingly represented in the upper lines; not only does the vocal melody end on $\hat{3}$, but the piano line does so as well—instead of descending to $\hat{1}$, the piano's uppermost line changes direction after arriving on $\hat{2}$ (A4) in m. 30, moving up to $\sharp\hat{2}$ (A \sharp 4), and continuing upward until finally ending on $\hat{3}$ (B5) in the piano postlude.¹³ A conventional descent to $\hat{1}$ (G4), while technically present in the inner voices, seems purposefully avoided in the actual upper line; to force its presence in the graph would be to ignore the equivocal nature of the dramatic closure that actually occurs at the end of the song—that what is yearned for lies just beyond the protagonist's reach. Forcing a complete

12 In his exhaustive article on non-normative voice leading in nineteenth-century song, Walter Everett concludes, 'We have tried to answer the question, what happens in this body of music, largely ignored by Schenker and his followers, that does not seem to be built upon a normal fundamental structure? It seems that in the nineteenth-century vocal literature, there may usually be a demonstrable poetic reason for such deviations from the norm' (2004: 59). Such is the case in 'Frühlingslied', where an actual *Urlinie* descent would be inappropriate for poetic reasons; the protagonist yearns to experience the sensations associated with his youth, but such a return (and, likewise, such overtly defined closure) remains impossible.

13 Recall that the deflection of $\hat{2}$ (A4) to $\sharp\hat{2}$ (A \sharp 4) was foreshadowed in m. 3, and that the enharmonic equivalent of A \sharp was first heard in m. 2 (B \flat).

Umlinie descent to $\hat{1}$ might also detract from the connection between the motivic repetition of $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{3}$ that traverses the whole song, and the numerous other examples of descent from $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{3}$ reflected in Example 4.¹⁴

Example 4

Foreground descending motions from $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{3}$ in 'Frühlingslied'.

Example 5

Voice-leading graph of B section, 'Frühlingslied'.

The relationship between the voice and piano in the A' section is shown in Example 8. Due to the deceptive motion and subsequent repetition, the voice remains above the piano for much longer in this passage than in the original A section; also, there are two G5s in this passage in close proximity to one another (mm. 27 and 29). Exactly what these changes mean for the interpretation of 'Frühlingslied' will be examined shortly.

¹⁴ Descent from $\hat{8}$ - $\hat{3}$ also appears in the middleground, as demonstrated by the brackets in Example 7; the A and B sections together descend from $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{3}$, and the A' section descends from $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{3}$ as well.

Example 6

Relationship between piano and voice in B section, 'Frühlingslied'.

Example 7

Middleground voice-leading graph of 'Frühlingslied,' complete.

Example 8

Relationship between piano and voice in A' section, 'Frühlingslied'.

Having explored the ramifications of the opening major seventh leap in the voice and the registral relationship between the voice and the uppermost piano line, there is but one technique that remains to be explicated: the direct translation of aspects of Geibel's poem into musical events. Despite his long-held reputation for supposedly avoiding such direct word-to-music representations, Brahms engages a fair amount of actual text painting in 'Frühlingslied'.¹⁵

15 For a detailed summary of the reception history of Brahms's songs, see Platt 1995.

The most obvious example of text painting is the lark's song, which is first mentioned in the text in mm. 8 and 9, but which appears in the voice part as a neighbor-note figure as early as m. 4. The piano takes over the role of the lark almost immediately, dovetailing with the voice's lark in m. 5. The inner voice D4–E4–F4–F#4–G4–F4–E4 in mm. 11–12 (and its sequential repetition in mm. 13–14) seems to depict a drowsy field of grain slowly swelling toward the daylight. Brahms also uses a particularly colorful sonority to set the word 'trunken' in m. 16 (D–F#–Ab–Bb), which captures drowsiness (and perhaps drunkenness) through its multiple tendency tones, which are smoothly approached and resolved by chromatic half step. Another example of direct musical setting of the poem occurs in mm. 27–31, where Brahms uses deceptive motion to set the text, 'Ah, before you burn out, old heart of mine, you would like to blossom *one more time* with the flowers, with the trees, to blossom *one more time*, old heart of mine' ['Ach, du möchtest vorm Verglühn/mit den Blumen, mit den Bäumen,/Altes Herz, noch einmal blühn'], which requires an additional attempt at cadential closure.¹⁶

The role of G5

It has already been well established that it is possible to hear Brahms's setting as interpreting Geibel's text in a far more profound way than the surface musical representations of the text just presented; however, still more subtlety remains to be exposed. Examples 2, 6, and 8 show that there are only fleeting moments where the voice emerges above the piano's texture. Several of these moments occur where the voice sings the note that it seems elsewhere to avoid: that is, of course, the G5, which appears in the voice only in mm. 7, 27, and 29.

The prominence of the vocal G5 in m. 7 in particular might at first lead one to believe that any lingering leading-tone residue from earlier has been resolved, and indeed, m. 7 is marked in several ways in addition to the arrival of G5 in the voice part and the voice's concomitant emergence above the piano.¹⁷ For instance, an important change of texture occurs in mm. 7–8: for the first time in the song, the piano's uppermost line and the vocal part move in parallel consonance (thirds), and also perform the same rhythms. M. 7 marks the registral high point for the voice, which is never surpassed, only met, in mm. 27 and 29; m. 7 also marks the low point of the bass line, which is not surpassed until m. 31. For all of these reasons, m. 7 seems to be a significant moment.

Although m. 7 is marked in terms of texture and register, the vocal G5 that appears on the downbeat cannot be considered a true realization of the strong leading-tone implication presented repeatedly in the voice. There are several reasons for this; first, the G5 in m. 7 steps downward to $\hat{7}$ (F#5), and continues to descend by step, leaving the leading tone unresolved in a manner similar to the beginning. Also, the vocal G5 in m. 7 is approached by $\hat{7}$ in the piano, not the voice, as the two parts finish each other's musical lines exactly at the point where the voice leaps to G5 and emerges on the top of the texture.

Finally (and most importantly), the sung G5 in m. 7 cannot be heard as a true resolution of the leading-tone implications from earlier because it lacks tonic support. Specifically, it is harmonized by a subdominant occurring after a dominant (an unexpected progression, to be sure!); this unanticipated resolution, while certainly drawing more attention to mm. 7–8, also distracts from any sense of leading tone resolution that might otherwise

16 This phrase-expanding construction is an example of what Janet Schmalfeldt calls the 'one more time' technique, a particularly fitting term in this instance (Schmalfeldt 1992).

17 Except for rhythmic changes in the right-hand piano part, mm. 27–28 are exactly the same as mm. 7–8. I have chosen to mention only mm. 7–8 in this part of the essay to simplify the musical discussion. The G5 appearing in m. 29 features many of the same characteristics as the G5s in mm. 7 and 27, so I have not dealt with them separately here.

be perceived. The voice-leading of the A section (shown earlier in Example 3) is mostly straightforward; however, in m. 5, the prolonged bass G2 moves to A2, which acts as a dominant of D2 (m. 6). At first, it might seem that m. 6's D2 functions as the structural dominant of the phrase; after all, it is the root of a dominant ninth sonority in the key of G major, which implies a downward stepwise resolution of the upper-voice tones C5 and E5 as the dominant harmony resolves, most likely to the tonic G major.

The event that follows, however, renders the D dominant ninth chord in m. 6 an unlikely structural dominant: in the strangest harmonic moment in the song, the upper-voice dissonances C5 and E5 do not resolve down by step as expected. Instead, they are held, and it is the bass-voice D2 that gives way to a C2 (mm. 7–8). The bass-line D2 of m. 6 thus acts as an incomplete upper neighbor to the C2, which is the actual prolonged bass pitch, as it harmonizes the prevailing upper-note E5. Of course, the arrival of the bass pitch C2 in m. 7 marks one of the only moments where the voice emerges above the piano part, with the words 'high in the sky, soars the first note of the lark', and also marks the only point in the A section where the voice sings a G5. It is as if the protagonist has reached into the recesses of memory through a musical retrogression as he attempts to re-experience youth; but, as is frequently the case with a distant memory, the protagonist's grasp of the most detailed aspects of the memory proves fleeting. Soon, the piano resumes its role as uppermost line, and the out-of-context appearance of the sung G5 itself becomes a memory.

Any one of the above factors on its own might be insufficient to truly undermine the appearance of such a strongly implied goal pitch as G5 in 'Frühlingslied'; however, taken in combination, the above circumstances render m. 7's G5 out-of-context, and therefore a less satisfactory resolution than might otherwise have occurred.

Having established that the vocal G5s in mm. 7 and 27 do not truly resolve the 'problem' of the earlier unresolved leading-tone implication, the question of the significance of the sung G5s remains. Given the strong and repetitive references to sensory perception throughout the poem, the emphasis on memory revealed by the words 'yearning' ('Sehnen') and 'dreaming' ('Träumen'), and the curious way in which the vocal G5s are treated, I hear the vocal G5s as triggering particularly intense memories and sensations, so vivid that the protagonist's physical experience of youth is nearly re-created.¹⁸

At the end of the A' section, the appearance of two sung G5s in close proximity can be heard as the protagonist experiencing the sensations in the poem even more powerfully than before, a phenomenon that is underscored by the various musical intensifications already outlined as occurring in the A section (dynamics, increased activity in piano, and repetition). The forest is so familiar and fragrant in the protagonist's memory that he can almost sense its fresh scent; the lark's note is so memorable and clear that he can almost literally hear it, above him, high in the sky; his yearning is so great that even the field of grain swells toward the sun in sympathy with his desires. The musical setting is so vibrant, so evocative, that the protagonist can almost literally re-experience the sensory facets of youth described in the text.

In contrast to the vocal part, the piano part features a number of prominent G5s, a fact that strengthens hearing the rare vocal G5s as moments of particularly intense sensory recall. The piano clearly, from this view, represents an object of longing for the protagonist, whose desires are embodied in the vocal part. The piano's first prominent G5 occurs in m. 2, where its appearance seems almost to correct the dissonant vocal F#5.

18 The manner in which these sensations are triggered by the G5's appearance on top of the texture resonates somewhat with the cross-sensory phenomenon known as *synaesthesia*, in which a sensory experience in one domain triggers a response in a separate sensory domain. *Synaesthesia* can technically involve any pair of senses, but most commonly occurs between color and sound; in 'Frühlingslied', the protagonist experiences the sensory perceptions evoked in the poem through the sound of the G5.

G5 reappears in the piano part in mm. 11-12 in the B section, where it is juxtaposed with an F♯ in the voice. Mm. 15-18 present a series of tantalizing G5s, which are emphasized by repetition and syncopation. Finally, the piano features G5 at the beginning of the A' section in an analogous location to its original appearance in m. 2, and again in m. 28, where it leads a brief imitative passage with the voice.

While the vocal G5s in mm. 7, 27, and 29 technically fulfill the leading-tone implications from earlier in the song, they do not function as true resolutions for the many reasons outlined above. Instead, they represent particularly striking moments of remembrance. Like many of the memories we encounter in our daily lives, the vocal G5s heard throughout 'Frühlingslied', while familiar, appear without warning and without context; they are—purposefully, at least in the case of 'Frühlingslied', it seems—displaced.

In the words of Hermine Spies, the piano part in 'Frühlingslied' 'sings and rings and rejoices,' and as it does so, it represents a regaining of youth, youth so clearly memorable that one can nearly experience a physical sensation of that memory. In contrast, the voice represents the protagonist's yearning to return to his own youth as he contemplates the past. Throughout most of 'Frühlingslied', the piano assumes the role of that which lies just out of reach: despite the repeated attempts of the voice to attain the pitches held by the piano, the piano—and the protagonist's experience of youth—remains ultimately unattainable. The yearning aspect of memory is represented by the dissonant leap of the opening vocal melody, whose aspiring ascent is followed by a slower descending line that 'moans and weeps' in contrast to the more animated accompaniment. Again and again, the voice nearly reaches the notes in the piano part, but, at almost every opportunity, fails to meet or surpass the piano's melodic line. The few exceptions to this relationship represent moments in which the rare sung G5 triggers the protagonist's near-literal re-experience of the sensory aspects of youth; this experience grows more amplified as the song continues, as evidenced by, among other factors, the appearance of two G5s near the end of the song. The voice's final, equivocal balance on $\hat{3}$ represents the protagonist's resigned contentment to indulge in his memories, so vivid they are nearly tangible.

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Close Encounters of Another Kind: Strategies of Intercultural Composition, 1960s-2000s

In recent years, the contemporary music scene saw the appearance of several multicultural ensembles that aim to go beyond a type of interculturality commonly referred to as exoticism. One of them is the Amsterdam-based Atlas Ensemble, a collective of musicians uniting strings, zithers, lutes and winds from various parts of the Eurasian continent. Initiated in 2002 by the Dutch composer Joël Bons, the Atlas Ensemble has grown into an international meeting place for teachers and students committed to exploring the communalities between musical traditions that usually do not meet. This article discusses Bons's Ensemble, as well as Theo Loevendie's kindred yet different Ensemble Ziggurat, in light of the aims and ambitions of an earlier generation of 'intercultural' composers, including Tōru Takemitsu, Chou Wen-chung, and Ton de Leeuw. If the latter aspire(d) to a confluence of Eurasian music traditions through a reorientation toward the aesthetic and ethical principles of modality, the repertoires of the Atlas Ensemble and Ensemble Ziggurat demonstrate a wide variety of aspirations for, and approaches to, intercultural composition.

Although regular visitors of the VARA Saturday Matinee at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw are accustomed to adventurous programming, the concert of 7 December 2002 is likely to have ventured beyond both their visual and aural horizons. Even for those who keep a close track of musical East/West exchanges on the concert stages, a thirty-headed ensemble compiled of masters in winds, strings, lutes, zithers and percussion from the whole cross-section of the Eurasian continent must have been a curious experience. Apart from one sceptic voice raising a hue and cry about 'virtual neo-colonisation', all reviewers were unanimous in their admiration for the Atlas Ensemble and its prime mover, Joël Bons (b. 1952), and made it clear that more of the same would be desirable. And more they got: as the Atlas Ensemble approaches its tenth anniversary, it has presented several equally acclaimed concert programmes, drawn commissions from an international selection of composers at various stages in their careers, and established an annual summer school, the Atlas Academy, which provides a laboratory of experimentation and exchange for students and teachers alike.

Bons's project would surely have appealed to Ton de Leeuw (1926-1996), a name in Dutch musical life inextricably associated with the advocacy of musical cosmopolitanism. In the 1970s, De Leeuw's life-long exploration of differences and communalities between music traditions across the Eurasian continent culminated in a series of informal meetings and workshops for composers, musicians and (ethno)musicologists similar, yet not identical, to those of the Atlas Ensemble. This article discusses the enterprises of De Leeuw and Bons as examples of a trend in the contemporary music scene that emerged in the 1960s as a critical response to both a predominantly Eurocentric and past-oriented musical establishment and the (perceived) failure of the avant-garde to provide an alternative. Proponents of this trend (variously dubbed as 'transethnicism', 'transculturalism', 'cross-culturalism'

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or ‘interculturalism’) cringe at straightforward evocations of ‘otherness’ (‘exoticism’ or ‘orientalism’), and aspire instead to a state of mind in which – as De Leeuw phrased it – the world’s music, in all its diversity, is no longer understood as ‘exotic’, but ‘endotic’, i.e., as something in which all listeners can recognise themselves.¹

Diagnosis and Antidote: The Musicultura Meetings

‘There’s still a lot to be done’, Ton de Leeuw concluded after his first tour of India, January-February 1961. ‘On both sides [i.e., India and the West] there exists not only non-understanding, but most of all ignorance [of each other’s music].’² De Leeuw did not leave it at this observation: thirteen years later, he urged an international gathering of music experts, convened on his initiative in what was the first of the so-called ‘Musicultura’ meetings, to face up to what he saw as the problems and needs of music in his time. In De Leeuw’s diagnosis, music’s predicament everywhere across the globe resulted from a general lack of cultural policy combined with the relentless expansion of what Theodor Adorno was wont to call the ‘culture industry’: a monolithic conglomerate of broadcasting networks and recording companies that in the name of profit figures would sacrifice the artistry and authenticity of living traditions to the marketing laws of efficiency and accessibility. Convinced of the acuteness of music’s challenges in a globalising world, De Leeuw had been most discouraged to find many of his colleagues to react with indifference whenever he brought them up. Through informal concerts, lectures and discussions by, for, and between representatives of endangered music traditions, the Musicultura meetings were hoped to lure all those involved in the production of music from their ivory tower, and incite them to act upon the perceived threats to music’s integrity.³

De Leeuw’s advocacy on behalf of ‘traditional’ musics in his time tuned in to widely shared concerns. Alain Daniélou (1907-1994), for instance, felt equally compelled to increase awareness of the challenges that a commercially-driven or state-sponsored media apparatus poses to local traditions and musical taste. The noted indologist particularly deplored the way in which Europe’s (former) colonies had internalised their coloniser’s idea that their music would be monotonous and underdeveloped to the extent that they did not deem their traditions worthy of governmental support, and deliberately allowed them to be packaged and adjusted – literally ‘harmonised’ – for global consumption.⁴ To prevent bearers of music traditions in Africa and Asia from resorting to the ‘music industry’ out of dire necessity, Daniélou had founded, in 1963, the Institute for Comparative Music

- 1 David Nicholls, ‘Transethnicism and the American Experimental Tradition’, *The Musical Quarterly* 80/4 (1996), 569-594; Yayoi Uno Everett, ‘Intercultural Synthesis in Postwar Western Art Music: Historical Contexts, Perspectives, and Taxonomy’, in: Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (eds), *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004, 1-21; Ton de Leeuw, ‘Les cultures musicales des peuples: traditions et actualité’, lecture delivered at the seventh International Music Congress, Moscow, October 1971. Cited in the introduction to *Ton de Leeuw*, ed. Jurrien Sligter, transl. John Lydon, Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995, xxi.
- 2 De Leeuw, ‘People and Music in India’, in: *Ton de Leeuw*, 13. De Leeuw’s travelogue of his Indian trip was originally published in three parts as ‘Mensen en muziek in India: Reisdagboekbladen’, *Mens en Melodie* 18/5 (1963), 144-149; 18/7, 213-216; and 18/8, 239-243.
- 3 De Leeuw, ‘Premises and Aims of an East-West Music Encounter’, in: *Ton de Leeuw*, 57-65. This lecture, delivered on 21 October 1974, was originally published in the proceedings of the first three Musicultura meetings, *The World of Music* 20/2 (1978), 19-33. The sessions, organised under the auspices of the Eduard van Beinum Foundation, took place at the Foundation’s residence, the patrician estate of Queekhoven in Breukelen, The Netherlands, and were funded by the Dutch Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, UNESCO, the Utrecht Association for Arts and Sciences, and the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds.
- 4 Alain Daniélou, in collaboration with Jacques Brunet, *The Situation of Music and Musicians in Countries of the Orient*, Florence: Olschki, 1971, 1-18.

Studies and Documentation in West Berlin, which would gain a reputation for its defence and promotion of music traditions outside the Western sphere of hegemony.⁵

If the sociologist Max Weber had construed the emergence of Western music as the unique and favourable outcome of processes of rationalisation (the development of music notation and equal temperament, for instance), De Leeuw and Daniélou considered the very same processes as having led to the bankruptcy of Western contemporary music.⁶ More than Daniélou, however, De Leeuw proved willing to appreciate the positive consequences of rapidly advancing media technologies as well. He recognised, for instance, that the same 'culture industry' could stimulate a wider interest in the West for non-Western musics, and – if used conscientiously – could be instrumental in breaking down provincialism, if not chauvinism. Moreover, following from his observation that the dominant Western music tradition was just as much misunderstood in the non-Western world as vice versa, De Leeuw sensed that any attempt at mutual understanding was destined to fail if it would depart from differences instead of communalities. Therefore, he proposed to discard persistent myths about 'Western' or 'Eastern' uniqueness, and to focus on ways in which cultures could influence each other ('acculturate', in De Leeuw's terminology) for the good of world's musical ecology.⁷

De Leeuw's position is intriguing: on the one hand he wished to 'correct' the average Westerner's conception of non-Western musics that has been shaped for decades by exotic appropriations à la *Madama Butterfly*; on the other hand, his perception of 'the East' was arguably no less filtered through an exoticist lens, since it reflected a trend – particularly strong since the late nineteenth century – of idealising 'the East' as the panacea for all that would have been lost in 'the West': a sense of spirituality, intuition, communality, craftsmanship, etc. The Japanese composer Tōru Takemitsu (1930-1996), whom De Leeuw met at a UNESCO conference in Tokyo in 1968, realised that his thinking about East/West relations held the same paradox. He knew that he himself – like Claude Debussy, one of his main examples – had often construed 'the East', including Japan, as the living source of what 'the West' would have abandoned. On the other hand, he understood that his country did not belong (anymore) to that idealised image of the 'East' he and De Leeuw had treasured in their minds. This once more dawned upon him while being on an international musical expedition in Indonesia, 1973, where he saw the disenchanting effects of Japan's economic hegemony on indigenous communities in its sphere of influence. This experience made him feel at odds with both the West and Japan, as if he were 'sandwiched between two mirrors' and looking at a 'complexly replicated, skewed self'.⁸

This feeling of belonging to neither 'the East' nor 'the West' was perhaps what De Leeuw wished to overcome, not merely by reflecting upon it in academic or musical writing, but also by fostering international dialogue about the issues of the time. The

5 The initiative for this institute was taken at the 1961 East-West Music Encounter in Tokyo, an event organised as part of the efforts of the so-called Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) to lure intellectuals the world over away from the overtures from the Soviet Union. For an account of the CCF's music festivals and conferences, see my dissertation *Negotiating the East/West Divide Musically: Connecting and Confronting Musics in the Early Cold War, 1945-1961*, Utrecht University, forthcoming.

6 Max Weber, *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music* [1921], transl. and ed. Donald Martindale, Johannes Riedel and Gertrude Neuwirth, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958.

7 De Leeuw, 'Premises and Aims of an East-West Encounter', 65-72; see also De Leeuw's essay 'Interaction of Cultures in Contemporary Music', in: *Ton de Leeuw*, 33-34, 53-56, originally published in *Cultures* [UNESCO et la Baconnière] 1/3 (1974), 13-32.

8 Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, transl. and ed. Yoshiko Kakudo and Glenn Glasow, Berkeley, CA: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995, 27-31, 52, 92; idem, 'Contemporary Music in Japan', *Perspectives of New Music* 27/2 (1989), 198-206; idem, 'Mirrors', *Perspectives of New Music* 30 (1992), 39-42, 47, 57, 69-70; Debussy, 'Du goût' ['On taste'], *Revue Société Internationale Musicale* 9/2 (1913), 48.

first three weeks of the month-long Musicultura conventions were devoted to thorough introductions in music traditions from a particular geographic area by specialists and performers. The last week was reserved for discussions and evaluations by a core group of musicians, composers and musicologists representing the generation to be confronted with ‘the negative consequences of current trends.’⁹

One contemporary reviewer of the first Musicultura meeting noted how, in spite of the active participation of the members of this core group, the lack of common terminology, as well as the limited experience and knowledge of the music traditions in question, prevented discussions from becoming truly reciprocal. Nonetheless, an exchange did occur at different levels: the setting provided the Chinese composer Chou Wen-chung (b. 1923) – who had resided in the United States since 1946 – with a platform for airing the problems he faced as a composer in the West as well as for adjusting some Western misperceptions about the effects of the Cultural Revolution on the musical life of the People’s Republic of China (Chou visited the PRC in the wake of President Nixon in 1972). Also, the South-Korean *gayageum* master Hwang Byungki heard the compositions of his exiled compatriot Isang Yun for the very first time. Most disappointing, however, was the lack of response from those who truly had the power to bring about concrete changes: representatives of record companies, concert managements, cultural ministries, publishers, broadcasters, educators, the press, and other arbiters of taste. All had been invited, but with the exception of Dutch NOS radio and the specialist music press, none of them showed up. And those parties were not the only ones that were notably absent: many musicians from the countries involved failed to respond, with the result that the meetings remained to a large extent a convention of the usual suspects preaching to the already converted.¹⁰

Unfortunately, apart from the published lectures given by participants, documentation about the first Musicultura meetings seems to be scarce. There is a brief report on the session of 1978, though, which gives us a glimpse. Organised in collaboration with the National Music Committee of Bulgaria represented by Dimiter Christoff, the theme of this meeting concerned the integration of ‘folklore and traditional music in contemporary composition techniques.’ A recurring issue centred on the question to what extent indigenous musics could be manipulated without losing their artistic and communicative value. Christoff, for instance, explained how he left the procedure of dividing a folk tune in several segments and then combining them in different orders for a procedure of deriving pointillistic textures from the tune without affecting its recognisability. The participants generally seemed to agree that folk styles should not be ‘over-abstracted’ when being adopted in the idiom of contemporary music. Neither, however, did ‘under-abstractation’ seem to meet with unanimous approval. Could Henryk Gorecki’s Third Symphony (1976), with its ‘twelve-part canon on an actual folk tune [*sic*], still be considered as ‘truly contemporary music’?¹¹

9 ‘Musicultura 1974’ covered traditions from China, Japan, Vietnam and Korea, ‘Musicultura 1975’ traditions from the Philippines and Indonesia (Java and Bali), and ‘Musicultura 1976’ traditions from Iran, Arabic countries, and India (Hindustani and Carnatic classical traditions). Reports on the lectures can be found in the proceedings, *The World of Music* 20/2 (1978). In the period between 1983 and the passing of De Leeuw in 1996, the meetings were continued as the International Composers’ Workshop, which alternately took place in the Netherlands and Bulgaria under the auspices of the International Music Council.

10 Sylvia Moore, ‘Reflections on Musicultura 1974-1976’, *Sonorum Speculum: Mirror of Musical Life in Holland* [Donemus] 57 (1974), 30-39.

11 William P. Malm, ‘A Composers’ Workshop: Folklore and Traditional Music in Contemporary Composition Techniques’, *Musicultura*, 10-24 October 1978. Netherlands Music Institute, The Hague.

Interestingly, one point of concern that popped up in the evaluation of the 1978 Musicultura meeting was the lack of a workshop character. Apparently, participants spent most of their time on lectures, discussions, private lessons with Christoff and De Leeuw, and concerts (the latter of which were not always germane to the topic of the workshop – like a recital of Bach harpsichord pieces or a piano recital of sonatas by Beethoven, Brahms, and Prokofiev). It was felt that one should have the opportunity to perform together and process the newly acquired insights in composition assignments to be presented to all for discussion. This is precisely the format that the Atlas Academy offers thirty years later: for two weeks, composition students work, under the guidance of composers experienced in writing for an intercultural formation, with members of the Atlas Ensemble on pieces that are presented in public concerts at the end of the period.

Needless to say, De Leeuw could only have dreamt of having an intercultural ensemble like Bons's at his disposal. Composers of his generation had rarely, if ever, the opportunity to write for any other formation than an ensemble of 'Western' instruments and perhaps one or two 'non-Western' ones. The consequence of this pragmatic limitation is not without irony, as those composers committed to reaching a responsible integration of different musics had to design their solutions for an ensemble of mainly, if not exclusively, 'Western' instruments played by 'Western' performers trained in a 'Western' performance practice.¹² This is not to say that if collaborations with non-Western musicians would have been an affordable option at the time, all composers would have seized that opportunity. A general reluctance prevailed in the contemporary music scene as to the use of non-Western instruments out of fear of sounding 'exotic' or being accused of a naïve or disrespectful attitude towards other musics – an attitude that Maurico Kagel satirised in *Exotica* (1971), in which six European musicians literally play *with* about sixty non-European instruments without having a clue about their usual socio-cultural habitat. Instead of facile appropriations, composers such as De Leeuw, Takemitsu, and Chou Wen-chung sought for intersections between different traditions on the level of pitch content, timbre, and temporal organisation.

Confronting Cultures Consciously: Modality as a Poetics of Intercultural Composition

With respect to the question of how to respond to processes of globalisation in a creative sense, superficial approaches to cultures beyond one's immediate experience were obviously wasted on sensitive minds like those of De Leeuw or Takemitsu. As De Leeuw observed in 1974, access to unfamiliar musical traditions might have increased significantly, yet still too often the contemporary composer from the West treated Eastern music as something 'exotic from which he will at most extract a few picturesque details', whereas his non-Western counterparts often tried to follow – rather unsuccessfully – Bartók's lead in integrating their folk music in a traditionally Western idiom. To De Leeuw's ears, such half-hearted attempts at attaining a synthesis merely sounded like colourless assemblages of heterogeneous materials. The possibility of a 'true' synthesis might only arise, De Leeuw assumed, 'when we no longer think of the various musics of the world as being "outside of us"' – a state of mind that is admittedly subjective and unverifiable, but nonetheless sensible when one compares the unique syntheses of Bartók, Debussy, De Falla, Stravinsky, Milhaud and Messiaen to 'the innumerable stitchers of folk music patchworks throughout the world.' These were the composers that according to

12 An exception in De Leeuw's oeuvre is *Gending, a Western Homage to the Musicians of the Gamelan* (1975), which premiered at the 1975 Musicultura meeting. Far removed from an attempt at achieving 'authenticity', De Leeuw conceived this work for gamelan (performed by students of the universities of Utrecht and Amsterdam) as the result of an acculturation process, in which the qualities of the gamelan are highlighted in a structure that is thoroughly Western. 'Ton de Leeuw's Composition *Gending*', *The World of Music* 20/2 (1978), 98-99.

De Leeuw had shown a capacity for weaving unfamiliar musics into highly idiosyncratic works without imposing their ego on them in a Romantic fashion.¹³

It was this quality of transcending one's own subjectivity, of resisting the temptations of 'narcissism, vanity, ambition, *Weltschmerz*, power, and violence', that attracted De Leeuw in non-Western musics, in particular in those from India and Japan:

In retrospect, I think that certain characteristics of Asian music corresponded to my personality: a penchant for introspection, a strong feeling of affinity with nature; the idea that nothing need be conquered, nothing need be invented, everything already exists; an inclination towards spirituality coupled with a deep distrust of its sectarian expressions; and, in connection with this, an instinctive aversion to all ideology, equating this with an assault on true inner freedom.¹⁴

Considering this self-observation, it is hardly surprising that De Leeuw's mind could not be captured for long by those of his contemporaries who affiliated with the Darmstadt avant-garde. True, like De Leeuw, they also sought to disassociate themselves from the Classical-Romantic heritage. Their solution, however – a highly cerebral method of dispelling the past and the possibility of expression, designed in a climate that was anything but free from sectarianism, ideology and vanity – ran counter to De Leeuw's own self-perception. Conversely, John Cage's resort to chance operations as a way of minimising the composer's control seemed to pass by what De Leeuw saw as the real nature of the problem. For him, it was not imperative to eliminate the composer's presence from music-making, so to speak, as it was to bring him back in the position he used to have in a time when 'the absence of an ethical, artistic, and spiritual foundation' would not yet have resulted in 'a deceptive world' reigned by money, publicity and superficiality, and the composer still would have been a humble mediator instead of an all-controlling, and perhaps all too arrogant, authority.

Takemitsu, too, with an obvious reference to integral serialism, wished 'to free sounds from the trite rules of music, rules that are in turn stifled by formulas and calculations.' He agreed with De Leeuw that music should be based on a profound relationship to nature and society rather than on the 'ideology of self-expression'. Likewise, he conceived of the musician as a mediator instead of an author:

What I don't want to do is use my control to set sounds moving in the direction of a particular goal. Rather, I'd like to release them, if possible without controlling them. It would be enough to collect the sounds around me and then gently set them in motion. To move sounds around, as though you were driving a car, is the worst thing that you can do with them.¹⁵

For De Leeuw, Takemitsu had that state of mind to which he aspired himself: the openness to musics from anywhere and everywhere, the capacity to internalise them, and the creative energy to melt them together into a profound synthesis.¹⁶ Interestingly, the Japanese composer himself did not seem to have considered his compositions as

13 De Leeuw, 'Interaction of Cultures in Contemporary Music', 35-36. See also his *Music of the Twentieth Century: A Study of its Elements and Structure*, transl. Stephen Taylor, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005, 117-133. Originally published as *Muziek van de twintigste eeuw*, Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1964.

14 De Leeuw, 'Back to the Source', in: *Ton de Leeuw*, 73.

15 Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 4, 7, 80, 119; idem, 'Mirrors', 41, 66; liner notes of *In an Autumn Garden* (Deutsche Grammophon, 2002).

16 De Leeuw, 'Travel Memories from Japan', in: *Ton de Leeuw*, 19-21. Originally published as 'Reisherinneringen uit Japan', *Mens en Melodie* 23/12 (1968), 354-359.

syntheses. In his writings, he frequently related how the contradictions he experienced between Japan, the West, and his own life led him to feel that he should not solve them, but ‘confront’ them, even intensify them.¹⁷

In *November Steps* (1967), Takemitsu’s first attempt at a large-scale composition for orchestra and two traditional Japanese instruments, the *biwa* (pear-shaped lute) and *shakuhachi* (vertical bamboo flute), the working device ‘not to blend but to confront’ has been pursued to such an extent that the Japanese soloists hardly play simultaneously with the orchestra. And yet, they are also not playing against it. At the start of the performance, it might seem difficult to imagine how the subdued, syrupy gestures of the orchestra – consisting of two ensembles of strings, harp and percussion that are placed antiphonally on stage, with a woodwind and brass section located at the back centre – will connect with the Japanese instruments (Example 1).

Example 1

Tōru Takemitsu, *November Steps* (1967): reduction of the opening measures.

The image shows a musical score reduction for the opening measures of *November Steps*. It consists of two staves for strings (right and left sides) and a staff for violins. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 60. The right side strings start with a triplet of notes marked *pp*, followed by a *p* dynamic. The left side strings start with a *fp* dynamic. The violin part features a triplet of notes marked *pp sempre*, followed by a *p* dynamic. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *mf* and *p*, and performance instructions like *vlns + vlns* and *tutti con sordino*. The notation includes triplets and complex rhythmic patterns.

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As the double concerto evolves, however, the elusive, fluid sound worlds evoked by the orchestra (reminiscent of Berg, Webern, Varèse, Messiaen, and Ligeti) and soloists appear to be highly compatible in terms of pitch treatment (indeterminate intonation and microtonal inflections), temporal conception (oscillation between a pulse-based mode and *senza tempo* mode), timbre (evocation of multiple harmonics in order to avoid pitch stability), dynamics (highly differentiated), and articulation (breathy, percussive, noise-like effects). In other words, the worlds of the Western avant-garde and traditional Japanese music (insofar as the music Takemitsu wrote for the *shakuhachi* and *biwa* can be called ‘traditional’ – their very presentation as a duo is already unconventional) might not *blend*, but they certainly *bend* toward each other to the extent that an impression of unambiguous juxtaposition is avoided.¹⁸

17 Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 52, 93; Takemitsu in an interview with Luciana Galliano, ‘The Roaring Epoch: Works of the 1950s-1960s’, in: Hugh de Ferranti and Yōko Narazaki (eds), *A Way a Lone: Writings on Tōru Takemitsu*, Tokyo: Academia Music Limited, 2002, 35.

18 For Takemitsu’s comments on *November Steps*, see: *Confronting Silence*, 62-63, 87-90; ‘Sound in the East, Sound in the West: The Way to *November Steps*’, transl. Mimi Yiengpruksawan, *Ear* 5/8 (1990), 21; and, ‘Contemporary Music in Japan’, 201-202. For other discussions of *November Steps*, see: Edward Smaldone, ‘Japanese and Western Confluences in Large-Scale Pitch Organization of Tōru Takemitsu’s *November Steps* and *Autumn*’, *Perspectives of New Music* 27/2 (1989), 218-221; Peter Burt, *The Music of Tōru Takemitsu*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 112-117; Christian Utz, *Neue Musik und Interkulturalität*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002, 296-299; Yayoi Uno Everett, ‘Reflecting on Two Cultural “Mirrors”: Mode and Signification of Musical Synthesis in Tōru Takemitsu’s *November Steps* and *Autumn*’, in: *A Way a Lone*, 125-154.

Rather than as a deadlock confrontation, the interaction between ‘West’ and ‘East’ in *November Steps* seems to be conceived as a confirmation of the impression that, as Chou Wen-chung formulated it, ‘the traditions of Eastern and Western music, [which] once shared the same sources, “re-merge[d]” [...] to form the mainstream of a new musical tradition.’¹⁹ To draw this process of convergence to its end, Takemitsu, Chou, and De Leeuw proposed a re-appreciation and extension of earlier principles of modality with respect to composing, performing, and experiencing music. From De Leeuw’s perspective, such a strategy (‘extended modality’, as he called it) would not only provide a possible solution for the impasse reached by (a)tonality, it would also reconnect the West with its past *and* the rest of the world from which it had separated itself in name of innovation and self-supremacy. In other words, where Max Weber had accepted the loss of modality as a necessary given of the processes of rationalisation that decisively affected the course of Western (and, by extension, Japanese or Chinese) contemporary music, Takemitsu, Chou, and De Leeuw sought to restore what had been sacrificed to those very same processes.²⁰

What united the three composers’ understanding of modality concerns – as mentioned before – the relation between the author and the authored. Instead of conceiving their role as one of creating something *ex nihilo* (the Romantic conception of artistic creation), all three rather saw themselves as mediators between the sounding and ‘unsounding’ world. In other words, their task was not one of creating a new universe, but of ‘actualising’ (i.e., rendering audible) an already existing universe of sound. Takemitsu phrased it as ‘capturing a single defined sound’ out of the ‘stream of infinite sound’ produced by the ‘vibrations’ that fill both the ‘external and internal world’.²¹ In terms of composition, this meant that all three composers worked with a pre-composed set of pitches and/or other parameters (the sounding potential) from which they derived musical material (the sounding actuality) in a quasi-systematic way.

Although Takemitsu had a name for being evasive about his composition method, analyses of his work have demonstrated that his seemingly panchromatic vocabulary results from an interplay between a wide variety of modal collections, including the more customary ones (the European ecclesiastical modes, the pentatonic, hexatonic and octatonic modes, or modes common to traditional Japanese music), Messiaen’s ‘modes of limited transposition’, and his own modal constructions.²² In *November Steps*, for instance, the first entrance of the *shakuhachi* (on a pitch swaying between D and E) is prepared by a swelling, polyrhythmic gesture in the brass and winds section (at m. 15) that culminates in a chromatic cluster (at mm. 18-20) containing all pitch classes except for D and E (Example 2). This cluster ‘implodes’ as the brass fall away and the winds feint a ‘solution’ into an incomplete octatonic cluster that introduces E. As this cluster fades away, the first contrabasses present the missing D (as a harmonic, mm. 21-24), which subsequently is taken over by the *shakuhachi*. At the second entrance of the *shakuhachi* (this time on E), the orchestra provides a harmonic background consisting of a chromatic

19 Chou Wen-chung, ‘East and West, Old and New’, *Asian Music* 1 (1968), 19; idem, ‘Asian Concepts and Twentieth-Century Western Composers’, *The Musical Quarterly* 57/2 (1971), 24-29.

20 Weber, *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*, 123; De Leeuw, ‘What Can We Do For Our Musical Future?’, lecture delivered at a congress of the International Musical Council, Manila, 1966; Chou, ‘Asian Influence on Western Music: Influence or Confluence’, in: *Traditional Korean Music*, ed. Korean National Commission for UNESCO, Arch Cape: Pace International Research, 1983, 226.

21 Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 8; Noriko Ohtake, *Creative Sources for the Music of Tōru Takemitsu*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993, 61-62.

22 Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 97-126, esp. 117-119; Peter Burt, *The Music of Tōru Takemitsu*; Timothy Koozin, ‘Spiritual-Temporal Imagery in Music of Olivier Messiaen and Tōru Takemitsu’, *Contemporary Music Review* 7 (1993), 185-202.

Example 2

Tōru Takemitsu, *November Steps* (1967): harmonic configurations at transitory moments.

TRANSITION TO FIRST ENTRANCE *SHAKUHACHI* AND *BIWA* (STEP 1)

18-20 | 20-21 | 21-24

trps + trbs
obs + cls

obs + cls

vcs + cbs + hrps

chromatic collection excluding D \sharp and E \sharp

octatonic collection (incomplete)

entry tone *shakuhachi*

TRANSITION TO SECOND ENTRANCE *SHAKUHACHI* AND *BIWA* (STEP 6)

32-36

chromatic cluster (excluding C \sharp)

vns, vcs, cbs, hrps

trps + trbs

chromatic collection excluding C \sharp

pentatonic collection (anhemitonic) Y6 scale

pentatonic collection (hemitonic) In scale

⑥ pitch collection *shakuhachi*

⊛ The framed chords sound simultaneously

cluster containing all pitch classes except for C (mm. 32-35). The chord scored for the brass stands out against this panchromatic backdrop, and appears to be what in Japanese music theory is known as the *yō* scale (on E: E-F \sharp -G \sharp -B-C \sharp), the anhemitonic pentatonic mode that in the West has been established as a conspicuous aural marker of the 'Far East'. Significantly, in its following phrase (the apex of which is C6), the *shakuhachi* does not employ the same mode, but its hemitonic version, the *in* scale (on B: B-C-E-F \sharp -G), which is more idiomatic to the *shakuhachi* tradition. It seems as if these subtle instances of pitch extraction, completion, and friction are deliberately designed as to mediate between two different yet convergent sound worlds.

Initially, Chou, too, sought ways of integrating – or, to use his term, 'remerge' – modality (in this case pentatonicism) in the Western practice of chromatic harmony. Since he was not satisfied with having to rely on pentatonic collections, he developed a system by which modes for pitch, and occasionally also duration, timbre, density, or other parameters, are constructed, and subsequently combined. The catalyst of this system is the *yin/yang* principle, which one of the oldest surviving Chinese classic texts, the *Yijing* [*Book of Changes*], expounds as the eternal interaction between two opposite yet complementary forces from which everything emerged and emerges. As for pitch, Chou's application of the *yin/yang* principle involves the subdivision of the octave in three conjunct or disjunct segments, each of which can appear either as 'unbroken' (*yang*) or as 'broken' into two intervals (*yin*). For *Pien* [*Transformation*] (1966) for winds, piano and percussion, Chou devised three pairs of complementary modes based on three sets of so-called *Yijing* trigrams (Figure 1).

Consisting of either one or two broken (*yin*) or unbroken (*yang*) lines, each trigram within a set mirrors its neighbour and finds itself back after two permutations. Following the reading direction indicated by the arrows, each trigram is interpreted as a succession of three minor thirds (separated by a minor second) that are either unbroken or broken, that is, divided into a major and a minor second. Each order is negated in terms of the sequence of interpolated and uninterpolated thirds along the horizontal and vertical axis, and complemented by its ascending or descending associate along the diagonal. A circular representation particularly clarifies the relationships within a modal pair (Figure 2). At the macro level, each mode consists of the same intervallic configuration of three minor thirds at a major third's distance (F-A-C \sharp). At the micro level, each minor third is at variance with its counterpart in the opposite mode. For instance, the A and C \sharp occur in each modal pair as anchor points, yet their neighbouring tones appear in inversion. Also, the range of one

Figure 1

Chou Wen-chung, *Pien* (1966): derivation of modal pairs from *Yijing* trigrams.

Figure 2

Chou Wen-chung, *Pien* (1966): derivation of the first modal pair from *Yijing* trigrams.

