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## Asian and European Musical Images of Water: Exploring the Stylistic Evolution and Development of Musical Language by Comparing Selected Water-Themed Piano Works from the Nineteenth Century to the Present

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ASIAN AND EUROPEAN MUSICAL IMAGES OF WATER:  
EXPLORING THE STYLISTIC EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF MUSICAL LANGUAGE BY COMPARING SELECTED WATER-  
THEMED PIANO WORKS FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY  
TO THE PRESENT

by

Chubing Wang

A Doctoral Document

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ASIAN AND EUROPEAN MUSICAL IMAGES OF WATER:  
EXPLORING THE STYLISTIC EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
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PIANO WORKS FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

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University of Nebraska, 2019

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This document aims to explore the stylistic evolution and development of musical language by comparing water-themed piano works selected from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. The study first examines how water-related pieces were developed through the nineteenth to the twentieth century demonstrating the growth of compositional language on this particular theme. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the document focuses on the similarities and differences between Asian and European water pieces by Karen Tanaka and Andrea Granitzio. The goal of the study is to discuss how the previous generations influenced later composers' works and how the current generation has developed new styles through constant evolution of traditional musical language.

There are many water-related pieces by Asian composers written during the twentieth century. The water theme was attractive to them even though their philosophies are different from Western composers. The outcome of this comparison shows that the characteristics of Western culture and music were gradually absorbed into Eastern culture through easier and frequent cultural communication.

This document is dedicated to my family.

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## Introduction

Water-related works can be traced back to the early eighteenth century including most famously George Frederic Handel's collection of *Water Music*. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were several composers who wanted to garner attention by creating a unique repertoire for the piano that sought to evoke images of water. For example, Franz Liszt's *St François de Paule: marchant sur les flots* and *Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este*. His early water compositions are in a style reminiscent of Schubert's *Lieder*, which become an important foundation for Liszt's art. The blossoming of water-themed piano pieces happened during the period of Impressionism: Maurice Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*, *Ondine*, *Une barque sur l'océan*, Claude Debussy's *Reflets dans l'eau*, and *Jardin sous la pluie* are examples. These pieces not only shaped the aesthetic sense of Impressionism, but also profoundly influenced late twentieth century and twenty-first century composers.

There are many water-related pieces by Chinese and Japanese composers written during the twentieth century. The water theme was attractive to them even though their aesthetic realm was different from Western composers. During Mao Zedong's communist revolution, a number of Chinese pieces were exploited for political ends, such as *The Yellow River Piano Concerto* (1969), the modern folk song *Liuyang River* and *Nanni Lake*. A few compositions combined Chinese folk elements and Western compositional skills, such as Zhu Jianer's *Prelude No. 2: Flowing Water* (1955-56) and Chen Peixun's *Autumn Moon over the Clam Lake* (1975). Japanese composers, however, emphasized the poetic aspects of water. Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996) composed several water-themed works from the late 1970s and through the subsequent decade, such as the well-known *Rain Tree Sketch I*, a solo piano work

composed in 1982. Similarly, Takashi Yoshimatsu's *Barcalore on Autumn*<sup>1</sup> from *Pleiades Dances VI*, Op. 71 (1998) aims to draw poetic images of water as seen in nature. Karen Tanaka, whose work *Water Dance* is a central focus of this study, is a representative composer from twenty-first century Japan. Nonetheless, she is clearly indebted to twentieth-century trends in Western music. Her work will be compared with the water-themed solo piano pieces of the Italian composer Andrea Granitzio. Both composers are obviously aware of the techniques of early twentieth century French music and yet they come from opposite sides of the world. This document will explore this further by looking at the connections and influences of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European water music on contemporary Asian water-pieces.

Music inspired by water has been present in the West since the seventeenth century. The technical and compositional skills in this area become progressively more colorful. By examining and analyzing the language of historical water-themed pieces, this stylistic evolution toward the twenty-first century is thrown into focus. Integral to this are developments in pianism, such as the use of revolutionary harmonies that serve the purpose of coloration, non-traditional tonal relationships, innovative textures and exotic scales.

This document is divided into five chapters: Baroque and early nineteenth century water-related works; Romanticism and Impressionism water-themed programmatic piano pieces; selected twentieth century water compositions from China and Japan; twenty-first century water-related pieces by Tanaka and Granitzio. The first chapter establishes a historical background of the emergence of "early" water music in keyboard works, revealing composers' tentative efforts in portraying

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<sup>1</sup> The title was misspelled in its first publication. In this document the corrected spelling of "Barcarole" will be used.

water. The next chapter offers the imagery of water in the nineteenth century programmatic system, with an emphasis on Liszt's compositions, then moving to studies of Debussy's and Ravel's water compositions, analyzing the trends that led to the twenty-first century. The third chapter traces stylistic development in selected twentieth-century water compositions from China and Japan. The final chapter explores the similarities and differences between Asian and European water music.

## CHAPTER I

### The Beginnings to Schubert

#### Baroque Water Pieces

The very well-known *Water Music* is undoubtedly a representative Baroque water-themed piece, composed by George Frideric Handel (1685-1759). It contains three suites, and all movements are orchestral. The purpose of this composition was to function as an important musical celebration for “a summer water party,” to promote the royal family’s appeal in England.<sup>2</sup> There are many loud movements in the suites to accompany this outdoor spectacle. As its title suggests, the *Water Music* was written to be performed on the water: in the actual event in July 17, 1717, King George I and court members left Whitehall Palace and boarded a lavishly-decorated barge; fifty musicians were involved, stationed on another nearby barge under the leadership of Handel.<sup>3</sup> From a historical point of view, *Water Music* is also a remarkable piece in keyboard literature. The full score of *Water Music* was not published during Handel’s lifetime and none of the autograph materials are extant.<sup>4</sup> However, in 1743 a version for harpsichord (transcribed by John Walsh) appeared, including almost all the musical numbers; this version existed in print for most of the

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<sup>2</sup>Christopher Hogwood, *Handel: Water Music and Music for the Royal Fireworks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Terence Best, “A Newly Discovered Water Music Source,” in *Handel*, ed. by David Vickers (London: Routledge, 2017), 221-230.

eighteenth century and was published much earlier than the full score by Arnold in 1788, as Handel left no written score of the orchestral version.<sup>5</sup>

The trend of transcribing an orchestral work to a piece for solo keyboard instrument was common in the Baroque period. In the transcription of Walsh, ornaments were added to the top line without destroying the structure, no doubt a concession to the harpsichord's inability to sustain or to accentuate:



Figure 1.1: *Water Music*: “Overture,” mm 1-9

The overture opens the first suite in French majestic style, followed by several dance-like movements including a frenetic *bourrée*. There is a lively sailor dance movement titled *Hornpipe* in the second suite, which is probably the only water-related figure that highlights the title. In spite of name, *Water Music* is a set of dances that are to be played for portraying events on the water, but not about the water itself.

Without doubt, the purpose of this composition was controlled by its original function: serving the political purpose for the royal's commission— to help restore confidence and regain popularity for King George I. In fact, Handel could have used

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Hogwood, *Handel: Water Music and Music for the Royal Fireworks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 16.

the compositional skill of tone painting very well for portraying water if he had wished. In Act 2 of his *Acis and Galatea* (1718), Galatea transforms Acis' corpse into a beautiful fountain; the instrumental lines are wavy and murmurous, with repeated dotted notes to bring out the calm and mystery of water. The effect is a typical example of Baroque tone painting, although this effect is not used in the *Water Music*.

### **Tone painting in Water Music**

In connection with the creative relationship between water music and tone painting, the German Baroque composer Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) also wrote a ten-movement suite of water music in 1723: *Wassermusik*— with the full title *Hamburger Ebb' und Fluth* (Hamburg's ebb and flow).<sup>6</sup> It shares some similarities to Handel's *Water Music*—both pieces were composed as instrumental music intended for outdoor orchestral performance, and they were both written within only a few years of each other. But unlike Handel's suites, which were for the Royalty of England, Telemann's suites were for the Admiralty of Germany's Hamburg.<sup>7</sup> In addition, this is a water-themed piece that intentionally depicts several watery subjects; it features Telemann the imaginative tone-painter at his most inventive, approaching the river Elbe in its varying moods. A sequence of dance movements portrays Greek sea gods and mythological deities on the river estuary: a sleeping *Thetis* (*Sarabande*), an amorous *Neptune* (*Loure*), sporting *Naiads* (*Gavotte*), and a *Gigue* which comes and goes with the tide, provoking the title *Ebb' und Fluth*. The

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<sup>6</sup> Chris Woodstra, Gerald Brennan and Allen Schrott, *All Music Guide to Classical Music: The Definitive Guide to Classical Music* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2005), 1399.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 1399.



*Overture* represents the visible movement of the water, with Telemann's fine skill of tone painting capturing its characteristics from gentle waves to stormy tumult.

The image shows a musical score for the Overture of *Wassermusik*, measures 42-44. The score is for Oboe 1, Oboe 2, Basso continuo, Violine 1, Violine 2, Viola, and Violone. The music is in 3/4 time and features a variety of rhythmic patterns and dynamics, including trills and slurs, capturing the movement of water.

Figure 1.2: *Wassermusik*: “Overture,” mm 42-44

Unlike Handel's *Water Music*, *Ebb' und Fluth* is clearly an unusual and early attempt to mold musical ideas to the behavior of water in nature. It did not occur to Telemann to use the harpsichord as any more than a continuo instrument for harmonic support. There is no suggestion that the keyboard could be used to supply any kind of texture. It was many years before the influence of Classical themes gave way to a much more literal response to natural phenomena.

Before the flourishing of program music in the Romantic era, water as a direct inspiration was still rare, Schubert being a notable exception. During the early nineteenth century, music achieved its effects from its own internal resources, notably in works written in sonata form. Beethoven once explained his musical ideas in his 1808 *Symphony No. 6 (Pastoral)* that the "whole work can be perceived without

description – it is more an expression of feelings rather than tone painting."<sup>8</sup> Yet the Symphony clearly contains depictions of birdcalls, a bubbling brook and a storm.

These were the natural expectations of audiences nurtured on the pictorial elements of baroque music - which can still be perceived in Haydn's *Creation*. Beethoven's comments clearly signal a shift in intention, from depiction to expression of feeling, a tendency picked up by Schubert.

### **Schubert's Love and Death in Water**

Romain Rolland described Franz Schubert's personality and music in his book *Jean-Christophe*, when Christophe feels completely alone and broken after arriving in Paris:

“...He [Christopher] heard a few fugitive bars of the *Unfinished Symphony* of Schubert. Poor Schubert! He, too, was alone when he wrote that, feverish, somnolent, in that semitorpid condition which precedes the last great sleep: he sat dreaming by the fireside: all round him were heavy drowsy melodies, like stagnant water: he dwelt on them, like a child half-asleep delighting in some self-told story, and repeating some passage in it twenty times: so sleep comes, then death....”<sup>9</sup>

There are two main themes involved in Schubert's compositions: his love of the natural world, along with the shadow of sorrow and the fear of death. These characteristics are also reflected in his water-themed compositions. Many of the *Lieder* contain water imagery. Unlike the functional simplicity of harpsichord writing

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<sup>8</sup> Jan Swafford, *Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph: a Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 512.

<sup>9</sup> Romain Rolland, *Jean-Christophe, Volumes 1-3*, trans. Gilbert Cannan (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1913), 173.

in harpsichord continuo-playing, piano accompaniments in Schubert's *Lieder* are always integral to the song and as crucial as the singer's melody. In *Auflösung* (D. 807), composed in 1824, the text refers to water as a symbol for death. Therefore, Schubert is one of the first composers to express water-images soulfully through the piano in the early nineteenth century.

Unlike Beethoven, who fought the battle with fate, Schubert was a surrenderer rather than a conqueror— he had little interest in being a shining hero, in building a powerful new world. Schubert suffered, then dreamed through music and poetry as his escape. Schubert's personality is like water, which presents a gentle feminine figure, with occasional uproars of raging torrent. Schubert walked a unique path after his predecessors and painted poetic soundscapes on the piano. The sentimental descriptions of nature were expressed with richness in depth, through the composition of *Lieder*.

Word painting is featured in the piano accompaniments of a number of *Lieder*. More than forty of them involve significant musical references to water.<sup>10</sup> For example, a vivid running spring is depicted in *Der Jüngling an der Quelle*, D. 300 with repetitions of sixteenth notes and fluidly grouped eighth notes; and the character of an immense ocean is presented in *Meeres Stille*, D. 216 by arpeggiated chords in every measure.<sup>11</sup> Schubert's boundless imagination was especially drawn to the art of portraying water. Compared to the limited musical vocabulary of Baroque water music, Schubert created many musical images capable of evoking water and producing some types of figuration on the piano unusual for his time. For example, in the opening measures of *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* (To be sung on the water, D. 774),

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Wigmore, *Schubert: The Complete Song Texts* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

a gracefully falling sixteenth-note figure pervades the song as the single motif, presented in the right hand as a repeated pattern, to portray an imaginary boat gliding down through dreamy shimmering waves. The paired slurs evoke the delicate and melancholy character of water, and hint at the bittersweet taste of a chromatic scale.



Figure 1.3: “Auf dem Wasser zu singen,” mm. 1-3

### Water Tremolos

Frequent use of tremolos of both hands in *Am Meer* (At the Seashore, from *Schwanengesang*, D. 957) conveys the agitated murmur of rising sea waves, and the poisoned tears from the poet’s lover.<sup>12</sup> “From your lovely eyes / The tears dropped:”<sup>13</sup>

Figure 1.4: *Schwanengesang*, D. 957: “Am Meer,” mm 12-18

<sup>12</sup> Richard Capell, *Schubert's Songs* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 255.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 255.

This is not the only water-themed *Lied* that uses tremolos. In *Der Schiffer* (D. 536), tremolo patterns running in the right hand describe raging water. A similar figure is supported by arpeggiated chords in the left hand in *Der Fluss* (D. 693) to evoke the movement of a swelling river.

The pianistic effect of tremolo becomes firmly established as a water-image in Schubert and becomes a thread running through the music of most of the composers featured in this document, right up to the present day.

### **Darkest Water**

Some passages in *Fahrt zum Hades* would seem to foreshadow not only Romanticism but also Impressionism in exploiting the coloristic capabilities of tone painting. Following a tradition established in the eighteenth century, Schubert was very sensitive to the choice of color in tonality. He once mentioned that “E-flat major is indicative of awe and devotion. It may be awe in the presence of the sea.”<sup>14</sup> And the darkest coloration of water appears in *Fahrt zum Hades*: the poem tells a story of a person going through the underworld after death, then facing a river called *Vergessenheit*, which is the river of forgetfulness.<sup>15</sup> The person will forget everything from the living world after drinking the water from *Vergessenheit*.<sup>16</sup> The entire song starts with D minor and ends on an F major chord, travelling through several daring modulations including C major (mm 24), F minor (mm 32), B-flat major (mm 40) and

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<sup>14</sup> John Reed, *The Schubert Song Companion* (New York: Universe Books, 1985), 484.

<sup>15</sup> Susan Youens, *Schubert's Poets and the Making of Lieder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 183-184.

<sup>16</sup> Eric Sams, *The Songs of Johannes Brahms* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 134.

later E-flat major (mm 62). But the most unusual moment is the sudden move to D-flat minor at measure 51, which is an enharmonic shift from C-sharp (leading tone of the opening key D minor) to D-flat; as the bass descends from D-flat to B double-flat at measure 52, the B double-flat is enharmonically equivalent to the dominant of D minor (in the *zurückhaltend* measure), indeed the listener will probably hear this as an anticipation of a D minor perfect cadence. But the D-flat minor 6/4 that follows shows that the dominant chord is in fact a German sixth, a revelation that Schubert feels he must repeat at the river's name “Vergessenheit”, reflecting the darkest moment of the entire *Lied*.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Fahrt zum Hades" (D.526) by Franz Schubert, measures 50-58. The score is in D-flat minor (three flats) and 6/4 time. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part has a prominent bass line with descending intervals. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "Tan - talus; es mur - - - melt to - - desschwangern Frie - - den, Ver - ges - senheit, dein al - - - ter - Fluss." The tempo marking "zurückhaltend" is present above the vocal line. The piano part includes a "pp" dynamic marking.

Figure 1.5: “Fahrt zum Hades,” D.526 mm 50-58

The tonal scheme of this passage also shows tone painting at its extreme, drawing out the darkest, lowest image of the song with richly nuanced flat keys, in order to accompany the appearance of the river of forgetfulness. All beautiful memories from the living world have disappeared, being replaced by a journey of death and fear. There is an intense contrast between the previous fleeting moments of major modulations and this sombre phrase in D-flat minor. This key is also very

remote from the clear tonal ending in F major, psychologically separating death and life. Moreover, the emptiness of B double-flat is a striking effect, a gaze into the gloomy shore of the underworld.

So far, only a small portion of Schubert's fascinating water effects have been examined as he portrayed water in many forms, displaying a rich and imaginative approach to pianistic language. In 1838, Liszt wrote to Marie d'Agoult while he was on tour in Vienna, "The other evening I heard some of Schubert's Lieder, sung by a friend of his. I listened to only three or four, then I came home and dissolved into tears."<sup>17</sup> There are fifty-six of Schubert's songs transcribed for piano solo by Franz Liszt,<sup>18</sup> and the influence of Schubert's compositional methods is evident in Liszt's early style, indicating a spiritual bond between the two composers. In summary, Schubert's *Lieder* compositions are "headwaters" of the nineteenth century, refining the art of tone painting, and his harmonic vocabulary influenced the works of future generations.

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<sup>17</sup> Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt by Himself and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 104.

<sup>18</sup> Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The virtuoso years, 1811-1847* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), 257.

## CHAPTER II

### Religion and Nature: Water in Romanticism and Impressionism

#### Liszt's Meditation and Religion in Water Images

Literature, fine art, as well as nature and religion.... these elements provided profound sources of inspiration for Franz Liszt's music. There are four water-themed pieces for solo piano composed by Liszt that are central to his art. The earlier examples are *Au lac de Wallenstadt* and *Au bord d'une source* from *Années de pèlerinage, Première année: Suisse*, S.160 and the other two are middle-late works: *Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este* from *Troisième année* S.163, and *St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots*, S.175/2 from *Deux légendes*. These pieces are like biographic travelogues of Liszt's musical life, which also reflect his personal path and growth through the pursuit of spiritual revelation. As Alfred Brendel wrote, the Swiss book of *Années* "deals with nature in a two-fold sense: as nature around us, and as the nature within."<sup>19</sup> The composer himself wrote in the preface of the first edition of *Album d'un Voyageur*, published in 1842:

"About a year ago I published three Swiss airs under the title *Album d'un Voyageur*.... I have recently travelled through many new countries, have seen many different places, and visited many a spot hallowed by history and poetry; I have felt that the varied aspects of nature, and the different incidents associated with them, did not pass before my eyes like meaningless pictures, but that they evoked profound emotions within my soul; that a vague but direct affinity was established betwixt them and myself, a real, though indefinable understanding, a sure but inexplicable means of communication, and I

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<sup>19</sup> Alfred Brendel, *Alfred Brendel On Music: His Collected Essays* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2000), 255.



have tried to give musical utterance to some of my strongest sensations, some of my liveliest impressions.”<sup>20</sup>

Liszt was attracted to water. When he was staying at Lake Como in 1837, a letter that he wrote describing his keen observation of “magical colors” on the lake sounds rather like an Impressionist painter: “they are a transparent rose, much like a pale ruby, sometimes an intense reddish hue like the desert sands, and at other times a mixture of purple, violet, and orange, which produces a fantastic color that is impossible to describe.”<sup>21</sup> The development of water subjects is central to the composer’s piano solo pieces. According to Paul Merrick, Liszt considered that water and the love of the Holy Spirit were linked.<sup>22</sup> Since he wrote so much sacred music, probably more than any of his contemporaries, the theme of water is spiritually significant. The early water pieces were composed during Liszt’s “virtuoso years” (1848-1854), featuring the Swiss nature sketches and joyful moments of his youth. *Les jeux d’eaux à la Villa d’Este*, which was composed two decades later, expresses the mature thoughts of the composer’s self-realization and spiritual renewal. Liszt’s philosophical beliefs and religious convictions are deeply embedded in *St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots*.<sup>23</sup> In addition, by foreshadowing the Impressionism of half a century later, these water compositions are prophetic. Not only did Liszt’s harmonic experiments provide a path for composers such as Debussy and Ravel, but his aesthetics also opened up a realm of possibilities.

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<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Krego, *Program Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 100.

<sup>21</sup> Franz Liszt, *An Artist’s Journey, Lettres d’un bachelier ès musique, 1835-1841*, trans. and annotated Charles Suttoni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 66.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Merrick, “The Rôle of Tonality in the Swiss Book of Années De Pèlerinage,” *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 39, no. 2/4 (1998): 372, doi:10.2307/902543.

<sup>23</sup> Dolores Pesce, *Liszt’s Final Decade* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2014), 284.

## Liszt's debt to Schubert

Both the Swiss water pieces are in A-flat major. Under the titles, each are accompanied by a few lines of poetry which clarify them, highlighting their different characteristics: *Au lac de Wallenstadt* is a calm meditation, where the other is energetic and fast. Schubert's influences are evident in *Au lac de Wallenstadt*: *Cantabile* melody is in the upper register, evoking an innocent Swiss folk song; the wave-like arpeggiated accompaniment represents the flowing river from beginning to end (before the coda). Such an arrangement— fluid melody in the right hand and undulating figure in the left— is commonly seen in Schubert's water-themed *Lieder*. Liszt stepped further and made the accompaniment pattern in *Au lac de Wallenstadt* even livelier. The continuous effect has a direct association with river-flow: its gentle swirl-and-twist can be visualized in the movement of the pianist's hand.



Figure 2.1: “Au lac de Wallenstadt,” mm 1-10

As Merrick mentioned in his article, the key of A-flat is a sign of love dedicated to Liszt's companion, Marie d'Agoult.<sup>24</sup> The tonic of A-flat appears as a

<sup>24</sup> Paul Merrick, "The Rôle of Tonality in the Swiss Book of *Années De Pèlerinage*," *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 39, no. 2/4 (1998): 372, doi:10.2307/902543.

tonal center with a pedal point in the accompaniment, persistently permeating the tonic-dominant harmonic pattern of the left hand. As the lowest note in the ostinato pattern and of the whole piece, the A-flat unifies the theme of love. The use of a pedal point to evoke the stillness of water persists through the rest of the century and becomes highly significant, as will later be seen in the music of Debussy and Ravel.

Liszt uses a pentatonic collection to transport the listener to the world of folksong, and this feature in *Au lac de Wallenstadt* may be one of the earliest examples linking water with the pentatonic scale. In the first section and the repeated phrases of the third section, the right-hand melody is mainly formed from five notes: A-flat, B-flat, C, E-flat and F. But the mood is not only defined by a simple scale; the rippling and swaying texture suggest a pastoral picture, a yearning for love and inner peace.

In this binary-structured piece, harmonically the most complex section is in the middle:

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The image shows a musical score for the piece "Au lac de Wallenstadt" by Franz Liszt, measures 36-49. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of music. The top system is marked "un poco marcato" and "sempre dolcissimo". The music features a melodic line in the right hand and a chromatic bass line in the left hand. The key signature is D-flat major. The score includes fingering numbers (1, 2, 3) and asterisks indicating specific notes or phrases.

Figure 2.2: “Au lac de Wallenstadt,” mm 36-49

The shifts of light and shadow between D-flat major and D-flat minor indicates a direct inspiration from Schubert. In its fleeting enharmonic spellings from measure 43, switching from D-flat minor to C-sharp minor, it is similar to a passage in *Fahrt zum Hades* (See figure 1.5). Similar but different, for where Schubert’s phrase leads to darkness, painting the notes with dim harmonic colors, Liszt lifts up the minor sharp key to its shining relative major— E major. The spellings in *Au lac de Wallenstadt* might not strictly be called a modulation, as the listener is not aware of any shift. But it shows a beautiful bridge painted by the composer just for the sake of colors and shades. Eight measures after measure 45, the pivotal note D-sharp plays another enharmonic role which links E major (its leading tone) and the home key A-flat major (enharmonically spelled as its dominant E-flat). The agitated breathing of chromatic shifts (D-sharp to E) is heard in the lowest notes of the left hand, prolonging the radiant return of the home key, the key of love.

These direct Schubertian influences are less evident in the other three water compositions. Comparing the earlier piece *Au bord d'une source* to the middle-period work *St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots*, reveals many significant developments of Liszt's pianistic language.

### **Virtuosity in Liszt**

First of all, both the pieces widen the expressive range of water compositions, presenting different facets of water: the liveness of its effervescent surface and the richness of its dimension and depth. *Au bord d'une source* portrays the transparent, crystal quality of a youthful spring; *St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots* focuses on the transcendental image of surging water and Roman Catholic legends. The former evokes lightness, placing both hands in a higher register, while the latter often features brutal solemnity in low pitches; the tessitura of *St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots* broadens to nearly seven octaves. This virtuosity was an inspiration for composers for piano at the end of the century, many works in the period of Impressionism exploiting a widened vocabulary of timbral distinctions, Ravel's *Une barque sur l'océan* being only one example.

Secondly, both works provide considerable technical challenges to pianists, especially when compared to *Au lac de Wallenstadt* which has little of the typical Lisztian virtuosity. John Gillespie described the balance between sound effect and virtuoso pursuit in Liszt, "As a marvellous showman and exhibitionist, he delighted in

sounding together as much of the keyboard as physically possible.”<sup>25</sup> There are many revolutions in Liszt’s water pieces, introducing innovations in sonority to later generations. For example, a menacing ocean storm is painted by howling tremolos, furious whirling chromatic runs on left hand, yet the steady and confident gesture of statue-like chords in right hand repeats the “hymn” as the presence of St. Francis.

According to Alan Walker, the purpose is to show “that the laws of faith govern the laws of nature.”<sup>26</sup>



Figure 2.3: “St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots,” mm 32-35

However, compared to the powerful and forceful orchestral effects in *St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots*, the language of *Au bord d'une source* is more appropriate for evoking transparent water images. It is significant that the young Debussy was deeply impressed on hearing Liszt’s performance of *Au bord d'une*

<sup>25</sup> John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music: An Historical Survey of Music for the Piano* (New York: Dover, 1972), 239.

<sup>26</sup> Alan Walker, *Liszt: The Final Years, 1861-1886* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996), 59.



Moreover, the texture of *Au bord d'une source* is like a delicately knitted flowing fabric with many layers. There are normally three or four layers, featuring the constant flow of sixteenth-note figuration and eighth-note melody; new materials (arpeggiated chords/octaves, grouped slurred notes) are introduced in each variant. One subtle strand in the second variant is a reminder of Schubert's *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* (Figure 1.3).



Figure 2.5: “Au bord d'une source,” measure 32

The resonance of major and minor seconds in the right hand create an ear-catching sensation: the melody is attached to complex colors rather than to a single line of eighth notes.



**IV. Au bord d'une source**  
Erschienen: 1855

**Allegretto grazioso (ma non troppo)**  
*(sempre non legato)*

*dolce tranquillo*

*sempre stacc. Ped. simile*

Figure 2.6: “Au bord d'une source,” mm 1-3

Compared with the stable treatment of slow rhythmic harmony in the meditative *Au lac de Wallenstadt*, the provision of fast-running figuration allows this piece to modulate frequently. For example, two remote-key modulations (B major at measure 3 and B-flat major at measure 6) follow the opening four measures, shifted by common tones in enharmonic spellings Eb/D# and F#/Gb. There are other daring harmonic effects: the use of chromaticism can be perceived everywhere, like the non-functional sequential cadenza passages at measures 10-12 and measures 23-27. In addition, minor chords are often “borrowed” for coloristic purposes, clashing together in juxtaposition. Then in measure 22 a cadence from V to I in the minor form of A-flat is presented in a highly ornate form, moving from the dominant in beat one, diverting to a C-flat triad (bVI of E-flat minor) on beat two before completing the

cadence, evoking the complexity of water-textures.



Figure 2.7: “Au bord d'une source,” measure 22

Liszt is clearly moving his concept of tone painting onto a new level. The spectacular way he uses diatonicism and chromaticism as giant brushes to splash colors is astonishing. Liszt described *St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots* in a letter of 31 May, 1860 to Richard Wagner: "On his outspread cloak he strides firmly, steadfastly, over the tumultuous waves - his left hand holding burning coals, his right hand giving the sign of blessing. His gaze is directed upwards, where the word 'Charitas', surrounded by an aureole, lights his way!"<sup>28</sup> If the "tumultuous waves" are depicted by the dark raging chromatic scales of left hand as "laws of nature" (Figure 2.3), then "surrounded by an aureole" is presented by the circular motion of diatonic scales to emphasize the brightness of "the laws of faith."

<sup>28</sup> Adrian Williams, *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 500.

Figure 2.8: “St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots,” mm 42-45

Liszt’s rapid expansion of patterns, textures, harmony, range and pianistic techniques is evident in the water pieces of his early to middle period. His daring tremolando, unexpected modulations, non-functional diminished chords, exotic scales and fast-running figuration are an inspiration for later generations. However, the crucial bridge that led to Impressionism is one of his late works, *Les jeux d’eau à la Villa d’Este*.

### Anticipation of Impressionism: Les jeux d’eaux à la Villa d’Este

There are three pieces featuring nature subjects in the “Troisième année” (“Third Year”), S.163; two pieces are dedicated to cypress trees, the other represents a fountain in the Italian garden of the *Villa d’Este* near Rome.



Picture 2.1: The Fountains in *Villa d'Este*

The main titles of the remaining pieces are all religious reflections. The word “fountain” functions as a metaphor, or as a symbolic carrier of the water images in the composer’s mind. There is a real fountain in the garden, but the thoughts in the music penetrate much deeper than the evocation of an architectural subject. Decades later, Debussy did something similar when choosing the titles for his preludes; the subjects in the titles are more suggestive and evocative than precise, aiming to stir up the listener’s imagination.

Liszt added a Gospel quotation from John 4:14 in the score where the musical line is divided into three-staves, “...but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”<sup>29</sup> This “fountain” can be taken in

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<sup>29</sup> Alan Walker, *Liszt: The Final Years* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996), 372.

reality to be a person—a receptacle of “the water” —that is to say the composer himself in his religious belief.

Just as Schubert associated E-flat major with the presence of the sea, Liszt linked F-sharp major with the Divine.<sup>30</sup> It seems bold that there should be eight key-signature changes through the piece (resembling Debussy’s *Poissons d’or*), but the significant revolution of the beginning 26 measures is the most important feature for anticipating Impressionism.

The beginning paragraphs of Ravel’s *Une barque sur l’océan*, the complete piece of Debussy’s *Voiles*, as well as many passages in the first movements of the Tanaka and Granitzio’s water compositions, all ignore the traditional narrative progression of tonality. The origins of this striking change can be found in the first twenty-six measures of *Les jeux d’eau à la Villa d’Este*. The elements anticipating the thoughts of the Impressionist revolutionaries are clearly seen in this passage. Liszt’s exploits in crystalline upper registers, his double tremolos formed by rule-breaking parallel fifths, non-functional dominant-ninth chord (measures 1-9) and half-diminished-seventh chords (measure 10) can only be termed revolutionary. Even his treatment of diatonicism is shocking, for chromaticism is absent (the first accidental is in measure 27) and none of the harmonic devices serve a functional purpose in traditional musical grammar. Yet the passage lasts so long, it seems to float forever in its purity and lightness. It is like diving into water and looking up to the surface of light and colors. Therefore, the common concept here is about the disintegration of the traditional tension-to-resolution progressions of harmonic language: obscuring a tonal scheme and replacing it with a sonic gallery of organic smaller cells in free-

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 372.

formed patterns. Although there is one augmented triad to present a contrasting color borrowed from chromaticism (measure 49), the main theme from measure 40 declaims its innocent presence and brightness with major triads, as well as the arpeggiated figure emphasizing thirds and fourths.

The musical score consists of three systems of piano music. The first system (measures 40-43) is marked *un poco piu moderato* and *dolcissimo tranquillo*. It features a tremolo in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The second system (measures 44-49) is marked *un poco marcato la melodia* and *sempre pianissimo e legatissimo*. It continues the melodic line in the right hand and has a tremolo in the left hand. The third system (measures 50-57) is marked *un poco espressivo* and *legg.* followed by *staccato*. It features a staccato melodic line in the right hand and a tremolo in the left hand. The score includes various performance instructions such as *tremolando*, *sempre una corda*, and *sempre pianissimo e legatissimo*.

Figure 2.9: “Les jeux d’eau à la Villa d’Este,” mm. 40-57

Both the frequent key signature changes and long paragraphs of non-functional harmony determine the tonal ambiguity of this piece. In addition, various ways of combining different figural elements are developed throughout, with many new patterns and innovations which clearly influenced Debussy and Ravel. For example, ascending and descending arpeggios with repeated notes or sequences of

thirds and fourth.

The image shows two musical excerpts side-by-side. The left excerpt is from Liszt's *Villa d'Este*, measures 54-55. It features a treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 3/4 time signature. The music is marked *leggiero*. The right hand plays a series of chords with a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note, while the left hand plays a simple bass line. Fingerings 1, 2, 3, and 4 are indicated. The right excerpt is from Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*, measures 19. It features a treble clef with a key signature of three sharps and a 4/4 time signature. The music is marked *pp*. The right hand plays a rapid, flowing sixteenth-note pattern, while the left hand plays a slower, more rhythmic accompaniment.

**Liszt: Villa d'Este, mm 54-55**

**Ravel: Jeux d'eau, mm 19**

The image shows two musical excerpts side-by-side. The left excerpt is from Liszt's *Villa d'Este*, measures 135-136. It features a treble clef with a key signature of three sharps and a 3/4 time signature. The music is marked *pp*. The right hand plays a complex, rapid sixteenth-note pattern with fingerings 3, 2, 1 and 3, 2, 1. The left hand plays a simple bass line. The right excerpt is from Ravel's *Ondine*, measures 37. It features a treble clef with a key signature of three sharps and a 4/4 time signature. The music is marked *pp*. The right hand plays a series of chords with a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note, while the left hand plays a simple bass line.

**Liszt: Villa d'Este, mm, mm 135-136**

**Ravel: Ondine, mm 37**

Figure 2.10: Pattern comparisons between Liszt and Ravel

At this stage, the devices of watery language are more compelling. One pattern even looks very similar to Debussy's *L'isle joyeuse* (1904), by comparing measures 44-47 in figure 2.9 to figure 2.11.

The image shows a single musical excerpt from Debussy's *L'isle joyeuse*, measure 8. It features a treble clef with a key signature of three sharps and a 3/4 time signature. The music is marked *pp*. The right hand plays a series of chords with a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note, while the left hand plays a simple bass line.

Figure 2.11: "L'isle joyeuse," measure 8

Visually and aurally, Liszt uses three-stave notation to highlight his Biblical quotation with the effect of deepening the perspective. The range also is expanded and the key shifts to D major; a bright span of running triplets underpinning the main theme in an ecstatically high register. Impressionists also employed this textural transformation, such as in Debussy's *Poissons d'or* (Figure 2.17). It is a useful notational tool for accommodating these more generous textures.

Figure 2.12: “Les jeux d’eau à la Villa d’Este,” mm 144-146

The evolution seen in Liszt’s water compositions, from early to late, offers a creative catalog of great profundity in the vocabulary of pianism. The magical palettes in the hands of the musical Impressionists—the chromaticism, the exotic modes and the parallelism—had not yet been completely achieved by Liszt, but he provides crucial elements as preparation for subsequent generations. The Impressionists also acquired many harmonic devices from other works of Liszt—not only from these water compositions, for example, Liszt’s remarkable *Nuages Gris*, (1881). Liszt’s experiments with non-functional, parallel progressions, his extensive use of dissonant intervals and quartal and quintal chords - these features are developed much more fully by Debussy and Ravel.



## Asian Influences in the Music of Debussy and Ravel

Impressionism in the twentieth century is a moment of flowering not only for water-themed pieces, but also for all kinds of programmatic music that connect with nature, with fine art or mysterious legends. However, discussion should first consider how Asian elements influenced the composers who were later termed Impressionists.

The western fascination for the cultures of the far East had far-reaching consequences for music of this period. Cultural communications between East and West profoundly affected musical development in both. But it is sometimes forgotten that the influence traveled in both directions: Asian composers absorbed the pianistic language of Western music during the middle-late twentieth and twenty-first century as much as Western had absorbed the Eastern. According to Mervyn Cooke, the famous *Exposition Universelle* held in Paris in 1889 was an event with far-reaching consequences: composers like Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, Bartok and Messiaen adopted new tonal concepts provoked by such ear-opening experiences.<sup>31</sup> The exotic Gamelan dances, the tuned bamboo instruments expressing a “fantasy of countless arabesques” definitely left a deep impression on Debussy. He wrote to a friend in 1895 after hearing a Javanese show, “Do you not remember the Javanese music, able to express every shade of meaning, even unmentionable shades, and which make our tonic and dominant seem like ghosts?”<sup>32</sup> Debussy was keen to explore natural sensations, not to mention how much he desired to imitate the sonority of Javanese music: “Their conservatoire is the eternal rhythm of the sea, the wind among the leaves and the thousand sounds of nature which they understand without consulting

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<sup>31</sup> Mervyn Cooke, *Britten and the Far East: Asian Influences in the Music of Benjamin Britten* (Suffolk, United Kingdom: Boydell & Brewer, 2001), 4.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

any arbitrary treatise.”<sup>33</sup> His article written in 1913 even mentions that to his ears, compared with the charming effects of Gamelan instruments, Western percussion is like “primitive noises at a country fair.”<sup>34</sup> He sounds like a mortal miraculously entering a fairyland.

As an enthusiastic observer and admirer of the natural world, Debussy wrote at least seven piano works to express his obsession with water: *En bateau* in *Petite Suite* (1886), *Jardins sous la pluie* in *Estampes* (1903), *L’Isle joyeuse* (1904), *Reflets dans l’eau* from *Images I* (1905), *Poissons d’or* from *Images II* (1907), *La Cathédrale engloutie* from *Préludes I* (1910), and *Ondine* from *Préludes II* (1913), all in the context of his claim that the “mysterious world of Nature” was his only religion.<sup>35</sup>

Ravel’s most-discussed water pieces include *Jeux d’eau* (1901), *Une barque sur l’océan* from *Miroirs* (1904-5) and *Ondine* in *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908). A further influence of Liszt, evident in Ravel, is virtuosity, of which Ravel made a feature.<sup>36</sup> The early water piece, *Jeux d’eau*, adopted many technically demanding features from Liszt, such as hand-crossing (mms 29-33), immediate and long-distant shifts in fast passages (mms 11-16) and large-range glissandi (measure 48). Ravel’s mature pieces, such as *Ondine* and *Une barque sur l’océan*, contain further virtuosity: hybrid tremolos combining chords or intervals, pentatonic glissandi and passages of cascading double-thirds. A significant feature is speed: at measure 103 in *Une barque sur l’océan*, one beat contains more than 19 thirty-second notes in order to depict the

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<sup>33</sup> Christopher Small, *Music, Society, Education* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 34.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

<sup>35</sup> Léon Vallas, *Claude Debussy: His Life and Works*, trans. Maire and Grace O’Brien (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 225.

<sup>36</sup> Ravel once said that he was aiming to compose something that was ‘more difficult than *Islamey*’. See Dominic Gill, *The Book the piano* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 105.

subtle motions and complex color-changes of the flow of water. Like Debussy, Ravel was also inspired by Gamelan music: these fast-running figurations in numerous layers reflect a direct influence of the arrangement and tessitura of a Gamelan orchestra.<sup>37</sup>

Broadening the sonority of the piano did not end with Liszt. Both *Une barque sur l'océan* (Ravel) and *La Cathédrale engloutie* (Debussy) span over seven octaves on the keyboard. Moreover, boundless expansion and striking alternations in dynamics are also astonishing. While implying later tensions with augmented sonority, the beginning of *Ondine* requires pianists to play the ostinato figure (C# major triad swings with an added minor sixth note) with “ppp” dynamic. The seductive song of the naiades, attendant on the water-god *Ondine* comes from nowhere, as light as the night air and echoes from deep water. A breath-taking atmosphere surrounds the audience, who are as much seduced as the sailors who were drawn to their doom by the song.

Water is so changeable. Just in one measure (m. 38) in *Une barque sur l'océan*, a dramatic explosion ranges from *pp* towards *ff* with a crescendo sign, achieved by sparkling tremolos in right hand and an ascending shower of thirty-second note cascades in the left. The unpredictable and stormy personality of the ocean is depicted here. The dynamic pattern repeats with the rhythm of the waves. Yet one should also appreciate the technical demands of playing the arpeggiated minor thirds *pianissississimo* (*pppp*) at the end of the piece without slowing down.

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<sup>37</sup> Mervyn Cooke, *Britten and the Far East: Asian Influences in the Music of Benjamin Britten* (Suffolk, United Kingdom: Boydell & Brewer, 2001), 7- 9.

### Superimposition in Meter, in Rhythmic patterns, in Mode and Harmony

So many compositional devices were explored by Debussy and Ravel, none of the traditional conventions limiting the imagination of either composer. Key signatures and meters change frequently in many of their water pieces. The meter changes 14 times in *Jeux d'eau*, in both *Une barque sur l'océan* and *Ondine* 46 times, the changes even including unusual meters such as 1/4 and 5/4. Thus, through sensitive observation, the impulsive breathing of the sea is vividly presented by changes of meter. The natural rhythms of ocean waves are complex, consisting of longer exhalation and shorter inhalation (or vice versa). In the opening of *Une barque sur l'océan*, the repetitive phrases depict the calm sighs of the sea, followed by a series of brief swirls. The motive material #F-E of the swirls is derived from the theme (a descending major second interval #G-#F). The meter is originally a superimposition of 6/8 and 2/4, from measure thirteen a 3/4 appears to indicate both the darkened color, agitated gasps and sudden flushes.

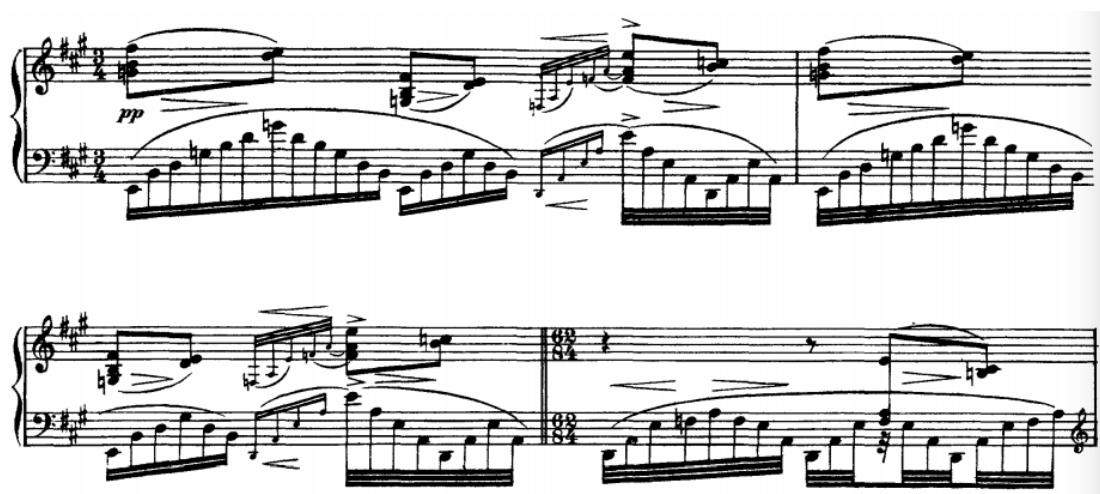


Figure 2.13: “Une barque sur l’océan,” mm 11-13

The subtle notation of the superimposed meters implies the layering of tides and multiple dimensions and echoes in the depths of the sea.

Such significant flexibility also allows figures and patterns to be grouped in irregular and complex rhythmic figurations. By thickening or thinning the note groupings, the speed of flow varies. Examples can be seen at measures 66-69 in *Jeux d’eau* where regularly grouped thirty-seconds are compressed to quintuplets and then to septuplets. Without tempo change, the effect of adding more notes per beat gives the impression of an accelerating flood.



Figure 2.14: “Jeux d’eau,” mm 66-69

Small note values such as sixteenths, thirty-seconds and sixty-fourths sometimes are superimposed in unusual ways to evoke the chaotic gestures of waves, as at measure 81 in *Poissons d’or* where Debussy depicts furious splashes.



Figure 2.15: “Poissons d'or,” measure 81

The superimposition of rhythmic patterns - polyrhythm - is more exploratory and complex at this point than in Western music of the past: ten-against-four at the end of *Poissons d'or*<sup>38</sup> is a case in point:



Figure 2.16: “Poissons d'or,” measure 95

Stefan Jarocinski uses a term for a better understanding of Debussy's harmonic language: “sound progression,”<sup>39</sup> the suggestion being that Debussy categorized his musical vocabulary into free-formed, non-functional clusters or fragments of intervals and chords, thus creating varieties of superimposition. A traditional tonal scheme could not satisfy the Impressionists; instead there are many

<sup>38</sup> Significantly, *Poissons d'or* was inspired by a Japanese lacquer panel hanging in the composer's study. See Linda Cummins, *Debussy and the Fragment* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 86.

<sup>39</sup> Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism* (London: Ernst Eulenberg Ltd, 1976), 163.

synthetic formulations of octatonic and acoustic scales, along with ancient church modes. These are “borrowed” materials: from the past, from the far-East, and from any sensory objects that can evoke the imagination. The framework of exotic scales—whole-tone, pentatonic and octatonic scales — should be understood as Westernized perceptions of Gamelan tuning systems, such as *slendro*.<sup>40</sup> As result, traditional Western harmonic progressions are much diluted, sometimes replaced by a long pedal points acting as base colors or shifting tonal centers as the supportive structure.

Debussy is usually referred to “Impressionist” or “Symbolist.” But let us consider the possibility that he was a pre-cubist. The three-dimensional structure of *Poissons d'or* is a good example. The layers are not only visually conveyed by a three-stave score, but also subtly hidden under the multi-layered harmonic structure evident from the beginning (mms 3-4).

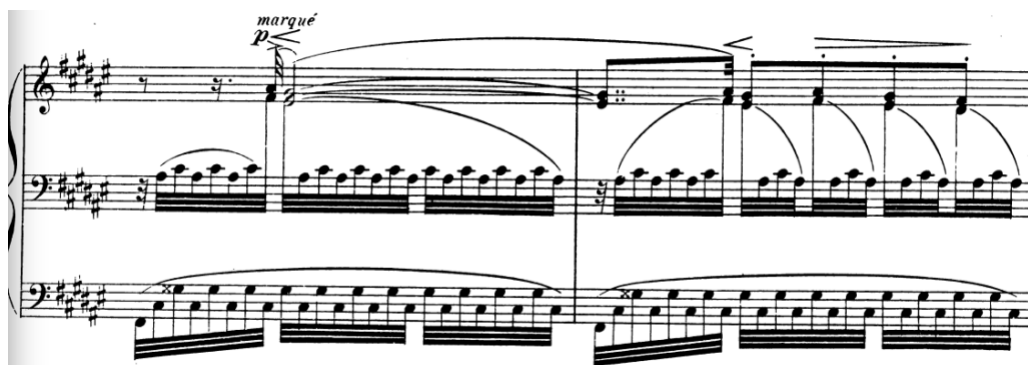


Figure 2.17: “Poissons d'or,” mm 3-4

Vivid tone painting of an oriental image of a swimming goldfish is presented in wide-ranging registers. The top line features a melody suggestive of pentatonic

<sup>40</sup> Mervyn Cooke, *Britten and the Far East: Asian Influences in the Music of Benjamin Britten* (Suffolk, United Kingdom: Boydell & Brewer, 2001), 6.

scale, fused by double-thirds and light-staccato textures; tremolos are knitted by both hands in minor third and augmented fifth intervals— thus three layers of superimposed intervals are apparent. However, each layer in the texture consists of a tone from an F-sharp major triad, planted with the lowest note F-sharp at the beginning of each measure, announcing the tonal focus of the whole piece. The color of the F-sharp major key (Liszt’s key of the Divine) is embedded within the pentatonic element, but it is so subtle, that the goldfish is merely an imaginary figure in the water.

In *Reflets dans l'eau*, intervals (pure fourths/fifths) form chords in a clear pentatonic progression, measures 16-17 being a typical example: parallelism in the right hand with the left hand mirroring and reflecting the exotic color. This fleeting passage in *Reflets dans l'eau*, shows a clear trace of Gamelan influence superimposed on an overall tonal frame.

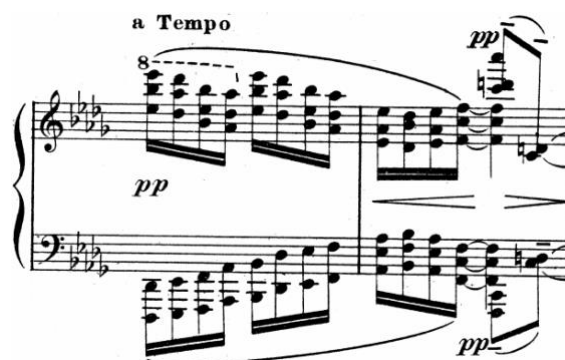


Figure 2.18: “Reflets dans l'eau,” mm 16-17

Direct superimposition of clashing and swirling opposing triads is common in both Debussy’s and Ravel’s works. In *Jeux d’eau*, the long cadenza at measure 72 is a sonic storm formed by two arpeggiated triads on F-sharp and C. These two triads combine to create an incomplete octatonic scale of alternating tones and semitones,



also to be seen in his *Ondine*.<sup>41</sup> The scale, as well as its superimposed chords appear in Debussy at measures 20-21 of *Reflets dans l'eau* and in *Poissons d'or*, measures 64-66.

### **Mirror Image**

Composers sometimes put puzzles in their works— maybe all artists do. In the water-pieces of Debussy and Ravel, skillfully designed mirror images are evidence of an exceptional degree of sophistication. From measures 10 to 13 in *Poissons d'or*, there are two types of imitation. The first two measures are conventional enough, repeating the second theme of *Poissons d'or*. The left hand in the following two measures presents an imitation, symmetrical and in retrograde, just like seeing an image in a mirror.

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<sup>41</sup> Roy Howat, "Ravel and the Piano," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ravel*, ed. Deborah Mawer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71-96.

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is a piano part, marked with a dynamic of *p*. It features a melodic line with several notes circled in green and pink. The bottom staff is a grand piano accompaniment, marked with a dynamic of *pp*. It consists of a complex rhythmic pattern with notes circled in yellow, orange, purple, and blue. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Figure 2.19: “Poissons d'or,” mm 10-11 and 12-13

Another mirror image appears in *Reflets dans l'eau*. Like the title implies, the reflection in water is presented by a symmetrical and retrograde imitation of a chromatic progression. The augmentation expands the outer notes of a half-diminished chord on F, to create a crisscross pattern.

The image shows a piano score for 'Reflets dans l'eau' in a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab). The score features a series of chords with notes circled in blue, green, and purple. Below the score is a chord diagram showing a crisscross pattern of notes: bE, E, F, F, E, bE. The notes are arranged in a hexagonal pattern with lines connecting opposite vertices.

Figure 2.20: “Reflets dans l'eau,” mm 22-23

In summary, there are many water-related gestures in Debussy and Ravel, such as the paired repetitions at the beginning of *Jeux d'eau* and *Une barque sur*

*l'océan*— the repeated structure demonstrates the effect of an agitated water surface. Evoking water's fluidity, a traditionally-structured phrase is interrupted and shortened. Inheriting the opening ambiguity of Liszt's *Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este*, the harmonic devices both Debussy and Ravel feature ninth chords with their extended spectrum of colors, combining with paired repetition to cloud traditional tonal structures. Such non-narrative progressions are a perfect parallel for the behavior of water, whose visual element is captured more and more precisely in water compositions.

## CHAPTER III

### Twentieth Century Water in China and Japan

This study now addresses the contribution of some Chinese and Japanese composers, who are able to draw on their national store of folk-melody and an artistic affinity with the subject of water. In their work, we will not only notice the presence of traditional Eastern music but hear it in the context of Western textures. Where Europeans were surrounded by Western art at the start of the twentieth century, later on Western art invaded the East, at least in music.

In 1601, the first Western instrument that was brought to the Chinese Emperor in the Qing Dynasty was a harpsichord; later in nineteenth century, it was damaged and lost during the wars between China and the Western world.<sup>42</sup> It was only in the twentieth century that Western musical language and the piano gradually gained more popularity in China. Taking advantage of the two-way cultural traffic, several Chinese musicians chose to study in European countries and in the United States<sup>43</sup> such as Zhu Jian'er (1922-2017), who wrote *Prelude No.2: Flowing Water* (1955-56) while pursuing his compositional degree at the Moscow Conservatory.<sup>44</sup> Others pursued their studies in Chinese conservatories in Shanghai or Hong Kong, as many piano teachers there were Russian musicians who had escaped from the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>45</sup> Chen Peixun (1922-2006), born, studied and taught in Hong Kong,

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<sup>42</sup> Le Kang, "The Development of Chinese Piano Music," *Asian Culture and History* Vol. 1, No.2 (July, 2009): 18, accessed July 22, 2019, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0f5b/542ea3e29ee693b9622cfd86fdf12ceba21b.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>44</sup> "Zhu Jian'er," Baidu, accessed July 22, 2019, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%9C%B1%E8%B7%B5%E8%80%B3>.

<sup>45</sup> Le Kang, 2.

composed a water piece named *Autumn Moon over the Calm Lake* (1975) based on a Cantonese folk song.<sup>46</sup>

### Folk Songs in Chinese Water Music

There are several water-themed pieces celebrating the communist revolution. *The Yellow River Piano Concerto* (1969), *Liuyang River*<sup>47</sup> and *Nanni Lake* (1943) are representative works of this kind. They share similarity with *Prelude No.2: Flowing Water* and *Autumn Moon over the Calm Lake*, that they are all based on Chinese folk song. However, the philosophies are different: *Flowing Water* talks about pursuing love<sup>48</sup> and *Autumn Moon* depicts a famous tourist spot on the West Lake.<sup>49</sup>



Picture 3.1: West Lake in China

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<sup>46</sup> "Chen Peixun," Baidu, accessed July 20, 2019, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%99%88%E5%9F%B9%E5%8B%8B>.

<sup>47</sup> Originally a folk song during 1950s, transcribed by Wang Jianzhong in 1974. See "Liuyang He," Baidu, accessed July 22, 2019, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%B5%8F%E9%98%B3%E6%B2%B3/13462273>.

<sup>48</sup> "Xiaohetangshui," Baidu, accessed August 1, 2019, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%B0%8F%E6%B2%B3%E6%B7%8C%E6%B0%B4/835938>.

<sup>49</sup> "Pinghuqiuyue," Baidu, accessed August 2, 2019, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%B9%B3%E6%B9%96%E7%A7%8B%E6%9C%88/1021762>.

There are twenty-six measures in Zhu Jian'er's *Autumn Moon over the Calm Lake*, and it contains three sections: the first section presents the complete theme (measures 1-10), the second has variants on the theme and connects to the climax (measures 11-14, climax 14-21), and finally the ending in the form of a coda. The traditional Chinese pentatonic scale in *Gong* mode<sup>50</sup> (tonic on D-flat) governs the main theme, but the second section contains the complete D-flat major scale; this is without doubt a Cantonese influence: folk-music from this area is written to a seven-tone scale.<sup>51</sup> There are no accidentals or modulations in the work.

The timbres indicate imitations of Cantonese instrumental music: String and Bamboo.<sup>52</sup> For example, the theme is perhaps to be played on *Gao hu*, a violin-like stringed instrument which often leads a Cantonese folk ensemble. There are obvious pattern and texture influences from Western water pieces. Wave-shaped passages in thirty-seconds and sixty-fourths are clear echoes of Ravel, along with tremolos, rolled-chords and septuplets. It is remarkable that the melody lines and accompaniment figurations of Chen resemble the Impressionists so closely, although these figurations are imitations of the Chinese instrument *Gu zheng* which is played like a harp.

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<sup>50</sup> *Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi, Yu* are five notes system in Chinese tuning. See Joseph C.Y. Chen, *Early Chinese Work in Natural Science: A Re-examination of the Physics of Motion, Acoustics, Astronomy and Scientific Thoughts* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996), 93.

<sup>51</sup> Le Kang, "The Development of Chinese Piano Music," *Asian Culture and History* Vol. 1, No.2 (July, 2009): 22, accessed July 22, 2019, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0f5b/542ea3e29ee693b9622cfd86fdf12ceba21b.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*



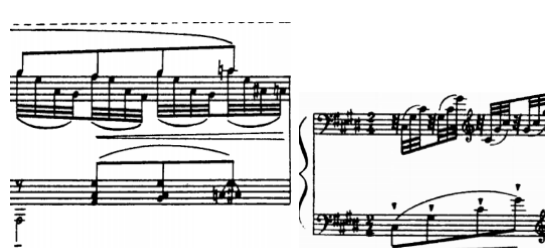
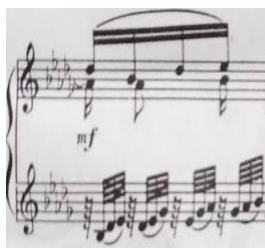
Calm Lake, Chen Peixun



Voiles, Debussy



Calm Lake, Chen



Jeux d'eau, Ravel

Figure 3.1 Pattern/texture comparisons of Chen peixun and Impressionists

It is not a coincidence that the patterns used to portray water images in Western music are adopted in this Chinese composition. It is an example of the somewhat neglected West-to-East influence in art as opposed to the more familiar East-to-West introduction of Gamelan ensembles to French musicians at the beginning of the twentieth century.

### Flowing Water by Zhu Jian'er

Zhu Jian'er's water composition is more innovative, because the original folk song was created in Yunnan province, where the local people play an instrument called *Sheng*.<sup>53</sup> It is a polyphonic mouth-blown instrument, and it differs from other

<sup>53</sup> "Zhu Jian'er," Baidu, accessed July 22, 2019, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%9C%B1%E8%B7%B5%E8%80%B3>.

traditional folk instruments. Chromatic 24- and 26-reed keyed *sheng* were common during the 1950s, with ranges wide enough to form a family of soprano, alto, tenor and bass.<sup>54</sup> All are chromatic throughout their range, and equal-tempered; a modern *sheng* can produce up to nine notes simultaneously.<sup>55</sup> Deeply influenced by Western compositional techniques, Zhu Jian'er introduced the sound of *sheng* into twentieth-century Western composition. He not only modulates from C *Yu* (measures 1-8) to F *Yu* (measures 10-18)<sup>56</sup>, but also employed both tertian and non-tertian intervals, creating rich harmonic aggregations.



Figure 3.2: “Flowing Water,” mm 9-12

The frequent presence of the Yunnan folk melody is heard in various guises. It is fully presented in measures 1-8 in C *Yu*. When it modulates to F *Yu*, the accompaniment in left hand is in F minor with a Neapolitan sixth appearing in measure 12; measure 15 on presents the same melody as measures 5-8 colored by

<sup>54</sup> 乐声, *中华乐器大典* (Beijing: 民族出版社, 2002), 962.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi, Yu* are five notes system in Chinese tuning, see footnote 49.



another Neapolitan sixth in measure 16. This phrase ends with an emphasized Picardy third. In general, every supporting chord is a major or minor triad and surrounding them there are decorative textures of sixteenth notes or triplets, which add sevenths, ninths and elevenths to the harmonic aggregations. It's clear that through the clouded pentatonic textures there are some highly Western traditional progressions.



Figure 3.3: “Prelude No. 1, Flowing Water,” mm 26-29

The chord clusters and complex rhythms all happen during the central section, where the dynamics reach *fff*. This dynamic intensity is unusual for Asian water-themed works, which are otherwise rather *tranquillo* and calm. However, the intensity gradually dissipates to the peace of the last section (measures 47-66), modulating back to C *Yu*. There is a Chinese philosophy behind this design as the story of the folk-song was rewritten by the composer. It was originally a love song but without a clear ending. The dramatic middle section reflects the struggles of lovers before everything returns to peace again.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> “朱践耳《序曲二号——流水》演奏示意,” 17zhadui, accessed August 5, 2019, [http://www.17zhadui.com/html/2014/guojimaoyi\\_0318/42497.html](http://www.17zhadui.com/html/2014/guojimaoyi_0318/42497.html).

### Japanese Water-pieces: Yoshimatsu and Takemitsu

Technically less challenging, but musically beautiful and poetic, the *Pleiades Dances* by Takashi Yoshimatsu (b. 1953) are ideal for modestly skilled piano players. These are several pieces composed on the theme of water, such as *Canticle of Quiet Rain* (*Pleiades Dances* IV, Op.50, 1992), *Andante on Water* (*Pleiades Dances* VIII, Op. 78a, 1999) and *Barcarole on Autumn* from *Pleiades Dances* VI, Op. 71 (1998). Yoshimatsu's compositions are little researched and deserve more attention.

*Barcarole on Autumn* (秋の舟唄, an autumn boat song) is strictly modal, based on the Phrygian mode with no deviation. Its scale is E F G A B C D E, but transposed down a tone, therefore D Eb F G A Bb C D. The composer has selected only two harmonic fields, based on E-flat and on B-flat, using the sonority of major chords. These alternate unpredictably, the whole bound together by the right hand ostinato. Its content is therefore highly restrained and although the piece is short (16 measures), it would be fair to call it minimalist. The speed is slow and thus the effect is quietly restful, in common with popular music for Zen meditation and relaxation.



Figure 3.4: “Barcarole on Autumn,” mm 1-4

## Takemitsu's Zen

It is profitable to examine the philosophy behind the music when studying Japanese water-themed pieces. During an interview in 1993, Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996) expressed his unique perspective on composing:

My music is like a garden, and I am the gardener. Listening to my music can be compared to walking through a garden and experiencing the changes in light, pattern, and texture. I do not like to emphasize too much with my music. Someone once criticized my music as getting to be very old fashioned. Maybe I am old, but I am looking back to the past with nostalgia. Composers are sometimes afraid to use tonality, but we can use anything from the tonal to the atonal – this is our treasure. I can say that because I am Japanese! <sup>58</sup>

This musical gardener cultivated several images: Garden, Tree, River, Waterscape. *Rain Tree Sketch* was composed for percussion trio in 1981, then became a piano solo series (1982, 1992).<sup>59</sup> The title was suggested by a passage from the novel *Atama no ii, Ame no Ki* by Kenzaburo Oe: “It has been named the ‘rain tree,’ for its abundant foliage continues to let fall rain drops collected from last night’s shower until well after the following midday. Its hundreds of thousands of tiny leaves – finger-like – store up moisture while other trees dry up at once. What an ingenious tree, isn’t it?”<sup>60</sup> The score of the first *Rain Tree Sketch* is designed to be a visual

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<sup>58</sup> Wolfgang Breyer, “Toru Takemitsu: My music is like a garden, and I am the gardener,” *Artistinterviews*, 1996, accessed August 3, 2019, [http://www.artistinterviews.eu/?page\\_id=62&parent\\_id=22](http://www.artistinterviews.eu/?page_id=62&parent_id=22).

<sup>59</sup> “‘Rain Tree’ by Toru Takemitsu,” Vicfirth, accessed July 25, 2019, <http://vicfirth.com/rain-tree-toru-takemitsu/>.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

representation of raindrops, notated by different pitch collections, thus it is like a "musical landscape."<sup>61</sup>

Takemitsu only found his Japanese identity after encountering John Cage in the 1950s; before that he avoided any influences from his homeland.<sup>62</sup> No wonder: a person cannot see his face unless he takes a mirror to reflect it. The language that he "spoke" is cross-cultural: the Western elements being chromaticism and symmetrical scales (octatonic and whole-tone, often in combination). But the images he draws reflect his oriental philosophy. His Western devices are equally balanced with his Eastern images, in the same way as he exploited a crucial balance between silence and sound. Takemitsu was not only a composer and a musician, but equally a naturalist, a symbolist, a Zenist and a sound-painter. He spelled a transposed motive in *Rain Tree Sketch* using German terminology (Es-E-A = sea) to indicate the presence of water in several works: *Toward the Sea*, 1981; *Rain Tree Sketch*, 1982; *I Hear the Water Dreaming*, 1987.<sup>63</sup>

Even following his death, Takemitsu remains one of the most discussed Asian composers of the twentieth century and certainly the best known in the West. It is perhaps his philosophy which opened a new world for twenty-first century artists. The famous movie *The Last Emperor* (1987) is an example of a two-way cross-culture: in it an Italian director demonstrates a Western interpretation of an Eastern story; yet it is very well understood by both nations.

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<sup>61</sup> Sung-Hie Ahn, "Eastern and Western Elements in Selected Works by Giacinto Scelsi and Toru Takemitsu" (D.M.A. thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014), 41.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 5 and 17.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Burt, "The Music of Toru Takemitsu: Influences, Confluences and Status" (doctoral thesis, Durham University, 1998), 215-218.

## CHAPTER IV

### Water and Stone:

#### A Comparison of the Water-themed Pieces of Andrea Granitzio and Karen Tanaka

##### Italy and Japan

The identities of Andrea Granitzio and Karen Tanaka are remarkably different, opposite in gender and contrasted in regional area: Andrea Granitzio (b. 1974) is an Italian composer and Karen Tanaka (b. 1961) is from Japan. However, their educational backgrounds are similar; both started music lessons at a young age, entered conservatories in Europe, and are now working as professional composers in the Western world.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, they also had similar experiences of attending workshops and composition laboratories and both have been involved in writing film music.<sup>65</sup> It is pertinent to the present study that they have both composed on the theme of water more than once.

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<sup>64</sup> Andrea Granitzio, email message to author, October 30, 2017.  
Karen Tanaka (eamde.com), "Biography," Eamdc, accessed July 16, 2019,  
<https://www.eamdc.com/psny/composers/karen-tanaka/biography/>

<sup>65</sup> Andrea Granitzio, "Music for Screen," Wordpress, accessed July 16, 2019,  
<https://andragranitzio.wordpress.com/music-for-screen/>.  
Karen Tanaka (eamde.com), "Works," Eamdc, accessed July 16, 2019,  
<https://www.eamdc.com/psny/composers/karen-tanaka/works/>  
All sources listed above were recommended by the composers directly.

## Water and Stone

During my interview with Granitzio, he shared that “it is worthy of mention that I was born in Cagliari, a beautiful city in Sardinia, an island surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea.” He added that “I had also a childhood passion for malacology and the marine world, acquired from my older brother, who is a geologist.” Later in his life, this enthusiasm divided into two fields: music and science. He wrote that:

Water, stones and sound are the three key words converging on my research. Driven by the interest to find a relationship that could inextricably bind and unite all three elements - water that turns into stone, transforming themselves into music - I am actually focusing on the natural phenomenon that combines water and stone: the growth of stalactites and stalagmites.

It was a natural landing place for me, going further in my studies to look ahead for an integration between all the influences that have piqued my interest and, subsequently, focus my attention on those artists who have linked the world of water and stone (i.e. Gaudi), and the artists who have linked these natural elements with music (i.e. Debussy, Ravel for music and water, and the Italian sculptor Pinuccio Sciola for music and stones).<sup>66</sup>



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<sup>66</sup> Andrea Granitzio, email message to author, October 30, 2017.

Picture 4.1: Andrea Granitzio and Pinuccio Sciola performing on Sounding Stones

Granitzio believes that the origins of sound and music is associated with cave stones and water.<sup>67</sup> His Ph.D. project focuses on “Stone and Water in Sound: A composition portfolio informed by the natural growth processes of stalactites and stalagmites.”<sup>68</sup> For this research, he also collaborated closely with Italian sculptor Pinuccio Sciola who carved Sounding Stones;<sup>69</sup> and they co-operated on the integration of Sounding Stones with a conventional orchestra. The link between water and stone is also the key to understanding his piano solo piece *Three Concentric Circles in the Water* (2011).

Tanaka’s musical journey took her from Japan to France, finally arriving at California, where she now teaches at the California Institute of the Arts. A phrase on her website describes her compositions: “Her love of nature and concern for the environment has influenced many of her works, including *Questions of Nature*, *Frozen Horizon*, *Water and Stone*, *Ocean*, *Tales of Trees*, *Water Dance* and *Our Planet Earth*.”<sup>70</sup> This long list of titles proves that Tanaka is a lover of nature as well.

Tanaka has written thirty-eight works to date, including fourteen piano solo pieces. Her composition for large ensemble *Water and Stone* (1999) suggests “various reflections of light when water flows over different colored stones, and also various behaviors of water itself . . . it was my imaginary landscape so I cannot specify the place. One could imagine a Japanese garden, but my image was rather abstract and

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Sounding Stones: sculpted rocks that produce eerie music when touched correctly.

<sup>70</sup> Karen Tanaka (eamde.com), “Biography,” Eamdc, accessed July 16, 2019, <https://www.eamdc.com/psny/composers/karen-tanaka/biography/>

transformable, like a dream.”<sup>71</sup> The concept of evoking dreams can also be applied to her *Water Dance* piano pieces, in which water occasionally whispers to us through its “shimmering play of light” with joyful dances.<sup>72</sup> This spirit is rooted in Impressionism in its suggestive expression.

The theme of “water and stone” has also been developed in the piano solo collections of *Crystalline* I, II, III (1988, 1995, 2000). The composer explained: “Since I composed 'Crystalline' in 1988, I have wanted to project the image of crystal onto sound.”<sup>73</sup> However, for her *Water Dance* compositions, she said that they should be like “water games:” the sound is “slimmer, lighter and more diluted than Crystalline,” so the soft water image has replaced the tangible “rocks.”<sup>74</sup> In the decade from *Crystalline* I to *Water Dance*, the composer’s personal growth is reflected clearly in the evolution of style, a parallel to Liszt and the development of his early water pieces into mature tone-poems.

Both Tanaka’s *Water Dance* and Granitzio’s *Three Concentric Circles in the Water* have three movements. Both composers lean heavily on French Impressionism and previous water-themed works;<sup>75</sup> both works have few traces of a traditional tonal language. All the movements in both water pieces are in loose form, about which the

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<sup>71</sup> “Karen Tanaka,” Musicsalesclassical, accessed July 16, 2019, <http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/10941>

<sup>72</sup> Karen Tanaka, “Crystalline” (PDF document of CD program note sent by Tanaka, Norway, 2011), 4.

<sup>73</sup> musicsalesclassical.com, “Karen Tanaka,” Musicsalesclassical, accessed July 16, 2019, <http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/11273>

<sup>74</sup> Karen Tanaka, “Crystalline” (PDF document of CD program note sent by Tanaka, Norway, 2011), 4.

<sup>75</sup> Mayu Nomura, John Milbauer, Tannis Gibson, and Lisa Zdechlik “An Examination of Karen Tanaka’s Approach to Minimalism: *Water Dance* and *Techno Etudes*” (dissertation of D.M.A., University of Arizona, 2017), 12.

Granitzio see footnote 43.



composers had similar views. Where Tanaka wrote that “repetition and gradually changing piano-textures are metaphorically analogous to water that flows constantly and never [in] the same phase,”<sup>76</sup> Granitzio states

The three movements are originated by the impact of a raindrop on a still water surface. Once the movement begins it is not possible to isolate it, they are connected. Even if superficially water could look still, there is always an imperceptible movement: something is constantly changing. I like to emphasize the idea of a metamorphosis that gradually involves all its constitutive elements.<sup>77</sup>

In spite of their origins in opposite sides of the world, Granitzio’s and Tanaka’s perspectives have much in common. Perhaps this is due to their European musical education, but equally, while their compositional obsessions are remarkably similar, the differences between them are equally clear. Even though the themes are alike, their differing personalities are reflected in their water music.

### **Stalactites and Stalagmites: New Way of Enharmonic-spellings**

To understand Granitzio’s musical water-language, knowing the structure of cave stones is crucial. He explained the meaning of *Three Concentric Circles in the Water* thus:

Stalactites and stalagmites are physically and symbolically at the antipodes, and are the result of the combinations of two opposite elements, liquid state (water-movement) and solid state (stone-stillness). It happens in limestone caves, where the slightly acidic water dissolves some of the limestone, carrying it downward, literally turning drops of water into stone. Therefore what may appear as a contrast - antithesis - between the liquid state and the solid state is reconciled, and brought back to union, in a sort of geological syncretism, in which water and stone act independently with their

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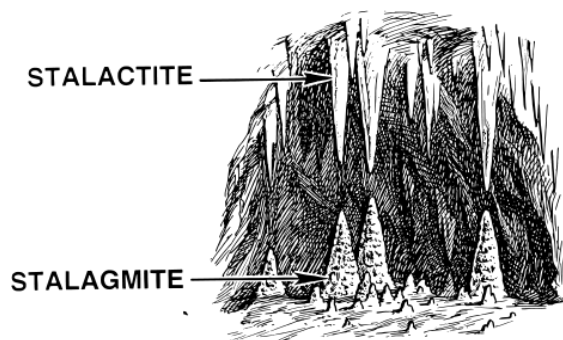
<sup>76</sup>Ibid, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Granitzio, email message to author, October 30, 2017.

distinct roles but also in a reciprocal interaction, both involved in the formation of a living form in constant development.

Within this research frame, *Three Concentric Circles in the Water* is inspired by the movement and ripples caused by rain falling onto a still water surface. The piece is intended to reconcile the relationship between stasis and movement and to overcome this oxymoron in the timeframe of the composition, with the challenging aim to create a flux encompassing syncretically both elements.<sup>78</sup>

Not every composer explains his or her music the way Granitzio does. His musical designs are not only sonic, but also graphic. In the *Three Concentric Circles*, many passages are presented with their mirrors, a reminder of the images of stalactites and stalagmites.



Picture 4.2: Stalactites and stalagmites

The first movement starts with a repeated figuration based on an enharmonically spelled major triad (E, A-flat, B) with an added fifth (B-flat); there is no key signature but only accidentals. According to Granitzio, this is an E Lydian chord, its purpose being to create “a sense of movement and stasis at the same time.”<sup>79</sup> Here lies a delicate and poetic thought:

E triad is a very stable chord, the lydian note gives a sense of centrifugal motion: the Lydian note is the eleventh harmonic ossia a

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Granitzio, email message to author, October 10, 2018.

very far note from the fundamental, a sort of alien, also E/Bb is a tritone – *diabolus in musica* (the devilish interval).

In order to balance the disruptive effect of the tritone and give a sense of balance I used a B at the bottom (doubling the top B). A very nice effect is given by the B natural–B flat interval and then the B natural an octave lower: B flat is caught into a B natural grid, or less prosaically, a B natural shell around the b flat pearl...<sup>80</sup>

The primary theme starts at measure 9, consisting of six notes: D-flat, E-flat, E, G-flat, A flat and B-flat. Aurally it sounds like C-sharp natural minor; the color becomes complex when the A natural from the harmonic minor scale joins at measure 25. In this section, the theme is constantly changing and repeats at different levels with lowered or raised notes. Then suddenly from measure 30 to 33, as the theme repeats again with slight changes, all accidental spellings of flat sign disappear and are replaced by sharps.

Figure 4.1: “Three Concentric Circles in the Water I,” mm 9-16

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

Figure 4.2: “Three Concentric Circles in the Water I,” mm 33-36

At measure 39, for the first time the theme is played by right hand, and in mirrored order: Previously there were two groups of ascending second intervals but now they are descending. In addition, both flat-sign-spelling and sharp-sign-spelling run in parallel.

Figure 4.3: “Three Concentric Circles in the Water I,” mm 37-44

It would be hard to justify this apparently perverse notation without the composer’s explanation. Granitzio says that D-flat and C-sharp are two sides of the same coin, like watching the surface of water from opposite directions (from up to

down and vice versa).<sup>81</sup> A consideration of the image of stalactites and stalagmites makes sense of these mirrored reflections. According to Granitzio “there is a flat dripping (the stalactite) and a sharp upwards movement (the stalagmite). They go one against the other with an opposing motion.”<sup>82</sup> So the passage is in imitation of nature, and there are reflections in many other parameters such as interval directions, themes switching from hand to hand and the notation moving between flats and sharps.

Debussy’s “mirror image” in *Poissons d'or* (Figure 2.19) is also in the background of *Three Concentric Circles*. At measure 49, the reversible contour of the top lines in both hands betrays the composer’s attention to detail.

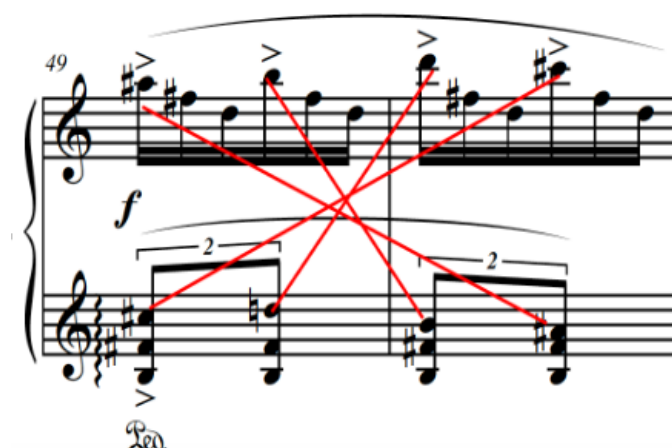


Figure 4.4: “Three Concentric Circles in the Water I,” measure 49

Granitzio constantly flips the Db/C# coin in the first and third movements, except for the second movement, which is written with a C-sharp minor key signature throughout and ending on the tonic. Granitzio’s “coin” is the tonal center that unifies the entire piece. In a similar way, a B-flat tonal center subtly unifies the first three pieces of Debussy’s *Prelude* book 1. The process has wider significance for

<sup>81</sup> Granitzio, email message to author, October 30, 2017.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

Granitzio: “the last bar of the first movement is D-flat, the last bar of the second is C-sharp, and, bringing the piece full circle, the last bar of the third movement is again a D-flat. Gradually the circle is expanding, and this is represented (in the last bar of the piece) through a D-flat played in the middle/center of the piano towards its extreme octaves.”<sup>83</sup> Finally, the three circles are completed at the end of the third movement.

The figure displays three musical excerpts from the piece 'Three Concentric Circles in the Water'.  
 - The first excerpt (measures 212-214) shows a piano (pp) texture in the right hand with chords and a melodic line in the left hand. It concludes with a very soft (ppp) chord. A 'rit.' marking is present above the first measure.  
 - The second excerpt (measures 57-60) features a piano (ppp) texture with a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. It ends with a 'rit.' marking.  
 - The third excerpt (measures 103-105) begins with a piano (p) texture in the right hand and a mezzo-piano (mp) texture in the left hand. The right hand has a rapid sixteenth-note passage. It concludes with a 'rit.' marking and a dynamic shift from pp to ppp.

Figure 4.5: Ending measures of *Three Concentric Circles in the Water*, in order.

<sup>83</sup> Granitzio, email message to author, October 30, 2017.

Granitzio imaginatively adopts the art of enharmonic spelling and combines it with skillful tone painting. While Schubert and Liszt employed a light-and-shadow effect through enharmonic shifts, Granitzio exploits new qualities of this feature and gives it new meaning. Scientifically-inspired ideas reveal a philosophy lying behind his architecture of sound in the water-stone images. Here is a modern, versatile way to write music: adventurous but approachable.

### **Shape of Water: Pattern Influences in Water Dance**

Tanaka's watery images are rather ambiguous: she does not seem fond of giving definite views of her compositions. As a post-minimalist,<sup>84</sup> her works are distinct from any of the previous water pieces; in them, one repeating rhythmic pattern tends to dominate a movement. The effect is consistent although there are irregular splashes of inserted fleeting notes or accents as an ever-changing surface. Tanaka's treatments of rhythm and texture are linked to her minimalist tendencies.<sup>85</sup> These result in "repetitions of a short melodic or rhythmic segment, a continuous and audible simple formal structure, an even texture, a simple harmonic palette, a lack of extended melodic lines,"<sup>86</sup> and a noticeable reduction of compositional materials. According to Nomura, post-minimalist music shares the core characteristics of

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<sup>84</sup> Mayu Nomura, John Milbauer, Tannis Gibson, and Lisa Zdechlik "An Examination of Karen Tanaka's Approach to Minimalism: Water Dance and Techno Etudes" (dissertation of D.M.A, University of Arizona, 2017), 19.

<sup>85</sup> Karen Tanaka, "Crystalline" (PDF document of CD program note sent by Tanaka, Norway, 2011), 4.

<sup>86</sup> Mayu Nomura, John Milbauer, Tannis Gibson, and Lisa Zdechlik "An Examination of Karen Tanaka's Approach to Minimalism: Water Dance and Techno Etudes" (dissertation of D.M.A, University of Arizona, 2017), 15.

minimalism itself.<sup>87</sup> The most important features for both are repetition and an even texture; however, the lengths of pieces in post-minimalist style are normally shorter.<sup>88</sup>

The short slurs of Schubert's and Liszt's water-pieces (Figures 1.3 and 2.5) are developed into an agitated irregular repetition in Tanaka's first *Water Dance*. This figure applies to both hands and it is organized in the asymmetrical 5/8 meter, creating a wavy unevenness and a constantly-moving agitation.

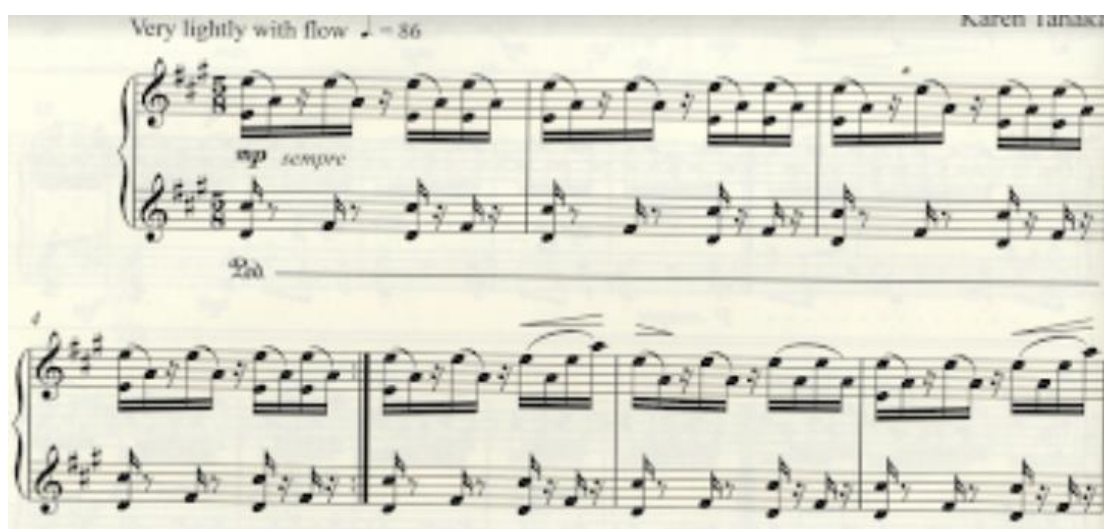


Figure 4.6: “Water Dance,” first movement, mm 1-7

Occasionally, to achieve the effect of a “flickering and changing surface,” eight notes with accents are presented in left hand, firstly seen at measure 18. Unlike a typical melody line, these improvised splashes stir up “a hidden, vague unrest below the surface.”<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>89</sup> Karen Tanaka, “Crystalline” (PDF document of CD program note sent by Tanaka, Norway, 2011), 4.





Figure 4.7: “Water Dance,” first movement, mm 18-19

In the second movement, both hands are dominated by tremolo figures, lightly knitted like clouds. The top line of the tremolo texture presents a blurred melody line, formed by patterns of quarter, half, dotted half and whole notes; the line is half concealed by webs of tremolo, creating a luminescent scene.



Figure 4.8: “Water Dance,” second movement, mm 1-5

As previous chapters reveal, tremolos and tremolando are figures representative of the movement of water. Examples are often seen in Schubert (Figure 1.4), Liszt (Figure 2.9), Debussy (Figure 2.17) and Ravel (*Une barque sur l’océan*, *Jeux d’eau* and elsewhere). As a post-minimalist, Tanaka “imagined that the piano behaves more like a couple of marimbas in a harmonic shadow play than like an ordinary piano, and out of this play of light and shadow she conjures up a quite

distinctive sound in the instrument.”<sup>90</sup> The effect is more like a “sound sculpture,” which serves to catch the play of light while symbolizing the movement of water.<sup>91</sup>

Consistent with this concept, the third movement is formed by two patterns, which divide the piece into a ternary form. There are echoes here of Debussy’s *Voiles*, in which the middle section is pentatonic and separated from the outer whole-tone sections. The first pattern of Tanaka’s is a combination of thirty-second and eighth notes, resembling a transformed, expanded and embellished version of Liszt’s left-hand accompaniment in *Au lac de Wallenstadt* (see Figure 2.1). Moreover, Ravel often uses fast ascending figuration in his water pieces (Figure 2.14), and in Tanaka’s notation these notes should sound like the arpeggiated chords of a harp.



Figure 4.9: “Water Dance,” third movement, mm 1-8

The pattern in the middle section is similar to Debussy’s figure in *Jardins sous la pluie* (also in the middle section).

<sup>90</sup> Karen Tanaka, “Crystalline” (PDF document of CD program note sent by Tanaka, Norway, 2011), 4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



Figure 4.10: “Jardins sous la pluie,” mm 76-77

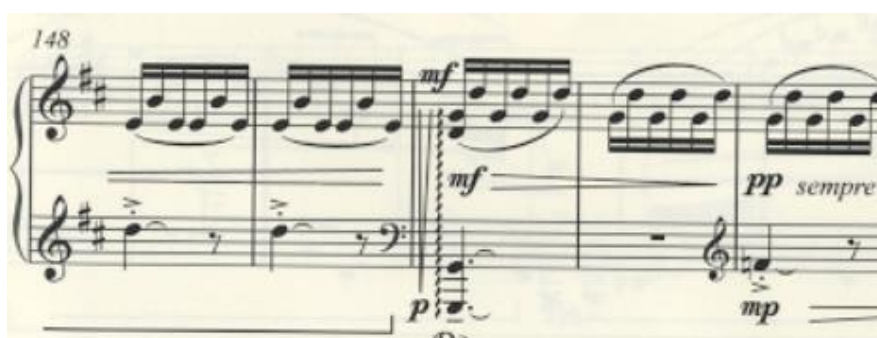


Figure 4.11: “Water Dance,” third movement, mm 148-152

### Pattern Influences in Granitzio: Links and Contrasts

Similar textural influences are also found in Granitzio. Evidently delighting in Ravel’s vivid figurations, he presents irregular rhythmic patterns, arpeggios (mm 171-178 in *Circle I*), rolled chords (mm 83-94 in *Circle I*) and repeated notes (mm 89-105 in *Circle III*). Although constantly flowing figures serve as sonically outspoken depictions of water (Figures 4.1-3 and 4. 12), there are other dripping, falling figures to indicate circles and ripples. Repetition in threes is a notable and direct reference to the title.

Figure 4.12: “Three Concentric Circles in the Water I,” mm 88-91

Recalling Liszt’s preference for dyads (Figure 2.6), Ravel’s rain-drop intervals (Figure 2.10) and the opening of Debussy’s *Reflets dans l’eau*, the opening of *Circle II* seems like a combination of all of these:

♩ = 150 Like fingertips touching water

Figure 4.13: “Three Concentric Circles in the Water II,” mm 1-8

The repeated rhythmic pattern of *Circle III* (from measure 2) is very close to Ravel's *Ondine*. Both are based on a 3+3+2 grouping of semiquavers; though Ravel is in 4/4, Granitzio in 3/4. Furthermore, Granitzio recalls Ravel's obsession with oscillation in octaves—in this case closely resembling the opening of the last movement of Ravel's *Rhapsodie Espagnole*. Tanaka's first movement is not dissimilar, the alternating patterns of 3 and 2 resolving into 5/8, among other patterns.



Pattern 3+3+2 in Circle III, mm 2-18      2+3+3, Ravel Ondine



"Feria" in Ravel's *Rapsodie Espagnole*

Figure 4.14: Pattern similarity between Ravel and Granitzio

The rhythmic patterns that both composers use to evoke an agitated water surface recall historical works especially from the earlier twentieth century. The effectiveness of the "water language" depends on the context. There are reasons why these patterns continue to appear in water pieces. From the early examples of wave-like shapes in Telemann, through Schubert's evocative tremolandi, the profusion of patterns employed by Liszt and the Impressionists, up to the timeless stasis of post-minimalism... these devices were renewed by each generation; their developments made the connections with water images ever more intricate and descriptive.

### Color of Water: Harmony and Texture

"I did not approach this composition 'harmonically'" —an impressive statement clarified by Granitzio, "the driving power is the chord effect, rather than the

harmonic approach.”<sup>92</sup> Writing his *Three Concentric Circles* was a storytelling process, similar to Debussy’s and Ravel’s treatments where motif and melody are developed in diversified ways; Granitzio’s themes for each movement are very much connected in *Circles*. “The third movement contains all: elements from the first movement and from the second. The last page of the third movement, for example, is based on the left hand accompaniment of the second movement. The right-hand theme of the first movement emerges like waves here and there.”<sup>93</sup>

Tanaka emphasizes that she does not create, but finds and uncovers a music that has always been hidden in nature and then makes it accessible to us.<sup>94</sup> In fact, the close parallels between Tanaka and Granitzio contain not only the similarities of pattern and musical sources of inspiration, but also of harmonic language and texture. They both lean heavily on examples from musical Impressionism at the turn of the twentieth century. And yet they come from opposite sides of the world.

#### Surface Presentation of Impressionistic Harmony

The first link between them is in their surface presentation of Impressionistic harmony. As discussed above, the most significant antecedent lies in Liszt’s *Les jeux d’eau à la Villa d’Este*. The ninth chord from the opening is left in suspension for too long for it to retain any status in functional harmony. Traditional harmony would not encourage a piece to start this way; but many pieces in Impressionism break away from old rules, escaping and avoiding any “fixed” tonal grammar, aiming to capture

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<sup>92</sup> Granitzio, email message to author, October 30, 2017.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Karen Tanaka, “Crystalline” (PDF document of CD program note sent by Tanaka, Norway, 2011), 4.

the fleeting appearances of water. The common thread in all these is the evocation of the constant movement of the surface of water by an agitated surface texture overlaying a relatively slow harmonic rate of change. Both Tanaka and Granitzio are embedded in this process.

In *Circle I*, there is no harmonic change at all from measure 1 to measure 22 (C-sharp minor with sharpened sixth and minor seventh added); measures 23 - 29 consist of an F-sharp minor chord with an added major second; measures 29-30 are a momentary interruption in the form of a D minor chord; then measures 31-38 are the same as the opening. All these chords have very similar resonances: a modal arrangement, a minor chord as their basis, and with added pitches for resonance.

Tanaka's first movement also draws on efforts of avoiding traditional progressions. But her treatment is focused on a tonal center, provided by the two notes in the repeating right-hand figure. The full spectrum of colors is gradually assembled through adding triad-derived notes and half-step shifts, creating an effervescent kaleidoscope of light and shadow on the surface of the flow of water.

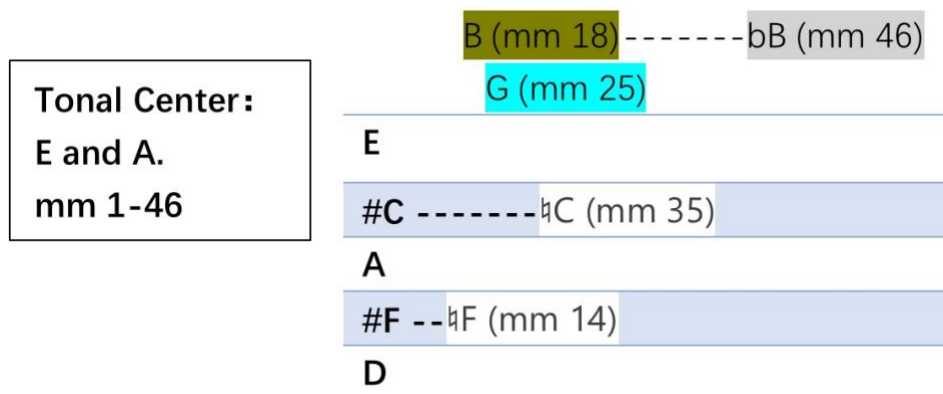


Figure 4.15: "Water Dance," first movement, reduction of mm 1-46

### Superimposition

Adding sevenths, ninths and elevenths to basic triads is a common harmonic device in the early twentieth century, symptomatic of the Impressionists' provision of new contexts for traditional harmonic elements. The first example is Ravel's *Une barque sur l'océan*. Measure one features a secondary seventh chord in arpeggios with an added ninth. This harmony could be considered as two triads being placed together, of F-sharp minor and C-sharp minor. This simultaneity is the beginning of a harmonic concept: superimposition.

**Une barque sur l'océan:**

F# min + C# min  
measures 1 - 10

E min + B min  
measure 11

D min + A min

**Tanaka I**

Dmaj + Amaj  
measures 1 - 13

Dmin + Amaj  
measures 14 - 17

F maj + Emin  
measures 35 - 41

Figure 4.16: Superposition in Ravel and Tanaka

A glance at the first movement of *Water Dance*, shows that this feature is everywhere. The opening superimposes D major and A major triads for 13 measures, just like *Une barque sur l'océan*; then at measures 14 to 17, the light on water has darkened a little, featuring a D minor and A major combination. Examples in the first movement can also be found at measures 35-41, 91-94. There is no system for



combining major and minor triads, they only serve one purpose—to conjure up the colors of water.

This feature is evident in *Three Concentric Circles*; by placing F-sharp minor and E major triads together, Granitzio creates a constant flow of exotic color.

Figure 4.17: “Three Concentric Circles in the Water I,” mm 45-49

Figure 4.18: “Three Concentric Circles in the Water III,” mm 83-84

### Paired Repetition

A further strategy that the Impressionists use to distance themselves from the continuity of traditional harmonic practice is to repeat chordal progressions twice over—the progressions are usually pairs of chords. This trend is established from the very opening of Ravel's *Jeux d'Eau*, *Une barque sur l'océan*, *Noctuelles* and many others. Its effect is to inhibit the flow of harmonic resolutions in traditional grammar. This

process is seen both in Tanaka and Granitzio, even to the extent of almost direct copies of the music of 120 years ago.

Tanaka exhibits this tendency in so many places, for example, measures 5 and 6 repeated immediately at 7 and 8; measures 21, 22 to 23, 24, 33/34 to 35/36, etc.

These are traditional harmonic progressions frustrated by repetition.

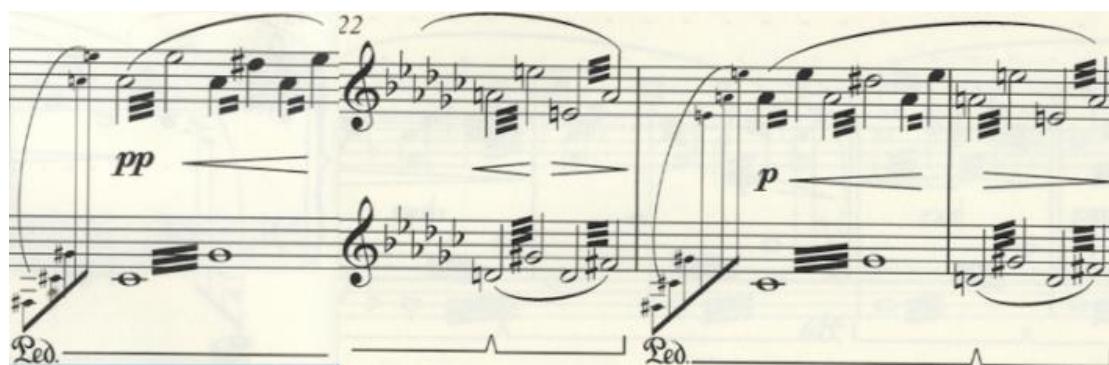


Figure 4.19: “Water Dance,” second movement, mm 21-24

Paired repetition is less evident in the Circle pieces. Granitzio does sometimes repeat harmonies but makes a slight change on the repetition. However, the examples found at measures 91-94 in *Circle III* are exactly like the beginning of Ravel’s *Noctuelles*. At the beginning of *Noctuelles* the ringed chords are dominant sevenths, but presented in parallel. A series of upward appoggiaturas in the right hand makes the effect more exotic. A crescendo leads one to expect a resolution, but Ravel goes back to the beginning again and destroys any narrative sense.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and a bass clef staff with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic marking. The second system, starting at measure 93, also has two staves with *p* and *mp* dynamics. Both systems include a signature 'Leo.' and an asterisk at the end of the system.

Figure 4.20: “Three Concentric Circles in the Water III,” mm 91-94

### I. Noctuelles

The image shows a musical score for 'Noctuelles' in 3/4 time. It features two staves. The tempo is marked 'Très léger (♩ = 128 environ)'. The dynamics are *pp* (pianissimo). The score includes a signature 'Leo.' and an asterisk at the end of the system.

Figure 4.21: “Noctuelles,” mm 1-2

Both composers' works remain in a rather quiet range of dynamics, mostly *piano*, *pianissimo* and even *pianississimo*. In summary, the links with the early twentieth century in both composers are very strong, almost amounting to plagiarism. And it is interesting that such differing backgrounds should lead to such similar results. It is possible that nowadays the musicians communicate more deeply across

vast distances. What used to be distinctive regional characteristics in music are gradually coalescing into something which is much the same, wherever one looks.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusion

Water-themed pieces of seven Western and five Eastern composers have been discussed, with a focus on the links between the compositions, like collecting pearls from the ocean and making a necklace—with clear clues and traceable connections. The comparisons between Tanaka and Granitzio show that music has become a cross-cultural phenomenon and its geographical borders are disappearing; the national styles of contemporary composers have been absorbed into a generality. Takemitsu once said that, “I am a Japanese composer, but it is not necessary to relate music to some nation, some race. Music should be beyond such fiction...”<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, he clarifies this view between regional identity and learning experience which also sums up the experiences of other modern composers: “I studied new music— Western music— by myself, mostly through radio.... I would like to develop in two directions at once, as a Japanese in tradition and as a Westerner in innovation... I don’t want to resolve the contradiction.”<sup>96</sup> In the Chinese and Japanese compositions examined here, Western compositional thoughts are applied to the Eastern aesthetic realm; the two-way traffic from the early nineteenth century to the current creates a bridge that allows musical hybrids and new inspirations.

This clouding of boundaries is particularly obvious in water-themed pieces. The uniqueness of water music is firstly reflected in the relationship between the visual and the aural. Not only is tone painting exercised through this particular

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<sup>95</sup> Tōru, Takemitsu, Tania Cronin, and Hilary Tann. "Afterword." *Perspectives of New Music* 27, no. 2 (1989): 209. doi:10.2307/833411. 209.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

subject, but visual elements are responded with ever greater precision. The images of water become graphically descriptive and detailed. The developments follow clear timelines: Baroque tone painting, Schubert's and Liszt's enharmonic colorations, Impressionism's non-functional harmonic devices and exotic scales, Takemitsu's "sea" signature then Granitzio's and Tanaka's specific depictions of the movement of water... all these features evolved through the composers' drive to pursue water images that are as close as possible to their spiritual beings. Granitzio mentions the natural intimacy between human beings and water in his research in the fields of Psychology of Musical expectation and Neurobiology, focusing on the prenatal foetus and its auditory capacity when immersed in the amniotic fluid.<sup>97</sup> It is fascinating that each composer's personal experiences are profoundly connected with this natural and ubiquitous element, water.

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<sup>97</sup> Granitzio, email message to author, October 10, 2018.

**APPENDIX****KEYBOARD WORKS OF TANAKA AND GRANITZIO****Karen Tanaka:**

*Crystalline* (1988)

*Jardin des herbes* (1989, rev. 1995), for harpsichord *The Zoo in the Sky* (1994–95)

*Crystalline II* (1995–96)

*Children of Light* (1998–99)

*Our Planet Earth* (2010–11)

*Lavender* (1989), for harpsichord

*Techno Etudes* (2000)

*Lavender Field* (2000)

*Crystalline III* (2000)

*Northern Light* (2002)

*Herb Garden* (2005)

*Water Dance* (2008)

*Blue Crystal* (2014)

**Andrea Granitzio:** <sup>98</sup>

*Five piano pieces for contemporary kids (2011- 2012)*

- *The Count and the Moon*
- *Harlequins' gaze*
- *The Drunken tightrope Walker*
- *The Dream of the Hibernated Butterfly*
- *Three Concentric Circles in the Water*

*The Flea Circus (2012 - 2103) a fleas company perform several numbers in an imaginary circus:*

- *The Fleas Parade - Jumping Overture*
- *The Flea Tamer - The memorable number in which the flea tamer tames the dog with the deadly \* flea collar thanks to its mesmerizing whistle*
- *Intermezzo I - The Flea Dancer Show: Petit Momò Waltz*
- *The Amazing Cannonball Flea The Flea-Tamer*
- *The Chariot Race*
- *Intermezzo II - The Inimitable Out of Tune Toy Piano Flea Jazz - The Inimitable Out of Tune Toy Piano Flea Jazz Orchestra*
- *The Fire Circle*

*The Fruit basket, (2013 - 2014) a suite concerning life, events, doubts and thoughts of eight anthropomorphized fruits:*

- *The Orange (The last will of a Mexican orange before its reincarnation into a juice)*

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<sup>98</sup> List provided by composer.



- *The Apple (2=7=9: Recent considerations of Newton's apple dissolve concerns regarding the strange equivalence between some, apparently different, pitch intervals in music)*
- *The Peach (Peach to peach : a flamenco serenade for the peach skin of the beloved little fruit still attached to the brunch of the tree)*
- *The Passion Fruit (Ultimate tango in Palate)*
- *The Lychee (The wonderful moment when the fruitgheisha undresses its peelkimono under the moonlight)*
- *The Pomegranate (The sad story of the ineluctable destiny of a fruit that would have never stained)*
- *The Banonion (Rhythm complex of an onion affected by Mal d'Afrique)*
- *The Eighth Cherry (The one who believed to be the last of the bunch)*

*ChiaroScurro (2014 - 2015), a suite concerning the perception of light in alternation with its absence, especially in places characterised by a visual deprivations, as caves.*

- *It is all about light*
- *Chinese Shadows on water wall*
- *The First Eclipse*
- *The Night Flight (I - Take off, II – Gliding with the Updraft, III - Nosediving and Landing)*

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