

Musical Time in Tōru Takemitsu's *November Steps*

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SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE

Submitted date: 10 jul 2022

Final approval date: 21 oct 2022

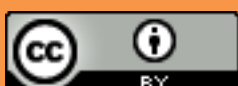
Abstract: This article offers a formal analysis of Tōru Takemitsu's composition *November Steps* and discusses the composer's statements that the piece has eleven variations (that he calls "Steps") and is an equivalent of a Western Theme and Variations form as well as of a Japanese traditional form called *danmono*. There is a discrepancy between these statements and the music's temporal organization. Not too much has been written about *November Steps*, and musicologists that have done it have avoided the "perplexing task" of double checking what is true about them and what is not. Therefore, this article's goal is to unveil the mysteries about *November Steps'* form, which is thoroughly considered here as musical time. The work displays a unique conception of temporality, identified here as circular, at one level, and cyclic, at another. The article explains the notion of circularity as applied to musical time, and also discusses the relationship between this specific work and the Japanese and Western traditional concepts of time that are reflected in the music.

Keywords: *November Steps*; Takemitsu; Japanese new music; Japanese traditional instruments; Musical time.

TÍTULO: TEMPO MUSICAL EM NOVEMBER STEPS, DE TÔRU TAKEMITSU

Resumo: Este artigo oferece uma análise formal da composição *November Steps* de Tōru Takemitsu e discute as afirmações do compositor de que a peça tem onze variações (que ele chama de "Steps") e de equivale à forma ocidental Tema com Variações, e a uma forma tradicional japonesa chamada *danmono*. Há uma discrepância entre essas afirmações e a organização temporal da música. Não muito foi escrito sobre *November Steps*, e os musicólogos que o fizeram evitaram a "tarefa desconcertante" de verificar o que é verdade sobre eles e o que não é. Portanto, o objetivo deste artigo é desvendar os mistérios sobre a forma de *November Steps*, que aqui é amplamente considerada como tempo musical. A obra apresenta uma concepção única de temporalidade musical, que é identificada aqui como circular, em um nível, e cíclica, em outro. O artigo explica a noção de circularidade aplicada ao tempo musical e também discute a relação entre essa obra específica e os conceitos de tempo tradicionais japoneses e ocidentais que se refletem na música.

Palavras-chave: *November Steps*; Takemitsu; Música nova japonesa; Instrumentos tradicionais japoneses, Tempo musical.



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1. Introduction¹

In a previous paper, I have tried to show how the combination of Japanese traditional instruments and the Western orchestra in Tōru Takemitsu's 1967 composition *November Steps*, for *shakuhachi*, *biwa* and orchestra² was not intended as a "East/West fusion", and that, on the contrary, it was born from a feeling of opposition between Western and Japanese music. The paper also used *November Steps* as a point of departure to discuss, from a neocultural 21st-century perspective and in general, the compositional practice of putting together musical instruments from different cultures. I called this practice *transcultural orchestration*. As a first step in Takemitsu's path of transculturality or cultural transcendence, that he expressed as a wish "to swim in an ocean that has neither West nor East" (Takemitsu *apud* Burt, 2001, 234), *November Steps* still does not deliver a truly transcultural orchestration. One might say it is rather just *intercultural*, but this is also an unsatisfactory label, as it does not do justice to the piece's complexity in this respect; it is also not possible to arrive at being transcultural without first attempting to be intercultural... I hope that the first paper was successful in showing how problematic combining Western orchestra with Japanese traditional instruments was for Takemitsu and other *yōgaku* composers of his generation.

The discussion in the paper showed how the introduction of non-Western contents in music composition still is, to this day, summarily (and frequently unconsciously) disapproved by musicologists and musicians still immersed in an old "common sense" and, most importantly, in an imperialist narrative concerned with the supposed loss of identity of European music composition in relation to the music composed by non-Western composers or by Western composers who welcome non-Western contents into their work. In that narrative, the "introduction" of "exotic" musical instruments is particularly feared because it directly affects the sound of the music, and modifies cultural practices by the introduction of foreign, determined by other cultures, performance techniques that "do not belong" to the cultural context of Western music³. However, compared with the time in which *November Steps* was composed, the 1960s, things are in a different plane

¹ This article presents partial result findings of my research project "O Círculo no Devir dos Sons: temporalidades circulares na composição musical", within the research group Processos Músico-Instrumentais at the Music Department of the State University of Santa Catarina (UDESC).

² "Integration and Opposition of Western and Japanese Traditional Instruments in Tōru Takemitsu's *November Steps*", Irlandini, 2021.

³ The quote marks are applied to these terms because they are used in the discourse of that narrative: "introduction", "exotic", and "not belonging" emphasize and express the feeling of weirdness or abnormality aroused by non-Western contents present in (Western) composition.

for 21st century composers in the 2020s who have in mind an integrative work that will sound different from the musical traditions involved in its making. This is so because, for us, the principle of combining instruments from different cultures simply constitutes an expansion of the traditional study of instrumentation and of the combination of different instruments. While the existence of this or that instrumental combination (piano trios, string quartets, the orchestra, the *gagaku* ensemble, the *koto-shamisen-shakuhachi* trio, etc.) is determined by cultural and social contexts, combining Japanese and Western traditional instruments today is no longer a problem whenever the cultural constraints are favorable to the creation of a given combination of the different instrumental forces in question, and once the cultural feelings of foreignness or exoticism and exoticization have been solved. Then, the study of instrumentation is naturally expanded to include instruments from non-Western cultures and, in theory, *whatever* combination of musical instruments. In a time in which intercultural relationships can develop into neocultural results, 21st-century composers follow the principle by which no instrumental combination should be judged *a priori* as impossible or incompatible. It is a matter of the composer's craft and skill that a given combination of instruments works or not, worked or did not... Central to this perspective are the notions of a neocultural musical work, and that of *World New Music*, which recognizes music composition today as an art of the whole world (not a "global" art but a world art), in which contents are no longer limited to Western contents, but are integrated in such a way that may transcend their cultural origin and produce something culturally new.

This new paper is the continuation of that one. However, I would like to direct the attention away from the musical instruments and focus on the music they play. The form of this music, as the flux of sound phenomena that it is, is considered here as *time*. A few premises concerning musical temporality and form should be stated at the outset.

In music, form is time. For the *attentive* listener⁴, and throughout the time of its sounding, music "replaces" ordinary time⁵ by its own, virtual, becoming (*devenir*, flux, or stream, to use a word dear to Takemitsu) of musical occurrences or parts. The analogy of music with form leads to saying that the musical work has parts. The analogy with time leads to saying that it has occurrences. A part or section is a time duration that allows the recognition that something, and not something else, is happening. The change in the conditions that produce that recognition result in another new part, occurrence, or duration. Thus, time is defined by events occurring, changing and relating to each other. Time is created by the impermanence of events, a perennial movement in which the change of occurrences, or things happening, is constant. Whatever is outside this perpetual flux is deemed timeless. Timeless means *without* time, that is, eternal or static and unchanging. For 6th-century BCE Greek philosopher Heraclitus, the world is in a universal flux of changes. Music mirrors Heraclitus' universal flux cosmology: it is in a perennial state of change, although it does not sound forever, and it is "formed" by its changing parts or events. For, in the same way as in ordinary time's flux of impermanent events, music, as it delineates its shape, loses it and becomes another shape, in a constant flux of impermanent shapes. Shapes or occurrences... This is why the notion of form applied to music is less adequate than the notion of time or becoming. Music flows, for everything in music (tones, timbres, etc.) changes; *πάντα ῥεῖ* (*panta rei*, everything flows). While the attentive listener is engaged with the music, their life "becomes" whatever they experience through the occurrences in the music; the musical

⁴ The distracted, inattentive listener deserves no attention.

⁵ Ordinary or absolute time: the time in which we live.

occurrences are the events of that portion of the listener's life⁶. Therefore, music is experienced as time, and time is experienced as music. Music is revealed as the realm of impermanence, just as ordinary time.

Still, the attentive listener is capable of developing a *memory* of the music's total time duration, as if a photograph of the entire musical flow had been taken. It is through this memory that the piece's sense of unity is revealed. If there is here some similarity with the idea of space, this is because time and space should be conceived as together. Because the sense of unity appears clearly from the image of the macroformal space-time, it is still useful to think of form and macroform, as long as this does not create the illusion of something permanent and rigid. Otherwise, it would be better to drop the form analogy altogether and speak, in relation to the work's total duration, not of macroform but of macro space-time. However, even for the composer, the notion of musical form may be particularly useful as it makes it easier to define the concrete aspects and generative *principia* of musical events or parts, albeit dangerously near to schematic conceptions capable of denaturing the flow of music. The notion of form helps the composer because their activity is, in essence, that of structuring musical time, giving *order* to the flux, not only as creating successions and simultaneities of events but also as shaping the sense of unity. The structuration of musical time achieved by a composer in a musical work determines, conditions, and builds the attentive listener's lived duration (experience) of the musical time.

Thus, in this paper, I propose to unveil certain aspects concerning *November Steps*' temporality or formal organization, but will refrain from mentioning basic facts and information about the piece that can be easily found in the existing texts in English and French languages that have been published or self-published in the internet (Smalldone [1989], Ohtake [1993], Burt [2001], Cornwell [2002], Bosseur⁷ [2005], Llorente [2009?]). Among these essays, only Llorente's shows that a detailed work of formal analysis has been done. Most of them abstain from entering a formal analysis or even questioning the accuracy of Takemitsu's description of *November Steps* as a set of eleven variations, probably because of the difficulties in trying to solve the discrepancies between this description and the music. The existence of such a discrepancy is mentioned by Peter Burt, who observes that "despite the apparent candour with which Takemitsu describes his formal

⁶ This is not to say that the attentive listener would be someone who easily identifies every structural component of all kinds of music. The ability of listening to music of each tradition (or each musical cosmology) requires a specific education and training that will result in the listener integrating intellect, emotion, intuition and sensation that results in, and allows for, the music of that tradition to become a living experience for the listener. This is, more or less, what we use to mean when we say that the listener "understands" the music, but the understanding is not only intellectual, as the word implies, but rather, an understanding with the heart, the mind and the body, all at once. Therefore, the attentive or immersed listening of music has not so much to do with structural or intellectual hearing but rather with the ability of mind and body to focus, completely and exclusively, on the sounds of music and its becoming, to the point that the listener forgets being a person listening to music, and the musical flux becomes, as it were, the passing of time of the listener's moment.

⁷ I became aware of Jean-Yves Bosseur's article entitled "Toru Takemitsu November Steps – oppositions et complémentarités de traditions" only after having submitted to the editor my first article about *November Steps*, which has a very similar title to Bosseur's. Initially, the similarity annoyed me to the point of considering to change it. However, acknowledging that the problem of opposition and integration or complementarity is at the root of *November Steps*, it is fair to conclude that this subject might be central for almost everyone writing about this piece. In addition, I decided to keep the title because the aim and scope of my articles are very different from those of Bosseur.

pattern, however, to determine conclusively how these eleven sections map to the actual score is – to borrow Funayama's phrase from the previous chapter – 'a perplexing task'" (Burt 2002, 114). He also mentions that, among Japanese scholars, Kuniharu Akiyama's analysis "slightly deviates" from the segmentation indicated by the rehearsal numbers, whereas Noriko Ohtake concludes that the sections are "ambiguously separated" (Burt 2002, 114). I hope to be able to arrive here at a more satisfying explanation about this issue and to how *November Steps* is formally organized.

2. *November Steps* as conceptual music

Among other things, Takemitsu's intention when he composed *November Steps* was to demonstrate "the fundamental differences between modern European and traditional Japanese music" (Takemitsu 1995, 75). His method for this purpose was to *alternate* Japanese and Western instruments, thus avoiding their simultaneity. He said: "A composer should not be occupied by such things as how one blends traditional Japanese instruments with an orchestra. Two worlds: biwa-shakuhachi and the orchestra. Through juxtaposition it is the difference between the two that should be emphasized" (Takemitsu 1995, 102). It is clear from these statements that this problem, pointed at by the composer in *November Steps*, is not limited just to the instruments in themselves, but that it is their *music* that he is talking about. By calling them "two different *worlds*", Takemitsu is really referring to the musical cosmologies to which these instruments and their music originally belong.

A question seems inevitable: if Takemitsu thought Japanese traditional music (*hōgaku*⁸) and Western modern music (understood as 20th-century modernisms) represented two irreconcilable and different modes of musical thought and practice, why did he bring them together in the same work? Instead of going through this trouble, he could have opposed them beyond all reasonable doubt by not composing⁹ *November Steps* at all. For it is also by *not doing* something, that a composer may be making a statement. However, Takemitsu, who almost gave up the project, decided to write a work charged with the *idea* that these musical traditions should not mix because they are opposite to each other. The pioneering act of combining biwa and shakuhachi with the Western orchestra in *November Steps* was not intended as a fusion of the two musics, nor a move beyond their cultural origins (which would have produced, in both options, a

⁸ The term *hōgaku* means "Japanese music", as opposed to Western music (*yōgaku*), but its meaning is not clearly defined by Western experts in Japanese music. In his book, William Malm uses *hōgaku* as a general term meaning "the traditional music of Japan" (Malm 1959, 21), but, in the on-line *Encyclopedia Britannica*, he refers to it as "the pre-Meiji period of 19th-century Japanese traditional music" (Malm, Britannica on-line). This latter "definition" would limit *hōgaku* to the period 1800-1868, in contrast with the informal usage of the term, that applies it to Japanese music since the 17th-century. This informality is not incorrect, as there is great continuity in Japanese music since the 17th through the late 19th-century, thanks to the country's isolation during the Tokugawa period (1603-1867). For this reason, *hōgaku* could also mean "Japanese classical music": older styles such as *nōgaku* and *gagaku* remain outside the *hōgaku* umbrella, although they are clearly traditional as well. My decision to use *hōgaku* as a synonym to "Japanese traditional music" has the only purpose to avoid the repetition of this rather long term.

⁹ The other option would have been not repeating the "mixture" in another piece... but, in fact, Takemitsu did repeat it six years later, in his *Autumn* (1973), for biwa, shakuhachi and orchestra. Takemitsu's concert music has only one more piece combining Japanese and Western instruments, and that is *Distance* (1972), for *shō* and oboe. For a complete list of, and a discussion about, his concert music works employing Japanese traditional instruments see Irlandini (2021).

neocultural work). The opposition Takemitsu was creating was a *conceptual* opposition, and it confers to the piece something of "conceptual music"¹⁰. In fact, instead of writing an article about that incompatibility, he wrote a piece of music. Because he saw the integration of the two musical worlds in a *new* musical cosmos as not possible, he decided to keep these two worlds in the same musical work but in a way that they would remain "undamaged" by each other. Thus, he wrote the orchestral segments in the textural musical style he became famous for as a New Music composer, which has a strong connection in feeling with Claude Debussy and impressionism but, at the same time, is in line with the 1960s texturalisms of György Ligeti and Witold Lutoslawski. As for the musical segments for biwa-shakuhachi in *November Steps*, these are not really playing Japanese traditional music; they do not make quotations of specific classical¹¹ pieces, and were all composed originally by Takemitsu, with the exception of Step No. 10, which relies heavily on the improvisatory activity of the players themselves, and is written in a set of loose instructions in indeterminate notation. While the segments for the Western instruments sound modern to the listener, the segments for the Japanese instruments sound ancient, and this impression is unavoidable. This is so because these segments for biwa and shakuhachi were written as close as possible to the musical style of their traditional music, even though they sound a little more "contemporary" than that, and by this I mean there is a gestural¹² feel which comes more from New Music than from hōgaku. However, there is a close connection between the biwa-shakuhachi segments in *November Steps* in respect with hōgaku, which consists in the fact that they retain hōgaku's *general* aesthetics and musical temporality. Takemitsu obtains this by composing music, for these instruments, music that follows, to a great extent, the ancient music as a model and by strategically inviting two famous musicians of Japanese traditional music to perform the piece (biwa player Kinshi Tsuruta [1911-1995] and shakuhachi player Katsuya Yokoyama [1934-2010]). Great liberty in performing all the parts was given to them, including those sections that do not involve improvisation. In fact, it is possible to see how the musicians deviate from the notation and play something that is actually not written by Takemitsu¹³. These strategies result in the traditional music feeling being introduced into *November Steps* in quite a natural way, without requiring any effort from the performers to do something they had not already been used to doing or that would require from them some experience in New Music performance, and without asking from them to perform portions of classical pieces. A slight twist in all this, which is rather an important detail, consists in that biwa-shakuhachi is *not* a historical hōgaku combination of instruments: it was first created by Takemitsu himself (Bosseur 2005, 147) for his 1966 *Eclipse*. This detail, in fact, already sets the biwa-shakuhachi segments as a not exactly traditional combination of Japanese traditional instruments. In itself, it is an innovation. Furthermore, Takemitsu avoided the Japanese instruments playing together with

¹⁰ In "conceptual music", as for example, John Cage's *4'33"* or La Monte Young's series of *Compositions 1960*, the work makes a statement, poses a concept or a question related to aesthetics or other fields of thought, a question that ends up being more important than the fruition of the actual music being heard.

¹¹ I am using the term "classical" in a loose way to refer to hōgaku.

¹² Musical gesture is a term with several nuances and applications, and it is frequently associated, not only metaphorically neither exclusively, with the physical performance gesture required for the sound production of a given musical gesture. My usage of this term applies to microformal groupings or morphological units that "sound gestural" because they include performative parameters in their compositional conception. They are expressive patterns of articulation, dynamics and temporality in a much more intense way than the traditional motif or rhythmic-melodic cell that are the building blocks of larger morphological units in traditional music. Also, gestures may form groupings that are larger than microformal units, resulting in longer expressive patterns of the same or different gestural nature.

¹³ Comparing the existing recordings, it is easy to find examples in which the notation is freely interpreted on the shakuhachi, giving way to alternate articulations and even pitches.

the orchestra. The result is that, just in the same way as the two opposing groups of musical instruments are, at first, visually striking as “two worlds”, the musics they play (the musical temporality for which they are instrumental) also give the first impression to be like two worlds apart and in sharp contrast, like antinomies of timbre, pitch, rhythm and time, juxtaposed without superimposition¹⁴. *November Steps* flows as the alternation of two separate realities: the biwa-shakuhachi segments and the orchestral, as both honor the two *historical* musical styles as impossible to mix, preserving, in that way, their original characteristic space-time¹⁵.

3. Opposition as a mode of integration

Even though integration was not Takemitsu's goal, my prospective as a composer interested in a neocultural musical work allows me to see this opposition by juxtaposition in *November Steps* as the *mode of integration* that Takemitsu was able to find (or conceive) at the time of his first experiment of joining hōgaku and modern Western music in his, as he calls it, “abstract music for the concert stage” (Takemitsu *apud* Burt 2001, 48).

It might sound strange to say that opposition is a “mode of integration” for *opposition* means to separate elements¹⁶, and *integration* means not only to bring them together, but to combine or amalgamate them¹⁷. However, these words are not exactly antonyms of each other. Opposition as a mode of integration, far from being a “Poliana syndrome” point of view¹⁸, makes sense if integration and opposition are viewed as two forces that are not always, neither necessarily, contrary, contradictory, or mutually exclusive. For integration to result from musical components placed in separation or juxtaposition, it is not necessary for these components to be strictly simultaneous: they may be not exactly together, even separate; they may be together *in time* or, in another word, *concurrently*.

Although Takemitsu declares there is only juxtaposition, there *are* several moments in *November Steps* in which portions of biwa-shakuhachi and orchestra segments do overlap. However, as shall be seen further ahead, these moments of real time intersection do not have enough presence, if compared to the rest of the

¹⁴ Juxtaposition and superimposition are two aspects of musical time that constantly occupy the composer's actions. While juxtaposition is diachronic, superimposition is synchronic. The notes on a chord are superimposed; those in a melody or arpeggio are juxtaposed.

¹⁵ Both styles are historical *and* personal: not only the biwa-shakuhachi segments are in a “historical style”, but the orchestral as well, with the only difference that the textural orchestral is contemporary with Takemitsu. At the same time, not only the orchestral is Takemitsu's “own musical style”, but the biwa-shakuhachi segments as well, since they are his original music “in hōgaku”.

¹⁶ For our purposes, a general definition will suffice to work with, without going into Aristotle's four types of opposition: opposition is a “relationship of exclusion between terms or objects in general” (Abbagnano 2007, 741). My translation: “*relação de exclusão entre termos ou objetos em geral*”.

¹⁷ A working definition of “integration” could be taken from biology or psychology. In biology integration “means the degree of unity or solidarity among the several parts of an organism, i.e., the degree of interdependence between such parts. By analogy, in psychology, it means the degree of unity or organization of the personality” (Abbagnano 2007, 582). My translation: “*Em biologia, (integração) significa o grau de unidade ou de solidariedade, entre as várias partes de um organismo, ou seja, o grau de interdependência dessas partes. Analogamente, em psicologia, significa o grau de unidade ou de organização da personalidade*”.

¹⁸ The “Poliana syndrome” point of view always tries to attribute a positive quality to negative ones.

music, to destroy the listener's prevailing perception that the two opposing sound sources do not mix. In other words, these moments are structurally unimportant.

The concurrence of the opposing textural components¹⁹ I have mentioned is not due to this kind of occasional overlapping. It is due to something else: to be able to hear these opposing components as sounding concurrently, together in time, one needs to consider the form in detail, and, most of all, become aware of the entire time duration along which this integration/opposition takes place. This time duration is the twenty-minute long macroform of *November Steps*. One needs to become aware of the musical work as it forms a whole, integrating all its constitutive components. While it is easier to perceive concurrence as togetherness in microformal or local units, such as, for example, the counterpoint of three melodic parts in a short segment of, say, two measures of duration, a greater effort must be made for doing the same in respect to the macroform. Once the listener has reached this sense of form as a whole in connection to the entire duration of *November Steps*, it is possible to perceive the *concurrence as togetherness at the macroformal level*. In a way, this is analogous to a bird's eye view: how an eagle flying high above in the sky can see things as happening practically at the same time in different places of the overviewed area.

Another side of the issue is that, even if the musical components in a work are in opposition, the musical work must form a whole, in the sense that it presents to the composer and to the listener a coordination or composition of interrelated elements that produces in them an aesthetical satisfaction usually called "unity"²⁰. Thus, it is possible even for a collage, a quilt, or a work which quotes other works²¹, to convey a sense of unity, to form a cohesive whole. In this sense, the elements in opposition are, in a way, always bound to become integrated into the whole in spite of, and by means of, among other things, their opposition/juxtaposition.

This leads us back to what has been formerly said about *November Steps* being an alternation of two historical styles. The alternation of these two "musical worlds" may have the effect of suggesting to the listener that the Western orchestral segments are in "Western temporality", while the biwa-shakuhachi segments are in "Japanese temporality". But what constitutes these two temporalities, Western and Japanese? I will deal with the cultural aspect of time concepts at the end of this essay, as this is, indeed, an important aspect of the situation in question, namely, that two cultural modes of music are supposedly put in place to form a musical composition with the concept that both are incompatible with one another. For now, and this is a spoiler, I simply suggest that *November Steps* stands aesthetically as a unity, a single time experience, and not as the alternation of two different musical segments expressing the aesthetical concepts of time of Japan and of the West separately. The relation created between the segments of music for biwa-shakuhachi and of music for orchestra creates a cohesiveness that is stronger than the relation between each segment and their models of reference (hōgaku and 1960s texturalism). In other words, in spite of Takemitsu's efforts in discriminating, separating and creating oppositions between the two discrepant musical worlds, his aesthetic sense and feeling of form won at the end, by integrating them into a musical

¹⁹ The opposing textural components are the biwa-shakuhachi segments and the orchestral.

²⁰ That the musical work "must form a whole" might sound too dogmatic at this point of the history of music composition and thought. I am presenting this idea (of the work's unity within multiplicity) simply as one of the most common and most traditional features (therefore, not as the only one) in music composition, without claiming that there would be something aesthetically wrong whenever unity is not purposely sought.

²¹ Such as Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia*, for example.

Whole, a musical time unique to *November Steps*. Since what he had in mind was incompatibility, one might ask: was this result of integration intentional or not? Was the composer aware that his opposition methods eventually created integration? These questions will never be answered, as we no longer can ask him, but since opposition as a mode of integration is a central point of this article, it is up to me to prove it. For this purpose, it is necessary to have a close look at the piece, and find out, by means of analysis, how the opposed elements are, in the end, integrated. The following analysis takes into consideration Takemitsu's statements about composing *November Steps*, but it also criticizes these statements, whenever they seem too ambiguous or misleading, under the light of theoretical principles of musical form, temporality and *Gestalt*, and the evidence found in the score and existing recordings of performances²².

4. Observations about the music and the score of *November Steps*

A few observations about the music and the score of *November Steps* should be made now in order to facilitate the discussion of the piece's temporality²³. A first listening with the score shows that the piece does successfully convey the sense of opposition/juxtaposition between biwa-shakuhachi and the orchestra: they seem not to play together, even though this does occur here and there and might even seem more than just occasionally. After this first listening, the listener will vividly recall that the first segment is a long orchestral opening, and that several episodes take place, alternating the two instrumental ensembles, until a long section arrives in which biwa and shakuhachi play without orchestra for a very long time (more precisely, about eight minutes): this is Step no. 10, which became known as the "Cadenza". Certainly, the term Cadenza is inadequate, for the section is out-of-proportion in relation to the macroform, lasting almost half the entire piece. The use of the term Cadenza comes from another misperception, i.e., that *November Steps* is some sort of "double-concerto". A Concerto involves an entirely different relationship between soloist(s) and orchestra, which would necessarily include the blending of Japanese and Western instruments that Takemitsu wanted to avoid since the beginning.

A striking feature of the score is the fact that it alternates two types of time notation. For the orchestra, the traditional Western chronometric notation is used, even though the resulting music is a-metric, fluid and conveys no sense of pulsation whatsoever. For biwa and shakuhachi, a 20th-century Western proportional notation "without time" (*senza tempo*) is used: head notes without time values indicate determined pitches and horizontal lines offer an approximate estimate of how long they are supposed to be sustained. Durations are free and proportional to how they look in the score and, therefore, are entirely dependent on the performer's interpretation. With the Japanese traditional music players, this interpretation is a function of their sense of *ma*²⁴, which directly connects the lines composed by Takemitsu with the traditional music.

²² I suggest listening to the following recordings, identified here by the name of the shakuhachi soloist: Katsuya Yokoyama's interpretation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjYMz0vVXpA>; Kaoru Kakizakai's interpretation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmmrWq34gYI>; Kifu Mitsuhachi's interpretation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZkiPv--zYo>

²³ It is also the case to clarify from the outset that I have decided in this article not to provide musical examples from *November Steps*' score because it is easily obtainable from the internet, and examples would be too cumbersome to deal with due to the high number of divisi in the orchestral sections. Although it is possible to read this analysis without the score, I recommend following the analysis with it, as well as the recording of Yokoyama's interpretation.

²⁴ *Ma* is a sense of timing from Japanese culture. This will be explained further ahead.

Takemitsu tells us about *November Steps*: "it was performed in November, and to me that project represented a new step: thus I titled the work *November Steps*. In Japanese music, *danmono* are the equivalent of Western variations, and the word *dan* means step. My 'November Steps' are a set of eleven variations" (Takemitsu 1995, 75). This statement will be discussed soon, but what matters, for now, is that the eleven Steps he mentions are marked in the score by Arabic numbers within circles. The number marks delimitate the Steps and also work as rehearsal marks. The orchestral opening corresponds to the twenty-four initial measures of the music, and it is not numbered as a Step. Step 1 is marked for the first intervention of biwa and shakuhachi. Does this suggest that the entire opening is not a *dan*, a Variation? Is it an Introduction, or, perhaps, the Theme of a Theme and Variations, as the composer's observation seems to put forward? This opening feels like an Introduction but it might be for the only reasons that it comes before everything else, it has a clear closure, and the music that follows it is the first entrance of the two soloists, on shakuhachi and biwa, which has an effect similar to stage curtains opening and revealing to the public the first scenery of the work after an orchestral prelude... One would think: *this* is the Theme, not the beginning... However, we know it is S1 (Step 1: Steps are henceforward abbreviated as S, followed by their number, from 1 to 11), as it is marked in the score by the number within a circle, thus perhaps indicating that the Introduction contained a hidden Theme in the midst of the orchestral textures and is not clearly perceived at the surface of the music... But nothing seems to confirm the idea of a Theme and Variations because the music is textural and athenatic, and, in the biwa-shakuhachi segments, the "melodic" instruments do not really play melodies that could shelter themes...

It is worthwhile considering the score in further detail, with an eye on the music delimited by the number marks and the idea of a Step (Variation). Board 1 below scores the results, but some explanation is needed about how to read it.

Board 1 – This board shows the duration (in seconds – ") and instrumentation of each Step. The first Duration column calculates the Step duration from the score; the second, from the recording of Yokoyama's performance.

Step	Duration (score)	Duration (performance)	instrumentation
Intro	108"	95"	orchestra
S1	<i>senza tempo</i>	41"	soloists
S2	8" + <i>senza tempo</i>	51" (11" + 40")	sol. & orch. + soloists
S3	2,5"	12"	sol. & orch.
S4	9" + <i>senza tempo</i>	74" (21" + 53")	sol. & orch. + soloists
S5	27"	27"	orchestra
S6	<i>senza tempo</i>	85"	soloists
S7	68" + <i>senza tempo</i>	124" (16" + 55" + 53")	shak. & orch. + orchestra + shak.
S8	20" + long <i>fermata</i>	37"	shak. & orch.
S9	<i>senza tempo</i>	22"	biwa
S10	19" + <i>senza tempo</i>	487" (27" + 460")	orch. & sol. + soloists
S11	56" + <i>senza tempo</i>	79" (56" + 10")	orchestra + soloists

1. The column **Duration (score)** shows the durations of the Introduction²⁵ and of each Step in number of seconds (") calculated directly from the number of beats (eighth notes) and tempo marks in the

²⁵ For lack of a better term, I proceed calling it an Introduction until something else proves the contrary.

score, which oscillate from MM 40 and 48 to 60 and 72. Sometimes, the number of seconds in the column is approximate because of the tempo changes present at certain points in some of the Steps.

2. The column **Duration (performance)** shows the durations of each Step according to the recording of the Yokoyama/Tsuruya/Osawa performance indicated in footnote no.22.
3. The Introduction and S5 are the only segments in which the orchestra plays entirely alone. S1, S6 and S9 are the only segments in which biwa and/or shakuhachi play entirely alone.
4. S11 contains a juxtaposition of the orchestra and soloists, and the column **Duration (score)** shows the durations of the respective segments in the order they appear in the music: first the 56" of orchestra alone, followed by the 23" ($79-56=23$) of soloists alone.
5. S3 and S8 contain the superimposition of soloists and the orchestra. This is indicated in the column **Instrumentation** by the code "sol. & orch.", which includes the information that the group indicated first was already playing in the previous Step, and, consequently, that the group indicated second is the added group in the current Step. Thus, the column **Instrumentation** shows for S3 that it adds, to the biwa-shakuhachi music already going on from S2, the participation of the orchestra overlapping them. Likewise, S8 adds the orchestra to the shakuhachi solo that was already taking place from the end of S7.
6. Finally, S2, S4, S7, and S10 are characterized by both the overlapping ("sol. & orch.") and the juxtaposition between soloists and orchestra. For this reason, a sense of how long these Steps really are needs to be taken from the column **Duration (performance)**, which shows the durations from the recording mentioned above, since it is not possible to calculate the duration of the *senza tempo* segments from the score alone. Notice that the column **Duration (score)** for S10 expresses that there are 19 seconds of orchestral music (because it consists of 18 beats in MM = 60 plus a fermata on the last one) followed by a *senza tempo* stretch. The orchestra overlaps the biwa solo for ten beats (the shakuhachi is added four beats after the beginning of the orchestra), and continues for eight more beats after the soloists rest. This is followed by 468" of *senza tempo* biwa-shakuhachi music to complete S10. The column **Duration (performance)** shows the durations of the respective segments in the order they appear in the music: first the 19" of orchestra with soloists, followed by the 468" ($487-19=468$) of soloists alone.
7. Comparing the values in the two columns of duration leads to a perception of the difference between the time duration prescribed in the score and what actually happened in this specific performance. Regarding the Introduction, the orchestral tempo was slightly faster in the performance than the indicated tempo in the score, resulting in 95" instead of 125". S5 shows the orchestral performance to be exact in relation to the score tempo. There is no comparison to make for the Steps involving the *senza tempo* mark.
8. The segments which overlap soloists and orchestra ("sol. & orch.") do pose an interesting question, as they superimpose the two different time notations: the chronometrical for the orchestra and the proportional for the Japanese instruments. This incompatibility is resolved in the performance by

reading the chronometrical notation with a certain flexibility. This concerns mainly S3 and S4, where the orchestra needs to wait for the soloists to play their parts at ease. S3 consists of one single 3/8 measure which would have the duration of 2.5" including the soloists' part, which looks vertically delimited by the 3/8 measure in the score. However, the performers take 12" to play their part, resulting in a much longer duration than that suggested in the score. The orchestra waits for around ten seconds to realign with the following measure, which starts S4. Here, again, the orchestra plays its durations as written, but the soloists freely perform theirs, and this results in the soloists continuing to play after the moment in which the orchestra finds its rest. Conclusion: in the few segments (S2, S3, S4, S7, S8, and S10) in which Japanese and Western instruments play together, the vertical alignment between the two groups is open: they do not need to be exactly together vertically. This is most significantly noticeable in S3 and S4 than in the other Steps.

However, the most important conclusion comes from comparing the durations of each Step. The board shows that the durations vary widely, from 12 seconds (or 2.5 in the column **Duration (score)**, for S3) to about 8 minutes (S10). Even disregarding S10 as the longest and taking the second longest, which is S7, with 125 seconds of duration, this still shows that the durations of the Steps are greatly diverse, something very rare, possibly unprecedented both in the history of *danmono* and of the Theme and Variations form.

5. *November Steps*, the *danmono*, and the Theme and Variations form

Let us return now to Takemitsu's remarks about *November Steps*: "In Japanese music, *danmono* are the equivalent of Western variations, and the word *dan* means step. My 'November Steps' are a set of eleven variations" (Takemitsu 1995, 76). With these words, Takemitsu leads us to the idea that the Step is a morphological unit like a *dan* of a *danmono*, or a *variation section* (explained ahead) in a Theme and Variations form. The fact that the Steps are clearly indicated in the score with Arabic numbers inside circles apparently reinforces this idea. It is necessary to establish the relation of a Step to both the *danmono* movements (*dan*) and the variations in a Theme and Variations form; this will cause a hopefully not-too-long detour from the analysis.

The *dan*-structure appears in several sectors of Japanese traditional music, such as the secular repertoire of narratives performed with *biwa* accompaniment, the *honkyoku* repertoire for *shakuhachi*, the music in *Nō* theater, the *sōkyoku-jiuta*²⁶ repertoire with *shamisen* and *koto*, or the *koto* solo traditions. The *dan* has the sense of "parallel sections of consistent length and nature" (Tsukitani 2016, 158). This is confirmed by Dutch ethnomusicologist Willem Adriaansz's (1921-2016) 1965 Ph.D. Dissertation, which presents a thorough study of the *danmono* and the *kumiuta*, the only two traditions of *sōkyoku* (music for *koto*) that existed before the foundation of the *Ikuta-ryū* in 1695 (Adriaansz 1973, 63). While the *danmono* in this context is purely instrumental, the *kumiuta* is vocal and instrumental. Adriaansz explains that the *danmono* consists of a number of separate movements called *dan*, and each *dan* has 104 time units, arranged in twenty-six 4/4 measures (the only exception is the first *dan*, which is slightly longer because it includes a three- to four-note short Introduction [*kandō*] equal to 4 to 8 beats). Although different *danmono* have a different number of *dan* (movements), their length remains fixed as described, except in the composition *Midare*, which shows

²⁶ Edo or Tokugawa period chamber music.

an irregular length of its dan (Adriaansz 1973, 94). "The danmono repertoire is limited today to seven or eight compositions. Their titles show the number of dan of which they consist"; for example, *Godan* has five dan, *Rokudan*, six dan, and so on (Adriaansz 1973, 63). The homogeneity of this small repertoire is such that listeners new to it may not be able to distinguish one piece from another. Adriaansz's study analyses each one of the compositions in the existing danmono repertoire for the koto and how each dan varies the first dan. For some reason, he does not call it a Theme, perhaps because the tradition does not do it either.

The important conclusion in regards to a possible relationship of danmono with *November Steps* is not in the variation techniques of the traditional music that Takemitsu might have inherited (a point difficult to establish), but rather in the fact that each dan traditionally retains the same duration of the first one without the short *kandō* introduction. Unless Takemitsu was inspired by the exceptional composition *Midare*, which does not follow the rule of the fixed, "allotted time" of 104 time units for each dan after the first, it would be fair to say that danmono has no relationship to *November Steps*, because the Steps have no fixed duration. Most likely, the relation consists in the idea of *variation* loosely understood as a general transformative principle. This is confirmed by the fact that the dan consists of melodic and rhythmic variations, while the athematic and gestural textural variations in *November Steps*' would be applying variation techniques to dynamics, timbre, timing, articulation and other expressive parameters that entirely differ from traditional rhythmic/melodic variation techniques.

Regarding the "Western variations", it is only natural to attempt to relate what Takemitsu calls a Step with the Variation section of a Theme (or simply as the Variation section of an unstated Theme), as this is an expectation created by the composer himself when he announced that *November Steps* is a set of eleven variations just after equating Variation (dan) with Step and with Western variations. Immediately, and again, it is the duration of a Step that appears as its most unexpected feature, if it is supposed to correspond in some way with a Variation from a Western Theme and Variations form. One needs to look closer at what is expected in a Theme and Variation form and what actually happens in *November Steps*.

Typically, in a Western Theme and Variations, the duration of a Variation tends to be equal to that of the Theme: Variations and Theme are in a 1:1 proportion. For example, the first movement of Mozart's Sonata K 331 (published in 1784) is a Theme and Variations form, with an 18-measure-long Theme and six Variations of exactly the same length (18 measures each). Each Variation becomes a "variation section", because each one is clearly and aurally identified as a section of the form by a repetition of the Theme structure disguised by a characteristic texture and a set of variation techniques applied to the melody, rhythm, accompaniment, and the harmonic progression. The consistent repetition of the "allotted time" of 18 measures provided by the Theme allows us to recognize that the first movement is a macroform divided in seven equal parts. Variation sections may be grouped together to form larger sections in a Theme and Variation macroform, but this fact does not interfere with the fact that a Variation is a section²⁷.

²⁷ To me, a "variation section" in the Theme and Variation form is equivalent to a dan in a danmono. Although Adriaansz describes dan as a "separate movement" (ADRIAANSZ, 1973, 63), the dan are performed one after the other with no interruption (this is easily verifiable by listening to *Rokudan* and other danmono on YouTube), in contrast with the interruption that most often occurs between the movements of a Western Sonata, for example. Adriaansz probably meant that the dan were "separate" because they form sections, each discernible from each other not by means of an interruption but by means of internal similarities and differences that relate them to the first dan. The danmono is better described as a single movement

Variations Sérieuses op. 54, for piano (1841), by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847), is another good classical example because it does adhere to this principle of the "allotted time", but not as strictly as Mozart's K. 331 First Movement. Mendelssohn's Theme has sixteen measures, as well as almost all of the seventeen Variations. The exceptions are Variations nos. 9 and 13, each with twenty measures; no. 10, with eighteen; and no. 17, the last one, with a total of 115 measures (including 41 measures of what would be the core of the Variation, followed by 13 measures of a recapitulation of the Theme over a pedal note, and a Coda of 61 measures in *Presto tempo*). The number of measures is not only the quantitative aspect of the duration, as it confers a certain rhythmic, therefore temporal *quality* to each section at the macroformal level²⁸, but it does not necessarily make the listener feel that a Variation is longer or shorter than another, provided that the quantitative difference remains small. The "deviation" of duration in Variations no. 9, 10 and 13, although perceivable as it breaks the *quadratura*, is irrelevant to produce a perception that these Variations are longer than the Theme. However, one of the many contributing factors by which Variation no. 17 feels long, complex and like the dramatic climax of the entire piece is that it is much longer than the Theme or the other Variations. Its 41 measures place this Variation and the Theme in a ratio equal to 1:2.56. It is more than twice as long.

As the Theme and Variation form evolved through Romanticism and 20th-century modernisms, it became less schematic and ever more liberated from the quantitative number of measures of the Theme, or from the necessity to maintain its harmonic progression recognizable in the Variations. As composers moved away from tonalism and thematism, the Theme and Variations form fell altogether into a (possibly) free concept of "Variations", which does not require them to be Variations of a Theme recognizable as such (a melody, for example). An example is the third movement of *Variations* for piano op. 27 (1936) by Anton Webern (1883-1945). Here, the only two principles preserved from the traditional Theme and Variations form are the total duration of the Theme (eleven measures) and, as described by Robert Wason, "the periodic change of rhythmic motive on the surface of the piece, which mimics the 'motivic variation' technique of the traditional style" (Wason 1987, 72). The Theme does not sound at all as a Theme to the listener. The Theme, and, in equal measure, each Variation, are composed by characteristic rhythmic motives with their own specific ways of setting the row forms into the texture. The Theme of Webern's op. 27 third movement sounds itself as a Variation, and not really a Theme, which should be, in the traditional style, "clear, concise, easy to grasp, in order to make its impressions quickly and be easily recognized by the ear, even when it appears in disguise" (Leichtentritt 1951, 96), and "not at all independent and self-determined. On the contrary, it is strictly bound to consequences which have to be drawn, and without which it may appear insignificant" (Schoenberg 1967, 103). Since in Webern it is the tone row that takes this role of generating variations, and the row is a background (or *hors-temps*) component acquiring new manifestations at each time it becomes a harmonic/textural component in the foreground, *en-temps* musical flow, one could call Webern's Variations a set of Manifestations (of the row forming different textures, themselves the manifestations): *Manifestations for piano* op. 27 would have been an interesting title... The point is that, if one insists that there is a Theme in Webern's op. 27, it would be for the only reason that it appears first, and

piece/macroform with variation sections, and not as a piece with "separate movements". A Theme and Variation form may be itself a single movement macroform or one movement within a multi-movement macroform (such as Mozart's K331). When Takemitsu mentions that the danmono is like the "Western variations", he is probably only referring to the fact that they are both a set of variation sections one after the other without interruption, and nothing else.

²⁸ This would be a theme for a separate article.

that the variations are variations because they appear after the Theme and do follow the principle of the "allotted time" provided as a time frame. Perhaps, for Webern, who had replaced the Theme with a tone row generating an athematic musical surface, the "allotted time frame" was a fundamental aspect of a Theme and Variation form for him to keep.

Thus, in modern music of the second half of the 20th century, the variation principle sometimes becomes independent from the existence of something like a Theme, which is "to be varied", "bound to consequences that have to be drawn": a Variation may not be a Variation of a Theme. Most important of all is that this also frees the so-called "Variations" from being tied to a certain given duration or proportion: it becomes not as fundamental as it might have been for Webern. Because the durations of each Step seem absolutely free, *November Steps* is itself a good example of a piece in which the Variations do not obey the temporal proportion of the Theme, and this fact certainly corroborates the idea that *November Steps* does not have a Theme. As mentioned above, the Steps are marked in the score like sections or rehearsal marks, and show that the shortest is Step 3, with the duration of 2.5 seconds (or 12, as in the performance studied), and that the longest is Step 10, which lasts around eight minutes (!). How exactly *November Steps* evolves through variation is still something to be discovered and established through analysis, but the fact that it does not use a fixed structure as point of departure should not be taken as a surprise or ground-breaking idea in New Music. What is, in fact, surprising, is that Takemitsu declared that the Steps are like dan and like Western Variations, when his music is not lined up with Western classical music, but with athematic textural music of the 1960s. Therefore, I suggest that, provisionally, the problem of the variations may be put "on hold", with the word "variation" applying to *November Steps* as a generic constructive/transformational principle, as this certainly agrees with the rampant athematicism of the piece. It also agrees with Takemitsu's attitude towards formalism, or the imposition of external schemata, as he expressed here:

It is important that compositional methods always be directed toward the search for the inner spirituality of man. It would be an extreme error if the composer limited himself to the search for external formulas. The music I am discussing here is European music, which is realized within a highly organized system. (...) composers gradually replaced the real essence of music with a derivative search for technique. This tendency toward specialized classification is evident not only in music but in European rationalism generally, and it was in this mathematical alchemy that composers lost the real essence of music. (...) Of course we should have the courage to discover new systems and face new methods. But we should not forget that these things must be dealt with by human hands (Takemitsu 1995, 95).

And since it has been now established that *November Steps* should not be compared to a "Western variation"²⁹, the analysis must move on to focus the problem of whether or not the so-called Steps constitute

²⁹ A note must be made about the analysis of *November Steps* published on the internet by Llorente (2009?). The author presents a complex arrangement of "paired-Theme & Variations Form", in which a theme section of the orchestra is followed by a theme section of the biwa-shakuhachi, and this pair is followed by a corresponding variation for orchestra and a variation for biwa-shakuhachi. The scheme repeats four times in total in the macroform. This may be a possible interpretation of *November Steps*' macroform, but the variations indicated by the analysis do not correspond to Takemitsu's Steps, neither do they correspond to the Sections I present in the analysis in this paper. Unfortunately, Llorente's analysis does not explain how it

morphological units, or "sections". This is not yet to say that *November Steps* has no Theme, but only that this seems, for the time being, really very likely. What happens if the Steps marked in the score do not match any notion of what a morphological entity is? This would show that the Steps cannot be conceived as Variations (as sections), because they would turn up as non-entities... in that case, the analysis would find itself in front of a flux in need of being deciphered, a flux which advances by free variation with no reference to formal schemata from the past.

6. Steps and Sections

At this point, the question to be answered is: are the Steps in *November Steps* morphological units? In order for a Step to be considered a morphological unit or section, both beginning and ending of a Step must correspond to points of formal articulation, thus allowing for the segmentation (partitioning) of the piece's time flux at some level (the change of occurrences mentioned before, since a section, or part, corresponds to an event or occurrence). While a section/event is formed by the cohesion created by the grouping of structural components into what we call a section, it is distinguished from another section/event by the separation created by other, different and contrasting grouping structural components. In this sense, orchestration and instrumentation in *November Steps* work as a stronger-than-usual form of creating structural groupings, or separating sections, because the piece is based on the opposition/juxtaposition of biwa-shakuhachi and the orchestra. However, the Step segmentation shown in the score is not a clear cut example of section segmentation, as well as orchestration is not the only means of distinguishing sections.

The first 24 measures stand as a first occurrence or section in the piece because, after evolving through orchestral clusters and flowing gestures, the music arrives at a clear closure (or cadence, to use an old word) on m.24, worked out by means of diminishing intensities and a composed (written out) *rallentando* along a punctualist (therefore more rarefied) texture formed by isolated sonorities in the gongs, strings pizzicati, harps, and a sustained Re played in harmonics on the double-basses. There are internal moments of articulation in this first section, but they belong to a secondary level of segmentation. After a brief rest with a fermata, this segment for orchestra without soloists is sharply contrasted by the world-apart texture played only by biwa and shakuhachi marked in the score as Step 1 (S1)³⁰. The shakuhachi takes over on the same pitch (the double-basses' Re), but it sounds now as a beginning, and in a totally new ambience. At this point, it is more convenient to call mm. 1-24 as Section 1, rather than as Introduction, although this is a consequence of the morphological analysis in course. The reason why will be explained soon.

Step 1, with its 41" of duration, establishes the beginning of a new sound environment played by the biwa and the shakuhachi. This, however, is only the beginning of a new, larger event that, in reality, groups all first four Steps, as explained as following: S2, S3 and S4 all have in common the continuation of the biwa-shakuhachi lines begun with S1, but now punctuated by interventions from the orchestra like a kind of *reaction* from the orchestra to some forceful sound in the shakuhachi. These orchestral reactions are of secondary importance, like momentary accompaniments, because they do not disrupt the soloists' lines. In

arrives at its conclusions, but they certainly show that considerable work has been invested in solving the "perplexing task" of understanding how the Steps relate to the Theme and Variations Form.

³⁰ Notice that the abbreviation for Steps (S1, S2, S3... until S11) should not be confused with Sections, for which there is no abbreviation.

fact, throughout Steps 1 to 4, the biwa-shakuhachi lines constitute the most important sound layer, which proceeds uninterrupted (though articulated by several pauses) until m.30. The beginning of S2, is marked by the first of these reactions to the shakuhachi's gesture, which is formed by three grace-notes and a *sff* long low Mi: the orchestra intervenes with a simple and brief gesture³¹, like a *frisson* caused by the *sff*. The soloists' lines persist without interruption, despite the fermata after the high Re on the shakuhachi in what would be m.27 but is, in reality, the return of the *senza tempo* notation, announcing more music just for soloists. This persistence of the soloists without orchestra helps grouping Steps 1 and 2 to one another, in accordance with Gestalt's law of good continuity, because it is the soloists to affirm their presence, and this happens again with the next Steps: S3 repeats the pattern of orchestral reaction with the harps, percussion, cellos and double-basses briefly adding color and emphasis to a shakuhachi accent, this time, the gesture of two grace-notes plus a *forte-piano* long Fa. As the soloists lines proceed once more into S4, here, again, the orchestral reaction to the shakuhachi's high Mi in *ff* is brief, though longer than that of S3 and involving the whole orchestra. This is followed by biwa-shakuhachi alone for more 53 seconds, reaffirming their continuity and presence. Therefore, Steps 1-4 are grouped together into what constitutes Section 2, of biwa-shakuhachi solos, even though the orchestra is present, however, with the limited role of punctuating the main event with "reactions" or "commentaries".

S5 contrasts with Section 2 because it brings back the orchestral music of Section 1 and is followed by the return of the biwa-shakuhachi solos of S6. There is no doubt about S5, S6, S7 and S8 standing each as Sections 3, 4, 5, and 6 respectively, as they express the juxtaposition of orchestral (S5 and S7), and the biwa-shakuhachi segments (S6 and S8). However, S7 and S8 are not exactly lined up with Sections 5 and 6. At the beginning of S7, the shakuhachi *sffp* ¼-tone low Do of the upper register is joined by the violins playing as-high-as-possible sounds, written in indeterminate notation, and overlapping with the shakuhachi on what is the very ending of the *senza tempo* writing of S6. This state of things is prolonged over the last shakuhachi sound, a high Mi, at the beginning of m.36 (now the writing resumes the orchestral, chronometric writing), by a glissando from the highest violins sound, to which a cluster on the brass and other strings instruments is added. This overlapping of the orchestra with the shakuhachi is not a true imbrication that would group S6 to S7: this is actually the ending of Section 4 and would be the proper ending of S6, although the score indicates the beginning of S7 with the arrival of the violins. But this is only the orchestra reacting to the shakuhachi *sffp*. There is a silent fermata in the orchestra on m.37, which is the decisive separating event marking the true beginning of Section 5, even more so because the character of the orchestra changes completely, returning to the music of Section 1. Thus, what happens at S7 is that the orchestra's overlapping the very last shakuhachi sounds of Section 4 (S6) "anticipates" the entrance of the orchestra, which "should have" started at the real beginning of Section 5 on m.37.

At the end of Section 5, it is the shakuhachi who now "anticipates" its own entrance. It overlaps the last reverberations of orchestral sounds in mm.47-48, with a tremolo and an ascending movement and then, proceeds, *senza tempo*, in the lowest register, in what is still "under the jurisdiction" of S7 according to the score. However, after the tremolo, Yokoyama plays a long fermata which does not exist on m.48, producing the effect that a new solo section starts there. Takemitsu probably meant that the solo should start when the shakuhachi moves to the lowest register, as this also coincides with the silence of the orchestra

³¹ Although simple in its general shape, it results from a complex alternation of *sul ponticello* and *ordinario* playing in the strings, *divisi* in 29 different parts.

(although, in the recording, the orchestra stops much earlier...). Surprisingly, S8 is marked at the returning of orchestral reactions to the shakuhachi line, m.49, after the shakuhachi had been playing alone *senza tempo* for a long time (46" in the recording). The orchestral parts here are not like the usual reactions, but are brief and simple enough *not* to be considered as structurally important or as the main music; the main line being that of the shakuhachi, Section 6 is fairly considered as a shakuhachi solo event from m.48 or 49 until m.52, which is where the orchestra and the shakuhachi both reach the closure of S8 and are marked by a double bar.

A long fermata with the instruction "Keep Silence" separates Section 6/S8 from the next music, S9, which is the first biwa solo, and, in the performance, lasts 22". Percussion and the harp break out at the beginning of the S10 mark while the biwa solo continues and is joined by the shakuhachi. The orchestra joins in with two intense clusters, the first in reaction to the shakuhachi strong gesture (three grace notes followed by a sustained $\frac{1}{4}$ tone low Fa), and the second in reaction to the *sffz* low Do. The cluster dies out and, after a medium size fermata (which is not obeyed in the performance, as the biwa solo continues right away and without interruption), starts the biwa-shakuhachi indeterminate solo in graphic notation which characterizes the improvisatory S10; this lasts for almost eight minutes in the performance. Since it is the biwa solo that sustains the main sound layer since the beginning of S9, as well as across the orchestral commentary of S10, it seems appropriate to consider that this is the beginning of a new biwa-shakuhachi section, which starts with the biwa alone at S9 and continuing, joined later by the shakuhachi, until the end of S10, thus constituting Section 7.

Section 7 arrives to an arrest of the solo lines, which is followed by the orchestral entrance with harps and percussion at the S11 mark. The strings instruments take part in what becomes a dying out sound layer, from *p* to *ppp* with *sordina*. At that juncture, shakuhachi and biwa resume their solo roles, but this is only a brief juxtaposition, shortly interrupted by percussive sonorities from the orchestra (gongs, tam-tams, and mostly double-basses *col legno battuto* and *pizzicatti* in the cellos). After that, a last dramatic gesture of the shakuhachi ends the piece. The soloists' intervention does not affect the fact that S11 is Section 8 for orchestra.

Unfortunately, this analysis could not avoid some description of what happens in the music, and it had to resort to such an unpleasant kind of analytical writing because the facts that segment the form pertain to the surface of the music, therefore, to the changes of occurrences that constitute its becoming. Naturally, these surface occurrences result from changes in compositional processes, and, in this specific work, the processes in question are mostly those related to creating surface structures (not deep ones): the juxtapositions of the two historical styles that *November Steps* wants to separate.

In fact, the analysis shows that the Sections do express the juxtapositions. The board below summarizes and clarifies the relationship between Steps and Sections. It is clear that Steps and Sections only coincide with exactitude for S5 (Section 3) and S11 (Section 8). While S1-S4 are grouped together in Section 2, the orchestral "reactions" do coincide with the beginnings of S2, S3, and S4, thus marking the beginning of subsections within Section 2. Section 4 starts at the beginning of S6 but ends after the S7 mark; Section 5 starts after the beginning of S7 and ends with the extinction of the orchestral sounds of m.48 and/or the fermata (played by Yokoyama) between the first and second beats of m.48, still far from the S8 mark. Section

6 starts in m.48.2³² or at the beginning of the *senza tempo* writing just after m.48 and finishes at the end of S8 on m.52. Section 7 is formed by both S9 and S10.

Board 2 – This board shows the Sections of the proposed analysis, indicating for each Section, their beginning and ending points in terms of measures or Steps, and their corresponding instrumentation, which truly result in Takemitsu's opposition/juxtaposition of orchestra and soloists.

Section	Beginning and Endings in terms of Steps or Measures	Instrumentation
1	mm.I-24	orchestra
2	S1-S4	SB
3	S5	orchestra
4	S6 to m.36	SB
5	mm.37-48.I	orchestra
6	mm.48.2-52	S
7	S9-S10	SB
8	S11	orchestra

Therefore, the juxtaposition of modern orchestral and ancient Japanese instruments/music happens almost entirely straight through and in accordance with this division in Sections. The only exception is that Sections 6 and 7 contain important superimpositions of the orchestral reactions/commentaries, although it is the Japanese instruments that carry the main sound layer: the biwa alone in Section 6 and both biwa and shakuhachi on Section 7.

Three last observations conclude the analysis. The first concerns the 24 measures of orchestral opening: after listening to the piece several times with the recognition of the above organization in eight sections, those 24 measures stop having the introductory character they had in the first listening. They are assimilated into the succession of sections that juxtapose the "incompatible" musics simply as the first one.

The second point concerns a different realization, expressed by Board 3, at which we would arrive if we considered the moments overlapping the orchestra and the Japanese instruments to count as *orchestral*.

However, this board is useless and needs to be discarded because it arbitrarily disregards the fact that the orchestra, when superimposed with biwa-shakuhachi, assumes a *secondary* role that qualifies those same moments not as orchestral but as soloist's moments, as we have seen. The juxtapositions of orchestral and Japanese instruments throughout the piece, conceived in this arbitrary way, do not even corroborate Takemitsu's description of the piece: the juxtapositions are not lined up with the Steps marks, neither are they eleven, but turn out to be sixteen.

The third point is the final conclusion about the formal role of Steps. Firstly, the correspondence of Steps with juxtapositions of instrumental forces is too problematic and shows no logic; one can only remain perplex facing Takemitsu's delimitation marks for the Steps. Secondly, the Steps are not perceivable as morphological units for the reasons explained above, namely, that they either group successive Steps to form larger sections, or their beginning/ending marks as Steps do not correspond to perceivable articulation points of the form (separation by fermata, change of texture, etc.). The only Step that corresponds exactly

³² This means the second beat of measure 48.

to a morphological unit is S5. The opening 24 measures of the piece also stand as a morphological unit, but this is not marked as a Step. Therefore, the Steps cannot be considered as morphological units (or sections/events) nor do they correspond to the juxtapositions of orchestra and biwa-shakuhachi.

Board 3 – This board proposes an alternate analysis of the opposition/juxtaposition of orchestra and soloists, compared with Board 2, which must be discarded because it arbitrarily ignores the secondary role of the orchestra in certain segments of the piece.

Juxtaposition	Segment	Instrumentation
orchestra	mm. I-24	orchestra
shakuhachi-biwa	S1	SB
orchestra	mm. 25-26 of S2	orchestra + SB
shakuhachi-biwa	<i>senza tempo</i> of S2	SB
orchestra	S3-S4	orchestra + SB
shakuhachi-biwa	<i>senza tempo</i> of S4	SB
orchestra	S5	orchestra
shakuhachi-biwa	S6	SB
orchestra	S7	orchestra (with short overlap of the shakuhachi in the beginning and at the end)
shakuhachi	<i>senza tempo</i> of S7	S
orchestra	mm.49-52	orchestra + S
biwa	S9	B
orchestra	mm.53-56 of S10	orchestra + SB
shakuhachi-biwa	<i>senza tempo</i> of S10	SB
orchestra	mm. 57-67 of S11 mm. 68-70 of S11	orchestra alone orchestra + SB
shakuhachi	<i>senza tempo</i> of S11	S

7. Circular Time

November Steps shows signs of both cyclic and circular time. But what would be the difference between circular and cyclic? Since there are previous works in which I have developed the subject of circular temporalities and suggested improvements in the existing and inaccurate musicological terminology about them, it should be enough to briefly explain the three main types of circular time that I propose to distinguish in music, in order to keep the autonomy of this essay. "Cyclic form", for example, has been a term used by musicologists whenever the recurrence of a theme from the first movement of a work happens again in the last movement, creating a strong feeling of returning to the beginning, therefore, the sensation of the completion of a cycle (as, for example, in Debussy's *La Mer*) or whenever thematic materials of a symphony reappear in one or more movements, as happens, for example, in Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. For the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, cyclic form is established simply by "the same or very similar thematic material" being employed in two or more movements (Randel 1986, 218). There has been no mention of a "circular form", as every recurrence has been described as "cyclic". This is because Musicology, until roughly the beginning of the 20th-century, has been mainly interested in the study of Western art tonal music, which is characterized by linear directional time; circular temporalities had gradually disappeared after the Middle Ages. A musicological vision that includes all musical cultures of the world (or, at least, more than just a single one) only started to become possible with the advent of Comparative Musicology and, later, Ethnomusicology. Such a vision requires a better explanation of what cyclic and circular forms may

constitute, since these are common features in a large amount of world musical traditions, as well as of several works of late 20th-century West.

Circularity and cyclicity have everything to do with recurrence of thematic material, but they are two different things due to the way this material recurs in each. I propose the following three types of circular musical temporalities: 1) *cyclic time*, which consists of thematic material recurring always in the same order, just as, in nature, the seasons always come in the same order (spring, summer, fall, winter), and never permute³³. Cyclic time corresponds to the *diachronic* perception of the circle because it is based on the repetitive movement along the circumference line of a circle: the points (events) in the circumference always occur in the same order because of the continuous forward movement over the circle's line. While cyclic time is certainly a circular kind of temporality, it needs to be distinguished from 2) the properly speaking *circular time*. This corresponds to the *synchronic* perception of the circle because it takes only an instant to see the circle in its wholeness. Circular time could be compared with the idea of *vertical time* proposed by Johnathan Kramer (1988, 454), but "verticality" is perhaps a more radical image than "the circle" for something that is perceived in a split second, as the vertical can be reduced to a point (which, in Geometry, doesn't even have a dimension), while the circle is itself an enlarged or expanded version of its central point. Because this instantaneous perception happens along a certain duration in the musical work (and usually is the entire work) along which thematic material recurs in an unpredictable order, without a repetition pattern (or with a pattern difficult to perceive), stasis (the circle) is established in a stronger and quicker way than that of the cyclic movement. Thus, this may be accurately called circular time. The fact that music in circular (or vertical) time does last more than an instant – and frequently tends to last for a long time, enhancing the sense of stasis and eternity – is due to the time flux nature of music: if music is to be heard, it must take its own time to sound. Thus, it is almost a paradox that circular musical time has to express itself within the time's arrow of linear time, the before/after linearity being inescapable: it is becoming (*devenir*) expressing being, time flux expressing stasis, movement expressing no movement. The recurrence of the same – or almost same – events without a given order transgresses the foundation of *en-temps* linearity and is what creates the impression of the absence of movement characteristic of the circle. This kind of musical becoming is found, among other genres, in gagaku and in several honkyoku pieces for the shakuhachi, such as *Koku* and *Kyorei*. 3) *Spiral time* mixes the recurrence of events appearing either in the same or in a different order, with a gradual process intensifying a certain tendency of growth or decay, therefore always repeating differently, as seen, for example, in many of my compositions, such as *Whale Sanctuary* (2016), for soprano saxophone and strings orchestra, or *Metagon* (2008), for shakuhachi³⁴.

The classical Western Theme and Variations form has an element of cyclic time, which is the recurrence of the Theme "under disguise" as Variations. The simpler the Variation is, the more recognizable by ear is the Theme. The less disguised the Theme, greatest is the feeling of cyclicity and repetition. At each Variation, the Theme is repeated differently, but as long as the Variation repeats the events of the Theme in the same order and with the same length, the clearest is the listener's recognition that the events are repeating themselves. In Gregorio Allegri's *Miserere mei, Deus*, the sections that compose one cycle recur identically,

³³ I have taken the motet *Miserere mei, Deus* by Gregorio Allegri (1582-1652) as the "prototypical" example of cyclic musical time. Please refer to Irlandini (2014).

³⁴ The examples given of spiral musical time are from my own works because this concept of spiral time is, as far as I know, unique to my compositional research. For more about spiral time see Irlandini (2017).

without variation (although some ornamental improvisation is possible in the section sung by the quartet of soloists); the naked repetition of the sections is what makes of this work a "prototype" of cyclic musical time. In the Theme and Variations form, due to techniques such as motivic variations, changes in the surface rhythm or even in specific chords of the harmonic progression, and the choice of a specific texture as a characteristic of each Variation, the perception of a recurring cycle tends to be obscured, and this constitutes a desired effect meant to show the composer's creativity and skill in producing multiplicity within unity (and unity within multiplicity). The experience of musical time in the Theme and Variations form combines cyclic recurrence with the irreversibility of the distinct events of the time's arrow. In this sense, it is a hybrid form, and this is so because, for the modern European cosmovision developed since roughly the 17th-century, the time of music became discursive, cronometric and linear, and avoided expressing unambiguously the circular's or cyclic's tendency to stasis and repetition.

Returning now to *November Steps*: it has been established earlier in this essay that this work should not be compared to the Western Theme and Variations form. However, the piece does offer, at each recurrence of the orchestral and biwa-shakuhachi textures segmented in the eight sections of the proposed analysis, a sense of *varied recurrence*, that resembles that of the Theme and Variation form, but in which *variation* must be understood as a free and athenatic transformative principle, and nothing more. Therefore, Section 1 is not the orchestral Theme from which derive orchestral Variation Sections 3, 5 and 8; Section 2 is not the biwa-shakuhachi Theme that generates biwa-shakuhachi Variation Sections 4, 6 and 7. What exists is an orchestral texture in Section 1 that recurs entirely transformed in the Sections 3, 5 and 8, and the same is true for the biwa-shakuhachi texture in Section 2 and its corresponding sections (with the added complication of the overlapping orchestral reactions and commentaries). Similarly, but for different reasons, to the example of Webern's op. 27, there really is no Theme. Furthermore, there is no hidden repetitive structure (as Webern's tone row); in *November Steps* there is, instead, a repertory of musical events in each orchestral or biwa-shakuhachi sections that remains roughly the same, even though these events are always different; different in appearance, but not in essence.

Because they do not follow the imposed structure of a Theme, nor its "allotted time" duration, the sections (variations) sound like *variations of the same*, and this is different from being variations of a Theme. The reason is that a given Variation of a Theme will always display a *different texture* from another given Variation. For example, Variation 1 in Mozart's K 331 ornaments the melodic line with chromatic and diatonic appoggiaturas, while the accompaniment fills in the melody's rests with short and separated chords (these are the main features, among others), while no other Variation repeats this kind of texture. Variation 2, on its turn, has a melodic ornamentation based on trills, mordents and grupettos while the accompaniment flows in sixteenth notes triplets. The piece continues with each Variation displaying a different textural treatment. The variations in *November Steps* are variations of the *same texture*, orchestral or for biwa-shakuhachi, which recur with different notes, different durations, different timbres and timing, but exhibit a vocabulary of interrelated gestures/events that resemble each other, some very clearly similar, while others seem entirely new. Orchestral gestures/events are formed by the interaction, superimposition and juxtaposition of carefully orchestrated lines and sound masses such as simply sustained cluster or bundles of lines grouped by micropolyphonic relationships, as well as accents on the percussion, harps and strings pizzicati. Timbre is one of the most important means of changing the sonority of a gesture/event. In the biwa-shakuhachi events, sustained tones in the shakuhachi explore varieties of vibrato and glissando, and are combined with grace notes, or with other sustained tones, forming a quasi-melodic line, often with great

leaps or moving by neighbor step movement. The biwa's gestures result from physical actions of the plectrum against the strings and the production of isolated tones, "chords" and percussive sounds, sometimes forming short linear segments. Biwa and shakuhachi are combined in several ways and varying roles, exploring simultaneities, counterpoint, accompaniment, solo, etc. Although, in general, there is no identical repetition of a gesture/event, the textures formed by them do sound like recurring music. Also, the events within sections do not obey any kind of pre-determined order of succession or, if they do, this order belongs to a deep background level, far away from human perception. This state of things creates *circularity* (not cyclicity) in the time flux within each section, each with its own dynamics, but expressing the same sound environment/temporality. On the other hand, the succession of eight sections alternating orchestral and biwa-shakuhachi environments that generates the macroform creates a *cyclicity* (not circularity), a regularity and predictability that assures to the listener that, after the orchestra, biwa-shakuhachi will follow, and, after that, will return the orchestra, and then, again, the soloists. The cyclic repetition of the opposing historical styles along the macroform is what makes opposition as a mode of integration in *November Steps*.

Therefore, *November Steps* combines both kinds of non-spiral circularity: the eight sections that constitute the macroform create cyclic time with the regular alternation of orchestra and biwa-shakuhachi, while, within each section, time is circular, because the same events/gestures recur varied (but recognizably the same) and without pattern in their succession. *November Steps* does not fit Kramer's description of vertical time, nor that of Stockhausen's moment time. In order to be comparable with vertical time, *November Steps* would have to offer a single ambience, like La Monte Young's *Composition 1960 no. 7*, or anyone piece from Cage's 1975 *Etudes Australes*, but it offers two ambiances in regular alternation. On its turn, moment form has a characteristic discontinuity which is absent in *November Steps*. Here, the sections flow into each other, even though there are clear separations between them, and their cyclic recurrence along the macroform, as "variations of the same", produces continuity.

8. *November Steps* and the Japanese concept of time

As mentioned in the Introduction, the juxtaposition characteristic of *November Steps* might suggest an alternation of Western and Japanese temporalities with its alternation of two "musical worlds" represented by the two historical styles of Avant-Garde texturalism and hōgaku. However, in my view, the experience of time offered by *November Steps* does not result in Japanese and Western aesthetical concepts of time alternating separately in that way. The reason why is that the segments of historical styles are put together (or structured, to use a word that Takemitsu would not appreciate) in a strongly unified way which contributes more to the macroformal sense of unity of the piece than to the assertion of the contrasting nature of these segments, so loudly announced as incompatible. One of the explanations for this has already been mentioned: the cyclic way of this alternation assures the work's continuity, thus integrating the alternating, opposing sections. However, probably, the main reason is that the "Western sections" are not in a "Western temporality", but in a "Takemitsu temporality", engendered by his own involvement with Japanese tradition. This brings the expected-to-be "Western temporality" closer to that of their opposing segments, the "Japanese sections", which are not excerpts of traditional music, but equally composed by Takemitsu, although "in the style of" a personal, imagined hōgaku for an instrumental duo – biwa and shakuhachi – that is really a creation of his own. In simpler terms, the musical time of the orchestral sections

is the same, or very similar, to that of the Japanese instruments, in spite of their differences. What is Western temporality? And Japanese?

It is clear that cultural differences between the Western and the Japanese traditional concepts of time do exist. Furthermore, it is generally accepted that the concept of time valid in a given culture is reflected in, and is one of the elements that determine, the way the music of that cultural tradition flows in time, how it sounds, how it is conceived, and how it is organized. This is why Western music is so different from *hōgaku*. This is a cosmological issue.

Explained in really summary and rough terms, for lack of space for a longer and fair description, the Western concept of time has been defined as linear, directional, non-repetitive, advancing from a beginning towards an ending, (Kato 2007, 29), and dialectic (Mertens 1983, 107). These characteristics are clearly reflected in Western music since about 1650, and they apply to Western civilization of the Modern Era. However, the way music reflects this time concept starts to change in the 20th-century, especially with Stravinsky's works such as *Symphony of Psalms* (1930) or even *Les Noces* (1923), in which he developed the time discontinuity of a compositional style in static panels that foreruns Stockhausen's moment form. After 1950, the dialectic/linear/teleological time of Western classical music disappeared in favor of the static serial aperiodicity of post-Webernian music and indeterminacy, and the ever changing but static temporality frequently explored by 1960s textural styles.

There is, in fact, a confusion caused by Takemitsu's statements about *November Steps* and about comparisons made by him concerning Western and Japanese traditional music because one never knows when he is referring to Western *classical* or 20th-century music. When *November Steps* puts Japanese and Western music in opposition to each other, it is actually doing this with Avant-Garde textural music of the 1960s, not with Western classical music. Clearly, the musical time in Takemitsu's textural compositions are anything but dialectic or dramatic; they belong to a Western style that has already left those ways of temporal organization and, most importantly, they are in-formed by the composer's involvement with Japanese traditional aesthetics.

In Japan, since the oldest records of Japanese mythology (the 8th-century *Kojiki*), time has been conceived as infinite, without beginning and without ending (KATO, 2007, 44), but what best characterizes time and space in Japanese culture, is the "now = here": "the tendency to live in the present, letting the past be carried by the waters and trusting the future to the direction of the wind" (KATO, 2007, 16)³⁵. This idea seems to come straight from Zen Buddhism, and the role of Zen in Japanese culture (and in Takemitsu's music) cannot be underestimated, but it is present since the times of the *Kojiki*, while Zen appears as a new Buddhist school in Japan only during the Kamakura Period (1185-1300). Shuichi Kato (2007, 58) explains that the Japanese "now" of each occurrence is not determined by the totality of past occurrences, neither its purpose is the totality of upcoming occurrences; "the infinite flow of time is hardly grasped, and what can be apprehended is only the 'now'. This is why each 'now' can become the center of reality in the axis of time. In it, people live

³⁵ My translation: "(...)há uma forte tendência de se viver o presente, deixando o passado ser levado pelas águas e confiando o futuro à direção do vento".

the 'now'." (Kato 2007, 48)³⁶. In Japanese traditional music, (gagaku, nōgaku, hōgaku,...) the emphasis on the present moment is expressed by the importance given to timbre and silence (the pause) that are happening now, and the resulting unimportance of what came before and what will follow that. Musical time seems to be arrested, or flows slowly, and the presence of silences may be overwhelming to an uneducated listener. Musicologist Luciana Galliano points out that the Japanese concept of time was perhaps most radically formed by the Buddhist idea of impermanence, and that traditional music "does not build an architecture of time; it rather singles out, from the flux of 'natural' time, a privileged part to which dedicate attention" (Galliano 1998, 29)³⁷. Thus, in her words, musical time in Japanese music is cyclic, instantaneous, absent, and "substantially irrational" (Galliano 1998, 30), the "cyclic" here still reflecting the common inaccuracy of this word's use in Musicology. I call it *circular* properly speaking. It is in this context that *ma* (the silent pause in music and recitation, the white on the calligraphy page, the empty space in architecture) appears as "a time or space between two events, but not as an emptiness, but as a distance that becomes a route between the two points" (Galliano 1998, 29), a lived and expressive distance.

In *November Steps*, the opposing sound sources are certainly different in their potential to produce sounds: two-voices in the soloists and sound masses of more than thirty parts in the orchestra. But both flow in the same way, both change and become according to their own potentiality, both concentrated in hōgaku's "single sound" aesthetics, in which "this *ma*, this powerful silence, is that which gives life to the sound and removes it from its position of primacy" (Takemitsu 1995, 64). Both orchestral and biwa-shakuhachi sections are in the same temporality of unstructured, impermanent moments of sound and *ma* presence. The orchestral sections seem absorbed in building complex timbre infused with *sawari* (a beautiful noise), chiseled with extreme sophistication and detail, and their moments of *ma* are masterfully controlled by Takemitsu's writing and sense of timing. But the soloists' sections are equally absorbed in the same tasks, but with a little less control from the composer. The soloists' expressive silences, true moments of *ma*, are trusted to the soloists to create and interpret, thanks to an open time notation. It is not that *ma* is more present in the biwa-shakuhachi sections than in the orchestral: *ma* is through-composed in the latter, and less so in the former. In order to allow the feeling of traditional music to flow naturally into "Takemitsu's hōgaku style" the time notation of their parts is open. However, the two opposing time notations (chronometric for the orchestra and proportional for the Japanese instruments) are simply different means of obtaining the same kind of rhythmic flow: a-metric, without sense of pulse and fluid. In fact, one should not mistake the means by which a result is obtained for the result itself.

Such a flow of musical time is necessarily not discursive, and, even though it may reach dramatic points, understood as points of sharp contrast with what precedes and succeeds them, there is no linearity that leads to or from a macroformal climax. There is no climax building. There is no narrative. There are extended moments of current events (the circular time within each section) that recur in alternation (the cyclic time of orchestra alternating with biwa-shakuhachi). This is a unique musical temporality, strongly connected to

³⁶ My translation: "A *totalidade dos acontecimentos passados não é o que determina o significado do 'agora' diante do qual se está, assim como a totalidade dos acontecimentos que devem vir não é o que determina o significado do 'agora'. O fluir infinito do tempo é dificilmente captado, e o que se pode apreender é apenas o 'agora', por isso, cada 'agora' pode se tornar o centro da realidade no eixo do tempo. Nele, as pessoas vivem o 'agora'".*

³⁷ My translation: "(...) *non costruisce una architettura del tempo: individua piuttosto nello scorrere di quel tempo naturale una parte per così dire privilegiata a cui dedicare attenzione*".

Japanese traditional music, which Takemitsu arrived at first by abandoning important Western traditional compositional conceptions such as structuring and the ideas of beginning, middle and ending. Even though the rejection of Western traditional aesthetic traits was already a current attitude among Western New Music composers, Takemitsu probably had a further motive to adhere to it, and that was to follow the path indicated by Japanese tradition:

I used to think each tone was like a building block, and that musical work was similar to architecture that needs to be constructed little by little, but my thinking started to change when I studied traditional Japanese music. I was influenced by its philosophy. The act of composing is like reaching a stream, feeling the river bed, and becoming one with it... I now only think about the stream of sounds that surrounds me and try to listen to its sounds. I no longer pay attention to its structure or giving it a beginning and an ending. There is no beginning or ending. When I compose, I touch the stream and express it as it is (Takemitsu *apud* Sakamoto 2002, 27).

9. Conclusion

It was mentioned in the beginning that what the composer does is, in essence, to structure musical time, give order to the flux, shape the sense of unity of the work. This is clearly a Western point of view, with a wording that emphasizes the composer's rational and intellectual decision making and structuring actions, since it is not mentioning the role of inspiration and intuition, nor the sensations and feelings that integrate the composer's poetics³⁸... In contrast with this, Takemitsu's writings about his music and music in general are extremely poetic and avoid academic discourse. Many of them criticize Western music's "mathematical alchemy" and place *hōgaku* as a means of salvation from it, probably because this actually happened for him. However, this might have been mainly a way to affirm that "modern European music, along with other kinds of music, is *one part of the musical resources today – probably nothing more, nothing less*" (my italics) (Takemitsu 1995, 109); this agrees with my point about the diminished importance of European music for contemporary composition as a World New Music. That said, there is another side to all of this: Takemitsu's statement above, among others, and Galliano's observation that Japanese traditional music "does not build an architecture of time" seem to emphasize and insist that general Japanese cultural values and Japanese traditional music, immersed in the simple expressive presences of timbre and silence of the "temporality of *now*", would be the antidote to any form of rationalism and would, ultimately, mean that there is no structuring of musical time in Japanese music. It is easy to fall from this thought into believing that, to live/compose this *now*, one would need to give up planning and structuring, and also "trust the future to the wind and the past to the waters", and so on and so forth, perhaps even entirely give up the intellect... This line of thought is a common trap for Westerners seeking alternatives in Japanese values, as it oversimplifies and distorts the roles of reason and the intellect in both Western and Japanese traditional arts, and makes it easy to pitch West and East against each other, based on empty stereotypes. Would, for example, a Zen Buddhist temple be the result of a total lack of architectural, rational and intellectual building activity? Hardly so... The Japanese architecture of time is not non-existent: it is only not the same as the European

³⁸ This emphasis does not mean the rejection of the role of inspiration, intuition and everything "not rational" in the compositional process.

architecture of time. Japanese rationality is certainly different from Western, but this does not mean it is inexistent; Zen clearly attacks the intellect but only when it interferes with the training to reach *satori*.

November Steps shows no lack of architecture in its construction of Section 1, Section 5, and in the constructed alternation of the opposing "two worlds" of sound along the entire work. This means to me that "becoming one with the stream" does not really stand in binary opposition or contrariety to "giving order to the stream". Takemitsu's architecture is employed directly to the composition of orchestral sound and timbre or, in other words, his orchestration is architectural in nature, built up from the smallest gestural blocks of sounds, to form the large splashes and smoothly moving surges that come and go like water (in fact, the piece's first title was *Water Rings*). Because these sounds are in a constant flow, the architecture is flexible and yielding. His architecture is employed also to the musical becoming, the succession of gestures, events, and sections, and the alternation of orchestra and biwa-shakuhachi: this results in an effect of total freedom, rather than of measurement, but this does not even mean that there is no measurement involved in the making... It is probably fairer to say that Takemitsu could build and compose his architecture of musical time by means other than over intellectualization, structural-ism, technicism, constructivism and external formulas, characteristics that are found so often in Western music, especially between 1945 and 1960. However, at the same time, Western music did not always get it all wrong! It only missed the point whenever reason became mechanics, spirit became matter, and *écriture* became disconnected from sound.

Words like architecture, structure, form, organization, and order may be scary at times. They all impose to music a sense of rigidity that might lead composers to believe they will "lose the real essence of music", which is the time flux, the stream. Some composers actually do lose that essence... However, those words are useful to the composer because their composing is a necessity. In order to "reach that stream and become one with it", the composer still needs to work hard directly with the materials of music (notes, tones, rhythm, time values, and all the "physical" components that build the musical work's *physis* and constitute its scientific cosmology). The composer uses every necessary shaping tool, polishes every surface, and must be able to perceive the deeper, hidden grounds that lay below the surface, while still understanding that the flux, the *how* time passes, is determined by order, the principles of organization of sounds. In between "touching the stream" (*forma formante*) and "expressing it as it is" (*forma formata*) lies a wide space of time, *ma*, that consists in the gradual discovery of the right actions that will express the stream. Each composer alone experiences and lives through this *ma* as a cosmogony.

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