

About *Music with silent aitake's*.

The idea.

When Tadatoshi Myagawa, my guide in my study of Gagaku, asked me to write a piece of Gagaku, it did not make much sense for me because in the time and space we are living in, all the cultural streams are debouching into one ocean. And it is from there that we have to invent new forms, universes and traditions. Therefore, I decided to compose for Gagaku, but confronted with modern Western music and ensemble.

What is meant with this ‘one ocean’?

It is definitely not something (European) universal to which all (non-European) things are reducible, neither the (barbaric) globalization, but an open space where the Eurocentric perspective towards other cultures has been dislodged.

The question if composition can exist without Eurocentric perspective has been insistent at each stage of the working process.

The compositional encounter with Gagaku is in any case not without problems.

First of all, Gagaku plays in a different tuning. The solution of tuning the Gagaku instruments in a Western way –as frequently happens in compositions to be played by Gagaku instruments and Western instruments together– was not only rejected artistically but also as an Eurocentric solution.

Therefore, I considered the coexistence of the two different tunings as a new stage and concept of dissonance. All the music of *Music with silent aitake's* originated from this steady stage of dissonance, which sometimes is accentuated, sometimes overcome, into consonance. This last process is obtained by structuring the Gagaku pitches, which have their own logic within the music for the Gagaku ensemble, simultaneously as spectral extensions of a fundamental and omnipresent drone, which is expressed only by the Western ensemble.

Therefore, Gagaku, which is traditionally a profoundly melodic music, is transformed here into harmonic music, which results in some material and structural deviations from traditional Gagaku. The main challenge for Gagaku and all the musicians involved is to play and connect chords and find a balance in the sound of these chords. With some exceptions, the chords which are played are all configurations and combinations of the “aitakes”– these are the traditional Gagaku chords of the “sho”.

Meanwhile, in the Western ensemble, the drone, as already mentioned, is not only expressed in many different ways, but is also colored, for example by modal chords, and serves also as an axis for atonal complex polyrhythmic textures, sometimes evolving into massive scale.

Although the concept of dissonance is typically European, the transformation from melodic to harmonic Gagaku is definitely due to the material encounter and friction of the two different tunings.

Another great problem in the encounter with Gagaku is the way the ensemble plays. Unlike the Western ensemble, Gagaku plays without conductor. When an ensemble plays Gagaku, the traditional rhythmical patterns of the percussion instruments play an important role. This is also the case here.

The music for the Western ensemble, on the contrary, is rhythmically and metrically structured according to completely different principles (including different counting and measures) but is simultaneously fully integrated in and determined by specific patterns of the “kakko”, called “katarai” and “mororai”.

This results in an adventurous yet fascinating, interactive ensemble playing, where the Western conductor not only has to guide his own ensemble but simultaneously has to follow the flow of Gagaku, and where the “kakko” player not only has to guide his own ensemble but simultaneously has to follow the flow of the Western ensemble.

Music with silent aitate's, in which Gagaku and the Western ensembles play together, both keeping their own musical logic and life, is therefore **not looking for a fusion but for a coexistence of two different cultures**, where differences remain profoundly different, but can be simultaneously overcome by the flow of music.

Music with silent aitate's therefore denies any form of nationalism, be it cultural or political, in search of trans-cultural liberation.