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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the musical analysis of Toshi Ichiyanagi’s 1972 solo piano composition *Piano Media*, and an examination of musical processes and considerations that mirror and parallel patterns of traditional Japanese culture. Through brief studies of language construction, Zen, Pachinko and traditional aesthetics, analogies and references can be used to highlight congruent musical structures and predilections in Ichiyanagi’s work. The final goal is to define the work not only within musical terms of analysis, but also within a cultural context.
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It was the world behind the world, where reflection precludes the necessity for action and the calm in which all things seek in death appears briefly in the guise of contentment, the spirit at last persuaded that the still waters of perfection are reachable.

Paul Bowles, *The Spider’s House*
INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Study

It is a widely accepted fact that the evolution of man is a direct function of his environment; humankind is inevitably a projected result of social, cultural, and environmental stimuli. So too, in essence, our aesthetic persuasions are linked to our early experiences, both social and artistic. Other influences such as language and comprehension regulate how the brain gathers and distributes information. Early experiences then, (such as religious ideologies, cultural expectations, and social standards) certainly create individuals that are a result of stimuli manifested through society’s cultural paradigms. This simple premise then operates through a system in society where individuals are linked by a unanimous series of “salient norms.” Through this example, it is easy to see that people born and raised in America (regardless of ethnicity) are inevitably “American” in culture\(^1\) and not Japanese. While this perfectly satisfies behavioral norms, class interactions, and attitudes, can it account for the more subtle aesthetic or artistic persuasions? How far can aesthetic predilections be linked to unconscious cultural assimilations and influences from society?

This thesis is primarily concerned with tracing elements of the Japanese culture and in particular the aesthetic predilections. As Japanese culture evolved from the Meiji Restoration to the contemporary post-World War II global village, many characteristic elements

\(^1\)They are American undoubtedly because they will be educated in the country-specific vernacular customs and be exposed to the various cultural codes that help define American society; these may include Judeo-Christian value systems, government systems, and common value systems. From such institutions come the acceptance of symbolic meaning and the manifestation of products that embody these symbols.
cultural and aesthetic identifiers, mostly Buddhist or Confucian in nature, became intrinsically part of the national psyche. I hope to adapt a model of Japanese thinking and understanding to interpret and define (as an end point) Toshi Ichiyanagi’s work for solo piano, Piano Media. The final ambitious construct of this inquiry will be an examination of Piano Media in terms of its many subtexts, both musical and extra-musical. In addition, the work will be defined and analyzed structurally, and contextually, with certain issues highlighted as analogous to Japanese modes of thinking.

A society’s culture is, no doubt, a system of associated initiatives and acceptances over time—i.e. heritage, whereby individuals are shaped through society’s conventions to understand certain underlying accepted principles (including social conduct, socioeconomic class/respect systems, etc.). Here, too, must the principles of artistic and aesthetic constructs be initiated. The heritage of Japanese society and the major currents and philosophies that have permeated Japan (from pre-history to the contemporary) will be investigated in this analysis. Japanese artistic initiatives became increasingly ethnocentric and specialized during Japan’s 250 years of self-isolation (ending in 1852). Initial and early art forms were, if not completely derived from, at least closely guided by foreign models. In light of the current contemporary climate, the question of interest is whether art from today’s artists is linked unconsciously (or inevitably) with Japan’s vast complex artistic history. According to the sociologist Roland Barthes:

> If the bouquets, the objects, the trees, the faces, the gardens, and the texts—if the things and manners of Japan seem diminutive to us (our mythology exalts the big, the vast the broad the open), this is not by reason of their size, it is because every object every gesture, even the most free, the most mobile, seems framed.²

²Roland Barthes, Empire of Signs (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 43.
In Barthes’ estimation, the complete social and cultural landscape of Japan in his sense is of an awareness of artistic stimuli; that the everyday, the fabric of culture, is a consequence of aesthetic acknowledgement from those within the group and through history—in many ways a Zen Buddhist doctrine that has permeated Japanese society since its inception. But the idea of the “framed” is not a particularly Eastern example; more likely it is a Western projection to describe a system of thought or values. In light of this observation, James Joyce likened the human metaphysical experience to three persuasions: the pornographic, the didactic, and the state of epiphany. (The last occurs when one simply sees the artistic object as “framed:” beauty that transcends human reactions, as opposed to that of argument, the didactic, or arousal, the pornographic).

In this study of Japanese artistic thought, the investigation becomes that of a search for Japanese perceptions and how art is a response to humankind’s perception, through personal ideology, of the world:

One tendency is to mirror the external world, as it is perceived (direct imitation). A mirror of public manifestations (in institutions, diplomacy, in architecture or the arts) is held up to the world so to speak, and keeps outsiders from penetrating the essential delicacy and emotional vulnerability of the Japanese sensibility.\(^3\)

Key elements in the creation of the Japanese sensibility arise from issues of influence, transformation, and national pride. How cultural stimuli from other Asian neighbors are re-created and transformed to Japanese tastes is still a particularly prevalent occurrence even today, and more pointed perhaps, is the role of language in creating Japanese patterns of culture.

The written Japanese language is comprised of three character scripts: Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji. These are all simplifications of Chinese pictographs, with altered meanings and pronunciations from the original. Further complication of the language involves the use of honorific titles and other add-ons, depending on the social status of the company in which one finds oneself. The word order in Japanese (subject, object, verb, or SOV) differs from English (SVO). This creates for its speakers an elongated suspense (by Western standards) before the verb, the real meal of a sentence.

By slight study of the language one finds the notion of groups emerging from the Japanese syntax construct. The language naturally controls its speakers in associations of “kin,” and “outside kin” relations. But the analogies between Japanese language and art come through the indelible ability of the language to speak volumes with so little in terms of syntax. The key to understanding the language lies in the understanding of context. So too it is in art. Art seen as a language unto itself can utilize direct communication through the written word, through calligraphy: where syntax and drawing cohabit and create for each other context and meaning. If this, then, is a legitimate avenue to investigate, one can possibly draw on the play of natural development and the direction of calligraphy and line drawing in cementing the quality of Japan’s art. Similarly, the importance that Zen Buddhism has had on Japanese sensibility is paramount to understanding some of the cultural and aesthetic persuasions, especially in regard to Toshi Ichiyanagi and Piano Media.

So, as an inquiry into both artistic and cultural signifiers, the aim of this thesis is to grasp pertinent facets of the Japanese sensibility. Within the context of the work of Toshi Ichiyanagi, traits and predilections that have been explored through visual art
manifestations, language constructions, and Zen associations will be sustained and gathered as an application of a somewhat complete model unto Piano Media. I will also include in this study elements of process traceable in Piano Media from the unusual cult of the game called Pachinko. The analysis of this game can reveal the predilections of the Japanese towards certain functions of play, as well as the way in which such a game differs in scope from many Western ones.

To strengthen such a complete application, a musical analysis (via set theory) and form analysis will be undertaken on Piano Media. Within the scope offered by set theory analysis, the internal dynamics of partitioning will be explored. Also, the larger scale architecture and how it is related to the smaller inner group workings of the piece will be examined. A synthesis of both the aesthetic and purely mechanical (theoretical) approaches will yield a more complete and revealing picture of the work.
PART. 1
SELECTED ELEMENTS OF JAPANESE CULTURE
II

THE CULTIVATION OF THE JAPANESE SENSIBILITY THROUGH THE ARTS

Early Chinese Influences in Sculpture

The period in Japanese history from A.D. 537-621 is known as the Asuka period and is marked by the introduction of Buddhism to the country and its adoption by Prince Umayado (also known as Shotoku). These significant events were cause for the eventual creation and advancement of a distinct Japanese art and philosophy that would become significant catalysts in the creation of the Japanese aesthetic. Buddhism arrived in Japan via the Korean peninsula, and through the ruler of the State of Paekche, King Syōng Myōng. The Korean king sent manuscripts and images of the Buddha in A.D. 552 and advised the Japanese Court to adopt the new religion that had found itself transported from India, through China and Korea. Initial reception and dissemination of the religion was difficult due to factions and rival families of Shotoku and because of the domestic religion of Shinto. Through the efforts of the Prince, the two religions came to work and co-exist together to such an extent that, even today, the Japanese see no conflict of interest in describing themselves as Buddhist, while also accepting and performing Shinto rites and ceremonies such as New Years Day and other seasonal festivities.

Many of the original documents that were presented by the Korean king included zuzo, a form of iconographic depiction. These documents “by the twelfth century . . .
were being classified by monks, which led to the standardization of many images... the zuzo exerted a profound influence on Japanese Buddhist art.\textsuperscript{4}

Some of the earliest examples of art directly commissioned by Shotoku took the form of statues representing the Buddha. Among the best-known surviving examples are those by the Korean-Chinese immigrant called Tori Busshi (who arrived in Japan in A.D. 532). He created many statues for Shotoku, and his first examples are inevitably drawn from his experience of the sculptures and statues of the Northern Wei Chinese Dynasty. Peter Swan has noted the myriad Chinese influences on Tori’s triad Buddha creation Sukayamuni in the temple of Horyu-ji at Nara:

\begin{quote}
The drapery is symmetrically arranged in clear-cut folds which fall richly but very formally over the pedestal; there is a certain lack of proportion in the limbs; the so called archaic smile on the lips brings a little animation to an otherwise impassive face.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

The domestic creation of the plastic arts was still in its infancy when this trio of statues was created. Many of the early Buddha representations and creations of Tori and his successors were noted for their seriousness, gravity, and highly organized structures. They were constructed, according to Noma Seiroku, with “an awareness of the present world...and a variety of continental traditions being imitated.”\textsuperscript{6} These initial statues were perhaps representations of Chinese ethics or tastes. The initial function of the first statues was to represent the direct imagery for the common people of Japan in order for them to accept this new, mysterious, and wonderful religion. These solemn and grave figures were the ambassadors for Buddhism’s lofty ideas, and, in order to capture the minds of


\textsuperscript{5}Peter C. Swan, \textit{A Concise History of Japanese Art} (Tokto: Kodansha International, 1979), 41.

people, it is not surprising that some forms of the mystical and serious would permeate the initial figures as embodiments of wisdom and the ultimate truth. It is notable that the first efforts to introduce and capture the imagination of the Japanese to the edicts of Buddhism were primarily through imagery and art. Historian George Sansom describes this first encounter with Buddhism as “remarkable that it was those beautiful things rather than to sermons or scriptures that the Japanese people owed their first direct knowledge of the culture which they were about to adopt.”

But it was in these first statues that the essence of a new approach was discernible and comforting: “serene figures standing in their edifice . . . here was a glimpse of paradise.” Indeed, it was these first statues that embodied the sense and wonderment of another world and of a higher salvation, something perhaps very new to Japanese peasant life centered entirely on surviving the current hostilities of the world. But Swan notes that, even in the first examples, a style was emerging that would claim a position as one completely Japanese: “one can already recognize in this triad [Tori’s Sukayamuni] a sense of rhythmical design which was to become one of the characteristics of Japanese art.”

The later Buddha statues differed remarkably and were more a reflection of Japanese society and tastes. Similarly too, in the next hundred years after Tori’s first creation, Buddhism had gained a firm foothold on Japanese society, and the understanding of the religion began to move away from its original pure form. Newly

8Ibid, 64.
9Swan, 42.
created statues functioned now not merely as didactic announcements of the power of the religion, but more for comfort and veneration. In the art work of Hakuho (active 673-685), a more humanistic quality is brought out in the works, a “slenderness of the arms and torso . . . frank open expressions of the face; resistance of aggressiveness and physical power.”¹⁰ Many of the Buddhas’ were much lighter in form than the earlier examples; they were more humanly proportioned and often possessed a great variety of facial expression.

If, as Noritake Tsuda asserts, Tori’s role was for the creation of statues that expressed “supreme feeling which would transcend all human care,”¹¹ then the function of the later Buddhist sculptors was to bring Buddhism back to the world and into the lives of the everyday person. Such human features of proportion and facial expression in the later works show the change in function of the objects. Also, there was a shift in emphasis from the early paradigm of Chinese classic proportions and style to a more domestic reevaluation of the function of the objects and the underlying aesthetics that governed their form.

The Tamamushi Shrine contains some early lacquered panel painting from this period. These examples, known as jutaka, show a precedent for a style that would become popular in later years. The jutaka style of painting usually depicted one of the Buddha’s previous lives. The examples at the Tamamushi Shrine are an embodiment of the “sympathetic and sensitive reception of cultural and technical ideas from earlier


¹¹ Seiroku, 36.

Continental [Chinese] Buddhist art.”\textsuperscript{12} In fact, this first encounter with an influence outside the country’s border was assimilated with great speed: “tremendous cultural receptivity in the Asuka period, therefore, may reflect a new Japanese sense of cultural inferiority in the face of an urbane, continental culture and a concomitant yearning for international parity.”\textsuperscript{13}

It is notable that this influence from beyond Japan is a catalyst for Japanese art. More notable, though, is the indication that the early Japanese artisans were very conscious of taking such models and re-interpreting them to suit their tastes: “they did not completely detach themselves from Tang [Chinese] Art, but rather took the decorative elements they had inherited and transformed them into subtle works displaying an elegance that conformed to the [contemporary Japanese] lifestyles and sensibilities.”\textsuperscript{14}

**The Emergence of Japanese Style**

Within the Japanese world of art, reactions towards the Chinese were initially didactic. Gradually though, aesthetic responses began to curb what was seen by the Japanese as the unemotional rigidity of Chinese art. Ninth-century ash glazed pots from the Shosoin repository display contemporary Japanese artistic attitudes to Continental Art. At Shosoin, earthenware examples are usually well formed by the standard of contemporary Tang canons, though they are glazed in a particularly Japanese fashion.


Here, ash is left to fall naturally over the work, creating an uneven green glaze across the shoulders of the pots. Famous schools of ceramic production, particularly the kilns at Bizen, Shigaraki, and Iga, developed controlled chance effects by the variation in use of different clays and kiln temperatures. At Iga, “rugged, asymmetrical flower vases and waste water containers . . . [in which] the warping or cracking that often occurred in the process of firing these heavy-bodied vessels made them all the more desirable.”15 A craftsman in contemporary China might have seen such a work as unusable or disfigured, but the Japanese taste was one in which imperfections, and those creations attributed to the hand of chance, held the most unpredictable, and therefore greatest beauty.

Similarly, the textures of such wares were venerated for their rough, muted quality, their flaws not seen as such but more as characteristics of austerity. Paul Varley states: “aesthetically, this was a significant transition, because it represented a reassertion of such basic values as naturalness and irregularity.”16 Thus, a new aesthetic emerged that was quickly accepted and internalized as a uniquely Japanese approach. The ceramics that were created at this time at the kilns of Shigaraki, Iga, and Bizen were in stark contrast to the Chinese models of traditional proportion and absolutism. These new modes of creation from Japanese artists “drew attention to themselves, not for their formal symmetry and decorative refinement, but rather for their irregular forms, softly textured surfaces, and surprising lightness.”17 These ceramic vessels provide early

15Guth, 56
17Stanley-Barker, 76.
examples of how Japanese culture, after coming into contact with other societies, has absorbed influences and reinterpreted them according to their own aesthetic persuasions.

By the Fujiwara period (897-1185), the establishment of a Japanese style had become particularly evident in painting:

The growing apart of the two cultures [Japan and China] can be seen in a comparison of painting techniques. In Northern Song [Chinese period 960-1126AD], the flat, colorist tradition of Tang painting was replaced by a linear modeling technique called cunfua, where depth and texture are defined in brush strokes rather than shading. This eventually gave way to an ink monochrome landscape tradition that was enthusiastically adopted by scholars and academy painters alike, spawning a host of competing schools. In Japan, however, the poetic colorist Tang style was retained and its emotive potential was developed so far that eventually Yamamoto-e painting had little in common with either its Chinese contemporary style or its Tang sources.18

The word Yamamoto-e, in fact, means “painting of Japan,” and its first understood examples can be seen in the murals at the Byodoin Phoenix Hall (Kyoto). In these newly understood, purely domestically cultivated paintings, Buddhism (a common Chinese subject) was not necessarily an inspiration for a work:

There are murals in the Horyuji, dating from 1069, which tell the life of Prince Shotoku. By the twelfth century Japan had a portrait painter, Fujiwara Takanobu, recording contemporary personalities at the court. His subjects, supposedly sketched from life, astonished his contemporaries by their fidelity to the originals.19

But in spite of the growing popularity of such secular works, the grip that Buddhism held, not only in works of art, but in many other aspects of emergent individualistic Japanese culture, was without rival.

18Stanley-Barker, 76.

Influences of Zen

The monk Eisai, who taught in the city of Kyoto as early as 1202, pioneered the distinctly Japanese interpretation of Chinese Buddhism, the sect of Zen. The spread of this new philosophy of Buddhist interpretation grew steadily for the next 150 years as monasteries rapidly became established around the surrounding areas of Kyoto. The ruling families and the Shogun Takauji built Zen temples resulting in the Doctrine of Zen coming into favor as a powerful aesthetic adaptation among the nobility. Within these temples and, particularly in the small meditation halls, grew Japanese arts that were significantly distinct from past Chinese models. “In order to impress a rather broad and unsophisticated audience, Buddhist arts of the period had often stressed mechanical finesse and complexity in technique.”

Zen Monks, particularly in the Kyoto area, sought to “counter the debasement of the arts by eliminating ostentatious technique and the confusion of excellence with complexity; they sought to develop highly personal, direct forms of expression rooted in the most profound levels of Buddhist thought.”

These new forms of expression countered the established mediums through the use of sumi-e painting techniques. In sumi-e painting, dark monochrome was favored over the indulgence of color (prevalent in Chinese contemporary art), and brushstrokes relayed simple construction that sought to express more intimate and revealing emotional reactions. In fact, the restrictions placed on the monks became a direct catalyst for them to recreate, in an abstract method, the understanding they had of the essence of reality. In using simplicity the painters reflected the essence of Zen: that the eternal and

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21 Ibid, 226.
incorruptible elements of reality are hidden beneath the complexities and chaos of the everyday world. They were able to transform “an ink painting tradition that had been transmitted to Japan from China centuries before.”

The artistic premise centered on “evoking images of the evanescence of life, the vanity of human passions and a longing for an idealized afterlife.” In expressing a slim form, in monochrome, and with the use of large free areas of ink that often spread random bolts, the beauty is revealed through space and the untouched areas of the paper. These first paintings, in their rough and lively power, were similar to calligraphic contemporary Zen scrolls or bokuseki (instructional phrases or exhortations which were also sharp deviations from contemporary calligraphic practice). Simplicity and naturalness were key aspects to this art inspired by the Zen monks, characteristics that would permeate Japanese cultural and aesthetics predilections for centuries to come.

Concepts of Zen also filtered indirectly into another important art form that was established during the tenth and eleventh centuries, that of the Noh Drama. This drama with music a genre that was an amalgamation of both foreign and Japanese art forms. Noh is steeped in subtle expressions of gracefulness and stasis. Often masks are used in the many dramas that depict mythology, court romance, and morality tales. The word yugen is often used in describing the way in which the drama seeks, in a typically Zen fashion, to coalesce theatrical brilliance with metaphysical content:

The Noh drama, in a way which delighted the men of the era, evoked the invisible world of metaphysics and the spirit of Buddhist


morality by the means of the charm and beauty of the theater; and for this, the masks worn by the chief characters were of basic importance. Along with the rather polished realism of the sculpture of the age, the mask makers consciously imbued them with a quality called ‘intermediate expression,’ whereby a single mask could be used to express joy or anger, pleasure or grief. . . .

. . . this ambivalence in a mask’s expression reflected the aesthetic principle often seen in Zen Buddhist arts, by which a certain flexibility and incompleteness of form challenged the spectator to complete in his own mind the interpretation of a landscape painting or a semi-symbolic dry garden.\(^\text{24}\)

The sect of the Zen Buddhists stood out in the history of Japanese Culture as singularly important. Much of the nation embraced Zen, and its influence permeated all aspects of not only the visual and ceramic arts, but many cultural institutions. It is a unique philosophy in which there is a “strong focus on the particular and the concrete aspects of ordinary experience as the site for the recognition of the persuasive presence of ultimate reality and of pervasive experience of enlightenment.”\(^\text{25}\) Similarly, there is a great concern with the “illusory and empty nature of reality.”\(^\text{26}\) This ideal of interpreting space, and the space that humans exist in, places the onus on the individual to interpret reality. If reality has become only man’s illusion, then to seek out the truth is to eliminate the superficial and look within.

This particular ideal is very evident in interpreting and understanding ink paintings from the seventeenth-century painter Tan’yu (1602-1674). In the hands of Tan’yu, a very distinct form of painting arose that, despite an obvious homage to Chinese


\(^{26}\) Ibid, 110.
disciplines, conveyed a Zen Buddhist, and therefore a Japanese sensibility. Swan asserts that:

Japan was presented with the spectacle of an art completely formed in China; and its great achievement was to recognize that art, to join its production with tremendous creative energy, and to develop it in new ways which China never surpassed.  

It was understood from the Chinese Masters that in ink painting, space was governed and appropriately constructed using a systematic division of the medium (paper/canvas). Objects that appear in the foreground of a painting are larger in size and darker in the quality of the ink than those represented in the background. In the hands of Tan’yu, the representation of space is very dramatic and highly unconventional; he clearly intended to create a sense of deep space and a broad view of the landscapes. A striking contrast to paintings of contemporary Chinese artists can be seen in the way that he uses large sections of open space. These spaces may first be understood as clouds or fog: open structures and trees seem to poke out from the dense haze. Further consideration shows that these large open spaces are the truth within the work; the representations are only the illusions of reality, appearing to punctuate and help direct the real point to the works. This is perhaps the ultimate Zen-thought adaptation to a pictorial art. Much like the conflicts within Zen, Tan’yu’s landscapes “express two conflicting visions, namely the illusion of deep and wide spaces created by the rules of pictorial recession versus the unpainted areas, which permeate and penetrate separate parts of the painting and transform them into undefined surfaces.” These undefined surfaces can be

\[27\] Swan, 44.
realized by the viewer, and viewed individually; the space can be interpreted by each who sees it as representing whatever he/she sees it to be; “the viewer is left to read the unpainted motifs and decide what the unpainted area represents.”

This individual aesthetic is also prevalent in the design and construction of Zen rock gardens, the most famous being at the temple Ryoanji in Kyoto.

Here too, the concept of yugen is consummate in the description of the garden as a remote and mysterious place of dramatic impact that requires a covalence of its opposing abstractions by its contemplator. Indeed, as in the late works of Tan’yu or in the famous emptiness of a Zen rock garden, the “Medieval period courted ambiguity, leaving empty spaces in their compositions for readers or spectators to fill in according to their intuit understanding of the ultimate meaning.”

A completely individual assessment of the works of this period is inevitably linked to the stylized experience of the practice of Zen. Moreover, the way in which nature was represented was never as a force that was tamed by man, but simply as an ever-evolving force that was captured as a still shot of a particular moment through the arts.

Undoubtedly, the influence of Zen Buddhist doctrine had had an overwhelming impact on how artists like Tan’yu viewed the representation of space. But it is also through the direct teaching of Buddhist philosophies that their love and admiration of nature arose. Due to this doctrine, nature as a powerful and unpredictable element became a part of existence that was intensely observed. Chance and unforeseen elements

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29 Ibid, 98.

that occur in nature have played a role as inspired and proven catalysts for Japanese art aesthetics.

The early period of Japanese art was an environment in which Chinese models were copied, yet there had always been an underlying predilection of the Japanese to observe, copy, and then to assimilate and re-forge. The first examples of ink painting show how imitation gradually led to a re-interpretation within the cultural and philosophical stance of the Japanese people and Zen. Their unique sensibility is very much drawn from the natural world occupied by the Japanese archipelago. Joseph Parker observes that:

As a world of changing seasons and trickling streams, the natural world well represented to them the ever-transforming, unreliable, and even paradoxical or dream-like nature of sentient existence in the Buddhist view.  

So, in the arts, and in particular pottery, accidents of nature, or the unpredictable form of an object drew much praise for their adherence to the laws of nature. This is a particularly Japanese understanding of an art’s aesthetic goal, quite contrary to the contemporary Chinese view of perfection through exactness.

**Twentieth-Century Adaptations**

In many ways, the initiation of a purely Japanese Art grew from a curiosity about the models of Chinese origin. By the time that the country had opened its doors again to trade with the West in 1852 (under the subtle suggestion of the American Fleet under Commodore Perry\(^3\)), the Japanese had been in a two-and-a-half-century isolation from

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the outside world. But due to this isolation “Japan . . . achieved a unique cultural maturity”33 that saw the rise in the middle class, (as popular culture) and a move towards the creation of a homogenous if not egalitarian society.

Through this isolation, a particularly introspective and individual development in artistic genres such as ink scrolls, sculpture, and screen painting was fostered. Japan was suddenly now (in 1852) left behind in the struggle to prove itself as a country worthy of international recognition and trade. So, as in so many other aspects of the Japanese culture (written language and painting to name two), artists set about to assimilate, copy, and eventually create anew the foreign (now notably Western) notions of realist painting and other avant-garde institutions. Thus, painting schools were created in Tokyo that taught the new Western Realism. Many of the schools were founded “for ‘the purpose of transplanting the techniques of modern Western art to original Japanese art as an aid to Japanese artists’ . . . [and] to teach ‘theoretical and technical aspects of modern Western art in order to supplement what is lacking in Japanese art.’”34 A notable exponent of this Western approach was Kuroda Seiki, who deftly adapted themes of Japanese tradition through lyricism, which cleverly appealed to the Japanese public at large. Kuroda subtly approached his works using a traditional Japanese poetic stance and sensibility, using Japanese legends and familiar surroundings to naturalize his essentially French-trained quasi-impressionistic painting technique.

32See Appendix 1 for complete timeline of Japanese History.


By the turn of the twentieth-century and the period following the Russo-Japanese War, a number of Japanese artists had become particularly attracted to the new German Expressionism; whether many artists saw the abstraction of art into collage and mechanism as an altruistic Zen creation is unclear. What is clear, though, is the influence of the artist Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901-1977). He served as the founding father of a particular Japanese adaptation of European abstraction, Modernism and Futurist ideals in the mold of the contemporary Italian (Russolo in particular) and Russian artists:

Murayama’s theory of conscious constructivism was first introduced in his April 1923 article ‘Sugiyuku hyugenna (Expressionism expiring).’ In this theory Murayama insisted on the negation of traditional realistic modes of representation, advocating the expression of modern life through abstracted or entirely non-objective forms. Like many of his contemporaries in Europe and Russia, he used the metaphor of construction to disavow both mimetic reproduction and the romantic subjectivity associated with expressionist abstraction. He created the group of artists that worked under the title Mavo. Though each acted individually, they were brought together by the compelling argument of their leader, Murayama. He preached a self-proclaimed version of the European avant-garde, manipulating it for his own Japanese tastes. His main goal was to connect art to everyday experience and the artists were seen as deeply engaged in the evolving conceptions of individualism, national identity, and culture. These were particularly innovative ideals for the period and show a striking and obvious influence from the concepts of Western notions of individuality and the strength of the democratic.

Until its re-alignment with the West, Japan had been ruled through large periods of history by shoguns and military leaders attempting to establish and instill traditional concepts of group dynamics and identity borne through collective workings. In light of

35Ibid, 42.
the nationalism of the ‘20s and ‘30s, this put particular pressure on the Mavo group and where their loyalties lay. The desire for the members of the group to be individuals and express these rights in an artistic light seemed not to mirror the traditional Japanese notions of unity and compliance; indeed, after the triumphs in the Russo-Japanese War, ultra-nationalistic sentiments were harbored and disseminated through propaganda efforts of the government.

The surrealist critic Takiguchi had surmised that the Mavo group had many internal conflicts and a “constant tension between individual artistic self-expression and cultural authority vested in the collective.”36 In spite of these issues, the group was able to mainstream the avant-garde. They were active not only in the visual arts but in theater and performance art events. The “Mavo artists were entertainers using new communication technologies to perform for a mass audience.”37 Due to the radicalism of the group and the impact it had on the public’s view of contemporary art, the legacy of Mavo was inherited and cited well into the latter half of the century. By the opening of Expo ’70 in Osaka, Japan was not only firmly seated as a world economic power, but, due to the efforts of the practitioners in the early Japanese avant-garde, the contemporary arts were on display as an expression of national character.

Expo ’70 has been noted for the huge influx of technology in the art exhibits that were on show. The burst of technology that was the hallmark of that decade in Japan had its precedent during this World Exhibition. But the awesome display of technological


37Weisenfeld, 248.
prowess was more for the expression of avant-garde art as an integrated Japanese cultural institution, than it was purely for show and wonderment. By 1970, and due largely to the efforts at the beginning of the century with Murayama’s group, the acceptance of the avant-garde in Japan was achieved. Alexandra Monroe remarks:

Artists outcast for their perverse unorthodoxy are now reclaimed as national treasures and the avant-garde culture that traditionally received little support among the Japanese establishment has come to be embraced. 38

So from the pavilions of Expo ‘70, public and governing bodies came to understand and accept the importance of contemporary Japanese avant-garde art. In increasing numbers, after 1970, artists working in many fields in Japan became increasingly drawn to the use of technology; and in particular, they recognized technology as a force indicative of Japanese culture.

By the early 1990s, the Japanese artist and former model Mariko Mori (b. 1968) found recognition through photography and video installations that combined traditions of cultural life in Japan with traditions of technological life. If the work of the artists involved in the Expo ‘70 was the beginning of a trend, then Mori’s is the apogee of this movement. Mori is able to capture traditional iconography, but in ways that expose myriad technological imaging techniques and manipulative devices that bring these symbols into the contemporary. Junichi Shioda further adds:

The traditional images are interpreted in new ways with the use of cutting edge technology. The seemingly contradictory elements of spiritual culture and contemporary technology are fused in a unique way, so that from the vantage point of the West, Mori’s art fits certain stereotypes of Japan perfectly. 39

The implementation of current technologies in Mori’s work is a function of how, after 1970, the boom in Japan’s economy and technology industry brought culture and high culture (art) closer together. Technology became a major industry through the 70s and 80s and shaped attitudes both in Japan and in the West. From this premise, then, Mori’s art reflects Japan as a culture that is embedded in the fixation with technology, and the popular, cult-like hold of Modernization. In this new light, Mori’s art may well reflect a new point in Japanese art because “Western models have been followed in Japan in almost every field of endeavor since the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the subsequent path of modernization has diverged abruptly from the traditional culture that existed up to that time.”

The focus of this chapter has been the development of Japanese art through cited examples that illustrates the way in which art was created, its origins, and its precedents. Shioda’s comment that the nature of Japanese art is one that was transplanted from China, and then developed through myriad outside influences is completely valid. Japanese art sits as a testament to the adaptation of models and the reforming of these models into the sensibilities of the Japanese aesthetic.

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40 Ibid, 81.
THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE: ITS ADAPTATION AND STRUCTURE

To investigate at least a small area of the spoken language of the Japanese people can certainly give an important insight into how Japanese people construct thoughts, and describe the abstract. It also provides a way in which to enter into a paradigm of thinking, and at the same time assess those issues and predilections that give the language such power in shaping people’s perception of the real and the artistic world. With just a brief introduction to the many facets of the Japanese language, one can begin to understand how certain artistic persuasions were derived from the way in which language functions, and indeed how the language came to be written (very important here, since the Japanese language is an adaptation of Chinese pictographic script). Also, the study of the language can point out how various cultural phenomena came into existence, and how these are still present today.

Implications of the SOV Construction

Japanese language syntax, unlike English, is constructed through the Subject, Object, Verb (SOV) sequence. This essential consideration, though a basic observation, nonetheless reveals many characteristics of culture that mirror its form. In an SOV language, the verb of a sentence is the last piece of information conveyed to the listener. In English, sentences are of the SVO variety, e.g. ‘John went to the library;’ compare this to Japanese, John-san wa toshokan ni ikiimashita (John [subject marker] library to went). Even in this simple example, the construct shows a distinct structure concealing the true
direction (or verb important information) until the end of the sentence. A simplified schematic highlights its structure more clearly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>1. temporal</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Interactional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. locative</td>
<td>Adjectival/Predicate</td>
<td>Particles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. joint action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. method</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. starting point</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. direction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. object</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e.g.,

Hara-san wa ashita kodomo to densha de Tokyo ni iki masu ne

Translation-

Hara Mr/Ms [subject marker] tomorrow children with train by Tokyo to go [interactional particle]

**Fig. 1.** Tabulation and Schematic of Japanese SOV sentence structure showing its four constituents and sample sentence presented in both Japanese and English translation.

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41This is a simplified schematic; topic markers in Japanese are marked by either *wa* or *ga*, and joint actions (reciprocals) are *to*. Joint actions are non-directional datives, *ni*. Method is marked with *de*, the starting point or Ablative with *kara*. Direction can either be Allative, *de*, or a Directional Dative *ni*. Object markers are either Affective, Traversal or Cathectic and are all marked with *o*. Interactional particles are added after the verb and include *ne* and *yo*; both of these markers either seek agreement or state an opinion of the speaker. They are not essential to the grammar for the purpose of intrinsic information dissemination, but rather post-inflections that subtly seek the listener’s commentary on the information.
As can be seen in Fig. 1, there is a distinct difference between Japanese and English phrases. Further implications arise, not only in terms of the composed form, but also by how the speaker naturally collects the information provided to him or her and converts this syntax into the order required to present. A further complication arises in the system of honorifics and its use when talking and communicating with superiors, or those outside of the family or social group. More problems arise between “men’s language” as opposed to “women’s language.” Though this does not change the standard word ordering or structure, it does create longer sentences that are usually laced with self-deprecating and very polite respectful forms of names and verb stems, suffixes and prefixes. But overwhelmingly, the stress of the verb and its placement in the sentence is the main difference in structure and associated cognition between a Japanese and English speaker.

The verb for the infinitive ‘to be’ in Japanese is the word desu. Japanese exhibits the interesting phenomenon of not requiring subject-verb agreement. In its informal guise, the verb ‘to be’ is da. It can be used for the present or past tense and does not require any specifications in terms of the number of people or things that it is referring to. In fact, the Japanese language is highly reliant on context. Speakers rarely use personal pronouns because in conversation it is recognized that the person speaking can be identified and that the information is a personal reflection of the speaker. In this case, then, the language makes great use of short and incomplete sentences, or simplex utterances. As Samuel Martin explains: “The essential notion is that a nuclear sentence- Yobu ‘someone calls someone,’ ookii ‘Its big,’ Hon da, ‘It’s a book,’- will stand as a complete sentence in Japanese, though it may be expanded to give further information,
e.g., Ha ha ga yobu, ‘Mother calls.’” In Martin’s last example, “Ha ha ga yobu,” the verb was the principal element of the utterance, and one that was shown to be completely acceptable and understandable as a simplex. Adding context to this was achieved through the nomination of a subject, ha ha, and the appropriate subject marker—though this situation need not be dependent on the need to validate context.

Japanese language, then, is very much verb-centered; Senko Maynard affirms that the “most important part of the sentence is the verb element, all other aspects are specified only when necessary, all are added before the verbal element. Contrast this with English sentence structure in which one is required to identify the grammatical subject, verb and sometimes the object.” With this element in mind, it is not difficult to draw parallels to early Zen art in which the picture space was largely vacant: what was present was the intrinsic verb, the main body of information (e.g. the work of Tan’yu as discussed in the first chapter). In a completely Zen fashion, the listener or observer becomes one who understands through context, or--in the case of the paintings of Tan’yū—creates his or her own context and completes syntax that would normally precede the verb.

The concept of individual context through non-verbal communication is a primary characteristic of the Japanese language system. Space and information are usually released and distributed often without the spoken word, or more often with very few words. Because of the verb’s importance in the language, much more can be implied and

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gathered by listeners who are within the limits of the specified context. The communicators of Japanese have developed an uncanny sense and respect for the feelings of others and have a large system of behavioral codes of body language that convey vast amounts of information.

Group Associations

The Japanese language naturally applies to its speakers the notions of groups and the distinction between those who are within the area of kin and those of the “outside.” For one’s own mother, one can use okasan, or more traditionally, ha ha. The words ha ha cannot be used for anybody else’s mother. Similarly, chi chi for father has as its equivalent otosan if talking of somebody else’s father. These kin terms are not terms of endearment, but simple neutral noun words. The same is so for all members of one’s own family: siblings in one’s own family have different devices of referral than when referring to another family’s siblings. But this system of identifying groups and pointing them out has grown over the centuries to create a group driven society. In fact, just about every aspect of Japanese society is conducted in a way as to favor the importance of the group at large over the differences in individuals. This can be seen from the way addresses are written (City, State, Ward, Street, House, Person), to the simple fact that names list the Family name first, then the individual. Similarly, if working for a company, you are socially described and introduced to others by means of

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44For example, when talking about “my older brother,” one uses ani, but referring to “your older brother,” one uses onisan. A generic word for brother doesn’t exist.

45This is evident in the age-old description that the Japanese people use for their society, ware ware nihonjin, “We Japanese.” Indeed it is very common for Japanese customs, and any other activities that are traditionally Japanese, to be described to foreigners in terms of group associations through the use of the ware ware, rather than using personal pronouns of the speaker. A native speaker sees his/her role as speaking for not only a place in society, but for society itself.
company name, job position, and (your) family name. The larger group always takes precedent as the more important force in social relations and interactions. Hence, society came to a point in which homogeneity of race and appearance was reflected in language use for those who were outside of the very narrow visual traits that termed someone “Japanese.” For anybody that does not “look” Japanese, the exclusion is afforded through the word *gaijin*, which means a person of a different place. These groups of association exist in defined environments that distinguish between *soto* (outside) and *uchi* (inside) relations, but also inter-society kinship groups. Merry White notes that groups can arise due to:

> Political or contractual dimensions (expressed in ideological terms, whether those of religion, business, or politics); it may be marked, as in some ethnic groups, by common rituals and sentiments; or may be measured by active participation and constant interaction with other members.46

Similarly, the system used for the counting of objects highlights the differences of objects in appearance. Japanese uses a counting system in which counting three glasses requires the use of the counter for “things that are long and cylindrical” that is added to the number required (see Fig. 2). Primarily, objects are grouped not because of their functionality or common usage, but their form and shape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counter</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ko-</strong></td>
<td>small compact objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>satsu-</strong></td>
<td>bound objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>soku-</strong></td>
<td>shoes, stockings (paired objects)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>dai-</strong></td>
<td>machine, vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>tsu-</strong></td>
<td>letters and documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hai-</strong></td>
<td>liquid, cups, glasses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**hon-** long cylindrical objects  
**mai-** flat thin objects

**Fig. 2.** Counters for items and their reliance on group stressed similarities (this list is not exhaustive)

From these brief examples given, the idea of the group as a driving force is particularly evident from the construction of the language of Japanese. But is this a phenomenon of the written language, or part of the culture before the language was written down?

**Origins and Assimilations**

The written Japanese language was actually a gradual corruption or (as has been discussed in previous chapters with regards to art) an adaptation of Chinese script. Scribes from China arrived in Japan around A.D. 400; the Japanese culture at the time was eager to adopt a writing system and was fascinated by the Chinese pictographic script. But the differences in the construction, sound system, and other matters caused them from the very beginning to adapt the script into a more malleable form. In these first early corruptions writing “followed the conventions of literary Chinese to some extent, though also showed the linguistic influence of Japanese.”47 There were some word reorderings in the early Chinese texts that were brought to Japan. These were transcribed according to Chinese pictographs, though only into a context of understandable construction to the Japanese who read them (in Chinese). This notion of transcribing one language’s written form (here Chinese pictographs) into another language that had no written element was quite an innovation. Essentially, the early Japanese scholars were seeking to take written Chinese and mold it to spoken Japanese word orderings:

Until about the seventh century writing in Japan meant composing either in [pure] Chinese style, or in a style which bore a substantial resemblance to this . . . in this setting, the first texts which were written in Chinese characters but arranged entirely in accordance with Japanese syntax may have been at the time almost revolutionary in their impact.\textsuperscript{48}

The complete Japanese adaptation of Chinese came later with the creation of three distinct scripts: Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji. Hiragana is a simplification of certain Chinese pictographs creating a phonetic alphabet for the polysyllabic Japanese (as opposed to the monosyllabic Chinese), as well as in verb stems, articles, and topic and subject markers. Katakana is also a deviation from Chinese script and is used for all foreign words (it is also a phonetic alphabet that mirrors Hiragana), while Kanji is the original Chinese script used to convey meaning in nouns, verbs, and the like.

**Loan Words and Code Switching**

So, from the very beginning of Japanese cultural life, the concept of adaptation has prevailed. Not only in the realm of art has the use of assimilation and gradual transformation taken place, but here, too, we see it in the very system in which communication is transmitted. It is a particularly prevalent aspect of the Japanese sensibility to take foreign things or influences, then recreate them to suite their own individual taste. Because of the Meiji restoration in the latter part of the nineteenth century, this particular phenomenon is very active in language today. Through the re-acquaintance and more constant presence of Western influences through the twentieth century, foreign words have permeated conversational Japanese speech. In fact, modern Japanese, as White duly notes, is “laced with words from Portuguese, French, German, and English, making it a living record of waves of cultural contact. For the Japanese, the

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid, 31.
social, rather than the cultural, identity is most salient and most defended.”

The use, though, of foreign words within the standard contemporary Japanese communication system is based, and modeled, on the first encounters that the Japanese had with foreign languages (the first, of course, was Chinese):

The system for employing loan words from English and other European languages as adjectives, adverbs and verbs is exactly the same as that developed for items earlier transferred from Chinese. It must be noted that almost all English loans are grammatically characterized for their nominal status and therefore have to undergo class conversion.50

In particular, the rise of English as a preferred foreign language has promulgated the acceptance of English within conversational Japanese through loan words. In fact, in the 1972 Kojihan Dictionary, 94 percent of the 7,045 loan words were English in origin. The integration of such words reflects the spirit of how Chinese was first assimilated into Japanese sentence constructions, though English enjoys far less of the adaptability the ancient Chinese contained. The early Japanese adaptations of the Chinese script took nothing of the original rules and structures of the host language:

Extraordinary freedom was enjoyed by almost any word . . . to enter into what one might call atypical syntactic functions; nouns can function like verbs; verbs and adjectives likewise may be used like nouns or adverbs, depending on the syntactic and semantic context . . . most words can/could function as other parts of speech depending on their place in the sentence.51

The Japanese people, in their estimation of the usefulness of foreign loan words, implement them in many ways that are un-grammatical yet succinct to the users. Louis Perez notes the differences: “Spoken Chinese is tonal and mostly monosyllabic . . .

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Japanese, however, is highly inflected and polysyllabic. Word order is much more important in Chinese than Japanese.52

One simple modern example of such adaptation is the creation of a verb form from a loan word (Fig. 3). Here the English adjective “romantic” has been the source word the Japanese have enthusiastically assimilated into common conversation, but with a different manner of construction. As seen in Fig. 3, romantic is made a hybrid through the adaptation of the Japanese verb suru (to do, or make). In this case, the stem or original English word loses its context and word class status. This is a particularly important and necessary process for the assimilation of the loan word into Japanese.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English: romantic</th>
<th>Japanese phonetic reading: lomantiku</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(adjective)</td>
<td>(loan word of no word class53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japanese Hybrid Verb: lomantiku suru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(verb suru ‘do make’                         )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 3.** Use of English loan-word to create new English-Japanese form; the synthesis of the languages is facilitated though the negation of the original word class of the English word romantic.

The verb suru has become a somewhat reliable utility when a loan word is required to undergo class conversion. In fact, in the context of hybrid creations, Leo Loveday comments that:


53 Japanese treat loan words as uninflected nouns that do not belong to any word class, thus allowing the speaker freedom to designate and manipulate the word to any class by suffixation.
The basic verb forms and grammatical apparatus are inevitably drawn from Japanese resources, and the matrix language is fixed as Japanese. No entire intra-sentential switch is observable, although as separate titles, as labels, and as peripheral advertising slogans and messages, total switches into English are frequent.\textsuperscript{54}

Often, loan words are used to particular advantage as multifaceted utilities in which their original grammatical context and class is ignored. For the sake of expressing new ideas in the host language, their original context and meaning is radically morphed. Another example is the use of the English word \textit{private}, phonetically represented in Japanese as \textit{puraibato}. In its original form as a noun, its designation into the host language of Japanese can produce any desired word-class utility (see Fig. 4).

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
puraibato ga / o / no & NOUN FORMS \\
puraibato ni & ADVERBAL FORM \\
puraibato suru & VERBAL FORM \\
puraibato na & ADJECTIVE FORM \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Fig. 4. Various forms of the Japanese synthesized English word “private”

Hence, the “morpho-syntactic paradigm for integrating foreign loan words mirrors and derives from those established for Chinese loan [words] a millennium ago.”\textsuperscript{55} So, as a precedent to other forms of adaptation, the confrontation of the Japanese language with other languages has inevitably ended in assimilations and reconstructions. This is a prevalent cultural fact of Japanese society. The culture’s ability to absorb influences for their foreignness, while concurrently adapting and reclaiming them within understood

\textsuperscript{54}Loveday, 135.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid, 139.
modes of Japanese predilection is unique. Japanese people consider the idea of admiring
the outside, seeing its exoticness and conquering its essence, as a particularly ethno-
centric process.

But there are perhaps other reasons for the Japanese people to adopt foreign
words. The sense that these words in their original forms may have deviated in structure,
placement and even meaning is of little consequence to the Japanese users. What holds
pertinence is the newness of the words and their significance as symbols of the West.
Indeed, the proliferation of English in its Katakana form and even in pure English script
finds its way into advertising through mass media on a daily basis. The fact that many who
encounter this English, either in its original script or in its phonetically translated
Katakana equivalent, actually can understand completely the meanings of the words
seems less important than the impact that using such words has. Similarly, English is
mixed ad hoc with Japanese in billboard and television media in such a way that there is
little semblance of the final product drawing on grammatical rules from either English or
Japanese. This mixing of scripts is a variant on the other forms through which English
has been assimilated; here though, this type of code switching crosses into the realm of
English as a visual signifier of something exotic, and therefore desirable.
PACHINKO AND ZEN: UNKNOWING BEDFELLOWS

Pachinko is generally regarded by the Japanese people as a national pastime. The game consists of steel ball-bearings that fall through pins and slots. The game is incredibly popular, with an estimated 40 to 50 million people professing to be players and enthusiasts (about a quarter of the population). Pachinko is believed to have originated in Osaka Prefecture in the 1920s and is thought to be a corruption, or in effect a Japanese adaptation, of the “Corinth Game” from Chicago. In the actual game, one propels numerous eleven millimeter steel ball-bearings through a maze of pins that directly or indirectly guide the motion and direction of the balls; they travel either into holes that contain jackpots, or to the bottom of the housed cabinet, in which case they are lost. Pachinko is a simple game relying on little outside influence from the player; in fact, it is only the initial propulsion of the ball that is influenced by the operator of the game. Because of Pachinko’s striking difference to, say, American pinball (in which the operator is always potentially in control), it has evolved into something that is distinctly Japanese and something that appeals to Japanese notions of play. Social commentator Yoshio Sugimoto has claimed:

One may also argue that Pachinko attracts so many Japanese partly because it is essentially detached from direct human interaction . . . to the extent that mass culture points to daily realities which the masses wish to
evade, the non-interactive quality of Pachinko games indirectly testifies to the intensity of group pressures and constraints on the working and community lives of the Japanese.  

As a pastime peculiar to the Japanese, Pachinko presents the ultimate tool for the individual to exercise and witness the process of chance (favorable outcomes are only an initial potentiality). Unlike the very hands-on approach of American pinball, Pachinko presents to its players the very non-committal Zen ideal of creation of circumstance through chance process, or non-mindedness. This is because the game is constructed so that an initial flight of a small ball-bearing that travels through corridors randomly triggers other balls to fall through the maze without the influence of outside forces of the player. Rupert Cox has noted:

Play in Japan is based on the absence of a distinction between creativity and order, and that even in structured, disciplined pursuits . . . play is a fundamental aspect . . . expressing as ludic and logical a particular relationship between nature and culture.

In this assessment then, the comparison of play to the structures of nature and its very special relationship to Japanese culture parallels the idea that “the Japanese world view does not conceive of man and nature as polarities, but as mutual parts of an all encompassing whole.”

In this case the act of Pachinko not only involves the individual released from the struggles of a group-structured society (Pachinko is solitary entertainment), but also the

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individual contemplating of the mechanics of nature. The process of Pachinko is appealing due to its familiar concepts and its pattern of distribution of events in a natural way. Barthes sees this process as an authentication of man within the natural environment.

Japanese notions of the function of art indicate that, “they [sic] did not simply imitate nature in their art, they added and subtracted from things in nature to create or reproduce the essential principles perceived there.” Similarly, Barthes is suggesting that Pachinko could be conceived in a like fashion to the process and principles of chance expressed in the asymmetrical glazings of early pottery artifacts from the thirteenth-century kilns of Bizen or Iga, or the action in the creation of calligraphy by Zen monks. In this light, Pachinko is perhaps a 20th Century reflection on the forces of nature, contained, packaged, and presented through the ritual of a popular game.

Dogen (1200-53), a famous Zen scholar from the thirteenth century, commented that to achieve the path to enlightenment is to “study the self, and to study the self is to forget the self, and to forget the self is to be authenticated by all things.” Referring to nature and reality (“all things”), one can draw a parallel to Pachinko. As a game it embodies the concept of nature framed. This is a particularly appealing idea to the Japanese people, whose relationship to nature is often manifested in the garden arts (e.g. ikebana, bonsai, etc.), where containment is the tool for seeking beauty. One need only to think of the framed Zen dry rock gardens that proliferate the environs of Kyoto. But in these cases, nature is framed within the context of stability and permanence, or a state of

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captured stasis. Pachinko, on the other hand, is a completely active containment. Zen scholar Daisetz Suzuki sees the relationship of Zen and nature as such:

It is not a sense of identity nor of tranquility that Zen sees and loves in Nature. Nature is always in motion, never at a standstill; if Nature is to be loved, it must be caught while moving and in this way its aesthetic value must be appraised.  

From this, then, it is possible to approach Pachinko as the very essence of how Zen interprets nature as action. Pachinko unveils the action and processes that lie within the framework of nature, the underlying principles of cause and effect, and the mechanics of chaos. In a similar vein, because of one’s avoidance of real involvement in the process of the game (the game is a compounding of accumulated possibilities), players succumb to what Suzuki might see as the great and true aim of Zen: “the absence of selfhood and the merging of subject and object in one absolute emptiness.” Possibly, Pachinko is a representation of nature as an impermanent phenomenon (nature “caught while moving”).

The game perhaps also represents a compaction of a progression of time (as an evolutionary process) presented as a series of possible paths that a ball bearing has to follow. It is rather a concrete example of the scientific theory of chaos, in which initial conditions can produce results that are hard to predict because of the many compounded events throughout the process.

Pachinko introduces a set of conditions that seem appealing to a very large number of Japanese people. While Pachinko is not an art, it represents, for those who play it, the conditions and situations that are often prevalent within artistic modes of action. Its dilemma is much like the Zen conundrum, that the beauty of a flower cannot

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61 Ibid, 352.
exist outside of itself: beauty is an intangible that exists only as a manifestation. In a similar way, the act of Pachinko is like a Zen meditation and a confrontation of the loss of ego. The actual machine and the balls are nothing special or extraordinary; they are merely tools required for the potential for something to be created and witnessed. By this rationale, the mechanics of the game are as much an aspect of play as they are of perhaps an artistic ritual. Seeing the game as a ritual has useful parallelisms in many of the Zen arts of Japan. Barthes adds:

The propulsion of the ball is at best only delicately constrained or halted (but not at all directed) by the hands of the player, who with a single movement, moves and observes: this hand is therefore a hand of an artist (in the Japanese fashion), for whom the (graphic) feature is a controlled accident. Pachinko reproduces in short, on the mechanical level, precisely of painting alla prima which insists that the line be drawn in a single movement, once and for all.62

The association that Barthes makes with the painters is an illuminating one. Though the game of Pachinko relies heavily on the act of chance, the initial propulsion of the ball accounts (like initial conditions involved with chaos theory) for a specified potential of outcomes. This means that a slight change in the force applied to the initial action of the ball can cause incredibly varied results between turns. Barthes applies the analogy to a painter with the assumption that this initial release of the ball accounts for an intended outcome, like a painter’s brushstroke. This is true to an extent, but is perhaps only pertinent to a finite group of possible outcomes. While there may be some artistic element involved with the desire for an outcome through specified ball propelling techniques, actual predictable results will obviously fall within a larger area of possibilities. Because of this, action painting, like Pachinko, requires an acceptance of the

consequences of the results from an empty mind. Hence, Pachinko plays in so well with the Zen idea of action through inaction, and authentication through nature.

Mastering an art like calligraphy requires the practice of the mechanics of the art to utmost perfection. After this has been studied, the student is to let go of the training and go beyond mechanical perfection. The second stage of the training then opens the door to a higher plane of achievement in which the student is not “aware” of what he/she is doing, but indeed ‘becomes one with the brush.’ At this point, the student is moving beyond art and into ritual. Playing Pachinko is perhaps a very fast way to experience this higher level. The movement of the balls, or the mechanics, occurs outside of, and unconnected to the player in a perfect Zen situation (the ego is absent); what is witnessed is the pure ritual of the act and the either good or bad outcome (which unto itself becomes irrelevant to the greater act of process). For many players, it would seem the outcome of winning or losing takes second place to the act of ritual. In this sense, the dichotomy of what Pachinko represents as an artistic ritualistic process, and as a pastime, further cements the view of Cox:

The other theme that emerges from . . . cultural history is the ambiguity of Japanese ways of playing which seems to be a mixture of opposing categories: the sacred and the secular, the aesthetic and the ascetic, the serious and the frivolous . . . A Japanese way of playing is to recognize that we are talking simultaneously of the creative experience of participants and also of the structural logic of certain activities.

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63There is a case made for Pachinko being yet another gambling attraction, and there are in fact so called “professional players;” but overwhelmingly the stakes and the winnings are small. This is particularly evident by the items available for winners at Pachinko parlors; small stuffed animals, toys, snack food, cigarettes, etc. Such prizes are awarded by the amount of Pachinko balls that players collect through winnings on the machines—no one becomes a millionaire playing the game.

Pachinko ultimately embodies the dilemma that is often cited as particularly Japanese in nature: the notion of the contradictory. Pachinko is where the realm of the aesthetic (in particularly the Zen idea of relinquishing of the ego through ritual) encounters gaming, entertainment, and popular culture.
I express my mind
using a brush instead of my tongue
and you seize my meaning
hearing my words with your ears

Gozen bungaku zenshu, vol. 3

V

SOME EXAMPLES OF JAPANESE SENSIBILITIES

The Doctrine of Modernization

Thus far, the exegesis of the Japanese people through their language, arts, and pastime of Pachinko has revealed a certain commonality of purpose. In particular, strong forces in Japanese culture stem from collectivism, Zen, and foreign-model adaptation. These are all classic and well identified by anthropologists as some of the traits common to the characteristic social organization of Japanese culture. But added also to these already studied elements, and particularly pertinent to the study of Piano Media, should be modernization. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney has said of Japan that,

Of all the conjunctures, the two that sent the most profound and lasting shock wave throughout the country were [sic] Japan’s encounter with the high civilization of Tang China between the fifth and seventh centuries, and the encounter with Western Civilization at the end of the nineteenth century.65

From the years 1612 through 1868 an unparalleled development, in isolation, of Japanese facets of culture occurred. “Japanese popular culture came into maturity during Japan’s period of isolation when the nation’s surplus found its outlet in the field of cultural

activities and developments. But with the introduction of the West through Commodore Perry in 1852, influences from outside were once again permitted; and more importantly, they began to shape the direction of modern Japanese society. It was the “Meiji Restoration in 1868 . . . [that] made economic modernization a top national priority.” Indeed, the notion that Japan had lagged behind in the face of the West gave great cause for the country to quickly and decisively regroup and to seek respect as a power and culture that was on equal terms with all its modern counterparts. Western concepts of ideology, philosophy, and art were embraced in a zealou...
During the Second World War a group of technology-minded bureaucrats devoted considerable effort to formulating a long-term strategy for technological development . . . these technology bureaucrats sought to devise a technology policy for Japan that would overcome the country’s backwardness, lack of sufficient raw materials, and weak scientific base.²⁸

In light of the efforts of the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) it can be noted that this stance was not unusual. The policies that the bureaucrats instilled in 1941 were not only for economic strength but nationalistic purposes. Their goals were:

- the establishment of a total war state system of science-technology
- rapid development of technology
- epoch-making advancement of science
- promotion of scientific spirit of the nation²⁹

Even with the defeat by the Allies, the years following the War were similarly dedicated to economic success, though now without any of the nationalistic sentiments seen during the war. The post-WW II period completed the process that had begun in the Meiji era: the internationalization of the Japanese economy and elements of society. The word *kokusaika* reflected this new spirit and is constructed from the Kanjis for country and outside influence. This expression is “used by the Japanese to convey the idea of ‘becoming international’ in the sense of achieving greater congruence with widely accepted social and economic standards or practices—both to lubricate concrete transactions with the outside world, and to avoid being seen as divergent or standoffish.”³⁰

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The progress of modernization through the twentieth century in Japan has produced an unusual acceptance not only of contemporary architecture, avant-garde art, modern cinema, and contemporary music, but also everyday activities that embrace “the new.” Objects and activities that embody technology are the most desirable acquisitions, for they are a manifestation of the contemporary enlightenment of Japan. This embrace of technology in Japan was created to bolster the country economically and socially. But the underlying history of the Japanese people is to adapt ideals and value systems to the betterment or perceived longevity of the culture. Kuroda and Hayashi further the argument:

A casual review of Japanese History reveals a definite pattern of Japan adjusting to challenges . . . the Japanese predisposition is ‘how do I adjust’ to new situations . . . The Japanese do not perceive challenges as things to respond to in a binary form.71

The above is a critical point given the history of how the Japanese have been able to assess the outside world and selectively embrace elements that were both necessary (such as the adaptation to Modernization in the Meiji era and after) or inevitable (such as the adaptation of Chinese script for the purpose of creating a written Japanese language).

**Japanese Culture: Some of the Forces of Cultivation**

Thus, in assessing some aspects of the culture of Japan, consideration about its societal nature, and the relevance of the facets of this study to *Piano Media*, inevitably resound to

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the paradigm that Alfred Krober and Clyde Kluckholm have supported: that “culture consists not merely of the visible or the material products created by that behavior, but also of the invisible ‘ways of thinking and feeling’ which constitute the ‘inner workings’ of social existence.”

Hence, the idea of what Japanese Culture embodies goes beyond the readily definable expressions that have been addressed here already—such as language, Zen and Art—into what Duncan McCargo sees as:

…core values and beliefs which are held to underpin society. These include collectivism (an emphasis on the interests of the family, village, company or nation rather than these of the individual); consensus (a preference for harmony or agreement over open dissent and disputation); and hierarchy (accepting the importance of seniority and status).

This rationale, that many elements of behavior and social action are products of culture, is an intrinsic ideal. Societies are inevitably manifestations of culture. In this sense then, such an embodiment can only be created by the State (through a history of education) so that the artifact of culture is a construct, carefully defined, yet constantly evolving. As Ohnuki-Tierney has said, the influence of China in the early fifth to seventh century and the creation of a Japanese political and aesthetic doctrine of conduct by Prince Shotoku were significant events that established patterns of culture for future generations. But add to this a general model of language adaptation, as forwarded by Steven Pinker, and it is easily understandable that culture can be informed not only through education, but through a gradual building of a system of values that eventually becomes innate and indistinguishable from culture as a learned artifact.

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Language as Culture

The assimilation of foreign things and values has been a particularly strong catalyst in the development of Japanese sensibilities; Suzuki Norihisa writes that “of the foreign, anything that looked useful and assumable was promptly adopted, but the Japanese were quick to sense and reject whatever appeared likely to cause confusion and discord within their relatively integrated society.” It can be seen that the adaptation of the existing environment, or an environment that was introduced, formed the basis from which the Japanese people discretely selected elements for their further cultivation. This is not unlike how the model of language creation, through various stimuli and inherent genes, is achieved (see Fig. 5). Pinker’s model for the acquisition of language assumes that for our species, the capability of producing and developing language is an inherent ability, an “innate psychological mechanism.” But this behaviorist mechanism has to be stimulated through the social environment and through the already adapted and acquired skills and knowledge that sensory processing achieves.

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According to Pinker’s model in Fig. 5, after collected data is processed by a psychological mechanism within the brain, behavior is regulated accordingly. Furthermore, this pattern of behavior is both social and language based. Hence, Pinker sees culture as a manifestation of society and society’s products and actions. This suggests that the environment (defined in social terms through education systems, behavioral patterns, et al.) provides stimuli to the innate psychological functions of the brain. Through this system, a constantly revolving process enables language (through its

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output into the environment) to become data, which is reassumed by its speakers (a reiterative function). Pinker’s idea is that there is a continual development of language (and its associated cultural manifestations) because of the feedback involved in his model.

Furthermore, the assertions of a forty-year study by Yasumasa Kuroda and Chikio Hayashi state, “the root of Japanese culture is the language, which in turn is affected by religious beliefs.”76 Results from their strong case study suggest that the language was essential in the dissemination and refinement of Japanese culture. There are examples that support this theory occurring within the spoken language. As remarked previously, the language is apt at subtly demarcating relations between groups. This is especially prevalent between social/public versus intimate/family relationships. The language produces a social response that generates notions of inside (uchi) and outside (soto) relations. Kuroda and Hayashi have argued that the Japanese language “predisposes its speakers to pay attention to human relations or the entire social context rather than to self or the individual.”77 White has noted manifestations of this concept in social behavior:

The strictness with which the Japanese boundaries are laid down stems in part from a long cultural tradition of inside-outside distinctions surrounding the use of space and the demarcation of borders . . . Japanese are socialized in early childhood to differences between inside and outside.78

Here is a point for the description of social order and behavior in terms of language structure, although many other cultural phenomenon can be drawn in the support of a


77Ibid, 17.

behavior through language model. What is completely assured about the Japanese language is its lack of measure for linearity, its ambiguity (due to heavy reliance on context), and non-binary assessing of reality. And with these characteristics it is not a difficult step to see why Buddhism could be so naturally accepted.

**Zen as Culture**

It is overwhelmingly apparent that, like many other aspects of Japanese culture, Buddhism was transplanted from a foreign shore and then was altered to Japanese tastes: “with the arrival of Buddhism and Confucianism, a deliberate modification, with attendant changes of emphasis occurred at the very moment of selection. The Japanese only took what they felt was needed.”79 Of all the major outside influences to be brought to Japan, Buddhism, through its domestic creation, Zen, has been one of the most significant and long lasting institutions. The roots of Zen lie within the thinking and action of Japanese culture; they are as deep as its history and first formation. Many scholars have noted the impact that Zen has had on Japanese thought:

> So pervasive is its influence, not only in the area of religion, but in Japanese culture generally, that any attempt to comprehend these dimensions of Japanese life would be impossible if it did not take Buddhism into account.80

The role of Zen is clear when examining the artifacts of culture, namely the arts. Zen inspired and produced ink painting and calligraphy, as well as haiku and other forms of poetry. Similarly, garden arts and martial arts are all products born from Zen


philosophy. To ingrain itself into the habits and the character of the Japanese psyche, its forward momentum needed little pushing by its founders. Because Zen rejected many of the complex and elaborate philosophical problems that had been brought from China (and before this from India), it was able to replace these earlier traits with a ritualistic form that could be brought into everyday life. Through this move, Zen found a presence within society, and was not solely limited to monasteries. Indeed, it must be said that Zen’s influence on, and its relation to, Japanese society today was inevitable. The fact that it was adopted among early rulers and formed over centuries as the prime model for philosophical thought duly reveals how influential it has been.

But Zen was also most likely an instrumental force in the cultivation of language forms and structures. Zen was very readily adapted to, and to some extent, suited to the forms of the Japanese language that make it so distinct. Thomas Hoover has noted:

Zen Culture is equivalent to Japanese Culture and evolved in a natural ordered fashion as the Ch’an masters intuitively realized the existence of the non-verbal half of the mind during the T’ang era (618-907). They, and later the Japanese used this knowledge to create a spectrum of art and cultural forms which exploits, strengthens and sharpens these same non-verbal faculties.  

This valuable point in the study of Japanese language patterns suggests that the conveyance of information through incomplete sentence utterances and non-verbal communication was a result of Zen Culture. Through Japan’s initial discovery of Zen, and its shunning of words, the language naturally “placed less emphasis on verbal communication . . . [and] gave more to action— especially pragmatic action.”

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provided a major catalyst for Japanese speakers to rely more on the codes and systems of innate non-verbal communication. The directness of Zen gives it the ability to go “beyond the details of words and letters, outside mental conditions, [and] into the inconceivable, into what ultimately cannot be grasped.”

Thus, the Japanese communication system and Zen each influenced the other to the point at which Zen and the elements of Zen ideals (particularly through experience and non-verbal communication) are permanently imbedded within the structure of the Japanese language. And, as has been noted earlier by Kuroda and Hayashi, the ultimate manifestation of Culture is through language.

Along with the importance of Zen came the infiltration of the idea of ritual and aesthetics into everyday life. The very essence of Japanese thinking and relationships to self and others has often been characterized as tied up within inner value systems that reflect a predilection towards the ideas that Buddhist aesthetics presents. Charles Moore comments that:

So important is the aesthetic in Japanese culture that it has been accepted by many students of Japan as the outstanding positive characteristic of Japanese culture as a whole—as of the very essence of Japanese life. In comparison with other cultures, the aesthetic has been considered to be the essentially unique expression of spirituality in Japan.

Zen Buddhism has overpowering appeal in Japan. Its absolute control in the shaping of Japanese culture is evident particularly through the arts, but also through the national pastime of Pachinko. One of the most prominent proponents of Zen’s introduction to


America, D. T. Suzuki (a great influence on John Cage), regarded Zen as an absolute force in the creation of Japanese cultural meta-facts: “Zen has entered internally into every phase of the cultural life of the people.”

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PART 2.

PIANO MEDIA AS A MUSICAL ARTIFACT
Composed in 1972, Toshi Ichiyanagi’s solo piano work was an open response to two stimuli, one human, the other artificial. The first was a performance of a Mozart piano sonata by the noted Japanese pianist Aki Takahashi, the second a performance of the same piece by a musical robot developed at Tokyo University. In the two performances the composer found very articulate, though strikingly different, orientations. Nonetheless, he was unable to discredit the computer’s performance as one that sounded typically digital or non-human. This naturally provoked a dilemma for the composer as to the true role of the performer and technology in the music industry.

Ichiyanagi’s love of technology, and fascination with the movement of technology within the realm of computer music, led to his need to express musically the paths technology has taken in relation to the shaping of a musical aesthetic among both performers and composers.

As a composer who, early in his career, was highly influenced by the American avant-garde as espoused by John Cage, Ichiyanagi was an important figure in the development of electronic music and its related technologies in Japan during the 1960s. His encounters with one of the greatest of all composer-technologists, Karlheinz Stockhausen, brought mutual regard. Superimpose onto this the great advancement in piano technique after the 1950s (also due largely to the demands of Stockhausen and Cage), and what is created in Ichiyanagi’s Piano Media is a work that is seeks to find the nexus between humans (as interpreters) and computers (as processors). Piano Media is, at
its most basic level, a blurred line drawing on the combination of the human mind with
the mechanics and artificiality of the computer. The work is constructed as a number of
simple rhythmic repeating cells of varying length (held in each hand) that merge, overlap,
and imitate each other over the length of the piece. The tempo is fast and the general
effect is of a driving difficult etude. It is incredibly demanding and seems to develop in
such an organic way that one finds it seamless and of a subtle logic.

This chapter will subject the work to a complete thematic and rhythmic analysis. I
hope to offer an insight into the work’s mechanics to reveal the organic nature of the
different cells and how they are derived from a single nonachord. The rhythmic structure
and the impetus for internal repetitions as relating to the opening rhythmic motive will
also be analyzed.

**Patterns of Repetitions and Repetitions of Patterns**

As mentioned, the impetus for this work was a performance of a computer. Because of this computer performance, Ichiyanagi became interested in the differences
between tactility (those human elements that can be labeled “musical”) and the purely
physical or clinical operations of mimicry of which a machine is capable. With this as an
obvious influence, it is easy to discern the highly mechanical and obstreperous nature of
the introduction to the work (see musical example 1, 370-1 (9) excerpt). The right hand
figure of this opening gesture (nonachord 9-11B) is the canvas across which Ichiyanagi
inks a mostly translucent soundscape.\(^{86}\) The right-hand figure of 9-11B is repeated some

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\(^{86}\)This set class designation for the nonachord is by Larry Solomon, who has realigned Alan
Forte’s set class listings to include inverted functions. This restructure is to account for the Forte system’s
lack of ability to distinguish between major and minor sets. This table and other information can be found
at [http://music.theory.att.net/pcsets.htm](http://music.theory.att.net/pcsets.htm). Solomon names this nonachord 9-11B \([0, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, T]\) as a
*Diminishing Nonachord* whose vector interval is \([667773]\).
360 times throughout the work, ceasing at the close for a repetition of a left hand derived figure.

![Musical Example 1](image_url)

It is clear, then, from the nature of the opening that the work is robotic-like, and pays homage to machines. As with many works of Ichiyanagi, though, there is only surface detail in this assessment. There is also the subtle manipulation of expectation and the shaping and distribution of proportions to suit the composer’s musical tastes. As will be explored later, this aesthetic is the orienting goal behind the predilection of the work to fuse together the forces of, and man-made constructs of, nature. The composition sets forth many internal rules and processes that are often disrupted by the composer midway into their unfolding. It is this manipulation of processes that creates a foil to the purely
mechanical guise the surface of the work occupies. In essence, Ichiyanagi humanizes the processes, making them more malleable so that they can move beyond the predictable schematic into other unforeseen areas. Here, the piece has its own internal agenda of proportion (one that is initiated with seeming indifference to any outside cause), but gradually it becomes subordinate to the musical shaping of Ichiyanagi.

Initiations and Juxtapositions

At the heart of the opening is the driving and utterly uncompromising right-hand figure, the nonachord 9-11B. Ichiyanagi labels the figure as eighth note equals 1/9 of a second\(^{87}\) and notes the numeral 9 next to the figure (musical example 1). This indication, and many more like it within the work, is documentation from the composer of the number of eighth notes that a particular pattern occupies. This indication is not only of local pattern lengths, but also of larger scale proportions. It is as if the composer invites the onlooker to observe the proportions of the work and its blueprint. The first indication (see mus. ex. 1, 370-1 (9) excerpt) of 9 refers to the 9 notes of the right-hand pattern as a group. This pattern is repeated 8 times in an opening warm-up of the process. When the first left-hand notes enter, the figure indicating the duration of the pattern is 34 (eighth notes). In this system the 34 note left-hand figure will have to cycle through 306 right-hand notes to complete its process (since there are no common denominators between 9 and 34, thus no redundancies, the process becomes 9 x 34 = 306). The right-hand pattern, \(\alpha\) is complete without any internal repeats or redundancies and repeats till very near the

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\(^{87}\) A perhaps inhuman speed suggestion: Aki Takahashi’s recording of the work is considerably slower than this. If anything this initial indication is there in an attempt to capture the purely robotic aesthetic that the work initially embodies. This indication completely de-humanizes the work and begins the piece within the realms of the mechanical, and on an inhuman trajectory.
end. Because of the nature of this 9 note set, the starting notes (notes of concurrency) for each beginning of the repeating left-hand figure, β (which repeats 9 times), are of the following order:

\[
\{A^b, C, B^b, B, G, F^g, E^b, E, D^b\}\text{ nonachord 9-11B}
\]

From this first statement it is apparent that β is essentially a microcosm of the mechanics of the work at large. In partitioning the work, the first section comes to a close with 5 more repetitions of this process with different left-hand patterns and some slight proportional adjustments from the composer. Examining the first three pattern changes of this first half will divulge much about the course of the work and its inclinations towards variety in texture rather than complete conformity to a schematic.

In studying the β pattern, we can see that it is comprised of only two notes, A-natural and F. Its rhythmic construct is a purely symmetrical layout of two 17-eighth-note
halves. Each half functions in an inverse way to the other: the first part is the sustained A (see mus. ex. 2, 370-1 (34) excerpt), the active half, while the second is the low staccato F—one eighth long followed by 16 eighth note rests—the static. In this simple internal partition the β pattern continually overlaps and superimposes itself over α, continually subdividing the right hand into hyper-measures of varying lengths. So, while stability is perfectly rational to each microcosm, the effect of juxtaposition only heightens the uncompromising nature of the different internal rhythmic proportions, i.e.:

\[(\alpha : \beta) = 3.7\]

where α is 9 eighth notes and is β is 34 \((17 + 17)\)

Due to this juxtaposition, there is no real rhythmic stability fostered in α during this first appearance of the left-hand; there is, in fact, the destabilizing effect of adding β. The pulse is moved from the stability of \(\alpha = 3 + 3 + 3\) (see beginning) to \(3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 2\). This is because β forces a transformation of the rhythmic division by adding two notes to the cycle (creating a combined 34-note pattern). After β exhausts its process and filters through each of the notes of the initial right-hand set, the next two appearances of left-hand patterns, \(\chi\) and \(\delta\), slight the proportions somewhat of the previous pattern:

\[(\alpha : \chi) = 3.5\]

\[(\alpha : \delta) = 3.3\]

where \(\chi\) is 34 \((16 + 16)\) and \(\delta\) is 30 \((15 + 15)\)

Here, the proportions begin to converge; the length of pattern is gradually collapsing, while at the same time the number of notes and activity of the left-hand patterns are increasing:

\[\beta- \quad (A \ F)\]
\(\chi\) - (A C# E\textsuperscript{b})

\(\delta\) - (A B\textsuperscript{b} D F)

When the \(\delta\) pattern is reached the aggregate is complete in both hands, and briefly there is some rhythmic continuity: when the juxtaposition of \(\delta\) with \(\alpha\) occurs, \(\alpha\) is partitioned into \(3 + 3 + 3\), repeated over the 30 eighth notes of \(\delta\). This brief resting point is also important because it is where the first instance of a fixed repetition occurs. Recall that the first instance of \(\beta\) over the \(\alpha\) pattern dealt a process that repeated the pattern 9 times, in which every one of the nine notes of \(\alpha\) was a starting point for the beginning of the \(\beta\) pattern.

Here at \(\delta\) (\(15 + 15\)), the lowest common denominator is 3 between the pattern structures, so that every note of \(\alpha\) will not be a starting note for the \(\delta\) pattern. Instead, only three notes will occur, repeated 3 times: A-flat, B-natural, and E-flat. These are the notes in the \(\alpha\) pattern that lie at 3 note-space intervals away from each other (hence only these can be heard).

From the addition of the left-hand \(\beta\) in the early measures, Ichiyanagi is able to build the texture of the work gradually. As the left-hand patterns from \(\beta\) onwards grow in note acquisition and rhythmic vitality, the composer is able to explore texture and register to add interest to the relentless repetition of eighth notes. By the arrival of the \(\delta\) pattern, the textual space has increased in the a3-f2 range that it first occupied. Also, the rhythmic scheme that began with the regularity of the 9-note \(\alpha\) ostinato (\(3 + 3 + 3\)) has morphed because of the \(\beta\) pattern into (\(17 + 17\)), and is eventually further transformed because of the \(\delta\) pattern into (\(15 + 15\)). In closing out this first section the general compacting of the left-pattern lengths continues:
Fig. 7. Graph of pattern note length vs. pitch class density for Section 1 of Piano Media: in this first section it is evident that the left-hand pattern lengths are inversely proportional to the increase in pitch class density.

It is easy to discern from the above graph (Fig. 7) the two quadrants that make up the first section of Piano Media. It is evident that the composer is propelling the work forward in this first section through the use of compacting proportions that become more active the smaller they become. He moves the work forward quite noticeably when the $\varepsilon$ pattern emerges. This pattern expands the texture space from the already established a3-f2 range...
up to c7 (see mus. ex. 3, 370-4 (20) excerpt). Through doing so, the composer obviously creates a point of departure from the established previous expectations; though at the same time he keeps the internal rhythmic partitioning predictable:

Recall

$$(\alpha : \beta) = 3.7 \quad \text{where} \ \beta = (17 + 17)$$

$$(\alpha : \chi) = 3.5 \quad \chi = (16 + 16)$$

$$(\alpha : \delta) = 3.3 \quad \varepsilon = (15 + 15)$$

Also

$$(\alpha : \varepsilon) = 2.2 \quad \varepsilon = (10 + 10)$$
Along with this compacting of the proportions with each new left-hand pattern, the pitch material and pitch space increase (Fig. 8). Ichiyanagi regulates the rhythmic divisions of the left-hand pattern in a mechanical fashion, breaking the precedent only in the division of the second to last \( \phi \) pattern. There is, in this first section, a striking regularity of underlying proportions that is used for consistency as well as propulsion of the material. Given the sparseness of the musical materials the composer begins with, the introduction of variously repeating patterns that create audible expansions and contractions of rhythmic cells creates a clever way to keep the piece interesting.

**Fig. 8.** Graph of pattern length (in eighth notes) vs. pitch class (pc 1 = A-natural): as the dimensions of pattern length decrease, the pitch content increases and becomes more uniform across the range.
Another aspect evident within the first section is the number of repeats that Ichiyanagi chooses for each of the statements of the left-hand pattern. The work begins with \( \alpha \), a nine-note pattern in the right-hand that is repeated initially 8 times. The first 34-note left-hand pattern is \( \beta \), and it cycles through all of the 9 notes of \( \alpha \) (which itself repeats 9 times). As can be seen from Fig. 9, there is a general move by the composer to increase the number of common tones between the left-hand and \( \alpha \) with each new left-hand pattern. The first three patterns, \( \beta \), \( \chi \), and \( \delta \), are created with the view to produce very small commonalities between left and right-hand patterns (in terms of pitch classes). The number of repetitions of the patterns \( \beta \), \( \chi \), and \( \delta \) decrease: 9, 5 and 3 respectively. The \( \delta \) pattern actually contains the greatest amount of redundancy. This means that after only three repetitions of the pattern, its phase is complete; Ichiyanagi merely repeats the cycle, i.e. \((3 + 3)\). It is here also that the aggregate is heard complete for the first time in the early part of the work. Similarly, this is where redundancy is at its highest—common tones and number of repeats also the lowest for the section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern name</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Number of Repetitions</th>
<th>Common tones with ( \alpha )</th>
<th>Starting ( \alpha ) notes for each repetition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>A, F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>A-flat, C, B-flat, B-natural, G, F-sharp, E-flat, E-natural, D-flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \chi )</td>
<td>A, C-sharp, E-flat</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>D-flat, E-flat</td>
<td>A-flat, B-flat, G, E-flat, D-flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \delta )</td>
<td>A, B-flat, D, F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>B-flat</td>
<td>[A-flat, B-natural, E-flat] repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \epsilon )</td>
<td>A, B, D</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A-flat, D-flat, E, E-flat, F-sharp, G, B, B-flat, C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \phi )</td>
<td>A, B, D, C-sharp</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>B, D-flat</td>
<td>A-flat, G, D-flat, B, E, B-flat, E-flat, C, F-sharp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Fig. 9. Tabulation of left-hand pattern contents and repetitions. Note general movement of the left-hand patterns toward pitch-class assimilation with the α pattern, i.e. common tone increases.

All these forces help direct the momentum of the work to this point; the composer then directs the close of this section of the piece in a much more predictable fashion. Much can be gained from Fig. 10, where there is a definite flux to the action in the first section; it is as if the energy levels begin at a low point, a disagreement between hands, then moves towards equilibrium. The pitch space within the first section is fully expanded by its close. Just as the proportions of the pattern note lengths become smaller, an inverse function of pitch space is evident. Each successive pattern is thrust higher into the range of the piano; these two forces (pitch space and note length) cause a considerable impact and are audible as the pure physicality of the move up the piano is evident in the performance. In constructing the first section of the work, there is evidence that suggests Ichiyanagi’s initial submission to the thematic material’s rhythmic drive and its implied mechanics, have been subtly controlled by a manipulation of each pattern’s proportions.
Fig. 10. Graph of pitch space for the patterns of Section 1 of *Piano Media*. Each pattern is here represented by its corresponding zone, or range, for which it is active.

Given the very mechanical sounding $\alpha$ theme (and the first process of using a left-hand pattern to run through a simple audible schematic), the composer innovates by taking initial precedents and changing them slightly to suit his musical needs. This can be seen in the way that pattern lengths become smaller and the repetitions move away from a strict use. Similarly, the imaginative use of the range propels the material to a natural high point and at the same time demarcates a shallow closure. All these manipulations help the work to overcome its initial obsession with the mechanical and the artificial; Ichiyanagi lends a human hand to the shaping of what might have been a flat, energy deficient, predictable outcome.
Stasis, Consolidation, Climax

A sense of rest permeates the next pattern to appear. Here, a natural partition of the work occurs: the introduction of pattern \( i \) signals the beginning of Section 2 of *Piano Media*. Ichiyanagi achieves this in a quite audible fashion. Left-hand pattern \( i \) consists of a repeating figure (F, E, A-flat, G, D-flat) held for a lengthy 18 repeats. There is a feeling of complete stasis here, and potential exits for movement ahead or somewhere else are non-existent. The work at this point builds on the premise of anticipation, of poise before a departure. After the occurrence of \( i \), there is a release of built-up energy. This first pattern of Section 2 paves the way for the three other patterns that make up the section:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern Name and Elements</th>
<th>Length in Eighth Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( i ) (F E A-flat G D-flat)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ii ) (F D-sharp E D-natural C-sharp A)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( iii ) (F D-sharp E C D C-sharp A)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( iv ) (F E D-flat C B)</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again, as in the first section, Ichiyanagi propels the material forward through the use of narrowing proportions and a varied repetition structure.

\[
\begin{align*}
(i : \alpha) & = 2.2 & \quad i (4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 4) \\
(ii : \alpha) & = 1.6 & \quad ii (3 + 3 + 3 + 3) \\
(iii : \alpha) & = 1.3 & \quad iii(3 + 1.5 + 1.5 + 3 + 3 + 3) \\
(iv : \alpha) & = 0.83 & \quad iv(1.5 + 1.5 + 1.5 + 1.5 + 1.5)
\end{align*}
\]

The change from pattern \( i \) to pattern \( ii \) is a large one. There is stability created through the large repetition structure (18 repeats, 9 + 9, of \( i \)) and the natural division of \( \alpha \) by \( i \) into groups of 4 (see mus. ex. 4, 370-8 (12) excerpt). As seen from the example, after the lengthy stasis of pattern \( i \), the explosive use of pitch space for the range of \( ii \) is quite a
shock; though here the rhythmic division serves as a means for a secure base to the extremes of pitch space.

Here, patterns $ii$ and $iii$ are closely related in pitch content. The aggregate is achieved between the hands when $ii$ is reached. In both $ii$ and $iii$ Ichiyanagi exploits the $\alpha$ pattern’s intervalllic inconsistency as a catalyst for pitch expansion:

$ii$ \hspace{5mm} (F\ D\text{-sharp} \ E\ D\text{-natural} \ C\text{-sharp} \ A)

[1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]
\[ \alpha = \{0, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11\} \]

\[ \text{iii} \quad (F\ D\text{-sharp}\ E\ C\ D\ C\text{-sharp}\ A) \]
\[ [1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9] \]

\[ \alpha = \{0, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11\} \]

As can be seen, iii exploits the interval vector of \( \alpha \): ii is created through the common tones of (5, 7, 8), and the filling out of the m.2 intervals between (0, 2), (5, 7) and (8, 10).

mus. ex. 5 [excerpt 370-9 (7.5)]
The final pattern in this section, \textit{iv} (see mus. ex. 5, 370-9 (7.5) excerpt) is created almost exclusively from common tones of \(\alpha\):

\begin{align*}
\text{iv} & \quad (3, 4, 5, 8, 9) \\
\alpha & \quad [0, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11]
\end{align*}

This pattern is also the shortest of the four and the obvious final destination for the proceedings. The pattern is 7.5 eighth notes long, though divided rhythmically in such a way that it is equally spaced as 1.5 + 1.5 . . . , etc. The common tone mappings throughout the section are shown in Fig. 11 and 12.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig11.png}
\caption{Graph showing common tones between the patterns \textit{i}, \textit{ii} and \(\alpha\).}
\end{figure}
Each of the new patterns from Section 2 is built from what has been stated in the previous pattern. The third pattern, \(iii\), is consolidated through the addition of a third common tone (pc 4) while retaining all the other elements from the previous pattern. There is an evident move through this section of displacement and consolidation. By the time that the last pattern in the section is reached, \(iv\), the pattern has been pared down to merely 7.5 eighth notes in length and is one of the most energetic of the piece. Another point worth mentioning in section 2 is the increase in redundancy with respect to the starting notes of \(\alpha\) that coincide with the various left-hand patterns.

Fig. 12. Graph showing common tones between \(iii\), \(iv\), and \(\alpha\).
. Because of the nature of the pattern lengths, \( i \) cycles through the notes of \( \alpha \) twice. In pattern \( ii \), only three notes of \( \alpha \) are heard, repeated three times. The same is true for \( iii \) and \( iv \):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern Name</th>
<th>Cycle of ( \alpha ), (ordered)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( i )</td>
<td>([0, 5, 8, 7, 10, 11, 3, 2, 4]) x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ii )</td>
<td>([0, 3, 7]) x 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( iii )</td>
<td>([0, 7, 3]) x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( iv )</td>
<td>([0, 7, 3]) x 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pattern \( i \) is caught in a long stasis of rhythmic invariance that is broken by the beginning of the next section, in which the pitch space for pattern \( ii \) through \( iv \) becomes the center for stasis and invariance. There are other pitches, of course, in the patterns themselves, but unlike the great variety of pitch content in Section 1\(^{88} \), the trichord 3-11 is a center for repetitiveness in Section 2. This stasis, perhaps manufactured by the composer, undergoes complete upheaval as the beginning of the final section is commenced.

So it can be seen that as \textit{Piano Media} unfolds, the \( \alpha \) pattern remains the unmoving control to which corresponding left-hand activity serves to accentuate and manipulate rhythmic proportion (thus creating musical interest). But increasingly the patterns of the left-hand have both amplified their use of pitch space and increased their rhythmic complexity. As the work progresses, there is a sense that the left-hand patterns gradually take on, and mirror, the function of \( \alpha \). They become more rhythmically

\(^{88}\text{Pitch content here is being referred to as the simultaneities that occur between each beginning of the patterns } ii, \ ii, \ iii \text{ and } iv \text{ and the corresponding notes that are heard in the right-hand pattern } \alpha. \ \text{Section 2 has a considerably smaller range of pitches that occur.}\)
consistent further into the piece, to the point that in section 3 each hand assumes an equal rhythmic platform (see mus. ex. 6, 370-10 (9) excerpt).

Dissipation and Coda

Section 3 can be easily divided into two parts, A and B, and A into two further sub-sections I and II. The distinction and reasoning for this partitioning is apparent after the study of the first 4 left-hand patterns of this section, a, b, c, and d (these four patterns make up Section 3, Part I). As the two hands now function more as equals in terms of their range and pitch space, Ichiyanagi explores the differences in pattern length and the
idea of rhythmic dissonance or rhythmic displacement. Whereas in the previous section, the issues revolved around a control pattern, α, and a rhythmically diverse second pattern, in Section 3, Part I, the composer coalesces the patterns to essentially become twins. This is initially achieved because the first left-hand pattern (and all subsequent patterns of the section) is a half step below (with an octave displacement) the α pattern. Now both patterns find rhythmic agreement and even a mirrored pitch movement. Within the scope of the work, this section stands out as a point of repose. But here too, there is a subtle flux within the section. As with the previous sections, Section 3 contains a process that is deployed meticulously to create variation and interest. What is developed here is the interaction of the α pattern (9 notes in length) and subsequent left-hand patterns of varying increasing proportions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern Name</th>
<th>Length in Eighth Notes</th>
<th>No. of Repetitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a [0,1,3,4,6,9]</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b [0,1,3,4,6,9]</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c [0,1,3,4,6,9]</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d [0,1,2,3,4,6,9]</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lack of common denominators between right-hand pattern α (9), and the two left-hand patterns, b and c (see table above), means that to play out the full cycle of the process requires 9 repetitions. This is achieved in a much shorter time with d because of its length of 12 notes. Of the pitch content in this section, only the d pattern adds the note B-flat (pc 2), a common tone with α. The issues, then, of this first part of Section 3 are
the shifting patterns and the juxtaposition of elements—how they phase through each other, eventually come to their own ends and beginnings. This, then, defines the process of this whole section, setting it apart but linking it to the opening. The focus is perhaps still on elements of rhythm, and how mating patterns together can cause subtle rhythmic elements to surface. If the opening of the work was concerned primarily with rhythm created through the exploration of pitch space and texture, then the third section is primarily concerned only with the subtleties of rhythmic organization and juxtaposition, rather than pitch interaction and development.

mus. ex. 7a [excerpt 370-11 (9)]
Part II of Section 3A continues with the exploration of juxtaposition (see mus. ex. 7a, 370-11 (9), and mus. ex. 7b, 370-12 (19), excerpt). Ichiyanagi adds the element of octave displacement to the process of juxtaposition. The schema for Section 3A part II is as follows (A-flat = 0):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{e} & \quad (9 \text{ notes}) \quad [0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 9] \times 4 \text{ then } 2 \text{ repetitions of } [2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11] + [0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 9] \\
\text{f} & \quad (19 \text{ notes}) \quad [0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11] \{\text{partitioned as } [2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11] + [0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 9]\} \\
\text{g} & \quad (10 \text{ notes}) \quad [2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11]
\end{align*}
\]

Pattern f primarily is based on the octave displacement created in e. Pattern e is the catalyst for the expansion of the idea of opposing sub-groups occupying discrete pitch space. While rhythmic harmony is sought in e because the same number of notes exists in e as in α, its last four sub-groups play on the displacement of the octave in which they exist. As seen from musical example 7, pattern f alternates between a group of 10 and a group of 9, both occupying different areas of the keyboard.

Ichiyanagi has added to and developed a process at this point. Not only is the left-hand working through an alternation of octaves, but now the pattern itself has grown more complex. The pattern f now comprises two segments of unequal length that repeat 8 times. The patterns of e, f, and g naturally move the work towards its climax, which occurs with the beginning of Section 3B Part I (see mus. ex. 8, 370-12 (9) excerpt).
mus. ex. 7b [excerpt 370-12 (19)]
The beginning of the first pattern of the left-hand, h, is a sweeping scale-like figure that opens up the top register of the piano. Here, where the apogee of the work is reached, pattern h weaves through the \( \alpha \) pattern and moves into the depths of the keyboard, exploiting the entire range of the piano. This huge release of energy is stretched out through the pattern of the left-hand g and facilitated by the way in which Ichiyanagi internally distributes the rhythmic construct:

Section 3B, Part I

\[
\begin{align*}
g &: [0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 9] \times 4 \\
h &: [0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11] \text{ partitioned as groups of } (5 \times 9) \\
& \quad \text{then } (6 \times 9), \text{ and } (9 \times 9).
\end{align*}
\]

So, at the peak of the work, the complete pitch space is explored (through the chromatic octave) and pitch range exploited (7 octaves used). After the tide recedes, Ichiyanagi presents the \( \alpha \) theme now as a division between the hands (see mus. ex. 9, 370-13 excerpt).
mus. ex. 9 [excerpt 370-13]
After the climax, Ichiyanagi eliminates the distinctness of the hands by distributing the initial nonachord 9-11B as a single shared figure. Working much like an anti-climax, he is able to set up a reaffirming of the function of α by relegating the theme to its most known function as rhythmic stabilizer (see mus. ex. 9, 370-14 excerpt). But here the left-hand has transformed to mirror completely the right-hand. Both hands are now in rhythmic equilibrium, and the left-hand tracks the pitches of α. In this final section, given the similarities in function between the hands (with regards to pitch and rhythm), Ichiyanagi sets the dynamics of each pattern at odds with each other:

Section 3B, Part II Coda: right-hand (α), left-hand (z)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>α</td>
<td>[0, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>[1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11] 9-note length</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The work is complete with the α pattern dropping out and the left-hand playing nine repetitions of the z pattern at maximum volume. The work begins with 8 repetitions of the α pattern in the right-hand and is closed with 9 repetitions of z in the left-hand. In essence then the α pattern is phased out, through dynamic control, and the z pattern takes closure (see mus. ex. 10, 370-16 excerpt).

In terms of musical construction, *Piano Media* can be seen as dominated by larger proportional considerations. Also, it is created with the idea that a push from rhythmic process will inevitably shape sections and fuel demarcations of energy transfer. Ichiyanagi calculates his use of repetition not for the celebration of redundancy, but as a catalyst for audible process and recognition of distinct proportional shapes. What can be gained from the musical analysis of this work is how the onset of the mechanical and the
predictable can be manipulated to bring about intended points of closure and dissipation.

The opening of the piece belies an almost purely mechanical stance that would seem to have a complete hold on the work. But this initial fact is subtly manipulated as the work progresses. A nexus between the human ability to craft and delineate proportion, and the artificial/mechanical idea of no-minded process pushes Piano Media in a very distinct direction. By the climax, there is still the overwhelming notion that process as a function of mechanical means is important and a centerpiece, though by this stage there is more of a presence of human intervention. Through the methods of the thematic materials and their construction, Ichiyanagi is able to present the work as a vehicle for the interaction and juxtaposition of patterns that bring out dysfunction and compliance. Both hands in
the work are, for the most part, at odds with one another: they coalesce at the point after
the climax, then are taken back to their respective functions. This perhaps shows us a
glimpse of the composer and his influence in the piece—subsumed in the opening, but
gradually showing his presence until the closure in which a state more like the beginning
is repeated.

Ichiyanagi has shown in *Piano Media* how a combination and juxtaposition of
similarly fashioned elements of rhythm and pitch material can produce results that are
unpredictable. If Ichiyanagi’s voice is slighted in this work, it is due to the importance
that process has in the piece. As perhaps the most dominating aspect of the work, process
is a drawn out consequence of the piece as a function of technology and the idea of a new
type of performer. If Ichiyanagi’s presence is sometimes obscured in the work, it is his
constant manipulation of proportions and directional movements of dynamics (always
under the surface) that betray something beyond the very apparent foreground
mechanisms of process.
PART 3.

PIANO MEDIA AS A CULTURAL ARTIFACT
The nail that sticks out will always be hammered down.
Old Japanese saying

VII

REEVALEATING PIANO MEDIA

This chapter aims to gather the trends and examples of Japanese cultural manifestations from previous chapters and integrate them into observations from the musical analysis of Part 2. Building on the already gathered data about the musical structure of Piano Media, it is hoped that this chapter will be able to clarify some of the evident parallels within the work as functions of Japanese cultural and aesthetic predilections.

Piano Media as a Function of Language

To view Piano Media as a cultural artifact can assist in a larger understanding of the work. By paralleling constructs in music to similar constructs in Japanese culture and language, a larger understanding of the piece may unfold. Similarly, to move past (though inevitably to build upon) the musical language of the work is to move into the investigative area of how the thematic structure of the piece (taken as an entity unto itself) can be analyzed as a conceivable function of Japanese aesthetics. An analysis in this case will only be successful if it can draw on like-structures and parallels that both the musical structure and Japanese language hold firm.
The similarity of the musical language of *Piano Media* to that of the Japanese language is not absolute; in fact, on the surface, minimalist rhetoric would seem at odds with the complexity of the Japanese syntax system. Indeed, they should be seen as different, for they serve different functions. What is apparent between the two is that they share at least a few common structural traits and are therefore related (in either a direct or analogous fashion). What is being sought here is the uncovering of aesthetic concepts (patented through concrete musical examples) that further lead to the contention that many “hidden” elements of *Piano Media* reveal it as being conceived within the construct of Japanese culture.

**Context and Redundancy**

Ray T. Donahue has asserted that the Japanese Language has “tolerance for little redundancy of information.”89 This would seem to be in agreement with accepted linguistic knowledge about the nature of Japanese language patterns functioning without the need for grammatically intact sentences. Often all that is required is a verb, or a small part of an utterance, to suggest (through an already established context) the information being conveyed. Contemporary Japanese speakers use an ever-increasing economy of syntax to reflect their views. Japanese is unlike many other languages in that it venerates such economy. Personal pronoun usage is very rare amongst speakers and the veritable and useful verb *desu* (to be, though not a complete translation of the concept) is used to describe the existence of things both animate and inanimate. Because of this, information

is highly reliant on the speaker’s knowledge of context, and this creates a unique “conceptual universe of discourse” (a shared phenomenon between speakers).

This is not to say that Japanese is an exceptionally terse language; indeed, the complication of the honor system and respectful speech patterns can cause many utterances to convey much information (often accentuating group dissimilarities). But this is not a case for the use of redundancy; it is more likely the implication of soto (outside) and uchi (inside) relationships as primary concerns in speech patterns amongst strangers. Still, the fact remains that, within the speech of everyday life, information is often presented with a very lean syntax.

How information is conveyed both in Piano Media and Japanese can be studied for commonalities. This is pertinent particularly in respect to the question of redundancy and the issue of context. As has been asserted previously, the penchant for lack of redundancy within the Japanese language has allowed it to produce structures that create meaningful chains of information through small environments of syntax. In examining Piano Media for a parallel trend or pattern, the question of redundancy arises due to the use of repetition in the work.

It can be argued that the use of repetition within the musical context of Piano Media is the ultimate avoidance of redundancy. Information is inevitably disseminated, often in the most economical way (as in the case of pattern repetition). The point in Piano Media is the issue of the constant repeating of the information. Though even this assumption is not clear. There is initially an unchanging model of information in the α pattern in Section 1. But when the left hand enters, juxtaposition between the hands is

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evident, and therefore new internal relationships arise, and the initial information carried by the $\alpha$ pattern is transformed into something new (context). This situation creates a renewal of context and meaning and therefore avoids redundancy (in spite of the surface level rhythmic repetition). Like the $\alpha$ pattern, $\beta$ is a musical figure that conveys a certain amount of information. When combined with other musical material, relationships arise that change its initial function. Concretely, this notion of information is one of intervals and combinations of them. There is obviously not an unlimited amount of information that can be disseminated between two musical patterns that contain a finite set of intervals; hence, after all possibilities and combinations occur between patterns, any repeating of the material amounts to no new information being conveyed. It is in this way that the whole piece works as a series of information cells (the patterns themselves) each locked with a certain tag of data or meaning. Juxtapositions between patterns create new relationships and new systems of information. Because of this aspect of *Piano Media*, parallels can be drawn to Japanese language usage. The Japanese language operates in a similar way: meaning is obtained from context and a change in context brings forth a re-directional focus on the information.

**Consideration of the SOV Structure**

In addition to context, another useful comparison for *Piano Media* and the Japanese language can arise out of an investigation into sentence structure (i.e., subject, object, verb: SOV). From this simplified representation of Japanese sentence structure, the imparting of succinct information (via the verb) is always preceded by elements pertaining to the creation of subject and object. In such a case, the verb (and the
information conveyed by it) is made meaningful through the context and its placement. The Japanese language can impart logical and relevant utterances without the need for pre-verb structures. Verbs in Japanese always come at the end of a sentence, and are the last informational unit to be expressed. The fact that a verb can be a succinct and meaningful utterance stems from the fact that it is not bound by the pre-verb elements of object or subject. Japanese requires no subject-verb agreement, and the fact that the verb is wholly able to function in an independent way is due to an understood context between speakers. Whereas English relies on the internal use of context through subject-verb agreement, Japanese functions in a different way. It has been noted by Donahue that Japanese politeness is a mirror of sentence structure: “the delay of focus in Japanese imparts politeness in the case of personal introductions.”

In the case of Piano Media, the relevance of this structure can be at least explored in regards to proportions. In simple terms, a typical sentence that contains pre-verb elements often will consist of twice as many elements as the verb. Due to this, the focus initially is on elements other than the verb. In Piano Media, the amount of musical space (as musical information) occupied before the work reaches its main, climatic moment is vast. The high point of the work is fairly short and succinct, and conveys purposefulness due to the rhythmic pitch and dynamic mirroring of both hands. It functions in a very different way from the preceding sections. It is obvious in Piano Media that the climax section (beginning Section 3) is representative of a movement away from the opening mechanisms. The rhythmic conflicts and juxtapositions that occur in Section 1 and 2 are left behind at the climax and cancelled out to zero. In many ways the climax functions as

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91Donahue, 164.
a section that imparts a new direction for the flow of information. This new diversion is of a different class function, and serves an analogous role to how a verb operates. The climax of Piano Media is a point at which the patterns of each hand come into agreement and the crux of the piece is revealed. Considering the complex juxtapositions of rhythm in the sections leading to this point, as an analogy, hearing the verb of the work conveys and gives a greater meaning to the process of combination that defined the earlier sections.

**Piano Media as a Function of Modernism**

From accounts that have been published about the inspiration of Piano Media, Ichiyanagi has commented that the work arose out of his interest in, and veneration for, the role of the computer in the music industry. This is particularly evident in the Yamaha Corporation’s creation of the Disclavier, a late twentieth-century reinterpretation of the player piano (now, though, complete with an onboard computer/performer rather than the mechanical and cumbersome barrels or rolls). Japan’s veneration for technology dates back to the pre-War years of the Meiji Restoration. Because of many decades of technological development, a cult of the new has arisen within mainstream Japanese culture (which in turn has created many other sub-cultures). In Japanese contemporary society there is a fascination with things that represent the modern. Such products that espouse this quality are usually aggressively marketed. One of the more popular developments in current technology is the role of artificial intelligence and robotics. Major companies such as Honda and Sanyo (and many other with increasingly diverse backgrounds) are developing robots. Their popularity in Japanese culture is second to
none (perhaps only rivaled by American pop culture). These major companies spend large sums in the creation of such technologies, and mainstream culture has become completely absorbed with their development.

The role technology has in Japanese culture stems from the period after the end of the Second World War. Japan was actively seeking an identity that could relate to its global neighbors. Through various secondary and tertiary industry incentives, the government sought to re-define Japan. Hoping to move beyond its image as a bastion of old culture, the nation looked to technology as a personification and force for economic growth in the twentieth-century. Certainly, the boom of the 70s and 80s is due in part to these strategies, but similarly, the rise in Japanese cultural awareness as having to reinvent, or at least adapt, a new approach was a key issue.

Ichiyanagi’s understanding of the importance of technology within the realm of musical influences is similar to Marshall McLuhan’s ideas about the breadth and nature of technology in twentieth-century living environments. The meaning of the term “media” in the title of the work is a reference to Ichiyanagi’s views about the triumphs of civilization’s creation and exploitation of technological and electronic media. The word media here is a representation of all possible media which digital technology has created. When Ichiyanagi first heard the Tokyo University Computer in a performance of a Mozart piano sonata in the early 70s, he was unable to distinguish the difference between the ability of a computer to that of a human (he had recently heard the same sonata performed in recital by Aki Takahashi). The media involved was indistinguishable to the ear as human or computerized. This realization redefined the way the composer saw technology. Ichiyanagi found that the piano as an instrument has changed little over the
last century. Hence, *Piano Media* is a conception that exists as a manifestation of technological media. McLuhan’s comments are of interest here:

What we call mechanization is a translation of nature, and of our own natures, into amplified and specialized forms. . . . . . the long revolution by which men have sought to translate nature into art we have long referred to as ‘applied knowledge.’ Applied means translated or carried across from one kind of material form into another.92

Ichiyanagi’s *Piano Media* is a comment on the extent to which technology has saturated the music industry. While at the same time, the mechanism of the piece is, as McLuhan suggests, an internal translation of nature into music. The immediate sound impression of *Piano Media* is of a computerized object that is able to reel out continual repetitions. The point of the work though, is not to have a human sound like a computer, but for the larger goal of combining computerized media to use with human media (performance). In this regard, McLuhan’s comments about the “translation of nature” are relevant. If humans are somewhat representative of nature, then *Piano Media* is a work that is a computerized translation of (human) nature. The world of technology and art is a place where *Piano Media* embodies the nexus of human sensibilities, precision of computer programs, and the translation of information, all captured within a new medium that combines both human and artificial means.

The Adaptation of Minimalism

The foreground musical language of *Piano Media* possesses many of the traits that occupied the American School of composers known as the Minimalists. This school, initiated around the late 60s, was guided by the composers Steve Reich, La Monte

Young, and Phillip Glass. The term Minimalism was borrowed from the visual artistic movement of the same era. The language of the musical minimalists paralleled the visual artists’ desire for clean and simplified lines and textures, as well as paired-down complexities of form with the use of repeating motifs and textures. Hence, compositions of this school contained “intentionally simplified rhythmic, melodic and harmonic vocabularies.”93 This new language was a reaction against the post-Schoenberg stance of composers such as Stockhausen and Boulez, who were, during the same period, embracing the extension of serialism into total serialism. Hence, Reich and others sought out reactive structures and processes that were simple and audible to their audience. With the movement in the visual arts, the general term for this type of artistic expression cast a great influence over the generations that followed in the steps of the Americans; indeed, the concept of minimalism has been noted as a particular movement that was indicative of the American reaction to the European avant-garde.94 Whereas, originally, the Europeans had valued complexity as an aid towards revealing the truth in music, Glass and others looked for process and a return to tonality and modality. The composers of this school were able to draw equally from Western popular and non-Western ethnic musics. Similarly, they sought out the “reduction of artistic materials to their essentials and a regularity of formal design.”95 The favored catalysts of their musical fabric were harmonic stasis and large-scale repetition. Because of this, “the thrust of the minimalist


94It has flourished since as a non-specific and universal system embraced by composers around the world.

95Potter, ibid, vol. 16.
aesthetic resided in the fact that reacting to such works often required extended periods of time while the subtle inflections of the work in question gradually permeated the audience." Many of the works, such as Steve Reich’s *Drumming*, are extended evening-length pieces that are built from very reduced means (in this case one rhythmic pattern), though are taut and precise in their proportions. Even though the new musical language relied heavily on past tonal traditions, “stasis and repetition replaced melodic line, tension, release, and climax of conventionally tonal music.”

Ichianagi’s brand of minimalism in *Piano Media* is unlike the language of the American minimalists. Instead, in a fashion congruent with modes of Japanese cultural development, the artifact of minimalism and its ideology has been observed and extracted. Added to this is Ichianagi’s manipulation of the essential elements of minimalist style to reflect a more personal (and perhaps Japanese) sensibility. In an historical parody of the ways in which Japanese culture has encountered and adapted outside influences, Ichianagi parallels this process musically in *Piano Media*.

Ichianagi’s brand of minimalism bears the traits of the American composers, such as repetition, process, and stasis, though his choice of a harmonic language is more aligned to the European modernists. The canon of minimalist music today has relied on the use of a harmonic system that is usually created through extended non-harmonic tones common to jazz and popular music. *Piano Media*, though, eschews this language in favor of a more chromatically varied and complex language, derived from sets and pitch class

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collections that bear little reference to functional harmony. The bleakness of the repeating \( \alpha \) cell brings to mind the issues of the weathered and the austere (described by the Japanese word *wabi*). The stasis of the repetitions is an important aspect of the work, though the process of pattern juxtaposition bears a greater mark of importance. Similarly, the technical demands on the performer go well beyond comparable thematic material of Reich or Glass.\(^9\) Ichiyanagi created the thematic language of *Piano Media* to be extremely demanding, perhaps both as an homage to the performer in this new age of technology and as the representation of the mechanical or artificial that has been growing consistently in recent years.

*Piano Media*, then, is a representation of many elements. From the minimalists comes repetition and process (though now within a personalized and more advanced harmonic language). Choosing an atonal language allows the composer to highlight cutting dissonances and enables him to explore a larger pitch space. In terms of process, Ichiyanagi amplifies areas of stasis to create and articulate the fluidity of the work. These are both inherent differences of approach from the American minimalists. Whereas Reich was in favor of stasis as a means to expand the larger architecture and give greater impetus to the sectioning and process of a piece, Ichiyanagi uses stasis in a more traditional way to halt and divert the energy. This is completely evident in the beginning of Section 2, in which, through the large amount of repetition (the longest section of stasis so far in the work), the internal dynamic flow of the work is slowed. Here, stasis is

\(^9\)Here the point is that for such works as *Piano Phase* or *Six Pianos* by Reich, the musical material was intentionally created for playability by Reich himself (a non-pianist) or any of his ensemble members (many percussionists included); similar traits are apparent with Phillip Glass’s music, and for the same reasons.
a function of the potential energy of the work. The composer uses this method again just before the climax and through Section 3 leading up to the climax. When the hands are separated by the major sevenths and gradually come to work in and out of phase, there is a masterly use of pace to give rise to the climax as a huge torrent of energy release. Of relevance here is the use of the additive note technique. This type of technique was invented and commandeered by Reich and Glass. The technique calls for a pattern to be built up against another pattern through note-rest substitutions. In Section 3, Ichiyanagi takes the premise of this idea but uses a technique in which phase shifting is also employed through a note-additive system. Here, the $\alpha$ pattern has another similar pattern set against it in major-sevenths. Whereas Reich had developed phasing as a means through which one pattern, set against itself, gradually moves ahead in tempo to create a phase shift, Ichiyanagi opts for a hybrid of phase shifting and note-rest substitutions (i.e. no use of tempo shifts). Ichiyanagi uses an increase in the left hand pattern formation to achieve a phase shift, but at the same time creates a different evolving pattern. This example is one of the most original ways in which the composer moves away from the language and techniques of minimalism and into a language that is a real hybrid, created for the aesthetics of the work at hand.

The Influence of John Cage the Modernist

The years before 1972 (when Piano Media was composed) were significant for Ichiyanagi because of the influence of the avant-garde American John Cage (1912-92). Ichiyanagi had studied at Juilliard beginning in 1952 (the year of the infamous Juilliard Lecture by Cage accompanied by David Tudor) and after meeting Cage “was deeply
influenced by his ideas . . . and soon became active as a pianist and composer, giving experimental performances that often included chance procedures.”

After returning to Japan in the 1960s, he was associated with the dissemination of contemporary avant-garde music in Tokyo, organizing numerous concerts along with his contemporary Toru Takemitsu. Many of these concerts and the works that were programmed included theatrical elements in the vein of the European Dadaists or even their Japanese contemporaries, the Mavo group. Also embraced was the current technology of sound projection and electronic means of amplification and manipulation. Of this period in Ichiyanagi’s compositional activities, David Revill remarks that “certain pieces seem to fall as much within the ambit of conceptual art or theater as of music.” This groundbreaking approach and embracing of new forms was directly because of Cage: “His influence remained . . . in the form of radical ideas about music in general, such as breaking away from fixed and traditional views on music and revitalization of the value system of Western Music.” For the entire period after his experience of Juilliard and through the 1960s, Ichiyanagi composed works of an indeterminate nature that relied principally on gestures of a theatrical nature. Piano Media of 1972 was the composer’s return to specific musical notation of a conventional form.

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102 Of note here, also, is the influence of his former wife the conceptual artist Yoko Ono (they married in 1957), who, during this period in New York, was gaining wide notoriety as a filmmaker and performance artist.
*Piano Media* is an especially significant work for Ichiyanagi, for it was the beginning of a new era with the composer; after associations with the American avant-garde he sought, for the first time, to produce a work that was an extension of his own thoughts about technology and performance. These were two significant elements not used extensively by the composer until 1972. *Piano Media* differs from his past pieces in that not only is it conventionally notated, but the work also cites technology as an aid to help create a performance context. *Piano Media*, unlike the composer’s theatrical precedents, is a combination of an aesthetic approach to both human performance and technology—such that the gesture of the work, and the process of the piece, is the goal. Meaning is achieved not through representation by theatrical gestures or operations outside of conventional music, but through the ideology of the performer-as-media-device (in a sense a mirror of the function of computers). *Piano Media* represents a refinement in Ichiyanagi’s attitudes towards performance that had gestated over ten years.

Theater has always been a dramatic catalyst for Ichiyanagi and a means to create musical form. With *Piano Media*, though, theater has been refined to the extent that the sheer physical struggle required to perform the piece has replaced his earlier dramatic elements (that have variously included throwing darts at pianos and eating on stage). These traits are all indicative of the influence of Cage, and when Ichiyanagi returned to traditional composition (in the 80s), he immediately sought out the possibility of incorporating the performer into the development of late twentieth-century technology.

*Piano Media* as an Embodiment of Zen

The influence of Zen ideals on Japanese culture is evident throughout its society. It is notably present in forms of art, architecture, sculpture, and garden design. Zen, like
many other aspects of Japanese culture, was imported from China, and as such many Japanese arts have been “clearly inspired on East Asian models . . . though displaying a marked individuality of style.” The implicit nature of Japanese culture has been to adapt. This is true for religious, as well as artistic and social structures. But this is not to say that Japanese culture lacks originality; in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Japanese society possesses the ability to accept outside things (within the already discussed soto relations), and manipulate them to mirror the relationships within society (uchi). This process is particularly evident in how the Japanese people view the world. As Ohnuki-Tierney has commented, “the construction and the reconstruction of the self of the Japanese have always taken place through their discourse with different peoples.”

This form of internalization is also a particularly important trait of Zen.

It would be impossible to assert that any piece of music could be a direct or complete transubstantiation of Zen. Even the work of Cage, though Zen-inspired, was for the most part not Zen music. A more likely assessment is how the important aspects of Zen and the principles of its philosophy are inherent in any given piece, and for this directive it can easily be seen that the work of Cage was, for the greater part of his life, an embodiment of Zen through music. His work was a conscious decision to embody Zen through artistic processes.

Ichyanagi’s association with Zen comes from a traditional Japanese upbringing in pre- and post-war Japan. Ichyanagi’s Zen is a part of his cultural fabric. The point of


inquiry, then, is how Zen relates to Piano Media, and if Ichiyanagi’s cultural background betrays in his music what Emily Dickinson described as “a certain slant of light.”

Ritual and Process

There is a great tendency in the Japanese traditional arts to approach the creation of art as an endowment of process manifested through ritual. In fact, the point that Cage took for his Zen-inspired stance on music was that music must be solely concerned with process, and that form was merely the division of the whole into parts. However unsuccessful Cage’s music was in the eyes of many critics, the root of his music came from an intimate understanding of how Zen functions. That the process is more important than the results is the most important aspect of Cage’s (and Zen) philosophy. Here is a classic example of the predilection for Zen to favor the absence of immediate conviction and seek out the course of action through ritual. Rupert Cox notes that when “treating the Zen Arts as a form of ritual, a great deal can be learned about its symbolic codes and structures, and the relations of these to Japanese social organization.”

The Zen veneration of ritual is initiated through the need for the dissolving of matters concerned with a duality of meaning. Noma Seiroku views the nature of Zen as a reliance not on material attachment, but intuition: “Zen’s philosophy negated the intellect by describing the highest sacred value as an unknowable essence—the ultimate void, felt only through intuition.” Through ritual, associations with binary thought patterns (e.g. dualities such as issues of good vs. evil, etc.), and the need for human attachment to

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things, can be replaced with the pure purpose focusing on a task (e.g. through meditation, action painting, archery etc.). Blocker and Starling’s assessment of ritual is one in which tasks or processes assist in internalizing the outside (soto) into the inside (uchi). This is primarily achieved through ritual because “the dissolving of the duality of subject and object, and thus the achievement of a state of awareness free from the ego’s interference . . . creates genuine self-realization.”¹⁰⁷ This need for ritual spans the many different art forms that were inspired by Zen, even traditional court and theater music. Within the sphere of traditional music and music performance, Fletcher provides this insight into the nature of ritual:

> When ornamentation is used, it appears to be performed with an utter lack of passion, as though every atom of personal feeling was suppressed in the interests of corporate ritual. In fact, such concentrated suppression conceals intrinsic passion.¹⁰⁸

Fletcher’s assessment of the role of suppressed feelings (and therefore suppressed individuality) highlights the overriding importance of group harmony. When involved in “corporate ritual,” the individual succumbs to the larger purpose of disbanding the notion of subject-object. Essentially, ritual involves the deconstruction of the “I” and the acceptance of the larger force outside of the self as the goal to revealing one’s true identity.

In relation to *Piano Media*, the idea of ritual is immediately apparent from the nature of the work’s construction. Whereas Cage’s notion of process as a Zen inspiration was primarily evident in his creation of indeterminacy, the approach of Ichiyanagi is

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¹⁰⁸Fletcher, 391.
through process as a means of devaluing the need for redundancy, and the reliance on ritual as expressing internalization. Process as ritual is evident in Piano Media through the superimposition of patterns onto one another. In the first section of the piece, the crucial observable point (which serves as a paradigm for the rest of the work) is the changing relationship of the patterns to each other as the left-hand ($\beta, \chi, \delta, \epsilon, \phi, \gamma$) cycles through the right-hand $\alpha$ pattern. This process is integral to the work, as it creates a meaningful structure that constantly spins out renewed information with each subsequent pattern juxtaposition. Thus, Ichiyanagi creates an aesthetic that differs from Cage’s complete relinquishing of control from a work. For Cage, the central structures and processes of a piece were, for the greater part, gathered (usually through chance means) and used for their impartiality. Cage saw no value in creating decisions based on musical taste. Ichiyanagi’s approach is of gathering materials for a work (especially in Piano Media) with a view to using their inherent characteristics to create complex results through juxtaposition. In such a way the loss of ego and the dissolving of subject-object is present to a certain degree. This is because, as the juxtapositions progress, greater degrees of complexity arise, and therefore the greater the chance for unforeseen cross-relationships. Ritual in Piano Media exists as a method by which an operation (i.e. the combining of rhythmic patterns with no common denominators) is initiated to create a stability and constancy to which smaller scale juxtapositions produce varied results. This form of ritual is also inevitably a result of the premise of the work as a manifestation of the human (analog) and computer (digital).
Daisetz Suzuki describes the Japanese word *wabi* as “the transcendental aloofness in the midst of multiplicities.”\(^{109}\) He further adds that the word evokes an implication of poverty. In this sense, poverty (within the creation of *Piano Media*) is an expression that is related to the lack of complete control of events. Poverty (or the sense of *wabi* in *Piano Media*) is embodied through the use of process and the lack of complex premeditated strategies to convey information. The simplicity in the ritual of the work conveys the essence of *wabi*. *Piano Media* lays out a canvas that has many ‘gaps.’ There is a bare structure; the work subsequently occupies a space, but initially explores the space in an almost independent way from the composer. Similarly, the piece seems free to explore space according to a set of initiatives that are initially hidden within the mechanics of the juxtaposition process. There is no sense in the piece that every note has been placed according to a premeditative plan. Local and lower level musical articulations are subsumed by the overpowering ritual presented through the quick tempo and repetition. Composing in such a fashion naturally leads to creating musical decisions on the basis of longer structural considerations (i.e. proportional considerations). As process is the consistent, and most audible aspect of the piece, musical material is paced (through juxtaposition), and left to develop according to its own internal characteristics.

The ritual of process in *Piano Media* is analogous to the Japanese concept of *wabi*; i.e., to break through all human forms of artificiality. It is as if the simplicity of the process of juxtaposition was utilized to unveil a deeper truth. *Piano Media*, as a complete structure and process, is what Hane sees as the essence of *wabi*: “severity, rusticity,

solitude...restraint and understatement...the most important elements in Japanese aesthetic taste.”

As a creative process, Zen and its influence have always measured art not by the success of a piece to display overt virtuosity, but to celebrate the spirit of action to which it was completed. Piano Media relates to Zen through the musical system to which the piece adheres, the simplicity and severity of the action of process, and the adherence of ritual as a driving force for artistic achievement. It embodies Zen because it exists as a series of processes that on the surface stem from simple structures, but attempts to present deeper notions of meaning through the seeming countless use of repetition as a musical catalyst. The virtuosity in the work is second to the ritual. The piece is indicative of Zen’s desire to reflect the internalization of the world through the use of ritual.

**Piano Media as a Product of Japanese Art Aesthetics**

The concepts of wabi and sabi are important aspects in relating Japanese art aesthetics to Piano Media. Both terms can be applied to the work because there is evidence that through a manipulation of proportion, Ichiyanagi has been able to reveal subtle imperfections and a desire for structures that are simple, austere, and aloof. Piano Media embodies Japanese aesthetics primarily in regards to its use of musical material, simplicity, and form.

**The Value of the Asymmetrical**

As has been explored in previous chapters, traditional Japanese values favor a work of art that is able to assume a naturalness and willingness of form and composition.

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Thus, due to these directives, successful Japanese art is able to transcend predictabilities (that are often viewed as overtly intellectual) and exist independently of the creator’s desire. Expressions of such aesthetics are found in the works from the ninth century kilns around Kyoto. Tea-ceremony-ware from this area was much favored because it displayed asymmetrical structural elements and disfigured areas. Pieces that contained accidents and unintentional markings were the most prized. Such examples exemplify the quintessence of *wabi* and *sabi*. This particular aesthetic, extremely prevalent in Japanese ceramics (from the ninth-century onward), shows an influence on paintings of the later seventeenth century. Late works of Tan’yu devote large amounts of the canvas to emptiness. This lack of content and the way in which the work is divided asymmetrically on the canvas all represent what Hane has summed *wabi* and *sabi* to ultimately mean:

Sabi is associated with age . . . , numbness, chilliness, obscurity . . . wabi is related to a sense of severity, rusticity, solitude and even melancholy. Both signify aesthetic appreciation of poverty.\(^{111}\)

These traits are all inherent in many examples of traditional Japanese visual, and other, arts. But they are perhaps only signifiers, or words representative of emotions that are gained from the structure and composition of an artwork. The descriptions themselves are unable to exist without the art to which they are ascribed. Ninth-century Japanese potters considered contemporary Chinese ceramic art to lack emotional content. Chinese ceramic art was criticized for its desire to seek perfection. The Japanese potters of the ninth-century claimed that Chinese ceramics failed to engage the user and were non-functional for everyday use. They saw such ceramics as lacking the sense of *wabi* or *sabi*; they were complete without the need for human interaction (too perfect for anything other than

observing). For traditional notions of Japanese aesthetics, beauty is embodied by irregularity, asymmetry, and the lack of perfection as an absolute.

*Piano Media* embodies elements of irregularity, and asymmetry, and for such traits the notion of *wabi* and *sabi* as an aesthetic model for the piece seem justified. The building block for the entire work, and indeed the repeating cell which all other elements of repetition are held against, $\alpha$, is itself of an unusual character. The nonachord (see Fig. 13), mapped in clock notation, contains no definite regularities. The internal groupings of the pitch classes are in a proportion divided 4:2:3. The three internal groups are all divided and portioned from each other through a separation of 1 pc. The lack of symmetry in $\alpha$ holds a key to how the other patterns will come to interact and be juxtaposed with it. Similarly, the use of a nine-note repeating figure avoids the use of a regular duality of division of the figure. Instead, the lowest common rhythmic value able to divide $\alpha$ into some form of regularity is a 3-note grouping. Other divisions, such as four note ones, will of course produce extended and constantly moving metric agogics. In relation to $\alpha$’s internal divisions, there is a curious parallel in the subsequent appearance of the ensuing left-hand patterns in terms of their length in pitch classes.

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112 Larry Solomon’s assessment and naming of this nonachord is pertinent here. According to his table of pc sets found at http://music.theory.home.att.net.pcsets.htm, this nonachord 9-11B is given the name *Diminishing Nonachord*; this is presumably due to the internal decrease in the proportions of the grouped elements in the nonachord (see Fig. 13).
Fig. 13. Representation in clock notation of α pattern from *Piano Media*; the nonachord is internally divided into three groups, derived proportionally from the initial tetrachord [2, 3, 4, 5], $x$. Thus, the second group, dyad [7, 8] is proportionally $x^{-2}$, and the final tri-chord [10, 11] is proportionally $(x^{-2} + 1)$.

Section 1 is divided into six larger groups of repetitions of each newly introduced left-hand pattern. The number of repetitions gradually decreases, though not in a predictable fashion as initially displayed. After the third set of repetitions, the decreasing values are abruptly reduced to an uneven rate (see Fig. 14). But, as seen from the analysis in Fig. 14, the way in which the proportions are mapped out follows a system in which a trend in increases of regularity is eschewed through the use of an organic additive form of progression. Instead of succumbing to the regularity and predictability of increases of repetitions (or pattern pc number increases), the form of the increases is dependent here on a model system.

if $\alpha : \beta$ represents $y$ (in terms of no. of pcs between each) then

\[
\alpha : \chi = y^2
\]

\[
\alpha : \delta = (y^2 + 1)
\]

*Note that here, $\alpha$ (nonachord 9-11B; Solomon) is not in prime form—prime form is [0, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, T].*
\[
\begin{align*}
\alpha : \varepsilon &= y^2 \\
\alpha : \delta &= (y^2 + 2) \\
\alpha : \gamma &= (2y^2 + 1)
\end{align*}
\]

Similarly, with regard to the number of eighth notes in each pattern in Section 1:

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\text{z} & 34 & z \\
32 & z & \\
30 & 2(z + 1) & \\
20 & (z + 1) & \\
19 & & \\
14 & & \\
\end{array}
\]

**Fig. 14.** Patterns of proportional increase within Section 1 of *Piano Media.* The relationship of \( \alpha \) to its juxtaposed left-hand patterns is through an initial relationship of \( \alpha : \beta \), taken as a model to which the further proportions are derived. A similar case exists for the rhythmic duration of each pattern in eighth notes through Section 1; though not predictably uniform, but irregular, they are organically derived from an initial “model proportion.”

As was seen in the nonachord \( \alpha \), each of the subsequent groups is proportionally a function of the first group. This system offered in the \( \alpha \) pattern becomes a precedent to the rest of the internal processes in the rest of Section 1. The rhythmic duration of each pattern in eighth notes in the left-hand (patterns \( \beta, \chi, \delta, \varepsilon, \phi, \) and \( \gamma \)) also corresponds to this type of model proportion process. Thus, the organic nature of the piece can be upheld, and a structure that is indicative of solidity sustained. But at the same time the work is able to move away from strictly formed, regularly arithmetic, and predictable notions of proportion. This system of proportional increases utilizes the idea of an organic model that can be manipulated to shadow regularity, but outside of the confines of predictability. Within Section 2, Ichiyanagi, in a similar manner, regulates the proportions with an eye to distributing data through a system that functions without a strict and absolute form. In Section 1, the proportions and organic nature of the relations
occur primarily through the two separate operations within the number of eighth notes per pattern, and the relationship of $\alpha$ to the juxtapositions of left-hand patterns; Section 2 fuses the nature of proportion between the length of left-hand patterns in eighth notes and the actual number of pcs within the pattern (see Fig. 15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of pattern and no. of pcs (redundancies excluded)</th>
<th>Length in eighth notes</th>
<th>Functional Relation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$i-$ 4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$(s^2 + 2)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ii-$ 6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$(s^2 - 1)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$iii-$ 7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$(s + 1)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$iv-$ 5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>$s$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 15.** Representation of comparative pattern proportions in Section 2 of *Piano Media*: shown above is the relationship between the length of the pattern and the number of pcs within the patterns. Evidence reveals that the patterns are functions of their length. Also, each named pattern is divisible from its length in eighth notes, so that the trend from $i$ to $iv$ is of a general increase and a trend towards convergence of the two figures.

In Section 2, the pattern is a function of itself; the proportions and trends within them brings about an interesting dynamic shift that signals the beginning of the main climatic section. Fig. 15 shows the relationship between the left-hand pattern in Section 2 ($i$, $ii$, $iii$ and $vi$), its number of designated pitch classes, and the length of the pattern in eighth notes. This table highlights the behavior of the integers as the section develops. The initial difference between the integers in $i$ is $4 \rightarrow 20$. This is reduced considerably, though not at all in a predictable or regular manner (it is $5 \rightarrow 7.5$ by the final pattern $iv$). A similar organic system is at work in the regulation of the reduction (though here the base unit is represented as the proportion that is the closest covalence of the eighth note
pattern length and the number of pcs). This proportion, represented as $s$ in Fig. 15, is a base descriptor for the functional relationships between pc and eighth note lengths for Section 2.

After the conclusion of Section 2 (and note that the integration between the aforementioned integers was nearly complete), Ichiyanagi uses a complete melding of the length of the left-hand pattern and its number of pcs in $\alpha$ to begin Section 3. It is in Section 3 that the climax is reached through a rhythmic unison between the hands. Here, the patterns are set initially in major sevenths; each hand is now a complete mirror and function of the other, and there has been a move from juxtaposition to integration.

For the first part of the final section (Section 3) of Piano Media, Ichiyanagi chooses to abandon the principles set in the previous sections in favor of a freer, and more dynamically unpredictable, course of events that offsets and punctuates the high point of the work. In Fig. 16 a bar graph comparison of the left-hand patterns (a-g) is given. Graphed is the length of the pattern in eighth notes set against the number of repeats that the pattern goes through. From the start of the section the graph identifies the near assimilation of the two figures and their trend to move apart. Unlike the previous sections, Section 3 shows no clear-cut indication of a model or even linear arithmetic series in action; it seems more intuitively driven. The largest difference between the two figures occurs in this passage in which the largest amount of pitch space is exploited before the real climax.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no. repeats</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 16.** Comparative bar graph of the first seven patterns in Section 3 of *Piano Media*; graph reveals the named pattern and its length in eighth notes set against the number of pattern repeats.

Pattern f and its corresponding repetition of 8 is set in such a way that the pattern is divided into two groups that straddle $\alpha$ (see mus. ex. 8 370-12).

Rather than displaying traditional partitions that function to initiate movement between sections, *Piano Media* reveals Ichiyanagi’s predilection for the manipulation of proportions through innate characteristics of pc set collections and relationships that are a result of juxtaposition between the hands. But this is not to say that the piece lacks form initiated from traditional ideas about partitioning. There is, of course, a natural climax,
and it is suitably achieved and prepared. But the location of that high point, and its immediate collapse, seems at odds with traditional Western music concepts of balance and form. In the same way that the piece seems to begin by the pull of a lever or the push of a button, it is closed in much the same manner (a point suggestive of the inspiration behind the work). Moreover, this on/off analogy is strengthened on examination of the dynamic structure: dynamics of action (initiation: i.e. crescendos) and dispersal (closure: i.e. decrescendos) never fully prepare or articulate form. Certainly the apogee of the work utilizes dynamics (marked $fff$), but these are more a consequence of increase of pcs, and therefore texture. Because of the nature of the piece in regards to repetition, there really could be no other way for it to be completed. The piece is rather stopped than completed; it is, as it were, “turned off.”

The coda reveals a significant and heavy intrusion on equilibrium. Up to this point, even in spite of the climax, balance between the hands has been notably absent. The coda has the two hands finally in rhythmic agreement. They are sent through a 36-cycle repetition that constitutes the longest instance of repetition in the work. After this passage is complete, the left hand alone finishes the work in a kind of complementary bookmark effect to the opening right hand gesture. Here, though, the difference between the opening right-hand $\alpha$ pattern and the closing left-hand is a difference in repetition length. The opening has eight repetitions of $\alpha$ before the first juxtaposition, while in the coda the left-hand completes the piece by cycling through nine repetitions. So, not even in this sense is there a symmetry or agreement to the outer limits of the work.

The main indication of an ensuing closure to the work comes in the nature of the patterns themselves. They are rhythmically in unison, and in a type of stasis. This
indicates either a change to take place, or some other impending event. The $\alpha$ pattern, as has been discussed, exhibits an internal asymmetry that now is matched, though not mirrored by, the last remaining left-hand pattern (see Fig. 17).

Fig. 17. Coda of *Piano Media*; shown in clock notation is the left-hand pattern $z$ and the corresponding $\alpha$ pattern for the coda. Note that $z$ possesses asymmetry, as does $\alpha$, and when the two are combined the aggregate is achieved.

Thus, the end to *Piano Media* is slightly (though subtly) contrived; the closure of the work is as sudden as the opening and the insistence on the coda as a point of stability gives the piece a closure that feels unresolved. There is a greater weight placed at the end of the work than the beginning. The opening of the piece is cursory in its function; it serves to enable the spinning-out of process. Due to this, the piece gradually becomes a large accumulation of texture in which there is a sense that the proportions of the work lay outside of classical notions of fluidity tempered by balance. In *Piano Media*, there is a definite statement, or thesis (via $\alpha$ and Section 1), but the development is late in
forthcoming; energy is dissipated at such a rate as to leave the end in question. It is as if the end comes too soon in relation to the rest of the work. But these assertions are based on classic notions (from Western music) of balanced proportions, and as has been analyzed, the piece negates traditional theories of balance, symmetry, and predictability.

Much like a work from one of the great thirteenth-century kilns of Shigaraki, Iga, and Bizen, the overall form and content of a work like Piano Media is readily recognizable. It functions and looks like what the creator has designated its form to be, but it is in the details that it moves away from conventional notions of content. Piano Media is loaded with passing references to slight disfigurements in its uses of asymmetries and small organic modeling techniques, as well as conventionally disproportionate sections of gravity; and the coda does not resolve the piece in any convincing fashion. On the surface, the form of the work is easy to grasp and perhaps even conventional or predictable, but the hidden details activate an internal mechanism of dynamic controls that moves the work away from conventionally used formats. The form is irrevocably linked and contingent on the processes that drive it. In particular, for Piano Media, it is the juxtapositions of various patterns and their dynamic interaction that create form. Hence, in respect to the ideals of wabi and sabi, the piece is set within a space of limited goals or limited intended outcomes: more often than not the results proceed from the process and the process comes from the initial characteristics of the patterns and their repetitive cycles. Poverty, in the Japanese sense of the aesthetics of wabi and sabi, lies within the limited thematic materials Ichiyanagi uses; the produced results articulate a larger goal of process as the apogee of artistic expression.
**Piano Media as an Analogy to Pachinko**

The interest and obsession that elements Japanese society has given the game of Pachinko, setting unprecedented levels of popularity for this pastime, have rivaled many of the more traditional forms of entertainment. But Pachinko has gone beyond the scope of entertainment and (for perhaps a number of reasons, both higher philosophical notions as well as more real at hand stress-relieving properties) the game has come to represent more a passing or slight form of diversion. The connection between Zen and the game has already been analyzed, but its greater connection to the Ichiyanagi work is a window to understanding how both the embodiment of Zen and Pachinko are inevitably linked as constituents and like products of Japanese culture.

The game of Pachinko presents a simple set of finite pins, against which small ball bearings express the infinite amount of combinations and permutations of chance mechanics of motion. The game is housed in a vertical box in which this large array of vertical pins, in a somewhat random fashion, is placed like a maze. Through the length of the box, and around any number of pins, are other holes that are jackpot holes. A ball or balls are projected into this maze; then, the balls find their way, either to the bottom of the case, or into the jackpot holes which consequently release more balls. Acquiring more balls is the aim of the game. The only form of control that the player has is in the first and initial release of the ball (usually through the push of a small lever: differing degrees of force can be applied to change the ball’s initial trajectory).

The real attraction of the game is in the expression of the mechanics. Balls fall through the large number of pins as a direct result of the initial push from the player.
Pins, and the patterns to which they are held, are changed daily at Pachinko Parlors, so the trajectory of the balls becomes unpredictable from day to day. The motion of the balls through the maze of pins acts like a filter of sorts. There is a strong case for the application of chaos theory to this set of variables, and this is a classic example of how the theory works. Through the initial projection of a ball into the maze, the final outcome becomes a compounded result of these initial interactions, added to the myriad other encounters the ball has with other balls and pins. But for this study, the idea of filtering is a paramount concept. The pins in their fixed fashion represent a finite set of filters. The balls, put in motion by the player, have an infinite number of possible trajectories. In the course of a game, the nexus of these two environments produces results that can be incredibly varied.

Applying this understanding to Piano Media, then, one can see that the α pattern acts like the pins; it is the filter with which the balls or left-hand patterns naturally come into contact with. Though here, the left-hand pattern has a certain predetermined motion. Because of this, the outcome of the product as a filtered entity is predictable in the sense that what goes in will come out. The unpredictability comes, though, in the filtered pattern that is the product of the interaction or juxtaposition of the two hands. In Fig. 18, the tabulated information shows the α pattern as filter and the motion of the first left-hand pattern, β, through its nine repetition cycle.
Fig. 18. Graphic tabulation of the filtering effect of $\alpha$ pattern on the $\beta$ pattern, Section 1, of *Piano Media*. The $\alpha$ pattern has been condensed (no repeats) and is also in normal form. $\beta$ is a two-note pattern whose cycle consists of nine repetitions; one dot represents the first note of the pattern, two vertical dots, the final note of the pattern. Also indicated is the direction of the motion.

From the data in Fig. 18, what is apparent is the nature of this very first combining of right-hand and left-hand elements. There is a certain level of entropy in the filtering effect
that the \( \beta \) pattern has on \( \alpha \). From the table it can be seen how the motion of \( \beta \), against a condensed representation of \( \alpha \), is not uniform, nor attributable to any regular motion. What the graph represents is the way in which the filtering effect of \( \beta \) partitions \( \alpha \) as a continually changing internal division. Similarly, \( \alpha \) is able to produce a definite flow and direction to which the \( \beta \) pattern falls in its first four repetitions of its cycle. After the first four repetitions, the motion and direction to which the pattern operates, in relation to \( \alpha \), is inverted. A quick visual analysis of the table reveals that there is not real distinctive predictability about either the range created in the partition of \( \alpha \) by \( \beta \), or the points at which each repetition in the cycle commences. Even changes of direction are not strictly uniform: four initial repetitions partition \( \alpha \) from lowest pc to highest, an inverted motion for the next four, and a resumption for the last. What is predictable is the fact that both the beginning and end notes of the \( \beta \) pattern cycle are concurrent at least once with every pc of \( \alpha \).

This first example from *Piano Media* shows how the beginning of the work functions much like the throwing into action of a ball in a game of Pachinko. If the pins are represented by \( \alpha \), then the ball is \( \beta \). The motion of the ball (\( \beta \)) is such that a filtering

\[\begin{align*}
\text{If the first range of division of } \alpha \text{ (between pc 0 and pc 10) by } \beta \text{ can be assigned as } x \\
\text{then the following proportions apply to the rest of the cycle—} \\
(x^2 - 1) \\
(x^2 + 2) \\
(x + 1) \\
(x^2 + 1)
\end{align*}\]

Though this division and use of proportions differ slightly in their process to that of the internal mechanisms of Fig. 13, nonetheless, the reliance and distribution of a type of model compounding process is evident just as it is within the internal structure of \( \alpha \).

\[\text{114 Also of note are the proportions to which } \alpha \text{ is divided through the beginning and end notes of } \beta. \text{ What is evident here is, namely, the way in which the proportions of the division of } \alpha \text{ are laid out and progress in a fashion that is reminiscent of the ‘model proportion’ paradigm that was present in the inner proportions of } \alpha \text{ (see Fig. 13):} \\
\text{If the first range of division of } \alpha \text{ (between pc 0 and pc 10) by } \beta \text{ can be assigned as } x \\
\text{then the following proportions apply to the rest of the cycle—} \\
(x^2 - 1) \\
(x^2 + 2) \\
(x + 1) \\
(x^2 + 1)\]
effect causes a certain response to the movement of the ball, though not to any real predictability (at least not within the confines of what has been examined so far).

As was discussed in the analysis of the musical elements of the piece in Chapter V, what occurs through the piece is a gradual assertion of some human responsibilities. At best, the opening is an emancipation of human interaction, at least from the composer. It seems that these patterns have been predetermined, and Ichiyanagi is as much an observer of their process as the listener or performer is. He naturally lets them run their course, and acknowledges that their course seems somewhat destined by the internal relationships that they possess. With this said, it is perhaps clearer in Section 2 as to how Ichiyanagi comes to assert control of the unfolding work.

Section 2 is in stark contrast to the freedom that was present in the opening filtering of the patterns. Through the whole first section, simple left-hand patterns have been presented in much the same fashion in which the vitality and varied results of the filtering of β through α had at the outset. But in Section 1, and its natural conclusion on the downbeat of Section 2, there is a sense of growing complexity within the patterns. Each pattern occurring after β seems to grow more predictable. At the downbeat of Section 2, the epic length of the repetitions heralds a considerable pint of stasis. Section 2 (see musical example 370-6, 20) is a stasis point, to which inaction through repetition is the central element. At this point, a security is afforded the rhythmic fluidity in relation to how it had been unfolding previously. Here, not only is a rhythmic stasis present (that hints at a possible diversion), but also a seeming lack of vitality. Such a definite shift in emphasis and shape of the section suggests an obvious choice by the composer to use certain elements to offset dynamic qualities that shaped previous sections.
Fig. 19 presents an outline of the first repetition cycle of $i$ from Section 2. Shown are the first 9 repetitions that comprise an 18-cycle pattern. This pattern, unlike the $\beta$ pattern, is consistent with a division of its form into small parts that repeat. The 9 cycles that are presented in the table are themselves repeated in whole to complete the further 9 cycles that remain. But, more distinctly noticeable is the pattern of repetitions between the cycles. The filtering effect of $\alpha$ on the left-hand pattern $i$ has the effect of producing a predictable movement in the cycles. It is here, also, that the whole piece falls into a set of prescribed operations that confine it. Similarly, it is here that Ichiyanagi’s control on the process is most apparent. The stasis of rhythmic movement, and large repetition cycle, are not the sole factors giving this section weight. This is quite a significant issue in this section, and the work is duly affected by it.
Fig. 19. Tabulation of the $i$ pattern as filtered by $\alpha$ from Section 2, *Piano Media*. The pattern is an 18 cycle form; represented in the table are the first 9 repetitions (which repeat thereafter a further 9 times). Dotted lines delineate the parts of the cycle.
The Pachinko-like effect is still inherent, though it seems as if Ichiyanagi has obtained exactly the results that he intended, rather than observing naturally derived ones. But also, it signals, perhaps, a reestablishment of human will over the work. In what seems like a struggle for will, the opening measures set the natural processes of the combining of patterns against human assertiveness. By Section 2, there is a greater feeling of this struggle becoming more dominated by the composer’s intervention. Ichiyanagi steps into the picture and begins to subtly control the pace and direction of the piece.

The effect of the filtering described in the first sections is abandoned by the beginning of Section 3. By this point, the work exists not as a trajectory of possible outcomes through the process of filtering, but as a direct result of juxtapositions. Here, both of the patterns of each hand are on equal terms rhythmically and in terms of pitch space. Their unison is a first for the work, and indeed this characteristic is held until the completion of the piece.

_Piano Media_, in relation to its analogous role to Pachinko, displays internal musical processes that express comparable roles to those operations inherent in the game. Through filtering effects and subtle manipulations, Ichiyanagi is able to be witness to process (as a Pachinko player is), while at the same time initiating a control (to a greater extent than a Pachinko enthusiast) on possible outcomes and favored directions for the fluidity and greater structure of his work.
PART 4.

ON CONSIDERING THE BROADER IMPLICATIONS
CONCLUSIONS

Issues of Performance Practice

Given the nature of a work like *Piano Media*, and its obvious background, it is safe to assume that the piece relies on the performer to embrace a new approach to piano technique. A virtuoso pianist in his own right, Ichiyanagi created *Piano Media* to suit his technique. The work is extremely difficult and requires great stamina. But this aspect of the work is at odds with comparable nineteenth-century etudes or salon-pieces in the canon. The main catalyst for *Piano Media*’s demanding nature must be seen as a manifestation of the composer’s desire to fuse humanity with computer-derived technology. This is rather different from the intention of many nineteenth-century virtuoso pianist-composers who sought virtuosity to reflect purely human feats of endurance.

From perhaps the first great *Klavierstücke* of Stockhausen to Boulez’s *Piano Sonata No. 3*, or in the works of Xenakis, Ligeti, or Ferneyhough, piano compositions of the mid- to late twentieth century have developed immensely and created demands on the performer that have far eclipsed even the revolutionary use of the thumb in the early Baroque period. But many of these developments have centered on producing previously unimaginable complex rhythmic structures, inevitably fused with philosophies that demand innovative musical approaches to create originality (such as the realization of graphic scores or the use of theatre, gestures, etc.). So, too, the physical demands in *Piano Media* represent Ichiyanagi’s observations on the history of piano technique in the
twentieth century and the function of Piano Media as a transition piece to a new music and new performer. A central focus of the work lies in the technique of using repetition to generate form. Primarily from Minimalism, but also from the idea of machines and the synthetic uncompromising capability of computer systems, the work’s musical language uses repetition in a way that doesn’t overtly draw attention to itself.

The idea behind the performance of the work comes in the acquiescence of the performer as a willing entity seeking to merge into the realm of the artificial. A computer or robot could very easily play the work in much the same way that Ichiyanagi first heard the University of Tokyo robot perform Mozart in 1972, but the point is then lost. What is important to convey in the performance of the piece is the incomprehensibility of the demands and absolute will of the piece, as a mechanical construct, to serve as an interface for human stimulation. The supreme nexus of achievement lies in the hands of those who are able to identify with the work as completely beyond human or pianistic notions of interpretation and allow the work to create an artistic statement in itself. In fact, the idea of interpretation has become something in which traditional nineteenth-century ideas of musical freedoms or individualities of understanding have been severely challenged by twentieth century aesthetics. The invention of various mathematically based composition systems (again, citing names such as Babbitt, Boulez, and Xenakis) gives scope to this new understanding of how the performer relates to the music. In any of the works of these composers, the notion of interpretation moves away from the concept of performer as co-creator and more towards the idea of performer as vessel. Whereas this may not immediately seem different from the quotas of interpretation that are traditionally associated with nineteenth-century compositions, it differs in the sense that the
interpretation comes through the exactness of details rather than the communication of individual feelings or perceived emotional responses. But, of course, this difference is complicated because of many other aspects and functions.

In terms of performance, *Piano Media* represents the meeting of the human and the artificial, and demands, through its transparent foreground, absolute perfection as a replacement for the interpretation of ideas or emotions. The piece can really only work (and work well) when there is an absence of human will (in terms of shaping or directing the outcome), but nonetheless a *presence* of humanity. The absence of human will rejects the nineteenth-century ideals of piano performance as a function of shaping a musical composition with manipulations of phrasing, rhythm, and dynamics. These types of considerations have to be absent in a performance of *Piano Media*. Without an intentional dedication to the keeping of strict rhythm and tempo, as well as dynamic gradations, the whole concept of the work, its mechanics and fluidity of construction, is lost. So, in this sense, interpretation is more akin to the placement and key understanding of the work’s dimensions and divisions. But the aim here is not for the performer to become a robot; instead, the human must merge with machine. In this new construction, Ichiyanagi creates a new media of technology, and its prime achievement is the interface between the analog and the digital. Therefore, traditional ideas about the role of interpretation have to be reviewed (or new ones invented).

From the illustration in Fig. 20, *Piano Media* sits within immediate realms that are derived from environments both natural and artificial. The piece is the interface between the world of nature and the world that has been created as a counter to nature: digital technology.
Fig. 20. Venn Diagram showing *Piano Media* as an interface between natural and digital environments.

Ichiranagi, as the composer, is of the natural analog world. *Piano Media* bridges the gap between this world and the idea of another realm, created by man (but distinct and separate): it is a technological manifestation of man’s greater power to create in the spirit of nature. Absent from this Venn Diagram is the performer as interpreter. In the case of *Piano Media*, the performer becomes more a facilitator than co-creator.

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115 Of particular interest here must be the mention of the cover to the published version of *Piano Media*. Appropriately, Ichiranagi’s publishing company has the name Zen-On, a Tokyo based firm that publishes the composer’s work. But the cover to *Piano Media* reveals much about the work and its perceived functions discussed in this chapter. The cover shows the first page of the piece as if it is superimposed or printed on a flat metal sheet; a perfect series of 15mm diameter punched holes are arranged in a grid of 8x8 (a reference to Pachinko slots?). Behind this sheet (the holes are shaded somewhat to represent depth in the surface) is an early photo of Ichiranagi, most likely from around the time of the work or slightly earlier. His portrait is barely visible, visually filtered, and obfuscated by punched series of holes in the printed α pattern. He is looking out and it is difficult to distinguish if he plays the role of the
So the performer’s status in this piece is a great departure from many previous ideas about performance as a function of the composer’s intentions, fused with the individuality (and charisma) of the performer. The work succeeds because it demands, not a robot to complete the work’s stunning mechanics of process, but a human interpret the musical language, and create a new type of performance environment. While this musicality historically extends into far less an area than did performances practices in the nineteenth century, a human performer is definitely required for the realization of Piano Media. Interpretation in such a work is accomplished through an understanding of the piece as an articulation of ideas about freedom, process, and human will.

**Piano Media in Context**

According to Harumi Befu, Japanese culture developed and flourished over centuries according to a few pertinent goals and methods of adaptation:

[Japan] has not been simply a copier, an imitator . . . but has seen to making refinements—technical improvements, subtle changes, and added precision . . .

. . . This cultural pattern of making innovations to fit borrowed elements to Japanese culture is an essential trait.  

In such a pattern of influx, various degrees of cultural/artistic stimulation and the processing of such information was inevitably mixed with the contemporary trends and understanding of Japanese tastes and sensibilities. We see borders to which language,

confessor, or the listener of confession. This cover begs many questions that seem answerable in the acceptance that it is a complete assessment of what the work represents, and what has been brought forth through this study: that Piano Media is a piece that is much more of a nexus of realms (between the digital [soto] and the natural [uchi]) than a definitive imprint of conviction from the composer.

Zen, and the ideals of proportion of the traditional arts are tied completely to each other. The purpose of this study has been to uncover at least the few important parallelisms in the examination of Piano Media as both a cultural and musical artifact.

The Soto-Uchi Paradigm: Piano Media as a Nexus of Realms

As proposed in Fig. 20, Piano Media functions as, and resembles, a bridge between the traditional Japanese notions of outside and inside. Fig. 20 interprets these traditional relationships as analog (natural) and digital (artificial) environments. These notions are analogous to Japanese cultural understandings and are present in the language structure of soto (outside of group) and uchi (inside group) distinctions. Piano Media is a merging of a number of important soto-uchi distinctions. Musically, foreign (soto) influences from minimalism are juxtaposed with proportional and symmetrical considerations inherent in traditional Japanese (uchi) predilections. Perhaps the precedent of the cover Ichiiyanagi used for the piece lends the idea of process as central and a binding issue of credence. On the cover, he has cast himself as secondary to his own work (rather than dominating it). Or could it be read as the composer existing at the center, as the ultimate controller of the piece. It is slightly ambiguous, and consequently the situation creates the question, who is outside (soto), and who is inside (uchi) the piece?

Final Thoughts

The point of this study has been to provide something more than a regular analysis of a musical structure. The objective involved here was to trace representations of Japanese cultural patterns, and aesthetic manifestations in language structure, religious
beliefs, traditional arts, Pachinko, and Piano Media. In addition, the musical analysis of Piano Media was set against these cultural and artistic characteristics. It was revealed that many of the musical processes, and ideas about symmetry and large forms, were analogous with traditional Japanese aesthetics.

Through this thesis, Piano Media has been studied for its inherent and innovative language and extra-musical influence. Its composer, Toshi Ichiyanagi, is culturally Japanese (he was raised in pre-WWII Japanese society), and Piano Media is therefore an explicit product of a Japanese thinker and composer. But the piece is not a dedicated example of Japanese culture (it does not directly express tradition or heritage). What is apparent about the piece, though, are inherent musical structures that are analogous to Japanese cultural patterns, language structures, and aesthetic predilections. Piano Media is as much an expression of a parallel process to Pachinko, the ritual of Zen, and the structure of Japanese language, as it is a series of musical manipulations, juxtapositions, and explorations. Many aspects of Japanese cultural ideas and aesthetic approaches seem easily drawn because of their congruency and similarity to musical structures and approaches Ichiyanagi took in the construction of the work.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS CITED


**GENERAL REFERENCE**


APPENDIX

1.

TIMELINE OF PERTINENT JAPANESE PERIODS AND EVENTS

Late Ancient

Asuka (A.D. 537-646)

552—Buddhism introduced into Japan
593—Prince Shotoku becomes Regent
595—Sculptor Tori Busshi flourishes
604—Prince Shotoku’s 17 Article Constitution based on Confucian ideals of government instigated in Japan
607—construction of the Horyuji Buddhist Temple
621—Shotoku dies
618—beginning of Chinese Tang Empire (until 906)

Nara (646-794)

710—Nara named capital

Heian (794-1185)

794—Kyoto becomes Capital
1141—birth of monk Eisai (first Zen master)

Medieval

Kamakura (1185-1392) [Nanbokucho 1336-1392]

1202—first signs of the emergence of Zen Buddhism in Kyoto
1215—death of Eisai
1274—first Mongol Invasion
1281—second Mongol Invasion

Muromachi (1392-1603)

1536—birth of Hideyoshi
1549—Francis Xavier, first Christian Mission to Japan
1590—Feudal States unified by Hideyoshi
1598—death of Hideyoshi
1602—birth of painter Tan’yu
Early Modern

Edo (Tokugawa) (1603-1868)

1612—Christianity banned, beginning of period of isolation
1674—death of painter Tan’yu
1852—arrival of American Navy under Commodore Perry

Modern

Meiji (1868-1912)

1868—Meiji Restoration, Industrialization and Modernization of Japan begun, isolationist policies dropped
1894—Sino-Japanese War (Korean peninsular)
1901—birth of artist Murayama Tomoyoshi
1904—Russo-Japanese War

Taishō (1912-1926)

1921—Pachinko invented by Takeichi Masamura, Osaka
1923—avant-garde group Mavo created

Showa (1926-1989)

1933—birth of Ichiyanagi Toshi
1941—creation of technology policy by War Bureaucrats for the Modernization of Japan, Pearl Harbor attack
1952—Ichiyanagi studies at Juilliard, meets Cage
1957—marries Yoko Ono
1961—returns to Japan, gains wide recognition
1973—Piano Media
1977—artist Murayama Tomoyoshi dies

Heisei (1989-present)
2.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF TOSHI ICHIYANAGI

Toshi Ichiyanagi was born in Kobe, Japan, on February 4, 1933. His early musical training included piano studies with Chieko Hara and composition under Ikenouchi. He left Japan early in his life and was accepted into the Bachelors program for composition at the Juilliard School in 1952. His piano teachers at Juilliard were Beveridge Webster and Bernhard Weiser. During his time there he became involved in the performance of contemporary music. John Cage became a mentor and teacher (Ichiyanagi was also a student at the New School for Social Research from 1954-8). Some early works, such as Music for Piano No. 4 for David Tudor, completely embrace the Cage ideal. The score for Music for Piano No. 4 for David Tudor has the simple instructions: “use sustaining sound(s) and silence(s) only. No attack should be made.” Basing his work on the polymorphous resources offered by the New York avant-garde, Ichiyanagi came to embrace not only these techniques and philosophies, but also championed piano works of Cage and his associates. A similar essay into the avant-garde came with the work Sapporo for 15 players and conductor. Here any sounds sources can be used and the score consists of a graph of possible events.

After marrying the conceptual artist Yoko Ono in 1957 (the marriage dissolved in 1963), Ichiyanagi moved back to Japan in 1961. His efforts in Japan were a continuation of his work at Juilliard. Using the NHK Studios in Tokyo, he produced myriad (purely) electronic works that include: Tinguely Mixture No.2, Funkakushi, and Shikisokuzekusokuzeshiki, as well as electro-acoustic works such as Appearance for three players and sound projectionist. During the early 60s, Karlheinz Stockhausen visited Japan and
worked extensively at the NHK Studios with Ichiyanagi, producing the electronic work *Telemusik*. Ichiyanagi’s other activities in Tokyo during the 60s included the organizing of various festivals and concerts that often included piano works of Cage and others. The first festival was held in 1961 at the Institute of Twentieth Century Music in Tokyo. Many others followed, including the Orchestral Space Festival of 1966, coordinated with assistance from Toru Takemitsu. The 60s also saw Ichiyanagi involved in the creation of the ensemble “New Directions” (1963) and their subsequent success and embrace of domestic and overseas avant-garde music. At the close of the decade, he had become a recognizable figure in Japan, perhaps only second to Takemitsu. In 1967, he became Rockefeller composer-in-residence in New York.

After a decade of intense experimentation in electronic and acoustic music that explored many aspects of both chance and indeterminate music, in 1972 he returned to conventional compositional notation with the solo piano work *Piano Media*. Later pieces in the 80s made use of traditional Japanese instruments: *Ogenraku* (for gagaku ensemble), *Still Time* (sho), and *Winter Portrait II* (koto).

In the late 80s and early 90s, Ichiyanagi received numerous awards for his compositional achievements of the past forty years (both domestic and overseas). During this time, he was awarded the Otaka (1981, for the first piano concerto), Nakajima (1984), Mainichi Shinbum (1985), and Kyoto Music Prize (1989), and was presented with a Koussevitsky Prize and the *Ordre d’Arts et de lettres* (1984). He also founded the Tokyo International Music Ensemble and was appointed the Director of the Interlink Festival and advisor to the National Theater in 1991. He currently resides in the US,
receives numerous commissions, and his music is performed both in Japan and around the world.

**Selected Works**

**Symphonies/Orchestral**  
The Field, 1966  
Activities, 1967  
Piano Concerto No. 1 “Reminiscence of Space,” 1981  
Reingaku Symphony “The Shadows Appearing Through the Darkness,” 1987  
Symphony “Berlin Renshi,” 1989  
Voices of the environment, 1989

**Chamber Instrumental**  
Music for Piano No. 2, 1959  
String Quartet No. 1 “Nagaoka,” 1964  
Piano Media, 1972  
Time Sequence (Piano), 1976  
Arrangements (Percussion), 1972  
Scenes III (violin), 1980  
Still Time III (Harp), 1987  
The Way (Japanese trad. instruments) 1990

**Electronic**  
Parallel Music, 1962  
Life Music, 1964  
Shikisokuzeku sokuzeshiki, 1965  
Tokyo 1969, 1969  
Mandarama, 1970  
Improvisation, 1975