

UC San Diego

UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Ma as a Universal Language, and Ma as Applied to my Musical Practice.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4vd7448s>

Author

KAWAMURA, MARI

Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Ma as a Universal Language, and *Ma* as Applied to my Musical Practice.

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts

in

Contemporary Music Performance

by

Mari Kawamura

Committee in charge:

Aleck Karis, Chair
Thomas Erbe
Lei Liang
Daisuke Miyao
Wilfrido Terrazas

2022

The dissertation of Mari Kawamura is approved,
and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dissertation Approval Page.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures	vi
Acknowledgments.....	vii
Vita	viii
Abstract	ix
Introduction	1
Part I: What is <i>ma</i> ?	3
<i>Ma</i> , in daily life	3
<i>Ma</i> as Visual space	4
<i>Ma</i> in traditional paintings	4
<i>Ma</i> in <i>ikebana</i>	6
<i>Ma</i> in <i>Shinto</i> Shrines	7
<i>Ma</i> in architecture	8
<i>Ma</i> as temporal space	11
<i>Ma</i> in Performance Arts	11
<i>Ma</i> in the traditional Japanese music	14
Part II. Takemitsu's <i>ma</i>	20
Fragmented Materials	21
Manipulation of <i>Tempi</i>	22
Fermatas (Performer-oriented flexibility)	23

Use of Resonance	24
Use of Pedal	25
Part III. <i>Ma</i> in other works	28
Haydn Piano Sonata in Eflat major, Hob. XVI:49. Second movement.....	28
Iannis Xenakis: <i>Evryali</i>	30
Part IV. About my album	38
My Definition of <i>ma</i>	38
Haydn Piano Sonata in Eflat major, Hob. XVI:49.	40
Lei Liang: <i>Garden Eight</i>	44
Katharina Rosenberger: <i>Torsion</i>	48
Program Order	52
Conclusion	54
References.....	55

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Origin of the Chinese Character, 間	3
Figure 2: <i>pine trees</i> 松林図屏風 by Hasegawa Tohaku	5
Figure 3: <i>Kyozou</i> 虚像 by Sohu Teshigawara	7
Figure 4: <i>Hashigake</i> 橋がけ in a Noh Theater	10
Figure 5: <i>Rain Tree Sketches</i> , mm. 54 – 60	21
Figure 6: <i>Litany I</i> , mm. 34 – 40	22
Figure 7: <i>Litany II</i> , mm. 15 – 17	23
Figure 8: <i>Rain Tree Sketch</i> , mm. 35 – 39	24
Figure 9: <i>Rain Tree Sketch II</i> , mm. 30 – 35	25
Figure 10: <i>Rain Tree Sketch</i> , mm. 1 – 11	27
Figure 11: <i>Rain Tree Sketch II</i> , mm. 7 – 9	27
Figure 12: Haydn’s Keyboard Sonata in E-flat major, Hob. XVI: 49, second movement mm. 1 - 10	29
Figure 13: Xenakis’ <i>Evryali</i> , the first silence	31
Figure 14: Xenakis’ <i>Evryali</i> , the second silence	32
Figure 15: Xenakis’ <i>Evryali</i> , the last silence	34
Figure 16: Haydn’s Keyboard Sonata in E-flat major, Hob. XVI: 49, first movement mm. 1 – 24	42
Figure 17: Haydn’s Keyboard Sonata in E-flat major, Hob. XVI: 49, first movement mm. 48 – 64	43
Figure 18: “Tian” from Lei Liang’s <i>Garden Eight</i> , 2004 version	46
Figure 19: “Tian” from Lei Liang’s <i>Garden Eight</i> , 1996 version	47
Figure 20: Rosenberger’s <i>Torsion</i> , mm. 170 – 177	49
Figure 21: Rosenberger’s <i>Torsion</i> , mm. 1 – 16	50
Figure 22: Album track list	53

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the support of many people.

Many thanks to my mentors, prof. Aleck Karis, prof. Lei Liang, prof. Wilfrido Terrazas, prof. Thomas Erbe, and prof. Daisuke Miyao for their guidance during the process of developing this project.

To all the staff members in the music department, especially the recording engineer, Andrew Munsey, and the amazing production team, Jessica Flores, David Espiritu, and Jeremy Olson, for their kindness and professionalism.

I am also eternally grateful to Joseph Bourdeau and Ilana Waniuk for the friendships and the tremendous support - thank you for the countless hours of sitting with me and helping with English writing and thank you for giving me so much encouragement and advice.

And finally, thanks to my parents, Sasha, Maeda-kun, and numerous friends, who always offer support and love, and inspire me every day.

VITA

2009 Bachelor of Music, Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music, Nagakute

2012 Master of Art, Royal Academy of Music, London

2016 Graduate Diploma, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston

2022 Doctor of Musical Arts, University of California San Diego

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Ma as a Universal Language, and *Ma* as Applied to my Musical Practice.

by

Mari Kawamura

Doctor of Musical Arts in Contemporary Music Performance

University of California San Diego, 2022

Professor Aleck Karis, Chair

Ma (間) is an ancient Japanese concept concerning space and time. *Ma* means “interval” or “gap” in Japanese, but it is a beautiful and philosophically nuanced word, which carries the implication of movements within silence or “empty” spaces. The concept has served as an essential element in people’s daily life in Japan, in traditional arts, such as brush paintings, *ikebana* (flower arrangement), and music, for hundreds of years, and is often considered to be an

original concept, unique to Japanese culture. Because of this perceived uniqueness, *ma* has been discussed and treated with a slight hint of a nationalistic mindset, especially in the last centuries.

However, I will argue that although the formalization of these ideas as “*ma*” is uniquely Japanese, the phenomenon described is more globalized. As a Japanese pianist who engages with Western classical and experimental music, I have witnessed *ma*-like elements in musical pieces from different geographic locations and time periods.

My artistic interest has, thus, centered around finding *ma*-like structures in music from outside of Japan’s sphere of influence, with the goal of demonstrating that the concept of “charged stillness” is quite widespread. With this idea in mind, I recorded a piano solo album titled “*MA ~space between~*” that includes pieces by Chinese American composer Lei Liang, 18th-century Austrian composer Joseph Haydn, Swiss composer Katharina Rosenberger, and 20th-century Greek avant-garde composer Iannis Xenakis, as well as Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu. These works are very different from each other, but I believe that they all embody *ma*-like ideas in their own ways. As a performer, one can then apply this ancient idea to the performance of various musical situations to enrich their performance experiences.

Introduction

Ma (間) is an ancient Japanese concept concerning space and time. *Ma* means “interval” or “gap” in Japanese, but it is a beautiful and philosophically nuanced word, which carries the implication of movements within silence or “empty” spaces. The concept has served as an essential element in people’s daily life in Japan, in traditional arts, such as brush paintings, *ikebana* (flower arrangement), and music, for hundreds of years, and is often considered to be an original concept, unique to Japanese culture. Because of this perceived uniqueness, *ma* has been discussed and treated with a slight hint of a nationalistic mindset, especially in the last centuries.

However, I will argue that although the formalization of these ideas as “*ma*” is uniquely Japanese, the phenomenon described is more globalized. As a Japanese pianist who engages with Western classical and experimental music, I have witnessed *ma*-like elements in musical pieces from different geographic locations and time periods.

My artistic interest has, thus, centered around finding *ma*-like structures in music from outside of Japan’s sphere of influence, with the goal of demonstrating that the concept of “charged stillness” is quite widespread. With this idea in mind, I recorded a piano solo album titled “*MA ~space between~*” that includes pieces by Chinese American composer Lei Liang, 18th-century Austrian composer Joseph Haydn, Swiss composer Katharina Rosenberger, and 20th-century Greek avant-garde composer Iannis Xenakis, as well as Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu. These works are very different from each other, but I believe that they all embody *ma*-like ideas in their own ways. As a performer, one can then apply this ancient idea to the performance of various musical situations to enrich their performance experiences.

This paper has been designed to follow the following structure of parts.

Part I: What is *ma*?

This chapter will discuss how the concept of *ma* is traditionally utilized and expressed in various situations in Japan, including daily life, traditional visual art, architecture, performance art, and music, to extract essential characteristics of this profound term.

Part II: Takemitsu's *ma*

In this chapter, we will look at specific examples of how the ideas of *ma* manifest in different kinds of music other than traditional Japanese music, examining piano solo pieces by Toru Takemitsu in which he intentionally incorporated this ancient idea.

Part III: *Ma*, in other works

I will demonstrate how *ma*-like elements are used in two contrasting piano solo works by European composers, Joseph Haydn and Iannis Xenakis, to argue that artistic ideas which resemble *ma* clearly exist in other traditions than Japanese. This chapter will briefly look at the history of how the ancient concept has been conceived with a hint of a nationalistic mindset in Japan for the last couple of centuries. I will also introduce some examples of how the idea of admiring “emptiness,” a core essence of *ma*, does exist in eastern philosophies and arts.

Part IV: About my album

This chapter will discuss my album, “MA – space between.”

After showing the essential five types/characters of *ma*, I will demonstrate how each piece shows *ma*-like musical elements categorizing them into these types. I will also discuss how I deal with these moments as a pianist.

Part I. What is *ma*?

The word *ma* basically means an “interval between two things or events,” either spatial or temporal. For instance, *ma* can carry meanings as simple as the “gap” between two cars, or it can refer to a more abstract, temporal “break” between two activities. For instance, when you say, “I will take a lunch break now.” The “break” is *ma*.

The Chinese character for *ma* already expresses the imagery of *ma* clearly. The symbol for *ma*, “間,” consists of two elements; 門, meaning gate, and the inner character 日 implies the moon. The visual image suggests lights shining through the gates in between. This image is important for us to understand the concept of *ma*.

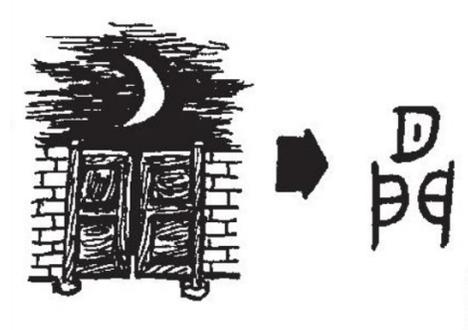


Figure 1: Origin of the Chinese Character, 間¹

***Ma*, in daily life**

Ma is a casual word that is used in daily life, and Japanese people seem to be obsessed with the idea of *ma*, even now in the 21st century. It is used in daily life so often that it almost gives the impression that the concept of *ma* dictates people's perspectives in Japan. This is

¹ Chaziwang online dictionary, accessed August 1, 2022, <http://qi Yuan.chaziwang.com/etymology-14367.html>

evidenced by the fact that so many idioms that center around the term *ma*. For instance, 間を置く (*ma wo oku*) (put some *ma*) means to take a break (and calm down). 間が悪い (*ma ga warui*) (bad *ma*) means an awkward moment. 間が持てない (*ma ga motenai*) (one cannot hold the *ma*) means an awkward moment when you are talking with someone and you have nothing else to talk about.

These examples show that the word *ma* has multiple meanings and nuances, which are all somehow associated with “space” or “intervals.” 間を置く means take a **temporal distance** between two events so that one can have a moment to calm down. 間が持てない is an awkward situation when you do not know what to do with the **temporal and spatial space**. Also, combined with another character 時 that means “moment,” 時間 (*jikan*) means ‘time’ in Japanese – **temporal space** between moments.

***Ma* as Visual space**

-*Ma* in traditional paintings

Ma is not only a casual word used in daily life, but it can also be discussed in artistic contexts such as in ink painting. Here, the concept is still associated with spatial space. However, the space is not always a small gap in between but here expresses something more profound than just a physical space between.



Figure 2: *pine trees* 松林図屏風 by Hasegawa Tôhaku ²

The ink painting work, *Pine Trees* 松林図屏風 by Hasegawa Tôhaku (1539-1610), is an excellent example of how *ma* has been utilized in the realm of Japanese traditional visual arts. You can notice vast blanks between the pine trees in this picture. This negative space might indicate the fog covering the trees, hiding numerous pine trees underneath. The blank space leaves the viewer a certain room to use their imagination to fill the gap and daydream about it. In this way, the negative space invites the viewers to participate in the piece.

A Japanese painter, Tosa Mitsuaki (1617 – 1691) documented the oral tradition of one of the earliest treatises on Japanese style painting in his book *Honchô Gaho Daiden* 本朝画法大伝. In it, he states that “the blank space is also part of the design. Hence fill it in with your heart/spirit.” *Hakushi mo moyo no uchi nareba, ‘kokoro’ nite husagubeshi.* (白紙も模様の内なれば、心にてふさぐべし。) ³

² “Collections,” Tokyo National Museum, accessed August 1, 2022, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_collection/index.php?controller=dtl_img&size=L&colid=A10471&t=

³ 本朝畫法大傳, 新日本古典籍綜合データベース, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100269795/viewer/49>

'*Kokoro*' in Japanese means 'heart' or 'spirit.' Tosa's statement shows that traditionally those painters have left these negative spaces intentionally. Still, these negative spaces must be filled with spiritual strength (*kokoro*). These spaces are *ma*, and 'spiritual strength' will be a key when discussing the concept of *ma* further. We will discuss the nature of 'spiritual strength' later.

-Ma in ikebana

The *ikebana* work, *Kyozou* 虚像 (1951) by a great master, Sohu Teshigawara (1900-1979), is another beautiful example to show some important characters of *ma*. This piece features one huge log that is cut in half down the center, which somehow reminds us of the Chinese character for *ma*, 間. The upper parts of the logs are decorated with the different branches of various trees, such as the Japanese box tree, so that these logs closely resemble a tree that is split in half. These two pieces stand straight up, facing each other by the flat section, with a small amount of space between them. A historian, Matsunosuke Nishiyama (1912 - 2012), points out that the distance between the two logs narrows slightly as it goes up. He continues that this suggests the possibility that the two logs will cross each other and melt into one again were the piece to continue upwards. According to Nishiyama, there are two critical aspects to this work, which we can use in understanding the aesthetic of *ma*. One is the fact that what is now two separated halves were once a single log, and the other one is the possibility of something happening in the space between these halves. He explains that the nuance created by this spatial distance is *ma*, finally concluding that *ma* is the distance that occurs when one is cut off. If they

were two whole trees, for example, the space created would be less intimately connected to the aesthetic of *ma*.⁴

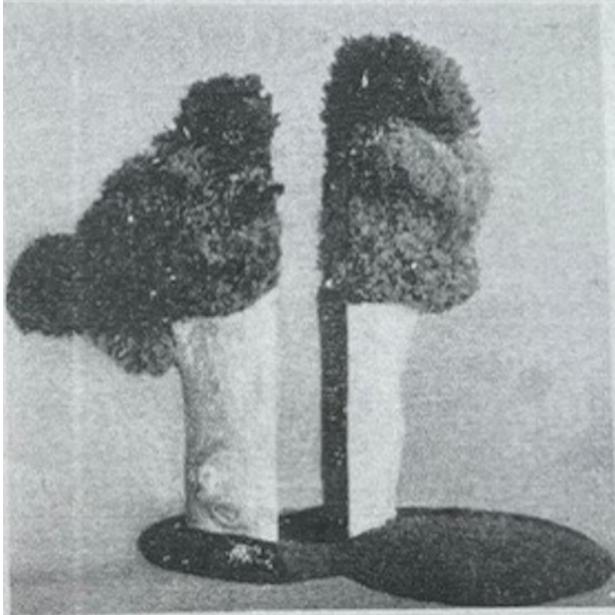


Figure 3: *Kyo-zou* 虚像 by Sohu Teshigawara⁵

-Ma in Shinto Shrines

An American scholar, Richard B. Pilgrim, explains that *ma*-like elements can also be found in ancient and modern *Shinto* traditions. For instance, one visiting a *Shinto* shrine for the first time may be surprised by its simplicity. Rather than statues or icons, one is likely to find empty, open spaces, with even the inside of the shrine being extremely simple. These spaces are designed to be open and cleared out, in anticipation of the comings and goings of *Kami* (spirits or

⁴ Matsunosuke Nishiyama 西山松之助, “*Ma no Bigaku seitirsushi*” 間の美学成立史 [History of Establishment of the Aesthetics of Ma], in *Ma no Kenkyu* 間の研究 [Researches on Ma], ed. Hiroshi Minami (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983),116.

⁵ Mirei Shigemori 重森三玲, *Atarashii Ikebana* 新しい生花 [New Ikebana] (Tokyo: Isobe shobou, 1951), 1.

holy ghosts). These *Kami* are said to use the central approach to the shrine for their movements, and as such, one should not walk through these spaces.

As these examples above show, the anticipation of a spirit's visit, or to sense the 気配 *Kehai* (presence, atmosphere) of spirits in an empty space is important in *Shinto* beliefs, and Pilgrim argues that this concept of anticipation is one of the origins of *ma*.⁶

-Ma in architecture

Isozaki Arata (B. 1931) is a contemporary Japanese architect with a passion for *ma* in Japanese traditional arts. Similar to the idea about anticipation, he finds the sense of waiting in the concept of *ma*, and describes it thus:

...The fading of things, the dropping of flowers, flickering movements of mind, shadows falling on water or earth are the kinds of phenomena that most deeply impress the Japanese.

The fondness for movement of this kind permeates the Japanese concept of indefinite architectural space in which a layer of flat boards, so thin as to be practically transparent, determines permeation of light and lines of vision. Appearing in this space is a flickering of shadows, a momentary shift between the worlds of reality and unreality. *Ma* is a void moment of waiting for this kind of change.⁷

At the same time, Isozaki also expresses a different characteristic of *ma*, which is closer to the image of the log split into two parts we observed earlier. He states that “*ma* divides the

⁶ Richard B Pilgrim, “Intervals (Ma) In Space and Time: Foundations For A Religio-Arsthetic Paradigm In Japan,” 262.

⁷ Arata Isozaki 磯崎新, “Ma: Japanese Time-Space,” *The Japan Architect* 54, no.2 (1979) :78.

world”⁸ and that *ma* is the space between two edges or contrasting ideas, such as the secular world and the heavenly world, or the upper and lower levels.⁹

This idea is reflected in the striking image of the architecture of *Noh* 能 theaters. On the left side of the stage, there is a bridge passageway called *hashi-gakari* 橋掛かり connecting the backstage (mirror room) to the center stage, where the performers walk through as they come onto and go back from the stage. Large, mid-sized, and small pine trees are planted in descending order from the main stage to the mirror room. They are known respectively as the first, second, and third pines. They are placed this way using the perspective to express the long distance between the mirror room and the stage.

Another aspect of *Noh* related to the discussion of *ma* is the fact that the protagonists are, most of the time, spirits, or ghosts. The bridge structure, *hashi-gakari*, supports the idea that the spirits visit the secular world by traveling through the vast distance crossing the bridge to tell the audience their stories and then retrace their steps back to the heavenly world. The space between two opposites is *ma*, and the bridge is able to connect the two. Any action or conversation occurring on the bridge during a play indicates that they are on the way somewhere.

While Isozaki’s first example explains *ma* as the state of waiting and anticipating gradual transformation, his second example describes it as the gap between two contrasting spaces that are independent of each other. However, both examples demonstrate his understanding of *ma* as a connection between two states; one as a way of transitioning from one state to the other, and the second as a space between two opposite states. Therefore, the gradual transformation as previously referenced in the "fading of things", as well as the states of “life and death” and "the

⁸ Ibid, 77.

⁹ Ibid, 77.

secular world and heavenly world" are opposing ideas yet interconnected conceptually. And despite their opposition, one would still be able to experience both sides either by remaining still or embracing the progression and regression between these two states. *Ma* can be the bridge that lets us traverse two states, just like the one in a *Noh* theater.



Figure 4: *Hashi-gakari* 橋がかり in a *Noh* theater¹⁰

In this part, we looked at examples of *ma* that live within visual arts and architecture. These examples show that *ma* is a concept that deals not only with space and distance but also

¹⁰ *Nohgaku* 能楽, Japan Arts Council 日本芸術文化振興会, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/dglib/contents/learn/edc9/kouzou/stage/tokusyoku.html>

with temporality and motion. In the next part, I would like to focus on these aspects of *ma* as they relate to performative arts, such as *Noh*.

***Ma* as temporal space**

-*Ma* in Performance arts

The founder of *Noh* theater, Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443), describes the moments of silence/*ma* during *Noh* performance as follows:

Sometimes spectators of the *Noh* say, “the moments of ‘no-action’ (senutokoro) are the most enjoyable.” This is an art which the actor keeps secret. Dancing and singing, movements and the different types of miming are all acts performed by the body. Moments of “no-action” occur in between (*hima*). When we examine why such moments without action are enjoyable, we find that it is due to the underlying spiritual (*kokoro*) strength of the actor which unremittingly holds the attention. He does not relax the tension when the dancing or singing come to an end or at intervals between (*hima*) the dialogue and the different types of miming. [Not abandoning this mind/heart (*kokoro*) in the various intervals (*himajima*)] he maintains an unwavering inner strength (*naishin*). This feeling of inner strength will faintly reveal itself and bring enjoyment.¹¹

The idea of ‘no-action’ resembles the negative space in the ink paintings I discussed earlier. As we observed earlier in Tosa’s statement regarding the blank space in paintings, Zeami also discusses the importance of spiritual strength during the moments of ‘no-action.’

¹¹ Nose Asaji, ed Zeami Jurokubu shu hyoshaku 世阿弥十六部集評釈 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1949), Quoted in Richard B. Pilgrim, “Intervals (*Ma*) In Space and Time: Foundations For A Religio-Arthetic Paradigm In Japan,” *History of Religions* 25, no. 3 (1986), 258.

What is spiritual strength exactly? Below we can examine an exchange between a *Kyogen* 狂言 actor, and a figure skater, revealing the nature of performers' 'spiritual strength' during the no-action moments.

In contrast to *Noh* and *Kyogen* actors, figure skaters do not often stop during their performances. However, they have in common that the figure skaters also experience a 'no-action' by skating big circles between elements, thereby creating a space that skater Hanyu Yuzuru (B.1994) describes as the "state of *mu* (無) (state of naught, or emptiness)."¹² For instance, a contemporary *Kyogen* actor, Nomura Mansai II (B. 1966), discusses the alertness of the actors during such 'no-action' moments in the conversation with a legendary figure skater, Hanyu. In this, they talk about the similarity between figure skating and *Kyogen* performance. Nomura advises Hanyu on how he may incorporate the philosophy of the long-lasting tradition of *Kyogen* and *Noh* performance practice to figure skating. One of Nomura's recommendations for Hanyu was to feel the space he was skating in. He suggested spotting the moments when skaters make big circles on the ice between technical elements, such as jumps and complex steps, and identifying those as the "state of *mu*"¹³. Nomura explains that by paying attention to all four directions inside the competition arena, one can "make the space your ally,"¹⁴ and then one can "attract the audience's consciousness toward you."¹⁵ This technique is just like how *Kyogen* and *Noh* performers are traditionally taught to "inject *chi* into four pillars" on the stage.

¹² *Hyogen no gokui wo kataru*, 表現の極意を語る “HanyuYuzuru x Nomura Mansai” 羽生結弦 x 野村萬齋 NHK BS 1, 49:59. December 30, 2015.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Hanyu, who was only twenty-three at that time, said he was paying attention mainly to the judges or the audience, but he has never paid attention to the ice rink, the ceiling, the fence, or the wall of the competition arena before. However, during the conversation, he realizes that he needed to sense the connection with the audience or space in 360 degrees at each moment. Like Zeami, Hanyu pays attention to the space by recognizing not only the people but also the atmosphere of his surroundings, not allowing the tension to relax when their performance comes to rest between dancing or skating elements.

A couple of months after the meeting, Hanyu won the NHK trophy and reported how Nomura's ideas had an impact on him: "I could feel the wind brushing through my face. I felt my existence in the world from a broader perspective while skating."¹⁶

These "state of *mu*" discussed by Nomura and Hanyu between actions resemble the moments of long rests in Western music. As a pianist, I understand how moments of 'no-action' can be enjoyable, and a powerful tool for performers to make successful performances.

I had an unforgettable performance experience when I was in my early teens, playing Schubert's Piano Sonata D784 in a minor. During one particular performance, I noticed how much I was enjoying the moments of long rests, in which I could hear my sound traveling until reaching the back of the room, then bouncing back. I felt that the silent moments helped me concentrate better, get involved in the music deeper, and connect with the audience.

Since this experience, I have continued to become more aware of the powerful effects of rests in music, and have used my treatment, and enjoyment of pauses like these as a gauge of whether a performance is going well. When I am nervous on stage, my body tenses up, and I get more anxious thinking about the technically demanding passage coming up next or worrying that

¹⁶ Ibid.

I might have memory slips. When I am in such a state, I use the moments of long pauses to release body tension by taking a long breath and reminding myself to listen to the sound in the room instead of the thoughts in my head. This helps me come back to the present moment and focus on the music. My experience as a musician has also resonated with what Nomura and Hanyu have discussed about being aware of the space, especially during the moments of no movements.

This experience that I have of *ma* is something that the traditional Japanese musicians also have. However, *ma* encompasses a huge range of musical ideas for these traditional musicians.

Next, I would like to discuss what is *ma* in the realm of traditional Japanese music.

-*Ma* in the traditional Japanese music

Japanese musicologist, Gamo Satoaki (B.1937) discusses the presence of *ma* in Japanese traditional music in his essay 日本音楽の間 (*ma* of Japanese Music). Here, the sense of “distance/space” discussed earlier continues to be apparent.

According to Gomo, *ma* in Japanese traditional music is the concept pertaining to the rhythm.¹⁷ However, he continues that *ma* in Japanese traditional music is exclusively associated with performance aspects. For instance, this word is used to describe the performers’ sense of

¹⁷ Satoaki Gamo 蒲生郷昭, “Nihon Ongaku no Ma”日本音楽の間 [ma of Japanese Music], in *Ma no kenkyu 間の研究*[Researches on Ma], ed. Hiroshi Minami (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), 135.

rhythm, saying, “the performer has a good/bad *ma* (間が良い/間が悪い) ,” but it is rarely used to talk about the compositional techniques.¹⁸ With these premises, Gamo points out that four main aspects of *ma* in the realm of Japanese traditional music are performers’ sense of rhythm, rests, beats, and tempi.

In traditional music, the term *ma*, may be used, as mentioned above, to describe a performer’s sense of rhythm, but may also be used to describe “rests”, or “beats”. For instance, in traditional *shamisen* practice, people call the first beat and the second beat of a duple meter *omote-ma*(front-ma), and *ura-ma*(back-ma) respectively.

Gamo characterizes the relationship between beat and *ma* thus: “Beats, embodied by the act of striking, are points in the music. On the other hand, *ma* is the length or distance between beats. Namely, the relationship between beat and *ma* is similar to that of “points and lines”.¹⁹

Moreover, he argues that although *ma* in traditional Japanese music tends to be understood as “silence”, this is not always the case, since pauses are occasionally interrupted by shouts from the performers. Not only is this not always the case, but it seems like, it is often not the case, since if the rhythm is *ma* as well as the beats, then there is not a lot of room for empty space in there.

Ma rather is the elastic variation of the temporal distances between each beat and those surrounding it. The term *ma* is thus also used to describe tempi, with Gamo explaining that different tempi are described using the terms *oso-ma* (slow *ma*), and *haya-ma* (fast *ma*). The common point between these four examples is that all are somehow related to the rhythmic, or temporal movement of the music.

¹⁸ Ibid, 135.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Again, the concept of *ma* in the realm of music is also strongly related to the sense of distance/space, as represented here by space between beats. Also, *ma*'s existence in time is shown through its association with performance, rather than composition. In traditional music, as with other Japanese art forms, *ma* is also associated with temporal distance and some form of spatial manipulation of it.

If “*ma* is the length or distance between beats” and the “manipulation of temporal distance,” as Gamo describes, then *ma* may not be limited to Japanese traditional music, and may be something of which traces can be also found in Western performance practices. My piano professor in college, Vadim Sakharov, taught me many things, but one of the most memorable moments was when he was describing to me how to make “rubato” in Chopin’s music. He used to say, “rubato is the technique of give and take,” where for instance, if you take longer time on one part of a phrase, then you must “regain” the time in the following part by playing slightly faster. If you keep giving time without taking it back, the music eventually gets stuck and will not function as desired.

The elastic nature of rubato playing means it is intuitive, relying on the performer’s discretion in manipulating the temporal distances between beats. This idea of the temporal management of space and elastic, or evolving intervals of time relates to the concept of *ma*. As Gamo described, “*ma* is the length or distance between beats” and “manipulation of temporal distance.” This indicates that *ma* is not limited to Japanese traditional music, but its traces can also be found in Western performance practices.

There is a youtube video in which a *shakuhachi* player, Matsumoto Kohei, explains the concept of *ma* and demonstrates its functions. There, Matsumoto defines *ma* in *shakuhachi* music as “the third element that is not sound, nor rest,” and explains thus: “In a piece of music (like

Shakuhachi Koten Honkyoku), in which you cannot keep time by clapping, for which there is no indication about the duration of each note or a general sense of the speed, you need *ma* to tune up the tone of the entire piece..... *Ma* functions as the catalyst that connects sound and sound in the best condition.”²⁰

It is clear from Matsumoto’s comments that *ma* is an indispensable tool, which holds the structure of *shakuhachi* music. His remarks also demonstrate again that the length of *ma* depends on the performers’ intuition and choice. He also demonstrates how the length of *ma* changes the impression of the whole piece. When he takes too much space, the music tends to sound stuck, just as Chopin would under similar circumstances. This leads one to wonder if perhaps, the function of *ma* in Japanese traditional music and the rubato in Chopin’s music are similar since both depend on performer discretion, and both “tune-up” the impression of the whole piece.

This example with Chopin’s rubato is not a perfect comparison, since it is found within the context of a strong sense of pulse, and acts more as manipulation of this pulse, than as a global way of perceiving musical time. However, two different musical examples from different traditions show clear resemblance in terms of how they deal with the distance between beats and how performers make musical decisions spontaneously on how short/long the gap should be, instead of composers notating down everything.

²⁰ “Jitsuen to Ohanashi ni yoru dentougeinou perspective No.4, Shindou suru “ku”/Gyoushuku suru “mu”, shakuhachi, shodou, noh niokeru [ma] no okugi wo saguru.” 実演とお話による伝統芸能パースペクティヴ<第4回>振動する「空」／凝縮する「無」-尺八、書道、能における「間」の奥義を探る [English], YouTube video, 20:08, “Art Council Tokyo,” May 18,2017.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2ekWBgEBIQ&index=2&t=561s&list=LLEKMrnmhAs0HkRoK0gjHt5w>.

I started to notice these kinds of similarities in a lot of pieces that I performed as a pianist, which made me wonder if this way of thinking about space and time was not only in Japanese culture but can be seen in different traditions as well. I will discuss other musical pieces from outside of Japanese cultural influence later.

In the previous chapter, I presented how *ma* is expressed and utilized in daily life and in Japanese traditional arts, such as ink paintings, *ikebana*, *Shinto* tradition, traditional architecture, performance art (*Noh* theater), and traditional music to grasp the feature of this complex and ancient concept.

Although *ma* has slightly different characteristics depending on the contexts, some principles remain the same. *Ma* is always related to the sense of distance/space, and the space is intentionally left empty, such as the negative space between pine trees in the ink painting, the space between two logs in the *ikebana* example, and the space in *Shinto* shrines, etc. These empty spaces or silence are never empty, as they are filled with movements, possibilities, or energy, perhaps like a magnetic field. In the emptiness, you would sense something great that is hard to describe with words, just like you anticipate the spirits coming and going in the *Shinto* shrine's empty space. You may also appreciate the 'sense of becoming' in such moments. Long pauses, therefore, are not opportunities to 'rest' for artists. They must not release their concentration during these occasions, and instead, they must sharpen their focus during such pauses. These moments are essential for the performers. You can use the moments to observe your surroundings, sense the audience, listen to the sounds better, and remove the tension in the body.

Going forward, we are going to look at specific examples of how the ideas of *ma* manifest in different kinds of music other than traditional Japanese music.

Part II. Takemitsu's *ma*

Toru Takemitsu (1930 – 1990) is a pioneer of Japanese modern classical music. He is one of the first composers to intentionally incorporate the traditional ideas of *ma* in his compositions using Western musical notation.

Thus, it is essential to examine how he utilized the concept in his musical works to further discuss *ma*-like elements in non-Japanese traditional music.

In Part II, I would like to discuss what Takemitsu's idea of *ma* is like, and how he expressed it in his piano solo works. Takemitsu described *ma* as thus:

In the flow of Japanese music, for example, short fragmented connections of sounds are complete in themselves. Those different sound events are related by silences that aim at creating a harmony of events. Those pauses are left to the performer's discretion. In this way there is a dynamic change in the sounds as they are constantly reborn in new relationships. Here the role of the performer is not to produce sound but to listen to it, to strive constantly to discover sound in silence. Listening is as real as making sound; the two are inseparable.²¹

This quote shows that Takemitsu's understanding of *ma* in Japanese traditional music is also associated with performance aspects just like those Gamo pointed out in his essay.

Takemitsu understood *ma* as something flexible, which was to be controlled by the performers with the aid of intense listening.

²¹ Toru Takemitsu, *Confronting silence* (Berkeley: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995), 84.

Fragmented materials

Takemitsu utilized this idea of “short fragmented connections of sounds” quite frequently, especially in his later piano music. For instance, figure 5 is an excerpt from his piano piece, *Rain Tree Sketch*, showing fragmented materials that are divided by two 16th notes; “related by silences” in his words. Although those materials are complete in themselves, overarching structures do seem to appear. One such structure may be found in the outlining of a longer melodic line using a descending scale (C, B, A, G#, F) in m56-60. These short melodic materials that are complete in themselves, but are also parts of the bigger picture remind me of the sense of “distance between the two that used to be one” discussed earlier in relation to the *ikebana* work by Hiroshi Teshigawara.

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the piano piece *Rain Tree Sketch*. The top staff is the right hand, starting at measure 54. It features a descending melodic line with notes C, B, A, G#, and F. The bottom staff is the left hand, starting at measure 58. It also features a descending melodic line with notes C, B, A, G#, and F. The score is marked 'Tempo I' and 'pp'. There are annotations for '8va' and 'loco' in the right hand, and 'V' for accents. A circled '3' is above measure 60. The bottom of the score has 'R.^' annotations with arrows pointing to the right.

Figure 5: *Rain Tree Sketch*, mm54-60²²

²² Toru Takemitsu, *Rain Tree Sketch* (Tokyo: Schott Music, 1982), 74.

Manipulation of Tempi

In his early piano piece, *Litany* (1950/1989), Takemitsu indicated quite specific tempo markings, such as the sequence of *poco stringendo*, *fermata*, *a tempo*, *rit.*, *fermata*... (figure: 6) It seems like Takemitsu is experimenting with the possibilities of notating the elasticity of *ma*. He also uses commas (figure: 7), which represent a slight injection of space, and call to mind “the third element that is not sound, nor rest”, discussed above by Matsumoto in relation to *shakuhachi* performance. These commas indicate the end of each section, and as such often invite a slight distention of space or musical time.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Toru Takemitsu's *Litany*, measures 34-40. The first system (measures 34-38) features a treble and bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. It includes markings for *poco stringendo*, *mf*, *a tempo*, *rit.*, and *p*. The second system (measures 39-40) continues with *a tempo*, *rit.*, and *ppp* markings. The score uses various dynamic levels and tempo changes to create a sense of elasticity and space.

Figure 6: *Litany*, mm.34-40²³

²³ Toru Takemitsu, *Litany* (Tokyo: Schott Music, 1990), 5.

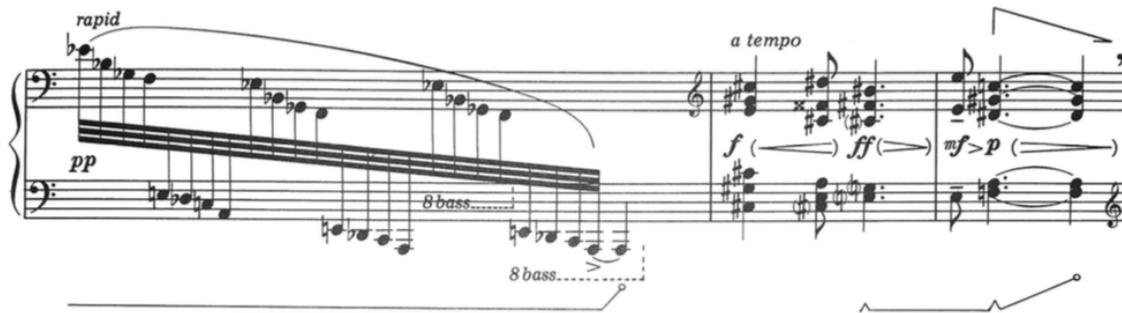


Figure 7: *Litany II*, mm. 15-17²⁴

Fermatas (Performer-oriented flexibility)

Takemitsu also experiments with the performative flexibility of *ma* by using several different kinds of fermatas in his notation.

Three different kinds of fermatas appear *In Rain Tree Sketch*:  is very long;  is medium and  is short²⁵. Longer fermatas are often accompanied by words such as “Senza misura” (m.35) or “dying away” (m.39).

²⁴ Ibid, 4.

²⁵ Toru Takemitsu, *Rain Tree Sketch* (Tokyo: Schott, 1982) Performance note.

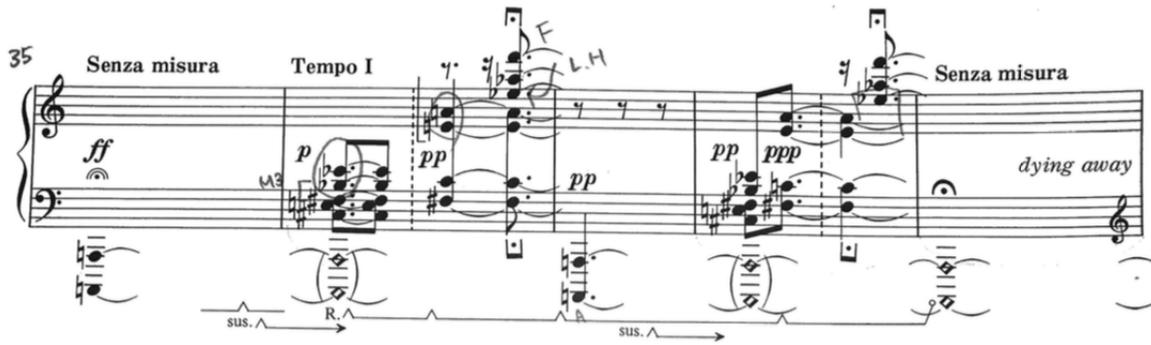


Figure 8: *Rain Tree Sketch*, mm.35-39²⁶

This shows that Takemitsu had rather specific ideas of how long each note with fermata should sustain, relative to each other within the piece. However, since Takemitsu did not include specific time durations, or even suggestions for each fermata, the actual length in performance is up to the pianist. His use of fermatas aligns with his idea about *ma*, which I presented at the beginning of this part. During these fermatas, performers are expected to listen and strive to discover sound in the stillness, which reminds me of the *Kyogen* actor and the figure skater’s conversation about the awareness of the space when their performance comes to rest between dancing or skating elements.

Use of resonance

In both *Rain Tree Sketch*, and *Rain Tree Sketch II*, whenever there is a long rest, the preceding note/chord is allowed to ring freely. An indication of “let ring” can be also seen in such situations in *Rain Tree Sketch II* (1992). This indicates that Takemitsu’s rests do not, in this

²⁶ Ibid, 5.

case mean a complete cut to the music and silence, but rather a moment that allow the sounds of the instrument's resonances to travel.



Figure 9: *Rain Tree Sketch II*, mm. 30-35²⁷

Use of Pedal

The importance of resonance in Takemitsu's music is further supported by the use of the sustain pedal in these works. For instance, in *Rain Tree Sketch*, even when there is a long rest, Takemitsu indicates that the sustain pedal is to be down for at least the duration of the pause.

²⁷ Toru Takemitsu, *Rain Tree Sketch II* (Tokyo: Schott Music, 1992), 6.

Also interesting is that when notating pedaling in these two pieces, Takemitsu shows only the point at which the pedal is to be depressed, not when it should be released.

In *Rain Tree Sketch*, he uses arrows to show this idea (figure: 10), and in *Rain Tree Sketch II*, he indicates ped. ad lib. throughout (figure: 11). Considering the fact that he strictly notated the pedal markings in his earlier piano pieces, it is clear that this ambiguity was included intentionally. This notation implies that sustained sounds should often be held through rests, meaning that rests in his music are not silent moments. In these spaces, one will hear the instrument resonating and sounds traveling in the room and wavering in the air during these rests. The slow decay of resonances across rests means that there are always activities going on, even when the performer is no longer generating sounds. In this way, Takemitsu embodies the idea of a “void moment of waiting” by creating lulls in activity, within which gradual changes still occur.

♩ = 3 ♩ = 63 ~ 56 (Tempo I)

in p *mf* *p*

R. ^ L. ^

♩ = 2 ♩ = 100 ~ 108 (Tempo II)

in pp *poco più mosso*

R. ^ L. ^

Figure 10: *Rain Tree Sketch*, mm. 1-11²⁸

poco riten. *Poco meno mosso*
♩ = ca. 72 (Tempo II)

poco mf *p* (L.H.)

ad lib.

Figure 11: *Rain Tree Sketch II*, mm. 7-9²⁹

²⁸ Takemitsu, *Rain Tree Sketch*, 3.

²⁹ Takemitsu, *Rain Tree Sketch II*, 3.

Part III. *Ma* in other works

Ma is not only unique to Japanese tradition or Japanese music, and similar moments can be found also in Western music. Aside from “composed *ma*” such as silences and spaces, *ma* in music is also associated, as discussed earlier, with performance practice. In this way, the performer has the option to apply the concept of *ma*, or a similar idea to any musical work as a tool for enriching the performance experience for themselves and for the audience. In this section, I would like to discuss the moments in two piano solo pieces from different parts of the Western classical tradition: one is Joseph Haydn’s piano sonata in E-flat major, and the other is Iannis Xenakis’ *Evryali*.

Haydn Piano Sonata in E-flat major, Hob.XVI:49.

Haydn’s Keyboard Sonata in E-flat major, Hob.XVI:49 presents incredible sensitivity toward silence or rests between notes.

The second movement shows his great mastery of musical space, and the structures that resemble *ma*. He places 1.5 beat rests in the center of his four-measure main theme (Figure: 12). Although 1.5 beats may not seem to be a very long pause, at the movement’s slow tempo, these moments leave a strong impression. This image resembles the *ikebana* with a log that is cut in the middle.

Adagio e cantabile

Figure 12: Haydn's Keyboard Sonata in E-flat major, Hob.XVI:49, second movement, mm. 1 - 10³⁰

For the performer, it is important to note that one cannot express the true charm of these moments by adhering to strict time, but through introducing some flexibility, can create a sense of the space in the room. In managing this space, one must remember that the handling of the preceding material changes the character of the rests.

This process is very similar to the performer-oriented elasticity of *ma*, which was discussed earlier, and it resembles Takemitsu's use of fermatas between fragmented materials.

³⁰ Joseph Haydn, "Sonata in E-flat major, Hob.XVI:49" The Complete Piano Sonatas (Vienna: Universal Edition, 2010), 75.

Iannis Xenakis: Evryali

Evryali is a magnificent piece of music that demands a great deal of technicality and physical labor from the pianist, with a relentless fast and steady 16th note pulse throughout the work. Most of the musical materials were generated using mathematic systems.

In this driving and almost violent piece with mathematically generated materials, Xenakis prepared three *ma*-like moments with long pauses, which are indicated as “silence”. These silent moments are very effective. The first one (figure: 13) occurs after four measures of persistent repetition of 16th note chords in *ffff*. Since the pedal is off here, the silent moment can be totally soundless. The shock of the silent moment is great, since this is the first one of the three, and it appears after the first *ffff* moment with insistent chords. When I perform this piece on stage, I am able to sense the shock of the audience in the air. This circa twelve-second silence falls into the “tree-type” of *ma*. It violently cuts off the momentum of the music and eventually connects the music into the following different sections. Also, this is a moment of ‘no-action,’ where the performer has to hold their spiritual strength. They have to be absolutely still during this twelve-second, as it ruins the tense atmosphere if they move even slightly. I take a short inhale after the silent measure to prepare my hands in position for the next passage, in this way, I can perform the silent measure fully without worrying about the next passage.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Xenakis's *Evryali*. The first system consists of three staves (treble, middle, and bass clefs) with complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings. A marking below the first system reads "fff partout, sec". The second system continues the notation on the same three staves. The third system begins at measure 8, indicated by a small "8" above the first staff. It features a large section of silence, marked "~ 12'' silence", followed by dense, complex notation. A marking below this system reads "Sourd., pp partout".

Figure 13: Xenakis's *Evryali* the first silence³¹

The second one (figure: 14) occurs after an aggressive and climactic section with a long, eight-measure crescendo descending chromatically into several bars of dense sixteenth-note chords in the low register notated at *ffff*, which stop abruptly at a circa six-second silence. This second cessation of activity holds both “tree-type” and “void-type” characteristics. It is a “tree-

³¹ Iannis Xenakis, *Evryali* (Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1974), 8.

type” since it is the gap between two sections. However, this gap is not truly silent (despite the composer calling it “~6” silence”) since the sustain pedal has been down throughout the previous passage in the low register and continues to be held through the pause, creating a large cloud of resonance. During this “silence”, the performer and audience hear the instrument roaring creating pulsing, and the resonance gradually changes its color as it decays, and thus “void - type”. Again, I am cautious not to release the energy by making any unnecessary physical movement, which could ruin the intensity. I listen for the sound to expand and fully fill the room.



Figure 14: Xenakis *Evryali*, the second silence ³²

The third silence moment (figure:15) occurs toward the end of the piece, after an extreme diminuendo from *ffff* to *ppp*. The placement of this moment may cause the listener some

³²Ibid, 24.

uncertainty. Due to the preceding diminuendo, the silence here gives the impression that the piece has ended. By then, the pianist is exhausted and feeling relieved because the demanding passages are over, but she cannot release her concentration yet. Otherwise, the audience will start clapping, which has happened to me in the past. This circa six-second silence is a great moment for the performer to listen to the sounds reverberating against the walls of the space, and to sense the audience's presence in the room.

It is also important to notice that in all the three silent moments, the numbers of the durations are not exact, but approximate, as Xenakis puts 'circa' before the numbers. This gives the pianist certain freedom to manage the length of the pauses, sensing the acoustic of the room, instead of just counting in their head. *Ma* is performer-oriented elasticity.



Figure 15: Xenakis's *Evryali*, the last silence³³

These examples from Western music clearly show that the musical elements that work like *ma* exist outside of Japanese arts. This fact stands in contrast to the trend of the last couple of centuries that *ma* is seen as a very particular Japanese inheritance.

For the last couple of centuries, many intellectuals in Japan have intended to explain what *ma* was within the context of Japanology. These arguments are often discussed with a hint of a nationalistic mindset, being used to differentiate the Japanese perspective from others. For instance, Kakuzo Okakura (1863 – 1913), a Japanese scholar in the nineteenth century, explains the difference between extravagant interior designs found in Western houses and the simplicity of Japanese traditional tea rooms, which is another expression of *ma*, and states:

³³ Ibid, 28.

The tea-room is absolutely empty, except for what may be placed there temporarily to satisfy some aesthetic mood. Some special art object is brought in for the occasion, and everything else is selected and arranged to enhance the beauty of the principal theme. One cannot listen to different pieces of music at the same time, a real comprehension of the beautiful being possible only through concentration upon some central motive. Thus it will be seen that the system of decoration in our tea-rooms is opposed to that which obtains in the West, where the interior of a house is often converted into a museum. To a Japanese, accustomed to simplicity of ornamentation and frequent change of decorative method, a Western interior permanently filled with a vast array of pictures, statuary, and bric-à-brac gives the impression of mere vulgar display of riches.³⁴

Here, Okakura describes the excellence of Japanese tea rooms, with their acute sensitivity toward empty space, while criticizing Western interior designs. Later in the twentieth century, the author of “Ma no Nihon Bunka” (Japanese culture of *ma*), stated, “Japanese traditional arts think a great deal of *ma*. One can always find such a *ma* that completely stands still, in a traditional dance, *Kendo*, *Kyudo*, or any kind of martial arts. *Gaijin* (foreign people) do not understand such moments.”³⁵

These two examples show that *ma* has been discussed as a sophisticated sensitivity that only Japanese people are able to understand for the last hundred years. This is understandable in the historical context of Japan.

In the 19th century, as the country radically modernized and Westernized, preservation of its own traditional arts was an urgent mission. Since *ma* is a part of these traditional arts, it was also affected by this movement which used traditional arts to paint an image of a “supreme

³⁴ Kakuzo Okakura, *The Book of Tea* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc.), 39.

³⁵ Quoted in Tadashi Fukuda 福田精, “Undoushisei to Nihonjin no ma” 運動姿勢と日本人の間 [posture and Japanese people’s *ma*], in *Ma no kenkyu 間の研究* [Research on *Ma*], ed. Hiroshi Minami (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), 40.

Japan”. More specifically, philosopher Umehara Takeru (1925 – 2019) argues that the interpretation of Japanese tradition had been distorted during the *Meiji* era (starting 1868) when the country opened the border after the closed-door policy that lasted over 200 years. The *Meiji* government felt threatened by European countries that possessed highly advanced technologies. To compete with them, Japan needed to produce an image of a powerful Japan.³⁶ In doing so, they selected traditional elements that could support the idea.

Later after WWII, when artists and intellectuals like Takemitsu lived, the country was suffering, and it was their mission to regain their wounded identity and reboot confidence. They relied on traditional arts and concepts, including *ma*.

However, when we consider the emptiness aspect of *ma*, we can draw a connection to the long traditions of appreciating emptiness and silence in the Eastern philosophies, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. While these philosophies conceptualize emptiness as the ultimate source for everything, *ma* describes the emptiness in between. Despite these differences, *ma* and the Eastern philosophies overlap in their appreciation of emptiness. Similarly, when we think of ink paintings, Chinese landscape painters in the Sung dynasty embraced the art of blank space in their works. Daisetsu Suzuki (1870 – 1966), a Japanese religious scholar, states that paintings of Southern Sung artists, such as Ma Yuan 馬遠 (1160-65 – 1225) and Muqi 牧谿 (1210? – 1269?) were brought over to Japan in the thirteenth century when there was constant traveling of the Zen monks between the two neighboring countries.³⁷ This migration had a great effect on Japanese painters of that time.

³⁶ Takeru Umehara 梅原猛, “Nihonbunkaron” 日本文化論 [Cultural theory of Japan] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1976), 40-41.

³⁷ Daisetsu Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005), 26.

Perhaps, *ma* could be a mere interpretation of this Eastern traditional way of thinking that somehow appreciate emptiness or void as the origin of everything where greater wisdom lies. In this sense, *ma* is a variation on this general wisdom, influenced heavily by the local sociological backgrounds of Japan. The way that *ma* is formulated in Japanese culture is unique, but similar ideas are reflected in a lot of other artistic works from different places. We should focus on these similarities as a way to explore the idea more thoroughly. Now we have the benefit of being in a globalized society, we should talk about this idea in a global context.

Further, I think that we should also discuss the potential for the way I think about space as a Japanese woman in the twenty-first century, to interact with the way that Haydn thought about space as an Austrian composer in the eighteenth century, and to interact with the way that artists in western countries deal with this matter today when there is clearly something related in these ideas. I think that we make the conversation difficult when we make the discussion based on nationalism. In order to promote this way of thinking, I curated and recorded an album, choosing musical works from music from a range of time periods, eras, and geographic locations, including the aforementioned piano pieces by Toru Takemitsu, the piano sonata by Joseph Haydn, and *Evryali* by Iannis Xenakis, as well as *Garden Eight* by Chinese American composer, Lei Liang, and *Torsion* by Swiss composer, Katharina Rosenberger.

In the final chapter, I will discuss my album and how each selected piece embodies *ma*-like ideas.

Part IV. About my album

My definition of *ma*

In earlier chapters, I introduced *ma* in traditional Japanese arts, music, and Takemitsu's music. I also discussed similar effects that can be seen in Western classical and modern repertoire to demonstrate the universality of this concept. Comparing all these broad examples, I have noticed that there are five essential characteristics/types that *ma* tends to be. Most importantly, *ma* is a manipulation of spatial or temporal blank space between two objects or events. The empty space holds great potential and energy of becoming one thing to the other. With this premise, below are my personal four types that *ma* tends to be and one essential characteristic that *ma* tends to be that I have noticed as an outcome of this research. *Ma* is often some combination of these ideas.

1. *Ma* divides/splits one material into two or in a continuous state [tree-type]
2. Void with invisible movement [void-type]
3. A bridge that you are able to travel and explore the opposites [bridge-type]
4. Performer oriented elasticity
5. Spiritual Strength

The first type of *ma* is characterized by the use of rests that divide musical events and fragment materials. This type can be related to Teshigawara's earlier discussed work *Kyozou*, so I will call it the "tree-type". This typically consists of interruptions to the understood flow of materials, or the use of pauses, which interrupt the momentum, often through the insertion of

rests, or a small “lift” or gap in the rhythmic flow of a section. In these cases, the gap should feel like an interruption, and a silent space is not likely to create *ma* if two events are divided by a perfect authentic cadence.

The second type of *ma* is associated with gradual changes in void moments, which can be related to the aforementioned *Shinto* shrines, where people sense invisible spirits coming and going, and hence I have designated it as “void-type” *ma*. This is often expressed with long-held notes with the sustain pedal on. Once one hits a note on the piano, they are no longer able to control the sound, which I think of as a state of emptiness. However, one will be able to listen to the sound travel through the room, bloom, blend with other notes, and gradually decay. Even in the stillness, the space is full of movement.

The third type of *ma* communicates the idea of traveling back and forth between contrasting states. This type of *ma* could be related to the image of the bridge between the mirror room and the center stage, in *Noh*, which often represents a connection between the heavenly world and the secular world. Through the bridge, the protagonists are able to travel between the two different worlds or states, and so I call this type “bridge-type.” I find this type of *ma* in such music that features opposite musical ideas, such as striving forward and standing still, or dense and sparse, and plays with transitions between the two opposing points. I also find “bridge-type” *ma* in such music that repeats minimal materials over and over again but with slight changes. Such music can initially sound stagnant, but when you listen closely, you will notice that the music never stays the same and is constantly in transition, just like changing of the seasons.

The fourth type is performer-oriented elasticity. As we looked at earlier, *ma* in Japanese music tradition describes performers’ sense of rhythm. Supporting this idea, *shakuhachi* player Matsumoto explained that *ma* functions as the catalyst that connects sound and sound in the best

condition. He also demonstrates how the length of *ma* changes the impression of the whole piece. Examples from Takemitsu's piano music were also designed to allow a pianist certain freedom with speeding up and slowing down, how long one holds a pause, and when one changes a pedal. This type of *ma* is never in a fixed state but is flexible and manipulated by a performer spontaneously depending on the acoustics of the room, etc.

For performers when expressing any type of *ma*, it is important that they hold their "spiritual strength." Even with a long pause, *ma* is not a place for relaxation; instead, it allows the performer to be aware of the surroundings, observe yourself, and like Hanyu expressed, you may feel your existence in the world from a broader perspective.

Next, I will discuss the moments in the works included in my album and how I have dealt with these moments from my own experiences.

Haydn Piano Sonata in E-flat major, Hob.XVI:49.

As discussed earlier, Haydn's Keyboard Sonata in E-flat major, Hob.XVI:49 shows his great mastery of musical space, and we looked at how he used musical structures in the second movement that resembled the idea of *ma*. Here, I will discuss the rest of the first movements of the sonata.

Haydn tends to use the tree-type of *ma* and bridge-type of *ma* in this movement. As for the tree-type, the first subject of this movement consists of short and fragmented materials, which resembles Takemitsu's idea about "short independent materials connected by silence," which we observed in the previous chapter. Take the first two measures as an example; there is a

sequence of a rhythmic motif of four sixteenth notes and an eighth note divided by a dotted quarter note long rest creating a light and mischievous character (figure: 16). Although these short melodic materials can stand on their own, these two gestures are closely related to each other, as the eighth-note immediately before the pause is Bb, which is the fifth scale degree of Eb major. The tension of the dominant is resolved as the second gesture lands on Eb, which is the first scale degree. Moreover, since these materials are on the same chord, which is tonic, we could see these fragmented materials as “one thing” that is split into two.

Saving the first Perfect Authentic Cadence until m.12, paired with the short motifs divided by rests, this first section gives an unsettling impression, as if it is still negotiating which way to go. The rests, which divide the implied dominant and tonic relationship and interrupt the continuous extensive ascending melodic line, resemble the tree-type of *ma*, interrupting the continuity of the music. The pianist needs to listen for these rests while keeping a steady tempo.

Another tree-type *ma* can be found between m.52 – m.53 when Haydn places a 3.5 beat rest after arriving on an Ab major chord (figure: 17). This moment is almost uncanny, stuck in between two keys, as he borrows the chord from Eb major, which is the original key of the piece, while staying in the current key of Bb major. The long pause here is certainly a moment of a tree-type *ma*, as it interrupts the continuity of the four-measure long descending scale (mm.49-52). This is also a moment of Zeami’s ‘no-action,’ where the pianist has to hold her spiritual strength to keep the musical tension. According to the traditional sonata writing, the ending of the exposition is expected to be somewhat climactic. Instead of following this tradition, Haydn jokingly made the coda section sparse and mostly quiet.

SONATE
Hob. XVI/49

Allegro

1

5

10

15

20

2

3

EA:

Figure 16: Haydn's Keyboard Sonata in E-flat major, Hob.XVI:49, first movement, mm. 1 - 24³⁸

³⁸ Joseph Haydn, "Sonata in E-flat major, Hob.XVI:49" The Complete Piano Sonatas (Vienna: Universal Edition, 2010), 67.

Another tree-type *ma* can be found in m.24, where Haydn sets a fermata on a V7 chord stopping the flow of the music as it finishes off the first section before going into the coming B section (figure: 16). Arriving on this V7 chord softly (*p* is indicated) after a chromatic descending scale, this long-held half cadence is puzzling and reminds me of a temporarily overcast sky. This fermata resembles the tree-type *ma*, standing between sections, giving the performer and audience time to enjoy the unresolved half cadence.

Figure 17: Haydn's Keyboard Sonata in E-flat major, Hob.XVI:49, first movement, mm. 48 - 64³⁹

³⁹ Ibid, 69.

As these examples demonstrate, rests and pauses are a recurring theme in the piece. These *ma*-like functions in this movement seem to express two contrasting musical ideas: acceleration and deceleration. When the music starts going forward with light Alberti bass, Haydn repeatedly cuts the momentums built up previously, setting pauses and unexpected chords. The music hesitates and staggers for a while until it finds its direction again. This idea of exploring two opposite characteristics aligns with Isozaki's *ma*, which I call "bridge-type," dealing with collinearity between two opposing states.

Lei Liang: Garden Eight

Garden Eight consists of six pieces of music, a tribute to the *Ming* Dynasty Yuen Yeh, the earliest and the most exquisite Chinese horticultural treatise.

This work represents the "void-type" *and* the "performer-oriented elasticity" type of *ma*. With the sustained pedal on for the entire piece, the instrument is always "open," and all the notes take on a very long decay. This effect created, where resonances overlap and blend with one another resembles the way a drop of ink dissipates slowly into water. If one thinks of each note as a different colored drop of paint, it is easy to envision pitches dripping into the water and changing their color gradually as notes dissipate and affect one another. Looking at the score of the first piece, *Tien*, one can see that the dotted slurs mark off short phrases, within which several notes are played and allowed to ring out. These phrases usually end quite softly, and are followed by rests, allowing the air to clear again before the next phrase begins. This gradual change of the colors over the course of the movement is *ma*.

This work was composed in 1996, then revised in 2004 as it was published. I played from the original manuscript for this album since it seems to give the performer more flexibility to control the musical flow, which aligns with the “performer-oriented elasticity” type of *ma*. In the manuscript, there is no time signature nor bar lines indicated, although the proportion of each note is strictly notated with the use of conventional musical symbols. On the other hand, in the revised version, the time signature is given, as well as bar lines with dotted lines. Similarly, fewer dynamics markings and articulations are given in the manuscript than in the revised version. This increased freedom allows the performer to make musical decisions spontaneously by listening to how each note blooms and decays, and reacting to the acoustic of the room, instead of counting the beats. The freedom/responsibility that this piece gives the performer aligns with the idea of “performer-oriented elasticity” discussed earlier. In order to embrace the freedom, the performer has to keep the “spiritual strength” up, listening to the resonances and being aware of the surroundings.

Garden Eight
piano solo version Lei Liang (*1972)

"Tian" (heaven)

♩ = 46

Piano

© 1996/2004 Lei Liang Publishing, administered exclusively worldwide by
Schott Music Corporation, New York (ASCAP)

Figure 18: "Tian" from Lei Liang's *Garden Eight*, 2004 version.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Lei Liang, *Garden Eight* (New York: Schott Music Corporation, 1996/2004), 1.

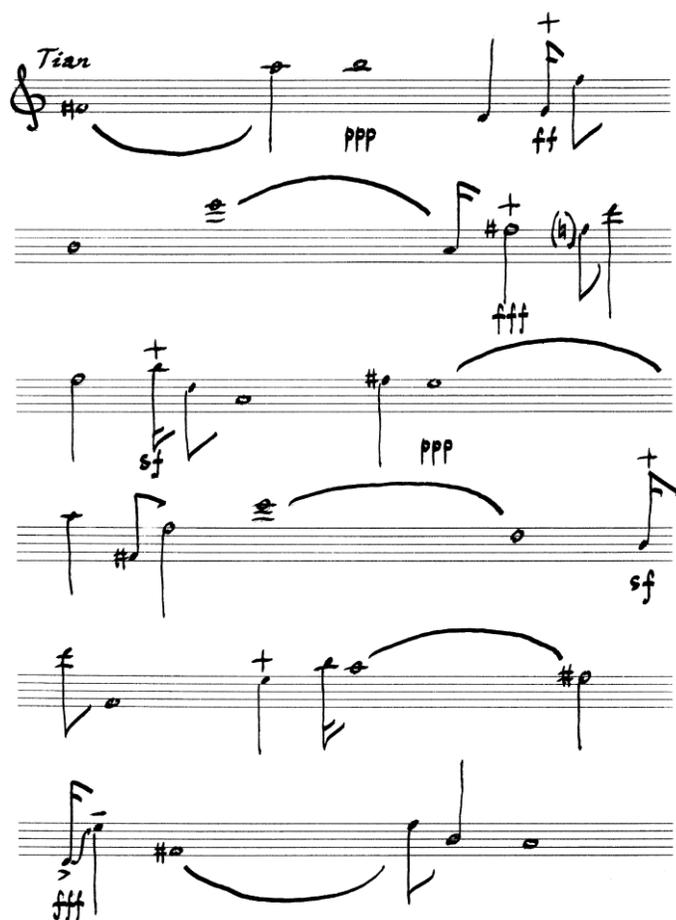


Figure 19: “Tian” from Lei Liang’s *Garden Eight*, 1996 version. ⁴¹

Without conventional harmonic progression or musical forms dictating the pieces, this musical work may sound still. However, each piece has a significant moment when eighth-note(s) are hit with *sforzando* (using some kind of extended technique of your choice) and the number of eighth-notes increases as the pieces go on. The first piece, *Tian* has one such eighth-note, the second piece *Di*, has two, the third piece, *Dong*, has three, and so on. These eighth-note

⁴¹ Lei Liang, *Garden Eight*. manuscript, 1996. 3.

attacks remind me of a pendulum clock striking time somewhere. One time, two times, three times, as the piece goes on, it strikes one more.

Listening through one piece is like walking through a garden observing tree trunks, insects climbing up the tree, and clouds in the sky. Throughout the work, you are left to coordinate these open time spaces, then interrupted by the regularity of the clock-like motions. In the garden where the time has seemingly stopped, the clock reminds me that time is never still. *Ma* elements observed in this Liang's work seem to express vicissitudes within time seemingly stood still.

Katharina Rosenberger: Torsion

Torsion is a piece of spectral music, where compositional decisions are often informed by sonographic representations and mathematical analysis of sound spectra. This science-inspired piece embodies the “bridge-type” and “performer-oriented elasticity type” of *ma*.

According to Rosenberger, *Torsion* describes the winding and twisting of curves, referring to a particular model of parabolic spirals, as they can be found in sunflower heads.

This piece was also inspired by a text from a monologue play, “*Die Planung des Planes*” (“The Planning of the Plan”) written by a Swiss novelist, Peter Stamm. Rosenberger explains that the play expresses the author’s idea about “great oppositions in movement: accelerations, cessations, striving forward, then standing still...”⁴².

She explores this idea of opposites in this piece, such as ascending and descending scales, multiple and single pitches, fast and slow, dense and sparse, fundamental notes and spectral notes, and low and high registers. The idea of exploring contrasting ideas and the state of shifting

⁴² Katharina Rosenberger, *Torsion*, 2008. composer’s note.

in between reminds me of Isozaki’s idea about *ma*, in which *ma* is described as a bridge that connects two opposites.

She thereby presents three contrasting musical ideas: hectic and elastic scales, solemn and grounding chords, and alarming and demanding repeated single notes. The piece seems to play with different possible ways of transitioning between these three different characters, as can be seen in mm. 170 – 175 (figure: 20).

Figure 20: Rosenberger’s *Torsion*. mm 170 – 177.⁴³

⁴³ Katharina Rosenberger, *Torsion*, 2008.

torsion

dedicated to Simone Keller

Katharina Rosenberger

molto lento
(♩ = 48)

molto rall. ----- ca. 4,5 ----- **a tempo**

rubber band figure: slow down the motif, like stretching a rubber band that suddenly snatches. This triggers the left hand, which functions like a snip of gravity

Piano

mf ppp poco mp p

4 hold the note until it rang out swaying ppp (15) ca. 10,5 keep holding G mf poco ord.

12 sim. molto rall. sim. rubber band figure (25) ca. 6 a tempo p sim. hold E mp

16 in a swaying motion ppp

-2-

Figure 21: Rosenberger's Torsion. mm 1 – 16.⁴⁴

Moreover, Rosenberger seems to explore the idea of “performer-oriented elasticity” with this piece, stating that while she as a composer initiates the unwinding movement but hopes that the spirals then – through the interpretation of the performer – develop their own dynamics of these oppositions in movements.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, composer's note.

Supporting her idea about leaving space for the performer to interpret, the notation of this piece is rather gestural. Although the conventional musical symbols determine the rhythm roughly, control of tempo changes is left to the interpretation of the performer, and this idea aligns with the characteristic of *ma*, which is performer-oriented elasticity.

For instance, the alternating C# and G in the second line of the first page demonstrate a movement that gradually slows down and stops. Rosenberger indicates the slowing down in a visual way showing the physical distances between each note head get wider as you repeat these two pitches with the dotted bar lines showing a basic pulse. In this way, it allows the performer to decide how and how much to slow down. Because *ma* is a gradual transition between two contrasting states, I wanted to make the slowing down, as to how a wheel gradually stops turning when you stop pedaling it. I controlled the slowing down motion by listening to the decay of each note and placing the next note, and balancing the diminished 5th between C# and G.

With this piece, you are always in transition. Rosenberger explores opposite ideas that are interconnected conceptually, such as dense and sparse, and slow and fast, and she demonstrates different possibilities of transitions between the two states, relying on the performer's musical decisions on the spot as if you are constantly on one or more bridges between two points. This idea coincides with the "bridge-type" of *ma* - a bridge that lets us traverse two states, like the one in a *Noh* theater. And despite their opposition, one would still be able to experience both sides either by remaining still or embracing the progression and regression between these two states.

Program order

Deciding on the order of the program with the eclectic mix of pieces was a sensitive matter. Although it was my intention, all the pieces contrast with each other, and one may not find any connection at first glance. This can give the audience a cluttered and chaotic impression unless I present the pieces in a somehow orderly manner.

To give the disorderly program some orderly rhythm, I decided to insert a piece from Liang's *Garden Eight* in between Rosenberger, Haydn, Takemitsu, and Xenakis to work as short interludes, or *ma*, which also represent your own inner garden, where you can always come back to whatever is happening in the outer world. After the first piece from *Garden Eight*, Rosenberger's *Torsion* was placed, because I felt that the ascending scales at the beginning of the piece possessed the energy to start something new as if one is pedaling a bicycle. Presented next is the Haydn sonata. I decided to put this classical piece, which was the only work with a strong sense of tonality, toward the beginning of the program before the audience gets used to the otherwise atonal musical environment listening to this album. Because I wanted to make the general energy trajectory of the listening experience to be soaring toward the end, I placed two Takemitsu pieces after the Haydn, before finishing up the program in a climactic manner with the Xenakis.

I intended the collection of musical pieces for the album to be as extensive as my repertoire allowed me primarily to demonstrate the universality of *ma*, but also to express my aspirations as a pianist. I am hoping to be a musician who is able to embrace a wide range of repertoire and styles of music from early western classical music to experimental works of today, and from improvisation with unpitched noise to dance, freely traveling across the time and genre just following creative desires.

Perhaps this is another personal expression of *ma* that I will keep exploring.

1.	Lei Liang (b. 1972) Garden Eight (1996/2004): Tian - Heaven	2:14
2.	Katharina Rosenberger (b. 1971) Torsion	9:17
3.	Lei Liang Garden Eight: Di - Earth	2:16
4.	Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 - 1809) Piano Sonata in E flat Major, Hob. XVI:49 I. Allegro II. Adagio e cantabile III. Finale. Tempo di menuetto	6:00 8:01 4:07
5.	Lei Liang Garden Eight: Dong - East	2:25
6.	Toru Takemitsu (1930 - 1996) Rain Tree Sketch for piano	4:20
7.	Lei Liang Garden Eight: Nan - South	2:20
8.	Toru Takemitsu Rain Tree Sketch II - In Memoriam Olivier Messiaen -	3:59
9.	Lei Liang Garden Eight: Hsi - West	2:27
10.	Iannis Xenakis (1922 - 2001) Evryali	9:49
11.	Lei Liang Garden Eight: Bei - North	2:38

Figure 23: Album track list

Conclusion

The concept of *ma* has served as an essential element in people's daily life in Japan and in different realms of traditional arts for hundreds of years. It is often considered to be an original concept, unique to Japanese culture. However, the phenomenon that resembles *ma* can be found in various musical works of contrasting styles from different geographical locations and eras, although the formalization of these ideas as “*ma*” is uniquely Japanese.

In a polarized world where differences are often the focal point, my program seeks to highlight similarities between seemingly contrasting compositions by Joseph Haydn, Lei Liang, Katharina Rosenberger, Toru Takemitsu, and Iannis Xenakis by uncovering the inherent *ma*-like structures contained within music from outside of Japan's sphere of influence. In this way, the ancient concept could function as a bridge to connect different cultures across the globe.

As a performer, one can then apply this old wisdom to their performance experiences no matter what kind of music one engages in. Understanding of *ma* will help us listen to the resonance more carefully and deeply even during still moments, take agency of their own performance, and connect with the audience better, as we become more aware of the surroundings on stage.

If *ma* is void with infinite possibilities, we should look at it globally, instead of treating it as a local concept. *Ma* is a bridge that connects opposite, then it could be a bridge connecting different world cultures, and also to connect past and future.

REFERENCES

Writings

- Burt, Edwin A, ed. *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*. New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1955.
- Burt, Peter. *The Music of Toru Takemitsu*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Cage, John. *Silence*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961.
- Chenette, Jonathan Lee. "The Concept of *Ma* and the Music of Takemitsu" GRINNELL COLLEGE, 1985
- Isozaki, Arata. "Ma: Japanese Time-Space." *The Japan Architect* 54, no.2 (1979): 69-81.
- Kenmochi, Takehiko. *Ma no Nihon Bunka* 「間」の日本文化 [Japanese Culture of *Ma*]. Tokyo: Chobunsha, 1992.
- Koozin, Timothy. "Toru Takemitsu and the Unity of Opposites." *College Music Symposium* 30, no. 1 (1990): 34-44.
- Okakura, Kakuzo. *The Book of Tea*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1964.
- Okuno, Takeo. *Ma no Kouzou* 間の構造 [Structure of *Ma*]. Tokyo: Shueisha, 1983.
- Pilgrim, Richard B. "Intervals ("Ma") in Space and Time: Foundations for a Religio-Aesthetic Paradigm in Japan." *History of Religions* 25, no. 3 (1986): 255-77.
- Ping, Foong. *The Eddicacious Landscape*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Pritchett, James. *The music of John Cage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Northrop, Filmer Stuart Cuckow. *The Meeting of East and West*. Woodbridge: Ox Bow Press, 1979.
- Matsuo, Hosaku. *The Logic of Unity*. Translated by Kenneth K. Inada. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987.
- Minami, Hiroshi 南博, ed. *Ma no Kenkyu* 間の研究 [Researches on *Ma*]. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983.
- Yasumura, Toshinobu, Hiroshi Kanazawa, Masatomo Kawai, Natsumi Kusanagi, Satoshi Sakakibara, Yasuhito Satoh, Hisao Sugawara, Tonio Nakamura. *Nihon no Sumie* 日本の墨絵 [Ink Painting of Japan]. Tokyo: Tokyo Bijutsu Seinenkai, 1984.

- Yuasa, Joji. *Ongaku no Kosumoroji e* 音楽のコスモロジーへ [To Cosmology of the Music]. Tokyo: Seido Sha, 1981.
- Shigemori, Mirei. *Atarashii Ikebana* 新しい生花 [New Ikebana]. Tokyo: Isobe Shobou, 1951.
- Shultis, Christopher. "Silencing the Sounded Self: John Cage and the Intentionality of Nonintention." *The Musical Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (1995): 312-350.
- Smullyan, Raymond M. *The Tao is Silent*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977.
- Suzuki, Daisetsu. *Zen and Japanese Culture*. Translated by Momo'o Kitagawa. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005.
- Takemitsu, Toru. *Confronting Silence*. Translated and edited by Yoshiko Kakudo and Glenn Glasow. Berkeley: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995.
- _____. *Takemitsu Essay-sen* 武満エッセイ選 [Selected Essays by Takemitsu]. Edited by Junichi Konuma 小沼純一. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2008.
- Umehara, Takeshi. *Nihon bunka ron* 日本文化論 [Cultural Theory of Japan]. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1976.
- Wong, Eva, ed. *Teachings of the Tao*. Boston & London: Shambhala, 1997.

Music Scores

- Haydn, Joseph. *The Complete Piano Sonatas*. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1964.
- Liang, Lei. *Garden Eight*. New York: Schott Music Corporation, 1996/2004.
- Rosenberger, Katharina. *Torsion*, 2008.
- Takemitsu, Toru. *Litany*. Tokyo: Schott Music, 1990.
- _____. *Rain Tree Sketch*. Tokyo: Schott Music, 1982.
- _____. *Rain Tree Sketch II*. Tokyo: Schott Music, 1992.
- Xenakis, Iannis. *Evryali*. Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1974.

Websites

- Chaziwang online dictionary. August 1, 2022.
<http://qi Yuan.chaziwang.com/etymology-14367.html>

Tokyo National Museum. “Collections.” August 1, 2022.
https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_collection/index.php?controller=dtl_img&size=L&colid=A10471&t=

Shin Nihon Koteseiki Sougou Data Base 新日本古典籍総合データベース. “*Honchō Gaho Daiden* 本朝画法大伝.” August 1, 2022.
<https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100269795/viewer/49>

Japan Arts Council. “*Nohgaku* 能楽.” August 1, 2022.
<https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/dglib/contents/learn/edc9/kouzou/stage/tokusyoku.html>

Recordings

Toru Takemitsu, *The Complete Solo Piano Music*. Noriko Ogawa. BIS – BIS-CD-805, 2000, compact disc. Liner notes.

Videos

Hyogen no gokui wo kataru, 表現の極意を語る “HanyuYuzuru x Nomura Mansai.”
羽生結弦 x 野村萬斎 NHK B1, 49:59. December 30, 2015.

“Jitsuen to Ohanashi ni yoru dentougeinou perspective No.4, Shindou suru “ku”/Gyoushuku suru “mu”, shakuhachi, shodou, noh niokeru [ma] no okugi wo saguru.” 実演とお話による伝統芸能パースペクティヴ<第4回>振動する「空」／凝縮する「無」一尺八、書道、能における「間」の奥義をさぐる [English]. YouTube video, 20:08. “Art Council Tokyo,” May 18, 2017.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2ekWBgEBIQ&index=2&t=561s&list=LLEKMrnmhAs0HkRoK0gjHt5w> .

Hyogen no gokui wo kataru, 表現の極意を語る “HanyuYuzuru x Nomura Mansai.”
羽生結弦 x 野村萬斎 NHK B1, 49:59. December 30, 2015.