

## Review

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*Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*. Edited by Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau. 2004. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. xx, 321 pp.

This collection of essays on the interface of East Asian, European, and American art music makes a significant contribution to the vast amount of literature on post-World War II art music by addressing issues of musical transculturation that are often overlooked in more traditional historical studies of contemporary music. While most studies of post-1945 Western art music have acknowledged the influence of East Asian music, this book represents a major step by examining the more compelling aspects of this cultural interpenetration. Gathered together for the first time are chapters on Western composers who have appropriated Asian elements alongside chapters on Asian composers who, trained in Western art music, have worked towards a synthesis of Eastern and Western musical aesthetics. The fact that several of the Asian-born composers studied in this volume immigrated to the United States makes this book an important contribution to the study of American music.

Ranging from analytical essays on compositional methods to interpretive cultural studies of musical works, the chapters in this volume address a number of critical questions for composers, audiences, and scholars concerning the interpolation of Eastern elements in Western compositions. In what ways do composers utilize aesthetic principles, musical systems, or sounds that are Asian and to what extent are these works musical quotations, transformations, or syntheses of East and West? How do Asian-born composers working in the West negotiate between two different cultures and how do the economic demands and cultural politics in the art music arena affect their compositions? What are the differences in reception of hybrid compositions by Western audiences and Asian audiences? How should researchers of these hybrid compositions deal with issues of compatibility/incompatibility between East and West?

Co-editors Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederic Lau provide two opening articles that create a useful context for the chapters that follow. Everett's opening chapter on intercultural synthesis in postwar Western art music features a taxonomy of hybrid compositions based on three broad categories: transference, syncretism, and synthesis. Transference includes the use of aesthetic principles without direct reference to Asian sounds (Cage's use of the *Yijing* or *I Ching* in his *Music of Changes*), the evocation of Asian

sensibilities (Stockhausen's *Inori*), the quotation of literary or extra-musical material (John Zorn's *Forbidden Fruit*), and the quotation of preexistent musical material (Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997*). Everett identifies two kinds of syncretism in the transplantation of Asian musical attributes onto Western instruments (Takemitsu's *Itinerant for Flute*), and in the combination of Asian musical instruments with Western instruments (Takemitsu's *November Steps*). Synthesis, her third category, applies to transformations of traditional musical forms into a synthesis of East and West (Mayazumi's *Nirvana Symphony*). Lau's chapter on the cultural politics of Chinese composers working in the West demonstrates the need for researchers to examine the social dynamics that inform transcultural composition. Focusing on the "new wave" of composers who immigrated to the United States, represented here by Tan Dun, Chen Yi, and Bright Sheng, Lau stresses the need for musicologists to consider the power of the global multicultural music market in assessing these young composers. Lau finds these composers caught in a bind between striving to create works of transcendent universality and drawing on Chinese elements as a kind of "orientalist" cultural capital to ensure their own unique identities in the art music market.

Cultural politics guiding composers' musical choices is also the focus of a chapter by Judith Herd on four Japanese composers, Kiyose, Mitsukuri, Hayasaka, Ifukube, the only pre-World War II composers featured in this collection. Working under strict regulation and censorship, these composers created hybrid works that allowed them greater flexibility in musical creativity than if they were to have composed in the Western style as standardized in Japan since the second half of the nineteenth century. The strategies of these composers working under the coercion of the pre-war military government laid the groundwork for more integrated Japanese-Western fusions of the post-war period. Toshiro Mayazumi's *Essay for String Orchestra* (1963) is analyzed in a chapter by Steven Nuss who details the composer's transformation of the music of Japanese *nō* drama into a Western ensemble. Compared to the pre-war composers featured by Herd, the politics guiding Mayazumi were far more personal. Mayazumi's right-wing support of the emperor, which he shared with his good friend, the novelist Mishima, led him to a more subversive strategy of using a *nō* play that praises the emperor as the foundation for a piece of Western music which, in a symbolic reversal of post-war cultural colonization of Japan by the United States, forced a Western string ensemble to "speak" Japanese.

Three Asian-born composers working in the West, Tan Dun, Chou Wen-chung, and Isang Yun, are featured in three individual chapters. Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997* is analyzed by Yu Siu Wah who addresses the crucial element of Asian versus Western audience reception of hybrid works. Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997*, commissioned for the reunification of Hong Kong with China, is a good example of how music that appears to Westerners as mere exoticism can be loaded with politically symbolic meaning that is obvious to natives of Hong Kong, such as his use of ancient Chinese bells

as symbolic of centralized government and, in another section, a well-known aria from a Cantonese opera that is symbolic of the downfall of a city. Eric Lai's detailed analysis of Chinese-born Chou Wen-chung's compositional technique of variable modes that are based on his application of concepts from the ancient Book of Changes (*Yijing*) is shown to be much more fully integrated with Western practices than the work of John Cage. Also drawing heavily on the *Yijing* and Taoism is the Korean composer, Isang Yun, whose compositional approach is analyzed in a chapter by Jeongmee Kim representing the only Korean composer in this collection. As the Korean-born Yun spent his entire career developing his East-West musical syncretism in Germany, Kim utilizes diaspora studies in ethnomusicology to explain how Yun's distance from his homeland and lack of access to traditional Korean instruments led to his application of Korean instrumental techniques to Western orchestral instruments.

American-born composers are represented in this book by chapters on Henry Cowell and John Zorn. Nancy Yunhwa Rao's detailed analysis of Cowell's theory of sliding tones reveals how deeply the composer was influenced by Chinese music. As Rao demonstrates, Cowell's appropriation of Chinese tonality was clearly not a distant, exotic sound superimposed like a novelty item into a Western idiom, but the everyday sound of Chinese immigrants Cowell grew up hearing during his childhood in the Asian neighborhoods of San Francisco, infusing Cowell's music with a truly multi-cultural American sound. Rao finds it significant that Cowell conceived of his musical theories derived from such marginalized and oppressed "alien outsiders" in America while he was serving a prison sentence in San Quentin for the "crime" of homosexual activity. In contrast, the only chapter to deal with the negative aspects of Orientalist appropriation in East-West music is Ellie Hisama's article on John Zorn, which is a welcome critique coming from an Asian female of the composer's frequent use of sexist and anti-Asian imagery in his work. While Hisama takes other musicologists to task for praising Zorn's music while ignoring his explicit sexism and implicit racism, there is nevertheless a good reason why musicologists avert their gaze from the veneer of nastiness on the surface of Zorn's work when one considers just how effective his high-speed musical collage is, in spite of its unpleasant elements. Like the insufferable toilet humor of Frank Zappa, Zorn's torturous visual and sonic violence seems to be an obsessive, adolescent residue that should no more weaken the validity of his music than anti-semitism weakens the validity of Wagner's operas. Although the lasting significance of Zorn as a composer has yet to be determined, if he has any historical legacy it will be the appreciation of the structural qualities of his music that go beyond any sexist, Orientalist surface.

The last three chapters are perhaps the most historically important in that they feature the words of three of the most prominent composers of East-West music: John Cage, Tōru Takemitsu, and Chou Wen-chung. The lecture by John Cage on his impressions of the flourishing experimental

music scene in early 1960s Japan—a movement he virtually inspired single-handedly—is a piece transcribed by Fredric Lieberman who recorded the lecture as a graduate student in Hawaii in 1963. Hugh De Ferranti and Yayoi Uno Everett's translation of a Tōru Takemitsu lecture from 1975 is extremely useful for the composer's explanations of the key Japanese concept of *ma* (silence), his elaboration of the term *sawari* in explaining the element of timbre in Japanese music, and the recounting of his struggle to create the East-West fusion work *November Steps* which he almost aborted in futility. Whereas Cage described a vibrant experimental scene in post-war Japan, Takemitsu targeted the corruption of the traditional music scene which had, at least at the time of his lecture, produced little of interest for new music. Stagnation and decay of traditional Chinese music is the focus of the final chapter, an impressive essay based on a 1999 lecture by composer Chou Wen-chung on the historical development of Chinese music since the time of Confucius. Chinese music has been, in Chou's opinion, in decline since the beginning of the seventeenth century which coincided with the rise of European industrialization and the expansion of Western colonial power. With the recent massive influx of Western culture into a China weak from centuries of its own cultural decay, Chou calls for Chinese composers—and Asian composers everywhere—to put an end to Western imitation and dedicate themselves to innovation.

In summary, the variety of essays in this well-balanced collection has a lot to offer musicologists, composers, and cultural theorists whether researching Western art music, East Asian traditions, or American studies. As Bonnie Wade explains in her foreword to this volume, this long-awaited book on East-West fusion in art music should help us move beyond essentialized views of “East” and “West” that limit the perspectives of scholars, composers, and listeners of contemporary music.

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