IV. The *shō* Context

1. Transformation and Myth Criticism in Works for the Japanese Mouth Organ

In Chapter 1, "intercultural composition" and related terms were understood as a reflection on the basic question of identity formation in the conflict zone of cultural "hypolepsis" (→ I.3): how is a balanced reference to a globalized cultural memory possible when caught in the tension between diverse musical cultures, and to what extent do the incommensurable cultural idiomatics of those cultures allow for interchange among themselves or intermediate action spaces? Hypolepsis, in the ancient theory of rhetoric, is the connection of a statement to a previous speaker's words and their free development; transferred to intercultural contexts, it can signify the further development and (inter-)cultural transformation of texts and practices. We will use a concrete example to study this concept in practice, and we find an excellent case study in recent works for the Japanese mouth organ, the *shō*. The *shō* is a particularly apt example when debating these issues, because its sound is culturally coded like no other and it is therefore an excellent measure of the narrow gap between "culture-free" sound and simplistic culturalism, between incommensurability and the potential for hybridity. One might ask: where and how do composers continue to write about cultural memories while engaging with this instrument? What role is played by the construction of a "canonic" or "classical" tradition that is connected to this instrument (that Jan Assmann separates from the hypoleptic process → I.3)? How are the symbolic-connotative elements of the *shō*, what we could call the myth of the instrument, approached in newly written compositions? And what significance can be ascribed to a – possibly historicocritically-based – ethnomusicological expert knowledge in the compositional process?

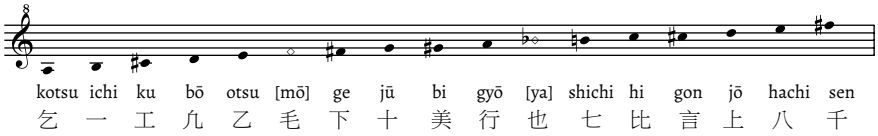
The Japanese Mouth Organ in the Traditional Context

The multitude of new works with *shō* created since the 1980s is due in large part to the activities of soloist Mayumi Miyata, who, since 1983, has presented the *shō* as a solo instrument on the international concert stage. Her former student, Kō Ishikawa, has also helped to promote the instrument considerably since the early 2000s. All works discussed below were premiered either by Miyata or Ishikawa. Before I discuss individual compositional approaches, I will briefly outline the mythological content, history, and manner of playing of this instrument.

The *shō* consists of 17 bamboo pipes embedded in a circular wind chamber. Metal reeds vibrate when the finger holes are covered and produce 15 mostly diatonic pitches between A4 and F♯6 (the 13 pitches of the A major scale with G5 and C6 added, Ex. 4.1) – two pipes remain mute

and contain no reeds.[1] Modern instruments – the majority of the instruments found in works after 1990 – have reeds added to both the muted pipes which produce the pitches F5 (*mō*) and B♭5 (*ya*). The metal reeds inside the bamboo pipes vibrate during both exhalation and inhalation, so that it is characteristic for the *shō* to produce a continuous stream of sound.

Example 4.1: Pitches playable on the shō; the diamond noteheads indicate the pitches that are only available on the modern instrument and are not used in traditional music.



The *shō* came to Japan as a court music instrument in the eighth century during the Chinese Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE). Its Chinese precursor, the *sheng*, was an ancient instrument that can be traced as far back as the pictograms of the Shang Dynasty (1766–1122 BCE) (→ II.6). The construction of the instrument is mythologically attributed to a goddess at the beginning of time, and it was supposedly played by an "immortal" at the foot of a mountain on a moonlit night.[2] The character 笙 (Chin. *sheng*, Jap. *shō*) consists of the bamboo radical and the character for "to be born." Together they symbolize emergence, becoming, and passing away. It is associated with the mythological bird, the phoenix, which is reborn from its own ashes. Also, the character's shape and construction are modeled on the phoenix. In an archaic Chinese classification, the ordering of the eight sounds, *ba yin*, the *sheng* is likewise attributed to a process, namely the transition from winter to spring.[3] The tuning of the *shō* is based on a cycle of pure fifths, which can be traced back to the ancient Chinese treatise *Guanzi* (Guan Zhong, died 645 BC); the eleven *aitake*, the *shō*'s basic chords in the *tōgaku* repertoire of the Japanese court music genre of *gagaku*, are constructed from superimposed fifths (Ex. 4.2).[4]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, in the early era of Meiji restoration, for political reasons, the current form of the *tōgaku* repertoire was unified and codified, making *gagaku* music – most often represented by the *tōgaku* repertoire – the principal representative of Japan's "traditional music."[5] From the same period, *gagaku* was actively promoted to Western audiences (starting with presentations at the Paris world exhibitions in 1867 and 1878), its repertoire repeatedly being transcribed into Western notation.[6] With the exception of the free introductory sections, *chōshi* and *netori*, which resulted from tuning into the mode and partly contain canonic techniques (→ III.4), the *shō* part in this newly codified repertoire was limited

1 The mute pipes were originally (during the Nara period, 645–794 CE) also fitted with reeds and were interchangeable; they were able to produce up to four more pitches: *ya* (G4), *mō* (D♯5), as well as *to* (B♭4) and *boku* (F5), see Harich-Schneider, *A History of Japanese Music*, 126–128.

2 See, ibid., 131.

3 In the *ba yin* classification, the *sheng* is associated with the material *pao* (calabash) from which the wind chamber was originally made, as well as the direction northeast. Moreover, the *sheng* was considered a symbol of *yin*. See Liang, *Music of the Billion*, 64–70 and Schwörer-Kohl, "Mundorgel," 617.

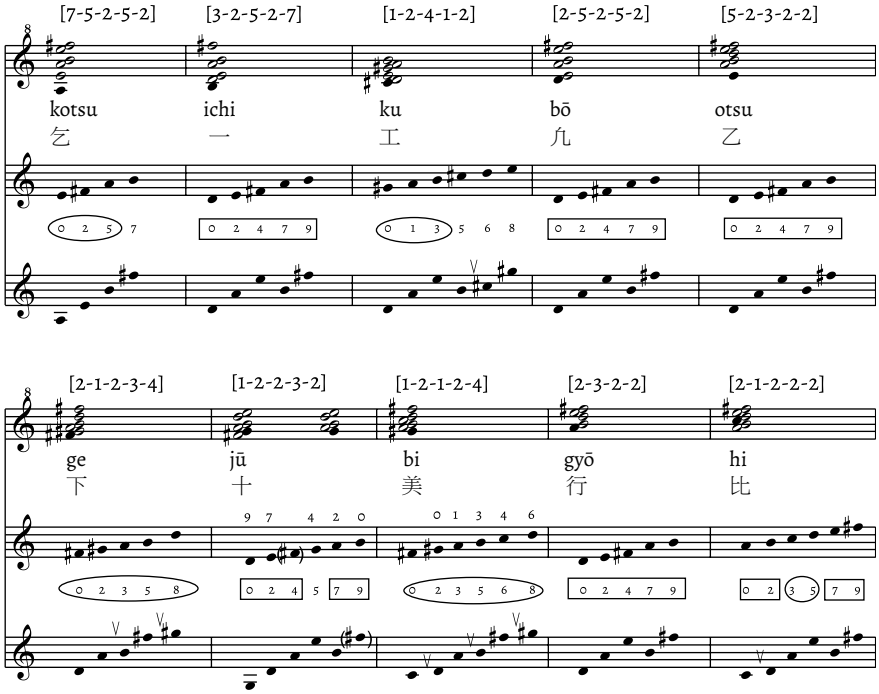
4 See Garfias, *Music of a Thousand Autumns*, 65–66.

5 See, among others, Tsukahara, "Aspects of *gagaku* in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries."

6 See Tsukahara, "State Ceremony and Music in Meiji-era Japan."

exclusively to eleven different chords, known as *aitake* 合竹 (literally "united bamboo"). The *aitake*'s "central pitches" (marked with black noteheads in the first row of Example 4.2; with the exception of the *jū-* and the *hi*-chords they are always the lowest note) follow the melodic scaffold of the *tōgaku* pieces which were heterophonically elaborated in on all other melody instruments, particularly the dominant reed oboe *hichiriki* and the bamboo flute *ryūteki*. In these pieces, the characteristic micro-glissandi *embai* were used extensively in the other wind instruments to connect the pitches of the basic melodic line.[7]

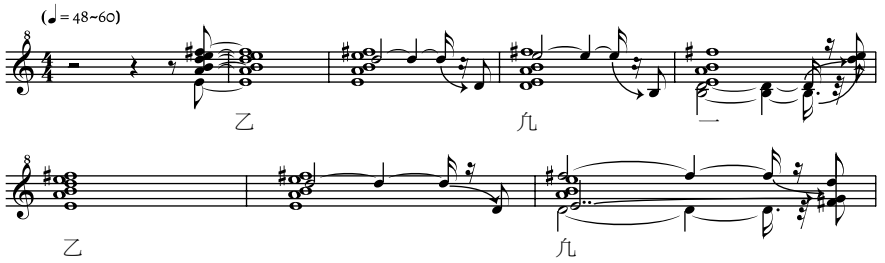
Example 4.2: Schematic presentation of the eleven aitake chords of the shō in traditional tōgaku repertoire; the black noteheads (row 1) represent the basic pitches of the chords; the numbers above the first row describe the interval structure of the chord in semitones; the second row breaks the chords up by the system of pitch-class set analysis; row 3 represents the (partly incomplete) underlying sequences of fifths



In the utterly characteristic manner in which the *shō* (usually three *shō* perform in a group) is used in the *tōgaku* repertoire (which emerged from the court music of the Chinese Tang Dynasty), the mythological symbolism is aptly reflected. The swelling and receding of the *aitake* are strictly regulated (Ex. 4.3). Some 90 changes of position, as well as the corresponding changes of breath (*ikigahe*) must first be memorized by the *shō* pupil (as mentioned, the reeds vibrate during in- and exhalation, creating a continuous sound).

7 See Garfias, *Music of a Thousand Autumns*, 112–113, 131.

Example 4.3: The beginning of the shō part in the famous piece ***Etenraku*** *(in the mode hyōjo) from the tōgaku repertoire with the characteristic position changes known as te-utsuri (Miki, Nihon gakki hō, 79)*



The character of *gagaku*, frequently described as "unmistakably Japanese," is significantly indebted to the slow swelling and receding curve of the *shō* part within the slow basic tempo, which is common today. *Gagaku* music thus appears particularly suitable to illustrate essential Japanese aesthetic principles, such as the sadness of transience (*mono no aware*) or the rusted austerity of old things (*sabi*). On the other hand, there is the objection that *gagaku*, as it was generally understood and conceptualized (in Japan and in the West) until recently, is thoroughly a result of Japanese nationalist sentiment since the nineteenth century and, as such, must be considered a product (rather than an *a priori* model) of such a culturalist aesthetic. In the Heian Period (794–1185 CE), not only was the basic tempo of *gagaku* music presumably substantially faster (arguably around eight to 16 times faster) than in most modern performance practice, but the *shō* was also a leading melodic instrument alongside the lute *biwa* and zither *gakuso*, and its character was not at all limited to today's "solemn" manner. Its performance practice was likely similar to today's *chōshi* sections with the enlargement of a basic melody through parallel fifths or fourths.[8] Also during the Heian Period, the vocal genres *saibara* and *rōei* began to include the *shō* as the main melodic instrument playing in heterophony with the vocal line. The critical revision of the popular understanding of *gagaku* music as Japan's "cultural legacy," as a pivotal element in the authority of Japanese antiquity, and as evidence of an unbroken tradition of Japanese identity provides a central subject of debate for current *gagaku* research (→ II.6).[9]

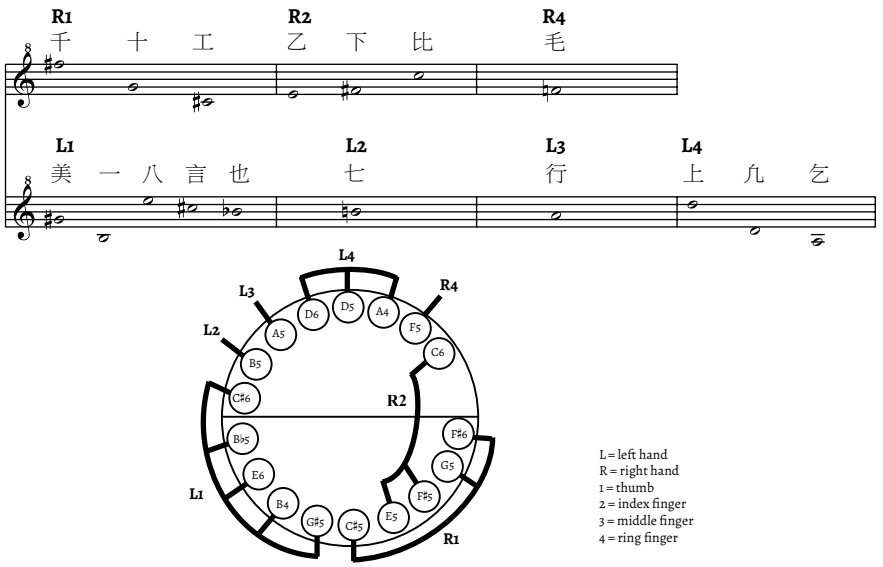
8 Picken and Wolpert, "Mouth-Organ and Lute Parts of *tōgaku* and Their Interrelationships" as well as numerous other essays on the interpretation of old *gagaku* sources by Picken and his school, among others, in the series *Music from the Tang-Court*, ed. Laurence E. R. Picken and Noël J. Nickson, vol. 1 (1981), vol. 2/3 (1985), vol. 4/5 (1990), vol. 6 (1997), vol. 7 (2000), Cambridge 1981–2000. Picken's Tang Music Project provided the basis for the reconstructions of Chinese court music of the Tang Dynasty under the direction of Chinese music scholar Chen Yingshi (published in 1989 on the CD *Zhongguo tangyue*).

9 See the contributions to the round table "*Gagaku* and Studies on *Gagaku* in the 20th century" at the International Congress of the Musicological Society of Japan in Shizuoka 2002: Tsukahara, "Aspects of *gagaku* in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," Marett, "The Present State of Research on Early Notations," Endō, "The Revival of Lost Repertoire," and Terauchi, "Future Perspectives: New Possibilities in Research on *gagaku*."

The Reception of the *shō* in Contemporary Music

Despite all historiographical criticism of essentialist discourses on identity, it is easy to understand why the *shō* (and, increasingly, the Chinese *sheng* → II.6) have become popular media for interculturally accentuated composition in the West and in Asia. It is hard to negate the aura of these instruments' sound and it seems to be the ideal embodiment of the auratic component of compositional material, to which Helmut Lachenmann attributed essential functions in new music as the "bearer of familiar experiences of existential reality"[10] (it is no coincidence that one of the earliest new instruments, produced at the beginning of the nineteenth century on the model of the *sheng* – which was first sent to Europe by the Jesuit Joseph-Marie Amiot in 1777 – was called "Aura"[11]). Added to this are particular instrumental techniques that provoke compositional thinking: the limitation of available pitches on the instrument and the unorthodox finger positions based on a largely fixed assignment of the seven active fingers to individual holes/pitches (Ex. 4.4; → IV.2, Ex. 4.13). These limitations allow only a reduced number of sound combinations between one and six or seven pitches (→ VI.2) and condition the peculiar changes of finger positions, *te-utsuri*. A further characteristic is the high degree of fusion between chord notes, due to the richness of overtones and the high register of the instrument. It is precisely these idiosyncratic properties of the *shō* that pose extraordinary compositional challenges: at first glance, they seem to leave little room for "interventions" by composers. Nevertheless, some fundamentally distinct approaches to these characteristics and the traditional contexts of the *shō* can be identified in the tension between myth reception and myth criticism.

Example 4.4: Fingering table of the 17-pitched shō (Kō Ishikawa)



10 Lachenmann, "Vier Grundbestimmungen des Musikhörens," 61 ("Trägerin von vertrauten Erfahrungen der existentiellen Wirklichkeit").

11 The mouth-blown Aura (with 15 steel tongues) was designed by Christian Friedrich Ludwig Buschmann in Berlin in 1821 and was a direct forerunner of the accordion, which was patented in Vienna in 1829 by Cyril Demian (1772–1847), see Harrington and Kubik, "Accordion" and Schwörer-Kohl, "Mundorgel."

Myth and Aura

Of course, the reception of *gagaku* music since the 1980s is not without historical precedents; composers attracted by the *shō* before this period include Benjamin Britten, Olivier Messiaen, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Jean-Claude Eloy, and a group of Japanese composers who had begun to link current musical developments with structural and tonal aspects of the *gagaku* as early as the 1930s (→ II.4; III.1). Britten, who had brought a *shō* from his trip to Japan to England in 1956, uses a chamber organ in his church parable *Curlew River* (1964) to evoke, especially in the frame parts, the aura, structure, and function of *shō* chords in *tōgaku*, which are sometimes quoted verbatim.[12] Olivier Messiaen, in the fourth movement of his *Sept Haïkaï* (1962), limits himself largely to a timbral reproduction of the *shō* sound (eight solo violins imitate the chords of the *shō*), while rhythm and pitch organization remain entirely within Messiaen's systematic approach.[13] Stockhausen quoted the best-known *gagaku* piece *Etenraku* several times in an electronic piece written in Tokyo, the universalist *Telemusik* (1966, moments 3, 6, 20, 31) (→ II.2) and attempted, by electronic glissando effects produced by a "*gagaku* circuit," a double ring modulation, to transform characteristic microtonal slides in *gagaku* melody by electronic means.[14] Stockhausen also wrote *Der Jahreslauf* (1977) for a complete *gagaku* ensemble that was later included in *Dienstag aus Licht* and met with harsh criticism in Japan.[15] Jean-Claude Eloy likewise composed an extensive work for *gagaku* orchestra, augmented by *bugaku* dancers and the Buddhist chanting style *shōmyō* (*A l'approche du feu méditant*, 1983, duration: 150 minutes). Eloy's central work is the four-hour *Anāhata I–III* (1986–90) for soloistic *shō*, *hichiriki*, *ryūteki*, two *shōmyō* singers, *bonshō* (Japanese temple bells), and electronics. Both works exude a pronounced ritualistic character and incorporate the "stretched" concept of time of *gagaku*. Eloy's methods are based on extensive knowledge of traditional music practice, and he developed special forms of notation in collaboration with the *shōmyō* singers.[16]

The following part of this chapter focuses less on *gagaku* music in general than on concepts that place the *shō* as a solo instrument at the center of the compositional interest.[17] Tōru Takemitsu's pioneering work *Distance* for oboe and *shō* (1972) acts as a starting point for a soloistic treatment of the *shō* (→ III.4). Similarly important are Takemitsu's works *In an Autumn Garden* (1973/79) for *gagaku* orchestra and *Ceremonial* (1991) for *shō* and (Western) orchestra.[18] Toshio Hosokawa also provides a particular wealth of works for *shō*,[19] which were performed

12 See Cooke, *Britten and the Far East*, 112–189, Utz, *Neue Musik und Interkulturalität*, 116–136, and Crilly, "There's No Theatre like Noh Theatre…"

13 See Utz, *Neue Musik und Interkulturalität*, 187–188 and Bispo, "Olivier Messian's Sept Haïkaï."

14 See Utz, *Neue Musik und Interkulturalität*, 153–165, Kohl, "Serial Composition, Serial Form, and Process in Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Telemusik*," and Erbe, "Karlheinz Stockhausens 'Telemusik.'"

15 See Utz, *Neue Musik und Interkulturalität*, 151–153 and Shimizu, "Stockhausen und Japan."

16 See Utz, *Neue Musik und Interkulturalität*, 195–200.

17 Also, new works for *gagaku* ensemble are not discussed below, since here the *shō* is strongly influenced from the outset by its context within the ensemble. The huge number of new compositions for *gagaku* ensemble could hardly be adequately dealt with in this chapter. For the compositional reception of the *gagaku* see especially Everett, "Mirrors of West and Mirrors of East" and Menzel, *Hōgaku*, 100–119, 181–194.

18 See Burt, *The Music of Tōru Takemitsu*, 139–141, 160–167, 224–225.

19 The following works by Hosokawa require a *shō*: the works for *gagaku* ensemble (partly with *shōmyō* vocals) *Tokyo 1985* (1985), *Seeds of Contemplation (Mandala)* (1986), *New Seeds of Contemplation (Mandala)* (1995), and *Garden at First Light* (2002/03); *Utsurohi* (1986) for harp and *shō*, *Utsurohi-Nagi* (1995/96) for *shō* and string orchestra with harp, ce-

by Mayumi Miyata throughout, and composed partly under the unmistakable influence of Takemitsu.[20] Especially since the 1990s, Hosokawa has taken the reference to orthodox Japanese aesthetics, following Takemitsu, to an extreme, referring in almost every one of his works to the relationship between sound, breath, nature, and silence, as well as pointing to central culturalist concepts like *ma*, *sawari*, or principles of calligraphy, gardening, or landscape painting.[21] His characterization of the *shō* remains firmly and seamlessly attached to the mythical aura of the instrument:

> The mouth organ *shō* is a wonderful instrument. When it starts to play, its sound spreads out and fills the whole room, and one does not know where the sounds come from. The actual melody, as the pattern of this music, is immersed in the chords of the *aitake*, the background sounds, and is forgotten. This means that one does not clearly recognize its boundaries. These sounds make me think of the way cicada sounds penetrate the world.[22]

Hosokawa calls the *shō* chords in *gagaku* the "mother's womb" or the "mother's chord" from which the lines of the *hichiriki* and *ryūteki* develop.[23] Hosokawa also transfers this relationship of chord and line to cosmology and compares it to the relationship between humans and nature. His works with *shō* are characterized by the constant flow of inhaling and exhaling and draw directly on the *gagaku* model sketched above. In particular, earlier pieces rely almost exclusively on this model of inhalation and exhalation. Particularly elementary in this regard, for example, is a work for *shō* solo *"Wie ein Atem im Lichte"* ("Like a Breath in the Light," 2002), whose title is borrowed from a poem by Rudolf Steiner. The religiously tempered natural mystique of the poem seems to find a logical equivalent in the harmonies based on quintal/quartal chords reminiscent of the *chōshi* introductory parts of *tōgaku* (Ex. 4.5). The *aitake* chords are quoted throughout, sometimes in complete form and sometimes fragmented: the sonority E5–A5–B5–E6 at rehearsal number 1 contains the basic structure of the chords *kotsu*, *bō*, and *otsu*; rehearsal number 2, with D5–E5–F5–A5–B5–E6, features five of the six pitches of the *bō* chord (with F5 replacing the original F♯5); rehearsal number 3 introduces G♯5–A5–B5–C6–D6–F♯6, an exact quotation of the *bi* chord, and rehearsal number 4 quotes the *ge* chord with the pitches F5–F♯5–G♯5–A5–B5–D6–F♯6. At rehearsal number 7, the quintal harmony is pointedly brought to the foreground and the fifth F♯5–C♯6 is twice repeated *ff*. Some more dissonant passages

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lesta, and percussion; *Birds Fragments II* (1990) for *shō* with drums ad libitum, *Birds Fragments III* (1990) for *shō* and flute(s), *Birds Fragments IV* (1991) for violoncello, percussion, and *shō*; *Landscape V* (1993) for *shō* and string quartet; *Cloudscapes – Moonlight* (1998) for *shō* and accordion; *"Wie ein Atem im Lichte"* (2002) for *shō* solo; *Cloud and Light* for *shō* and orchestra (2008); *Sakura für Otto Tomek* for *shō* solo (2008); *Two Japanese Folk Songs*, arrangements for mixed chorus and percussion with/without *shō* (2008).

20 One can assume that all three of Takemitsu's works with *shō* had a great influence on Hosokawa; in particular, compare *Distance* with *Utsurohi* and the *Birds Fragments*, *In an Autumn Garden* with *New Seeds of Contemplation (Mandala)* and *Garden at First Light*, and *Ceremonial* with *Utsurohi-Nagi*. See also Hosokawa's notes on Takemitsu's *Distance* in Hosokawa, "Aus der Tiefe der Erde," 52.

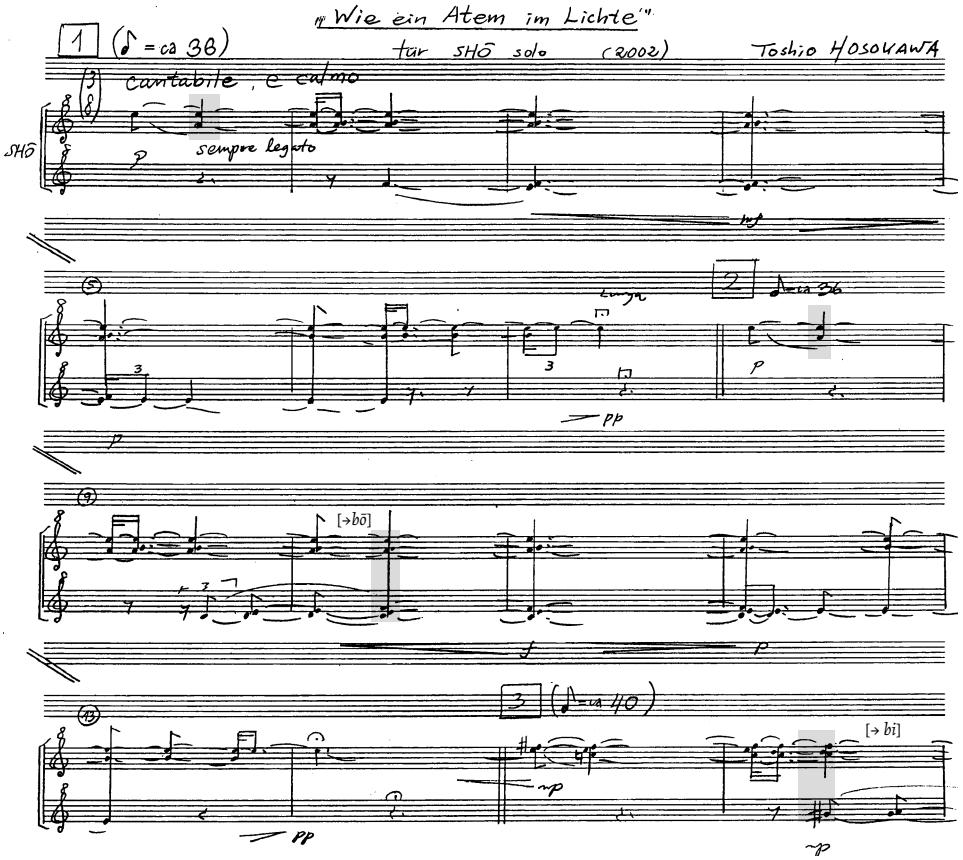
21 See particularly Hosokawa and Sparrer, *Stille und Klang, Schatten und Licht*.

22 Hosokawa, "Aus der Tiefe der Erde," 51. ("Die Mundorgel *shō* ist ein wunderbares Instrument. Wenn sie zu spielen anfängt, breitet sich ihr Klang aus und füllt den ganzen Raum, und man weiß nicht, woher die Töne kommen. Die eigentliche Melodie als das Muster dieser Musik wird in die Klänge der *aitake* eingetaucht, in die Klänge als Hintergrund und gerät in Vergessenheit. So kommt es dazu, dass man ihre Grenzlinie nicht deutlich erkennt. Ich stelle mir bei diesen Klängen die Art und Weise vor, wie die Zikadenstimmen die Welt durchdringen.")

23 See ibid. ("Mutterschoß," "Mutterakkord.")

eventually lead to the remaining highest pitch F♯6, before a reprise-like return at rehearsal number 12, where the fifth A4–E5 flows into the fifth A5–E6, an octave higher.

*Example 4.5: Toshio Hosokawa, "**Wie ein Atem im Lichte"** for shō solo, opening*

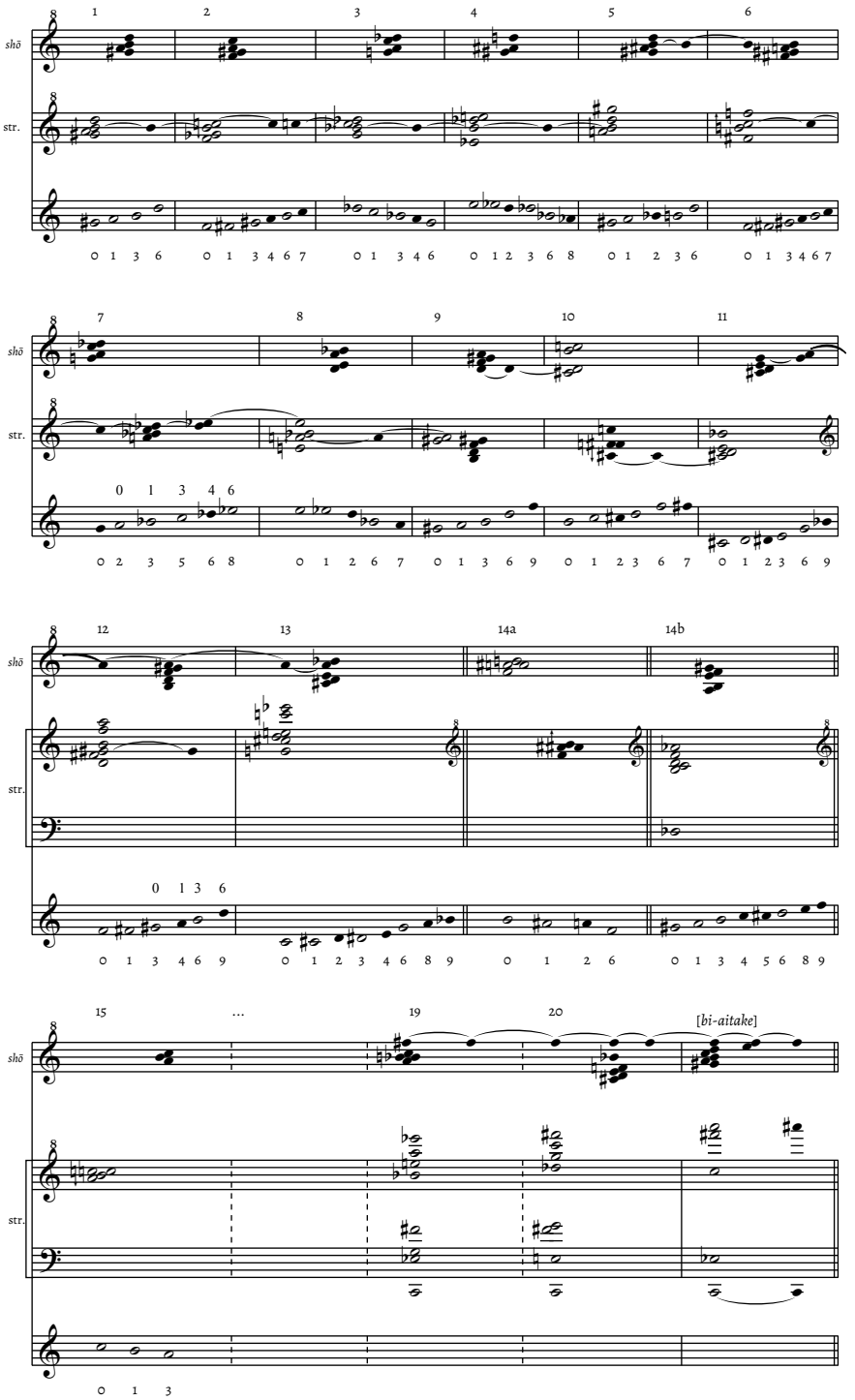


The *shō* myth here tends to turn into a regressive ideology of nature. The naïve devotion to the order of nature culminates in a fifth-octave harmony in which the few "wrong notes" appear as mere "decoration." Above all, this appears to be a development of the early 2000s, as an analysis of the harmony of Hosokawa's earlier *shō* works show.[24] *Landscape V* (1993) for *shō* and string quartet (→ III.5) emanates from the microtonally colored tetrachord G♯5–A5–B5–D6 (a subset of the *ge* and *bi aitake* chord), which, as a "mother chord," pervades most harmonic formations in the piece (Ex. 4.6). The "vertical" cuts (the principle of the "vertical" for Hosokawa is based, among others, on the energetic preparations of strokes of the drum *ōtsuzumi* in *nō* theater[25]) at

24 *Cloudscapes – Moonlight* (1998) for *shō* and accordion occupies an intermediate position where the restriction of inhalation and exhalation is likewise unbroken and exclusive, but the harmony is more similar to *Landscape V*, in that it is much rougher and more dissonant.

25 See Utz, *Neue Musik und Interkulturalität*, 313–315.

Example 4.6: Toshio Hosokawa, ***Landscape V*** *for shō and string quartet, harmonic reduction and pitch-class set analysis*



rehearsal numbers 14a/14b, dividing the composition into two halves, spread the frame intervals from a narrow position of continuously increasing intervals (1–2–3 semitones, pitch-class set 0136) to extreme registers at the very end (rehearsal numbers 19/20). The complex structure of the intervening development can be consistently traced to the mother chord and reveals its potential in the extension of a semitone-whole-tone sequence to the modified octatonic scale (rehearsal numbers 13, 14b). Only in the very last sound field is there a complete *aitake* chord attained, embedded in a complex spectrum (and it hardly seems by chance that it is just that *bi-aitake*, as an excerpt from it had already appeared in the "mother chord").

Hosokawa's music thus shows that the world of the *shō* can develop considerable compositional density while also demonstrating the aesthetic pitfalls to which an unconditional surrender to the "*shō* myth" can lead. All in all, Hosokawa, to return to Lachenmann's words (→ I.3), only communicates the "conjured magic" of *shō* music, but hardly its "broken magic." Yet Helmut Lachenmann himself seems to use the *shō* in the penultimate scene of his "music with images" *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (The Little Match Girl, 1990–96) exclusively to evoke a state of mythical rapture, a dimension that the sonic structure of the two-hour music otherwise rarely approaches (→ IV.2).

In this regard, a short comparison of Hosokawa's works for *shō* with a seemingly contradictory work of art like Matthew Barney's film *Drawing Restraint 9* (2005–06), shot on the Japanese whaling ship Nisshin Maru, might be revealing. The music used in this film was produced by Björk, and the *shō* occupies a dominant role in three pieces (played by Mayumi Miyata, who also appears in the film). On the one hand, the film could easily appear as merely another example of the much-cited post-exotic Western fascination with Japan, but on the other hand, it may also achieve a hybrid in its sometimes abstruse mixture of *shinto* rituals, bathing culture, rebirth, *nō* theater, and *shō* music – a hybrid quality that Hosokawa's monistic sound blocks sometimes seem to lack. According to the film's press release, "the performance practice of the instrument itself reflects the organizing thematic of *Drawing Restraint 9*: the relationship between creativity and resistance."[26]

From Myth to Myth Criticism

Of course, there are also a number of compositional ways to deal with the myth and canon of the *shō* in a "critical" way, implicitly or explicitly. Klaus Huber's *black plaint* (1995) for *shō* and percussion may perhaps go the furthest in terms of an organological "reinvention" of the instrument: twelve of the 17 pipes are retuned to sixth- or third-tones,[27] which is very difficult due to the fragile design of the instrument. Working with thirdtone and three-quartertone tunings has had a lasting impact on Huber's work since the 1990s, with an interest in old European tuning systems (especially 19-tone divisions of the octave from the sixteenth century) and the *maqamāt* in Arab music (→ II.6).[28] Of course, in the traditionally Pythagorean-tuned *shō*, such a re-tuning has less of an archaizing, but rather a strongly alienating effect. In contrast to this break with a "traditionalist" approach (Huber states that he wanted to cut off the "tradition of Japanese music," as it were[29]), the gestalt and the atmospheric concentration on the inhalation and exhalation are strongly related to a *tōgaku*-oriented model. The five-note *shō* chords were

26 http://bjorknet.altervista.org/restored/dr9.

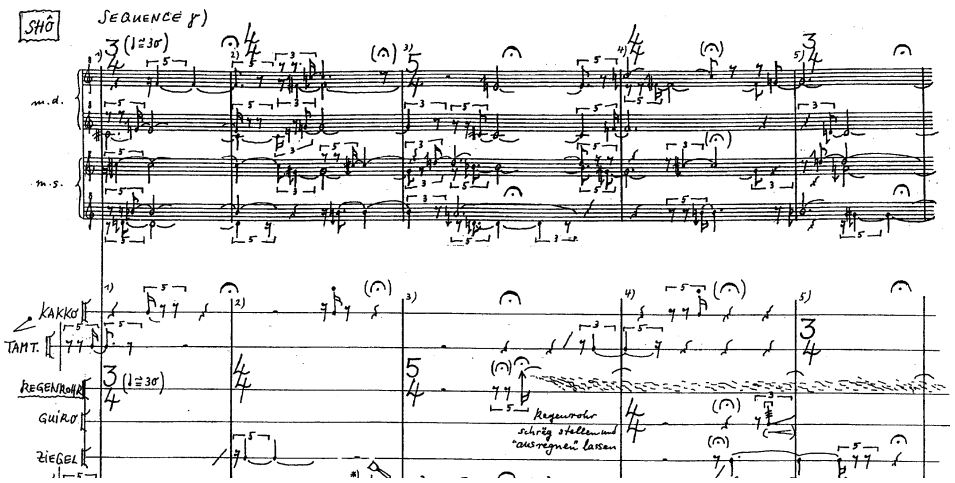
27 Huber and Mahnkopf, *Von Zeit zu Zeit*, 95.

28 See, among others, Knipper, "Tonsysteme im kompositorischen Schaffen von Klaus Huber."

29 Huber and Mahnkopf, *Von Zeit zu Zeit*, 95.

created by a permutative principle and are blended into one another using *te-utsuri*-like techniques: Huber emphasizes the richness of detail of these transitions by a notation reminiscent of Robert Garfias' transcription of the *te-utsuri* on four staves[30] (Ex. 4.7). An extremely slow basic tempo (𝅗𝅥 = c. 32), continuous *pianissimo*, and the quasi-ritual conception of the drum part (the instruments include the *shoko* gong and the *kakko* coordinating drum from the *tōgaku* orchestra as well as the *rin* temple bell in addition to a stone slab and a roof tile) reinforce a quasi-ritualistic archaic atmosphere. This evocation of "shadows of millennia-old backdrops cast into the barbarism of our century"[31] is further supported by the two performers' quiet recitation of two mourning poems from the oldest Japanese poetry anthology *Man'yōshū* (Collection of 10,000 Leaves, Nara Period, c. 759), as well as fragments from the Hiroshima novel *Black Rain* (*Kuroi ame*, 1965) by Masuji Ibuse. In addition, characters from the texts are inscribed with mallets on the instruments and even carved into the stone slab. Clearly, the authority of the archaic is conceptualized as an "unspeakable" that is ideally opposed to the political and social conflicts of modernity. Especially in the alignment of the third-tone system (which refers to the history of European music) with the "Japanese" basic structure of sound composition, tempo, and color, Huber's work can be understood as an attempt to migrate into a global cultural memory beyond an explicit hybridization, but also with a clear recourse to mythologizing discourses.

Example 4.7: Klaus Huber, ***black plaint*** *for shō and percussion, p. 8*



An atmospheric archaism was also a promising middle ground for many Asian composers, as shown in several examples in this book (→ III.4, III.6, V.1). This middle ground helped to keep nationalist tendencies at arm's length while retaining a degree of cultural and personal independence from the European mainstream. Of course, as already discussed (→ I.3, II.6), the archaic discourse can always turn into an uncritically mythologizing one. Gerhard Stäbler, who, like Huber, Lachenmann, and many others, strongly relied on the politically committed

30 See Garfias, *Music of a Thousand Autumns*, 48, 177–188.

31 Huber, "Black Plaint" ("Schatten jahrtausendealter Hintergründe, geworfen in die Barbarei unseres Jahrhunderts").

tradition of "critical composition" that had emerged since the late 1960s, clearly addressed this boundary when he introduced his 33-minute *shō* solo *Palast des Schweigens* (1992–93) by writing that the world of *shō* had remained "strangely alien" to him, "perhaps because in the traditional music of Japan it musically traces phases of becoming and decaying – as if following nature. This style of music does not seem to cope with impurities, external disturbances, 'worldly' interventions."[32] Stäbler consequently sought "rough and chapped, sometimes even aggressively and intrusively charged" sounds in an attempt to "renounce" traditions.[33] As a study for Stäbler's Christa Wolf opera *CassandraComplex* (1994), the isolated, harshly juxtaposed blocks of sound in *Palast des Schweigens* are also to be understood as a musical correspondence to Wolf's archaic language and a reflection on different forms of silence in the novel.[34]

Also, in more recent works by Stäbler for *shō*, an analogy between archaic Greek and Asian elements forms an important starting point for the conception. In *]LIFE[* (2004) for *shō*, *hichiriki* (the short doubled-reed oboe that leads the *tōgaku* orchestra), and glass chimes, the *shō* and *hichiriki* soloists alternately whisper fragments of Sappho, while the other instrument unfolds strictly monophonic lines. The underlying scale B–D–E–F♯–A, to which later C♯ and G♯ are added, can be understood both in the context of *tōgaku* modality and as an allusion to archaic Greek scales. Especially in the third movement, analogously to the earlier solo work, extremes of dynamics are increasingly sought, culminating in a dense series of *aitake* chords at high volume. Example 4.8 shows the *aitake ku*, *otsu*, *ge*, *jū*, *kotsu*, and *jū* (second version without F♯5) in the second system as well as the *aitake ku* (the missing D5 is added by the *hichiriki*) and *bi* (with D6 instead of D5) in the fourth system. After a distant *hichiriki* line grows out of the last chord of the second system, the last Sappho fragment is whispered ("with a bright voice") along with bright glass sounds. For the two closing *aitake* sounds in the *shō*, the *hichiriki* is pushed "beyond its limits." In contrast to the uncompromising criticism of tradition in *Palast des Schweigens*, the peak of Stäbler's "anti-traditionalism" here translates into a quotation of traditional harmony, which, of course, extends almost "shamanistically" and thus appears in a refracted form.

The basic idea of an unbridgeable gap, which is related to this concept, is at the center of Chaya Czernowin's *Die Kreuzung* (1995). The composer starts from the paradox of constructing a "super instrument"[35] out of an *ū* mouth organ (a bass *shō*, pitched an octave lower), an alto saxophone, and a double bass, the instruments being related to one another only as opposites and by the curious attraction of the basically incompatible. As in Franz Kafka's short prose fragment "A Crossbreed" [*Eine Kreuzung*] (1917) about an animal that is half-cat and half-sheep, the mix-ture of repulsion and attraction results in a "net of impossible relationships between the micro and macro levels."[36] Czernowin exacerbates these kinds of relationships through the extensive fragmentation of the structural building blocks of the piece (→ V.3): the fragmented structures are layered and coupled in an unsystematic way. Especially in the first part of the work (sections A–C), this can easily

32 Stäbler, "Palast des Schweigens," 8 ("seltsam fremd"; "vielleicht weil sie mir zu eng mit der des kaiserlichen Hofes liiert schien, wahrscheinlich aber mehr, weil sie in der traditionellen Musik Japans – gleichsam der Natur folgend – Bögen des Werdens und Vergehens musikalisch nachzeichnet; ein Musizierstil, der Unreinheiten, äußere Störungen, 'weltliche' Eingriffe nicht zu verkraften scheint.")

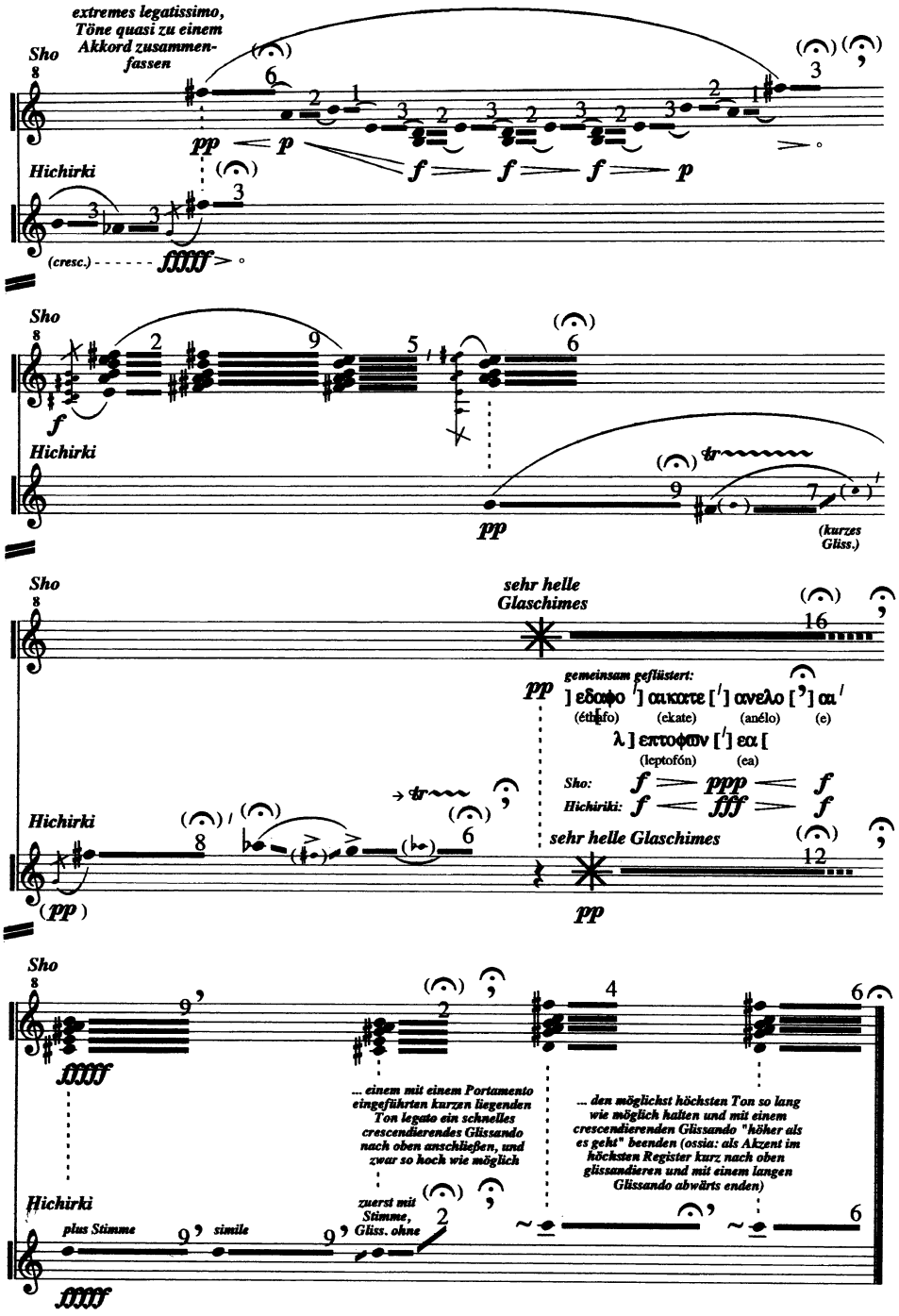
33 Ibid., 8–9 ("rauh und rissig, manchmal sogar aggressiv und aufdringlich," "Traditionen zu kündigen").

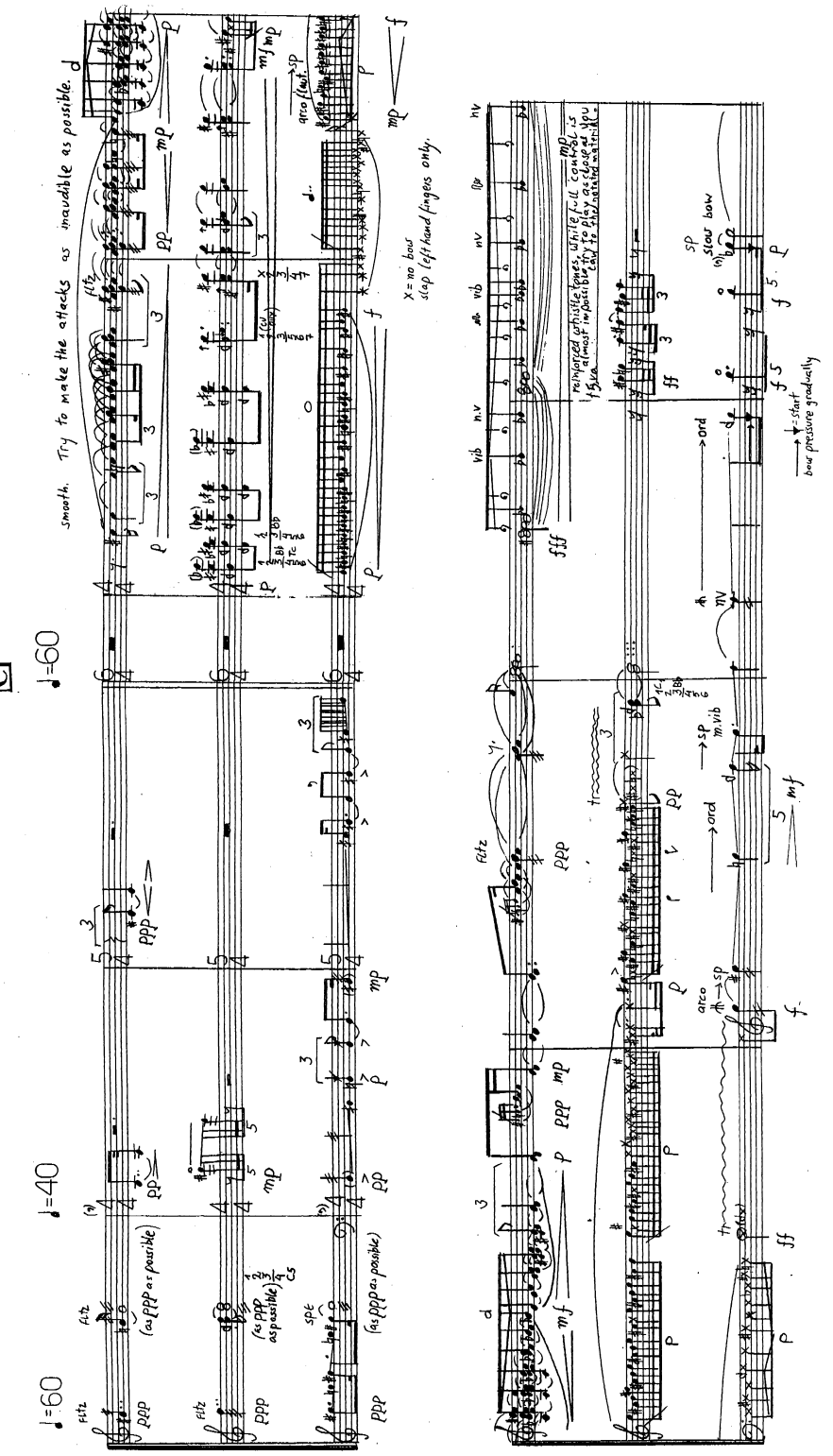
34 Ibid., 9–10.

35 This is a very probably a conscious reference to Helmut Lachenmann, who has repeatedly spoken (especially with reference to his Second String Quartet) of producing a "super instrument" in the process of composing (Lachenmann, "Über mein Zweites Streichquartett," 232).

36 Czernowin, "Die Kreuzung."

Example 4.8: Gerhard Stäbler, ***]LIFE[*** *for shō, hichiriki and glass chimes, III, ending*





Example 4.9: Chaya Czernowin, ***Die Kreuzung*** *for u, alto saxophone, and double bass, beginning of section C*

be recognized in the score: a constant alternation of homorhythmic and polyrhythmic passages, frequent changes in tempo, and continually changing figures express sameness through difference. Instrument-specific extremes of technical possibilities seem to be the object of the work, in dynamics (*ū*), registers (double bass), and timbre (alto saxophone). The density thus achieved in section C (Ex. 4.9) and the virtuosity of the *ū* part lack any reference to the mythical-canonical *shō* tradition. The cultural identity of all three instruments seems to be reduced to that minimum that ultimately does allow for a connection of their difference, counteracting on the "gap" between their contexts and, in this way, repeatedly tending toward leveling and neutralization.

The break with the myth of the *shō* is attainable here only at the expense of a complete "anti-idiomaticization" of the instrument. A different approach to myth criticism is found in John Cage's composition *One*^{9} (1991) for solo *shō*, one of the late "Number Pieces."[37] In order to determine the selection of chords within the time windows, Cage started from a table of all possible chords and made a random selection (between one and seven notes), which can be repeated[38] and may contain *aitake* chords as well as major or minor triads:[39]

> Cage approached composition by determining a number of possibilities for an instrument and then using chance to select which of these possibilities would appear, and at what point in the composition. Among his musical sketches archived at the New York Public Library are copious notes indicating all individual notes and clusters (*aitake*) that the *shō* could play, both familiar and unfamiliar. Audiences and performers of his music who are intimately acquainted with the *shō* would surely recognize some of these combinations, but the unusual ones would defamiliarize the older chords and allow them to be experienced as fresh and novel sounds in their own right.[40]

Through pauses and caesuras, the flow of sounds is broken again and again – and thus the music maintains a clear distance from traditional *shō* performance practice. Sounds and silences are contained in an infinite continuum that Cage designed in the early 1950s, based on the maxim of "unimpededness and interpenetration" derived from Huayan Buddhism (→ II.6). Of course, this form of myth *negation* (to speak of myth criticism would arguably be inappropriate here) is characterized by a sharp paradox. By making instrumental technique, the playable sounds as delineated by traditional fingering, the sole basis, Cage replaces the canonical myth of the *shō* with the factual myth of playing technique: "The composer folds his hands in front of his sounds […]" – "[…] the mythology that in play was expelled as semblance is more than ever reproduced […]."[41]

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37 Coupled with *One*^{9} is *Two*^{3} (1991), which combines the *shō* part of *One*^{9} with a part for conch shells; in *Two*^{4} (1991) for violin and *shō*, the *shō* part is newly composed (whereby the *shō* can also be replaced by a piano). In addition, *One*^{9} can be combined with *108* for large orchestra (1991). Some basic information about these pieces is provided by Haskins, "The Extraordinary Commonplace" and Drury, "Variation Pitch Structure Time." Toshio Hosokawa also mentions Cages *Two*^{4} in Hosokawa, "Aus der Tiefe der Erde," 53. For Cage's Number Pieces in general see Haskins, *Anarchic Societies of Sounds*.

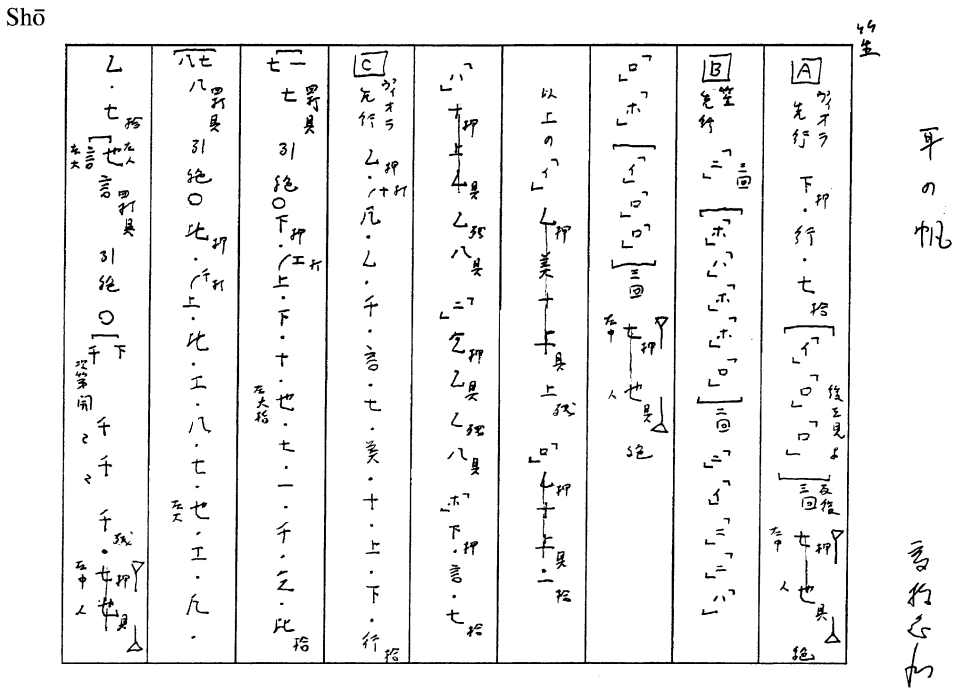
38 Compare, for example, the seventh chord after 4:45 in no. 6 with the first chord after 2:00 in no. 1.

39 Examples of *aitake* chords are the first chord after 4:00 in no. 2 (*ku*) or the fourth chord after 7:45 in no. 2 (*jū*, second variant). The first major triad appears as the fourth chord after 0:00 in no. 3.

40 Haskins, "The Extraordinary Commonplace."

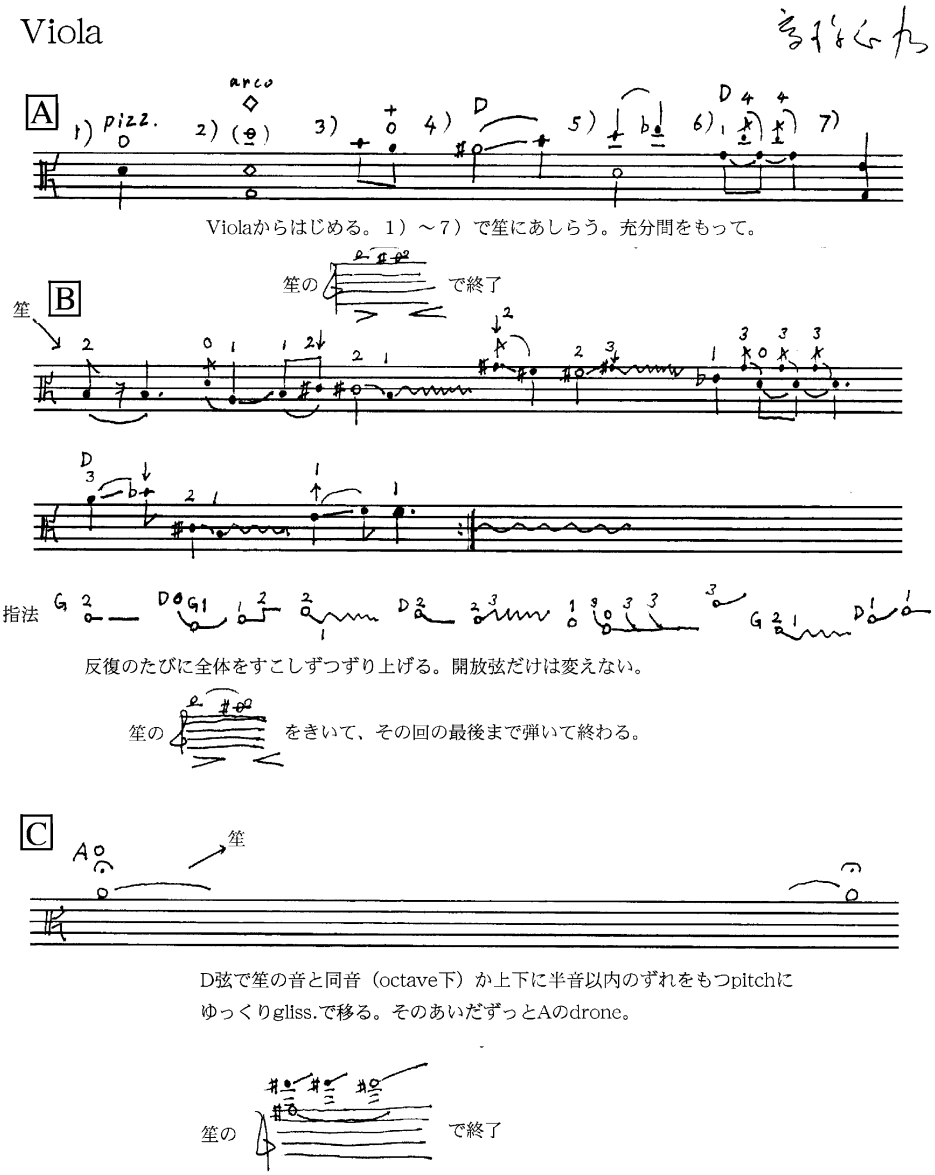
41 Adorno, "Anton von Webern," 122 ("Der Komponist faltet vor seinen Tönen […] anbetend die Hände."); Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music* ("im Spiel reproduziert sich […] erst recht jene Mythologie, die man als Schein vertrieben hat." Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, 67n). These statements, in which one could see the essence of Adorno's critique of twelve-tone technique, especially in its application by late Webern, might make a fundamental aporia of Cage's aesthetics visible.

*Example 4.10: Yūji Takahashi, **Mimi no ho**, score pages shō (left) and viola (right); under the instructions for the viola player (section C) one finds the final shō glissandi with which the piece ends*



A probably more productive form of myth criticism via recourse to the physical-technical basics of *shō* performance practice is offered by Yūji Takahashi's *Mimi no ho* (Sails of the Ears, 1994) for *shō*, viola, and speaker. In many of his works, Takahashi "twists and turns" (Western and Asian) performance traditions back to their elementary beginnings through close observation and study of traditional performance practice (→ III.4). To be sure, Takahashi's goal is neither a historical reconstruction of tradition nor its negation, but the almost playful discovery of a place beyond these extremes. These techniques, however, are by no means limited to Japanese instruments, but open up new possibilities of intercultural rapprochement, such as in the transfer of the kinaesthetic, haptic treatment of *shō* and viola in *Mimi no ho*. Just as the 15 or 17 sounding pipes of the *shō*, which are not arranged in a scale (see Ex. 4.4), require a specific haptic orientation from the player, the fretless fingerboard of the viola is predestined to connect pitches by sliding lines. This is particularly elaborated in Section B, where the viola repeats a model several times, each time setting it a little higher, but maintaining the "physical" distance of the first played figure, creating slightly "stretched" intervals (Ex. 4.10, viola part). In *Mimi no ho*, as in many of Takahashi's other works, these two distinct performance modes, resulting in two fundamentally independent textures, are superimposed in a mode of attentive listening to one another. To this situation, the speaker adds a recitation of an early poem by Ossip Mandelstam that welcomes emptiness ("Sluh chutkij parus naprjagaet…," [Ears stretch sensitive sails…,] 1910). The final section is held together by a drone on A4 in the viola part, above which

耳の帆(1994)



Violaからはじめる。1）～7）で笙にあしらう。充分間をもって。

反復のたびに全体をすこしずつずり上げる。開放弦だけは変えない。

笙の をきいて、その回の最後まで弾いて終わる。

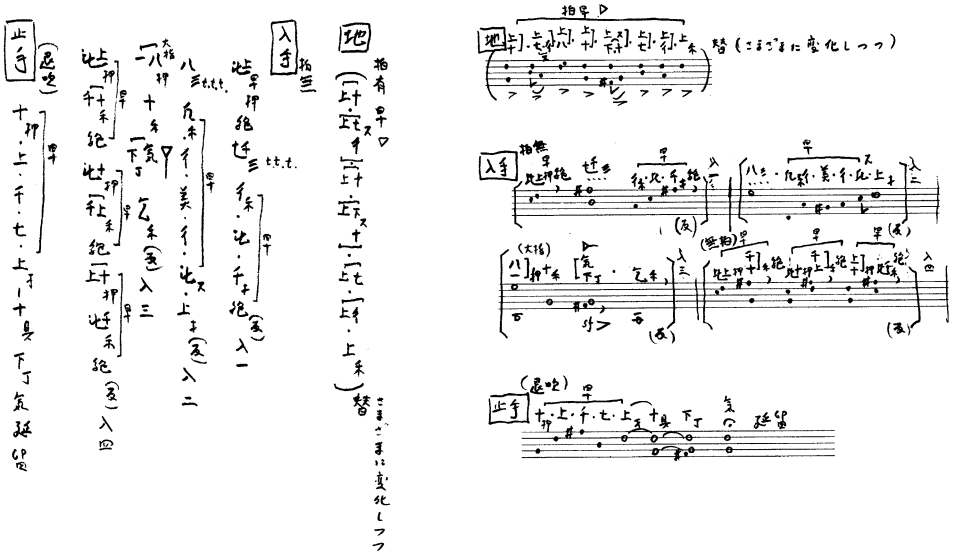
D弦で笙の音と同音（octave下）か上下に半音以内のずれをもつpitchに
ゆっくりgliss.で移る。そのあいだずっとAのdrone。

the viola follows the pitches of the *shō* in a free manner, connecting them with glissandi. The glissando gesture is in turn taken up by the *shō* in a concluding gesture, creating a model of subtle communication between the two soloists.

If in *Mimi no ho* the "organological" dimension of the instrument, its physical properties and their implied gestural performativity, is the starting point for overcoming its "canon," Takahashi, in *Sōjō rinzetsu* (1997) for one or two *shō*, takes the path of a more philologically accentuated myth criticism, not least against the background of an intensive study of old

gagaku manuscripts.[42] The composer uses elements of the archaic notation in this work (Ex. 4.11), which contained special signs for adding and removing individual fingers revealing a "haptic" playing logic increasingly lost in modern notation,[43] and he also picks up on aspects of the archaic style that Laurence E. Picken and his colleagues have reconstructed. The thesis of the researchers, among others, was that, in the context of early *tōgaku*, the *shō* was not required to play those contemplative sound surfaces of the interlacing chords *aitake* for which it is known today. Rather, together with the *biwa*, it was used as a melodic instrument and integrated into a heterophonic structure.[44] In addition, the melodies were supposedly played at a much faster tempo than today.

Example 4.11: Yūji Takahashi, ***Sōjō rinzetsu*** *for one or two shō, part 2; right: transcription in Western notation by the composer*



42 The sources used by Takahashi are, among others, *Taigen shō* (1512), ed. Toyohara no Muneaki, and *Gaku ka roku*, ed. Abe no Suehisa (1690), as well as a comparison of the three sources *Shinsen shōteki fu* (1302), *Kofu ritsu ryokan* (1201), ed. Toshiaki Toyohara, and *Hōshō ryo ritsu kan* (1345), ed. Tatsuaki Toyohara (1630?) by the *shō* soloist Kō Ishikawa. Takahashi also explicitly refers to the research tradition of the Laurence E. Picken school. He studied, among others, volumes 4 to 6 of the series *Music from the Tang-Court* and essays by Allan Marett and Steven Nelson, especially in connection with his composition *Bosatsu kangen dennōdate* (Computerized Music for a Bodhisattva) for *gagaku* ensemble und electronics (1992). Correspondence with the author 21/3/2006.

43 Takahashi calls this a "digital" notation method, in the double sense of the word, alluding to the Latin term for finger, "digitus." (Correspondence with the author 21/3/2006.)

44 See, for example, the transcription of *Sendai-en* in Wolpert, "The Mensural Notation," 128–129.

Takahashi's *Sōjō rinzetsu* is surely more than a mere historical reconstruction of the *tōgaku* style during the Heian or Kamakura Periods. He also tries to include elements of oral tradition in his score (to which the second term of the title "*rinzetsu*" refers,[45] while *sōjō* merely indicates the [G-] mode of the piece). In the second part of the piece, Takahashi extends the historico-geographical scope of his references to southwest China. Here he refers to a tradition of the Chinese Miao minority,[46] possibly dating to an early historical period, in which the *lusheng* mouth organ is played by young men during courtship dances. It is no coincidence that this social practice stands in stark contrast to the solemnity of the courtly *tōgaku* as we know it today.

The pseudo-archaic notation derived from the study of ancient *shō* manuscripts here helps to reconstruct a *shō* style in which the instrument shows a way of playing that has at best survived in the *chōshi* introductions of the *tōgaku*, but is here introduced in different tempi and enriched by ornamental gestures. The paradoxical effect of *Sōjō rinzetsu* lies in the fact that the authority of the archaic attributed to the *shō*, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is overcome precisely by a meticulous, source-critical philological reconstruction of archaic *shō* music. Takahashi's composition is certainly more than mere archeology, as he refers above all to those improvisational parts of *shō* performance that do not appear in the written sources. Thus Takahashi also explicitly criticizes those nationalist currents of Japanese ethnomusicology that had negated such a view of the (early) history of the *shō* for a long time.

"Music begins by doubting sounds"[47]: Takahashi's work aptly characterizes the far-reaching and complexly transformative approach that the composer has developed on the subject of cultural difference. Concentrating on specific case studies and historical sources, he refrains from any sort of pseudo-authentic historicism. Rather, his music permits the transformational and unpredictable on a large scale, which also manifests in the fact he gives much space to the personal responsibility of the performers. This approach can lead to individualized situations in which essentialist, political, or ideological definitions of culture become fluid.

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New music for *shō* is more than a compositional confrontation or appropriation of a novel/ancient instrument with novel/archaic sounds; it is always especially a demonstration of a "world-

45 "I consider those old notations [a] personal memorandum by amateurs or students of oral transmissions devoid of extempore variations and ornaments, rather like some reconstructed performances of European Medieval dance tunes." (Correspondence with the author 7/6/2006.) According to Takahashi, *rinzetsu* refers to improvisational practices in the context of the historical *gagaku*. More commonly the term designates a freer composition style within the *koto* tradition, which dates back to the repertoire of Yatsuhashi-ryū of Yatuhasi (Yatsuhashi) Kengyō.

46 The *lusheng* (among the Miao in Guizhou and Guangxi) and *hulusheng* (among the Yi, Lahu, and other minorities in Yunnan) may be the descendants of one of the oldest demonstrable forms of the Chinese mouth organ *sheng*. This would support the theory that the mouth organ originated in the Southeast Asia region independently, or even before, central Chinese variants (this similarly applies to the mouth organ *khaen* in Laos and Thailand). For details of the history of the mouth organ, see Schwörer-Kohl, "Mundorgel."

47 "Music begins by doubting sounds. One tears oneself away from the charm of sounds, one cuts the stream by coming to depend upon musical elements that are not time-related. Eliminate all unnecessary information and learn new techniques; repeat one thing again and again instead of indulging in the traditional dramas of time." (Takahashi, "From Words to Music," 67.)

view" – a word that appears repeatedly in Toshio Hosokawa's statements with good reason.[48] But not only that extensive reference to the canon and myth of the *shō*, designed by Hosokawa's own music, produces a worldview, the term also applies to the myth-critical counter-positions described above, especially to those that implicitly pretend to have overcome the dimension of worldviews entirely, such as John Cage's Number Pieces, instead submitting to the facts of the sounds in the attempt to escape the myth.

A way out of this polarization between a reproduction of canonized repertoire or mythological aura on the one hand, and the mythology of a "pure sound" on the other, is suggested by those reflective positions outlined here, which critically take up the myth of the *shō* but neither negate its cultural historicity nor absolutize it aesthetically. Of course, it is inevitable that they, too, internalize the "myth" of the instrument, historically shaped in the unification of the *gagaku* repertoire since the mid-nineteenth century and its aestheticist essentialization. What is decisive, however, is that they allow this myth to be experienced in perspective, while deforming, perhaps distorting previous practice, continuing to rethink and transform the *shō* in a "hypoleptic" manner. Perhaps this is a measure of intercultural composition as a whole, which is certainly attained by the following, more thoroughly discussed example of *shō* reception.

2. The *shō* as a Medium of Alterity and Self-Referentiality in Helmut Lachenmann's Music

Aura and Alterity

When the chords of the Japanese *shō* sound in the penultimate scene of Helmut Lachenmann's *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (The Little Match Girl, 1990–96), or when we hear the breathy wind chords in the final section of his large ensemble work *Concertini* (2004–05), these moments undoubtedly bring about what the composer has often described in his listening phenomenology: a conscious *hearing-in* ("Hin-Hören") takes place, a moment that makes the act of listening conscious and makes it possible, perhaps even inescapable, to listen sensuously for the sake of listening itself, to break out of the "listening grammar" that seemed unproblematic a few seconds earlier. When *hearing-in*, one questions the rules of this grammar, and with it the aesthetic and cultural agreements on which it is based (→ I.1).[49]

Such an overt break with the directly preceding sound world refers in particular to that auratic component of the musical material, which Lachenmann accords a central position as the

48 "And to paint or sing this vivid line – I always need that mother chord and it can be like a very tight silence. – And for me this is like a worldview: there must always be something in the background and there must be two different layers. That can be silence, that can be flowing sounds – and a line. Analogously, one can call these layers: universe and human, nature and human." ("Und um diese lebendige Linie zu malen oder zu singen – dazu brauche ich immer diesen Mutterakkord und der kann auch wie ein sehr dichtes Schweigen sein. – Und das ist für mich wie eine Weltanschauung: Es muss auch im Hintergrund immer etwas da sein, und es müssen zwei verschiedene Schichten entstehen. Das kann Schweigen sein, das können fließende Klänge sein – und eine Linie. Analog kann man diese Schichten nennen: Universum und Mensch, Natur und Mensch." Hosokawa quoted in Sparrer, "Toshio Hosokawa," 8.)

49 A theory of "hearing-in" as an oscillation between metaphorical and non-metaphorical listening has been developed by Andy Hamilton in correspondence to Richard Wollheim's theory of "seeing-in" (see Hamilton, *Aesthetics and Music*, 95–111 and Hamilton, "The Sound of Music," 171).