Confronting Silence: Selected Writings by Toru Takemitsu

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distinguished Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu reflects Confronting Silence: Selected Writings his contemporaries, including John Cage, Olivier Messiaen, and Merce Cunningham; on nature, which has profoundly influenced his composition; on film and painting; on relationships between East and West; on traditional Japanese music; and on his own In these writings, available here in English for the first time, the distinguished Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu reflects on his contemporaries, including John Cage, Olivier Messiaen, and Merce Cunningham; on nature, which has profoundly influenced his composition; on film and painting; on relationships between East and West; on traditional Japanese Confronting Silence: Selected Writings and on his own compositions.


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Confronting Silence: Selected Writings profound meaning to anyone who has invested love in arts. The words are peaceful and understated, truly reflecting the sentiment that listening, or perceiving in general, is an active process.

Confronting Silence: Selected Writings I closed the book I felt like I've met the man. My respect for music grew and I felt that I became more sensitive as a musician. I believe that all those lost in the bustle and clutter of everyday life should read these essays. It is short and it will make living and listening more meaningful. Nov 15, Marxist Monkey rated it it was amazing. Ma is that no-sound that precedes and subsumes all music. Sawari, the physicality of sound, the sound of the sounding body, is the other key concept that Takemitsu explains here.

Both these concepts are central to understanding all music—whether that of messiaen, cage, Takemitsu or Sonic Youth. Takemitsu is not quiet. Don't make that mistake. But he is profound. My roof is leaking. Aug 14, Phillip rated it it was amazing. Takemitsu writes about, although only sparingly, film, paintings and nature.

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It is lavishly illustrated with score samples. It is the only substantial musicological writing here. Most of the pieces, however, are fluff. An obituary essay in memory of Feldman, Nono, and Messiaen is just a simple explanation of who they were and when they died, without any clear information on how they influenced Takemitsu's music. Some of the content is repeated, for how many times Confronting Silence: Selected Writings we need the same description of the biwa?

All in all, I'd recommend this book only to committed fans of Takemitsu, and flipping through it in a university library may be the best course Confronting Silence: Selected Writings action. May 26, Laura rated it it was amazing. For a musician these are illuminating essays. Takemitsu writes on his struggle to reconcile Western composition and Eastern aesthetics and Confronting Silence: Selected Writings.

He documents his personal search for a sonic realization of "ma" and a non-counted sensory perception of space and time with his knowledge of Western music vocabulary. Lenny rated it it was amazing Jan 27, Abigail rated it it was amazing. Takemitsu writes about, although only sparingly, film, paintings and nature. Every sentence

Confronting Silence: Selected Writings decries the musicological writing here. Most of the pieces, however, are fluff. An obituary essay in memory of Feldman, Nono, and Messiaen is just a simple explanation of who they were and when they died, without any clear information on how they influenced Takemitsu's music. Some of the content is repeated, for how many times Confronting Silence: Selected Writings we need the same description of the biwa?

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Using dream as an inspiration and varying pre-compositional processes, A Flock Descends becomes a blend of Japanese Traditional musical gestures and features using a western orchestra as well as its textural characteristics to create a piece he wanted to transcend the two aesthetics. Broken down, the title reveals the character of his piece. The flock suggests birds, movement, air, sparseness and space. Descending also betrays another aspect of the piece; its movement and motifs, though they build up, are still inclined to move in a downward motion and a decrease in timbre and texture.
It conjures something lush and growing, but also importantly the idea of meditation, like the theme of the flock. Takemitsu concerned himself and a lot of his composing with the unfolding of his works through time.

It is circular...one always comes back. The piece starts with a definite sense of polyphony, where the melody or motif evolves in the flowing and distinct registers of the brass and strings sections. The oboe and the strings definitely express this sense of gliding, from texturally intense lows, most of the orchestra playing, and then the brass falling into the background as the wind instrument and its string accompaniment lessen the intensity of the group but at the same time provide Confronting Silence: Selected Writings lulling timbre from the piece.

Still in the first quarter of the piece, the polyphonic melody represents the idea of the birds gliding down in a convoluted spiral to reach the pentagonal destination. The oboe, however, repeats and meditates on the single pitch C and moves up and down very slowly, exhibiting the theme of the flock. The black bird is an abstract in the piece.

Where the oboe represents the theme of the flock, the central pitch of F sharp represents the black bird that Takemitsu dreamt of leading the flock.

This is his favourite pitch, and what is interesting to note contextually is that though it is a pentatonic scale, the notes C sharp, E flat, F sharp, A flat and Confronting Silence: Selected Writings F are Confronting Silence: Selected Writings make up for the traditional Japanese scale called yo.

The black note pentatonic scale featuring B sharp, E flat, F sharp central pitch A flat and B flat. Brass as a single element in the piece does becomes more prevalent as the piece progresses, a noticeable climax, or one at least worth exemplifying, around the 3 minutes, 20 seconds mark introduces the independence of the strings trilling in the foreground of the piece over the oboe drone and the rest of the orchestra.

So emptiness is not there until its antithesis is there. Toru certainly does this. And that defines the silence. Just after halfway through the piece, Takemitsu idiosyncratically uses percussion to typically bestow melody rather than a sense of rhythm.

The glockenspiel coupled with the plucked harp give this particular section of the piece not so much a sense of sparseness, but a rich, dream-like fleeting moment. One thing Takemitsu noticeably explores is pitch, and though his garden metaphor is something to note, one finds Confronting Silence: Selected Writings the piece has a tendency to explore vertical Confronting Silence: Selected Writings just as much, maybe a bit more.

The main polyphony, one notices, is lost occasionally throughout the piece and takes on a sense more like that of biphony, creating a play between the strings and brass. The strings take the foreground, the brass having to keep quiet, and then taking more of a polyphonic counterpoint character. That, though it is more of a contemporarily pioneered aspect of texture, and the imitations as well as symmetries of varying louds and softs are exhibited again.

However, this section has a tendency to hold on to the drone element given by the oboe and creates and Confronting Silence: Selected Writings a merging of a very traditional Japanese musical gesture but also a contemporary and more universal one as well. A sense of closure or resolution can be heard near the ending of the piece, with the orchestration of the trumpets and the glockenspiel again.

Example of the varying diagrams and sketches explaining his pitch derivations. Something noticeable about these pitch constructs, is their uncanny ability to sound like each other. The text on the score fails to make mention of these rhythmic constructions, and as such, these general observations fall upon the work such that it suggests a piece not too concerned with rhythm.

The harmonic range of Confronting Silence: Selected Writings is vertically orientated modal forms, an aspect that is not unfamiliar when listening to his music. Then again, the composer was extremely fond of western music, having grown up with Confronting Silence: Selected Writings in the Japanese colony Manchuria in China, his parents played him many jazz records. This too must have had a deep impression on the young boy. By he had been exposed to much western music, and during a period of time when he was ill, he would listen to the radio for hours on end, cultivating as much of the western aesthetic he could.

The composer was very much interested in composers like Confronting Silence: Selected Writings, Mahler, Gershwin and Messiaen. As a composer, the Frenchman had a fondness for the eastern aesthetic and its sense of time. As well as Messiaen, John Cage was a figure that Takemitsu wished to identify with.

In Japan, we too, wanted to transform things in our own way. Cage particularly wanted to see what kind of different silences could be captured and what they contained. So in a sense, the capturing of different silences and what they contain is a parallel one could draw between the two composers. As time moved on, the composer found himself composing again in a Japanese fashion, some of which would occur in the movies he would write scores for.

However, Takemitsu was quite adamantly about not creating a blend between the western music he loved and the eastern music he was subject to in his early years. I am not, however, interested in either of these possibilities. His orchestration is in a sense western, with the whole strings, percussion, woodwind and brass ensemble, but a lot of his metaphysical and also pitch construction has a tendency to take from his traditional roots.

The pitch and sense of silence have a disposition to merge, which then very much so reflect a Japanese cultural taste. At the beginning and ending of these sections and structures comes an almost undefined feel to them, another characteristic of the Japanese sense Confronting Silence: Selected Writings time.

Using a very Japanese notion of Confronting Silence: Selected Writings, timbre and silence portrayed by a western orchestra, the composer has exhibited an extremely deep and exploratory search of fixed musical objects, tonal exploration in a single note and a harmonic series that is free to bounce around an almost non-existent Confronting Silence: Selected Writings of values.
However, Confronting Silence: Selected Writings saying this, Takemitsu was one to say things, and then go Confronting Silence: Selected Writings it in a way that is not quite as linear as to what he proposed.

His rhythmic series used in the piece seems almost non-existent. Also, the Japanese garden metaphor on which he based his piece and its texture is strongly associated with horizontal texture and the piece as it unfolds over time.

However, as a composer influenced by traditional Japanese music, like gagaku the vertical texture is extremely Confronting Silence: Selected Writings to the piece as it does have a tendency to explore the timbral range of Confronting Silence: Selected Writings orchestra and how that evolves just as much as its horizontal counterpart. Toru Takemitsu, trans. Could the garden symbolize Japan?

Beautiful m. The storm is coming and the birds descend into the garden. You are commenting using your WordPress. You are commenting using your Google account. You are commenting using your Twitter account. You are commenting using your Facebook account. Notify me of new comments via email.

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