
Advantages of a Traditional Centre for Compelling Modernity:
Examining the Roles of Japanese Traditional Instruments
in Contemporary Music Through the Analysis of Katsusuke Nakajima's
Mizu no En



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Abstract: Nagauta shamisen performer, founder of the genre “Sōsaku Kamigata-Jōruri”, and Japanese composer Tōon Katsusuke Nakajima (1940-2009) was a prolific forward thinker of traditional instruments and music through a complex web of musical practices, historic roles, and deeply developed traditions with new and creative compositional solutions. His composition, *Mizu No En (The Water's Grudge)* (1969), for shamisen, voice, and fue (shinobue and nōkan flute) is a hauntingly provoking example that questions the role of Japanese traditional instruments and performers/composers within modern music through revealing the process of modernising a tradition based on its own inherited musical aesthetics and practice. Examining this piece's incorporation of modernity, traditional idioms, instrumental roles and musical-cultural contexts highlight how Japanese traditional music can coexist within the modern music scene while retaining its own identity and original aesthetic.

The music analysis process itself will also be brought into question as its influence has historically limited, overshadowed, and diminished the appreciation of Japanese “performer/composers”, as well as Japanese instruments themselves. This research includes personal experiences as a composer, teacher, researcher and Japanese instrumental performer living in Tokyo, and first-hand interviews with performers, students, and family members connected with Nakajima. This paper will reveal new opportunities for Japanese traditional instrumental roles and performances within contemporary music when enriched by the ideas and traditions from their own history, hopefully expanding the possibilities for modern music.

Keywords: New compositional techniques, Nagauta, Japanese instruments, Nakajima Katsusuke, Instrumental roles

Introduction

At a concert of new music for Japanese traditional instruments,¹ I sat there shocked as audience members around me were chuckling. *Aun* (1957), by Toshiro Mayuzumi, was being performed on the stage by the kotsuzumi (shoulder drum), ōsuzumi (hip drum) and nōkan (untuned bamboo flute) instruments. This piece utilised these instrument's traditional rhythms, vocal calls,² and pattern combinations that had been developed, in Japan, for this ensemble since the 15th C. while also changing and interweaving these elements in new, modern ways. I found this piece's incorporation of a traditional base with modern modifications exciting. However, the audience, filled with mostly older Japanese music enthusiasts and students of the performers, erupted with shocked giggles every time one of the drummers made long, loud "Yoooo" or "Hoooo" calls or the nōkan flute performed piercingly high notes. The audience seemed to have no idea why the music sounded like, to them, a disorganised mess of unfamiliar sounds. I realised that if an audience of Japanese music lovers couldn't understand the brilliance of music based on its own inherited history, then changes to research approaches is needed to more effectively transmit the appreciation of new Japanese music based off its own traditional heritage to the broader world of modern music.

This paper questions the role of traditional instruments and performers/composers³ within modern music through revealing the process of modernising a tradition based on its own inherited musical aesthetics and musical theory. This is accomplished through the musical analysis of musical-cultural contexts and the process of blending tradition with modernity⁴ within Katsusuke Nakajima's composition, *Mizu no En*⁵ (*The Water's Grudge*) (1969). Examining this piece's incorporation of a modernised compositional theory, performance practices, and instrumental roles highlight how Japanese traditional music can coexist within the modern music scene while retaining its own identity and original aesthetic.

1 "三木稔ゆかりの作曲家たち(*Miki Minoru yukari no sakkyokukatachi / Composers Connected to Minoru Miki*)" Aura J Creative Ensemble of Japanese Instruments' 37th Seasonal Concert on December 16th, 2019 at Toyosu Civic Center Hall, Japan.

2 *Kakegoe* (掛け声) or making calls like "Yo" and "Ho" with the voice to express both rhythmic time and musicality.

3 As defined by Bonnie C. Wade in the book "Composing Japanese: Musical Modernity" (2014), "An individual whose musical creativity is informed first and foremost by their competence and situatedness as a performer". Wade, Bonnie C. *Composing Japanese Musical Modernity*. University of Chicago Press, 2014. pg. 2

4 As Carol Gluck, a Japanese historian, explains in his essay, the modernity used here isn't just one conditional universal. Instead, modernity here is viewed as a condition that has been produced by its own history and is continually changing due to multiple complex, unique and in common, interlocking influences. In short, the modernity of music here isn't limited to just Western influences but is instead informed by its own culturally and historically changing practices. (Gluck, Carol. "The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now." *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 676–87. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23308221>.)

5 The Japanese characters for this title is written as 『水の怨 (*Mizu no En*)』

Overview of Tōon Katsusuke Nakajima and *Mizu no En*

Born in 1940, Katsusuke Nakajima (中島勝祐) started his musical studies in Tokiwazu-bushi⁶ and later moved on to Nagauta⁷ shamisen.⁸ Nakajima graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts in 1964, majoring in Nagauta shamisen performance and joined the Nagauta performing group Tōon-kai under the direction of Shōtarō Yamada and Hiroaki Kikuoka. With encouragement from Shōtarō Yamada, Nakajima wrote and premiered his first composition *Matsu, Take, Ume (Pine, Bamboo, Plum)* at the first ever Tōon-kai Composition Concert in 1968. Tōon-kai would go on to premiere six more compositions by Nakajima until 1975. Nakajima also created a new shamisen genre, “Sōsaku Kamigata-Jōruri (創作上方浄るり)”,⁹ which combines the jōruri¹⁰ narrative musical style he grew up with and the new creative Nagauta lyrical music he was presently composing for. Of Nakajima’s 110 compositions, 97 were commissioned by a variety of traditional dancers in search of new music. Nakajima passed away on the 24th December 2009. A more detailed account of the life and activities of Nakajima can be found in the Japanese journal “Japanese Music and Dance”,¹¹ issue 720.

Nakajima’s composition style can be described as a “master of word painting”. Nakajima always started with the poetry (or lyrics), reading the text over while imagining the the visual of the music. Only after he could feel, intimately, the words would he start writing the music.¹² Nakajima’s musical inspirations include multiple shamisen performance styles from the lyrical, jōruri and min’yō¹³ genres, as well as western opera, which he frequented with his wife.

⁶ An Edo-jōruri genre (narrative storytelling with shamisen). Founded in 1747 by Tokiwazu Mojidayū I, the ensemble is generally made up of two *chūzao* (middle size neck) shamisens and three narrators called tayū. This genre is also frequently used on the kabuki stage as accompaniment to special dance pieces.

⁷ A lyrical shamisen genre (lyrical singing with shamisen) developed, around the 18th century, alongside of kabuki theater and became the primary accompanying ensemble for kabuki. The ensemble can be as small as two *hosozao* (thin size neck) shamisens and one singer to as large as ten *hosozao* shamisens to ten singers with the inclusion of a variety of narimono (Japanese percussion and flutes).

⁸ A three-string lute that arrived in the Osaka trading ports of Japan from the Ryukyu Empire around the 1560s. In Japan, because there is a large variety of genres based on the shamisen instrument (generally separated into two categories: lyrical and jōruri) there are three different sizes of shamisen characterised by the thickness of the instrument’s neck: *hosozao* = thin, *chūzao* = middle, and *futozao* = thickest.

⁹ Nakajima wrote jōruri in Japanese as 「浄るり」 (jōruri), instead of the more common spelling 「浄瑠璃」 (jōruri).

¹⁰ Jōruri is a category for the shamisen genres based on the narrative style of storytelling. Other jōruri genres include Gidayū-bushi, Itchū-bushi, Shinnai-bushi, Kiyomoto-bushi etc. Each genre within jōruri is based off narrative storytelling, but each genre uses its own unique shamisen size, tools, playing style, and singing/chanting styles to transmit the tale.

¹¹ Nakano, Yoshinori. “Naniwakko no Katsusuke-san no Shōnen Jidai (The Boyhood of Katsusuke, a ‘Naniwa’ Boy)”. *Hōgaku to Buyō (Japanese Traditional Music and Dance)*, vol. 61, no. 6, 2010, pp. 12–17.

¹² Schmuckal, Colleen Christina. “Personal Interactions with Hisako Nakajima.” 2012.

¹³ A blanket term meaning “Japanese folk music”. There are a variety of styles and forms of sung folk music throughout Japan; some are sung unaccompanied but many use shamisen as the accompanying instrument.

Mizu no En, for two *hosozao* (thin size necks) shamisens, fue (one player performing two Japanese traditional bamboo flutes: *nōkan*¹⁴ and *shinobue*¹⁵) and voice (lyrical), was premiered at the second Tōon-kai Composition Concert in 1969, with lyrics by Katsuichirō Kaizu (海津勝一郎). The “en (怨)” in *Mizu no En*, has many nuanced meanings including, “a grudge; bitter feeling; regret”¹⁶ and has been used within traditional Japanese art to represent ancient unrestful souls as well as anguish about a fleeting reality. A possible connection between “en (grudge)” and “mizu (water)” is within the long historical epic *The Tale of Heike* (c. 1330) when during the last battle of Dan-no-ura the powerful Taira family were forcibly drowned to their deaths in the Shimonoseki Strait. Historically, “en” has been generally used as an expression in traditionally older and more noble musical genres like *nō*.¹⁷ Since shamisen music is relatively younger and used commonly for entertainment, *Mizu no En* is not limited to old idioms or traditions associated with “en”.

Mizu no En was, instead, an endeavour to express the pure, complex emotion of “en” or “urami” (the other reading for this word). Nakajima says, “This piece eliminates the merit of modern conceptions and instead focuses purely on emotions and intuition”.¹⁸ Only the first couple of lines of the lyrics are originally written by the lyricist himself: the rest imitate famous poetry and utilise classical verses.¹⁹ This purposeful mixing of various ambiguous texts makes the lyrics’s meaning and time period unknown and it’s only through the raw performance of the music that the deeper meaning may be revealed. However, depending on the performer, the performance does change greatly meaning the music’s deeper meaning is varied and up for debate. Because of this, *Mizu no En* has the most dedicated fans, from both Nagauta and *nihon buyō*,²⁰ of all of Nakajima’s

¹⁴ Made from bamboo that has been split into many strips and turned inside out, bound back together with cherry bark. Due to a wooden cylinder being placed between the mouth hole and first finger hole inside the *nōkan*, this flute cannot overblow at the octave, is generally un-pitched, and is considered a percussive, atmospheric instrument that traditionally plays rhythms alongside the taiko drum.

¹⁵ A simple bamboo flute that has seven holes, overblows at the octave, and is used to play alongside the shamisen and vocal melody, making it much more melodic and sweet sounding than the *nōkan*. This flute is also used in many festival genres found throughout Japan.

¹⁶ Sanseido. うらみ (*Urami*). Sanseido’s Daily Concise English-Japanese Dictionary, Sixth Edition (1997): pp. 53.

¹⁷ Classical Japanese dance-drama theatre based off Zen Buddhism. Developed into its present form by Motokiyo Zeami (1363?–1443?), *nō* was performed for high-class nobles of Japan since the early 15th century. The music is mostly made up of Japanese drums, *nōkan* flute, and vocal chanting.

¹⁸ Nakajima, Katsusuke. *Nakajima Katsusuke Sakuhinshū (san) (Collection of Pieces by Katsusuke Nakajima vol. 3)*. VZCG-750 Japan Traditional Cultures Foundation, Victor Entertainment INC., Japan, 2011. pg. 4 「現代的な判り良さを排して、情感と感覚を重視しよう」 (“Gendai-tekina wakari yosa wo hai shite, jōkan to kankaku wo jūshi shiyō”)

¹⁹ Nakajima, Katsusuke. *Nakajima Katsusuke Sakuhinshū (san) (Collection of Pieces by Katsusuke Nakajima vol. 3)*. VZCG-750 Japan Traditional Cultures Foundation, Victor Entertainment INC., Japan, 2011. pg. 4

²⁰ Japanese traditional dance, commonly associated with kabuki theatre and *jōruri* music. The base of this style of dance is said to have been established in the early 17th century by Izumo-no-Okuni. Like shamisen, there are many styles, schools and genres of Japanese dance, though it is commonly performed to shamisen accompaniment.

compositions. However, because both the lyrics and music don't tell a clear story and instead invoke a multitude of nuanced emotions surrounding the dark depths of the water, this piece is also one of the hardest to perform. Hisako Nakajima, Nakajima's wife, explains, "The meaning of the lyrics is really ambiguous. Is there a dead spirit, or perhaps something else on the other side of the water? It's hard to know. But it was purposely composed so it isn't clear. The listener [and performer] doesn't know what's exactly being said".²¹ Aside from the ambiguous musical expression, another issue plaguing the broader reception of this piece is the notation.

There is no one standard notation used among all shamisen genres. Even just within the Nagauta genre, multiple types of notations can be observed: the most common being *Bunka-fu* (horizontal tablature number notation) and *Kenseikai-fu* (vertical solfège number notation). This is because each shamisen genre has a different musical aesthetic, fingering positions, plectrum placement, performance practice, and how techniques and rhythms are interpreted. Therefore, traditionally it is difficult for shamisen performers from two different genres to perform together. Furthermore, while shamisen performers typically compose most of the music, it is customary for the other instrumental professionals (like drums, flutes and voice) to be responsible for creating their own individual parts, coming together in what might be called a communal composition. Therefore, even within the same Nagauta ensemble, the percussive parts, including the drums (kotsuzumi, ōtsuzumi, taiko, etc.) and the flutes shinobue and nōkan, use different notations from the shamisen and voice. In addition, the use of Western staff notation is still relatively rare among traditional shamisen ensembles because staff notation is limited in its ability to correctly transmit shamisen's nuanced playing techniques, rhythms, and the actual "sound" of each pitch.

In the case of Nakajima's *Mizu no En*, and most of his other compositions, the score is published in *Kenseikai-fu* [Fig. 3]. This notation, vertically written, read right to left (up to down), includes a few notation marks inspired by Western scores, and both the shamisen (in numbers) and vocal (in Japanese text with numbers) parts with a few cues of the fue musical line. The numbers, for voice and shamisen, reflect the solfège of the pitches: same numbers are the same "pitch" regardless of the shamisen string they are performed on and the same pitch numbers for the shamisen is used for the voice [Fig. 1]. The fue notation, also written vertically (read right to left, up to down), includes both the shinobue and nōkan parts on the same page. The shinobue part is written in numbers (roman numbers = high octave and Chinese character numbers = low octave

²¹ Schmuckal, Colleen Christina. "Personal Interview with Hisako Nakajima (wife of Nakajima)." 28 May 2021. 「歌詞の意味は曖昧、亡霊なのか、水の向こうに何かはあるか、ちょっとわかりにくい。何かわからないわけで作ってはずです。何を言っているかわからない」 (*Kashi no imi wa aimai, bōrei nanoka, mizu no mukō ni nanika wa aru ka, chotto wakarinkui. Nanika wakaranai wake de tsukutte hazudesu. Nani wo itteiru ka wakaranai*)

[Fig. 2]) and the *nōkan* is written in *katakana*²² expressing how the musical phrase is spoken syllabically [Fig. 3].²³ The *fue* notation shown here was most likely finalised by the *fue* performer at the premiere, Takara Sanzaemon.

Because few shamisen performers, musicians, and researchers can read the score to *Mizu no En*, widespread appreciation of this piece is limited. However, transcribing this notation into staff notation can be misleading because how a “note” is heard and is interpreted in Western notation differs greatly to how “pitch” actually sounds and is interpreted in the Nagauta shamisen tradition. For example, a perfect fourth in the Western tradition is heard as “consonant”, while in the Nagauta shamisen tradition it actually sounds “dissonant” due to conflicting timbre. Furthermore, the numbers on the number notation are not equivalent to an exact pitch (for example, the number “7” doesn’t always transcribe to a B4) but instead the interval relationship between the pitches (for example, a “37” chord always has a perfect 5th relationship, though it might not sound consonant depending on the context). Therefore, for this analysis, the original notation will be labelled and explained without a transcription to best reflect how the performers interpret each musical sound. Refer to Figure 4 for a quick breakdown on how both *Kenseikai-fu* and the *fue* notation could be transcribed into staff notation.

Shamisen's String Range

The figure shows three staves of music for the strings of a shamisen. Each staff is labeled on the left: 1st String (I), 2nd String (II), and 3rd String (III). The notes are written in a simplified notation with accidentals. Below each staff is a sequence of numbers representing fingerings: 1, #1, 2, (#2), 3, 4, #4, #5, 6, (b6), 7, 1, #1, 2, (#2), 3. The 3rd string staff has a circled 'o' above the first note and a circled 'x' above the 11th note. The 3rd string staff also has a circled 'o' above the 11th note and a circled 'x' above the 12th note.

Figure 1: The relative range of each string in relation to the numbers used in *Kenseikai-fu*. Note: There are no fixed pitches. Depending on the singer or flute player, the entire range of each string can be raised or lowered.

²² One of the alphabets used for the Japanese language. Katakana uses phonetic symbols, each representing one syllable.

²³ As mentioned above, *nōkan* isn’t a melodic instrument and instead plays percussive-like atmospheric passages, meaning the actually “pitch” isn’t as important as the overall music phrasing and expression. Therefore, important *nōkan* phrases will be represented with illustrative lines [Fig 8].

Shinobue Size 6 Range



Figure 2: The range of shinobue's notes in relation to the numbers for the fute notation. Note 1: There are many shinobue sizes which will raise or lower the overall range. Note 2: Because nōkan has no fixed pitches/range, relative pitches, or even sense of melody, nōkan's range in relation to the katakana cannot be practically written out in staff notation. It is better to think of nōkan's notation as a type of ambiguous, improvised melodic rhythm than anything tonal.

shamisen and voice notation
By Nakajima Katsusuke

fute notation
By Takara Sanzaemon

Figure 3: Left: pg. 1 of Kenseikai-fu (shamise and vocal) (Tōon Nakajima, Katsusuke. Mizu no En (The Water's Grudge). Edited by Katsusuke Nakajima Memorial Association. Tokyo: Bunseisha Corporation, 2020). Right: pg. 1 of the fute notation (handwritten by Takara Sanzaemon, date unknown)

The figure displays a musical score for "Mizu no En Introduction" and its handwritten transcription. The score on the left is in staff notation, featuring three staves: Voice, Shinobue, and Shamisen. The Shinobue part includes a "shinobue solo" section with fingerings (3 2 3 5 4 3 2 3 1 3 七 1 2 七 2 4) and a "tuning sansagari" section with fingerings (6 6 3 1 7 7 6 #4). The voice part includes the lyrics "水 ず と り の" and "水 ず と り の" with a circled 1. The transcription on the right shows the "shamisen" and "shinobue solo" parts with handwritten notes and fingerings. The "shamisen" part includes a circled 1 and the text "(shamisen enter)". The "shinobue solo" part includes a circled 1 and the text "voice 三味線入り (shamisen enter)".

Figure 4: An example of the introduction (from right to left, solo shinobue to first entrance of the voice) of *Mizu no En* transcribed in staff notation. Note: The actual pitch changes depending on the performance as well as the nuance timing of each note. Furthermore, the actual timbre of each shamisen “sound” and vocal style isn’t properly reflected in this transcription.

Another limiting factor for *Mizu no En* is the instrumentation and overall sound (timbre and musical lines) appearing to be strictly traditional. Just an analysis and Western score transcription of the instrumentation, the range of pitches, pitch combinations and performance patterns would support the typical criticism of new Nagauta music as expressed by William Malm in 1963, “Though there was a great deal of music composing and polemic article writing in the twentieth century, little really new has happened in Nagauta in the last fifty years [...] The talented Nagauta composers of today, however, tend to produce replicas of the nineteenth-century classical style with a few fast passages

added in hope of capturing the attention of the modern ear”.²⁴ Even though Malm is a second-generation shamisen disciple²⁵ of Shōtarō Yamada and mentions Yamada’s modern compositions, which used staff score and incorporated Western instruments, Malm still believed that little modernization has happened within the Nagauta musical world.

This opinion of new traditional music seems to be shared by both foreign and Japanese audiences. For example, traditional/modern shamisen and koto performer Akiko Nishigata explains after her 1979 European tour, “While people are interested in the shamisen as a unique musical instrument, some like it and others dislike it [...] What I always feel while I am performing is that both classical and contemporary works are listened to at exactly the same level, which makes me happy”.²⁶ While I can understand her happiness, I fear this shows that these foreign audiences couldn’t differentiate between traditional and modern shamisen compositions due to a lack of first-hand experience. Interviewing her recently, I asked her if she felt like the same comment could be said for Japanese audiences. She responded, “I don’t really think so. [Audiences in Japan] have a strong prejudice. If it’s a familiar melody, then it is easily accepted. But they seem to be reluctant to listen to unfamiliar music for the first time.”²⁷ These familiar melodies include melodies overplayed during New Year celebrations (including Miyagi’s *Haru no Umi* (1929)), within traditionally themed restaurants and parks (including Yatsushashi Kengyō’s *Rokudan no Shirabe* (c.1600)), and common Western melodies. Therefore, in Japan and abroad, new traditional music is commonly compared with music most audiences are more familiar with instead of judged on its own artistic aesthetics.

Under these circumstances it is easy to see how truly pioneering but traditional-sounding pieces might not receive fair recognition. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, *Mizu no En* will be broken into six sections:

²⁴ Malm, William P. *Nagauta the Heart of Kabuki*. Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo, Japan: 1963. pg. 19

²⁵ Malm’s teacher, Kikuoka Hiroaki, was a student of Yamada Shōtarō

²⁶ Kikkawa, Eishi, editor. *Hōgaku Ikusei-kai no Ayumi: (The History of Hōgaku Ikusei-kai: In Search of Modern Hōgaku)*. NHK Hōgaku Ginōsha Ikusei-kai, Bunshodo Corporation, 1985. pg. 109

「それに対して三味線は個性的な楽器として興味を持たれるが、好き嫌いがある【。。。】いつも演奏していて感じることは、古典も現代作品も全く同じレベルで聴いてくれるということ、それが私には何よりも嬉しい。」 (*Soreni taishite shamisen wa kosei-tekina gakkī toshite kyōmi wo motareru ga, sukikirai ga aru [...] Itsumo ensō shiteite kanjiru koto wa, koten mo gendai sakuhin mo mattaku onaji reberu de kiitekureru toiu koto, sore ga watashi niva naniyori mo ureshi.*)

²⁷ Schmuckal, Colleen Christina. “Personal Emails with Akiko Nishigata.” 20 June 2021.

「思いません。先入観が強いので、聞き慣れているメロディや旋律は、容易く受け入れられますが、耳に馴染みのない、初めて聞くような音楽には抵抗があるようです。」 (“Omoimasen. Sen’nyūkan ga tsuyoi node, kikinareteiru merodi ya senritsu wa, tayasuku ukeireremasu ga, mimi ni najimi no nai, hajimete kiku yōna ongaku ni wa teikō ga aru yōdesu.”)

Section 1

lower 1st string

nagashi

nagashi

sansagari

shinobue

Solo 1

Mizu no En 1969 一九六九年

Katsuchiro Kaizu

Katsusuke Nakajima

Key:

- = coloristic subdominate-like tone
- = dissonant/dominate-like tones
- = consonant/tonic-like tones
- = coloristic subdominate-like tones
- = dissonant-like 1 tone
- △ = nagashi set up patterns

Notation 1: Section one analysis

Section 2

The image shows a handwritten musical score for Section 2, annotated with coloristic tones and clusters. The score is divided into several parts:

- shinobue solo 2:** The first part on the left, featuring a solo line with circled notes (coloristic tones) and boxed notes (coloristic clusters).
- shinobue:** The second part, continuing the solo line with similar annotations.
- shamisen duet:** The third part, featuring a duet line with circled notes and boxed notes.
- temoi:** The fourth part, featuring a line with circled notes and boxed notes.
- nōkan:** The fifth part, featuring a line with circled notes and boxed notes.
- niagari:** The sixth part, featuring a line with circled notes and boxed notes.

Key: ○ = coloristic tone □ = coloristic cluster

Notation 2: Section two analysis

Section 6

Section 5

Notation 4: Sections five (right) and six (left) analysis

1. In *sansagari* tuning (shamisen's three strings are tuned to two perfect fourths [Fig. 5]), this section begins with a shinobue solo and ends with the tuning change. Key features include the use of consonant and dissonant simultaneous tones for horizontal development ①, repeating motifs ②, unconventional *nōkan* pattern combinations ③, untraditional set-up for the *nagashi*²⁸ pattern ④ and shamisen extended techniques ⑦. The text and music feel more modern here, seemingly expressing a present-day Kōwakamai²⁹ dance performance in the evening by Shimonoseki Straight as a crowd of people wait for the moon to rise. [Notation 1].³⁰

²⁸ The *nagashi* pattern, typically short and flashy, is the performance of a repeated, uncounted, single pitch that starts slow and quickly speeds up until the last strong, strummed pitch which is rhythmically slowed through creating an intentional space between the last two, or so, performed pitches. *Nagashi* is traditionally used for transitions between two rhythmically different sections (the *nagashi* pattern itself has no inherent sense of a pulse so it destroys all sense of prior rhythmic time) or is used for the dramatic *ōzushima jōruri* sections which generally have no strict sense of "time".

²⁹ Kōwakamai (幸若舞) is a recitative dance from the Muromachi Period that depicts many old tales including stories from "The Tale of Heike" (c. 1330). Today, restored performances are found in Setakamachi Ōe, Miyama City in Fukuoka Prefecture. To date, there have been a couple of Kōwakamai dancers who have created new choreography and danced to *Mizu no En*.

³⁰ All English translations are done by the author. Since the lyrics are purposely unclear as to what is being expressed, the English translations should be read as the atmospheric images of the lyrics more than a direct, perfect translation.

Lyrics: Japanese: 「水鳥の、水に映ろう篝火に、幸若舞の水の怨、月出潮や待ちぬらん。」

Romanisation: *Mizutori no, mizu ni utsurō kagaribi ni, Kōwakamai no mizu no en*³¹, *tsukiide shio ya machinuran.*

English: The waterfowl reflecting within the lamp's fire³² on the water, gathering before waters of the Kōwakamai dance, waiting for the rising tide of the moon.

2. In *niagari* tuning (shamisen's 1st and 2nd strings are tuned to a perfect fifth and 2nd and 3rd are tuned to a perfect fourth [Fig. 5]), this section starts very slow, suddenly speeding up in the middle, and ending on a shinobue solo. Key features include use of dissonant and consonant simultaneous tones for horizontal movement ①, repeating motifs ②, standard nōkan pattern combination ⑤, independent shinobue musical line ⑥, and shamisen extended techniques ⑦. The text seems to be expressing scenes of noble people (ghosts?) gathering. The music reflects this shift through the tuning change and mixing both traditional and modern musical rhetoric. [Notation 2].

Lyrics: Japanese: 「不思議やな水の上に、浮織物の直垂に爪勾の鎧着て、さも華やかなる公達の、袖に袂に掻い纏れ、室の津の唄聞かんせ、水馴棹の唄歌わん。」

Romanisation: *Fushigi yana mizu no ue ni, ukiorimono no hitatare ni tsumanioi no yoroi kite, samo hanayakanaru kindachi no, sode ni tamoto ni kaimotsure, Muronotsu no uta kikanse, minarezao no uta utawan.*

English: It is such a wonder on the water's edge, wearing elaborate embroidered clothing under noble *tsumatoriodoshi*³³ armor, long elegant sleeves vigorously entangled in the water,³⁴ hearing the song of Murotsu,³⁵ singing the songs of *minarezao*.³⁶

³¹ The lyrics' use of the phrase "mizu no en (水の怨)" here is of course a reference to the title of the piece and could be referring to "the deep anguish (grudge) of the waters by the Kōwakamai dance". However, on further exploration, this "en" in the lyrics is sometime written as 「宴」 (*en*), instead of the title's 「怨」 (*en*) (reference Notation 1), changing the meaning to a celebration, gathering, or banquet. However, because the "urami" or "grudge" character (「怨」) is also sometimes used (as seen in the liner notes on pg.4 of the CD *Nakajima Katsusuke Sakuhinshū (san)* (*Collection of Pieces by Katsusuke Nakajima vol. 3*), there is still a hint of darkness and unrest associated with the water at this performance.

³² This fire is probably coming from a boat on the water and would be used to attract fish to the surface with the light.

³³ A name for a traditional armour worn by the noble class

³⁴ In this case, the meaning seems to be that noble people dressed in *hita-tare* (a robe originally worn by aristocrats but also by samurai since the Kamakura period) and armour are dancing so enthusiastically that they are getting entangled.

³⁵ Murotsu, read here as "Muronotsu" in the lyrics, is a town located in Tatsuno City, Hyōgo Prefecture. This could be referring to the *min'yo*, or folk music, sung there.

³⁶ The direct translation would be a long wooden pole that is used to the water (a pole used a lot in the water). Possibly this pole is used to push boats through the water (like shallow rivers). This word could be expressing some sort of traditional boat song.

3. In *niagari* tuning, this section is the slowest of all sections with no clear rhythmic pulse. Key features include shamisen extended techniques ⑦, lowest pitches of the piece being performed by the voice ⑧, and no use of the fue. The ambiguity of the text's meaning here (is this a ghost's regret? Is it referring to the *kōwakamai* dance? Is something else on the water?) is expressed through the change in vocal singing style and shamisen's shimmering arpeggiated tones. [Notation 3].

Lyrics: Japanese: 「一夜馴れた³⁷が名残り惜しさに³⁸出て見たれば、沖中に、舟の速さよ、霧の深さよ。」

Romanisation: *Hitoyo nareta ga nagorioshisani idetemitareba, okinaka ni, fune no hayasa yo, kiri no fukasa yo.*

English: Even with one night of pleasure, regretfully it has all dissipated, like the speed of a boat and the depth of the fog over the sea.

4. In *niagari* tuning, this section speeds up and ends before the *ainote* (instrumental interlude, in this case shamisen only interlude). Key features include repeated melodic motifs ②, shamisen's use of the *suki*³⁹ technique ⑩, and a more traditional *shinobue*, voice and shamisen performance style ⑨. The lyrics seem to imply a pitiful voice of someone holding onto the past with regret or anguish as the harsher timbre and rhythmically quicker shamisen music is contrasted against the more lyrically sad vocal and fue sounds. [Notation 3].

Lyrics: Japanese: 「犬飼星は何時候ぞ、⁴⁰ あ、惜しや惜しや、惜しの夜や、世の中はちろりに過ぐる何にしようぞ、一期は夢よ、ただ狂え。」

Romanisation: *Inukaiboshi wa nandoki sōrō zo, a, oshi ya oshi ya, oshi no yo ya, yononaka wa chirori ni suguru nani shō zo, ichigo wa yume yo, tada kurue.*

English: What time does the Altair star show? Oh, such grief, anguish, regrettable night, what's going on in this world? Existence is just a dream, simple lunacy.⁴¹

³⁷ A direct translation of 「一夜馴れたが」 (*Hitoyo nareta*) is “Getting familial with it in one night”. However, in the larger context of how this phrase can be used in older Japanese texts, this might be portraying a quickly disappearing “happiness”, as short as a night's dream, before all is lost (possibly commenting on how the Taira were doomed to lose the war and die).

³⁸ 「名残り惜しさに」 (*nagorioshisani*) has the feeling of regret, nostalgic, or missing of something. It could possibly be hinting at missing the world left behind after death.

³⁹ When performing with a plectrum, there are two basic traditional strokes: the standard “down” stroke (*hiku*) and “up” stroke (*suki*, which is marked with a “V” in the notation). While a combination of both strokes helps shamisen players perform quick passages, the upstroke tends to sound scratchier and noisier than the downstroke. It's this scratchy timbre that is used here to help create the aggressive sound. It is notable that the *suki* technique is not used much until this moment of the piece.

⁴⁰ 「犬飼星」 (*Inukaiboshi*) or the Altair (tanabata summer) star gives a sense of the season or time of these lyrics. Possibly spirits are wondering how long has it been since they have died? Or this could be taken more romantically, as one looks back in time at their list of loves found and lost. Regardless, time feels fleeting here.

⁴¹ This scene is expressed in a way that it can be taken as both real and unreal. The lyrics are very sensuous and sensual, letting the composer express abstract sorrow.

5. In *niagari* tuning, this section is the fastest of all sections, beginning with an *ainote* and ending on a *nagashi*. Key features include a unconventional *nagashi* ③, shamisen extended techniques ⑦, shamisen's use of the *sukui* technique ⑯, rhythmically offbeat heavy *ainote* ⑩, the only high ヒ (*hi*)⁴² pitch from the *nōkan* ⑪, and narrative style from the voice ⑫. Both music and lyrics are describing deep emotional trauma, like waves swirling and disappearing into the depth. [Notation 4].

Lyrics: Japanese 「漫ろ狂うも水の上、その船戦生き死にの、二つの水の滔々と激地の底に飛び入て、」

Romanisation: *Sozoro kurū mo mizu no ue, sono funaikusa ikishini no, futatsu no mizu no tōtō to tagichi no soko ni tobi'irite,*

English: Losing one's mind on the water, living and dying within a battle of ships, jumping into the depths of two torrents of water.

6. In *niagari* tuning, the piece ends on an unconventional *dangire*⁴³ (final cadence pattern). Key features include repeating motifs ②, shinobue instead of the more traditionally typical *nōkan* ⑬, high solo voice instead of *nōkan* ⑭, and an untraditional shamisen ending on unison simultaneous tones ⑮. Both the music and text express the unknown, where “they (possibly Taira?)” went. [Notation 4].

Lyrics: Japanese 「行方も知らずなりにけり。」

Romanisation: *Yukuemo shirazu narinikeri.*

English: Where they went is unknown.

Three Main Tunings of Shamisen String



Note: Pitches of open strings can be moved freely to desired range
(Ex: B → D, E → G, A → C)

Figure 5: Note: These are not fixed pitches so the entire range of each string can be raised or lowered

⁴² The highest unpitched sound of the *nōkan*. Used at dramatic parts to emphasise important musical moments, notes, and lyrics.

⁴³ Typically, only a few bars long, a traditional *dangire* starts with a hard hit from the taiko (shime-daiko) drum and entrance of a strong *nōkan* non-melodic pattern: the voice and shamisen playing simple motivic gestures behind these two instruments. After the *nōkan* plays its final pattern, all percussive instruments shout out a loud *kakegoe*, then the *nōkan* plays its highest tone ヒ (*hi*) and the shamisen ends on two simultaneously sounding pitches. Please refer to Figure 8 to see a visual representation of a traditional *dangire*.

Analysis: Instrumental Roles and Performance practices

The instrumental roles heard in *Mizu no En* fight against tradition, introducing new functions for each instrument that would have sounded surprising during this piece's premiere.⁴⁴ Analysing the music of *Mizu no En* from the point of view of the inherent instrumental roles reveals new compositional ideas, musical expressions, and instrumental possibilities.

Role of Shamisen:

Traditionally the shamisen is the backbone of the Nagauta ensemble, working as the main musical sound, soloist, conductor and accompaniment at the same time. All musical expression, including time and rhythm, is set up by the shamisen's musical line for the other instruments to work from: Pulling at the music for emotionally tense moments and driving it forward during the climatic moments.

In *Mizu no En*, the two shamisens seemingly encompass this traditional role. However, the typically bright, crisp, and dynamic sound of the Nagauta shamisen is surprisingly more muddled and warmer sounding. This strange sound colour is emphasised by the twangy buzzing sound from the *sawari* (multi-harmonic buzz) on the 1st string vibrating longer and slower than is possible on a typical Nagauta shamisen. This new sound is created by changing the Nagauta shamisen's bridge (*koma*) and plectrum (*bachi*).⁴⁵

The Nagauta bridge, which is typically a thin, tall, ivory bridge, is replaced by a shorter, wider water buffalo horn bridge containing lead pellet inserts that adds weight to and elongates the sound [Fig. 6]. This type of bridge creates an overall warmer, less piercing sound and is used in genres like Jiuta,⁴⁶ where the emphasis is on the singer's long lyrical phrases and the shamisen performing nuanced sliding on the resonating sound between pitches. This less rhythmically distinct bridge never overpowers the voice, changing how the Nagauta shamisen is functionally able to lead the ensemble musically.

However, this is not to say the shamisens in *Mizu no En* are actually playing in a pure Jiuta shamisen style. Jiuta performers use a big, heavy plectrum placed at the upper rim of the shamisen's body creating a longer, more strained sound, which is not present in the performance of *Mizu no En*. This is because the heavy Jiuta plectrum has been replaced with an even thinner and lighter plectrum than is typical for Nagauta performance [Fig. 6]. In *Mizu no En*, the plectrum is placed between the upper rim and center of the

⁴⁴ Schmuckal, Colleen Christina. "Personal Interview with Fukuhara Kan." 31 May 2021.

⁴⁵ Nakajima, Katsusuke. *Nakajima Katsusuke Sakuhinshū (san) (Collection of Pieces by Katsusuke Nakajima vol. 3)*. VZCG-750 Japan Traditional Cultures Foundation, Victor Entertainment INC., Japan, 2011. pg. 4–5.

⁴⁶ A lyrical shamisen genre (singing and shamisen) developed by blind monks in Kamigata region (today's Kyoto) around the 16th century, making it one of the oldest shamisen genres. Traditionally solo music performed by one player on a *chūzao* (middle size neck) shamisen while singing. Today it is better known for its incorporation into sankyoku music: performance of Jiuta pieces in an ensemble of shamisen, koto and shakuhachi (or kyoku during the Edo period)

body to create a more percussive, vocally strong sound that is dampened by the thin, delicate plectrum and warmed by the thicker bridge, creating a sort of percussive, robust weakness with heavy, long resonating notes. This combination of opposing forces allows for the performer to play quick, clean passages more typical of Nagauta music while also more lyrically long, ambiguous sounds as heard in other shamisen genres like Jiuta.⁴⁷

With all these elements put together: the playing style, the plectrum and bridge combination, and role within the ensemble: it is clear that the shamisen's musical and tonal role has become an intentional mixture of shamisen traditional genre: min'yō, jōruri, Jiuta, Nagauta, etc. This allows the music to focus on the most effective musical expression to portray the feelings of each ambiguous lyric and musical pitch.

Role of Voice:

Traditionally, Nagauta singing style is characterised by a beautiful, lower voice with natural vocalisation and contrasting falsetto moments. When multiple singers are available, musical contrast is created through moments of unison group singing versus individual solo parts.⁴⁸ Nagauta singers also traditionally mimic nō chant, kyōgen⁴⁹ comical speaking, and jōruri narrative styles of vocal expressions.

Mizu no En uses only one voice, eliminating the contrast between individual and group singing. Instead, the one voice alone needs to perform all the musical expressions of each text. Most recordings of this piece rely on singer Tōon Miyata Tetsuo (東音宮田哲男), a living national treasure.⁵⁰ However, even with Miyata's talent, this piece feels heavy and almost burdensome for the one lone voice, seemingly emphasising a painfully regretful emotion. There have been performances of *Mizu no En* with three singers instead of one.⁵¹ In this case, this piece feels overall more dynamically free with less emotional weight placed on one voice, even though the notes and musical phrases remained the same.

⁴⁷ It is important to note here that for shamisen players to physically change the bridge and play with a different plectrum, while awkward, is not as difficult as asking them to correctly perform another genre's style. This is because the fingering positions, left and right hand-techniques, and how the plectrum is used differ depending on the genre.

⁴⁸ Tanaka, Yumiko et al. *Marugoto Shamisen No Hon (The Complete Shamisen Book)*. Seikyūsha, 2009. pg. 62

⁴⁹ Performed on the same stage as nō as a shorter, modern comical interludes between each longer nō play. Story wise, nō and kyōgen generally have no connection. Stylistically, kyōgen typically has more artistically spoken dialogue (similar to sprechstimme style) while nō is more meditative chanting (a more musical version of Buddhist chanting).

⁵⁰ A Japanese term for those individuals certified as "Preservers of Important Intangible Cultural Properties" by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as based on Japan's Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.

⁵¹ "Hanayanagi Saehide Recital (nihon buyō) *Mizu no En* (Midaregami Yoruno Amigasa)" YouTube, YouTube, 15 Oct. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fero7LrSTrw&t=1307s.

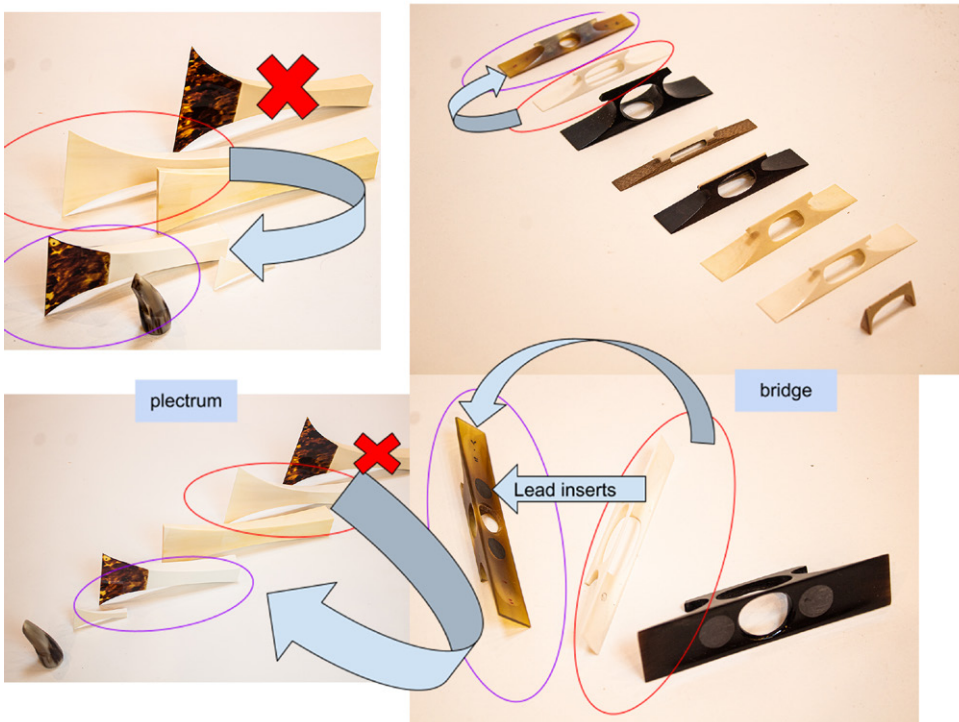


Figure 6: Shamisen bridges (right) and plectrums (left). Note: the thin plectrum used in performance is probably all ivory (like the original Nagauta plectrum) and doesn't have the tortoise shell inlay (photo by author)

The voice in *Mizu no En* flows freely between musical styles, switching between lyrical singing (throughout), a low, grumble *nō*-like chant style ⑧, and clear *jōruri* spoken/singing style ⑫. Therefore, like the shamisen, the voice focuses on the musical expression of each individual text instead of clearly citing any one genre's style.

Role of the Fue and Lack of Percussion:

Traditionally, the Nagauta hayashi ensemble,⁵² including both Japanese drums (kotsuzumi, ōtsuzumi, and shimedaiko⁵³) and fue (*nōkan* and *shinobue* flutes), is used to

⁵² Hayashi is a term for the Japanese percussive ensemble made up of *narimono* (Japanese percussion) and/or fue (both *shinobue* and *nōkan*). The hayashi can either play alone or accompany another musical genre's ensembles, meaning it isn't limited to nagauta but also used within many shamisen genres as well as other traditional genres including *nō*, *kyōgen* and festival music.

⁵³ A small stick taiko drum.

create the overall sound colour with a percussive base while developing the music to its most climatic part.⁵⁴ In addition, the fue traditionally is also utilised as the atmosphere enhancer: the shinobue embroiders the vocal and shamisen melodic lines through use of melisma and the nōkan expresses “ma”⁵⁵ (the emphasis of the space between two sounds) through dynamic, vaguely percussive, syllabic sounds. This expression of “ma” is typically supported by the drums, making the role of the fue (especially nōkan) synchronised with the role of the percussion ensemble.⁵⁶ However, *Mizu no En* only utilises the fue. Symbolising the light flickering on the mysterious water, the fue must perform both traditional and two new modern roles: 1. independent solo instrument and 2. creator of the musical base like the shamisen.

Role 1 can be observed at the end of section two ⑥. The shinobue plays a contrasting, seemingly musically independent melodic pattern to the shamisen's rhythmically quicker musical line. Fukuhara Kan, fue performer who took over Takara Sanzaemon's performance name, expressed that this was his favourite part in *Mizu no En* because it was so unlike traditional shinobue playing and allowed the shinobue performer to freely express the music in new ways.⁵⁷ Role 2 is seen in both shinobue solos (in section one and two). Both solos are setting up the musical base used for the next section of the piece. Solo one, which contains a non-traditional combination of pitches, makes it clear this piece's sound colour is not just traditional but also modern. Solo two, which contains a trill at the end, needs to both create the next musical colour of the piece while also enticing the shamisen and voice back in. Both solos' roles are accomplished not just by the pitches being performed, but also by emphasising the “ma” between each tone. Kan explains, “Even if you play the same thing, it is not about playing the notes of the melody or just playing the pitches, but instead [...] In a Japanese term, it is the kind of performance where you can feel the ‘ma’ that is most important”.⁵⁸ Nakajima shows that the traditional expression of this “ma” can also be used in modern compositions.

This trend continues with the nōkan as well. Without the traditional support from the drums the nōkan's sound feels significantly heavier when expressing traditional pattern combinations. However, this also gives the nōkan freedom to enact new performance practices and musical combinations. For example, in section one, the nōkan pattern

⁵⁴ Malm, William P. *Nagauta the Heart of Kabuki*. Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo, Japan: 1963. pg 74

⁵⁵ Written as 間 (*ma*) in Japanese

⁵⁶ Schmuckal, Colleen Christina. “Personal Interview with Fukuhara Kan.” 31 May 2021.

⁵⁷ Schmuckal, Colleen Christina. “Personal Interview with Fukuhara Kan.” 31 May 2021.

⁵⁸ Schmuckal, Colleen Christina. “Personal Interview with Fukuhara Kan.” 31 May 2021.

「同じ吹くでも、音でメロディーを音で追っていくじゃなくて、それを[。。。]日本的な言い方をすると、間で感じるような、そういう演奏は結構大事ですよね。」 (“Onaji fuku demo, oto de merodi wo oto de otteikun janakute, sore wo [...] Nihon-tekina iikata wo suru to, ma de kanjiru yōna, sōiu ensō wa kekkō daiji desu yone”)

combination is made up of three smaller patterns: 1. “Ohya-, Rorura- (オヒャーロールラー)” 2. “Hihyo-, Ru-ri- (ヒヒョールーリー)” and 3. “Ro-, Rura-, Riya- (ロールラーリヤー)” [Fig. 7] While each pattern individually is traditional, this pattern combination is non-traditional. For example, traditionally 1. “Ohya-, Rorura-” pattern is actually followed by a, “Ura, Ura, Ura, Riya- (ウラウラウラリヤー)” pattern (as seen in *Tsurukame*) and 2. “Hihyo-, Ru-ri-” pattern is followed by a, “Hihyo-, Iyo-. (ヒヒョーイヨー)” pattern (as seen in *Renjishi*) [Fig. 7]. This creates inherent unease for the performer, since they cannot play the ingrained pattern combinations they have memorised, while also modernising the musical sound.⁵⁹

In contrast, in 2020, dancer and choreographer Saehide Hanayanagi premiered a dance version of *Mizu no En*⁶⁰ that included the entire hayashi ensemble (kotsuzumi, ōtsuzumi, shimedaiko, and fue), making the overall instrumental roles closer to traditional Nagauta music. However, no matter how naturally the drum's traditional patterns blended with the rest of the instruments, the drums, which created an overall clearer rhythmic drive and solid musical base, felt like a distraction from the sombre expression of “en” due to dismantling the natural burden felt by the fue performer, singer and shamisen instrumentalists when drums are not present. In short, the addition of the drums makes the musical expression too clear and takes away from the ambiguity and unrest felt when the musical role of each instrument is not performed strictly to tradition.

⁵⁹ Schmuckal, Colleen Christina. “Personal Interview with Fukuhara Kan.” 31 May 2021.

「演奏者も、ですから、古典的な、普通吹いている感じがないところだから、あ、そうじゃなくてこっちというようになちょっと吹辛い感じになるんですけど。これがまた演奏する方としては面白いと思うところもあります」(*Ensōsha mo, desukara, koten-tekina, futsū fuiteiru kanji ga nai tokoro dakara, a, sōjyanakute kocchi toiu yōna chotto fukitsurai kanji ni narun desukedo. Kore ga mata ensōsuru kata toshite wa omoshiroi na to omou na tokoro mo arimasu*)

⁶⁰ Hanayanagi Saehide Recital on October 13th, 2020, at The National Theatre

“Hanayanagi Saehide Recital (nihon buyō) *Mizu no En* (Midaregami Yoruno Amigasa)” YouTube, YouTube, 15 Oct. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fero7LrSTrw&t=1307s.

Figure 7: Traditional (right and middle) and Mizu no En (left) nōkan patterns

Analysis: Horizontal Movement through “Contrasting Sounds”

Traditionally, shamisen music doesn't utilise the Western art musical concept of harmonic development or functional chords movement to develop the music *horizontally*. Instead, the focus is on “contrasting sounds” or the combination of pitches whose timbres, tuning, or performance techniques greatly contrast side by side to develop the music *vertically*. These contrasting sounds are formed from the combination of two, or more, contrasting timbral instruments within the same ensemble or a sequence of tones using intentional differing timbral performance techniques. No instrument of the Edo period (1603–1867) is better equipped to perform contrasting sounds than the shamisen itself. This is because each of the three strings on shamisen were constructed to express different “sounding” timbres: 1st, lowest, string has a harmonic buzz (called *sawari*), 2nd, middle, string is muted due to the sound missing parts of the harmonic overtone series, and the 3rd, highest, string is bright, clear, and most expressive. Each of the three strings sound like individual instruments whose sounds don't naturally blend. Furthermore, the limited musical range of each string overlaps greatly with the others [Fig. 1]. This overlap is not just used to play fast passages more effectively, but it gives the

shamisen performer the freedom to choose pitches based on the desired sound. Having three different sounding strings let's shamisen expertly express *contrasting sounds*, while being limited when expressing conventional *harmony*.

However, traditionally the shamisen does play “simultaneously sounding tones” to both contrast with a single sounding tone and to add more volume to the instrumental sound. These simultaneously sounding tones don't horizontally function the same as Western art musical chords or harmony, but still retain the role of tension and release for vertical contrasting motion. However, Nakajima takes this vertical traditional concept and adds to it a horizontal theoretical concept.

For example, in section one [Notation 1], simultaneous tones ① are used to pull the music forward by rocking between moments of dissonance and consonance sounds. Because *Mizu no En* starts with a shinobue solo followed by a shamisen solo, the overall tuning or “tonic” pitch is unclear until the first consonant simultaneous tones: “37” on 2nd and 3rd strings [Fig. 4].⁶¹ The voice then enters and continues with the shamisen until the shamisen plays new simultaneous tones: “36” on open 2nd and 3rd strings. Lowering the top pitch “7” down a major 2nd to pitch “6” takes away the “37” perfect fifth relationship and instead makes the “36” a perfect fourth relationship. However, due to the shamisen's internal conflicting timbre, this perfect fourth sounds more dissonant than a typical Western perfect fourth consonant sound, thus the “36” simultaneous tones are labelled as “dissonance” here. Following its dissonant function, the music quickly returns to the “37” consonant simultaneous tones.

Throughout all of *Mizu no En*, these consonant, dissonant, and subdominant simultaneous tones are used to move the music forward. In contrast, sections without clear simultaneous tonal movement become highlighted as a contrasting musical and emotional pause (see section four in Notation 3). In this way, Nakajima is using inherently traditional simultaneous tones to both move and stop the music's forward horizontal momentum in a modern way. Nakajima also develops the music in a modern way through repeating motifs. Traditionally, Nagauta music doesn't generally repeat musical lines within the same piece: instead utilising the citation of traditional patterns from prior famous pieces or cadential patterns as cues to the musical structure. However, *Mizu no En* purposely uses repeating motifs ② to either deepen the meaning of the text, move the music forward horizontally, or to create a tense pause. This can be observed throughout *Mizu no En*.

Lastly, *Mizu no En* presents a surprising use of traditionally standardised patterns and techniques. For example, the tuning change [Notation 1 and 2] from *sansagari* to *niagari* [Fig. 5] has the traditional role of creating new contrasting sounds and the modern role of making the piece's emotion feel more ambiguous and unbalanced. *Mizu no En* starts

⁶¹ The tuning of *sansagari*'s “7” pitch is not the open 3rd string: the open strings on the 2nd and 3rd string are “36”. However, “37” sounds more consonant than “36” because there is less timbral interference.

in the tuning of *sansagari*, an irresolute sounding tuning since the 1st and 3rd strings are not a perfect octave apart, emphasising the sad, lonely emotion of this piece. This tuning is then changed to *niagari*, a typically cheerful, vibrant, resolute sounding tuning with the perfect octave between the 1st string and 3rd string and a perfect fifth between the 1st and 2nd string. However, to go from *sansagari* to *niagari*, the 1st string peg, the base note, is physically tuned down, creating an inherently dark, unstable *niagari* sound. This unstable sound come from the base tuning string being physically looser making the overall tuning unstable. Furthermore, dropping down the foundation pitch of the overall tonal and timbral colour creates audible confusion as it takes time to audibly readjust to the new tuning's pitches.

The end of the piece best exemplifies Nakajima's masterful technique of combining all the above compositional methods. The rhythmically faster section four [Notation 3] has the shamisen, voice and fue playing more traditional patterns: the fue's melody based off the shamisen's line and the voice singing in between. However, the relatively aggressive shamisen playing, using rhythmically faster patterns and the upstroke *sukui* technique ㉗, is pitted against the more lyrically long vocal and fue melody. This holds the music back until section five's *ainote* [Notation 4]. This shamisen-only duet *ainote* is rhythmically the fastest and most aggressive part of the composition, emphasising off-beat ㉘ simultaneous tones. The *ainote* seems to try to fulfill its traditional role of climatically building up the music to the final cadence, *dangire* [Notation 4]. However, this forward momentum is stopped by a sudden suspension of time on the *nōkan*'s high “㉙ (*hi*)” tone.

A *nōkan*'s ㉙ (*hi*) ㉘, the highest, most piercing and characteristic tone of the instrument, is traditionally used to strongly emphasise the musical peak, or signal the sudden change in the modal, tonal, or rhythmic passage. However, in *Mizu no En*, the *nōkan*'s ㉙ (*hi*) only creates a slight musical hesitation, failing to transition from, or emphasise the peak of, the quick, rushing shamisen musical line that continues forward until the unconventional *nagashi* pattern that finally dissipates the forward momentum. This is because the ㉙ (*hi*) in *Mizu no En* might signify the bewildering moment the Taira plunge into the thrashing water.⁶² Using repeating ㉙ (*hi*) tones to represent violent waves is actually observed in a lot of traditional pieces. However the timing of this single ㉙ (*hi*)⁶³ makes it feel more like a sudden gasp of air before everything rushes out of control than the climatic peak of waves hitting rocks.

From here it would only be natural for the audience to expect the music to transition into the final, dramatic *dangire* cadential pattern. Traditionally, the *dangire* [Fig. 8] cadential

⁶² Schmuckal, Colleen Christina. “Personal Interview with Fukuhara Kan.” 31 May 2021.

⁶³ Older recordings of *Mizu no En* (including the 1998 CD) has the *nōkan* play a setup of patterns before the ㉙ (*hi*) (which can be observed in the handwritten notation). However, newer recordings (including the 2011 CD) take away this *nōkan* setup and only the ㉙ (*hi*) is heard, emphasising the suddenness of this ㉙ (*hi*) sound and moment.

Traditional Dangire

イヤア-天 (ten) i.Ya-
 オヒヤ-リヤ-リ O.hya - Ri.ya - Ri.
 ヒヒヨ-ル-リ- Hi.hyo - Ru - Ri -
 ヒ (ten) Hi

Introduction
 Conclusion

#47 shan

Mizu no En's Dangire (with traditional nōkan cues)

Yukuemo- Shira - Zu 行く方も 知らず (オヒヤ-リヤ-リ)
 Nari- なり-
 Ke-e-ri け-エ-リ

Introduction
 Conclusion

2- #1- 7 #1- 7 - 5 7 #4
 4- 3- 2 3 0-
 3#4 -
 3#4 - (#4)

#4#4 (shan)

Figure 8: A traditional dangire pattern (above): hayashi (red), nōkan (grey blue) and shamisen (pink): vs the dangire in Mizu no En (below): voice (grey blue), shinobue (orange) and shamisen (pink) with the traditional nōkan (light blue) part included in both for comparison.

figure is led by strong percussive hits from the drums and overpowering *nōkan* sound: the shamisen and voice just adding in a few last notes to end the piece. However, the *dangire* in *Mizu no En* [Fig. 8] begins after a tonally shifting, unconventional⁶⁴ *nagashi* pattern ③: performed on higher pitch with a weaker *hajiki* (left hand, downwards pizzicato) technique that eliminates the prior tonally strong, rhythmic drive while making the transition feel unclear. Here, the voice performs in a mixed, raising and falling spoken *jōruri* style ⑫ to match the frail, plucked (*hajiki*) timbre of the shamisen. This also eradicates any expectation for a traditional *dangire*.

This *dangire* starts with the shamisen playing a short, repeating motif ② to set up the next hauntingly long, wailing vocal solo emphasising the mystery of the “unknown”. This vocal line’s timing and overall motion seems reflective of a typical *nōkan* introduction *dangire* pattern. However, while the *nōkan* is traditionally strong and imposing, the singing here is soft and lofty. Then the voice drops into a low singing style to start the traditional vocalised ending pattern of a *dangire*, with traditional shamisen accompaniment. Here, the *shinobue* performs a melodic pattern ⑬ similar to the typical concluding *nōkan* *dangire* pattern with the elimination of the conclusive high ㄣ (*hi*) pitch. However, like the voice, the *shinobue* is soft and airy in comparison to the more traditional *nōkan*, dismantling the sense of conclusion. In addition, the last simultaneous tones (called “*shan*” ⑮) performed by the shamisen is unison double dissonant “#4#4” pitches, instead of the more traditionally vibrant concluding “#47” pitches for a *niagari* tuning. This dissonant sound is produced by playing the two “#4” pitches on differentiating timbral strings (the lowest 1st string in combination with the open 2nd string) subverting all *dangire* expectations while making this inconclusive ending both audibly surprising and musically satisfying in a modern context.

Conclusion

This is how *Mizu no En* sounds to the ears of Nagauta performers, Japanese traditional dancers and researchers: a hauntingly beautiful pioneering modern composition with a deep musical rhetoric that is connected to its inherited musical history, musical practices and traditional culture. In short, *Mizu no En* is not a typical Nagauta, or even traditional shamisen, composition. Nakajima modernises the music through a complex web of musical practices, historic roles, and deeply developed traditions with new and creative compositional solutions. This analysis shows vertical musical development, through the use of contrasting sounds with traditional patterns and instrumental roles, horizontal musical development, through the modern use of simultaneous sounding tones,

⁶⁴ Its unconventional natural comes from the very short set up before the *nagashi* pattern, and its use of a high, weaker, repeated tone. Furthermore, while a strong *nagashi* is traditionally used to transition and signal the beginning of a conclusive, climatically ending *dangire*, the weakness and suddenness of this *nagashi* pattern makes the listener unsure where the music is going next.

repeating motifs, new instrumental roles, and anticipatory development until the surprising final *dangire* cadential pattern. This piece excites traditional performers because it both challenges them to express and think about music in new ways, while letting their instruments naturally perform how, historically and culturally, they were developed to perform. *Mizu no En* was born naturally, from the performer's point of view, and modernises an inherited tradition, from a composer's point of view, to more effectively resonate with the aesthetics of today's modern Japanese society and audiences without the need to conform to standard Western practices.

Mizu no En is a great example of a long history of modernity⁶⁵ within the Nagauta, and shamisen, musical tradition. This piece is not an extraordinary example within a protected tradition. Instead, it is one example among many performers/composers modernising the musical expression inherent within their tradition. Nakajima's compositional and pioneering legacy has continued through the *Katusuke Nakajima Composition Award*, sponsored by the Japan Traditional Cultures Foundation, which supports new compositions by performers/composers of all Japanese musical backgrounds.⁶⁶

However, due to knowledge transmission limitations and how performers/composers are received in modern music, the reception of *Mizu no En* is limited to those who study and participate within the Nagauta tradition. Bonnie Wade concludes in her book, *Composing Japanese: Musical Modernity*, "'Glocalisation' also makes a space for the engagement of *composers* with the traditional music of Japan – something that is happening not infrequently in the creative work of non-Japanese as well as Japanese composers and is a very modern way of proceeding".⁶⁷ What I hope is for glocalisation to also make a space for engagement of overlooked *performers/composers* within the modern music scene. To do this, researchers and musicians need to be more open to different ways of expressing and analysing a "broader" modern music theory. Accomplishing this would also expand the role of shamisen within modern music from a solely percussively rhythmic instrument to a more nuanced expresser of complex sounds and human emotions. It is my hope that this analysis of *Mizu no En* has revealed new potentials for Japanese traditional instrumental roles and performances within contemporary music when enriched by the ideas and traditions from their own history, further expanding the possibilities for music making worldwide.

⁶⁵ Gluck, Carol. "The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now." *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): "In my view, modernity is not a trope, theory, project, or destination, or if it sometimes seems to be all these things, it is never these things alone. It is instead a condition, historically produced over three centuries around the globe in processes of change that have not ended yet" pg. 676

⁶⁶ Jtcf.jp. 2021. Nakajima Katusuke Sōsakushō (Katusuke Nakajima Composition Award) | Japan Traditional Cultures Foundation. [online] Available at: <<https://jtcf.jp/nakajima>> [Accessed 25 June 2021].

⁶⁷ Wade, Bonnie C. *Composing Japanese Musical Modernity*. University of Chicago Press, 2014. pg. 214

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