

AN ANALYSIS OF THE MUSICAL STYLE AND CONCEPTION OF "MEMO FLORA"

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ABSTRACT: *Takashi Yoshimatsu is a famous neo-romantic composer in modern Japan. He opposes the unmusical modern music and his works have distinctive styles. Based on European classical music, he integrates jazz, rock, modern music, folk music, electronic music and many other genres in his works, which are full of Oriental characteristics at the same time. Piano concerto op. 67 "Memo Flora" was composed in 1997. This piece is dedicated to young Japanese pianist Kyoko Tabe for her excellent performance of a series of piano solo works named "Pleiades Dance". It shares the same tone, the same trilogy, and the same double-pipe arrangement as Mozart's bB major concerto K.595. Based on the western structure, it uses the eastern tone to describe the beautiful characteristics of flowers, birds and spring scenery. Among the numerous works of Yoshimatsu, it is a unique one with romantic, gentle and dreamy style. Each movement is very different from the obscure modern style, but like a kaleidoscope of music, can be said to be one of Yoshimatsu's best masterpieces.*

KEYWORDS: contemporary music, Japanese composer, neo-romantic style, analyse

INRODUCTION

Biography of the composer

Takashi Yoshimatsu, born in Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan in 1953, is regarded as one of the representative composers of Japanese contemporary music. However, he was not a music major himself. When he was studying in the engineering department of Keio university, he changed his goal to be a symphony composer because of his love for classical music. Having briefly studied under Teizo Matsumura, his debuted piano solo "To the companion star of Sirius" in 1974, which was heavily influenced by Matsumura and modern musical style. He was then introduced to the Tokyo University of Arts to study harmony and counterpoint, but he gave up after a few months. Yoshimatsu dropped out of the university in March 1974 and began to learn composition by himself. He was rejected nearly 20 times in various composition competitions until 1980, when "Dorian" for the orchestra was selected for the symphonic revitalization consortium composition award. In 1981, "Threnody to Toki" was premiered at the modern music exhibition, which was highly praised and became his most famous work. From then on, he truly entered the ranks of famous young Japanese composers. But soon he began to reject atonal music and turned his style of composition into a neo-romantic style. Later, with symphonic works as the center, he composed six symphonies and twelve concertos, a series of chamber music works with the theme of birds, and piano solo works represented by the "Pleiades

Dances". In addition, he also published guitar music, traditional Japanese music, stage music and many other types of pieces. His symbolic mustache was the result of three months of hard work in his room on Symphony NO.3 Op.75. After that he decided to keep it that way.

In 1998 he became a contract artist for CAHNDOS in the UK and recorded and published all his symphonies. Later, he provided music for some Japanese animation, film and drama works, such as Astro Boy (2003) and NHK drama Taira no Kiyomori (2012), which were well received by the public. Yoshimatsu also enjoys writing music reviews and essays, and is active as a radio music commentator and critic. He is the author of several books, including "The introduction to classical music" series and his autobiography, "Composing is like a bird". On March 20, 2013, he held the "the sound of birds exhibition", a concert of 60 years from his fantastic debut to the opera "Taira no Kiyomori" at the Tokyo opera house, which was highly praised.

Takashi Yoshimatsu's thoughts on musical aesthetics

The objection to unmusical modern music

Although Takashi Yoshimatsu was born in the modern era, and his debut composition was also in the modern genre, he gradually started to oppose the modern style. He advocates "new lyricism of the end of the century" and objects to atonal music. Yoshimatsu believes that atonal music had contaminated the classical music world of the 20th century after Arnold Schoenberg. It is indeed a new way of thinking, but it is also as terrifying as nuclear bombs, mass murder and destruction of nature. He feels he must dispel this nightmare and establish a new musical concept in the 21st century. Therefore, Takashi Yoshimatsu's works are still built on the theoretical system of classical music, retaining the important position of tonality. On this basis, modern harmonic elements, other musical genres and free musical thoughts are added, which makes the two completely independent systems of classical and modern integrate with each other, forming a new unique musical style.

The fusion of different music styles

Takashi Yoshimatsu is a wide-ranging composer. In addition to classical music, he is also fascinated by progressive rock bands such as Pinkfloyd, Yes and EL&P. Progressive rock is a continuation and development of all musical forms of the past (classical, jazz, modern, folk music, etc.), so it is highly musical. He used to play in rock bands as a keyboard player. He also formed a band called Beyond and tried to create works that combined traditional Japanese music with jazz, rock and modern music. Although he did not continue to write rock music, he still likes to incorporate these styles into his work. For example, the famous work "Fuzzy Bird Sonata" for saxophone and piano has an obvious jazz style, and the six symphonies often show the characteristics of other music genres. During the writing of the third symphony, Takashi Yoshimatsu said that a symphony is "a sound structure with great mass and energy woven by the acoustic synthesis system of an orchestra" and "an emotional complex that gathers the musical

memory of the composer together". Just as the various emotions in the human heart are blended together, "the third symphony is the huge mixed memories of western classical music, Oriental music, rock, jazz, folk music, avant-garde, computer art and so on in my body".

Love of nature and respect for freedom

Takashi Yoshimatsu loves nature, especially birds. He considers them to be his musical teachers. He wrote many pieces of music about birds, such as the famous "Threnody to Toki", "Fuzzy Bird Sonata" for saxophone and piano, the symphony

"Birds and Angels", and the book "Composing is Like a Bird". In Yoshimatsu's eyes, the vibration of the birds' wings when they fly high is so full of rhythm, showing the preciousness and freedom of life. In addition to birds, stars and angels are also important themes frequently used by Takashi Yoshimatsu. These beautiful things in the far sky represent Yoshimatsu's pursuit of freedom and his yearning for perfection.

Treating Sibelius as his teacher

The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, who was expert in writing orchestra and symphonic poems, was Yoshimatsu's most admired master. Most of Sibelius's inspiration came from the natural scenery and human history of Finland, and his musical language was relatively conservative with a romantic style. "There is such wonderful music in the world," Yoshimatsu once said, marveling at Sibelius's music. He treated Sibelius as his teacher and was influenced by his style of composition. On his first trip abroad, he chose Finland and paid his respects at Sibelius's grave on June 21. By coincidence, on the same day the following year, the orchestra played "Dorian" and Yoshimatsu finally became known by the public after so many failures. He thought it was his teacher's blessing.

Variability of the composition style

Takashi Yoshimatsu considers himself a man of many personalities, and this is reflected in his varied style of composition. Take the six symphonies as an example. The first symphony is calm and objective, sounding like someone is looking at the memory fragments of his whole life and the elements that make up the world before the end of his life. In the second symphony, Yoshimatsu becomes a compassionate philosopher who presents an elegy for the Earth. The third symphony is full of contradictions and bursts of energy amid repression and heaviness. The fourth symphony, however, because of "the sudden arrival of the Muse's smile," he wrote an innocent, light, romantic reverie about the wilderness of spring and the toy box. In the fifth symphony, Yoshimatsu looks on coldly at the joys and sorrows of human life, but the sixth symphony is the ode to romance, holiness and freedom from the bottom of his heart. There are not only obvious differences in style between different works, but also varied colors in different part in the same work. Yoshimatsu has a good command of changing beats and tonality, and the musical styles often change frequently in his works. This is

undoubtedly a challenging test for the performer and conductor.

An analysis of Memo Flora

In the spring of 1996, Takashi Yoshimatsu came up with the idea for a beautiful piano concerto with the same tone, the same trilogy, and the same double-pipe arrangement as Mozart's bB major concerto K.595. The writing of "Memo Flora" was completed on December 3 of the following year, and it was premiered by the Japan philharmonic orchestra on February 8, 1998, with Yukio Fujioka as conductor. This piece is dedicated to young Japanese pianist Kyoko Tabé for her excellent performance of "Pleiades Dance", also performed by her. The instruments used are one piano, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets in bB, two bassoons, two trumpets in C, two horns in F, strings and percussion (antique-cymbals, brass wind chimes, triangle, castanets and tambourine).

Memo Flora is a masterpiece of the perfect combination of classicality and modernity, western and eastern traditions. It is based on the pattern and characteristics of western classical music and integrates oriental tonality, romantic harmony and free musical thinking, belonging to the neo-romantic style. The title, which means "a note of flowers," was written on the cover of a notebook by Kenji Miyazawa, Yoshimatsu's favorite poet. In the flower-beds(movements), where to plant what kind of melodic flowers, the score becomes the configuration chart for recording these. This concerto is divided into three movements, maintaining the traditional "fast-slow-fast" mode. The first movement "Flower" is an allegro movement similar to a sonata. It gradually develops from silence to vitality, depicting the growth and blooming of flowers. The pale winter landscape is gradually rendered into the rich colors of spring. The second movement "Petals" is a very quiet and gentle andante, describing the spring breeze blowing gently, the flower trees shaking, falling petals floating on the water and quietly carried to the distance. The third movement "Bloom" is a magnificent and untrammelled allegro, using 4/8 and 5/8 alternating beats, full of vitality, like the sea of flowers under the bright sunshine, strong spring atmosphere is floating with the wind. Each movement is very different from the obscure modern music style, but like a kaleidoscope of music: beautiful, dreamy and rich in variety. It unfolds a picture of a wonderland in the hearts of the audiences, bringing endless amazing and moving emotions, can be said to be one of Yoshimatsu's best masterpieces.

The first movement: Flower The first movement is similar to the sonata form. The music

gradually spreads out from the piano, and the single color of winter gradually become colorful and vibrant. Bars 1 to 14 are the intro of the first movement, 7/4 beat, dominated by solo piano, with a slightly chilly atmosphere set off by faint strings. This part describes the snow is gradually melting and the flower seeds begin to sprout at the end of winter and the beginning of spring. Bars 15 to 23 are the first tonal area of the exposition and the theme melody of the first movement, sounding like a flower bud suddenly bursts out of the ground. Here, Yoshimatsu uses the F tune with oriental color, which is elegant and gentle. Once the piano sounds, it can instantly bring the audience to the far east country where the cherry blossoms are shaking in the wind. The extensive use of ornaments makes this theme more vivid.

Bar 24 to 35 is a development of the theme, with the use of 6/4 and 7/4 alternating beats to enhance the cadence of the melody, and the strings have richer harmonies and warmer colors. Bars 36 to 49 are further variations on the main melody, as if the seedlings grow up and stretch out in the tender warm light of early spring. The texture of the string accompaniment changed, with the quaver accompaniment of the first violin gradually spreading to the viola, the second violin and the cello, from one to seven parts. The piano also develops from single notes to double notes and chords, and the overall acoustics gradually thickens to the first small climax.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled 'piano', consists of five staves. The top staff is the piano part, and the bottom four staves represent string parts. Time signatures are indicated below the piano staff: 6/4, 7/4, 6/4, 7/4, and 6/4. The second system, also labeled 'piano', consists of six staves. The top staff is the piano part, and the bottom five staves represent string parts. Time signatures are indicated below the piano staff: 7/4, 6/4, 7/4, 6/4, 7/4, and 6/4. Dynamics such as 'p.' (piano) and 'f.' (forte) are marked throughout the score.

But the crescendo is followed by a sudden weakening, with *allegro* in bars 50 to 67 in 4/4. The irregular semiquavers on the piano sound like a sudden spring rain. Although the score is not marked with *staccato*, it should be played as bouncing were a skip, like the clear sound of raindrops falling on flowers and leaves. The accompanying strings use alternating patterns of two seventh chords, and the second chord in each group is more dispersed than the first, bringing a sense of breathing that alternates between contraction and expansion, creating an ethereal space for the listener's imagination.

Bars 68 to 71 speed back to *andante* and turn into *g* natural minor, a simple and

The image shows a musical score for piano and strings, covering bars 68 to 71. The piano part is marked 'piano' and features a melodic line with triplets and groups of five, six, and seven notes. The string accompaniment consists of alternating seventh chords. The tempo is marked 'allegro (rit.)' and the key signature is G natural minor.

elegant piano solo passage. triplets, fives, sixes and sevens are alternately used to adjust the density of notes, creating a slow and rapid change in rhythm. The first tone of each group composes the melody, accompanied by strong fluidity, as if the soft spring breeze gently blowing after the rain.

Then there are three short but contrasting passages in succession. Bars 72 to 75 is the second tonal area with intense chords, 4/4 in *bA* major, setting the stage for the climax in recapitulation. Bars 76 to 79 are brief recapitulations of the main theme, in *bD* pentatonic. In bar 80 to 83 the piano solo is arranged for the end, returning to *g* natural minor. The overall atmosphere changes from rigid to soft, from dynamic to static in only twelve bars. The contrast between these three short phrases is striking, bringing a succession of surprises to the audience at the end of the exposition.

Bar 84 heralds the change of music with the crisp sound of the triangle, turning into *F* major, bringing the audience to the development of the first movement. Here Yoshimatsu begins to add wind instruments, making the overall color more warm and lively. The bright timbre of the oboe is the sunlight through the clouds, the continuous trills of the piano sounds like the warm and fresh wind blowing across the field, and the alternation between high and low notes of the flute seems like the sea of flowers swaying in the wind.

The image shows a musical score for bars 96 to 104. The top system includes staves for flute (fl.), oboe (ob.), clarinet (cl.), bassoon (bn.), and horn (tr.). The piano part is shown in a grand staff. The string section (violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and double bass) is shown in a grand staff below. The score is in a key with one flat and a 4/4 time signature. The piano part features a descending scale in the right hand and a more active bass line. The flute and piano parts are marked with 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte) dynamics.

Bar 96 is a free time part, with piano and flute alternately imitating the song of birds, bringing the joy of the beautiful spring and the revival of lives. Yoshimatsu loves birds very much. He treats birds as his music teacher and his most frequently used subject.

The image shows a musical score for bars 97 to 104. The top system includes staves for flute (fl.), oboe (ob.), clarinet (cl.), bassoon (bn.), and horn (tr.). The piano part is shown in a grand staff. The string section (violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and double bass) is shown in a grand staff below. The score is in a key with one flat and a 4/4 time signature. The piano part features a descending scale in the right hand and a more active bass line. The flute and piano parts are marked with 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte) dynamics. The string section is marked with 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte) dynamics. The score is marked 'Senza Tempo' (Ad libitum).

Bars 97 to 104 are quiet and gentle, dominated by the piano descending scale, like petals falling in the wind. Then comes the alternate representation of the main part and the secondary part, and the first movement turns into a climax. The deputy division uses the 5/8 and 6/8 alternating beats, with passion and power, highlighting the strong sense of rhythm, showing the vitality of spring, the whole world is painted with colorful colors by flowers. After a quiet reappearance of bars 97 to 104 and bars 68 to 71 played by piano, the main theme comes back in bar 185, which gradually leading to the reenactment of the elements in each part of the first movement, sounding like flowers

with different colors blooming and competing with each other. The melody of each voice part appears alternately with the feeling of polyphonic music. During the performance of this cadenza, extra attention should be paid to control the volume of each part, so as to highlight the main melody of each part in turn while maintaining the overall sound effect abundant but clear. Then the theme melody is drawn out among the numerous colors, gently fade into the ending preparation.

The last two bars as an epilogue sound a little bit abrupt at first, but it is easy to understand if we imagine the rapid bloom of a flower in a time-lapse documentary.

The image shows a musical score for a cadenza section. It consists of several staves. The top staves are for voices, with dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'. The bottom staves are for piano accompaniment, with dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'. There is a '2 TEMPO' instruction in the middle of the score. The score ends with a double bar line and a final chord.

The beauty of spring is hidden in every close-up.

The second movement: Petals

The second movement is quiet and beautiful andante, the melody voice is basically played by the piano. This movement depicts falling petals drifting to the distance with the slow flow of water, with a little pity and sadness. Bars 1 to 18 are three repetitions

The image shows a musical score for the second movement 'Petals'. It consists of several staves. The top staves are for voices, with dynamic markings like 'p' and 'pp'. The bottom staves are for piano accompaniment, with dynamic markings like 'p' and 'pp'. There is a 'Tempo ad lib.' instruction in the middle of the score. The score ends with a double bar line and a final chord.

of the theme melody, 3/4 beat in g natural minor. The dialog between piano and strings sets the atmosphere for silence and sorrow. Then the composer writes scattered notes for piano to describe the falling blossoms. In bar 35 to 40, the timbre of wind chimes is fresh and tranquil, like a breeze blowing through the flower trees. The mode of strings accompaniment here is similar to bars 50 to 67 in the first movement, bringing a sense of breathing that alternates between contraction and expansion. Bar 41 shares the same musical thought with bar 96 in the first movement, imitating the song of birds with tremolos of the piano and overtones of the violin in free beats.

After a short reappearance of the theme melody, here comes a melodic reenactment of bar 97 to 104 in the first movement. The flowing piano is like a babbling stream, and the violin solo is added in bars 58 to 63 to make it more lyrical and poetic. Bars 78 to 93 speed up suddenly to allegro, turning the tune to D major. The syncopation in accompaniment part lightened the atmosphere that had always been serene and soulful, as if the water were suddenly rushing and the petals spinning down the river. Then he added the strings accompaniment and made further development, pushing the music to the climax of the second movement. The composer innovatively wrote a short and sweet waltz in 5/4 beats in bars 136 to 143, which made the waltz more lively and rhythmic than traditional waltzes. Yoshimatsu loves to create rhythmic variations, and this distinctive 5/4 waltz also appeared in the second movement of his fourth symphony.

The image shows a musical score for a section of a concerto. It consists of three staves: piano (pp), violin, and strings. The piano part features a melodic line with grace notes and a dynamic marking of *pp*. The violin part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The strings part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *p*. The tempo is marked "Tempo di Waltz (♩ = 120)" and the time signature is 5/4. The score is for bars 136 to 143.

The 144 to 164 bars are the sections that have the most variation in tempo of the whole concerto. Each bar is a different beat, which is irregular at first sight, but it is not difficult to find that it is in line with the pianist Kyoko Tabe's birthday, March 26, 1967. It must be said that Takashi Yoshimatsu is a very careful composer. It stabilizes on the 6/8 beat from bar 165 till the end.

The image shows a musical score for piano. The top staff is the piano part, marked 'piano' and 'p'. Below it, there are five staves for strings (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass). The score includes a variety of time signatures: 1/8, 9/8, 6/8, 7/8, 3/8, 2/8, 6/8, 1/8, 9/8, and 6/8. The tempo is marked 'andante' with a metronome marking of quarter note = 80. The score is divided into two systems, with bar numbers 140 and 160 indicated at the bottom.

• The third movement: Bloom

The third movement is a magnificent rondo allegro, using 4/8+5/8 alternate beats to depict the colorful spring with flowers in full bloom and vitality. Its overall structure is as follows:

Bar 1 to 3	Introduction	Bar 100 to 107	Theme(strings+woodwinds)
Bar 4 to 19	Theme(piano)	Bar 108 to 115	Episode D
Bar 20 to 27	Episode A	Bar 116 to 123	Theme(piano)
Bar 28 to 35	Theme(strings)	Bar 124 to 131	Episode E
Bar 36 to 43	Episode B	Bar 132 to 147	Theme(piano+woodwinds)
Bar 44 to 59	Theme(strings)	Bar 148 to 159	piano solo
Bar 60 to 67	Episode B'	Bar 160 to 167	Theme(piano)
Bar 68 to 83	Episode C	Bar 168 to 183	Episode F
Bar 84 to 91	Theme(woodwinds)	Bar 184 to 199	Theme(trumpet)
Bar 92 to 99	Episode A	Bar 200 to 217	Episode E'
		Bar 218 to 221	Coda

The first three bars are the introduction of the third movement played by the piano and woodwind ensemble. This three bars use 5/8, 6/8 and 7/8 beats respectively, and the length gradually increases, which has a strong sense of introduction and makes the audience more curious about the future development. Bars 4 to 19 are the main theme played by piano, g minor, based on the deformed triplet rhythm. Yoshimatsu combines the time value of the first two notes of the triplet to create a syncopated uneven movement, using a large number of repeated notes to increase the bounce and strength of the theme, implying the exuberant vitality of spring. The main part appeared eight times in the third movement, each time with a different arrangement mode, using different timbre to play the main melody: piano, strings, strings, woodwinds, strings and woodwinds, piano and woodwinds, piano, trumpet. At the same time, tonality and accompaniment pattern are also changing, so that each appearance of the main part brings a completely different experience to the audience, as if the kaleidoscope of music continues to bring surprise. It is worth mentioning that at the end of almost every reappearance of the main part there is a crescendo of the tambourine. Like the wind

chimes in the second movement, the tambourine in the third movement is undoubtedly the finishing touch. Its complicated clear sound is full of vitality, naturally brings the joyful mood to the human, which is very suitable for the decoration on a painting of the colorful spring.

Episode A is a further variation of the main melody. As the first episode, this arrangement is relatively conservative, making the transition from the main theme to the episode very natural, so as not to make the audience feel abrupt at the beginning of the movement. At the same time, in order to keep the sense of fresh listening, the piano here is very bouncing, and the author adds the tambourine as accompaniment to make it more lively. Episode B is a continuous triplet of piano, flute and oboe, bA major, sounding like spring winds sweeping across the field. Episode B' is enriched on the basis of the episode B. The piano is changed into two parts, the triplet of the wind

instruments is played by the clarinet, and the oboe with a brighter tone plays the hidden melody. The episode C is a reproduction and development of the musical thought of the episode A and B. Then here comes the development of episode A, with a longer span between the notes, making the whole phrase more bouncing. Episode D in bA major is a dialogue between piano chords and trumpets, two powerful timbres that alternate to form a complete melody. Episode G is the first small climax in Bb major. The main melody is composed for violin, oboe, clarinet and bassoon ensemble, the continuous triplet of piano, viola and cello constitutes a strong accompaniment, and the active flute becomes the delicate decoration. The quiet piano solo at bar 148 to 159 has a sense of the second movement. Yoshimatsu even makes bars 68 to 71 of the first movement to reappear here, as if this part was a memory before the end of the last revel. After getting rid of the bondage of old memories and sad emotions, we finally dance freely in the wonderful spring scenery. The ensemble of all instruments in episode F and episode E' sounds like thousands of flowers in full bloom and the whole piece ends in a riot of color.

CONCLUSION

"Memo Flora" is perhaps not the most famous one of Takashi Yoshimatsu's many masterpieces, but it combines classical music and modern music, western style and oriental tone, can be said to be one of the representative works of Japanese neo-romantic style. It is traditional but not conservative, romantic but not conventional, modern but not obscure, using exquisite music thought and beautiful music style to create a fantasy, colorful wonderland for the audience. The analysis of this concerto can help to the study of the inheritance and development of neo-romantic style in Japan.

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