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Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation

The Application of Maurice Ravel and Toru Takemitsu's Techniques of Musical Composition to the Conception and Direction of Experimental Digital Cinema

『モーリス・ラヴェルと武満徹の音楽構成技法の
実験デジタルシネマ演出概念への適用』

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Creation and Expression of the Screen Image I

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This dissertation aims to expand existing cinematic expression by applying musical notation, tonal systems, and the forms and structures of musical composition techniques to the conception and direction of digital cinema. My objective is to apply the construction and techniques of Maurice Ravel and Toru Takemitsu's music composition to the practice of digital cinema, to push the boundaries of story telling, rhythm and mise-en-scene structure in current cinematic conventions.

Painter Paul Klee and animator John Whitney derived their inspiration from music and its construction. Their visual and video artworks such as "Ancient Harmony" or "Digital Harmony" could be appreciated as the visualization of music. The film pioneer Sergei Eisenstein pioneered montage theory in silent films practice through films such as "Battleship Potemkin" and remarked that what connects music and narrative has to be the rhythm. Although we share a common engagement with music and visuals, my research is neither a visualization of Toru Takemitsu and Maurice Ravel's music, nor a revision of the montage theory, but with a focus to apply the music composition techniques in digital cinema production.

How narrative is constructed in filmmaking closely resembles how music is written. But in music, the 11th-century invention of musical notation allowed composers to edit their musical ideas on parchment, producing sophisticated emotional effects when played. It greatly contributes to the ability to identify and visualize a system of patterned relationships: pitch and melody, major and minor scales, polyphony and counterpoint, meter and tempo, sonata form and symphony, motif and sequence, theme, variation and improvisation. However, there is no such a visual display method to express emotion and narrative in cinema that can be used as a composer does notation. As a result, my research is focused on other ways to conceptualize and apply the techniques of musical composition to filmmaking. Digital editing application layouts mirror how music is written. I suggest that the application of notation to digital editing allows one to structure and organize reality into a cinematic experience visually.

At the same time, the music of the early 20th century French Impressionist composer Maurice Ravel and the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu reflect the confluence of East and West in their original use of polytonal motifs, the pentatonic scale and the jazz idiom; their compositions elucidate the relationship between music, poetry, imagery and nature; and they were avant-garde and cinematic. Toru Takemitsu invented his composition technique by confronting the sound of silence, the concept of Ma, sometimes referred to as negative space, in Eastern music. Maurice Ravel is considered one of the

greatest French Impressionist composers; his work is permeated with rhythm and melodies reflecting the choreographic aspects of Spanish dance.

This dissertation has the purpose and intention to offer and assess my experimental films WATER, THIEF and TAKAO DANCER in order to examine whether it is effective for expression in digital cinema to apply Toru Takemitsu and Maurice Ravel's composition techniques, reconciled with methods of contemporary digital cinema.

Chapter 1 describes the aim and summary of the dissertation. It leads to the presumption that music composition techniques can be useful tools to conceive and direct film expression.

Chapter 2 discusses three concepts as the common sources from which both music and film derive.

1. The common concept of time and space in music and film.
2. How this concept of time and space influences the perception of form.
3. How I put this discovery into filmmaking practice.

Integrating these three primary concerns is the principal theme of my research.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of this study and experimental filmmaking according to it. At the turn of the 20th century, poets, artists, musicians and filmmakers flocked together beyond their fields in search of new means of expression, exchanging inspiration and ideas. Crossing the line between sounds and colors, paintings and symphonies, or poetry and music, it is not unusual for filmmakers to exploit musical elements, like melody, harmony and tempo, as their grammatical components. So, I choose as a main sample the musical structure of the early 20th century French Impressionist composer Maurice Ravel and the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu in relation to film conventions, to explain the reason why I apply their music composition techniques to my filmmaking. As a result, Chapters 4 through 6 describe how I came to make cinema experiments WATER (2010), THIEF (2011), and TAKAO DANCER (2013) as trials of this application.

Chapter 4 describes the application of composition techniques to the direction and conception of digital cinema in the making of the experimental 15-minute film WATER (2010).

This film exploits the sonata form and poly-rhythmic and polytonal motifs used by the French Impressionist composer Maurice Ravel in his work "Ondine" ("water sprite", in English). In "Ondine", Bertrand's poem serves as the blueprint for Ravel's music; the music is considered the narrative. In my

film WATER, the screenplay serves the same function as Bertrand's poem does for Ravel, as a blueprint from which I derive the narrative film. WATER focuses on an attempt to study very deeply and carefully the essence of music, to explore, to create new modern forms derived from the same object of inspiration: water.

Chapter 5 describes the application of composition techniques to the direction and conception of digital cinema in the making of the experimental 50-minute film THIEF (2011).

The composer Toru Takemitsu states that "life itself has no boundary between reality and fiction" and his music is "to be the vehicle for his continuing reflections on human existence". THIEF reflects Takemitsu's Asiatic values, cultural consciousness, and morality as well as the significance of Takemitsu's Asiatic composing structure, expanding the imagination from a single sound source and monotone to a symphony. The composition techniques and directorial conception of music are applied to cinematic expression in THIEF, through such themes as "fiction and reality" and "life and rehearsal". In addition, Takemitsu developed his musical mode from jazz: Improvisation as a drive for composition as well as the concept of the cyclic-time motif in a one theme and variations structure. THIEF applied these techniques to the directorial conception, and the process is detailed here.

Chapter 6 examines the reciprocal influence of the East and the West, resulting in the 100-minute fiction feature TAKAO DANCER (2013) with the previous two cinema experiments as a base.

It notes that TAKAO DANCER is an extension of WATER, deepening the digital synthesis techniques used in the latter, yet it also shares the fundamental human element in THIEF as a musical harmony, and adds more of the aesthetics and spontaneity of expression in jazz, which both composers Maurice Ravel and Toru Takemitsu were inspired by.

The cinematic expression of emotional complexities has been inspired by Maurice Ravel's "La Valse". The cinematic experience of time as incarnation when future plunges into past and the practice of constructing multiple meanings into one theme has been the implication of Toru Takemitsu's music composition techniques.

Chapter 7 presents the conclusion of my research, achievements and feedback from international film festivals, as well as and plans for applying these research findings to future productions.