

TAKEMITSU

A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden **Spirit Garden • Dreamtime**

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra • Marin Alsop



Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996)

Spirit Garden · Solitude Sonore · Three Film Scores · Dreamtime A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden

Toru Takemitsu was the first Japanese composer to gain international status, creating in his compositions a remarkable fusion between Western music and the philosophies, sensibilities and culture of his country, as well as, on occasions, its music. During his lifetime his music was performed around the world; posthumously he is regarded as one of the most important composers of the second half of the twentieth century. The works on this CD cover Takemitsu's career from the early *Solitude Sonore* to *Spirit Garden* composed two years before his death.

Largely self taught, Takemitsu's starting points were Debussy, Stravinsky, Berg and Messiaen; he was also influenced by the post-World War II avant-garde such as Boulez, and by his friends John Cage and Morton Feldman. He first came to prominence with *Requiem* for strings (1957), which Stravinsky hailed as a masterwork. The musical traditions of his country became important in the 1960s with compositions such as *November Steps* (1967), a concerto-like work for the Japanese instruments, the biwa and shakuhachi and orchestra, and he also wrote for Japanese instruments alone, for instance *In an Autumn Garden* (1973) for gagaku orchestra. In his later years his music became more tonal as his affinities turned again to the early twentieth-century French composers who had inspired him in his youth.

Takemitsu had a wonderful ear for orchestral colour. His scores, frequently cast in a single span, are refined, sensuous and harmonically rich, yet at the same time delicate with many pauses for silence, sometimes brief, sometimes lengthy, but all closely calculated to create the contemplative, dream-like spaciousness and stillness that characterises his art. He said of himself that he probably belonged to a type of composer for whom melody was a crucial aspect to his music: 'I am

old fashioned', he wrote, 'What I desire to reach through the communication of melody is beyond the pleasure and sorrow experienced during this continuation. Yet I cannot simply call that for which I reach eternity.' His inspiration came from many different sources as far apart as Australian aboriginal myths to images from film and James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*. The natural world was especially important to him, for example, he was fascinated by different aspects of water as in *riverrun* (1984), *Rain Coming* (1982) and *Vers, l'arc-en-ciel, Palma* (1984). In *Tree Line* (1988) the inspiration came from a row of acacia trees near his mountain home, and images from dreams led to one of his finest orchestral works, *A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden* (1977). As a man he was a polymath who loved cinema, had an encyclopaedic knowledge of Western pop music and wrote a detective novel.

Takemitsu was fond of using the metaphor of walking around a Japanese formal garden for the process of listening to his works: 'I love gardens', he said, 'they do not reject people. There one can walk freely, pause to view the entire garden, or gaze at a single tree, plant, rock and sand snow: changes, constant changes.' Thus the wisps of melodies, chords and instrumental textures may be likened to the carefully placed plants, trees, stones and rocks of the garden, which can be viewed from different positions, in close-up or from a distance, in ever-changing vistas and perspectives.

Takemitsu described *Spirit Garden* (1994) as 'my experiment with and on-going inquiry into orchestral colour and melody'. It was commissioned by the Hida Furukawa International Music Festival and was first performed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Hiroshi Wakasugi, in Tokyo

on 14th July 1994. The title he said was 'a metaphor for the sacred ground of the festival's home, Furukawachō, in Gifu.' In this work the music derives from a twelve-note-row, from which are created three chords of four notes each. These chords, themselves ever-changing in colour, are analogous to the soil out of which Takemitsu 'grows' the 'objects of sound placed about the garden'. These too are all derived from the basic raw material of the twelve-note-row, and 'change their forms by means of the changes in the viewpoint that is moving around the garden.' Takemitsu stated firmly that *Spirit Garden* was not programme music; nevertheless, the music overall has a mysterious, sacred and ritualistic quality that reflects both the title and the inspiration behind it.

Even though *Solitude Sonore* (1958) is an early work, it bears the stamp of Takemitsu's distinctive personality. It was first performed by the NHK Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Hiroyuki Iwaki, in a radio broadcast on 2nd November 1958. Earlier that year Takemitsu had listened to the Nirvana Symphony by Toshiro Mayuzumi which had moved him deeply, so much so that he determined to compose his own creative response to Mayuzumi's work. The latter resonates to the sounds of bells, a feature which fascinated Takemitsu who commented that 'Bells strike the hour, congratulate us and mourn', and he absorbed this metaphor into his own work, so that the music may be heard as the outward manifestation of the sounding bell within the composer himself. The work has very limited material and is built around the evocation of the ringing bell in the opening bars. What is obvious, even at this early stage in his career, is Takemitsu's brilliant command of orchestral colour.

Takemitsu's passion for movies resulted in him watching, by his own account, some 250 films each year and he wrote two books on the cinema. He composed over ninety film scores including a collaboration with the renowned director Akira Kurosawa on *Ran* (1985), a powerful Japanese version of *King Lear*. In *Three Film Scores* (1994-5), for string orchestra, Takemitsu

reworked music from the scores to *Jose Torres* (1959), *Black Rain* (1989) and *Face of Another* (1966). William Boughton conducting the English String Orchestra, gave the première at CineMusic Festival, Gstaad, on 9th March 1995. The first 'score' entitled *Music of Training and Rest* has a jazzy, blues-like character, whilst the following *Funeral Music* is solemn and intense. *Waltz* completes the trilogy: on face value it seems relaxed and urbane, but its minor key suggests darker undertones.

Dreamtime (1981), commissioned by the Nederlands Dans Theater, was first performed as a staged work with choreography by Jiri Kylian. Its first concert performance was given by the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Hiroyuki Iwaki, on 27th June 1982. It forms part of what Takemitsu called his 'Dream and Number' series, and he recalled that at the time of the work's composition he was intensely pre-occupied by 'dreamtime', the Aboriginal myth, although this is not specifically expressed as such in the work. Instead, the composer wrote, 'Just as a dream, for all its vividness of detail, points to an unanticipated, unreal whole, so in this work short episodes hang suspended in seeming incoherency to form a musical whole. The subtle variations in rhythm and changes in tempo only serve to emphasise the sensation of floating in the music.'

The metaphor of both dreams and gardens as applicable to Takemitsu's music is particularly relevant to *A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden* (1977), a commission from the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, which gave the première on 30th November 1977, conducted by Edo de Waart. It is one of Takemitsu's finest achievements and has become one of his most performed works. He explained that it arose from a dream, which may have been connected to a photograph he had seen earlier in the day of the artist Marcel Duchamps, who had cut his hair in the 'form of a star-shaped garden'. Takemitsu described the work as a 'shifting panorama of scenes in which the main motif - introduced by the oboe and representing the so-called

“Flock” – descends into the harmonious tone-field called the ‘Pentagonal Garden’, created mainly on the strings’. These two elements are freely interwoven in a series of a dozen or so paragraphs of varying length within a single movement. The musical material is based on the image of the five sides of the pentangle; there are a set of five five-note scales, each one of which can only have five transpositions. Within the work are

silences, passages of randomness, great swells of dissonance, and delicate fragmentary melodies, the quintessential characteristics of one of the supreme composers of colour and texture of the twentieth century.

Andrew Burn

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1893 by Sir Dan Godfrey, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra has had among its Principal Conductors some of the finest musicians in the world, including Rudolf Schwarz, Constantin Silvestri, Sir Charles Groves and Paavo Berglund. More recently Andrew Litton raised the orchestra's standards to new levels, crowning its centenary season with a triumphant début tour of the United States in April 1994, followed by Yakov Kreizberg and débuts at the Musikverein, Vienna, the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and Carnegie Hall, New York. Marin Alsop took up the position in October 2002 and has already helped raise the profile of the BSO still further including concerts at the Philharmonie, Berlin, and in Madrid, Prague, Bruges and a return trip to Vienna. The name of the orchestra is internationally known through over three hundred recordings, including the award-winning Naxos release of Anthony Payne's sketches for Elgar's *Symphony No. 3* (8.554719) with Paul Daniel, the symphonies of Vaughan Williams with the former Chief Guest Conductor Kees Bakels and Paul Daniel, and recordings of works by Philip Glass, Leonard Bernstein, and John Adams under Marin Alsop for Naxos (8.559031), this last chosen as Editor's Choice in the November 2004 issue of *The Gramophone* Magazine. The Naxos BSO/Serebrier Mussorgsky recording (8.557645) reached No.2 in the top twenty Classical Chart, and was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2006. In addition to its recording and international touring commitments, the BSO is dedicated to providing orchestral music across the South and West of Britain, enhanced by a programme of educational and community projects, and makes regular appearances in major festivals and concert-halls throughout the United Kingdom.

Marin Alsop

Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra since 2002, Marin Alsop has been designated the next Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony. She won the Royal Philharmonic Society Conductor of the Year award in 2002 and was named *The Gramophone* magazine's Artist of the Year in 2003. She regularly conducts the Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and Los Angeles Philharmonic, and recent guest engagements include the Boston Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, NDR Hamburg and Munich Philharmonic. Marin Alsop studied at Yale and at the Juilliard School and won the Koussevitzky Conducting Prize at Tanglewood, where she studied with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. Her recordings for Naxos include the Brahms Symphonies and Overtures with the London Philharmonic, the complete orchestral works of Samuel Barber with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Symphony* with the Colorado Symphony. Acclaimed recordings for Naxos with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra include releases of works by Bernstein, John Adams (8.559031), Philip Glass (8.559202) and Bartók (8.557433).

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Now regarded as one of the most important composers of the second half of the twentieth century, Toru Takemitsu was the first Japanese composer to gain international status. The works on this disc cover Takemitsu's career from the early *Solitude Sonore* to *Spirit Garden*, 'my experiment with and on-going inquiry into orchestral colour and melody', composed two years before his death. Inspired by a dream, *A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden* has become one of Takemitsu's most performed works, notable for the interweaving of silences, passages of randomness, surges of dissonance and delicate fragmentary melodies.



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(1930-1996)

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|---|---|--------------|
| 1 | Spirit Garden (1994) | 14:42 |
| 2 | Solitude Sonore (1958) | 6:32 |
| Three Film Scores for String Orchestra (1994/95) | | |
| 3 | Music of Training and Rest (from <i>José Torres</i>) | 5:12 |
| 4 | Funeral Music (from <i>Black Rain</i>) | 5:17 |
| 5 | Waltz (from <i>Face of Another</i>) | 2:26 |
| 6 | Dreamtime (1981) | 14:35 |
| 7 | A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden (1977) | 13:52 |

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra • Marin Alsop

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