EXAMINING FRANÇOIS ROSSÉ’S JAPANESE-INFLUENCED CHAMBER MUSIC WITH SAXOPHONE: HYBRIDITY, ORALITY, AND PRIMITIVISM AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

John Sampen, Advisor

François Rossé (b. 1945) is a Bordeaux-based improvising pianist and prolific composer who has received relatively little scholarly attention. He has written over one hundred works involving the saxophone, and in many cases, featuring the saxophone, yet his music is not widely studied or performed in North America. This document draws attention to Rossé’s music for saxophone by tracing the application of hybridity, orality, and primitivism in *Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa*, and *Orients*, his Japanese-influenced chamber pieces with saxophone. These concepts are presented within relevant discourses, as prominent features of Western art music history and saxophone repertory, and as philosophically motivated practices that form the core of Rossé’s approach to music-making and composition. An overview of relevant Japanese cultural elements, such as history, art forms, aesthetics, and spirituality, provides the necessary groundwork for identifying the manifestations of Japanese influence in *Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa*, and *Orients*. By surveying Rossé’s incorporation of Japanese tradition and spirituality through the tripartite theoretical lens of hybridity, orality, and primitivism, this document offers a valid and useful schema for experiencing and interpreting his music.
This document is dedicated to the memory of my grandmothers, Malka and Marion
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

François Rossé (b. 1945) is a prolific French composer and active improvising pianist who has contributed significantly to the saxophone’s repertoire for over three decades; however, much of his music remains unexplored by North American saxophonists. By publishing through small companies in Paris, Rossé’s works are not always easily accessible outside of Europe. Another factor may be the aesthetic divide between Rossé’s multifaceted approach, which combines non-Western tradition, avant-garde, and polystylism, and the general preference of American saxophonists for pop-derived, post-minimal, neoclassical/neoromantic, and jazz-infused music. Like many iconic postwar composers, Rossé has constructed a unique style, or “language,” that requires mastery and artistic application of extended techniques. By addressing the conceptual challenges his music presents, this document provides saxophonists with a deeper understanding of Rossé and his rich collection of music for saxophone.

Relatively few academic publications have been devoted to the study of Rossé’s music. The co-written book Être Musicale: un Rencontre avec François Rossé by Alain Fayolle and Rossé was published in 1998. It covers the composer’s ideas regarding a vast number of topics, such as improvisation, collaboration, aesthetics, and culture. Musical examples are referenced throughout the book to supplement the discussion. Unfortunately, this valuable book is no longer in print and was never translated from French. Since the publication, Rossé’s collection of saxophone music has grown substantially. Adam Estes’ dissertation, “Unaccompanied Saxophone Music by François Rossé,” is a more readily available source. Published in 2008, the document offers analyses and suggested pedagogical methods of two specific pieces, Le Frêne égaré and Sonates en Arcs. Also included are a biographical sketch and general review of
Rossé’s aesthetic principles. The breadth of Rossé’s oeuvre undoubtedly warrants further scholarly attention.

This document delves into Rossé’s recent contribution to saxophone repertoire by examining his application of hybridity, orality, and primitivism in *Bear’s Trio* (2003), *Nishi Asakusa* (2004), and *Orients* (2002). Introduced within various musical, cultural, and discursive contexts, these concepts serve as a theoretical framework through which Rossé’s Japanese-influenced works can be explored.

Chapter 1 provides general biographical information regarding Rossé’s early musical development, education, and career. Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) is introduced as an influential teacher who continues to impact Rossé’s musical endeavors. A brief overview of Messiaen’s music highlights the various ideas gleaned by Rossé during his studies at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris (CNSM) in the 1970s. This is followed by a discussion of Rossé’s highly philosophical approach to music-making and composition. Lastly, Chapter 1 tells the story of the historic collaboration between Rossé and world-renowned saxophonist and scholar Jean-Marie Londeix (b. 1932) in the late 1970s. Their project resulted in *Le Frêne égaré* (1979) for unaccompanied alto saxophone, Rossé’s first piece for the instrument and an early example of his developing approach.

Chapter 2 begins by contextualizing the term ‘hybridity’ within the discourse of culture theory, and presenting its manifestations throughout Western art music history and within contemporary saxophone repertoire. ‘Hybridity’ refers to the condition of being hybrid, “anything derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of different or incongruous elements.” As both a composer and pianist, Rossé has established himself as a hybridist who

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seamlessly melds material from early Western art music, non-Western sources, and other genres. His activities as a collaborating musician and world traveler continue to reinforce his interest in exploring diverse cultures. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of hybridity within Rossé’s music and more specifically, his works for saxophone.

The following chapter similarly delineates the term ‘orality’ within orality-literacy studies, a branch of culture theory, and its role throughout Western art music history and in the saxophone’s contemporary repertoire. ‘Orality’ refers to that which is orally transmitted rather than written. Orality is involved in various aspects of music-making, such as pedagogical method, facial expression, physical gesture, performance practice, and improvisation. Chapter 3 also demonstrates the prominence of orality across Rossé’s writings and music.

Chapter 4 examines the place of ‘primitivism’ within the discursive narrative of philosophical theory and the concept’s role in ethnological museum history, postcolonial France, modern art, and Western art music history. Primitivism is the notion that a simple way of life is better than a sophisticated one. Chapter 4 summarizes how the meaning and application of the term has changed over time and between contexts. Rossé’s understanding and use of ‘primitivism’ is thoroughly evaluated, along with how the concept is demonstrated in his music for saxophone.

Chapter 5 provides a general review of relevant aspects of Japanese traditions and spirituality. These include a brief history of Japan’s music within the broader context of the country’s history, spirituality, specific art forms, aesthetics, and traditional pedagogy and performance practice. This information lays the groundwork for identifying the Japanese cultural elements at work in *Bear’s Trio*, *Nishi Asakusa*, and *Orients*. 
Finally, Chapter 6 examines these pieces through the theoretical lens of hybridity, orality, and primitivism. *Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa*, and *Orients* are explored through musical examples that reflect these salient concepts. The chapter focuses on how Rossé’s musical approach can be used as a point of departure for experiencing and interpreting his Japanese-influenced works.

An evaluation of these representative pieces will familiarize a larger audience with Rossé’s music and render his music more approachable to saxophonists and musicians previously unfamiliar with his aesthetic.
CHAPTER 1.
FRANÇOIS ROSSÉ
Rossé’s Early Musical Development, Education, and Career

François Rossé was born on June 16, 1945 in Alsace, an eastern region of France along the German border. When they were young, Rossé and his three older siblings were introduced to classical music by their father, a businessman and amateur cornet player. Rossé was ten when his oldest brother began taking piano lessons. Rather than wait his turn, Rossé taught himself to play piano by ear. In 1962, at the age of seventeen, he finally began formal training with a teacher at the Conservatoire de Strasbourg.²

After three years there, Rossé moved to Nancy to pursue an academic path. Although he dreamed of attending the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris (CNSM), he knew that further preparation was necessary in order to gain acceptance. Wishing to receive appropriate training for auditions at the CNSM, Rossé entered the École Normale de Musique in Paris in 1967 where he studied piano until 1969.³ With the help of his teacher, Jeannine Bonjean, he realized that his primary interest in improvisation was not a practical career path on its own. He thus decided to add composition as an area of concentration.⁴

In 1970, Rossé finally began his studies at the CNSM, where he earned Premiers Prixs in harmony, counterpoint, analysis, and fugue in 1976, and composition in 1979. While studying

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³ Ibid., 6-7.
with his primary teachers, Olivier Messiaen and Betsy Jolas, Rossé also enjoyed additional lessons with Ivo Malec and Iannis Xenakis.5

In 1974, Rossé accepted the position of Professor of Analysis at the Conservatoire National de Region de Bordeaux, which he managed to balance while continuing his studies at the CNSM. In 1979, he was finally able to move to Bordeaux, where he continued teaching until 1985. That year, he became Principal Inspector of Music for French Ministry of Culture, a position involving the cultural development of southern France through education, community events, and fundraising. When he left the job in 2000, he resumed teaching near Marseilles at the Aubogne School, a pedagogical institution that prepared musicians for teaching careers. Since his retirement in 2007, Rossé has been concertizing, conducting workshops, and teaching master classes around the world.6

Rossé’s oeuvre of over seven hundred works includes music for solo instrument, duo, trio, quartet, mixed chamber ensemble, choir, large ensemble, theater, video, site-specific community spectacles, and many other combinations.7 The saxophone is involved in more than one hundred of his pieces, and in many cases, as a featured voice. Rossé’s commitment to the instrument and its performers has only grown stronger over the years.

Olivier Messiaen

Studying with Olivier Messiaen strongly impacted Rossé’s compositional career and musical activity, and Rossé continues to treasure the lessons, influences, and inspiration he gained from this master teacher and composer. Consequently, a brief portrait of Messiaen is

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5 Estes, 7.
6 Ibid., 8.
appropriate for examining the origins of Rossé’s compositional philosophy and his interest in hybridity, orality, and primitivism.

Messiaen’s early compositional output demonstrated his inclination toward non-Western music, medieval tonal systems, and orality. His *Esquisse modale* (1927) for organ is an early example foreshadowing his more extensive work with modes of limited transposition. Rather than borrow directly from plainchant melodies, Messiaen developed modern modes with restricted possibilities for transposition. These modes provided a systematic basis for Messiaen’s improvisations and in turn, his composition.\(^8\)

In 1928, Messiaen’s *Le Banquet céleste* for organ was his first published work. It represents his struggle to reconcile the eternal nature of God’s existence with the mortality of human beings, a theme that resonates through much of Messiaen’s music. Pointing to the primitivistic elements in the piece, Christopher Dingle explains, “Rather than the evolution and progression conventionally expected of a musical work, *Le Banquet céleste* just is. At the age of nineteen, Messiaen was challenging the established perception of the function of music and hence the entirety of the Western art music tradition since the Renaissance.”\(^9\) The seemingly simplistic piece involves sustained chords that progress in a non-teleological manner.

In 1945, Messiaen completed an hour-long song cycle titled *Harawi*, one of his only pieces “containing discernible, though modified, quotations from folk music.”\(^10\) It is the first larger work of what became the Tristan triptych, a collection composed in response to his wife’s deteriorating mental health. The final component, *Cinq Rechants* (1948-49) for twelve voices was inspired by Peruvian folklore, which Messiaen paired with “surrealist French and semi-

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\(^9\) Ibid., 12.
\(^10\) Ibid., 103-104.
invented words.”¹¹ His incorporation of folk elements demonstrates primitivistic tendencies in Messiaen’s approach. *Cinq Rechants* also marked the beginning of a new compositional style involving birdsong.

Commissioned by the small orchestral group Domaine Musical, Messiaen combined his love for non-Western culture with his fascination with birdsong to create *Oiseaux exotique* (“Exotic birds”) in 1956. Messiaen layered various harmonies and unpitched percussion sounds with material from recordings of North and South American, Chinese, Malaysian, and Indian birds:

> Just as an artist, however realistic or naturalistic, is seeking to portray their subject in a way that conveys something more than, or at least different from, a photograph, Messiaen’s transcriptions are not attempting the same thing as a recording, however closely the composer tried to come to capturing the notes and timbre of each species.¹²

After completing the piece, he began his next bird-inspired project, *Catalogue d’oiseaux* (1958), a cycle of piano pieces. Featuring birds located in rural areas, such as Sologne, Provence, and Brittany, Messiaen’s *Catalogue d’oiseaux* and his general incorporation of birdsong served as way of navigating the aesthetic demands of the mid-20th century.¹³ Taruskin posits that Messiaen’s attraction to birdsong might have gone beyond the composer’s faith in God. “Not only theological tradition, but many of the world’s ancient folk traditions as well, regarded birds as messengers from the *au-delà.*”¹⁴ Symbolic across cultural and historical boundaries, birdsong is another sign of Messiaen’s primitivism.

His attraction to birdsong was soon coupled with a deep interest in Japanese culture, landscape, and wildlife, to which he was introduced during his month-long trip to Japan in the

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¹¹ Ibid., 109.
¹² Ibid., 145.
summer of 1962. In response to his travels, Messiaen wrote *Sept Haïkaï* for piano and orchestra, a programmatic work depicting the various sites he visited, as well as Japanese birdsong. He also included references to *gagaku*, the imperial court music of Japan. In the central movement, “Gagaku,” Messiaen evokes the style and sound of the *sho*, a Japanese mouth organ, by scoring eight violins to sustain different pitches without vibrato. The combination of Japanese influences with elements from other sources, such as Greek rhythms, French birdsong, and chorales, is evidence of Messiaen’s hybridity.

While in Japan, Messiaen strived to live like the Japanese. He paid close attention to their customs and habits, ate Japanese food, and walked about in slippers rather than shoes. Messiaen soaked in the sounds and sites as fully and deeply as he could when attending performances of traditional Japanese music and theater. He was able to continue learning about Japanese culture over the years through his numerous Japanese students at the CNSM. Their presence and participation in Messiaen’s class also exposed Rossé to Japanese culture, an interest that has since become a strong force in his music and personal life. However, it will shortly become clear that for Rossé, those are one and the same.

**Rossé’s Musical Approach**

As a student in Rossé’s music analysis class in 1980, Jean-Michel Goury made the following observation of Messiaen’s impact on Rossé: “This young man was still impregnated by ‘Messiaenity.’” It is clear from this account that Rossé spoke often of Messiaen in hopes of

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15 Dingle, 159-161.
18 Jean-Michel Goury, email interview with the author, June 26, 2013. All translations are my own in collaboration with Zach Pfau. See Appendix B for original text, 189-190.
passing along what he had learned from his mentor. In his co-written book *Être musicale: Une Rencontre avec François Rossé* of 1998, Rossé briefly mentions his application of Messiaen’s compositional techniques in *Virgile* (1978), one of his first works for piano. References to his former teacher surface regularly in Rossé’s writing.

‘The strength of the work lies in the strength of the musical thought’; these words of Olivier Messiaen resonate permanently…knowing that this thought is certainly musical, it is beyond the scope of crafts, art itself, to negotiate at all levels of human consciousness, it is thus placed at the level of biology, politics, etc…it resists somewhat the strictly cultural foci…it is an impertinence…but it is still relatively simple and uncompromising.¹⁹

Rossé’s path to achieving “strength of musical thought” is through human interaction and meaningful relationships. That is to say, cultural exploration yields musical depth.

Messiaen was not the first to convey such ideas to Rossé, who recalls:

My piano teacher at the Conservatory of Strasbourg, Alphonse Foehr, proceeded from an extrapolated pedagogy that I willingly received in a humanistic dimension. It interlocked, in a tangible way, music, German and French poetry (double Alsatian culture) and gastronomy (the art of taste). Then considered the “classical” studies at the Conservatoire National Supérieure de Musique de Paris, crafts that have taught me the sportsmanship of writing.²⁰

From early in his career, Rossé was aware of these extra-musical aspects and their potential to inform his musical practice.

By the end of his studies with Messiaen at the CNSM, Rossé’s cultural questions and considerations were made manifest in his music. He was primarily concerned with the

¹⁹ The original reads: “‘La force de l'œuvre réside dans la force de la pensée musicales’; ces mots d'Olivier Messiaen résonnent en permanence… à savoir que cette pensée est certes musicale, elle dépasse le cadre de l'artisanat, de l'art lui-même, pour se négocier à tous les niveaux de conscience humaine, elle se place donc au niveau biologique, politique, etc. elle résiste quelque peu aux focalisations strictement culturelles… elle est une impertinence… mais elle est toujours relativement simple et intransigeante.” Fayolle and Rossé, 8.

²⁰ The original reads: “Mon professeur de piano au conservatoire de Strasbourg, Alphonse Foehr, procédait d'une pédagogie extrapolante que je percevais volontiers dans une dimension humaniste. Il imbriquait, de manière tangible, musique, poésie allemande et française (culture double de l'alsacien) et gastronomie (l'art du goût). Puis furent abordées les études "classiques" au conservatoire national supérieur de musique de Paris, artisanat qui m'aura appris la sportivité de l'écriture (qu'exigent les mises en loge).” Fayolle and Rossé, 7.
physicality involved in music-making, the evolution of human nature, the effects of
globalization, and the juxtapositional relationship between orality and literacy.

My reflection of my music is not a musical reflection – it is a general reflection. It is
biological. What is my philosophy? It is not an aesthetic philosophy. It is a moral
question, a philosophical question. For me, it is better to have a contemporary thinking of
music than to think of contemporary music. The question we should ask is – how is the
world today?21

Rossé considers music to be a direct reflection of cultural experience, the condition of today’s
world. He is committed to attaining such insight by meeting people of diverse backgrounds,
learning about different parts of the world, and remaining open and flexible to new artistic
experiences.

Rossé acknowledges the interconnectedness of composition and cultural awareness in his
musical process.

The composer engaged in broader initiatives (who supposes a thought beyond the strict
framework of writing), sometimes at high risk (the gamble stimulating engagement)
seems able to access fertile or potentially fertile land. Creative situations multiply,
opening themselves to professional demands, demands involving music schools, urban
sites, various cultural confrontations (my state as an improvising pianist undoubtedly
facilitates certain exchanges). Mobility in my creative processes provides me a concept of
existence placing man and his craft in osmosis. Creation is thus an integral part of my
biological metabolism in some way. A certain number of experiences have led me to
conduct practically and musically the realization, on stage, to renegotiate forms of very
engaged “pedagogy.”22

He believes that any artist informed by his or her surroundings cannot separate experience from
creativity.

21 Estes, 102.
22 The original reads: “Le compositeur engagé dans des initiatives plus larges (ce qui suppose une pensée
dépassant le strict cadre de l'écriture), parfois à haut risque (le pari stimulant l'engagement) semble pouvoir accéder
à des terres fertiles ou fertilisables. Les situations créatives se multiplient, elles s'ouvrent sur des demandes
professionnelles, des demandes impliquant des écoles de musique, des sites urbains, des confrontations culturelles
diverses (mon état de pianiste improvisateur facilite sans aucun doute certaines rencontres). La mobilité dans mes
démarches créatives m'autorise un concept d'existence mettant en osmose l'homme et son artisanat. La création fait
ainsi intégralement partie de mon métabolisme biologique en quelque sorte. Un certain nombre d'expériences m'ont
amené à conduire pragmatiquement et musicalement la réalisation, de monter sur scène donc, de renégocier des
formes de ‘pédagogie’ très engagées (ce point est abordé dans cet ouvrage).” Fayolle and Rossé, 75.
Rossé’s interaction with his Japanese colleagues at the CNSM is a prominent example of how human relationships have influenced his musical endeavors.

The active starting point of my relationship with Japan was, in particular, the class of Olivier Messiaen (1976-78). Messiaen was in Japan and very much liked the country, the result of which was that many Japanese came to study in his class. I befriended Susumu Yoshida, a Japanese composer living in France, allowing me to go to Japan in 2004 for the first time. Very impressive in its traditions, this country was not without influence in my conception of music and its forms of energy and therefore instrumental from the beginning. I was in Japan a second time recently, returning yesterday from Tokyo, in duo with dancer Shiro Daïmon, master of Nô and Kabuki.23

The last decade of Rossé’s musical activity has been particularly Japanese-influenced, as demonstrated by numerous collaborations with Daïmon and Mieko Miyazaki, in addition to many compositions incorporating elements of traditional Japanese culture.

For Rossé, human connection is the strongest impetus for making music. His interactions and relationships with the people in his life have been integral to his compositional process.

If the analysis and composition classes seemed important to me (in the methodological research and in the sphere of exchange they bring about), I very quickly learned to live outside of channeled circuits; the individual interactions and their extensions have maintained and still intensely maintain my activity as a composer.24

Rossé cites his friendships with Messiaen and Daïmon as fulfilling both personally and musically.

It is important to occasionally meet personalities apt to give meaning to our artistic practice (I was myself happy to have lived with Olivier Messiaen who inspired a great moral energy); I am very happy to be complicit in this moment with powerful personalities like Shiro Daïmon, it is also part of my lifelong learning and not theorizing in pedagogies absent of all strong spiritual dimensions, without which instrumental practice would be limited to a simple exercise of integrated style in a static culture.25

He recognizes the importance of surrounding oneself with inspirational people.

23 François Rossé, email interview with the author, April 19, 2013. See Appendix B for original text, 185.
24 The original reads: “Si les classes d'analyse et de composition m'ont paru importantes (dans la recherche méthodologique et dans la sphère d'échanges qu'elles provoquent), j'ai très rapidement appris à vivre hors des circuits canalisés; ce sont les rencontres individuelles et leurs extensions qui ont maintenu et maintiennent encore intensément mon activité de compositeur.” Fayolle and Rossé, 7.
25 Rossé, email interview, April 19, 2013. See Appendix B, 187.
Rossé’s commitment to forming strong relationships is well known by those around him, especially his collaborators. As emphasized by Goury, “The importance of human exchange with the interpreter is essential to him.”

Marie-Bernadette Charrier also attests to Rossé’s collaborative nature.

During my music studies, I met him several times to work on interpretations of his works, but a true artistic collaboration began after my studies twenty or so years ago. This performer/composer exchange was steady and still exists today on various projects like a kind of apprenticeship.

It is clear that Rossé’s colleagues are mutually committed to the long-term relationships they have formed.

Rossé has undoubtedly been influential and inspiring to his colleagues and collaborators. Goury fondly recalls the impressions he formed of Rossé as his student in Bordeaux (1980-1982). Rossé “seemed eccentric, quirky, very smiling, brightening the atmosphere” of the conservatory that seemed to Goury “very morose and conventional.” He continues by observing that Rossé “was as rigorous in his work as he was warm in his human relationships. This professor, bright, clairvoyant, was for me a great catalyst of creative energy.” The two of them spent Tuesday evenings together listening to and discussing contemporary music long after other students had gone home. Having been inspired by the collaboration of Rossé and Londeix, both his mentors in Bordeaux, Goury recalls, “The educational pair Londeix-Rossé was explosive!”

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26 Goury, email interview. See Appendix B, 192.
27 Marie-Bernadette Charrier, email interview with the author, June 11, 2014. See Appendix B for original text, 188.
28 Goury, email interview. See Appendix B, 190.
29 Goury, email interview. See Appendix B, 190.
30 Goury, email interview. See Appendix B, 190.
Jean-Marie Londeix and *Le Frêne égaré*

Before retiring from his performance career in 1996, Jean-Marie Londeix dedicated his life to bringing the saxophone to the forefront of concert music, and later, contemporary music. As one of the leading scholars of saxophone history, pedagogy, and literature, he remains active as a researcher, lecturer, adjudicator, and advocate. Following the early saxophone virtuosos, such as Marcel Mule and Sigurd Rascher, Londeix traveled extensively as a recitalist in hopes of engaging new audiences.\(^{31}\) In the 1970s, Londeix realized that contemporary music was the best way to create a unique voice for the saxophone, a truly modern instrument. Since then, he has been committed to building an extensive and diverse repertoire of serious, contemporary pieces that continues to grow exponentially each year.\(^{32}\) According to Londeix, “The universal saxophone repertoire regarded as “classical” is currently at more than 30,000 pieces. In 2012, I catalogued more than 3,000 new titles, which means 8 new works every day!”\(^{33}\)

In 1946, Londeix won *Premier Prix* at the National Conservatory of Bordeaux, the same year that he had his first lesson with Marcel Mule, professor of saxophone at the CNSM. Although Londeix went to trade school for several years, he remained committed to becoming a professional saxophonist. He moved to Paris in 1951 to complete watch-making school and to begin taking lessons regularly with Mule. Londeix was admitted into the CNSM’s exclusive class of twelve saxophonists in October of that year. In 1953, just two years later, he won the *Premier Prix* and the *Prix d’Honneur du Conservatoire*, a special award given by the director of the conservatory, Claude Delvincourt. Londeix also won the *Premiere medaille* in solfège, a


\(^{32}\) Ibid., 63.

\(^{33}\) Jean-Marie Londeix, email interview with the author, April 13, 2013. See Appendix B, 193.
challenging course of study in ear training. Londeix’ subsequent recitals and concerto performances took him around the world. Although solo woodwind recitals were still rare in Europe, Londeix succeeded in capturing audiences through the presentation of new works.

In addition to his active performance career, Londeix was dedicated to solidifying a standard pedagogical approach to saxophone playing. He wrote and published books that are still used today by saxophone students, teachers, and professionals alike. These resources were some of the earliest to establish methods of approaching the instrument and are helpful to saxophonists of various skills levels. Among the first was the four-volume set entitled *Le Saxophone en jouant* (“Playing the Saxophone”), published between 1962 and 1971. This collection was intended as a guide to technique, rhythm, practice techniques, style, phrasing and interpretation. Other early publications include *Exercices Mécaniques* (“Mechanical Exercises”) (1960-65), *Le Détaché* (“The Staccato”) (1967), and *Méthode de Rhythm* (“Rhythmic Methods”) (1972). As a guide to contemporary music techniques, Londeix later published *Hello, Mr. Sax!* (1989). He also published a book of challenging etudes called *Nouvelles Études Variées* (1983). Londeix’ newest comprehensive bibliographies are *150 Years of Music for Saxophone* (1994) and *Londeix Guide to the Saxophone Repertoire, 1844-2012* (2012).

In 1971, Londeix accepted the position of Professor of Saxophone at the National Conservatory of Bordeaux. He “recognized the period 1968-1972 as the beginning of a significant break with his past, especially regarding the musical repertoire that interested him.”

While he still loved performing the kind of traditional and new virtuosic works he had been programming for many years, Londeix became musically dissatisfied.

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34 Umble, 42-46.
36 Ibid., 80-82.
37 Ibid., 93.
From a purely musical point of view I was frustrated and when I moved beyond the taste for sheer virtuosity in the early 1970s this music was no longer of interest to me…with the move to Bordeaux my personality, and my taste, evolved significantly.\(^{38}\)

The catalyst for this change was Edison Denisov’s *Sonate* for alto saxophone and piano, which was written for Londeix in 1970 after his concert tour in Russia. Londeix provided Denisov with a tape he recorded of various saxophone sounds, both traditional and unconventional. Later that year, Londeix premiered the piece in Chicago. He considers *Sonate* the earliest avant-garde piece for saxophone and thus, a “turning point” for the instrument. Demonstrating serialism, jazz influence, and microtonality the piece explores extended techniques, such as multiphonics, quarter tones, altissimo, and slap tongue. Enthusiastically received, it quickly became a landmark piece for the saxophone. Its success led Londeix on a quest to expand the instrument’s repertoire with substantive contemporary works idiomatic to the saxophone.\(^{39}\)

Londeix primarily targeted young composers, like Denisov, for collaboration. This younger generation of composers had the energy to explore the instrument and was enthusiastic about forming long-lasting relationships with both the saxophone and its performers.\(^{40}\)

Rossé’s move to Bordeaux in the late 1970s coincided with Londeix’ initial projects with young Bordelais composers. Alongside Étienne Rolin, Christian Lauba, Thierry Alla, Christophe Havel, and several others committed to “avant-garde saxophone composition,” Rossé was involved in what came to be known as the Bordeaux School.\(^{41}\) This group of composers was dedicated to understanding the saxophone and grew to appreciate it as a “privileged mode of expression for serious art music.”\(^{42}\) Composers of the Bordeaux School are largely responsible

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 93.
\(^{39}\) Ibid., 101-103; Michael Ibrahim, “New Aesthetics in Contemporary Saxophone Music” (DMA diss., Manhattan School of Music. 2009), 30-33.
\(^{40}\) Umble, 103-106.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., 104.
for establishing the saxophone’s identity as a legitimate contemporary voice and have been contributing to its repertoire significantly for over three decades. Some of their earliest projects involved Londeix’ student group, the Ensemble International de Saxophones de Bordeaux, established in 1977.\textsuperscript{43}

Rossé and Londeix met on September 9, 1977 at the Bordeaux Conservatory restaurant. Londeix recalls, “We immediately hit it off,” and so began a camaraderie and colleagueship that has lasted ever since. Londeix’ original idea of publishing saxophone arrangements of spirituals was abandoned and the concept for an unaccompanied alto saxophone piece took form. Londeix provided Rossé with the same recordings of saxophone techniques that he had sent to Denisov.\textsuperscript{44}

Rossé describes the collaborative process with Londeix as absolutely necessary to gaining proper knowledge of the saxophone.

It was in 1977, while I was still a student in the class of Olivier Messiaen at the Paris Conservatory, that Jean-Marie first asked me to compose for the saxophone. I knew little about the instrument prior to this undertaking, and my first saxophone piece…resulted from a long period of gestation. Working together with Jean-Marie Londeix was essential, both in learning about writing for the instrument and about the intricacies of performing.\textsuperscript{45}

Although he had just finished Virgile, Rossé considers Le Frêne égaré his Opus 1. It was the first piece that forced him to search beyond his training as an improvising performer.

Rossé completed Le Frêne égaré (“The Fallen Ash Tree”) on March 21, 1979, and Londeix premiered it shortly thereafter on June 30, 1979 at the World Saxophone Congress in Chicago. The title came from the emblematic ash tree in Richard Wagner’s opera Tristan und Isolde, a work that Rossé studied in Messiaen’s analysis class during the 1978-1979 academic year. While other unaccompanied pieces for saxophone had been published, Le Frêne égaré was

\textsuperscript{43} Umble., 63.
\textsuperscript{44} Londeix, email interview. See Appendix B, 193.
\textsuperscript{45} Umble, 106.
the first idiomatic solo piece to demand fluency in extended techniques and the ability to interpret abstract musical ideas.46

*Le Frêne égaré* shows that hybridity, orality, and primitivism were established early in Rossé’s compositional career as core principles. The material for the piece is a patchwork of elements from non-Western traditions, older styles of Western art music, and contemporary techniques weaved together seamlessly. Rossé explains that “influences from the Orient, northern Africa, and Greece are evident. I was influenced by Messiaen’s neumatic principle originating from Gregorian chant—in other words, by the melodic principle of writing using small groups of notes. It’s a sort of image or gesture.”47 Rossé’s implementation of such varied influences is reflective of the hybridity dominating much of Messiaen’s work.

The neumatic style is also a demonstration of orality. It can be described as highly gestural, speech-like, and repetitive. Rossé often reiterates short ideas or figures in an unsystematic way that resembles improvisation. Examples of this style in his Japanese-influenced works are examined more specifically in Chapter 6.

The score of *Le Frêne égaré* is typical of Rossé’s notation in its juxtaposition of orality and literacy. By combining metric, spatial, and graphic symbols, he allows the performer freedom to shape gestures and phrases in a personal way without forfeiting complete control. As Londeix explains, *Le Frêne égaré* is neither aleatoric nor metronomic.48 A careful balance between orality and literacy is evident throughout his work.

Londeix describes how the collaborative process began. “Musically, we were stripped of all of our protective layers” with “no agenda” or “a priori ideas.”\textsuperscript{49} Finding that neo-classical writing for saxophone gave “the appearance of a hippopotamus dressed in a pink skirt with lace,”\textsuperscript{50} Rossé divorced himself from any preexisting “cultural framework” and explored the saxophone’s inherent sonorous qualities. His research, which he describes as “expansive,” involved studying the acoustic vocabulary of the instrument, the technical gestures of the instrumentalists for whom he writes, and the saxophone’s relationship to the environment or surroundings.\textsuperscript{51} Goury describes Rossé’s command of the saxophone enthusiastically.

François is also one of the most prolific French composers of his generation and takes a place in the center of the creation of contemporary art, because he is still active (overflowing) as composer, performer, improviser and poet. His music is human, emotional, carnal and intelligent. He possesses a most effective compositional technique. Never taking the easy route of “effect” he knows with ease to excite the sonorous material of an instrument, remaining an ingenious innovator. His understanding of our instrument is always limitless. Like all the “greats,” he feels he knows, and he does. For all this, disregarding my friendship, objectively, he remains for me one of the greatest French composers born since World War II.\textsuperscript{52}

Goury’s statement points to Rossé’s undying energy and drive to continue learning.

According to Londeix, Rossé made the saxophone “an instrument necessary for the music he initiated...This attitude (generally possessed by the greatest composers for the instruments they used) is now accepted. We seek less and less to disguise the saxophone.”\textsuperscript{53} Goury adds, “François forces the interpreter to question his own faculties of knowing how to ‘sound’ the instrument. He senses what is possible then organizes his writing scheme based on the vernacular potential of the instrument.”\textsuperscript{54} The term “vernacular” is applied in this context to represent the

\textsuperscript{49} Umble, 106.
\textsuperscript{50} The original reads: “donne à notre instrument l’allure d’un hipopotame habillé d’une jupe rose avec des dentelles.” Fayolle and Rossé, 47.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 43-44.
\textsuperscript{52} Goury, email interview. See Appendix B, 191.
\textsuperscript{53} Londeix, email interview. See Appendix B, 194.
\textsuperscript{54} Goury, email interview. See Appendix B, 192.
unique, native language of the saxophone. By embracing the instrument’s “vernacular potential,” Rossé and the Bordeaux School composers were the first to write music that could only be realized on the saxophone. In so doing, they provided the saxophone with its own irreplaceable voice in Western art music.

Rossé’s return to the fundamental elements of saxophone playing can be found in the refrain material of Le Frêne égaré. Air, sound, and harmony are represented by breath, long tone, and multiphonic. Later in the piece, expression and virtuosity are added to the refrain in the form of vibrato and trill respectively. Although the refrain is reiterated differently each time, it always emphasizes the specific physical demands of playing the saxophone. Rossé believes that this visceral aspect of performance more effectively engages the player with the music while also encouraging a stronger connection between the performer and audience. By exploiting the saxophone’s inherent qualities to enhance the performer’s physicality, Rossé demonstrates primitivism.

After writing Le Frêne égaré, Rossé suggests that his “production for saxophone has diversified, attracted by possibilities resulting from having performers approach their instruments in new ways.” He seems eager to learn from new experiences and continues to emphasize the

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55 In his thesis on hybridity in Christian Lauba’s saxophone music, Zachary Pfau develops the conceptual relevance of the vernacular within contemporary music discourse by drawing from literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin and the postcolonial critique of Homi Bhabha. As colonizers impose their own vehicular language to assert power, the persistence of the vernacular represents resistance and solidarity of the other. Therefore, the saxophone’s vernacular celebrates its roots as an instrument of popular music and jazz, and includes the unique sonic possibilities of the saxophone used to express the ideas of the composer and ultimately, the performer. The concept of the vernacular provides a certain depth not found in the term “idiom” and perhaps more accurately represents the saxophone’s uneasy and ambiguous position in the Western classical tradition. Zachary Pfau, “L’esthétique hybride de l’oeuvre pour saxophone de Christian Lauba,” Master’s Thesis (Université de Paris IV, Paris-Sorbonne, 2012), 29-32.

56 Umble, 107.

57 Londeix, Chapter 6-9, “François Rossé,” Disc 3, The Londeix Lectures, DVD.

58 Umble, 107.
indispensability of the interpreter throughout the collaborative process, which he refers to as an interpreter-composer synthesis.\textsuperscript{59}

The presence of hybridity, orality, and primitivism in \textit{Le Frêne égaré} proves that Rossé established a philosophical path from the very beginning of his compositional career, a creative journey that began with the saxophone. After more than thirty-five years, Rossé is still a major contributor to the saxophone’s growing repertoire. He continues to follow the same guiding principles, each of which is explored in the following three chapters.

\textsuperscript{59} Fayolle and Rossé, 48, 50-53.
CHAPTER 2.
HYBRIDITY

This section is devoted to unpacking the term ‘hybridity’ within the contexts of culture theory, music history, saxophone literature, and Rossé’s music. While Rossé does not specifically refer to hybridity in his own writings, the concept appropriately represents his eclectic style and more relevantly, his incorporation of non-Western elements. The following overview offers clarification of the term’s origin in scholarly discourse and the justification for applying ‘hybridity’ to Rossé’s compositional approach.

‘Hybridity’ in Culture Theory

Scholars in postcolonial studies and cultural criticism initially adopted the term ‘hybridity’ to represent “degrees of cultural exchange between race, ethnicity, gender and class.”60 As Apollo Amoko explains, the field of postcolonial studies represents “an effort by scholars in such diverse disciplines as literature, cultural studies, history and anthropology to come to terms, from a global perspective, with the legacy of European colonialism.”61 Established in the 1970s, this broad field examines the ongoing political, social, economic, and cultural effects of colonialism on both the colonized and colonizing groups.62

Cultural theorist Homi Bhabha argues, “The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres.”63 He believes

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62 Beard and Gloag, 137; Amoko, 132.
63 Homi Bhabha, Location of Culture, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 173.
that contained within cultural exchange is a “Third Space,”64 or “in-between space,” which “carries the burden of the meaning of culture.”65 The Third Space is where hybridity dwells and serves as the bridge between ‘Self’ and ‘Other.’66 It demonstrates that the “hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or ‘purity’ of cultures are untenable.”67 In other words, “this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.”68

Paul Gilroy, a British sociologist, also argues against “ethnic absolutism”69 in The Black Atlantic (1993). While his discussion focuses on the culture of the African and Caribbean diaspora in the Western world, his general ideas about race and politics can be applied universally. He claims, “The history of the black Atlantic yields a course of lessons as to the instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade.”70 Gilroy employs the term ‘hybridity’ to describe the constant transformation of culture and blurring of cultural boundaries.71

According to Annie E. Coombes and Avtar Brah, “The phenomenon that the term ‘hybridity’ seeks to address produces varied responses. At times it has resulted in an uncritical celebration of the traces of cultural syncretism which assumes a symbiotic relationship without paying adequate attention to economic, political, and social inequalities.”72 Coombes and Brah insist that ‘hybridity’ must always be considered alongside “the geopolitical contexts in which

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64 Ibid., 36.
65 Ibid., 38.
66 The term “Other” is used in many disciplines to denote those who are different from a dominating group. In the case of colonization, the Other is the colonized group.
67 Ibid., 37.
68 Ibid., 4.
70 Ibid., xi.
71 Ibid., 2.
the terms of the debate circulate.”73 That is, hybridity should not, and effectively cannot, be isolated as a solely cultural phenomenon. Their collection, Hybridity and its Discontents: Politics, Science, Culture, aims to ground the term ‘hybridity’ by standardizing its application across disciplines.

George Lipsitz and John Hutnyk argue that in many cases of intentional hybridity, inequality is consequentially emphasized and perpetuated. Lipsitz discusses the musical trend of white artists who invite minority performers to collaborate and subsequently categorize the culminating product as ‘world music.’74 This type of phony multiculturalism exploits minority cultures for commercial gain. Hutnyk also argues that the term ‘world music’ dangerously promotes a false sense of multiculturalism by covering up ethnic differences and ignoring underlying political conflict.75

Despite the term’s controversy within postcolonial studies and beyond, scholars continue to implement the term ‘hybridity’ across disciplines. Among them is Marwan M. Kraidy, who finds the term to be extremely useful when applied thoughtfully. In accordance with Coombes and Brah, he explains that it is “imperative to situate every analysis of hybridity in a specific context where the conditions that shape hybridities are addressed.”76 That is, hybridity should not be presented as a one-dimensional description of culture. Kraidy also explains, “Hybridity is one of the emblematic notions of our era. It captures the spirit of the times with its obligatory celebration of cultural difference and fusion, and it resonates with the globalization mantra of unfettered economic exchanges and the supposedly inevitable transformation of all cultures.”77

73 Ibid., 2.
74 Beard and Gloag 85.
75 Ibid., 86.
77 Ibid., 1.
Hybridity has been an essential characteristic of Western art music from its very beginning. According to Richard Taruskin, “New styles and genres do not actually replace or supplant the old in the real world; this happens only in history books. In the real world the new takes its place alongside the old, and, during the period of their coexistence, the two are always fair game for cross-fertilization and hybridization.”78 Performers and composers have repeatedly borrowed from various genres, music of the past, and cultural traditions other than their own.

During the Renaissance period, composers began to travel more regularly and consequently became acutely aware of international styles. They emulated each other by appropriating and combining ideas in hopes of arriving at something unique and refreshing.79

The Baroque period demonstrated further hybridization through stylistic borrowings of international musical elements, a practice that was becoming integral in the development of Western art music.80 J.S. Bach (1685-1750) is a prominent figure who contributed to this trend. Although he never left Germany, he was able to seamlessly weave together elements of English, French, Italian, and German styles.81 Rather than simply imitate these characteristics, Bach fashioned them into an organic, innovative conglomeration.82

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79 Ibid., 145.
80 Beard and Gloag, 86.
82 Ibid., 285.
In the early 19th century, hybridity was a result of the commemoration, emulation, and reworking of past styles. As Taruskin describes, “A sense of heirship, of tradition, of obligation to illustrious forebears and their great works becomes in the nineteenth century a stronger force in the history of musical composition than ever before.” As public concerts became the primary venue for performance, significant works from earlier generations were retroactively recognized as masterpieces. Thus, the venerated canon of Western art music was established.

Prior to the mid-19th century, musical hybridity appeared as a cross-cultural exploration and a renewal of past ideals. At the turn of the 20th century, hybridity was the product of increased implementation of folk music, non-Western traditions, popular genres and music of the past. These various borrowings are precisely what characterize Rossé’s music.

Béla Bartók (1881-1945) was highly successful in blending a Western approach with folk music of central and eastern Europe to create an original style. He and his colleague, Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), conducted fieldwork throughout this region from 1906 to 1918. They systematically collected, transcribed, and studied folk songs, thus instigating the field of ethnomusicology. Bartók’s extensive communication with peasants provided him with a deep understanding of their music. By incorporating folk music, he was able to masterfully create a unique hybrid style.

Many composers throughout the 20th century were interested in music of cultures other than their own. French composer Claude Debussy (1862-1918) was particularly innovative with

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83 Ibid., 637-638.
84 Ibid., 638-639.
his incorporations of Russian and Southeast Asian elements.\textsuperscript{87} He captured the non-teleological quality of Asian philosophies by constructing static parallel chord progressions, and implementing whole tone, pentatonic, and modal tonalities.\textsuperscript{88}

In the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century, Asian traditions increasingly appealed to Western composers. As an admirer of Debussy and student of Messiaen, Pierre Boulez (b. 1925) extended the French tradition of implementing Asian and African characteristics. Boulez’ \textit{Marteau sans maître} (1953-1955) and \textit{Répons} (1981) demonstrate his interest in African drumming, Balinese gamelan, and the Japanese \textit{koto}.\textsuperscript{89} Deeply involved with rhythmic mechanisms, American composer Elliott Carter (1908-2012) is recognized for innovative transformation of tempo known as metric modulation. Indian, Arabic, Balinese, and West African music, as well as post-war jazz styles, inspired his polyrhythmic complexity.\textsuperscript{90} Like many intellectuals of the postwar era, American Experimentalist John Cage (1912-1992) explored Asian and Indian philosophies, and most particularly Zen Buddhism. Cage applied his philosophical and spiritual studies conceptually rather than sonically. In hopes of achieving the irrational, while completely eliminating the impact of desire and preference, he adopted radical chance procedures involving the ancient Chinese \textit{I Ching}, or “Book of Changes,” coin-tossing, and other randomizing methods.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{87} Gibbs and Taruskin, 826-828.
\textsuperscript{88} Wilder, 18-21.
\textsuperscript{90} Gibbs and Taruskin, 1046-1049.
\textsuperscript{91} Gibbs and Taruskin, 1025-1027. Cage used coin-tossing techniques as a compositional method as a way of relinquishing control and intention. His monumental 4’33” of 1952 requires an instrumentalist to perform three movements, all marked “tacet.” Ibrahim explains: “By instructing the performer to remain silent for the duration of the work, and thus embracing the spontaneous sounds of the performance setting, Cage’s work questioned the existing definitions of concert music. This epitome of aleatoric music not only introduced a new palette of sounds, noises, and silences to contemporary composition, but reframed concert music. In such conceptual works, the frame around the work is often of a greater importance than its content, and in some cases, the frame can be said to be the ework’s content.” Ibrahim, 41.
Since the 1960s and 70s, boundaries between musical genres have become blurred and indistinct as a result of globalization.\textsuperscript{92} Advances in technology and media have led to fast and widespread dissemination of information.\textsuperscript{93} As Taruskin summarizes, “This access naturally spurred eclecticism as well as attempts at fusion.”\textsuperscript{94} American conductor, composer, and historian Gunther Schuller (b. 1925) pioneered Third Stream, a conglomerate genre of jazz and art music. A blend of oral and literate traditions, Schuller envisioned Third Stream as “a global concept which allows the world’s musics—written, improvised, handed-down, traditional, experimental—to come together, to learn from one another, to reflect human diversity and pluralism.”\textsuperscript{95}

Minimalism is another contemporary style that perpetuated hybridity. In conjunction with the minimalist art movement of the 1960s, minimalist music is generally characterized by simplicity of material, transparency, rhythmic repetition, and gradual change over time. An early example is La Monte Young’s (b. 1935) \textit{Composition 1960 #7}, consisting solely of a perfect fifth “to be held for a long time.”\textsuperscript{96} Another important minimalist work is Terry Riley’s (b. 1935) \textit{In C} (1964), a construction of short musical ideas that can be repeated for up to several hours, depending on the performance. Both composers were influenced by the spirituality of Eastern philosophies.\textsuperscript{97}

Steve Reich (b. 1936) and Philip Glass (b. 1937) also studied Eastern traditions and specifically implemented Asian and Indian rhythmic elements. Many of Reich’s rhythmic ideas were inspired by his extensive study of West African drumming and Balinese gamelan.\textsuperscript{98}

\begin{thebibliography}{98}
\bibitem{Beard} Beard, 42.
\bibitem{Gibbs and Taruskin} Gibbs and Taruskin, 1067.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid., 1094.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid., 1065.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid., 1068.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid., 1082.
\bibitem{Ibid} John Corbett, “Experimental Oriental: New Music and Other Others,” in \textit{Western Music and its}
\end{thebibliography}
Collaborations with Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar inspired Glass to structure his music through rhythmic progression rather than harmony.\textsuperscript{99}

Many composers today borrow and rework material from various cultures, eras, and genres to create intertextual webs that defy categorization. For example, Osvaldo Golijov (b. 1960) developed an eclectic style that stems from his heritage and upbringing. A native of Argentina, he was raised in an eastern European Jewish household where music was an essential component of family life.\textsuperscript{100} In 2000, the premiere of Golijov’s \textit{La Pasión según San Marcos} (also known as \textit{St. Mark Passion}) commemorated J.S. Bach’s 250\textsuperscript{th} birthday. This monstrous 87-minute spectacle, involving vocal soloists, an Afro-Cuban dancer, a Capoeira dancer, a choir, bermimbau, accordion, brass, strings and percussion, demonstrates Golijov’s love for klezmer, classical, and South American music.\textsuperscript{101}

John Adams (b. 1947) emphasizes his nationality through the implementation of various American genres. His \textit{Saxophone Concerto} (2013) stems from his “life-long exposure to the great jazz saxophonists, from the swing era through the likes of Coltrane, Eric Dolphy and Wayne Shorter.”\textsuperscript{102} His fascination with jazz can also be heard in \textit{City Noir} (2009), a symphonic work featuring the alto saxophone in a bluesy style. Having played the clarinet in his earlier years, Adams refers to his personal memories with the instrument in \textit{Gnarly Buttons} (1996) for

\textsuperscript{99} Gibbs and Taruskin, 1077-1078.
clarinet and chamber ensemble. Many influences contributed to the piece, including Benny Goodman and marching band.¹⁰³

Hybridity in Saxophone Repertoire

Over the last few decades, hybridity has been a definitive characteristic of saxophone literature. Many pieces demonstrate the influence of jazz, such as the third movement of Denisov’s Sonate (1970), which resembles a jazz trio. The lower voice of the piano acts as a walking bass line while the upper voice produces melodic riffs and chordal accompaniment. The saxophone is featured as a virtuosic soloist.¹⁰⁴ The “Mad Dance” in Sonata (1984) for alto saxophone and piano by William Albright (1944-1998) is dominated by a bebop style. The saxophone part exhibits characteristic gestures and inflection, and the piano imitates a pizzicato bass line.¹⁰⁵ In Dream in a Bar (1992) for baritone saxophone and percussion, Christian Lauba (b. 1952) evokes the atmosphere of a bar. By featuring the drum kit, incorporating the blues scale, and providing performers with opportunities to improvise, Dream in a Bar exhibits the integration of jazz.¹⁰⁶

Non-Western influence is also a salient feature of many late 20th and 21st century saxophone works. Florent Schmitt’s (1870-1958) Légende, Op. 66 (1918) for alto saxophone and orchestra demonstrates the composer’s fascination with “the Orient” through “beautifully muted

colors” and its “evocative, passionate character.” Piet Swerts’ (b. 1960) Kotekan (2006) for alto saxophone and piano imitates the kotekan technique of Balinese gamelan music, which can be described as fast interlocking parts that collectively build a phrase. The third movement of Darius Milhaud’s (1892-1974) Scaramouche, (1937) entitled “Brazileira,” contains syncopated rhythms that clearly demonstrate the influence of Brazilian dance music. The first movement of Concertante (1978) for alto saxophone and orchestra by Romanian-born composer Marius Constant (1925-2004) depicts the improvisatory style and mood of an Indian raga.

Contemporary saxophone repertoire often borrows from music of the past. David Maslanka’s saxophone quartets, Mountain Roads (1997) and Recitation Book (2006), recall Bach’s chorale and cantata writing and are loosely reminiscent of his style. Henri Pousseur incorporates a 17th century song by Samuel Scheidt in the middle of his saxophone quartet, Vue sur les Jardins Interdits (1973). This section is largely comprised of major chords, and sounds similar to vocal and dance music of that era. Lauba’s Ars (1992-1994) for two soprano saxophones presents styles such as Ars Antiqua and Ars Nova from the Middle Ages in a contemporary setting. Marilyn Shrude references Niccolo Paganini’s 24th Caprice for violin in

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110 A Raga is a “Mode in Indian music. In addition to a scale, the concept may include notions of pitch ranking, characteristic ascent and descent patterns, motives, use of ornaments, performance time, and emotional character.” The Harvard Concise Dictionary of Music and Musicians, s.v. “raga.”
Renewing the Myth (1988) for alto saxophone and piano. She also inserts short motives from other standard works for saxophone, such as Jacques Ibert’s Concertino da Camera (1935).115

Hybridity in Rossé’s Approach

The biography on Rossé’s website describes the role of hybridity in his music as follows: “His activity is consistent between engagements as improvising pianist and composer, both close to the tradition of historical Western music and in tune with the artistic dynamics in the current global environment.”116 As discussed in the previous chapter, Rossé considers exposure to non-Western traditions paramount to his identity as a musician.

Although he does not use the term ‘hybridity’ himself, Rossé characterizes contemporary music as a prominently hybrid genre.

In Europe today, the standard of music has been much more impacted by Jazz, and not what came from Schoenberg. For thirty years or so, I would say it was Schoenberg that impacted the direction of art music, but today, in 2008, it is the tradition of Jazz and improvisation that drives music. What we have now is the mixing between oral and writing traditions of music. This has come about because we now live in a global world. It is a great time for music and art because finally, it is possible to meet other cultures.117

Rossé finds the shift away from strict methodologies, like serialism, liberating. He promotes and strives toward pluralism by freely borrowing from other styles and encouraging broad cultural awareness. “A work is, for me, a society of sounds whose relationships are defined by codes that slyly connive with broader human and social aspirations.”118 Rossé asserts that there remains no linearity in Western music, no over-riding narrative that guides artistic expression. However, he

117 Estes, 100.
118 Original text reads: “Une oeuvre est, pour moi, une société de sons dont les rapports sont définis par des codes qui, sournoisement, sont en connivence avec des aspirations humaines et sociales plus générales.” Fayolle and Rossé, 16.
does admit that serialism, spectralism, and other systematic or research-oriented methods were necessary in the mid- to late 20th century, because they ultimately served to revitalize our culture within the realm of Western art music.119

While Rossé is particularly enthusiastic about globalization and the accessibility of other cultures, he recognizes the potential danger of hybridity. “The issue of the world going global is both fantastic and troubling at the same time. In the twentieth century I saw the end of Europe. Europe is finished!...Now, the question is what is social, and what is political—that is the most important question.”120 On the one hand, globalization yields cultural exchange, but it can also lead to cultural dissonance, or even dissolution.

Despite his concerns, Rossé is grateful for cross-cultural collaborations, an activity he asserts is normal, or in his terms, ‘natural.’ Ease of travel and speedy access to information have made cultural exchange an integral aspect of modern society. He proposes an analogy between cross-cultural intersections and sexuality. “I want the possibility to live with my music in active meetings of other music; meeting different cultures—a marriage of cultures. It is natural, right. What is sexuality? As humans, we have the obligation to meet others—it is true nature.” He goes on,

But incest, as practiced by some cultures throughout history, does not promote this particular type of diverse interaction. It is the same with culture—you must meet others and have contact—it is like producing a child of blended cultures. The musical result of this blend of cultures is very exciting! Just think of the wealth of new music that could result from these contacts?121

Rossé suggests that isolating art from cultural influences might harm society and oppose the course in which culture is evolving. Instead, he believes artists should branch out, converge ideas, and promote hybridity.

119 Fayolle and Rossé, 13-14.
120 Estes, 101.
121 Estes, 102.
According to Rossé, collaboration is always a learning process that simultaneously breaks down barriers, bringing everyone involved to common ground. The following statement by Rossé is a description of his work with Mieko Miyazaki, Japanese koto player and singer, from a 2008 interview. He reiterates the importance of human connection discussed in the first chapter.

I also have a duo that I have formed with a Japanese singer. As you can see in this video, we are both improvising. She is singing while I am playing the piano. She also plays the Koto (Japanese stringed-instrument) during this particular improvisation. For me, this kind of social interaction is what I am most interested in – the blending of cultures and the social contact with others. We are creating something together, marrying our cultures and musical languages in a way that is very special.122

Building relationships with people of other backgrounds represents the most important aspect of Rossé’s musical process. From his perspective, the bonds established with other artists through the exchange of ideas and collaboration yields valuable results.

In 1989, one of Rossé’s projects took him to Réunion, an island to the east of Madagascar. As an overseas department of France, it functions under the French government. Rossé was fascinated by his new discovery of Creole culture on the island.

Ultimately, I just went down to the island and met these people without telling them who I was and what I was doing there. When I first arrived, without even meeting them, I began to play – to improvise. They quieted down and then, all of the sudden they joined me in playing – percussion, guitar, and people were singing. Afterwards, we were drinking and eating together – we had become friends!

I went down there to create human contact – to try to get an understanding of their culture. It was three or four days later that I finally told them who I was and what I was doing there. However, it was too late for them to judge me because we had already become friends! More important than the musical experience is the human experience.123

This is just one example of Rossé’s many projects involving new people of unfamiliar places and cultures. The culmination of his seven visits to Réunion over the span of two years was an hour-long piece, Baiser de Terre (“Kiss the Ground”). Since the majority of performers were unable to

122 Estes, 107.
123 Estes, 104.
read musical notation, the piece was taught and performed orally.

Rossé’s music also exhibits hybridity through his references to works written or performed by other musicians. By combining borrowed ideas with other influences, he continues to develop his own voice and discover new possibilities.

Paying homage to other composers in my works is very important to me. You must take the borrowed material and use it differently though. You must mix it and then mix it some more. If my compositions were only my ideas, then I would be done. Drawing from others and from other languages is very important me.\\footnote{Estes, 106.}

In this way, Rossé is able to enrich his music while shedding new light on existing works.

Traditional Japanese culture has also factored significantly into Rossé’s hybridity. He explains, “Very impressive in its traditions, this country was not without influence in my conception of music and its forms of energy and therefore instrumental from the beginning.”\\footnote{Rossé, email interview. See Appendix B, 183.}

Rossé’s second and most recent visit to Japan (April 2013) involved collaborations with Daïmon. As a Paris resident since 1976, Daïmon is known for contemporary and traditional Japanese dance styles, such as those used in noh and kabuki. Daïmon and Rossé have collaborated in hour-long improvised performances since 2006.\\footnote{Shiro Daïmon, “Accueil,” Shiro Daïmon, accessed September 13, 2014, http://www.shirodaimon.fr/accueil.html; Daïmon, “Biographie,” Daïmon, accessed September 13, 2014, http://www.shirodaimon.fr/biographie.html.} In addition, Rossé has worked extensively with Miyazaki, another collaborative artist who continues to influence his work.

Rossé describes his projects with these Japanese artists as a fusion of traditional and contemporary genres:

Nontheless with Shiro Daïmon and Mieko Miyazaki we are with musicians and dancers who have a strong impregnation of tradition but are open to contemporaneity. This is the paradox of Japan visible in architecture, the environment, where old beautiful temples can be found next to extremely modern buildings. They are both very open to new technologies and steeped in secular tradition that gives them a sort of rigor and an

aesthetic sense in all of the things in life (the way of eating, the ritual of tea and ikebana in the flower arrangements…etc).  

By collaborating with such versatile artists experienced in both contemporary Western and Japanese performance, Rossé stays active and engaged as both a performer and composer.

Hybridity in Rossé’s Music for Saxophone

As mentioned in Chapter 1, *Le Frêne Égaré* is an early example of hybridity in Rossé’s repertoire. It is safe to say that a significant number of Rossé’s compositions exhibit hybridity in one way or another.

In an email to saxophonist Allison Balcetis on March 8, 2006, Rossé explains that the melodic development of *…sur un ilôt de la rivière* (2005) for soprano saxophone was influenced by a Confucian text. Written for Chinese saxophonist Tong Yang, it is “a piece that proposes a space where different cultures can intersect or merge.” The music was inspired by Chinese ritual; it incorporates text and multiphonics that represent metal percussion instruments. Rossé borrows from himself in *…sur un ilôt de la rivière* by replicating a section from *Le Frêne Égaré*.

In 2011, Rossé composed *Kreuzung*, a double concerto for baritone saxophone and piano with orchestra. The saxophone part is notated while the pianist improvises. On Vimeo, a video sharing website, Rossé posted a performance of *Kreuzung* with background information and a general description of his musical approach. After briefly mentioning the Haydn-esque themes in *Kreuzung*, Rossé emphasizes the diversification within contemporary music in an ever-globalizing world. The connections between Western and non-Western, old and new, are “the

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127 Rossé, email interview. See Appendix B, 187.
128 Original text reads: “Une oeuvre qui propose un espace où les cultures aussi différentes peuvent se croiser, voire fusionner.” Rossé, email to Balcetis, March 8, 2006.
mental connections that cause the active and creative space of the imagination to explode."\textsuperscript{129}

*Shanaï* (1990), for three high saxophones (sopraninos, sopranos, or altos) consists of six short etudes. These include “Aka,” which is “dedicated to Bibayak Pygmies in Africa,” and “West Orient,” “an etude on the ornamentation of note beginnings and releases as well as melodic flexibility.”\textsuperscript{130}

In *Être Musicale*, Rossé designates the 1990s as his era commemorating “our cultural heritage,” or Western art music.\textsuperscript{131} On the list of works in this category is *Ost-Atem* (1992) for tenor saxophone and tape, a tribute to Rossini.

Like many musicians throughout history, Rossé implements borrowing and intertextuality as tools to create original and personal work. His career of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural collaboration as both performer and composer is guided by his hybridity. Rossé’s thirst for strong human connections and cultural exploration is evidenced vividly in his pursuits with Daïmon and Miyazaki, and carry over to his Japanese-influenced chamber works.


\textsuperscript{131} Original text reads: “notre patrimoine culturel.” Fayolle and Rossé, 78.
CHAPTER 3.

ORALITY

Central to Rossé’s musical background and compositional approach, ‘orality’ is a concept that consistently makes its way into his interviews, unpublished essays, and facebook posts. This section contextualizes orality within the discipline of orality-literacy studies, a branch of culture theory that examines human thought and communication in relation to learning, psychology, socialization and culture.\(^{132}\) Aspects of orality in music will be traced through music history, saxophone literature, and Rossé’s music for saxophone.

‘Orality’ in Culture Theory

Walter Ong (1912-2003), one of the most notable scholars of the 20\(^{th}\) century, helped solidify the field of orality-literacy studies, a branch of media theory. In *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982), Ong synthesizes and extends existing multidisciplinary research on the effects of spoken versus written word on human consciousness, communication, and culture.

By studying primary oral cultures, “cultures with no knowledge at all of writing,”\(^ {133}\) Ong has determined some of the ways in which literacy has affected human thought and how orality relates to literacy.

A deeper understanding of pristine or primary orality enables us better to understand the new world of writing, what it truly is, and what functionally literate human beings really are: beings whose thought processes do not grow out of simply natural powers but out of those powers as structured, directly or indirectly, by the technology of writing. Without writing, the literate mind would not and could not think as it does, not only when engaged...


in writing but normally even when it is composing its thoughts in oral form. More than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness.\textsuperscript{134}

Orality and literacy rely on each other, forming a symbiotic relationship.

Ontogenetically and phylogenetically, it is the oral word that first illuminates consciousness with articulate language, that first divides subject and predicate and then relates them to one another, and that ties human beings to one another in society. Writing introduces division and alienation, but a higher unity as well. It intensifies the sense of self and fosters more conscious interaction between persons. Writing is consciousness-raising.\textsuperscript{135}

Therefore, in literate societies, orality and literacy inherently coexist.

One of the major differences between orality and literacy is the way in which each relates to the physical world. While orality involves the extrasemantic characteristics of gesture, inflection, and facial expression, writing is detached from the physical world. In literate settings, meaning is derived solely from the words, which have been carefully chosen and indelibly fixed by the author.\textsuperscript{136} Ong argues that sound, a fundamental element of all language, is the common thread that links orality and literacy. He explains, “Some non-oral communication is exceedingly rich – gesture, for example. Yet in a deep sense language, articulated sound, is paramount. Not only communication, but thought itself relates in an altogether special way to sound.”\textsuperscript{137}

Print holds further implications regarding the affect of literacy on consciousness. For example, books encourage silent reading, a private act that establishes distance.

By removing words from the world of sound where they had first had their origin in active human interchange and relegating them definitively to visual surface, and by otherwise exploiting visual space for the management of knowledge, print encouraged human beings to think of their own interior conscious and unconscious resources as more and more thing-like, impersonal and religiously neutral. Print encouraged the mind to sense that its possessions were held in some sort of inert mental space.\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 129.
Unlike printed works, which are permanently fixed, manuscripts “remained closer to the give-and-take of oral expression. The readers of manuscripts are less removed from the author, less absent, than are the readers of those writing for print.” Interestingly, many of Rossé’s works are published in manuscript form, including the pieces examined in Chapter 6.

Throughout his discussion, Ong draws on the existing research of other scholars. As one of the major precursors to orality-literacy studies, Milman Parry was an influential figure to Ong and many others in the field. He pioneered research on Homer, claiming that the epic poet orally composed the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by applying existing thematic and formulaic methods of oral composition. Alongside his student, Albert Lord, Parry expanded his research in the mid-1930s by observing and archiving performances of Yugoslavian epic singers, which he argued were composed in a method similar to that of Homer’s epics. In *The Singer of Tales*, Lord explains that the purpose of Parry’s study was to compare oral and written story poetry by observing singers who traditionally learned and practiced through oral transmission. These studies, along with Lord’s subsequent research, laid the foundation for orality-literacy studies.

Eric A. Havelock’s *Preface to Plato* (1963) expands upon Parry and Lord’s findings by illustrating the integral role that memory plays in human consciousness in pre-literate Greece. Particularly central to Havelock’s research is the use of mnemonic device as a tool to stimulate memory. Similarly to Havelock, Jack Goody and Ian Watt study how memory establishes and maintains social practices and behaviors in primary oral cultures.

What the individual remembers tends to be what is of critical importance in his

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139 Ibid., 130.
142 Lord, 3.
experience of the main social relationships. In each generation, therefore, the individual memory will mediate the cultural heritage…The social function of memory – and of forgetting – can thus be seen as the final stage of what may be called the homeostatic organization of the cultural tradition in non-literate society.144

Goody and Watt also discuss the importance of mnemonic devices and the active nature of spoken word (i.e. physical gesture, vocal inflection). They clarify that mythologies and genealogies are established by oral cultures as “‘charters’ of present social institutions rather than faithful historical records of times past.”145 In other words, they are used as social pillars and moral codes rather than literal depictions of historical events.

By exploring the differences between spoken and written word, scholars have reached conclusions regarding human consciousness, communication, and therefore, culture. Only in recent years have music scholars, performers, and composers been committed to examining the relationship between orality and literacy in the areas of music composition, performance, interpretation, and perception.

Orality in Western Art Music History

Music began as an oral practice, just as spoken word preceded writing. While many cultures maintain musical orality, the Western art tradition has become overwhelmingly literate due to the development of standardized notation. This gradual shift from orality to literacy involved changes in performance practice, particularly improvisation. In recent decades, comparative research exploring the role of improvisation across cultures and through history has illuminated some of the implications of the orality-literacy relationship on music performance and perception. As ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl explains, “The perspective afforded by a look

145 Ibid., 310.
at improvisation in many kinds of music can actually uncover a number of things about music making across various traditions that might otherwise not come to the surface. The following overview focuses on orality in Western art music history.

In its earliest form, sacred music for the Catholic Church was orally transmitted. By A.D. 300, Christian liturgy diverged into various strands, including the Roman rite in Latin. For centuries, traveling church musicians disseminated music by rote teaching, which contributed to a diversity of local traditions. Aspiring to gain authority through standardization of religious practice, Charlemagne (ca. 742-814), ruler of the Carolingian Empire, allied with the Roman Catholic Church in the 8th century. By establishing a system of music notation for liturgical use, he hoped to promote a more consistent religious practice among the population.

Named after Pope Gregory I (590-604), Gregorian Chant is the monophonic, vocal music developed by the Roman Catholic Church. Neumatic notation of chant melodies came into practice either during Charlemagne’s rule or closer to 900. In the early 11th century, Guido d’Arezzo (c. 1000-1050) introduced the four-line staff on which neumes were placed. While the staff improved the effectiveness of notation as a memory aid, it was far from sufficient as a learning tool. Kenneth Levy describes the role of notation during its early stages of development in *Gregorian Chant and the Carolingians*.

Memory is essential, because the neumes are inadequate as to pitch; still, the neumatic memory aids enhance memory’s sharpness; they make verbatim recall possible. That initial memory-neume relationship evolved during centuries to come. As the staffless
neumes were turned into pitched signs heightened precisely on the lined staff, memory came to have a lesser role. Yet it remained a stabilizing force, usually supporting the mainline transmission, though at times it became a vehicle for perpetuating local variants; other variants arose from fresh stylistic initiatives.153

The “memory-neume relationship” supports research regarding the use of formulaic patterns and mnemonic devices as memory aids. The implementation of neumes initially served to stimulate memory rather than eliminate its use altogether. Scholars still speculate about the extent to which plainchant was improvised, approximated, and altered to represent certain local styles.154

The first theoretical treatises from the 9th century outline the rules of organum (early forms of polyphony). These texts indicate that polyphony had already been a well-established method of embellishing plainchant melody.155 Before organum was notated, singers harmonized extemporaneously during performance by following certain rules.156 By the end of the 12th century, musicians of Notre Dame Cathedral developed rhythmic modes by differentiating between long and short values. In modal rhythm, the duration of each gesture, or ligature, depended on the context in which it was placed.157 Franco of Cologne developed rhythmic specificity further in the late 13th century with mensural notation. His new system allowed for a wider variety of subdivisions and single notes were assigned value.158

The rise of polyphony and simultaneous strides in notation gave way to the notion of ‘composer’ in both sacred and secular realms.159 Mensural notation was a significant step toward modern day notation, allowing composers to combine more complicated elements with clarity.

153 Levy, 16.
154 Ibid., 10.
155 Hoppin, 188.
156 Organum is the earliest form of polyphony in Western art music, or, as Hoppin would have it, the “unwritten accompaniment of plainchant” (188); Hoppin, 187-188.
157 Hoppin, 221.
158 Ibid., 334.
159 Gibbs and Taruskin, 88.
and create detailed scores for performers to follow. By the 15th century, composers felt a more definitive sense of ownership over their music and they became increasingly competitive with one another. Meanwhile, untouched by the musical developments among elite circles, oral traditions evolved within non-literate communities.

The advent of music printing in 1501 led to wider dissemination of notated music, and consequently, increased music literacy among the broader population. Sold within large collections, much of the earliest printed music was vernacular song arranged without text for instrumental performance. Stemming from a tradition of improvisatory fiddling, these arrangements led composers to write original works for instrumental chamber ensemble. Music printing catalyzed the transition from orality to literacy by popularizing music-reading skills and solidifying the concepts of a musical ‘work’ and ‘composer.’ This development brought Western art music that much closer to its current state of extreme literacy.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, improvisation remained an integral component of performance. Musicians “decorated the given melody” over a “harmonic foundation” with fast gestures in stepwise motion, such as trills, mordents, and appoggiaturas. They were also expected to improvise freely at cadential points, and within certain forms, such as unmeasured preludes and fantasias. In ensemble settings, keyboardists had the additional responsibility of realizing accompaniments notated as figured bass, shorthand notation indicating harmony.

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160 Ibid., 82-83.
161 Ibid., 145.
162 Ibid., 120.
163 Ibid., 163-165.
Method books, ornament tables, and other primary sources served as guides for distinguishing French from Italian styles.\(^{166}\)

Charlotte Mattax Moersch states, “In the keyboard music of the Baroque, the performer’s role rivaled or even exceeded that of the composer. Composers often provided only a skeletal framework to be elaborated upon \textit{ad libitum} by the performer.”\(^{167}\) She also points out how “players relied on standard flourishes and figuration patterns, passed down from teacher to student.”\(^{168}\) For example, scholars found similarities within the notated improvisations of J.S. Bach, his students, and his son, Carl Emanuel Bach, pointing to a formulaic approach.\(^{169}\) By developing a bank of musical ideas and a personal vocabulary, musicians were able to improvise lengthy passages and even entire works that functioned within stylistic constraints.

By the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, composed works provided few opportunities for improvisation. Music scholar Lydia Goehr explains, “Musical production was now seen as the use of musical material resulting in complete and discrete, original and fixed, personally owned units. The units were musical works.”\(^{170}\) This was a dawning era in which composers were recognized as artistic creators rather than employees in service to nobility or aristocracy. New copyright laws transferred rights from publishers to composers, whose “music came to be seen as a product of a free person’s labour.”\(^{171}\) Along with the establishment of orchestras and public concerts, these new laws allowed some composers, such as Beethoven, to earn a living solely from commissions, public engagements, and publications.\(^{172}\)

\(^{166}\) Ibid., 150-153.
\(^{167}\) Ibid., 167.
\(^{168}\) Ibid., 168.
\(^{169}\) Ibid., 162.
\(^{171}\) Ibid., 218.
\(^{172}\) Ibid., 210.
The transition of music from a malleable art form to a fixed, permanent product solidified literacy as the prominent modality of Western art music. According to Goehr, “Music soon acquired a kind of untouchability which, translated into concrete terms, meant that persons could no longer tamper with composers’ works.”\(^{173}\) Originality became a priority for composers, who were protected from plagiarism under new laws. Composers submitted precise, detailed scores to publishers, and demanded that they be printed accurately. Notation was further improved at the turn of the 19th century to accommodate such requests and to ensure specificity of musical scores. For the first time, composers indicated metronome markings, dynamics, and instrumentation.\(^{174}\)

Alongside the notion of a fixed ‘work’ came the distinction between the musical score and realizations of the score. Composers embraced this division as protection against inaccurate performances. Ultimately, however, composers relied on performers to bring the musical works to life.\(^{175}\) As Goehr explains, “The comparable duty of performers was to show allegiance to the works of the composers. To certify that their performances be of specific works, they had to comply as perfectly as possible with the scores composers provided.”\(^{176}\) The ideal interpretation of a musical work was that which adhered most strictly to the composer’s markings. Not only did this leave the performer with far less room for freedom, but it also rendered improvisation an unnecessary skill.

While Goehr reiterates that early 19th century improvisation and composition existed in “strict opposition,” musicologist William Kinderman points to evidence in Beethoven’s manuscripts that suggests a compositional approach stemming from improvisations at the

\(^{173}\) Ibid., 220.  
\(^{174}\) Ibid., 224  
\(^{175}\) Ibid., 227-232.  
\(^{176}\) Ibid., 231.
piano.\textsuperscript{177} “Interdependence of freedom and determination reminds us of the need to qualify the nature of what Beethoven would have regarded as successful improvisation.”\textsuperscript{178} Beethoven believed that skillful improvisation was always guided by intuition. However, while total freedom might otherwise lead to chaos, notation provided balance through structure and cohesion.\textsuperscript{179} Kinderman’s research demonstrates that improvisation was still integral to the writing process for composers, even though for performance, it was no longer a necessary skill.

Music scholar Robert S. Hatten finds similar signs of improvisatory compositional methods in the works of Robert Schumann and Frédéric Chopin, and argues that improvisation has contributed to the overall appreciation of their music by audiences.\textsuperscript{180} He explains, “Competent listeners in a musical style may value spontaneous creativity within that style not only for its artistic melodic, harmonic, or formal results, but also for its potential to suggest immediate, personal, authentic, and thus intimate disclosure on the part of a performer who embodies those sonic gestures.”\textsuperscript{181} Improvisatory characteristics in a composed work free the music from the so-called “canonic museum.”\textsuperscript{182} This notion coincides with Rossé’s idea that orality promotes communication between performer and listener.

Within the realm of performance, Franz Liszt (1811-86) and Clara Schumann (1819-96), both accomplished pianists and composers, worked to sustain an otherwise fading oral tradition. During her recitals, Schumann improvised preludes and interludes as transitions between composed works. These short segments were meant to guide the audience seamlessly from one

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 308.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 309.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 291.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 291.
piece to the next while Schumann showed off her own virtuosity. In pioneering the solo recital, Liszt curated extravagant programs of original works alongside arrangements of symphonies, song cycles, and opera excerpts. Like Schumann, he wove pieces together through improvisation, but also elaborated works with spontaneous modifications.

By the late 19th century, improvisation was no longer an inherent component of performance in the Western tradition. John Cage was one of the first to reintroduce improvisatory techniques during the 1930s and others soon followed in various ways. George Lewis explains this phenomenon in “Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives.”

After 1950 composers began to experiment with open forms and with more personally expressive systems of notation. Moreover, these composers began to designate salient aspects of a composition as performer-supplied rather than composer-specified, thereby renewing an interest in the generation of musical structure in real time as a formal aspect of a composed work.

Although much of Cage’s early improvisatory music did not survive, a few examples are preserved. For instance, the first movement of Quest (1935) for amplified toy instruments and found objects is an improvisation without a score. Elements of jazz improvisation are also evident in Cage’s music from the early 1940s (e.g. Third Construction (1941), Credo in Us (1942), Ad Lib (1942) and Jazz Study (ca. 1942)).

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184 Gibbs and Taruskin, 572-573.
Cage temporarily rejected both jazz and improvisation in the 1950s, but he regained interest in the 1970s. Sabine M. Feisst summarizes Cage’s motivations in the conclusion of “John Cage and Improvisation: An Unresolved Relationship,” as follows:

Cage rejected improvisation because many of its implied meanings contradict his aesthetic principles. These connotations include intuition, self-expression, memory and taste-based utterances, discursiveness, predictability, and repetition. He embraced solely one rarely achieved and often illusory etymological meaning of improvisation: to do something unforeseeable. He undoubtedly created a greater awareness of the implications of improvisation and shed light on the challenges and illusions of improvisation.  

Cage spent his entire career challenging the concept of a fixed musical work by surrendering control as a composer. Improvisation was one method he implemented in his quest for unpredictability.

Cage and his contemporaries employed graphic notation in order to elicit spontaneity and freedom on the part of the performer. For example, December (1952) by Earle Brown (1926-2002) allows performers to freely interpret the seemingly sporadic lines and shapes covering the page. Beginning in the early 1950s, Cage organized “happenings” for like-minded musicians, actors, writers, and dancers interested in exploring “purposeful purposelessness.” Inspired by a similar interest in exploring experimental performance practices, composer Cornelius Cardew (1936-81) co-founded the England-based Scratch Orchestra in 1969.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the music scene reached its pinnacle of diversification by the late 1960s, particularly in the United States. Gunther Schuller’s Third Stream effort of blending art music with jazz and other genres was a significant move to inject orality into a primarily literate tradition.

It was during this explosion of eclecticism that musicologists adopted a more contextual, integrative approach by shifting their attention from the score to its interpretation and realization.

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187 Ibid., 48-49.
188 Gibbs and Taruskin, 1028-29.
In *Music and Discourse*, musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez takes a semiotic approach to answering questions regarding the nature of music.¹⁸⁹

This book is based upon a hypothesis that I shall immediately state: the musical work is not merely what we used to call the “text”; it is not merely a whole composed of “structures” (I prefer, in any case, to write “configurations”). Rather, the work is also constituted by the procedures that have engendered it (acts of composition), and the procedures to which it gives rise: acts of interpretation and perception.¹⁹⁰

According to Nattiez’ semiotic model, music has meaning at all phases of its development, including the oral stage of performance.

The increased hybridity in recent decades also accentuated the need for more extensive research on improvisation. Musicologists and ethnomusicologists alike have been chipping away more rigorously at the vast topic in recent years. Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl emphasizes the extreme variability of improvisation between and within cultural traditions in his research and collections.

There is, clearly, in the world at large and even in the culture of certain small societies, a wide spectrum of improvisation—a continuum of everything from oral composition without notation and the improvisation of cadenzas whose structures explicitly contradict the formal principles of the rest of the piece, to the ability to improvise works whose forms follow the explicit requirements of highly specialized genres such as fugues, and to pieces whose structure is predicated on choices made by the composer at the beginning of a musical statement.¹⁹¹

He argues that “musicological neglect of improvisation” results from negative regard for minority, non-Western, and folk cultures with which improvisation is often associated. A common misconception is that improvisation lacks planning and preparation, and is therefore unworthy of serious scholarship. In hopes of repairing the damage done by such misconceptions,
Nettl illuminates the diversity of improvisation worldwide and its function within various musical cultures.\textsuperscript{192}

Improvisation varies drastically from one culture to another, encompassing an array of practices throughout history. Nettl provides a general list of characteristics to describe its role within Western art music:

(1) something definitely distinct from performance and precomposition, (2) imitation of precomposition with the helping hand of notation withdrawn, (3) the essence of composition where there is aural transmission, (4) an art which the great composers particularly excelled, (5) a craft but not an art, (6) something to be evaluated along the same lines as composition, (7) a process that cannot be explained or analyzed, and (8) a kind of music making that sets apart the musical cultures outside the Western art music establishment.\textsuperscript{193}

Nettl emphasizes that improvisation commonly involves a “point of departure.” Often, performers improvise within certain parameters or are restricted by stylistic boundaries, such as specific chord progressions, themes, or forms. In this manner, improvisation requires a balancing act between stylistic propriety and creative license. Along the lines of Nattiez’ perspective, Nettl explains, “We may wish to reexamine the significance of paper and notation as diagnostic features of true music, and to stop thinking that the mark of a true work of art is the time devoted to its explicit preparation.”\textsuperscript{194} Nettl’s view is directly in line with Rossé’s beliefs outlined further in this chapter.

In the latter half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, free-form improvisation was instigated as a type of performance unassociated with any specific idiom. William L. Cahn describes free improvisation as “the most widely open and accessible type of improvisation for musicians.” He continues, “In this kind of music virtually all of the musical elements are subject to the performer’s real-time selection…In its purest form, performers are completely free to play whatever they wish

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 6-7.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 16.
however they wish, with virtually no external restrictions imposed.” Rossé’s activities as an improvising pianist fall under this category. While he improvises with musicians trained within specific cultural traditions, he is free to improvise without restrictions.

Broadly speaking, the communal aspect of group improvisation requires a balance between individuality and adaptation. Lewis argues,

Working as an improviser in the field of improvised music emphasizes not only technique by individual life choices as well as cultural, ethnic, and personal location. In performances of improvised music, the possibility of internalizing alternative value systems is implicit from the start. The focus of musical discourse suddenly shifts from the individual, autonomous creator to the collective—the individual as a part of global humanity.

In this setting, each performer is forced to adapt instantaneously to the given context of performers, audience, location and other variables. It requires pure instinct, the highest level of communication, and cultural exchange, which are precisely the qualities Rossé emphasizes with his compositions.

The growing body of research on improvisation indicates increasingly widespread acknowledgement of its relevance in Western art music. However, as Francesca R. Sborgi Lawson argues, “The link between the visual technology of notation and its effect on the oral-aural processing of music” needs to be examined more extensively. She advocates for a collaborative approach that would unite experts from relevant disciplines to learn more about the relationship between orality and literacy in music.

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196 Lewis, 110.
Orality in Saxophone Repertoire and Performance

Many contemporary works for saxophone incorporate orality in various ways. Influenced by his native Japanese culture as well as contemporary French music, Ryo Noda (b. 1948) has employed a combination of standard and graphic notation in his works for saxophone, which are widely studied and frequently performed. In his *Improvisation I* for unaccompanied alto saxophone, Noda mimics gestures of the *shakuhachi*, a traditional Japanese flute, leaving the performer relatively free to determine pacing. The piece includes a short section designated for improvisation that restricts the performer to specific pitch content.

The first movement of William Albright’s *Sonata* (1984) has several improvisatory sections marked “*Cadenza,*” “*Cadenza, ad libitum*” and “*senza misura.*” The general structure, dynamics, and pitch content of the improvisatory gestures are specified, but pacing, shaping, and intensity are left to the performer’s discretion. These freer moments provide a flexible space for increased expressivity and individuality in contrast to the surrounding sections, all of which are precisely notated and in strict time.

*Tre Pezzi* (1956), a three-movement work for soprano (or tenor) saxophone or bass trumpet by Giacinto Scelsi (1905-1988), originated as an improvisation by the composer on the ondiola, a keyboard instrument with pedals, dials and keys for producing glissandi, quarter-tones, vibrato, dynamic contrast, octave transpositions, and predetermined timbres. Scelsi’s improvisations were part of his planning process for larger works and were transcribed for a

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wide variety of instruments. The use of drones indicates the influence of Greek, Egyptian, Syrian, and Arabian modes, and Byzantium pitch groupings.201

Numerous saxophonists present improvised music under the broad category of the avant-garde. While they are most commonly considered jazz musicians, these saxophonists create music that bridges the gap between genres. For example, John Zorn (b. 1953) has incorporated Klezmer, Japanese music, and punk into his improvised works and recordings. He is also known for composing open form pieces, such as Cobra (1984), under the category of “game pieces,” which are guided improvisations for open instrumentation. Other saxophonist-improvisers integral to the avant-garde scene include Steve Lacy, Evan Parker, and Anthony Braxton.202 The saxophone has long been a prominent voice in the avant-garde scene and improvised music.

Orality in Rossé’s Approach

Rossé uses the term ‘orality’ in reference to all aspects of music outside the realm of music notation. The most explicit examples of orality in his music are free-form improvisation and non-Western oral practices, which are often combined in his activities as an improvising pianist (e.g. collaborations with Daïmon and Miyazaki). Orality also includes all extra-semantic or unwritten aspects of performance, such as physical gesture or facial expression. Rossé’s training as an improviser from a young age coupled with his interest in exploring new cultures through collaboration renders orality an intrinsic condition of his music.

Similar to George Lewis’ ideas presented earlier in this chapter, Rossé argues that improvisation requires performers to listen more carefully and closely engage with other
musicians, the audience, space, and sound itself. Unlike the process of performing written music, improvising is always active, present, and dependent on the given situation. Rossé views improvisation as an attitude above all else, because it requires one to actively confront life within the frame of culture.  

Rossé often references Bach, Mozart, and general performance practice of the Baroque and Classical periods, a time when musicians improvised regularly. He finds it unfortunate that so many performers and composers have become restricted by literacy, which results in a lack of cultural exchange and detachment from reality. Instead, Rossé advocates for a comprehensive approach involving orality, thus encouraging awareness of today’s social and political situation. As cultures transform through globalization, the arts are responsible for addressing change by confronting the question of cultural identity, an aspect that is always in flux.

Rossé finds that the need to balance literacy and orality is just as relevant to music composition as it is to performance. He uses the term ‘orality’ to delineate any aspects of spontaneity, freedom, improvisation and non-Western oral traditions. “Of course, the relationship between writing and orality, which is not limited to improvisation, is a very balanced relationship between living gesture, physical, even choreographed sound, and a more speculative mental approach connected to writing. Music, art of sound?” This complements the points Ong presents; orality connects people to each other while literacy reinforces this connection by providing a means for analysis. Rossé acknowledges the benefit of fostering orality and literacy in the same musical space.

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204 Ibid., 6.
205 Ibid., 1.
While some composers accomplish this equilibrium through aleatory or graphic notation, Rossé tends to use spatial and proportional notation. As introduced during the discussion of Le Frêne égaré in Chapter 1, his scores are neither strict nor free. He notates ideas in such a way that allows flexibility and demands intuition on the part of the performer. Even though his works are not necessarily the direct result of improvisation, Rossé’s unsystematic repetition and constant transformation of short musical figures sound improvisatory. Specific examples will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Rossé explains his approach in a short description of Bachflüssgeit (1985), a chamber orchestra work written in commemoration of Bach’s 300th birthday.

This piece is important because the performers must rely on the ears and listen attentively to each other. It is written out, yes, but there is also some flexibility here. The score is written in a graphic notation where the melody is connected by lines throughout the score…It is essentially chamber music for fifteen performers. I really like the type of social situations this work demands of the performers. A little bit of improvisation is included…Again, during this piece, I am combining oral traditions and written traditions – an important part of my compositional aesthetic.207

In describing Waaij (1999) for saxophone soloist, piano improviser and chamber ensemble, Rossé raises the same point. “I like this social situation very much. This is active music! Correct energy is very important throughout this work. It is a physical experience for the players.”208

Parallels can certainly be drawn between orality and hybridity within Rossé’s music and musical discourse more broadly. The seemingly disparate elements he combines to form hybrids often contain aspects of non-Western oral traditions and free-form improvisation. Rossé’s relentless concern with cultural exchange and human connection forms a link between orality and hybridity. That is, his application of the concept ‘orality’ and his implementation of orality in practice tend to occupy the same space as his hybridity.

207 Estes, 106.
208 Ibid., 107.
Orality in Rossé’s Music for Saxophone

Rossé’s saxophone repertoire offers many examples of orality. In *Scriu numele tâu* (1992), a three-minute piece for solo soprano saxophone, Rossé uses a combination of standard and spatial notation. The lack of bar lines and meter throughout the piece provide freedom for the performer. As Londeix mentions in a brief essay on the piece, “The notation is not metered, but the rhythm is defined. This allows for greater flexibility in performance.”

*Scriu numele tâu* “is essentially based on the fluctuations of speech [for example, the agogic movements that are present in speech, evident when one speaks easily understood words and ideas more quickly than words conveying more abstract concepts.]” The spontaneous, speech-like manner of the *Scriu numele tâu* results from Rossé’s loosely-repeated ideas. For example, he organizes short groupings of pitches that alter slightly with each reiteration so that the ideas transform gradually and unsystematically. Although segmented, the piece is cohesive through continuity of pitch content, ornamental gesture, and rhythm. The same improvisatory style is evident in his Japanese-influenced works.

*Sonates en arcs*, written for Daniel Kientzy in 1982, requires an individual saxophonist to play the soprano and alto saxophones simultaneously for certain sections. The baritone or bass saxophones, although not played simultaneously, are used for the remainder of the piece. *Sonates en arcs* is in an open-form structure that forces the performer to decide upon its overall design. The specific musical material is provided along with a map of possibilities. In a 2008 interview, Rossé explains the work. “*Sonates* is really the only piece of mine that is set up in this type of global form. It is truly an open form, but with specific solutions. It is not aleatoric. I like this

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210 Ibid., 281.
open situation very much, but it takes a very intelligent musician to make this work.”

Although the material is written out, there is flexibility within each musical episode as well. Thus, the saxophonist has some freedom on both micro and macro levels of interpretation.

Musical orality has been a dominating component of Rossé’s music due to his background as a self-taught pianist. He has made significant strides toward reintegrating orality into Western art music by creating situations in which notation is downplayed and interpreters are given greater agency. Cultures maintaining oral traditions have been instrumental in Rossé’s endeavors; this aspect points to the overlap between hybridity and orality in his approach. Rossé’s turn toward the traditions and music of Japan resulted from his studies with Messiaen. The overwhelming orality within Japanese culture has informed his own integration of orality, as evidenced in Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa, and Orients.

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211 Estes, 17.
CHAPTER 4.
PRIMITIVISM

Due to its complex history and discursive baggage, the term ‘primitivism’ carries with it a plethora of implications. It has been transformed over the centuries, accumulating layers of meaning as it evolved. Examining the concept of ‘primitivism’ and its manifestations within philosophical theory, art history, and European colonialism enables a grounded discussion of its relevance in musicology, saxophone repertoire, and Rossé’s music. As a term frequently used by Rossé to describe his approach, primitivism will also be explored from his perspective.

‘Primitivism’ in Philosophical Theory

Some of the first scholars to theorize about the term were philosophers Arthur Lovejoy and George Boas. Their 1935 book, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*, remains a valuable resource for many disciplines. The book traces “man’s reflection upon the general course of his own history and upon the value of those achievements of his which have been most distinctive of that history.”

By introducing and analyzing ancient texts, Boas and Lovejoy demonstrate that humans have always questioned the “value of the outcome of civilization so far,” a behavior equated with primitivism.

Boas and Lovejoy specify two types of primitivism that demonstrate overlapping features. The first is ‘chronological primitivism,’

One of the many answers which may be and have been given to the question: What is the temporal distribution of good, or value, in the history of mankind, or, more generally, in the entire history of the world? It is, in short, a kind of philosophy of history, a theory, or a customary assumption, as to the time—past or present or future—at which the most

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213 Ibid., xi.
excellent condition of human life, or the best state of the world in general, must be supposed to occur.\textsuperscript{214}

Theories of chronological primitivism question the widely accepted ‘idea of progress,’ “a tendency inherent in nature or in man to pass through a regular sequence of stages of development in past, present and future, the later stages being – with perhaps occasional retardations or minor retrogressions – superior to the earlier.”\textsuperscript{215} If progress is assumed, then past patterns offer predictions of what lies ahead. However, chronological primitivism indicates “nothing better is to be anticipated than a recovery of what has been lost,” an ultimately “backward-looking habit of mind.”\textsuperscript{216}

As defined by Boas and Lovejoy, the other type is ‘cultural primitivism,’ “the discontent of the civilized with civilization, or with some conspicuous and characteristic feature of it.”\textsuperscript{217}

The cultural primitivist’s general belief is “that the simpler life of which he has dreamed has been somewhere, at some time, actually lived by human beings.”\textsuperscript{218} Boas and Lovejoy refer to people of primary oral cultures as living examples.

These contemporary embodiments of this ideal have usually been found among races not intimately known to, and existing at some considerable distance from, the people to whom the preacher of primitivism commends them as examples to be followed, or exhibits them as more fortunate branches of our species whose state is to be envied.\textsuperscript{219}

Cultural primitivism is also characterized by a “love of strangeness and the revolt against the familiar,” often referred to as ‘exoticism.’\textsuperscript{220} There is a certain nostalgia that has historically driven this type of primitivism.

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 8.
Cultural primitivism can be divided into two categories: ‘soft’ and ‘hard.’ The first depicts the “primitive” lifestyle as easy and simple compared with that which is modern and developed. It presents people of oral cultures as fortunate to be unburdened by technology, complex social structures, or moral codes. Hard primitivism views oral populations as courageous for overcoming risk, confronting extreme physical challenge, and managing without the aid of technology. Both perspectives romanticize oral cultures, upholding them as superior to so-called “civilization.”

Boas and Lovejoy emphasize the central role and application of the term ‘nature’ in relation to primitivism.

The history of primitivism is in great part a phase of a larger historic tendency which is one of the strangest, most potent and most persistent factors in Western thought – the use of the term ‘nature’ to express the standard of human values, the identification of the good with that which is ‘natural’ or ‘according to nature.’

The concept of ‘nature’ has acquired a variety of meanings, many of which are ambiguous and contradictory. Boas and Lovejoy describe it as “probably the most equivocal in the vocabulary of the European peoples.”

The phrase ‘state of nature’ is similarly problematic, because it assumes a standard to which humanity should be compared at any given time. “The primitive condition of mankind, or the life of ‘savage’ peoples, has usually been extolled because it has been supposed to constitute ‘the state of nature.’” Boas and Lovejoy place the term into seven categories, including its most general form, ‘the temporal state of nature,’ defined as “the original condition of things,

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221 Ibid., 10.
222 Ibid., 11-12.
223 Ibid., 12.
224 Ibid., 12.
and especially the state of man as nature first made him, whatever this condition may be supposed to have been.”

Philosopher and composer Jean-Jacques Rousseau, an important intellectual figure of the 18th century, devoted much of his attention to theorizing about the ‘state of nature.’ Rousseau describes the essence of the ‘savage man’ in his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, published in 1755:

His imagination portrays nothing; his heart yearns for nothing; his modest needs are easily within reach; and he is so far from having sufficient knowledge to wish to acquire even more that he can have neither foresight nor curiosity. Nature’s spectacle becomes so familiar that it leaves him indifferent. There is always the same pattern, there are always the same revolutions.

While incapable of self-reflection in the state of nature, humans gradually transformed themselves as they learned to adapt through the use of tools. “Man’s effort to struggle actively with the world resulted in psychological changes. The faculty of comparison made him capable of rudimentary reflection: he began to perceive the differences between things.” When man discovered his superiority to animals, he felt a sense of pride. The distinction between ‘self’ and ‘other’ was born. Although returning to the state of nature would be impossible, Rousseau believed that the attempt to recreate its essence would improve society.

The skepticism exhibited by Rousseau during the Age of Enlightenment extended through the 19th century and peaked in the early 20th century. In the midst of colonialism, industrialism, and destructive world wars, Westerners craved the naïveté and simplicity of a bygone era. In *Primitivism and Modern Art* (1994), Colin Rhodes’ explains, “Whereas the

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225 Ibid., 14-15.
229 Ibid., 27.
conventional Western viewpoint at the turn of the century imposed itself as superior to the
dominant, the Primitivist questioned the validity of that assumption, and used those same ideas as
a means of challenging or subverting his or her own culture, or aspects of it.”

Marshall McLuhan, Walter Ong’s teacher and mentor, claimed in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*
(1962) that “the tribal state was the normal condition of humanity and that that condition had
been disrupted in the West by the invention of the phonetic alphabet, a radical technology unique
to the West.” According to McLuhan, the “tribal state” was characterized by its orality. Print
led to visualization of knowledge, which subsequently resulted in rationalization, and ultimately,
“mechanistic science and industry, capitalism, nationalism, and so on.” The rise of literacy is
therefore responsible for leading to general attitudes of primitivism, or the desire to return to
orality.

Scholarly discourse continues to question the appropriateness of the term ‘primitive.’ In
the 1950s and 60s, anthropologists who studied the application of ‘primitive’ deemed its general
use in scholarly writing “ambiguous, inconsistent, and demeaning:”

From a terminological perspective, it was argued that it names a category of cultures that
do not in fact exist, that do not have characteristics that are not shared by all other
cultures and peoples, and that therefore is of very little intellectual or analytical
advantage. Thus the use of the term can be justified neither empirically nor
theoretically.

The common connotations of ‘primitive,’ such as simple, inferior or lacking intelligence, are
generally negative as compared with ‘civilized,’ a term that enjoys associations with that which
is cultivated, sophisticated, or modern. For this reason, Ong suggests replacing ‘primitive’ with
the term ‘oral,’ in hopes of highlighting differences in culture without assigning negative

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230 Rhodes, 13.
165.
232 Ibid., 165.
233 Geertz, 51.
implications. Other scholars have adjusted their vocabulary by using more specific terms, such as ‘indigenous,’ ‘tribal’ or ‘native.’ However, these alternatives have also been deemed pejorative and are not necessarily improvements.

In *The Neo-Primitivist Turn: Critical Reflections on Alterity, Culture, and Modernity* (2006) cultural theorist Victor Li argues that “the avoidance of the word ‘primitive,’ far from signifying a complete rejection of primitivism, represents primitivism’s transmutation into the liberal creed of multiculturalism, the preservation of cultural diversity in the age of globalization.” In his book, Li explores neo-primitivism, an “anti-primitivist primitivism that simultaneously disavows and reinscribes the primitive.” He justifies using ‘primitive’ in this context because the term “still seems to serve a useful theoretical function, though it is now conceptualized as a regulative ideal rather than as an actuality.” Li argues that running away from the terms ‘primitive’ and ‘primitivism’ is unhelpful even within neo-primitivism, because “primitivist logic” persists under other guises. For this reason, he warns those dealing with primitivism that “an equally unending critical vigilance and reflexivity on our part” is required.

Primitivism in Ethnological Museums, Modern Art, and Postcolonial France

In *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945-1975* (2011), Daniel J. Sherman reiterates Li’s remark: “A productive use of primitivism in historical study demands a flexible conceptualization that takes into account its multiple valences at particular moments.” This is

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234 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*. 171.
236 Ibid., ix.
237 Ibid., x.
especially useful in tracing primitivism through the emergence of ethnological museums and early modern visual arts movements, both of which are direct consequences of colonialism. Given Paris’ role as the center of these events, and coincidentally, the city in which Rossé completed his musical training, the ensuing narrative focuses on French culture. As Sherman’s research indicates, primitivism continued to evolve after decolonization and is still a part of French culture today.

As early as the 15th century, explorers brought objects from colonized lands in Africa and Oceania back to Europe. However, it was not until the mid-1800s that Europeans began preserving and studying these artifacts. They did so to gain deeper understanding of colonized peoples in hopes of forming more effective trade agreements. The acquired objects were initially placed in museums of Berlin, London, and Rome alongside antiquities until ethnological exhibits were established. In 1878, the Trocadéro became the first ethnological museum in Paris, housing objects from America, Mexico, Colombia, Africa’s Canary Islands, and Oceania.239

Ethnologists were initially unappreciative of artifacts from oral cultures due to the influence of dominating evolutionary theories. They crammed imported objects into display cases without bothering to classify them by region. It was not until visual artists and collectors demonstrated an inclination for these objects that ethnologists gained new perspective on the value of their collections. Following World War I, museums began to designate certain items as aesthetically superior by displaying them as art. For example, the collection at the Trocadéro was reorganized in 1928 and again in 1937-39 when it was moved to the Musée de l’Homme. Art historian Robert Goldwater notes, “‘Excellent’ objects continued to be singled out for their

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aesthetic qualities at the same time as their use and meaning were carefully explained.”

Cultural context began to play a more significant role in the life of these artifacts.

As patrons and champions of these museums, many visual artists acquired an affinity for the aesthetic qualities of what came to be called “primitive art.” Goldwater was one of the first to trace this phenomenon in *Primitivism in Modern Art*:

Far from being the cause of any ‘primitive’ qualities that may be found in modern art, primitive art only served as a kind of stimulating focus, a catalytic which, though not itself used or borrowed from, still helped the artists to formulate their own aims because they could attribute to it the qualities they themselves sought to attain.

He argues that in addition to appreciating the formal aspects of primitive art, visual artists were drawn to the expression of basic human emotion they found these objects to possess.

In “Primitivism” in 20th-century Art, Will Rubin asserts that primitive art appealed to modern artists “as a countercultural battering ram,” with which they could challenge “prevailing aesthetic canon.” He adds, “Artists such as Picasso, Matisse, Braque, and Brancusi were aware of the conceptual complexity and aesthetic subtlety of the best tribal art, which is only simple in the sense of its reductiveness—and not, as was popularly believed, in the sense of simplemindedness.”

Pablo Picasso is a fitting example of what Rhodes calls ‘stylistic’ primitivism. He refers to a transformation in Picasso’s painting style between 1907 and 1909 that clearly demonstrates influences from African sculpture. Rhodes deduces that these changes resulted from Picasso’s exposure to African artifacts at the Trocadéro. His *Nude with Raised Arms (The Dancer of Avignon)* of 1907 shares obvious similarities in form and texture with Kota reliquary figures.

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240 Ibid., 8-11.
241 Ibid., 252.
242 Ibid., 252-255.
244 Ibid., 7.
Beyond the stylistic features of these artifacts, Picasso was interested in the “magical” qualities he found in African sculpture and sought to capture the same expressivity in his work.245 These influences were integrated into Picasso’s existing style to create a hybrid approach.

Certain ethnologists, such as Joseph Maes and Ernst Vatter considered it problematic that artifacts were extracted from their original context and placed in the ‘art’ category by Westerners.246 Fred Myers addresses this concern in “‘Primitivism,’ Anthropology, and the Category of ‘Primitive Art.’”

Objects do not exist as ‘primitive art’. This is a category created for their circulation, exhibition and consumption outside their original habitats. To be framed as ‘primitive art’ is to be resignified – as both ‘primitive’ and as ‘art’ – acts that require considerable social and cultural work, and critical analysis of these processes has fundamentally transformed the study of art.247

Scholars have been challenging the notion that art and aesthetics are universal concepts by demonstrating that the concept of ‘art’ itself has changed significantly since ancient times.248 Myer argues that assigning universal aesthetic value to appropriated primitive objects strips them of their “meaning, context, and intention,”249 raising the issue of ethnocentrism.

Meanwhile, at the forefront of romantic-exotic primitivism was Paul Gauguin, a French artist who “has been made a symbol for the throwing off of the stifling superfluities of the hothouse culture of Europe in favor of return to that more natural way of life of which Rousseau is the generally accepted advocate.”250 Gauguin spent extended periods of time in peasant communities around France in the late 19th century and later moved to the Caribbean, Tahiti, and Marquesas Islands to experience the so-called simple life on these colonized islands.

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245 Rhodes, 115-116.
248 Ibid., 275.
249 Ibid., 272.
250 Goldwater, 63.
His was an exoticism which thought that happiness was elsewhere but which at the same time—and this is what is characteristic of his part in a new tendency—sought not the luxurious and intricately exotic of the earlier nineteenth century, but the native and the simple.\footnote{Ibid., 65.}

The only direct influence of primitive art on Gauguin’s work is evident in his woodcuts. The thematic and technical aspects of these pieces demonstrate borrowings from Marquesan wood and bone carving, such as figures and facial expressions of Tahitian idols.\footnote{Ibid., 71-72.} The images of Gauguin’s paintings, on the other hand, reflect the artist’s glorification of Tahitian culture in a conceptual manner.

Primitivist trends in the visual arts and elevation of primitive art by ethnological museums hold serious cultural implications regarding colonization. In the 1930s, ethnological museums in Paris claimed to “promote a nonracist appreciation of human diversity using scientific research made possible by the admittedly imperfect political system of colonialism.”\footnote{Sherman, 21.} Sherman argues that instead, the actions of these museums “served at once to reinscribe and to erase the colonial entanglements with which they began.”\footnote{Ibid., 23.} The many artifacts that museums had confiscated from colonized lands and rural France for research purposes were “material traces of the traditions it simultaneously celebrated, mourned, and displaced.”\footnote{Ibid., 25.}

Sherman finds that primitivism is still a “live force” in French culture and “remains entwined with colonial and postcolonial relationships, with market forces, and with the changing politics of difference.”\footnote{Ibid., 192.} Relatively recent controversial events regarding museums in Paris demonstrate the complexity and longevity of the decolonization process. In 1996, newly elected president Jacques Chirac announced the idea for the Musée du Quai Branly. Receiving much
media attention and scholarly criticism in its planning phase, the museum finally opened in 2006 as home to an enormous collection of non-Western objects.

Against the backdrop of a newly intensified debate over the French empire, including a short-lived provision in a 2005 law calling for public schools to teach the “positive effects” of French colonialism, the Quai Branly project prompted criticism for its lack of sufficient attention to the country’s—and its collections’—colonial past.257

Sherman presents the predominance of today’s French primitivism, a condition that cannot be regarded merely as a distant attitude or artistic approach.

In her “Introduction” to From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism, and Primitivism, 1919-1935, Carole Sweeney offers an alternative perspective of cultural primitivism in France that can be expanded beyond the interwar years. Sweeney illustrates the complexity of primitivism and its manifestations in literature, music, and the visual arts with Paris as her focus. Rather than place examples of primitivism on a spectrum of racism, Sweeney prefers to approach situations of primitivism in a holistic manner. “In other words, the inequities of the colonial situation itself do not account for nor precisely reproduce aesthetic and cultural engagements that may occur as a result of this underlying subjugation.”258 Sweeney argues that through primitivism, avant-gardists were able to open up a dialogue, thus uprooting hierarchies imposed prior to the First World War. “This dialogism by its very nature was a space in which not one but many voices could be heard; it was a multivocal space that was by turns oppositional, internationalist, and nonhierarchical.”259 She presents the possibility of moving past a primitivism that is “conflated with a brutishly uncaring aesthetic modernism or as a simple act of ruthless appropriation” and arrives at “a complex aesthetic and poetical occurrence.”260

257 Ibid., 200.
259 Ibid., 7.
260 Ibid., 8.
Like Sweeney, Kwame Anthony Appiah argues that colonial and postcolonial discourses tend to boil down primitivism and the relationships between its actors too rigidly. The Other is too often silenced through objectivity rather than given a subjective voice. Appiah believes intellectuals and artists should be allowed more freedom to create without being labeled as “otherness machines.” He states, “Perhaps the predicament of the postcolonial intellectual is simply that as intellectuals…we are, indeed, always at the risk of becoming otherness machines, with the manufacture of alterity as our principal role.”261 Rather than worry about the implications of a work or its intended audience, “what we should learn from is the imagination that produced it.”262 Appiah focuses on postcolonial Africa, claiming “the contemporary cultural production of many African societies, and the many traditions whose evidences so vigorously remain, is an antidote to the dark vision of the postcolonial novelist.”263 Despite Africa’s ongoing political and cultural problems, “there are those who will not see themselves as Other.”264

The perspectives offered by Sweeney and Appiah place primitivism in a more flexible space without denouncing the negative consequences of colonization and the difficulties experienced by those recovering from it.

Primitivism in Western Art Music History

Primitivism has been an active force in Western art music for centuries. As early as the Renaissance, philosophical discourse regarding the origins of music and its role in society directly influenced compositional style. By turning to sources from classical antiquity, theorists and musicians of the early Renaissance arrived at a new, humanistic approach to music.

262 Ibid., 357.
263 Ibid., 356.
264 Ibid., 356.
composition. Charles G. Nauert explains that Renaissance humanism was “conceived as ‘a new philosophy of life’ or a glorification of human nature in secular terms.”\(^ {265}\) Whereas ancient texts had previously been upheld as authoritative sources, humanists acknowledged the transitory nature of these writings and found them to be valuable sources for broader political and ethical discussions: “Any debatable issue involves matters that can be determined only at the level of probability. If absolute certainty could be obtained, then debate, discussion, and persuasion would be preposterous.”\(^ {266}\) Thus, humanists deemed the study of human nature, ethics, politics, and rhetoric of utmost importance.

During the 16\(^{th}\) century, Vincenzo Galilei hoped to illuminate music’s “powerful ethical and emotional effects upon its listeners” by applying humanist ideals to the composition of vocal music.\(^ {267}\) Galilei aimed to more accurately capture the qualities of human nature in order to elicit an emotional response from the audience. More specifically, he focused on the physical aspects of speaking rather than the actual meaning of the words. It was therefore the manner of delivery that possessed the potential rhetorical power required to move the listener, not the content of the message. According to Galilei, the new \textit{stile rappresentativo}, or “representational style,” would be most successfully achieved through monody, a solo vocalist accompanied by lute.\(^ {268}\)

In “The Concept of the Baroque,” musicologist Tim Carter credits humanism with providing the intellectual foundation upon which modern discourse on aesthetics has been developed: “A shift from the whats and hows of musical creation to the whys and wherefores of musical perception exposed the need for a poetics of music, of the art and craft of modern

\(^{266}\) Ibid., 16.
musical expression, and thus for a critical language to explore notions of value in contemporary musical art.”

The Enlightenment borrowed humanist ideas from the Renaissance, including those attributed to Aristotle. In his Poetics, Aristotle claimed that human passions could be communicated in music through the imitation of human actions. In line with this approach, Rousseau “believed music grew from the primal need to express human passions and melody’s imitation of language is the best way to express these passions.” According to him, expression is “not the mere representation of human emotions in the musical performance, but the expression that allows the listener to experience them.” As an inherent component of imitation, expression “happens in the process of music’s imitation of a design in nature.”

In his Essay on the Origins of Language of 1781, Rousseau states, “Music has its own object and means of communication,” thus recognizing “the potential in music for the expression of emotion as separate from language” and posits that music “surpasses language in its energy and ability to express emotion.” Katherine Hirt summarizes Rousseau’s assertion:

Music as an art imitates language, but when language began to develop as a tool to articulate ideas, it imitated melody as a form of expression. Music thus imitates this ‘original expression’ in linguistic utterances that relay feeling to the listener.

Rousseau’s German contemporaries constructed similar theories of imitation that fell under the umbrella of Affektenlehre, or “Theory of Affects.”

In response to Rousseau’s philosophy, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) developed a theory separating language from music: “Music and spoken language for Herder

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269 Carter, 52.
271 Ibid., 7.
272 Ibid., 7.
274 Ibid., 14.
come from the same emotional outburst, or Urlaut (elemental sound), ‘Ach’ or ‘O,’ but Herder describes language’s development as separate from music and a necessary means to articulate feelings and experiences."275 Both Rousseau and Herder “began to move toward thinking about music as expression rather than imitation, for music as its own language became a tool used to communicate emotions more immediately than words.”276

Around the turn of the 19th century, German philosophers such as Kant, Schlegel, Schopenhauer, and Reichardt generally moved in this direction.277 E.T.A. Hoffman, a major intellectual figure of the Romantic era, promoted instrumental music as the most expressive art for its ability to penetrate “the inner spiritual world” without the means of representation.278 Since words and images by their very nature refer to the external world, Hoffman considered vocal music inferior. Only instrumental music had the potential for direct expression.

Hoffman’s concept, known as “absolute” music, was the backbone of Romanticism. In direct opposition with humanist notions, the idea of absolute music led aesthetics in a new direction. Taruskin states, “The whole history of music, as Hoffmann viewed it, was one of progressive emancipation of music from all bonds that compromised the autonomy and absoluteness of expression that Hoffman took to be its essence.”279

Although seemingly contradictory, it was precisely this environment of the 19th century that increasingly drew composers toward peasant and folk music. The motivation behind this trend is evidenced in Herder’s theory that there is no universal human nature: “Each epoch of human history, each and every human collectivity was a unique entity—and uniquely

275 Ibid., 14.
276 Ibid., 15.
277 Ibid., 31.
279 Ibid., 642.
valuable.” Herder used language as his springboard by claiming that it shapes the modes of thought and personality of a given community, thus representing that community uniquely. Extended to other aspects of culture, such as clothing, behavior, and art, this concept serves to elevate local customs and folklore as an authentic representation of nationality. Once considered ‘low’ culture, peasant, vernacular, and folk customs became worthy of valuing.\footnote{281}

Nationalism, the “sense of a common, shared history, a concept that tends to cut across local and individual differences,” was the driving force of mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century primitivism.\footnote{282} It shares the mixed implications of the concept ‘nation,’ a “community’s terms of self-definition, according to religion, ethnicity, race, language or culture, in which any act of inclusion is, necessarily, an act of exclusion.”\footnote{283} While the use of folk music is meant to represent and empower one nation, it simultaneously cuts off Others within and outside of that nation.

The designation of folk music as the emblem of nationalism fulfilled the Romantic need to produce absolute music. Taruskin points out that the supposedly simple and uncivilized nature of folk culture provided an avenue for composers to achieve universal truth:

Belief that the qualities of technologically backward or chronologically early cultures are superior to those of contemporary civilization, or more generally, that it is those things that are least socialized, least civilized—children, peasants, ‘savages,’ raw emotion, plain speech—that are closest to truth.\footnote{284}

In Germany, composers incorporated German dance songs that were composed in a medieval style. Poets and musicians looked to the Dark Ages for themes that would authentically embody Germany’s unique culture and simultaneously contribute to the achievement of musical autonomy.

\footnote{281} Ibid., 122.  
\footnote{282} Beard and Gloag, 117.  
\footnote{283} Ibid., 117.  
Under the broad umbrella of nationalism, primitivism remained a salient feature of art music as Romanticism gave way to Modernism in the early 1900s. Richard Middleton describes the irony of the situation, as follows:

There is located ‘below’ the sphere of meaning and reflexivity an image, or a kind of memory, of musical immediacy—of prediscursive musical practices, or musics of nature, often identified with a range of others (archaic, folk, popular, foreign, exotic), whose musics are taken to really, authentically, belong to them. Ironically, it is the development of elaborate alienating systems in the Western musical culture that makes possible the depiction and annexation of these others: only when a sophisticated method of manipulating (mediating) semiotic difference is in place can immediacy be portrayed.\(^{285}\)

On the one hand, there is an “awareness of music’s expanding meaningfulness” and contrarily, “a quest for its essential immediacy (sometimes manifesting itself in an unwillingness to shift music as such out of a sphere of pure spontaneity).”\(^{286}\) Taruskin states, “Nostalgia is perhaps the most modern and complicated—or in one word, the most modernist—of all emotions.”\(^{287}\) This is the same nostalgia that permeated early modern visual arts movements.

An early Modernist example of this can be found in Mahler’s settings of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (“The youth’s magic horn”), an anthology of German folk lyrics from 1887 to 1901. Such pastoral themes often arise in modernist music as evidence of “the wistful irony of the thoroughly modern, thoroughly urban spirit, conscious of its separation from the ‘natural’ world and alienated by that consciousness from its own stressful environment.”\(^{288}\) This “nostalgic obsession” reflected a pervading demand for authenticity and spontaneity. As illustrated in *Ulricht* (“Primordial light”), the fourth movement of his Second Symphony, Mahler skillfully


\(^{286}\) Ibid., 60.


\(^{288}\) Ibid., 21.
covers up his “melodic simplicity” with sophisticated harmony and orchestration that “lend an air of ‘spontaneity’ to the performance.”

In the first quarter of the 20th century, primitivism continued to thrive as a modernist tool in ballet, which until then had been an unpopular idiom. Sergey Diaghilev (1872-1929), founder of the Paris-based company Ballets Russes, popularized ballet by collaborating with composers to depict themes of Russian folklore in an untraditional way. The young, inexperienced, yet ambitious composer who seemed most appropriate for the job was Igor Stravinsky. Diaghilev’s first collaboration with Stravinsky was The Firebird (1910), titled after its protagonist, a beautiful Slavic mythological creature.

Stravinsky’s next ballet for the Ballet Russes was Petrushka, premiered in 1911. Set in pre-Christian antiquity, it contained “many attempts to foster…a new mythological age.” Taruskin describes the approach as neoprimitivist, which he defines differently than Victor Li. “Neoprimitivism, the quest for a modern style through evocations of prehistory, was the primary engine then driving Russian artistic maximalism.”

Stravinsky’s music was extremely simple and diatonic compared with the “decadence of ‘Europe’” at the time, yet “with no hint of either monotony or of unsophistication.”

That same year, Stravinsky completed Rite of Spring, which was premiered in 1913. While its first performance was a “riotous fiasco,” Stravinsky’s Rite soon became “the triumph of his career.” The ballet depicts scenes from pagan Russia, but is meant to express much more than that. As Nicholas Roerich explains, Rite of Spring is not simply a representation of

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289 Ibid., 21.
290 Ibid., 151-152.
291 Ibid., 159.
292 Ibid., 161.
293 Taruskin, The Danger of Music, 421.
Russian folklore or Russian nationalism, it “is more ancient and pan-human.” In 1935, Marc Blitzstein claims that it marked the beginning of primitivism in music: “Early Primitivism is violent, rhythmic, blunt…early Primitivism is intent upon short successive electric moments.”

While Stravinsky denied any use of folksong in The Rite of Spring, save the opening bassoon solo, sketches that were discovered later prove that he did indeed include transcribed folk melodies throughout the piece. Many of them came from Rimsky-Korsakov’s 1877 folk-music anthology, which Stravinsky had also used for Firebird and Petrushka. Unlike his Russian contemporaries who used folk songs in a conventional manner, Stravinsky “was to use them as part of his self-liberation from that artistic mainstream, and as things turned out, its downright subversion.” Stravinsky’s style has been compared to Cubist painting. Both possess an ‘unfinished’ or fractured quality that comes across as rough and stark, seemingly ‘hand-made.’

One of the early 20th century composers most associated with folk music is Béla Bartók. As Nándor F. Dreisziger explains, Bartók’s incorporation of Hungarian folk music demonstrates his “ability to transcend the ethnographic confines of his own ethnic group that makes his patriotism different from that of most of his compatriots.” His intention was not to superficially exploit Hungarian culture, but rather promote it through his compositions. Bartók’s political involvement in the mid-20th century attests to his commitment to improving the post-

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294 Ibid., 424.  
war situation in Hungary and for building a more positive reputation for its culture. As Judit Frigyesi describes, “Bartók’s search for a pure and integral peasant culture was not a sign of naiveté. It reflected the social and artistic need to find some substance in Hungarian life behind the façade of empty nationalism.”

In turn, Bartók felt that peasant music would contribute to art music a “natural force whose operation is unconscious.” As Julie Brown explains, he believed “contemporary art music needs the ‘spirit’ of authentic folk music, that metaphysical aspect embracing the supposedly spontaneous expression of the physical and spiritual life of the folk: it’s ‘throbbing life.’” In other words, “even though new melodies inevitably come into contact with various peasant musics” Bartók believed that “the ‘home’ music is capable of transforming the ‘new’ music into its own type.” While 19th century music displayed exoticism, modernist composers, such as Ravel, Debussy, Stravinsky, and Kodály “have imbued their music with the true ‘spirit’ of folk music.” Ultimately, Bartók’s primitivism demonstrated his desire to create “a new Hungarian art music” of modernist proportions.

During the 1930s, composers in the United States increasingly reverted to the country’s “low-others,” namely the African-American population, to establish an “American” style of composition. An iconic example of this phenomenon is George Gerswhin’s opera *Porgy and Bess*, which was premiered in 1935. Richard Middleton describes the conflicts at work within the production.

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299 Ibid., 299-301.
302 Ibid., 134.
303 Ibid., 134.
304 Ibid., 134-136.
The relationship in the opera between the ‘folk’ world of Catfish Row—innocent and
arcladian—and the values of a modernizing America—grown-up, sophisticated, corrupt—
which are forever intruding can be linked to the central debates which have surrounded
the work, focusing as they do either on the question of exploitation (does Gershwin steal
from black music? Does he patronize his characters?) or on that of aesthetic status (does
the piece succeed in the grow-up world of opera?).\textsuperscript{305}

Middleton points to musical examples of appropriation and exploitation, such as the
“pseudoprimitive drumming” in the chorus of “I Ain’t Got No Shame,” drones and osinatos in
the fishermen’s spiritual, and the cries and shouts of Serena. He suggests that Gershwin’s
production clearly illustrates primitivism:

Porgy’s minstrelized “I Got Plenty o’ Nuttin” draws on a different stereotype. But the
musical differences between its simple scalar tune, with rag-style syncopations and banjo-
strum accompaniment, and the pentatonics and blue notes of the other pieces mentioned
does not disguise the ideological link, which lies in the picturing of simplicity.\textsuperscript{306}

Middleton concludes that Gershwin depictions represent “civilization’s parody of the
precultured.”\textsuperscript{307}

American Experimentalism has also dabbled in primitivism, as evidenced in the music of
Henry Cowell. He wrote about the potential of microtonal scales as material for experimental
composition in \textit{New Music Resources}, which was written during the 1910s, but went unpublished
until 1930. “Sliding tones, based on ever-changing values of pitch instead of steady pitches…are
very frequently used in primitive music, and often in Oriental music.”\textsuperscript{308} Cowell’s primitivism
parallels that of the early modern visual artists. According to John Corbett, Cowell, along with
Leo Ornstein and George Antheil, “were arguably the musical equivalents of Picasso in their

\textsuperscript{305} Middleton, 67.
\textsuperscript{306} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{307} Ibid., 68.
overt use of primitivism.”309 They used aesthetic qualities of non-Western objects to create an original hybrid.

Corbett brings attention to Cowell’s piano music of the 1910s and 20s as an example: “Cowell’s early work…remains particularly interesting and valuable in its oblique use of non-Western musics, the way that it tends to treat them as inspiration and catalyst rather than as exotic, ‘savage’ incendiary devices to be thrown at polite concert conventions.”310 Cowell applies techniques typically used on plucked instruments (e.g. Japanese koto) to the piano. By “abstracting the major icon of Western art music,” the piano, he creates totally new techniques and approaches. Corbett argues, “According to this model, non-Western musics provide a mirror that allows Western music to reconsider itself.”311

His latter statement reiterates the concern posed by postcolonial theorists, such as Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, that hybridity “conceals domination and inequality.”312 On the other hand, postmodernists find that the ever-increasing pluralism and eclecticism of the postwar era negate universalism and hierarchical dominance of the West. In grappling with the complexity of extreme hybridity, scholars of different camps have taken vastly opposing views. Given the postcolonial implications attached to ‘primitivism,’ Rossé’s use of the term and his musical application are a delicate matter to untangle.

Primitivism in Saxophone Repertoire

Many works for saxophone demonstrate the influence of primitivism, whether through the depiction of ancient mythologies, imitation of older musics, or reference to oral traditions. In

309 Corbett, 167.
310 Ibid., 168.
311 Ibid., 169.
312 Georgine Born and David Hesmondhalgh, introduction to Western Music and its Others, 21.
a short essay, Londeix points out the underlying primitivism behind André Jolivet’s *Fantaisie-Impromptu* (1953). A short piece for alto saxophone and piano,

> It illustrates a conception of religious art that is as far from intellectual art as it is from entertaining art (‘religious’ being used in an etymological sense, that is ‘relier,’ ‘to link, in direct relation with the universal cosmic system’…tied to the Spirit by the spacialization of the sound material, and linked to creation by the freedom of the rhythms and timbres).\(^{313}\)

In the footnote of this passage, Londeix clarifies Jolivet’s perspective. “He sought to tie ancient and contemporary art together, as well as ancient man and modern man. The ‘magic’ of primitive man is, for Jolivet, similar to modern religions of today. It is in this sense that his music, described above as ‘magical’ and ‘obsessional,’ is religious.”\(^{314}\) The music itself is lyrical, dance-like, and clearly jazz-inspired.

The influence of mythological thought and zoomusicology are demonstrated in *Aulodie* (1983) for soprano saxophone and fixed media by François-Bernard Mâche (b. 1935).\(^{315}\) In his published book, *Music, Myth, and Nature, or the Dolphins of Arion* (1992), Mâche opposes the modernist idea of progress in music, as carried out by Beethoven, Brahms, and Schoenberg, emphasizing instead the relevance of mythology and nature. Given the recurrence of similar themes among ancient mythologies, such as Japanese and Greek, Mâche believes that there must be “certain universal laws of the human intellect, which reside in its imaginative activities such as music, poetry, visual arts, dance, social ceremonies etc.”\(^{316}\) It is no surprise that as a former student of Messiaen, Mâche analyzed and integrated birdsong. His belief that animals might also make music affected his composition. “If it turns out that music is a wide spread phenomenon in


\(^{314}\) Ibid., 251.

\(^{315}\) Other versions of *Aulodie* exist for oboe and Bb clarinet.

several living species apart from man, this will very much call into question the definition of music, and more widely that of man and his culture, as well as the idea we have of the animal itself.”317 In reference to the aulos, an ancient Greek wind instrument, Aulodie represents the struggle between technology and nature. Mâche’s expressivity lies in the juxtaposition between vocal lyricism through monody and outbursts of machine-like sonorities.

Lee Hyla (1952-2014) reflects on the ancient Etruscan people in his bass clarinet and baritone saxophone piece, We Speak Etruscan (1992). He depicts the Etruscans with his own musical language, as described in the score’s performance notes. “The music’s jazz-like riffs contrasting with moments of lyrical stillness provide a vehicle that is a tour de force for these wind-instrument cousins.”318 Score markings, such as “Jagged, sustained, and honking,” “Furiously,” and “Intense” accompany fast, rhythmic sections to create the primitiveness that Hyla hoped to achieve.

**Primitivism in Rossé’s Approach**

There are several essential elements undergirding Rossé’s primitivism, such as the notion of physicality. He argues that musicians must revive the animalistic rawness of the state of nature in order to stay musically engaged and in turn, connected to the audience on a visceral level.

I think that before you have culture, you must discover your animalistic qualities—your physicality: your hands, your breathing, your voice, your posture, your mind, your soul. All of my music is generally physical; it is not intended for a little player who is small in his ideas and this is not engaging. Physical qualities are not only animalistic, they are spiritual as well—it is all the same. You must think about it before you play—Zen-like—totally engaged!319

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317 Ibid., 95.
319 Estes, 100.
Rossé’s approach closely resembles humanism of the Renaissance while his mention of pre-culture animalism echoes Enlightenment thinkers, such as Rousseau, as well as the Affektenlehre concept asserted by his German contemporaries. The idea that rhetorical power is embodied by extra-semantic aspects of delivery, such as physical gesture, facial expression, and inflection, connects Rossé with earlier scholars.

Rossé finds that the process of making music highlights the otherwise unreachable inner conscience of the creator.

Creation is an act bringing us somewhat closer to our animality, a curious intermingling between our cultural and biological states. If creation were just a more or less learned cultural act, it would be expressible in terms of an analytical compilation. But the cat sneaks into the shade of our conscience...the work is not prey, it is a vital space where the unspoken artistic emotion transgresses the laws of latent daily incommunicability... It corroborates the place of man in the animal world, all while not excluding his cultural states as varied as man’s laugh.320

By uncovering the pre-cultured self, creation can be considered a ‘primitive’ endeavor.

In this sense, Rossé’s general use of the term ‘primitive’ is literal as opposed to a reflection of 20th century cultural trends. The Oxford English Dictionary’s definitions of ‘primitive’ as “anything from which something else is derived” and “original as opposed to derivative” fit Rossé’s humanistic goals.321 His primitivism lies in the evocation of an unrationaledized self, a return to a pre-cultured existence or state of nature. It is a space where human beings can connect with each other on a visceral level. The return to an animalistic condition transcends all things tangible (e.g. culture) and unites those involved.

320 Original text reads: “La création est un acte nous rapprochant quelque peu de notre animalité, une curieuse interpenetration entre nos etats culturels et biologiques. Si la creation n’était qu’un acte de culture plus ou moins savante, elle serait exprimable dans les termes d’une compilation analytique. Mais le félin se faufile à l’ombre de notre conscience... l’oeuvre n’est pas une proie, elle est un espace vital ou le non-dit de l’émotion artistique transgresse les lois de l’incommunicabilité latente journalière... Elle corrobo re la place de l’homme dans la sphère animale sans exclure pour autant ses etats culturels aussi differentiés que les expressions du rire.” Fayolle and Rossé, 138.

321 OED, s.v. “primitive.”
To achieve these goals, Rossé always considers the nature of the instrument for which he is composing and its relation to the performer. For instance, Rossé might find great potential for percussive sounds in the body of a guitar. The compositional process for *Le Frêne égaré* is an excellent example of Rossé’s tendency to avoid *a priori* conceptions. As discussed in Chapter 1, he demonstrates a conscious refusal to extend preexisting traditions and is determined to highlight an instrument’s inherent qualities in order to exploit its untapped potential. Rossé explains his process as follows:

> When I compose for piano, I think of what man is and how he establishes a relationship with the piano. I think of the hands, the structure of the hands and what is possible with the hands in the space of the piano. Then I examine the piano – what is it made of, how does it feel, how does it smell? What does it feel like to touch a piano – the keys or the strings? I am a pre-historic man! I ask these questions and I also ask what is possible with the materials at hand. When I write for saxophone, I first examine that it is a tube made out of brass. Then I ask myself, “What is possible for this instrument?”

Rossé’s emphatic “I am a pre-historic man!” refers to the idea of starting from scratch just as a pre-cultured person would fashion found objects into useful tools. In *Le Frêne égaré*, Rossé uses the breath, an action required for the production of sound, as a prominent musical idea throughout the piece. This is a basic example of how Rossé’s primitivism is manifested through vernacular, or idiomatic, writing.

In his co-written autobiography, Rossé refers to a specific period in his career primarily dedicated to primitivism.

> I was caught in my primitivist period between the years 1984-1990, by the concerns regarding relational patterns between musicians, the way in which I could sharpen playing situations, to create a keen awareness of the musical act in the necessary complicity between the protagonists, to incorporate a high level of technicality, with an "educational" value, directly linking the human to the music.  

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322 Estes, 102-103
323 Original text reads: “J’avais été happé, dans ma période primitiviste des années 1984-1990, par le préoccupations touchant aux modes relationnels entre les musiciens, la maniere dont je pouvais aviver les situations de jeu, de créer une conscience vive de l’acte musical dans sa nécessaire complicité entre les protagonistes, d’intégrer
Rossé researched “forms, instrumental techniques (gestures), and the original behaviors of musical practice” in cultures still maintaining oral musical traditions, primarily in Africa and Asia. The orality practiced by such cultures yields the physicality and engagement that Rossé seeks to highlight in his own improvisation and composition. The “keen awareness” and “necessary complicity” among performers serves to eliminate boundaries and promote communication rather than perpetuate ethnocentrism. Within Rossé’s compositional approach, orality and primitivism are often directly related. From his experience, oral traditions require physicality, spontaneity, and total mental engagement that is sometimes missing in the preconceived, diligently rehearsed literacy of the West.

By acknowledging the positive and negative affects of globalization (see Chapter 2), Rossé recognizes that oral traditions are not completely untouched by outside forces. Nevertheless, he seeks inspiration from the orality that does still exist in hopes of maintaining a healthy exchange. Rossé believes that penetrating boundaries through cultural exploration betters society by increasing awareness. In response to the late 20th century explosion of pluralism, Rossé was among the artists who chose to embrace an “active negotiation” between cultures rather than avoid cultural references altogether.

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324 Original text reads: “les formes, les techniques instrumentales (gestes), les comportements originals de la pratique musicale.” Ibid., 75.
325 Fayolle and Rossé, 150-152
In a 1995 interview with Londeix, Rossé described *Mod’son 7* (1985) for saxophone quartet as one of the most significant examples of his primitivist period. Londeix describes the primitivistic elements at work as follows:

> The polyphony here is composed of original sonorous material, but also draws on influences from certain works of the Middle Ages (for example, motets). In *Mod’son* we find contrasting dynamics, ranging from quasi-silence to the most explosive, expressionistic *fortes*. This quartet is written in a flexible rhythmic style, and is particularly successful at creating agogic relationships between the four voices.\(^{326}\)

Extreme dynamic contrast and rhythmic vitality emphasize expressivity, and thus demonstrate Rossé’s primitivism. The interplay among the parts creates a communal atmosphere.

> Taken from *Shanaï* and adapted for piccolo flute and soprano saxophone, *Aka* (2003) “refers somewhat to the interwoven polyphonies of the ‘Aka’ pygmies of Central Africa.”\(^{327}\) It was composed for Le Duo Zéphyr, an ensemble formed by Jean-Michel Goury and his wife, Sophie; they premiered the piece in 2005. When *Aka* was still published by J.M. Fuzeau as part of the Nouveaux Horizons Collection, the score included the following short description by Goury: “This attractive, unusual little duo (2’30”) is a jewel of precision and balance both in its form and the material used. The delicate mixture of *pp* attacks (flute and soprano saxophone) create a sound with exotic hints reinforced by polyrhythms reminiscent of certain primitive ritual dances.”\(^{328}\)

Rossé’s *Etki en Droutzy* (1986) for saxophones and percussion was dedicated to Daniel Kientzy and Jean-Pierre Drouet. In three sections, the piece explores monody “in a homogenous


\(^{328}\) Ibid.
manner related to that of a *raga,*“ airy timbre or “white sound,” and polyphony as the two
performers theatrically converse.329

One of Rossé’s larger primitivist pieces is *Bachflüssgeit,* a *concerto grosso,* for chamber
orchestra without conductor, which was written in celebration of Bach’s 300th birthday.
Although notated, the piece was intended to sound improvised, much like a game piece by John
Zorn. Rossé describes *Bachflüssgeit* as his “first attempt at a social primitive situation. It is
animalistic in character, and full of wild energy—there is a pre-historic quality about this piece.
This is a very important work for me.”330 He chose the recorder, “an ancient instrument with a
haunting timbre” to open the piece in order to achieve a primitive sound.331 The saxophone is
also scored as one of the fifteen instruments in the ensemble.

Rossé’s primitivism surpasses the nostalgic and stylistic primitivisms of the early 20th
century. By exploring his writings, it becomes clear that his primitivist tendencies stem from an
overwhelming curiosity and the need to connect with others, including his interpreters and their
audiences. Rossé has recently focused on the art forms and spirituality of Japanese culture; these
traditions reinforce the guiding principles of interconnectedness and viscerality that he
established years ago, while simultaneously inspiring new ideas.

329 Londeix, “Etki en Droutry,” in *Jean-Marie Londeix: Master of the Modern Saxophone Maître du
330 Estes,106.
331 Ibid.,106.
CHAPTER 5.

JAPANESE CULTURE

The basic overview of Japanese history, religion, art forms, and aesthetics outlined in this chapter provides information relevant to the study and performance of Rossé’s *Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa, Orients,* and other Japanese-influenced works for saxophone. The subsequent summary highlights the many parallels between the hybridity, orality, and primitivism guiding Rossé’s musical approach and the principles that undergird Japanese culture.

Music History of Japan

Many aspects of Japanese culture were adopted from China, India, and Korea. During the Nara period (553-794), elements of Korean lifestyle, such as clothing and agriculture, were gradually absorbed by the Japanese. Through the work of Japanese embassies in the early 600s, values, rituals, artistic styles, music, and the Chinese writing system were transported from China to Japan.332 Court musicians from Korea and China established a style of fine arts, and ritual music was incorporated into dedication ceremonies for new temples and shrines. Similar to early sacred music in the Western tradition, Buddhist music was primarily vocal. Instrumental music was used to accompany dance.333 Japanese culture demonstrated hybridity through the widespread integration of Chinese, Indian, and Korean elements.

During the Heian period (794-1185), Japanese culture began to develop independently from outside influences. Although Chinese musical instruments were still in use, the number of Japanese musicians increased and court music assumed qualities unique to Japan. The

relationship between storytelling and music strengthened during this era and has since become a carefully preserved tradition. Also significant were Buddhist hymns and secular songs that demonstrated a native Japanese style.334

The Kamakura period (1185-1333) marked the establishment of the shogunate, a military dictatorship with elements of feudalism. Buddhism became more popular during this era, particularly in the lower classes. Military life and Zen complemented each other; in fact, the study of Zen was required of officer candidates until the onset of World War II. While court music was declining in popularity, theatrical arts played an increasingly important role in courts and the military. Meanwhile, secular and sacred styles intermingled.335

Although the Muromachi period (1333-1615) was marked by shifting power and warfare, the gap between the court and merchant class shrank as trade improved. Family became central to government and the general way of life. Many lower class citizens moved to Kyoto, now the former capital of Japan, to experience upper class culture, such as tea ceremonies and theatrical entertainment. By this point, the fine arts reflected a native Japanese style highly influenced by Zen. The popularity of theatrical arts and dance-dramas paved the way for noh drama. A new interest in instrument-making led to modifications of various instruments that had originated in China (e.g. the shakuhachi, shamisen, and koto).336

During the Tokugawa or Edo period (1615-1868), the Japanese government instituted isolationist policies. Edo was the political and economic center of the ruling Tokugawa family while the former imperial leaders remained powerless in Kyoto. Amidst inner turmoil during the mid-19th century, leaders made attempts to modernize Japanese society in hopes of avoiding Western colonization. In 1868, the former emperor reassumed his position of power with the

334 Ibid., 29-30.
335 Ibid., 30-31.
336 Ibid., 32-34.
help of regional feudal lords marking the beginning of the Meiji Period (1868-1912). Embassies sent abroad to study various aspects of other societies were instrumental to the modernization process. The economic shift from agriculture to industry led to the establishment of federally funded universal education. Edo, which came to be called Tokyo, grew rapidly into Japan’s first city and was designated as the new capital. Theatrical arts continued to flourish alongside the ongoing modernization of Japanese instruments. Noh drama was accessible to the middle class and the rowdier kabuki theater grew popular among the general public.

The Meiji period was marked by Westernization and the fall of the shogunate. Western music infiltrated Japan through the implementation of military bands, missionary work, and public school systems. The Japanese government established a brass band of Western instruments to support military efforts. Catalyzed by the work of Jesuit missionaries, Western music circulated throughout the country. The missionaries also taught hymns and instrumental music on imported wind instruments, strings, reed organs, and the occasional piano. Following the example of a school district in Massachusetts, the Japanese government established a policy requiring that music be taught as a core subject in public school. Traditional Japanese music was impractical and inappropriate for classroom instruction. Intended for the court, it requires a large stage, costumes, and pedagogical methods not conducive to the classroom format. Western music, however, was logistically feasible and more appropriately served the government’s quest to modernize Japan.

The interwar years of the early 20th century brought further political transformation. During the Taisho period (1912-26) until the early Showa period (1926-1989), leaders struggled...
to choose between a traditional cultural climate and globalization. By the 1920s, cosmopolitanism and consumerism reflected an increased influence from the United States and Europe. Many Japanese musicians trained in the Western tradition were able to earn a living performing while traditional Japanese musicians were less successful.\textsuperscript{341}

Recognizing the decline in traditional culture in 1955, the Japanese government instituted Living National Treasures awards to artists. In 1966, the National Theater of Japan was established with the financial support from the government and has continued to produce performances of traditional music, theater, and dance.\textsuperscript{342} The Japanese have been careful to preserve traditions while simultaneously welcoming and incorporating outside influences. It is a truly hybrid culture that takes part in ongoing cultural exchange.

**Japanese Religions and Spirituality**

Shinto and Buddhism intersect to form the religious foundation of Japanese culture, and will therefore be the focus of the ensuing overview. These traditions combine with aspects from Confucianism, Daoism, and folk religions. Until the 1960s, religion was more central in daily life, but as the extended family system broke down into nuclear family units, religion became more flexible. Japanese spirituality is centered on improving society for the living rather than focusing on the afterlife. As Michiko Yusa explains, “Religious ceremonies and practices are focused on the present—wishing for the benefit of individuals and the peace of the world.”\textsuperscript{343}

Shinto involves worshipping *kami*, which are spirits of nature, deities within natural objects, or supernatural powers representing ancestral spirits. The word ‘Shinto’ means “the way of the *kami*.” In some cases, brave and gifted individuals are regarded as living *kami*. However,

\begin{center}
\textsuperscript{341} Ibid., 18-19.
\textsuperscript{342} Ibid., 142-143.
\end{center}
*kami* do not always yield positive results; they can be constructive or destructive, good or evil. This dichotomy reflects the understanding that life involves both consonance and dissonance.\(^{344}\) The earliest Shinto practitioners felt that everything on earth came from the *kami*, possessed the power of *kami*, and was therefore interconnected.\(^{345}\)

The ritualistic nature of Shinto worship and the focus of Shinto on ancestry are characteristics that strongly correspond with aspects of Rossé’s primitivism. He strives to create an environment in which his performers will strongly connect with the music, audience, and their inner selves, by establishing an underlying spirituality similar to that of Shinto. The interconnectedness Rossé finds between people, places, and objects reflects the principles of Shinto. It is therefore unsurprising that Rossé is drawn to the all-encompassing spirituality of Japanese culture, including the principles of Buddhism.

Siddhartha Gautama came to be known as Buddha when he discovered that meditation was the path to enlightenment. He is recognized as the founding father of Buddhism in India. The religion spread to China in the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) century C.E., Korea in the 4\(^{\text{th}}\) century C.E., and Japan in 538. Although initially met with significant opposition from several ruling families, Buddhism was finally accepted by emperor Yomei as a Japanese religion alongside Shinto between 585 and 587. Buddhism was especially appealing to the ruling classes in East Asian countries, because it teaches that pious leaders and the lands they oversee must be respected. Consequently, the citizens of these countries also turned to Buddhism.\(^{346}\)

The four noble truths and eightfold path are fundamental to the teaching of Buddha. As outlined by Yusa,“(1) Life is full of suffering; (2) Suffering arises from craving; (3) Suffering

\(^{344}\) Ibid., 19.


\(^{346}\) Yusa, 31, 35-37.
can be stopped if craving is stopped; (4) The way to inner peace (nirvana) is to follow the eightfold path. The steps in the eightfold path include mindfulness, honesty, kindness, and other positive elements of behavior and mentality. Overall, the process is intended to instill self-evaluation and alleviate suffering. As Buddhism spread to different parts of India and throughout Asia, local traditions became increasingly varied.

Meditation in the form of Zen is practiced within certain strands of Buddhism. The Japanese word ‘Zen’ comes from the Chinese ‘Chan,’ a phonetic approximation of dhyāna, the Sanskrit for “concentration meditation.” Zen sects account for roughly ten per cent of the Japanese Buddhist population. Sitting meditation, called zazen, involves sitting cross-legged in a “lotus position” and focusing on breathing. The goal of Zazen is to achieve enlightenment (satori) through physical and mental concentration. Zen is meant to permeate Japanese lifestyle beyond zazen and is an integral element in all the traditional art forms discussed in this chapter. Rossé’s implementation of the concept in his Japanese-influenced works will be examined in the following chapter.

One of the important historical figures to promote Zen in Japan was Eisai (1141-1215). In his treatise, Propogation of Zen for the Protection of the Country (Kozen gokokuron) of 1198, he argues that human consciousness is “limitless and contains everything on earth and in the universe.” Zen rids practitioners of ego, allowing simplicity and purity to overtake, and in turn, leads them to universal truth. Eisai asserted that the selflessness yielded from Zen would protect and better society.

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347 Ibid., 31-32.
348 Ibid., 52.
349 Ibid., 52-53.
350 Ibid., 54.
Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki was one of the leading philosophers to write about Zen Buddhism. In *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, he opens the discussion with the following:

Zen in its essence is an art of seeing into the nature of one’s own being, and it points the way from bondage to freedom. By making us drink right from the fountain of life, it liberates us from all the yokes under which we finite beings are usually suffering in this world. We can say that Zen liberates all the energies properly and naturally stored in each of us, which are in ordinary circumstances cramped and distorted so that they find no adequate channel for activity.

Zen is intended to free human beings from the mental suffering they experience in daily life. It rids the mind of these obstacles and channels the inner self. This aspect of Zen reflects Rossé’s desire to access the state of nature through performance, an element of his primitivism.

From the middle of the Heian period (794-1192) until the Meiji period (1868-1912), Shinto and Buddhism coexisted. In the 10th century, honji-suijaku, the theory of “essence-manifestation,” became a popular approach that designated kami as symbols of Buddhism. Specific kami gradually came to represent particular Buddhas until every kami was assigned a Buddhist origin.

Confucianism made its way to Japan from China in the mid-500s along with Buddhism. The two were considered interrelated for centuries based on their overlapping ideals. Confucianism comes from the moral teachings of Confucius; it is a philosophy largely founded on the practice of humaneness, the idea of treating others with kindness and compassion. According to Confucianism, human beings are inherently good at birth, but become tainted by evil in the world as they grow older. Hints of this concept appear in Suzuki’s description above and are reminiscent of theories regarding the state of nature explored in Chapter 4.

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352 Yusa, 61.
The Meiji government hoped to salvage tradition during the modernization process by elevating Shinto as the state religion. By the late 1800s, Shinto was so embedded in Buddhism that the separation of the two caused major problems. In response to anti-Buddhist violence, the government made a statement clarifying that the separation of Shinto from Buddhism was not intended to destroy Buddhism. By the 1920s, Shinto worship became a patriotic act rather than a purely religious one. As the ultimate symbol of Japanese nationalism, Shinto was used as a tool by the totalitarian government to justify military actions during World War II.

Art is strongly tied to religion in Japanese culture. For example, ancient poets were often regarded as deities, because literacy is considered the gift of gods. Eventually, the act of composing *waka* poetry was likened to religious meditation found in Buddhism. The same is true for other art forms, such as the tea ceremony, flower arranging, and *noh* drama.

Popular religious movements were initiated in the early 19th century when the Tokugawa shogunate grew weaker. Often incorporating elements from Shinto and Buddhism, these new practices were initiated by individuals who had unique spiritual experiences with shamanism, the ability to heal. Popular religions also stem from Daoism, “which practiced the quest for longevity and attainment of supernatural power,” according to Yusa. During the modernization process of the Meiji period, the government banned folk and popular religions associated with shamanism. Following World War II, Emperor Hirohito ended the eighty-year streak of State Shinto, thus opening the doors to religious freedom. This change spurred a flood of new religious

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354 Yusa, 95-96.
355 Ibid., 105-106.
356 Ibid., 18.
357 Ibid., 118.
sects, which continued through the 1950s. The number of religious organizations has steadily increased, reaching 3,000 in 2002.  

According to Yusa, many seemingly religious activities and events of the present day have become purely cultural for the Japanese population. For example, during the first three days of the New Year, millions of Japanese citizens attend Shinto shrines to celebrate, but do not consider their actions to be religious in nature. John K. Nelson reiterates that Shinto is “still very much a part of the cultural codes a nation and its people utilize to meet the challenges of today as well as of the next millennium.” Nelson emphasizes how, in the case of Shinto, the term ‘religion’ refers to a system of customs, codes of conduct, and a way of life.  

In A New History of Shinto (2010), John Breen and Mark Teeuwen paint Shinto as a turbulent and unstable religion. They claim that individuals are largely responsible for the course of Shinto in the past, present, and future. “Shinto, in our view, appears not as the unchanging core of Japan’s national essence, but rather as the unpredictable outcome of an erratic history. By implication, that means that its future, too, is wide open to the unforeseeable forces of historical change and the actions of individuals responding to them.” Nelson also acknowledges the drastic changes that have occurred throughout Shinto history, but frames these events in a positive light. He views tradition as a malleable entity that fluctuates and adapts to culture, which itself is constantly transforming. This perspective highlights the potential of Shinto to continue renewing itself and remain relevant to the Japanese.  

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358 Ibid., 92-107.  
359 Ibid., 111.  
360 Nelson, 5.  
361 Ibid., 8-9.  
362 John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, A New History of Shinto (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2010) 228.  
363 Nelson, 11.
Shinto and Buddhist Music

*Nishi Asakusa* is a product of Rossé’s interest in Japanese religious music and ritual. Given the strong influence of these traditions on his music, this section offers a review of Shinto and Buddhist music. Shinto festivals known as *matsuri* celebrate agricultural events, such as spring plowing, midsummer growth, and the autumn harvest. They involve *sato-kagura*, “village music of the gods,” music and choreographed dance used to praise or entertain the gods. *Kagura*, more generally, is a term used to describe “the worship of kami by means of songs and dances.” Matsuri vary depending on local customs, but traditionally feature *matsuri bayashi*, a small ensemble of three *taiko* drums, *take-bue* flute, and other percussion instruments, such as a brass hand gong, the *atari-gane*.

The dance and music of *sato-kagura* is comprised of long, repetitive sections that introduce contrast gradually. While some pieces are more complex and rhythmically free, others are organized by common rhythmic patterns that have specific names. As John Breen and Mark Teeuwen explain, “Ancient kagura was not so much an aesthetic performance designed to please an audience as a powerful and unpredictable rite…In its rawest form, it was more like voodoo than ballet, and as such it was hardly a natural ingredient of formalized court ceremonial.” Historically, it was believed that the *kagura* dancer, a priestess, became possessed by the *kami* as she entered a trance-like state. *Kagura* originated in the court, where it acquired the name *mi-kagura*. As it developed over time, *kagura* became less ritualistic and more performance-oriented. By the Meiji period, it was a medium through which the Japanese maintained the Shinto tradition. Even while *kagura* was banned by the Meiji state in 1881, shrine

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364 Breen and Teeuwen, 148.
365 Malm, 42-50.
366 Breen and Teeuwen, 148-149.
367 Ibid., 148-149.
priests managed to sustain the tradition by teaching amateurs. New plays preserved local traditions while simultaneously preserving themes from the classics. Considered nationalist propaganda following World War II, *kagura* was omitted from textbooks and no longer served spiritual purposes. Now *kagura* is considered fantastical and exotic, an alternative to the mainstream.\(^{368}\)

The Sanja festival parade in Asakusa, the old quarter of Tokyo that inspired Rossé’s *Nishi Asakusa*, occurs in May each year. Bonnie C. Wade paints a vivid picture of Asakusa in *Music in Japan*.

At Asakusa, one of the first areas to be developed in Tokyo, its Shinto shrine and Buddhist Kannon Temple have been the locus of festivals and fairs for many centuries, and the area around it has been a thriving entertainment hub in the city, with traditional theaters and other places of amusement. Even now, when Asakusa is a staid, quiet business area by comparison, pockets of very old houses survive and the area comes alive with festivities such as the famous Sanja festival held by the Asakusa shrine every year in May.\(^{369}\)

As a center of cultural and spiritual events, Asakusa remains a busy area of Tokyo. The Sanja festival features amateurs from the community alongside experienced musicians. In preparation for the festival, elders teach the Sanja music orally, often without the aid of notation. This type of instruction is the norm for traditional Japanese music. Other musical and theatrical genres borrow from the recognizable ensembles, *matsuri bayashi*, because their music is both familiar and representative of Japanese tradition.\(^{370}\)

Buddhist music is also a foundation of other traditional Japanese art forms. The theory of singing and composing Buddhist chant acquired the name *shomyo* in Japan. Buddhist monks frequently traveled to the monastery in Yü-shan, China for instruction from the great masters. Its widespread dissemination yielded various sectarian styles. With roots in India and China,

\(^{368}\) Ibid., 164-167.  
\(^{369}\) Wade, 61.  
\(^{370}\) Ibid., 61-65.
shomyo is now sung in three languages in Japan. From a theoretical standpoint, Shomyo is based on scales and rules regarding the use of these scales. Just as singers of Gregorian chant follow formulas, singers of shomyo employ standard musical phrases and ornamentation to color the melody.\textsuperscript{371}

By describing morning mass at Tendai temple in Asakusa, Malm provides a concrete example of how Buddhist music functions in the temple. The ceremony begins with the repetitive striking of a bell followed by a processional of the clergy. As the priests process toward the front of the temple, the o-daiko drum plays deep and resonant sounds, setting a reflective tone for the ceremony. Once the priests are in place and the gong is struck, a cantor sings the opening phrase while priests hum quietly. At certain moments of the service, up to twenty priests chant simultaneously in different languages and on various pitches, often repeating the chants in groups of three. Some are simple and free while others are more rhythmic and accompanied by the o-daiko. The rhythmic chants sung in Japanese are often in seven-five syllable schemes as phrases of eight beats. Chimes, bells, and gongs mark specific moments throughout the ceremony, although other sects and types of services utilize a wider array of percussive instruments. The priests recess to beats on the o-daiko at the conclusion of the service.\textsuperscript{372}

\textit{Gagaku}

\textit{Gagaku} is the imperial court music of Japan and the primary inspiration behind Rossé’s Bear’s Trio. It literally means “elegant, correct, or refined music” and is rooted in ancient music from China, India and Korea. Gagaku was first introduced to Japan in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century, but was

\textsuperscript{371} Malm, 64-65.
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid., 68-70.
not adopted by Japan until the 8th century. As the first substantial instrumental form to develop in Japan, it is one of the oldest surviving orchestral musics in the world. Given its long history, the careful preservation of gagaku is impressive; in some cases, the tradition has changed little from its original form.\textsuperscript{373}

Wade provides four probable reasons for the preservation of the gagaku tradition in Japanese music: its prestige as music of the imperial court, the longevity of the imperial institution since the Nara period (710-84), the transmission of gagaku as a ritual, and the efforts of Buddhist temple musicians to sustain the tradition. Gagaku has become so indigenized that it is considered native to Japan. Some gagaku instruments have taken on roles in Japanese storytelling (biwa), contemporary chamber music (koto), and theatrical genres (taiko).\textsuperscript{374}

As early as the 800s, emperor Soga standardized the gagaku ensemble by reducing its size.\textsuperscript{375} Within gagaku, there is togaku repertoire from India and China and komagaku from Korea and Manchuria.\textsuperscript{376} Gagaku that accompanies dance is called bugaku, a more rhythmic and less ornamental style than the other types.\textsuperscript{377} Each kind of gagaku utilizes different combinations of instruments, which further emphasize stylistic differences.\textsuperscript{378}

The types of wind instruments in the gagaku ensemble include flutes, double reed, and mouth organ. The komabue flute is used in komagaku, the ryuteki is used for togaku, and the kagura-bue is played in Shinto ceremonies. The hichiriki is a resonant double reed instrument producing microtonal variations prominent in gagaku. Traditionally, hichiriki players learn music through solfège before touching the instrument. For certain Buddhist ceremonies, multiple

\textsuperscript{373} Malm, 77-78, 91.
\textsuperscript{374} Wade, 41-42.
\textsuperscript{375} Malm, 89
\textsuperscript{376} Wade, 25.
\textsuperscript{377} Malm, 77.
\textsuperscript{378} Ibid., 99.
hichiriki players perform a prelude.\textsuperscript{379} Flutes join the hichiriki with the melody, adding slight alterations and embellishments to create a heterophonic texture. The flutes produce ornaments by closing fingerholes halfway as the double reeds embellish the melody with microtonal inflections and manipulations of timbre.\textsuperscript{380}

The sho, or mouth organ, completes the wind section. Comprised of seventeen bamboo pipes sitting on a wind chamber, the sho has two silent pipes that were once functional. Now they solely serve an aesthetic purpose.\textsuperscript{381} The lower end of each sounding pipe has a hole and a metal reed on the inside. When the player inhales or exhales through the mouthpiece while stopping certain holes with his or her corresponding fingers, the reeds in those pipes vibrate and produce different pitches. The sho was a more melodic instrument during the Heian period, but now it most often serves as harmonic support when used within an ensemble.\textsuperscript{382} Unlike Western accompaniment that outlines harmonic progression, the sho sustains pitches contained in the melody. William Malm compares this technique to an insect preserved in amber.\textsuperscript{383}

The string instruments found in gagaku are the biwa and koto. The biwa is a large, pear-shaped wooden lute with a short neck, four strings, and thick strip of leather covering the striking area.\textsuperscript{384} The koto is a six-foot long wooden zither that evolved from the Chinese gaku-so. Each of its thirteen strings is tuned by the placement of a bridge that sits underneath the string. The two stringed instruments primarily support the winds by marking time with arpeggios and rhythmic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{379} Ibid., 96-97.
\item \textsuperscript{380} Wade, 23-27.
\item \textsuperscript{381} Malm, 98.
\item \textsuperscript{382} Wade, 25-28.
\item \textsuperscript{383} Malm, 99.
\item \textsuperscript{384} Wade, 29-30.
\end{itemize}
patterns.385 The subtler timbre of the strings often becomes unnoticeable when combined with the sounds of other gagaku instruments.386

The taiko and shoko are the most prominent percussion instruments in gagaku. The taiko is a double-headed drum with oxhide drumheads attached to a wooden frame by tacks. It is played with drumsticks padded by leather. The deep, resonant sound of the taiko is complemented by the high, bright sound of the shoko, a thin, bronze gong-like instrument struck by two long wooden sticks. Both the taiko and shoko sit in frames a few feet above ground level. Players must raise their arms to strike these instruments in ritualistic gestures.387 The sizes of the drums vary depending on the occasion and setting of the performance.388 The shakubyashi is a wooden clapper made of two hard pieces of wood, each held in separate hands.389

One of the differences in instrumentation between togaku and komagaku is the use of percussion instruments. While both styles share the taiko and shoko, the kakko is a drum particular to togaku and the san no tsuzumi is special to komagaku. The kakko is a small barrel-shaped wooden drum that is framed and sits low to the ground. It has two heads made of deerhide and are struck by sticks that are slightly knobbed. The san no tsuzumi is shaped like an hourglass and only struck with a stick on one side.

Rhythmic patterns in gagaku are usually organized in units of eight, four, or two. The eight-beat structure is used for slower pieces, the four-beat groups for moderate tempo, and two beats for faster tempos. Sometimes groups of two and four are combined, and in some cases units of two and three alternate.

385 Malm, 94-95.
386 Wade, 30
387 Ibid., 30-32.
388 Malm, 92.
Gagaku generally follows the form of jo-ha-kyū, a suite-like structure of shorter movements. Jo-ha-kyū typically begins with a slow section, or introduction (jo), that is rhythmically flexible. In an orchestral piece, jo begins with netori, a short phrase to set the mood of the piece according to its mode. This is followed by ha, an exposition or development, which begins with solo flute and percussion. After the first part, the other winds enter playing the same melody while the sho sustains the pitches from the melody in clusters. The biwa and koto enter toward the end of the phrase. The final part, kyu, involves all instruments playing together and gaining speed until the end. A coda called a tomede features the principal players as a smaller group. The texture becomes thinner as the instruments peter out, leaving the biwa and koto to end the piece.390

Wade describes gagaku as “a heterogeneous sound ideal, resulting in a sort of stylistic transparency.”391 Malm elaborates, “Much of the pleasure of gagaku is in its rare archaic flavor. To those who are accustomed to the dynamic drive of Western symphonic music, the static beauty of gagaku may seem very strange.”392

Nohgaku and Noh Drama

Inspired by an array of Japanese traditions, Rossé’s Orients is primarily based on the theatrical and spiritual elements of noh drama. Noh evolved as a hybrid of ritual-play, theatrical acrobatics, peasant dances, and comic plays that gradually solidified during the Kamakura period (1135-1333). A former Shinto priest, Kannami Kiyotsugu and his son, Zeami Motokiyo, were responsible for adding Buddhist chant (shomyo) to the theatrical medium. Shomyo contributed a more serious quality to the art form that came to be known as noh. As a member of a Zen sect,
Zeami integrated Zen concepts into his plays, a practice that has been followed since. Thus, *noh* is a masterful combination of Zen spirituality and popular entertainment that has been an important Japanese tradition.  

Zeami’s treatise from c. 1400 tells the famous Shinto rock-cave myth of a deity communicating to the sun-goddess through ritual. He organizes the principles of the rock-cave myth into a three-fold process to demonstrate how *noh* would enlighten audiences:

1. **myō**: anticipation, suspension of cognition;
2. **hana**: an emotional response, delight;
3. **omo-shiro**: recognition of one’s response, fascination.

His reference proved *noh* worthy as a divine practice and potentially, a classical form. Unlike most performative Japanese traditions, *noh* has a long recorded history of playscripts and treatises from as early as the 15th century. These records show the importance of *kami* as a major theme in *noh*, evidence of the tradition’s roots in Shinto festivals.

*Noh* dramas traditionally follow the *jo-ha-kyū* structure. However, instead of movements, *noh* is broken down into scenes and subscenes. Contrast between subscenes is established by varying the style of text (i.e. prose, free verse, and poetry), style of delivery, and the involvement of *noh* musicians. *Noh* plays were originally short, allowing for five plays and three comedies to be performed in one evening. Each play was chosen from a different category: gods, warriors, women, devils, and mad women, or other similar subjects. Now that plays have grown longer, often lasting an hour or more, fewer are performed in one evening.

The *noh* drama typically begins with a flute solo from behind the curtain. The curtain then rises and the musicians slowly process onto the stage. The instrumental ensemble for *noh*

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393 Malm, 105-108.
394 Breen and Teeuwen, 153.
395 Ibid., 154.
396 Wade, 83.
397 Malm, 109.
theater is called hayashi, and consists of a flute and three drums, the o-tsuzumi, ko-tsuzumi, and taiko. This is the same type of ensemble used in matsuri bayashi. The chorus, called ji, enters from a small door to the side of the stage. The hayashi sits toward the back of the stage while the ji kneels on the stage floor in two rows. The ji alternates between singing, narrating, and speaking from the actors’ perspectives. The music in noh drama always portrays characteristics, behaviors, and actions of the lead and supporting actors.

The flute’s role in noh is five-fold: 1) to signal parts of the play, 2) to accompany dance and initiate the tempo, 3) to add a new timbre and set the atmosphere during instrumental interludes, 4) to provide the ji with a pitch, and 5) to bring lyricism to certain passages. During hayashi interludes, the flutist must create new melodic material that he or she later develops alongside the original melody. When accompanying text, the flute part is generally constructed of patterns that can be subdivided into smaller groups of patterns. Certain phrases are unique to particular sections of the piece while others are used throughout. The special phrases indicate when a new section begins, helping performers stay together. Since flute notation does not specifically indicate rhythm, the flutist must learn the music orally and follow the taiko parts carefully.

O-tsuzumi and ko-tsuzumi parts are coordinated and consist of rhythmic patterns that are named. The rhythms involve verbal calls, or kakegoe, that contribute a dramatic effect. They also help the musicians stay together as they navigate the flexible beat of noh. Musical notation for advanced drummers shows only the name of each pattern. Given that there are roughly two hundred patterns, it takes years for a drummer to comfortably read a score. Like flutists,

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399 Wade, 109.
400 Malm, 120-121.
401 Wade, 110-111.
drummers must learn orally from experience rather than from notation. There are clans or guilds of drummers that interpret the patterns slightly differently from each other. When they prepare for performance, they must reach a consensus so that there are no discrepancies.  

The flexibility afforded the performers of noh relies on the art form’s pervading orality. From pedagogy to performance, the success of noh relies on the musicians’ engagement with the music and communication with each other at every moment. For Rossé, this kind of orality presents the ideal musical situation.

Noh singing is called yokyoku. Its style, inspired by Buddhist chant, can be described as solemn, simple, and reflective. The two styles of yokyoku are heightened speech, called kotoba (“words”), and melodic, fushi (“melody”). Within fushi there are two subcategories, yowagin, which is soft singing, and tsuyogin, strong singing. Yowagin is melodic singing in low, middle, and high pitch areas, each of which has a central tone. The central tones are separated by intervals of a perfect fourth. Tsuyogin, which is based on Buddhist chant, is more forceful and only loosely oriented around certain pitches. The rhythmic alignment of musicians with the text is called au while incongruent rhythmic accompaniment is called awazu. Like the instrumental notation for noh, the scores for yokyoku are not detailed. The singers are essentially provided with a set of neumes that outline gestures. This allows singers to be flexible with rhythm, pitch, and contour in the moment. The music and general style must therefore be learned and practiced by rote.

William Malm summarizes the roles of the musicians in noh:

Musically, the singing and the rhythm of the hayashi have been shown as subject to intense systematization. The singing is centered on the poetry, and the hayashi remains

\[\text{\footnotesize 402 Malm, 125-126.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize 403 Ibid., 127.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize 404 Wade, 105-106.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize 405 Malm, 129.} \]
alert to the rhythmic and emotional changes of the poetry and the movement of the actors. The flute, as the only melodic instrument, provides a necessary contrast to the mauve tone colors of the singing and the percussion of the drums. The calls of the drummers have been cultivated until they have become not only rhythmic signals but also important elements in the general emotional mood of the plays.\footnote{Ibid., 130.}

The combination of the various elements in noh creates a balance between subtlety and intense expression. It is interesting to note that although much of the learning process for noh is oral in nature, the music is meant to serve the text. This is yet another demonstration of how orality and literacy intermingle.

While Western drama typically builds toward climactic points and strives to create captivating plot lines, noh focuses on the present, as explained by Malm: “The purpose of both the play and the ceremony lies not in the form but in the objects presented and the atmosphere created. In either case, one should not seek only an intellectual understanding but rather savor the highly specialized aesthetic experience.”\footnote{Ibid., 119.} The concepts of restraint and simplicity come from Zen Buddhism. Malm notes that while most dramatic arts take place in a certain setting during a specific time frame, noh somehow “often evokes timelessness.”\footnote{Ibid., 131.} It is this quality that Rossé aims to capture with Orients.

\textit{Taiko Drumming}

As one of Japan’s most spiritual instruments, the taiko drum is referenced prominently in Rossé’s \textit{Nishi Asakusa}. The goals of taiko performance surpass the musical by reaching deeply into spiritual, physical, and intellectual realms. In an interview with Wade, taiko instructor Mokoko Igarashi describes the unique experience of playing the instrument.
I think spirit, spirit still. Spirit. Because when I studied European percussion, technique was very important. But I never moved up and down and I never obviously expressed myself. I expressed myself through the instrument. But taiko is...we can actually say music but also like physical activity. You need to use the entire body and we think the energy starts from the earth. Underground. That maybe the energy comes from god, through the earth and then through the earth, the energy comes from your body, and then after the energy goes through your body and then finally comes out through the sticks. So then the energy is circulating; it’s not just the technique, you know. That’s very interesting.\(^{409}\)

According to Igarashi, *taiko* drumming equally integrates a player’s physique, spirit, and intellect. These are precisely the aspects of performance Rossé emphasizes with his music.

The *taiko* has a body most often made of zelkova wood and drumheads of either cow or horse skin. A small piece of deerskin marks the center of the top drumhead; this is the spot where the drum is struck with *bachi*, or sticks. Ropes secure the skins to the body and encircle the drum. *Taiko* technique requires straight arms from elbow to hand with a loose grip on the *bachi*. *Taiko* training varies between communities and guilds, making it nearly impossible for drummers to join ensembles of different styles.\(^{410}\)

Modern *taiko* groups have become popular largely through the efforts of Seiichi Tanaka, the Japanese-American who founded *kumi daiko*, or group drumming. When Tanaka established the San Francisco Taiko Dojo in 1968, he popularized *taiko* among communities in the Japanese diaspora and beyond. Although it is a new tradition, *kumi daiko* is based on older rituals of farmers, fisherman, and spiritual peoples.\(^{411}\)

Worldwide, there are many *taiko* styles and techniques that have become localized traditions.\(^{412}\) Asakusa was one of the first communities of Tokyo to develop and maintain a

\(^{409}\) Wade, 61.  
\(^{410}\) Malm, 124-126.  
\(^{411}\) Wade, 58.  
\(^{412}\) Ibid., 59-60.
strong tradition. The Shinto shrine and Buddhist Kannon Temple in Asakusa have been the backdrop to festivals and fairs that feature taiko for hundreds of years.

Aesthetics of Japanese Music

Many of the overarching aesthetic qualities exhibited by the Japanese arts originated from principles of Shinto and Zen. The following summary touches on a handful of these aspects, most of which are evident in Rossé’s Japanese-influenced works.

Timbre is generally considered the most important parameter in Japanese music. The development of the biwa serves as a useful example. Its strings were gradually loosened with raised bridges so that players would be able to produce extraneous noise. This buzzy effect is called sawari (“touch”). Every pluck of the strings is so harmonically complex that the listener’s attention is directed to timbre rather than pitch.\(^{413}\) According to Minoru Miki, “Imitating the sounds of Japan’s natural environment is a fundamental precept in composition and performance.”\(^{414}\)

The Zen Buddhist concept that less is more permeates the aesthetics of Japanese traditions. For example, in noh drama, each of the actor’s subtle physical movements has a deeper meaning. Originally, the main actor himself was intended to represent “the personification of a soul.” Likewise, the stage, props, text, and music of noh are simple, yet profoundly symbolize the path toward enlightenment. The term ‘yūgen’ (“depth”) is used to describe the gracefulfulness and elegance of noh, a quality that comes from mimicking nobility.

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\(^{413}\) Ibid., 48.

Repetition is a salient characteristic of Zen Buddhist practice and has pervaded the Japanese arts for centuries. Again, noh acting provides a fitting example. Through repetition, an actor training in noh learns “to look into the interior of the mind by placing the body in continual movement at the center of which is a core of stillness and calm.”\footnote{Kathryn Wylie-Marques, “Opening the Actor's Spiritual Heart: The Zen Influence on Nô Training and Performance with Notes on Stanislavski and the Actor's Spirituality,” \textit{Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism}. XVIII, no. 1 (2003): 136, accessed September 7, 2014, https://journals.ku.edu/index.php/jdtc/article/viewFile/3486/3362.} By reiterating motions, the trainee is able to focus on each isolated moment, thus avoiding distraction. This achievement is described in Buddhism as “dochu no sei” (“stillness in motion”). The same concept is applicable to repetition in traditional Japanese music performance and pedagogy.

Space is an essential component of Japanese music. The concept of \textit{ma} highlights the importance of silence and can be described as “negative space,” or “perception of space and time in Japanese aesthetics.”\footnote{Wade, 160.} Malm explains, “In music it provides a rhythmic elasticity in which silence is as powerful as sound.”\footnote{William Malm, \textit{Six Hidden Views of Japanese Music} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 42-43.} There is a space between sounds that represents the connection and tension between people, objects, and places. As Miki describes, “The space between one note and the next is not considered a ‘rest,’ but rather an important space containing the absence of sound.”\footnote{Miki, 4.} Similarly, there is a concept called “\textit{kokoro}” (“invisible heart”) in noh drama that refers to the continuity between action and non-action. Therefore, in Japanese music, silence or stillness are as present and powerful as sound or motion.\footnote{Nafziger-Leis, 36.}
Since ancient times, the Japanese arts have centered on themes of wildlife and the environment associated with Shinto and Buddhism, such as wind, water, birds, trees, plant-life, and the seasons. Centuries ago, gardens were considered depictions of holy places and were used as settings for kami worship. In the Heian period, more intricate gardens with manmade ponds, bridges, and waterfalls were designed according to Chinese fengshui principles for aristocrat mansions. During the 14th century, gardens were added to Zen Buddhist temples as areas of private worship. Perhaps most famous is the rock garden at Ryoanji temple, which features fifteen rocks spread out in a flat area filled with white gravel. The art of garden making is a perfect demonstration of how these spiritually oriented elements continue to hold prominence in the traditions of the Japanese people.

Orality in Pedagogy and Performance

As emphasized throughout this chapter, Japanese music is strongly associated with the practice of Buddhism, Shinto, and other religious traditions. The oral nature of traditional Japanese pedagogy and performance also reflects the overarching principles of these spiritualities.

While some areas of Japanese pedagogy have adopted Western methods, others have retained an oral approach. The systematic method of Western instruction centered on instilling theoretical knowledge, technical skill, and interpretative abilities, has appealed to koto and shamisen guilds. However, drumming pedagogy is one type of training that retains its orality and emphasis on spirituality.

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421 According to Yusa’s glossary, fengshui falls under onmyōdō, “Literally, ‘Yin-Yang practice’; a Japanese adaptation of Chinese practices of divination, geomancy (i.e. fengshui), fortune-telling, astronomy, etc., which were further blended with ancient native Japanese sensibilities such as purity, defilement, mountain worship, asceticism, and so forth.” Yusa, 120-121.

422 Yusa, 69.
Zen followers believe music leads to self-discovery, or enlightenment. In describing this spiritual quest, Malm explains, “The path towards becoming a good drummer requires that one first become a good drum.” That is, a teacher’s goal is to guide the student in fusing with his or her instrument so that the instrument becomes an extension of the self, and vice versa. Each course of study depends on the individual needs of the student. Malm explains, “In the West the teacher is primarily a guide towards the spirit of the music, whereas a traditional Japanese teacher is more a guide into a ritual whose goals may differ for different students; some may be musical, some technical, and some spiritual.” Even when a student is technically ready to move forward to new music, the teacher might decide to hold the student back until he or she is spiritually prepared. Oral instruction gives teachers more control over their students’ education.

Ritualism is a major component in Japanese music-making and can only be taught orally. For example, an important part of the ko-tsuzumi and taiko lesson is instrument assembly. Through observation and supplementary verbal feedback, students learn the choreographed way of putting together the instrument, which is done prior to entering the stage. Once on stage, picking up the instrument and bachi (sticks), in the case of taiko, is another ritual that must be executed in a certain way. Only once these steps are learned properly can the student work on warm-up exercises; these involve hitting the drum with small, medium, and large strokes with the right hand and then again with the left in sets of three. The sticks are then brought to the drumhead silently. The goal of these preliminary gestures is to transform the arms into

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423 Malm, Six Hidden Views, 25.
drumsticks and, as Malm describes, “Enter into a state of being beautiful.”  Different guilds have their own traditions of ritualized gestures for the various aspects of performance.

There are certain customs, practices, and nuances in performance that are not notated in drum books. Although one could learn the required patterns of drumming from these sources, implementing the techniques correctly in a performance situation would not be possible. In lessons, patterns are learned through the use of mnemonic devices that are sung. This process is similar to the use of neumatic notation in Gregorian chant. Noh flute notation also offers patterns or phrases that must be learned orally with the aid of mnemonics. In the case of noh, learning solely from notation would negate the flexibility and flow necessary for a successful performance.

The function of orality in Japanese music and pedagogy is to emphasize the spirituality of performance. Lessons are taught orally so that students are not distracted by visual stimuli. Likewise, performances are given without the use of notation so that the musicians can remain actively engaged in what is happening on stage. Again, the flexible sense of time in noh requires impeccable communication among the performers. Thus, orality promotes engagement, interaction, and spontaneity.

The process of assembling a noh play demonstrates orality in several ways. The first step is commissioning a writer to create a text. Once it is ready, the head of the percussion ensemble typically composes the flute and drum parts. These parts continue to evolve as the actors and dancers become involved. The “piece” is considered a work in progress until all aspects of

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426 Ibid., 30.
427 Ibid., 24-25.
428 Ibid., 43-46.
429 Ibid., 25.
430 Ibid., 46-47.
performance are determined. Even then, as soon as another ensemble learns the play, the music is liable to change.

Japan seems to give its living musicians their creative outlet through the ongoing communal compositional process... The concept of relativity is once more most useful in appreciating Japanese music. Though a given piece is 'set,' it will not look or sound the same if experienced from the perspectives of different musicians in other performances.\textsuperscript{431}

In this way, Japanese music is a living, breathing organism constantly renewing itself through the means of orality.

Many of the qualities found in traditional Japanese art forms and spirituality reflect Rossé’s musical goals. Perhaps most prominent is the incorporation of Zen. In his Japanese-influenced music, Rossé establishes situations of heightened awareness, physicality, and communication that resemble the ritualism of kami worship, Buddhist chant, taiko drumming, and other traditions. Within the conceptual framework of hybridity, orality, and primitivism, the next chapter examines musical examples from \textit{Bear’s Trio}, \textit{Nishi Asakusa}, and \textit{Orients}, identifying more specifically the ways in which Rossé has incorporated Japanese musical sounds and spiritual principles.

\textsuperscript{431} Ibid., 51.
When asked about her approach to learning Rossé’s Japanese-influenced works, Marie-Bernadette Charrier replied,

As with any work, the process of the interpreter is to find the appropriate style for the chosen work. Thanks to our acquired culture, we have certain insights on how to play this piece. Then extensive work, an analysis of the proposed gestures, and continued research allow us to propose an interpretation as close as possible to the author’s idea.432

The following exploration of hybridity, orality, and primitivism in *Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa,* and *Orients* serves to clarify Rossé’s intentions and provide valuable ideas regarding his integration of Japanese characteristics. Although largely theoretical, this chapter is intended to assist performers in formulating appropriate interpretations of these works.

Background of *Bear’s Trio*

Rossé completed *Bear’s Trio* for saxophone, piano, and percussion on August 4, 2003 at l’hôtel de l’Ours (“Hotel of the Bears”) in Megève, France. The title of the piece comes from the hotel’s name rather than any reference to Japanese culture. The piece was composed at the request of Takashi Saito, a Japanese saxophonist, who premiered the piece in Shibuya, Tokyo in 2004. Originally published by Éditions Fuzeau in 2005, it is now published by Christine Paquelet Edition Arts (CPEA).433 *Bear’s Trio* requires the saxophonist to double on soprano and baritone

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432 Charrier, email interview. See Appendix B, 188.
saxophones. The instrumentation of the percussion part includes vibraphone, two gongs, woodblock, three toms, kick bass drum, and snare drum.  

In a recent interview, Rossé described the background of the piece:

_Bear’s Trio_ was written for a premiere in Tokyo by a trio led by saxophonist Takashi Saito in 2004. The title is simply linked to the name of the hotel in Megève (France) where I wrote this trio. However the piece is very Japanese relating to the inflections of Gagaku, Japanese ritual spectacle. For the Japanese, sound, in nature, is never straight (in pitch) but always flexible; the Japanese Shinto philosophy is very connected to nature.

As the primary influence behind the work, _gagaku_ is referenced in a variety of ways, both musical and spiritual.

**Hybridity in _Bear’s Trio_**

The incorporation of techniques and characteristics from _gagaku_ exhibits Rossé’s fascination with Japanese aesthetics and spirituality while demonstrating a desire to enhance his own musical language in a meaningful way. By hybridizing _gagaku_ with his personal style, Rossé satisfies his need for cultural exchange and establishes new ground for musical exploration. As the musical embodiment of Japanese culture, _gagaku_ epitomizes the country’s spirituality. An understanding of Rossé’s hybridity can guide performers of _Bear’s Trio_ toward interpretations that balance Japanese influence with the piece’s identity as Western art music.

The structure of _Bear’s Trio_ can be divided into seven sections. Using the rehearsal numbers as markers, the sections are as follows:

- Section 1: Rehearsals 1 and 2
- Section 2: Rehearsals 3 and 4
- Section 3: Rehearsal 5
- Section 4: Rehearsals 6, 7, 8, and 9
- Section 5: Rehearsal 10
- Section 6: Rehearsals 11 and 12

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435 Rossé, email interview. See Appendix B, 185.
Section 7: Rehearsals 13 and 14.

Musically, each new section is clearly delineated through contrast from the previous section. These sections do not precisely follow the typical jo-ha-kyu structure of gagaku, although some sections resemble aspects of the traditional form. Overall, the piece is a patchwork of sonic images rather than a linear journey. Certain ideas return, but generally, the sections are unrelated to one another.

The instruments in Bear’s Trio represent the typical instrumentation in gagaku: winds, strings, and percussion. However, in Bear’s Trio, the instruments sometimes switch roles. The saxophone generally resembles the hichiriki, flute, and on one occasion, sho. The piano takes on characteristics of the biwa and koto, although also the sho and taiko at certain moments. The vibraphone contributes harmonic support, but is not necessarily representative of any specific gagaku instrument. The remaining percussion instruments function similarly to the percussion section of gagaku.

The opening of the piece is roughly two and a half minutes long.436 It makes up approximately one-third of the piece’s duration, which is eight and a half to nine minutes. As shown in Example 1, the saxophone melody is in constant motion through the use of pitch bends, microtones, grace notes, and accents. These melodic characteristics are overwhelmingly similar to the highly-embellished playing of the hichiriki and flute in gagaku. The vibraphone and piano echo the contour of the saxophone in quasi-heterophonic fashion. Heterophony is often found within the wind section of gagaku as hichiriki and flutes play the same melody with slight variations and ornaments. Meanwhile, the piano represents the sho by sustaining the melodic pitches with the pedal. Throughout the opening section, all parts are generally centered within

436 This information is based on the recording of Bear’s Trio by Proxima Centauri on Rossé’s SoundCloud page.
the narrow range of concert G and Bb. The constant repetition within this limited collection of pitches presents a clear similarity to gagaku. Interspersed throughout Section 1 are gong and woodblock hits that recall the shoko and shakubyashi, small gong and wooden clapper, respectively. The slow tempo and varying rhythms simulate the flexibility of gagaku, leaving the listener without a sense of steady pulse. These characteristics fit the typical role of jo, the opening slow section of gagaku, which is flexible and intended to set the mood for the piece.

EXAMPLE 1  Rossé’s Bear’s Trio, page one, line one

While Section 2 is dissimilar overall to gagaku, there remain a few resemblances worth noting. The primary differences lie in the texture and rhythm. In gagaku, the texture is mostly thick and heterophonic, other than the opening flute solo, while in Section 2 of Bear’s Trio, the saxophonist is the lone melodic voice. The piano and vibraphone interject chords coordinated with the saxophone rhythm, which is not rhythmically typical of gagaku. The likeness to gagaku lies in saxophone part. As shown in Example 2, the quick slap-tongue accents serve as inflections in place of the grace notes that would typically precede two-note descending figures in the wind melodies of gagaku. For most of Rehearsal 3, the pianissimo dynamic is sustained, aside from the accents. Two measures before Rehearsal 4, there is a gradual crescendo until the

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437 The inclusion of all excerpts has been authorized by Christine Paquelet Editions Arts; Rossé, Bear’s Trio, 1.
fortissimo is reached at Rehearsal 5. The saxophone line climbs into a higher register as the dynamic increases, and the two-note groupings grow wider in interval. This type of intensification can be found in kyu, the final section of gagaku.

EXAMPLE 2  Rossé’s Bear’s Trio, page five, line one

Section 3 strongly exhibits gagaku characteristics. It resembles the opening of a gagaku performance more so than Section 1 of Bear’s Trio, because it begins with a woodwind solo, as shown in Example 3. However, while the opening of gagaku features flute, the soprano saxophone’s loud dynamic in the high register more closely mimics the hichiriki. The saxophone plays into the piano as the sustain pedal is depressed, causing the melody to resonate. The role of the piano resembles that of the sho, which is responsible for echoing the melody by sustaining its pitches as a note cluster. Rossé repeatedly uses this technique in Bear’s Trio and his other Japanese-influenced works. The sho-like sound can be heard during the two rests marked “long” and the third marked “très long.” These rests are examples of ma, the Zen concept of active silence, or “negative space.” Despite the tempo marking of 72 at the beginning of Section 3, the saxophone solo is notated in such a way that implies flexibility.

438 Ibid., 5.
EXAMPLE 3  Rossé’s *Bear’s Trio*, page eight, line two through page nine, line one\textsuperscript{439}

Section 4 begins at Rehearsal 6 and continues through Rehearsal 8 (see Example 4). This segment is characterized primarily by repetition within a homophonic texture between the percussion and piano voices. Similar to *taiko* drumming, the rhythms of the toms and piano alternate between quiet and loud attacks. Throughout the section, repeated figures come in the form of three different chords of sixteenth and eighth note rhythms. Although the repetition of these rhythmic chords is unsystematic, the same types of rhythms are reiterated, creating a sense of continuity for the listener. In the midst of the repetition, sudden woodblock interjections and kick drum hits interrupt the flow. These appear in the top and bottom lines of the percussion staff.

\textsuperscript{439} Ibid., 8-9.
in Example 4. Although the timbre of the woodblock matches that of the *shoko* gong or *shakubyoishi*, the roll technique is more customary of the *kakko* drum. Throughout Section 4, the kick drum clearly represents *taiko* drumming. The saxophone’s role is to provide low, long tones so quiet that they are felt rather than heard. The low sustained rumble is reminiscent of the large gong used in *gagaku*.

**EXAMPLE 4** Rossé’s *Bear’s Trio*, page ten, line two

At Rehearsal 8 (see Example 5), the percussion part ranges from *pp* to *f* with the added support of the saxophone. Until Rehearsal 9, the texture remains entirely homophonic. The slap-tongue attacks of the saxophone contribute to the overall *taiko*-like sound of the ensemble. The instructions above the piano part, “Consider the piano like a resonance of the tom,” indicate that all voices should blend as one.

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440 Ibid., 10.
441 Ibid., 12.
EXAMPLE 5  Rossé’s *Bear’s Trio*, page twelve, line one

At Rehearsal 9 (see Example 6), the piano chords become clusters rhythmically coordinated with the kick drum. The texture here is more transparent and the low tom rolls provide the same effect as the saxophone’s low rumbling at Rehearsals 6 and 7. Suddenly, in the middle of the twelfth bar of Rehearsal 9 (see Example 7), the baritone saxophone multiphonic and the piano chord enter simultaneously, recalling the sounds of the *sho* and *koto*. Although not strummed, the piano attack is accented and much stronger than the subtle entrance of the saxophone multiphonic, which swells in a way typical of *sho* performance practice. Throughout Rehearsal 9, the piano and kick drum hits never appear twice in the same fashion. The space between attacks demonstrates *ma*, creating a meditative atmosphere.

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442 Ibid., 12.
Rehearsal 10 stands alone as Section 5 of the piece. It begins with the relentless repetition of sixteen kick drum hits at a *forte* dynamic. Meanwhile, under the surface, the piano begins quietly with an extended strand of arpeggios that gradually grow louder, leading into Rehearsal 11. The piano part is marked “unmeasured” and “supple within the given tempo” (quarter note equals 80). The pedal is fully depressed at first, and then raised to the halfway point. This technique creates resonating, connected arpeggios that elicit the sound of a plucked *koto*. Section

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443 Ibid., 13.
444 Ibid., 14.
5 is the only portion of the piece that implements the piano in this way. Delicate at first, the dynamic and tempo increase to create an agitated state.

**EXAMPLE 8**  Rossé’s *Bear’s Trio*, page fifteen\(^\text{445}\)

Section 6 begins at Rehearsal 11 and acts as a return to the ideas from the opening section of *Bear’s Trio*. As demonstrated in Example 9, the material of the saxophone part is exactly the same as the beginning of the piece in terms of rhythm, pitch material, and melodic contour. Unlike the opening, at Section 6 the saxophone dynamic is marked fortissimo, the melody is one octave higher than the opening, and the tempo is slightly faster. Again, the saxophone line closely resembles the *hichiriki* and flute parts of *gagaku*. The piano’s highest grace notes in the upper register produce a shrill timbre that matches the saxophone’s brightness. The motion of the

\(^{445}\) Ibid., 15.
grace notes and use of a sustain pedal produce a heterophonic effect, even though the initial attack of each grouping appears to line up among the voices. The vibraphone part is also in the upper register and rhythmically matches the piano’s resonance. Slight discrepancies would perhaps be welcome during Section 6, as the phasing between instruments would produce heterophony similar to that of gagaku. The clusters and melodic motion resemble the sound produced by a group of hichiriki and flute players.

EXAMPLE 9  Rossé’s Bear’s Trio, page seventeen, line one

Rehearsal 13 initiates Section 7, the final part of the piece. Example 10 shows the climax one measure before the section begins and the sudden change that occurs at Rehearsal 13 with the silence of the piano and vibraphone. They leave the unaccompanied saxophone to play a string of repetitive three-note figures. Another sudden change occurs during the third measure of Rehearsal 13 when the piano and snare drum enter with repeated eighth notes at a tempo unrelated to the saxophone part. It is common in gagaku for the percussion instruments to insert repetitive rhythms in this fashion.

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446 Ibid., 17.
At Rehearsal 14 (see Example 11), the repeated percussion and piano attacks gradually slow down in opposition to the saxophone’s acceleration. The tempo continues to fluctuate through Rehearsal 14 until the piece ends with the saxophone reaching its pinnacle in pitch, tempo, and dynamic. Meanwhile, the piano and percussion increase dynamically, but slow down significantly to the very end.
This overview indicates Rossé’s numerous borrowings from gagaku in Bear’s Trio. Many of the same corresponding elements found in Bear’s Trio are evident in Nishi Asakusa and Orients.

Orality in Bear’s Trio

Flexibility, repetition, and soloistic passages in Bear’s Trio are particularly demonstrative of the pervasive nature of orality in Rossé’s compositional style. Japanese tradition has undoubtedly reinforced Rossé’s ideas regarding orality and inspired methods of implementation strongly tied with Japanese culture. Therefore, the prominence of orality in Rossé’s Japanese-influenced works validates his commitment to cultural exchange and fostering strong relationships.

In Sections 1, 3, and 6 of Bear’s Trio, the saxophone assumes a style obviously borrowed from the hichiriki and flute of the gagaku ensemble. Comprised of pitch bends, quarter tones, grace notes, and accents, the saxophone melodies demonstrate flexibility typical of traditional Japanese performance practice. Freedom allows more room for nuance in the saxophone part and

448 Ibid., 20.
requires that all performers communicate more carefully. This is particularly true of Sections 1 and 6, which involve coordinating attack points of challenging rhythmic combinations. As mentioned earlier, minor discrepancies in rhythm and attack would result in a heterophonic texture closer to the style of gagaku.

Rossé’s implementation of repetition often resembles the spontaneity of improvisation and reflects the repetition found in Japanese tradition. For example, throughout Section 2, which begins at Rehearsal 3 (see Example 2), the saxophonist plays strands of 32nd notes that are grouped in twos. The contour remains consistent throughout, but the exact intervals and pitch content rarely repeat. This kind of unsystematic or improvisatory repetition occurs at Rehearsal 13 (see Example 10) in the saxophone part and continues through to the end of the piece. To the listener, this type of repetition may seem like the improvised development of an idea. Rossé’s implementation of repetitive gestures relates to the Zen concept “dochu no sei” (“stillness in motion”) introduced in the previous chapter.

Unsystematic repetition appears again in a different context at Rehearsals 6 through Rehearsal 9 (see Examples 4, 5, 6, and 7). The piano and percussion parts align rhythmically and melodically, indicating that they should be treated as one unified voice. Once again, the same short figures repeat, but not in the same exact order or rhythm each time. This atmosphere becomes more spontaneous when the sudden woodblock rolls and kick drum enter through Rehearsal 6 and 7. The same is true of the piano and tom hits at Rehearsal 9, where the music is generally sparser.

One of the clearest examples of orality occurs at Rehearsal 10 (see Example 8) when the piano takes over as the featured instrument with a long string of arpeggios. The fact that the
Tempo is marked “non mesuré” (“unmeasured”) and “*souple dans le tempo*” (“supple within the tempo”) points to the freedom afforded the pianist.⁴⁴⁹

Rehearsal 14 (see Example 11) features intense eighth note attacks on the snare drum and piano. Both voices are directed to slow down gradually until the end while synchronizing each attack, or “poco a poco rallentando al fine (synchro piano/c.cl).”⁴⁵⁰ Rossé’s instructions require the musicians to communicate effectively and unite as one voice. The pacing of this section is likely to change from performance to performance.

Another aspect of Rossé’s orality that is not as explicit as the previous examples lies within the notation itself. Although *Bear’s Trio* is published and printed, the notation remains in manuscript form. Each symbol, other than the instructional text, appears in Rossé’s original handwriting. While his motive to print a manuscript version of the piece may have been practical, the results support Rossé’s philosophical aims. Walter Ong’s following statement regarding manuscripts becomes relevant: “They remained closer to the give-and-take of oral expression. The readers of manuscripts are less closed off from the author, less absent, than are the readers of those writing for print.”⁴⁵¹ By printing in manuscript form, Rossé conveys open-endedness and encourages his interpreters to take liberties. Also, as Ong mentions, manuscript implies intertextuality through borrowing and sharing.⁴⁵² Thus, the use of manuscript is representative of Rossé’s beliefs regarding cultural exchange. While it is true that effective communication is necessary in all chamber music, Rossé demands a particularly mindful engagement from the performers by providing them with ample opportunity to make decisions.

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⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.
⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 20.
⁴⁵¹ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 130.
⁴⁵² Ibid., 131.
Primitivism in *Bear’s Trio*

Some of the same examples used to demonstrate hybridity and orality in *Bear’s Trio* also exhibit elements of Rossé’s primitivism. His varied use of extended techniques, melodic shaping, and contrast bring out the inherent qualities of each instrument in addition to the physical relationships between instrument and performer. Rossé finds that physicality is the mode by which people connect with music and with each other in a way that transcends boundaries. It is therefore not surprising that he would find the ritualistic and spiritual aspects of Japanese music inspiring.

In *gagaku*, the constant microtonal motion of the *hichiriki* and flute is incredibly similar to the sound quality of voices in ritual Buddhist chant. Therefore, by emulating the woodwinds of *gagaku* in Sections 1, 3, and 6 of *Bear’s Trio*, the saxophone takes on a purely expressive, vocal quality. During the opening section, the *pianissimo* dynamic encourages an airy timbre, reserved energy, and floating motion. However, in the other two sections, the melody appears in the upper register at a *forte* dynamic. In each case, the performer must embrace the saxophone’s resemblance to the human voice and in turn, emphasize its animalistic qualities.

As noted in previous chapters, Rossé begins his compositional process by considering the possibilities of each instrument and how they are achieved by the performer. An example can be found in the opening of *Bear’s Trio* where the saxophone imitates *hichiriki* and flute by producing idiomatic *glissandi* and microtonal fingerings. These vocal inflections are part of the saxophone’s vernacular and serve to extend the performer’s own voice. Rossé’s aim to connect the performer with his or her instrument reflects the Zen goal of *taiko* drummers to become the drum.
The baritone saxophone multiphonic reiterated twice throughout Rehearsal 9 forms another example of this type of primitivism. The timbre, register, and dynamic of the multiphonic very closely resemble the sustained swells of the *sho* in *gagaku*. Rossé succeeds in creating a seamless blend between the multiphonic and the simultaneous righthand chord of the piano. His vernacular use of the saxophone and piano demonstrate his extensive knowledge of each instrument.

Toward the end of the piece, consecutive percussive strikes recall the spiritual essence of *taiko* drumming. These moments appear at Rehearsals 10, 13, and 14 (see Examples 8, 10, and 11), when the kick drum and tom are struck with power and precision. The final section of the piece is especially dramatic. As the tempo slows down, increasingly larger physical gestures are required to produce loud attacks. The bigger motions reflect the growing dynamic and emphasize the physicality involved in playing percussion. The piano chords also become stronger and slower, a transformation that comes across both aurally and visually as the pianist’s hands rebound further and further from the piano with each chord.

A similar example is found at Rehearsal 8 where the baritone saxophone joins the other voices homophonically. The constant unison repetition and alternation between soft and loud attacks elicits a ritualistic atmosphere. Dynamic contrast is once again perceived both aurally and visually as the percussionist and pianist use different gestures depending on the anticipated volume of each sound. The saxophonist’s breaths during this section also correspond with the given dynamic and reflect the physical energy involved in playing the saxophone.

Rossé’s primitivism is exemplified by his vernacular use of each instrument, his visceral performance situations, and his spontaneity, all of which are interrelated. His goal to create an environment that connects all entities of performance, such as instruments, performers, and
audience, is particularly close to Zen and Shinto concepts. Similar examples of primitivism can be found in 

**Background of Nishi Asakusa**

*Nishi Asakusa* was originally published by Éditions Fuzeau in 2006 as part of *Collection "NOUVEAUX HORIZONS"* (“New Horizons Collection”). Jean-Michel Goury established this series of pieces in collaboration with Fuzeau as a stepping-stone toward teaching younger students contemporary music. He addresses the challenge of unfamiliar musical language and aesthetics in the introductory pages of the *Nishi Asakusa* score.

Artistic creation is often engendered through a grim, tortuous progression on the part of the composer and his performer. Now an industrious craftsman, now a whimsical, inspired magician, the artist requires encounters, spontaneous or deliberate, to lead his poetical quest to a successful conclusion. The purpose of this research is to extricate the essential musical substance of the material or of an idea, and to share it with performers and audience, thus extending their musical commitment towards the discovery of new aesthetical and technical spheres.

In this context, “encounters” likely refer to explorations of various musical styles, collaborative processes, and research. Encounters guide performers as they identify works within broader contexts and decode musical scores in hopes of expressing ideas accurately and genuinely. Ultimately, the goal of the performer is to expand his or her own aesthetic capacity to embrace that which is new, unfamiliar, and perhaps, uncomfortable, and to share the experience with the audience. *Nishi Asakusa* certainly fulfills the mission of *Collection NOUVEAUX HORIZONS* by presenting its performers with conceptual challenges.

*Nishi Asakusa* was completed on August 13, 2004. Composed for alto saxophone and prepared piano, the piece is dedicated to Goury’s son, Martin, who was born prior to the

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Rossé often dedicates new works to the newly born children of his collaborators. Fuzeau’s publication of *Nishi Asakusa* includes an informative description by Rossé.

Written after a trip to Japan, this work was inspired by a Shinto ritual heard in the Senjō-ji temple in the Asakusa district (to be pronounced Asaksa), formerly Edo. A recto tono choir of low voices is sustained by the very rhythmic performance of the big Taiko, a magnificent instrument (skin) struck horizontally. Naturally the metallic instruments (atarigane or other metals) are also present in the second part of this piece (in particular in the enharmonic writing of the piano part). Fuzeau also includes Goury’s performance notes to support Rossé’s description.

Martial, ceremonial music, Koto atmosphere, microtonality with an oriental hint, oppressive, percussive accents, all converge towards an initiatory approach to Japanese traditional music in this both spectacular and intimist piece. A wink, a little souvenir which F. Rossé hands on to us about his travels, using various combinations typical of his writing (prepared piano, slaps, subtone, multiphonic sounds…) While the descriptions above provide a starting point for performers using the Fuzeau edition, *Nishi Asakusa* is now published by Christine Paquelet Edition Arts (CPEA) in Paris and does not include performance or program notes in the score. Rossé indicates additional specific references to Japanese music and spirituality in a recent interview.

*Nishi Asakusa* is a piece connected to a rather Buddhist tradition, close to a ritual heard in the ‘Asakusa’ district in Tokyo; this ritual involves a chanted recitation in the low register by the crowd and punctuated by percussion on the taiko (large Japanese drum hit horizontally).

Examples of these borrowings are discussed further in the subsequent section.

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454 Goury, email interview. See Appendix A, 181.  
456 Ibid., n.p.  
457 Original text reads: “*Nishi Asakusa* est une pièce liée à une tradition plutôt bouddhiste, proche d'un rituel entendu dans le quartier "Asakusa" à Tokyo; ce rituel implique une récitation scandée dans le grave du registre par la foule et ponctuée par la percussion sur le taiko (grand tambour japonais frappé horizontalement).” Rossé, email interview. See Appendix B, 185.
Hybridity in *Nishi Asakusa*

The title of *Nishi Asakusa*, which means “West Asakusa,” reveals a starting point for research. Upon learning that Asakusa is home to some of Japan’s most famous Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, a performer would be able to determine relevant musical and spiritual traditions. The distinction of *Nishi Asakusa* as a piece of Western art music, rather than a direct imitation of Japanese traditions, is an important one. By borrowing from aspects of Buddhist chant, Shinto ritual, and *taiko*, Rossé has created a collage reminiscent of his time in Asakusa without employing mere imitation. Goury describes *Nishi Asakusa* as “a wink, a little souvenir,” of Rossé’s travels. As such, it is necessary to confront the Japanese influences within the piece under the umbrella of hybridity.

While visiting the Buddhist Kannon Temple in Asakusa in 2004, Rossé stood in the crowd and discreetly recorded Buddhist chant on a small portable device. The audio clip features a man chanting rhythmically alongside *taiko* patterns and other percussive sounds. Although the excerpt lasts just under two minutes, the ritual likely went on for a longer period of time. The qualities found in Section 1 of *Nishi Asakusa*, which ends at Rehearsal 7, strongly resemble the musical characteristics in the recording. Representative of the entire opening section, the first three measures of the piece are shown in Example 12. Lasting for approximately two minutes, a duration comparable to that of the recording, this section is substantial in the context of the six-to seven-minute piece.

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458 “Senjo-ji (extrait),” Buddhist chant, Tokyo, Japan, recorded by François Rossé, 2004, sent to author by Rossé, mp3 file.
Example 12 demonstrates the unsystematic repetition of short rhythmic figures that make up the opening section of the piece. The effect of these rhythmic groupings resembles that of ritual chant (shomyo), which is constructed from specific rhythmic patterns; these are often syllable groupings of five and seven. The same few sounds repeat for an extended period of time rendering the repetitions imperceptible to the unfamiliar ear and instilling a meditative atmosphere. The same kind of repetition is found in Bear’s Trio. The lack of momentum toward a specific goal brings focus to the present moment, a quality that illustrates the influence of Zen Buddhism.

Another factor contributing to the meditative character of the opening is the sustained soft dynamic. In Japanese music, unwavering dynamics create a static situation that allows the performer and listener to focus on sound itself. Rossé’s choice to use a quiet dynamic throughout the first section indicates his perspective as an observer in a crowd. Evidence of this may be determined from the audio clip, which demonstrates full, resonant chanting and drumming recorded at a distance.

Rossé approximates the sounds of chanting and drumming with the use of several extended techniques. He transforms the piano into a taiko-like instrument through preparation. The pianist is directed to place putty on specific strings in the low register to dampen their sound.

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resonance prior to performance. During the opening section, these pitches are repeated as percussive dyads that resonate like a taiko. Meanwhile, the saxophone contributes percussive slap-tongue attacks sometimes coordinated with the piano. Occasional attacks are accented, just as certain hits on the taiko appear louder than others in the Kannon Temple audio excerpt.

As a wind instrument, the saxophone adds a vocal quality to the percussiveness of the opening section, perhaps reminiscent of the vocalizations in ritual chant. The saxophone part also involves rapid two- to four-note gestures inserted between slap-tongue attacks that resemble murmurings from the crowd or the rattling of additional percussion instruments. The triangular symbol above these groupings indicates “sons éoliens (souffle essentiellement),” (“aeolian sounds (essentially breath)”) (see Figure 1).460 The souffle timbre is airy or breathy, and contrasts with the percussive slaps and prepared piano attacks to create a multi-layered texture.

**Saxophone**:

![Saxophone symbols](image)

**FIGURE 1** Rossé’s *Nishi Asakusa*, performance notes461

At Rehearsal 7 (see Example 13), there is a sudden change in atmosphere from intense to calm. The saxophone and piano hocket through a linear passage like distant ringing bells. The depressed sustain pedal causes the notes to blur together. Marked souffle and ppp, the saxophone blends into the sound of the piano. This section of the piece may serve as a brief bridge or transition within a collage of scenes and sounds in Asakusa.

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460 Ibid., n.p.
461 Ibid., n.p.
Again, a sudden contrast occurs as the saxophone rapidly climbs to a *forte* dynamic during the grace note pickup gesture leading into Rehearsal 8, which initiates Section 2. Example 13 shows the beginning of the new section, which features the saxophone. The highly ornamental style, sporadic alterations of rhythmic groupings, and pentatonic pitch material resemble Japanese flute playing. The solo context resembles a flute interlude between pieces in *kagura* music or *matsuri-bayashi*.

The piano part at Rehearsal 8 can be likened to that of a *sho* in an ensemble. By holding down the sustain pedal, the pianist captures and resonates the pitches of the saxophone melody. Although the piano is inaudible for most of Rehearsal 8, the strings ring clearly during the rest following the solo, as shown in the second measure of Example 14.

Once the ringing dies away, silence remains. Marked “*long*”, the *fermata* rest is the only silence in *Nishi Asakusa* (see Example 14). It can be interpreted as an example of *ma*. In the

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462 Ibid., 5.
463 Wade, 63.
context of Nishi Asakusa, perhaps the fermata rest indicates a respite from the constant bombardment of sound heard in the streets of the Asakusa district. It provides the performers and listeners with a moment of peace, even if such silence is unrealistic to expect in a busy place like Asakusa.

**EXAMPLE 14** Rossé’s *Nishi Asakusa*, page six, line three

Following the rest, the saxophone enters *dal niente*, from nothing, and begins Section 3 characterized by *glissandi*, microtones, and *souffle* murmurings; the saxophone resembles distant Buddhist chant (see Example 15). Meanwhile, the piano acts as a vague accompaniment resembling bells or the additional support of chanting Buddhist priests. There are also percussive moments in the piano part, such as the rapid three-note figure found in the fourth measure of the second line. These hammering gestures may be considered representations of *taiko* or other percussion used during ritual ceremonies. Throughout Rehearsals 9 and 10, the saxophone timbre is marked *souffle* and the dynamics remain within a quiet range. The resultant airy or grainy tone resembles the sound of Japanese flute.

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EXAMPLE 15 Rossé’s Nishi Asakusa, page seven, lines two and three

Section 3 comprises roughly two minutes of the entire piece, a significant portion comparable to the breadth of Nishi Asakusa’s opening. A meditative atmosphere is immediately established with a significantly slower tempo than any of the previous sections. Again, there is a feeling of stasis that continuously draws focus to the present moment or current sound. Section 3 demonstrates Rossé’s application of Zen concepts through his use of tempo, rhythm, and timbre.

In Section 4, the inspiration behind the music becomes more ambiguous than previous sections of Nishi Asakusa. Similarly to Section 1, there is a quiet intensity at Rehearsal 11 (see Example 16) that suggests an observer’s distance from the music. The tempo is significantly faster than the previous section, which establishes immediate contrast in energy. Swooping ascending and descending lines in the saxophone line are to be played as fast as possible with souffle timbre at the pianissimo dynamic carried over from Rehearsal 10. The piano part contains rapid attacks on the prepared low A string, resulting in percussive thuds similar to those heard at the beginning of the piece. These gestures alternate with ascending flurries that match the

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467 Rossé, Nishi Asakusa, 7.
saxophone’s figures, but occur offset from the saxophone’s rhythm. The fast strings of notes resemble what might be vocalizations, flute flurries, or strums of a biwa or shamisen.

**EXAMPLE 16** Rossé’s *Nishi Asakusa*, page nine, line one

At Rehearsal 12 (see Example 17), another sudden contrast occurs. The saxophonist alternates among three thick multiphonics, ascending *souffle* runs, and low slap-tongue attacks. These sounds differ significantly from the delicate gestures of Rehearsal 11. Full chords in the piano are coordinated with the saxophone multiphonics while the percussive attacks on the piano’s prepared low A occur with the saxophone’s ascending runs and slap-tongue attacks. The abrasive timbre of the multiphonics is reminiscent of high-pitched metal percussion instruments used in festival music, such as the *atari-gane*, while the flurries resemble flute or plucked strings. Section 4 possibly depicts *matsuri bayashi* or *kagura* more generally, although it might also portray rhythmic Buddhist chant. Regardless, the pulsing rhythm and aggressive timbres create a ritualistic atmosphere.

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468 Ibid., 9.
EXAMPLE 17  Rossé’s *Nishi Asakusa*, page ten, line one⁴⁶⁹

Rehearsal 14 (see Example 18) is a three-measure coda that recalls the bell-like phrase at Rehearsal 7. The saxophone sustains a multiphonic dyad while the piano plays the melody alone. The rhythm of the melody gradually elongates rhythmically as both piano and saxophone fade away together. The multiphonic blends with the piano, infusing the overall sound with a rough texture. The end of the piece seems to indicate the observer’s retreat from Asakusa.

EXAMPLE 18  Rossé’s *Nishi Asakusa*, page eleven, line three⁴⁷⁰

*Nishi Asakusa* should be considered a collection, or suite, of sonic images from Asakusa. Both spiritually and musically, Rossé recreates his experience by applying a spectrum of extended techniques and jarring extremes. Even when obvious connections between *Nishi Asakusa* and traditional Japanese music are absent, there are enough shared characteristics to inform and enrich an interpretation.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 10.
⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 11.
Orality in *Nishi Asakusa*

Orality in traditional Japanese pedagogy and performance encourages communication, coordination, and flexibility among musicians. These are both necessary components to achieving Japanese aesthetic ideals and qualities that Rossé elicits in his music. Throughout *Nishi Asakusa*, like in *Bear’s Trio*, orality is manifested through flexibility, repetition, and soloistic passages. By recognizing and grasping how orality functions in the piece, interpreters will have a better understanding of how to navigate the music.

Repetitious sections throughout the piece prominently demonstrate orality. As illustrated in the examination of *Bear’s Trio*, Rossé uses unsystematic or improvisatory repetition often in his Japanese-influenced works. Again, this approach reflects the Zen concept “dochu no sei” (“stillness in motion”), because it leads performers to concentrate on the present. The first example of unsystematic repetition is the opening (see Example 12), during which short musical ideas in both parts appear in slightly different variations. Section 4 of *Nishi Asakusa* is similarly repetitive and rhythmic.

Rehearsal 8 requires an improvisatory manner of performance. The only instructions provided for the saxophonist are “rapide (avec souplesse)” (“rapid (with suppleness)”) and “sempre f” (“always forte”) (see Example 13). The lack of breath marks and indications of character requires the interpreter to approach the multitude of ornamental figures freely. The flexibility of the solo evokes spontaneity and engagement.

The following slow section from Rehearsal 9 through 10 (see Example 15) is marked at quarter note equals 44 to 48. This remarkably slow tempo allows freedom, but also calls for impeccable coordination between the two performers. The suppleness throughout this section

471 Ibid., 5.
recalls the flexibility of noh in its demand for accurate interaction between performers. For example, in the fourth bar of the second line in Example 15, the saxophonist must react quickly to the rapid three-note gesture in the piano so that the two figures connect seamlessly. This can only be accomplished if both players are aware of each other’s parts.

As with Bear’s Trio, a more unnoticeable example of orality in Nishi Asakusa is the manuscript-style publication.

Primitivism in Nishi Asakusa

Rossé’s primitivist tendencies evidenced in Bear’s Trio appear throughout Nishi Asakusa in many of the same ways. His use of extended techniques and contrast allow him to exploit and expand upon each instrument’s vernacular while also demanding physicality of his performers. The visceral and ritualistic qualities exhibited in Nishi Asakusa correspond with elements of traditional Japanese art forms.

Throughout Section 1 (see Example 12), the saxophone and piano assume the roles of taiko, Buddhist chant, and other peripheral sounds heard at the Kannon Temple in Asakusa. Rossé accomplishes this by combining prepared piano thuds, souffle timbre, and slap-tongue attacks within a rhythmic and repetitive context. The quiet, percussive sounds evoke a ritualistic atmosphere similar to Buddhist chant. The vocal quality of the souffle timbre adds an expressive quality to the saxophone part.

The saxophonist’s physicality is also emphasized in the solo at Rehearsal 8 (see Example 13). Marked forte throughout, the large contour leaps, fast tempo, and extensive ornamentation seem to invite a somewhat unrefined sound, and simultaneously require impeccable control. The
saxophonist’s energy and endurance are likely to become visible to the audience as the passage progresses.

At Rehearsals 9 through 10 (see Example 15), the slow tempo and combined colors of the saxophone and piano suggest introspection and meditation. Once again, Rossé employs extended techniques, such as *souffle*, *glissandi* and microtones in the saxophone part to depict Buddhist chant. This calm environment embodies the Zen concept of meditation, or *zazen*, by encouraging self-awareness and concentration. Sustaining low notes at a slow tempo for an extended period of time requires substantial endurance, focus, and control from the saxophonist. The resultant visceral intensity is precisely the quality Rossé seeks to produce.

At Rehearsal 12 through 13 (see Example 17), the saxophonist shifts quickly between three different multiphonics that are interrupted by low B slap-tongue attacks and fast *souffle* flurries. The alternation of these techniques requires increased energy and physical movement. Likewise, the pianist jumps swiftly from register to register in motions that are visibly more dramatic than previous parts of the piece. The physical demand of this section inherently moves the instrumentalists toward increased intensity. This section is another case of Rossé’s desire to elicit animalism through the use of extended techniques and contrast.

*Souffle* is a technique used throughout *Nishi Asakusa* that reflects the timbre ideal of wind instruments in Japanese culture. As discussed in Chapter 5, Japanese instruments are traditionally intended to depict the natural environment, such as wind, water, or birdsong. Characterized by grittiness and breathiness, *souffle* resembles the airy sound quality of Japanese flutes. By recreating the sound of a Japanese flute, Rossé points to the spiritual concept of interconnectedness that permeates Japanese tradition. Additionally, *souffle* draws attention to the
most fundamental ingredient in sound production on the saxophone: the breath. This aspect of
the technique also serves as an example of primitivism.

Although not considered strictly oral today, many Japanese traditions, such as kagura and
matsuri, carry with them ancient rituals and mythology. As presented in Chapter 5, Zeami’s
three-pronged goal for noh theater centers on the visceral aspect of kagura performance, the
practice from which noh originated. The ritualistic nature of ancient kagura exemplifies the
physicality and animalistic quality that Rossé strives to replicate in Nishi Asakusa. In this way,
Japanese elements coincide with the aesthetic goals Rossé has established.

Background of Orients

Dedicated to Takashi Saito, Orients was completed on August 13, 2002 and published by
Fuzeau in 2005. Now published by CPEA, Orients is written for violin, saxophone (soprano and
tenor), percussion, and prepared piano. The percussion part involves crotales, atari-gane, three
suspended cymbals, two gongs, vibraphone, cymbal on timbale, large tam-tam, low temple
block, three toms, and a kick drum. Proxima Centauri, Charrier’s flute, saxophone, percussion,
and piano ensemble, premiered the piece in 2005 at the TNT theater in Bordeaux. The group
invited violinist Jean Leber to play on this particular concert.472

Rossé describes the inspiration behind Orients as a combination of noh drama, gagaku,
and ritual. He was influenced by the concepts of time and energy that stem from Zen Buddhism.

Orients is constructed as a ritual in the forms of energy similar to Noh theater and the
treatment of tempo changes (which are not common in Western music). The relation to
Japan is especially interesting, beyond exoticism, in the consciousness and management
of energy in the instrumental or vocal style, and this may also interest Western
musicians.473

472 Rossé, email message to author, August 29, 2014.
473 Original text reads: ‘‘Orients’ est construit comme un rituel dans les formes d’énergie proche du théâtre
Nô et le traitement des mouvements de tempo (qui n'est pas fréquent dans la musique occidentale). Le rapport au
His use of the saxophone relates less to any specific reference than “the general management of
the form of energy with also the allusions to Gagaku in the opening line of the piece.”

The piece can be divided into five distinct sections, as follows:

- Section 1: Rehearsals 1-3
- Section 2: Rehearsals 4-5
- Section 3: Rehearsals 6-11
- Section 4: Rehearsals 12-13
- Section 5: Rehearsal 14-17

However, within each section, there are often multiple subsections that contrast from one another
like the scenes of a noh drama. Many of the Japanese influences, elements of orality, and
examples of primitivism in Orients overlap with those found in Bear’s Trio and Nishi Asakusa.

Hybridity in Orients

Rossé’s hybridity in Orients is focused on the interrelated concepts of energy, time, and
space. The Zen principles upon which noh drama is based are the primary influences evident
throughout the piece. Along with these conceptual applications are the more audible references
to sounds and techniques of Japanese music, such as gagaku, nohgaku, and matsuri-bayashi.

The opening of the piece begins with a passage reminiscent of gagaku (see Example 19).
The tenor saxophone is featured with a lengthy solo just as the flute solo would initiate a gagaku
performance. The style of the saxophone melody is similar to the ornamental and microtonal
passages of the soprano saxophone in Bear’s Trio. In addition to microtonal fingerings and pitch
bends, slap-tongue attacks are used to punctuate the rhythmic groupings. Narrow at first, the

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Japon est surtout intéressant, au-delà de l’exotisme, dans la conscience et la gestion de l’énergie dans le jeu
instrumental ou vocal, et cela peut aussi intéresser les musiciens occidentaux.” Rossé, email interview. See
Appendix B, 185.

474 Original text reads: “la gestion de la forme d’énergie de manière générale avec aussi des allusions au
Gagaku dans la ligne au début de l’œuvre.” Ibid. See Appendix B, 185.
range of pitches is only three-quarters of a tone. It expands as the solo progresses, reaching just over one octave before Rehearsal 2 begins.

EXAMPLE 19 Rossé’s *Orients*, page one, line one

Although these aspects of the opening section resemble *gagaku*, other characteristics indicate a strong relationship to the singers of *noh* drama. The inflective style of the saxophone solo also recalls ritual Buddhist chant, one of the origins of *noh*. Throughout the entire solo, the tenor saxophonist is instructed to sing in unison, or at the octave, with the played pitch, an effect called growling. This technique contributes an overwhelmingly vocal quality to the resultant tone.

Another resemblance to *noh* is the sparse and gestural use of percussive sounds during the saxophone solo. Several times, the percussionist coordinates a strike on the temple block with a short attack from the piano. The two notes struck by the pianist are prepared with putty in order to produce a percussive thud. This is the technique used in *Nishi Asakusa* to produce the same effect. Resonance from the piano is sustained by the pedal and blends with the saxophone.

Suddenly, a new idea begins at Rehearsal 2 (see Example 20) as all players join together. The cacophony of sounds resembles *noh* singers accompanied by a *noh* ensemble. Constantly in

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flux, the violin part alternates between *marcato*, *sul pont* (“on the bridge”), and *pizzicato* (plucked) techniques. Its gradual pitch bends resemble the style of *noh* singing. Rossé implements nine different multiphonics in the saxophone part, each producing a uniquely gritty sound quality. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the music of *noh* always serves the text, and thus reflects the behaviors and actions of the actors. Dramatic coordination of attack points among the four parts at Rehearsal 2 may represent a powerful moment during a *noh* drama. The unique timbre of each instrument creates a certain transparency characteristic of Japanese music and the lack of any discernible pulse reflects Zen. Rehearsal 3 combines ideas from the opening and Rehearsal 2.

**EXAMPLE 20** Rossé’s *Orients*, page five, line one

![Example Music](image)

Another sudden change occurs at the beginning of Section 2 (Rehearsal 4), when all four voices become overwhelmingly percussive. Rossé fluctuates the energy and sense of time throughout *Orients* by inserting rests and changing the tempo. These transitions constantly transform the flow and affect the overall character just as the mood in *noh* alters. At Rehearsal 4 through 5, the use of rests is unpredictable and cultivates a spontaneous atmosphere for the

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476 Ibid., 5.
listener. The longer rests exhibit *kokoro*, the concept that action and non-action are both positive components of a performance. This sparse texture continues through Rehearsal 5.

**EXAMPLE 21** Rossé’s *Orients*, page eight, line one

Rehearsal 6 marks the beginning of Section 3, a substantial part of the piece that features an extended violin solo. As demonstrated in Example 22, the violinist is instructed to harmonize by sustaining harmonics on the G string while playing the melody on the D string. The melodic line demonstrates the same ornamental style and microtonality used in the opening section of *Orients*, as well as several passages in *Bear’s Trio* and *Nishi Asakusa*. Melodically, the violin resembles a flute, yet the timbre is scratchy and buzzy like that of a *biwa*. At Rehearsal 10, the same type of melody returns, but is played with *pizzicato*. The plucked quality is similar to the playing technique of the *shamisen* and provides contrast from the previous violin solo.

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477 Ibid., 8.
The plucking, bowing, and metallic timbres of the piano and percussion provide support for setting the mood during the violin solos from Rehearsals 6 through 11. The variety of accompanimental sounds strongly resembles the wide range of percussive timbres in Japanese music. The percussion part involves more resonant instruments, such as crotale, cymbals, and gong, than those used earlier in the piece. Meanwhile, the pianist manipulates the piano strings by plucking, scraping, and producing harmonics while the sustain pedal is depressed to produce a resonating blend of sounds (see Figure 2). Specific piano effects are paired with certain percussion sonorities. For example, the crotale and plucked piano string always occur together. This is true of the bowed cymbals and scraped string. By setting the mood throughout Section 3, the accompaniment behaves in the same way as the percussion section of a noh ensemble.
The other component of Section 3 first occurs at Rehearsal 7 (see Example 23) with a drastic change. Singing on an “u,” or French “ou” syllable, the violinist, percussionist, and pianist, sustain a low pitch of their choosing. While vocalizing with discrete breaths when needed, they continue playing their instruments. The violinist produces harmonics, the percussionist rolls quietly, and the pianist scrapes a low string. Meanwhile, the saxophonist sustains a dyad multiphonic with an interval of three-quarters of a tone on the tenor. This particular multiphonic produces a hollow, vibrating timbre that is intended to blend with the ensemble, as indicated by the instruction, “immobile (sur le plan dynamique),” which translates to “immobile (on the dynamic map).” The static sound world created during this section corresponds with the Zen concept of “stillness in motion” that Rossé repeatedly integrates.

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479 Ibid., 11.
480 Ibid., 12.
The transition one measure before Rehearsal 12 is a dramatic moment that anticipates the new section. Shown in Example 24, all instrumental sounds stop abruptly as the three voices crescendo to a loud whisper and with rhythmic intensity exclaim, “to kaï tu,” in unison. While they have no actual meaning, these phonemes come from the Japanese language. They resemble kakegoe, the yells used in noh, and other taiko settings, for dramatic emphasis, although are much quieter in this context.

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481 Ibid., 12.
482 Rossé, email message to author, September 3, 2014.
According to the dynamics at Rehearsal 12 (see Example 25), the soprano saxophone begins a bombastic solo accompanied by quiet drumming. The contour of the melodic line follows a more dramatic shape than the other melodic features of the piece, and the dynamic constantly fluctuates. In addition to ornaments, pitch bends, slap-tongue attacks, and microtones, bisbigliando fingerings are incorporated to alter the timbre of certain pitches. Given its ornamental and sporadic nature, the saxophone solo is suggestive of both flute and singing styles of noh. The independence of the percussion part is also characteristic of Japanese music.
One measure before Rehearsal 13 (see Example 26), the violin entrance marks the beginning of the final part in Section 4. The piano leaps, woodblock rolls, and violin harmonic take on the chaotic nature of the saxophone solo. Although notated with a designated meter, the performers seem to be playing independently of one another.

**EXAMPLE 26** Rossé’s *Orients*, page twenty, line one

The final section of the piece begins at Rehearsal 14, the sparsest portion of the piece. For five measures, the only sound that occurs is a temple block hit once per bar. Even after the violin and piano enter in the fifth measure with one simultaneous attack, silence is the most prominent element until Rehearsal 16, as demonstrated in Example 27. Rossé applies *ma* by treating silence as an active component of the music.

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485 Ibid., 20.
When Rehearsal 16 arrives, the violin reenters with a sustained pitch that becomes rhythmic murmuring in the fourth measure (see Example 28). The other instruments provide percussive accompaniment until Rehearsal 17, at which point the saxophone takes over the distant murmuring.
For the remainder of *Orients*, the saxophone is directed, "*Immobile dans la dynamique près du silence (comme un chant à peine effleuré)*," which translates to "immobile within a dynamic close to silence (like chant barely muttered)." This indication comes with the instruction to circular breathe for a more sustained melodic line, as indicated by the symbol above the saxophone part in the second measure of Example 29. Constant repetition during the final section elicits a meditative atmosphere, due particularly to the chanting saxophone and relentless woodblock hits notated just above the top line of the percussion staff.

**EXAMPLE 29** Rossé’s *Orients*, page twenty-five, line two

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487 Ibid., 24.
488 Ibid., 25.
489 Ibid., 25.
The piece ends suddenly as though stopped by the push of a button (see Example 30). Rossé instructs the musicians to “stop as though cut off in an unexpected manner. Remain in a silent position long after the sounds end.”\textsuperscript{490} The silence is part of the piece and should be regarded as such by both performers and listeners.

\textbf{EXAMPLE 30} Rossé’s \textit{Orients}, page twenty-six, line two\textsuperscript{491}

Many of the characteristics found in \textit{Orients} are borrowed from aspects of \textit{noh} drama. Although the piece does not involve acting, Rossé infuses theatrical elements through the use of extreme contrast and vocalization. \textit{Orients} evokes an array of moods just as \textit{nohgaku} serves the text by setting the tone on stage. While Western musicians cannot truly capture the spirituality of Zen masters, they can approximate Japanese instrumental and vocal styles, and apply Buddhist and Shinto concepts to create an informed interpretation.

\textbf{Orality in Orients}

As demonstrated through the examinations of \textit{Bear’s Trio} and \textit{Nishi Asakusa}, orality is an integral component of Rossé’s Japanese-influenced works in particular. \textit{Orients} also provides

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{490} Original text reads: “Arrêt comme coupé de manière inattendue. Rester longtemps en position de silence après la fin des sons.” Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{491} Ibid., 26.
\end{flushright}
performers with many opportunities for flexibility, improvisatory gesture, and moments of spontaneous decision-making. These examples reflect the oral nature of noh drama and the essence of traditional Japanese art forms.

The slap-tongue attacks, pitch bends, held tones, and spatial notation of the opening solo provide the saxophonist with liberties to shape the line (see Example 19). The performer has the opportunity to choose his or her own way of inflecting the groupings and navigating through the passage. Although the dynamic and tempo must remain relatively stable, there is plenty of room for a personalized interpretation. The accompanying performers must follow the soloist precisely and place the coordinated attacks at the appropriate moments. This kind of flexibility requires careful communication among the ensemble.

The violin solos throughout Section 3 are additional examples of orality. While measured notation increases the level of strictness, the ornaments liberate the violinist, allowing varied phrasing and inflection. At Rehearsal 7 (see Example 23), the violinist, percussionist, and pianist are instructed to choose a low pitch to vocalize. By providing them with a choice, Rossé gives the performers control and an opportunity for spontaneity.

Rehearsal 12 (see Example 24) is another saxophone solo notated spatially. Although the tempo is marked, dynamic fluctuation and chaotic gestures allow the performer to shape the line freely. As mentioned earlier, it resembles a traditional Japanese flute or vocal part. The solo also contains ascending and descending flurries similar to those at Rehearsal 11 (see Example 16) in Nishi Asakusa. The contour of each gesture is outlined, but the pitches are unspecified and left for the performer to decide.

The unsystematic or improvisatory repetition of certain sections, such as Rehearsals 14 through 17 (see Examples 27, 29 and 30), demonstrate the same meditative quality found in the
other works reviewed in this chapter. Repetition brings focus to each moment and every sound in the music. It is also a reminder of the flexibility in noh and other Japanese art forms.

Lastly, aside from the performance instructions and tempo markings, the notation of Orients is in manuscript form. As is the case with Bear’s Trio and Nishi Asakusa, handwritten notation provides the performer with a sense that the text is open for exploration and personalization. It also promotes the idea that the interpretive process is continuous and need not end at any point.

**Primitivism in Orients**

Rossé’s emphasis on physicality and animalistic tendencies is particularly apparent in his use of the voice in Orients. As the most human of all instruments, the voice has historically been considered a powerful form of expression. Ritual Buddhist chant, which has long been a method of practicing meditation and reaching enlightenment, is a relevant example. Noh drama has drawn from Buddhist practices and principles since the beginning stages of its development. While Rossé’s implementation of the voice is not always intended as an exact imitation of chant or noh singing, it aims to capture the spiritual essence of the human voice in traditional Japanese music. Rossé also highlights the dramatic nature of noh through physical gesture, contrast, and extended techniques.

The first sound of Orients is the vocalized tenor saxophone solo. Highly ornamental and microtonal, the passage requires impeccable stamina and control of air. The gritty vocal timbre, or growl, displays the animalistic quality Rossé strives to summon. Accompanying the solo are isolated percussion and piano attacks that call for visual cues for coordination. These types of
physical motions enhance the audience’s experience and replace the simple, yet powerful, movements of noh actors.

The thick texture at Rehearsal 2 (see Example 20) is produced by physically demanding techniques. For example, the violinist bows a sustained double stop glissando at fortissimo while the saxophonist moves quickly between loud wide-ranging multiphonics, some of which are sustained. In the second measure of Rehearsal 2, additional physical techniques include plucked violin strings and scraped piano strings. As performers are challenged to maintain control and coordinate attacks, the visual aspect increases the level of intensity for the audience.

The array of percussion instruments and playing techniques employed in Orients produce a spectrum of visual gestures and a multitude of sonorities. At Rehearsal 4 (see Example 21), for instance, the percussionist plays kick drum, atari-gane, gong, temple-bock, and tom covered by tissue while alternating between $p$, $mf$, and $f$ dynamics. The piano part also becomes percussive with quick leaps, broad chords, and contrasting dynamics. Rapid changes in dynamic require physical movements of different sizes adding to the breadth of gesture for both percussionist and pianist.

At Rehearsals 6 and 8 (see Example 22), the microtonal and ornamental violin solos are highly vocal in nature. Every embellishment requires subtle finger movements and the added G string harmonic calls for careful control of the bow. The accompaniment also involves several visibly physical motions, such as scraped and plucked piano strings, and bowed gong. The rhythmic coordination of the percussion and piano attacks requires additional visual cues. Physicality plays a major role in these sections of the piece, requiring total engagement on the part of the performers and rendering the music more enthralling for the audience.
Vocalizations of the violinist, pianist, and percussionist at Rehearsals 7, 9, and 11 (see Example 23) serve as a visceral connections between each performer and the music. The sustained sung pitches can also be considered a method of uniting the performers and simultaneously drawing the audience closer.

As demonstrated in the discussions of *Bear’s Trio* and *Nishi Asakusa*, Rossé’s implementation of extended techniques displays his knowledge of the instruments for which he is writing and his understanding of how they are played. Most of the unconventional techniques used in *Orients* have already been mentioned. The saxophone part is almost entirely comprised of extended techniques, including vocalization, multiphonics, microtones, *glissandi*, slap-tongue, and *bisbigliando*. As expressed by Goury, these sounds do not simply act as sound effects, but are used fluidly as part of Rossé’s hybrid language. They express references to Japanese styles and spiritual influences.

Contrast, extended technique, and physical gesture are forms of primitivism prominent in all of Rossé’s Japanese-influenced music. In chamber music situations, these visual aspects are particularly reflective of community and interaction. Physicality enhances the aural experience and connects performers with the music, each other, and the audience. In the case of *Bear’s Trio*, *Nishi Asakusa*, and *Orients*, the interconnectedness yielded by visceral elements points to the spiritual and ritualistic influences of Japanese tradition.

Conclusion

*Bear’s Trio*, *Nishi Asakusa*, and *Orients* represent Rossé’s explorations of Japanese culture, and more generally, his integration of non-Western traditions. Japanese art forms and spirituality share many of Rossé’s aesthetic ideals and have therefore been particularly palpable
sources of inspiration. His collaborations with Shiro Daïmon, Mieko Miyazaki, and many other artists demonstrate an active commitment to cultural exchange that directly informs his composition.

By examining Rossé’s incorporation of Japanese elements through the conceptual framework formed by hybridity, orality, and primitivism, this document proposes a valid method for interpreting and experiencing *Bear’s Trio*, *Nishi Asakusa*, and *Orients*. As overarching principles that guide Rossé’s artistry, these concepts extend beyond his Japanese-influenced pieces and can be applied to a broader scope of his music.
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APPENDIX A.

TRANSLATED EMAIL INTERVIEWS

All interviewees responded in French to questions posed in English. The following translations were completed by the author in collaboration with Zachary Pfau.\(^\text{492}\) Additional correspondence is not included in this appendix, as there were not many follow-up questions.

Email Interview with François Rossé (response received April 19, 2013)

1. How do you find a balance between the Western art music tradition and non-Western cultural traditions in your performance activities and as a composer? Have you thought about this balance consciously, or did this come about more or less naturally?

The active starting point of my relationship with Japan was, in particular, the class of Olivier Messiaen (1976-78). Messiaen was in Japan and very much liked the country, the result of which was that many Japanese came to study in his class. I befriended Susumu Yoshida, a Japanese composer living in France, allowing me to go to Japan in 2004 for the first time. Very impressive in its traditions, this country was not without influence in my conception of music and its forms of energy and therefore the instrumental approach instrumental from the beginning. I was in Japan a second time recently, returning yesterday from Tokyo, in duo with dancer Shiro Daïmon, master of Nô and Kabuki.

2. How do your activities as a performer – particularly those involving improvisation in non-Western traditional settings – inform your compositions? How has this developed throughout your career?

My first contact with the musical practice was done in a self-educated manner, through improvisation before having a piano professor. My late training was in the Western classical tradition, leading me toward written composition. Improvisation did not exist for a long time except through jazz, I was not involved in this culture. It was not until the 1980s that the practice of improvisation opens to other cultures including mine in terms of programming possibilities in festivals or other concert venues. It is obvious that the reflection on musical languages, on the acoustic dimension that entails compositional practice affects the musical mediums in terms of improvisation. Already, at the level of the written composition I was interested in various traditional attitudes in different regions of the planet, but my primitivist approach has also helped me in this sense. (Carlo Rizzo of southern Italy, Mieko Miyazaki in a koto/piano duo, Mixel Etxekopar, Basque musician…etc. but also with other artistic disciplines, the dance company Jackie Taffanel, Shiro Daïmon, theater, film, performance with sculptors…etc). This opened my

\(^{492}\) See Appendix B for original French responses.
musical concept to a broader artistic concept and therefore the human essence. A late-starting musician, my career developed slowly but surely to today, perhaps the good fortune of having been a composer first and foremost at a time when all of this was simpler than today, and to have been able to be a part of public improvisation at the opportune time when oral practice was becoming more well-known in festival programs. Today things are shared between writing, improvised concerts and master classes at the conservatories and universities that invite me (the next taking place in Estonia in northern Europe, in the United States it was rather Northwestern University and in Canada in Montreal, Quebec and Rimouski)…and why not one day to Bowling Green?

3. Please describe the story or inspiration behind *Bear’s Trio*, *Nishi Asakusa*, and *Orients*. For each piece, can you describe specifically which Japanese art forms and philosophies have influenced you?

*Bear’s Trio* was written for a premiere in Tokyo by a trio led by saxophonist Takashi Saito in 2004. The title is simply linked to the name of the hotel in Megève (France) where I wrote this trio. However the piece is very Japanese with respect to the inflections of Gagaku, Japanese ritual performance. Sound in nature, for the Japanese, is never straight (in terms of pitch) but is always flexible; the Japanese Shinto philosophy is very connected to nature. *Nishi Asakusa* is a piece connected to a rather Buddhist tradition, close to a ritual heard in the “Asakusa” district in Tokyo; this ritual involves a chanted recitation in the low register by the crowd and punctuated by percussion on the taïko (large Japanese drum struck horizontally). *Orients* is constructed as a ritual in the forms of energy similar to Noh theater and the treatment of tempo changes (which are not common in Western music). The relation to Japan is especially interesting, beyond exoticism, in the consciousness and management of energy in the instrumental or vocal style, and this may also interest Western musicians.

4. Looking back to your first works for saxophone, how has your approach to the saxophone changed? More specifically, what role does the saxophone play in your Japanese-influenced pieces – particularly *Bear’s Trio*, *Nishi Asakusa*, and *Orients*?

I think the change in attitude is not directly related to the saxophone but to the physical relationship between the performer and his instrument; of course in *Bear’s Trio* we can think of the *hichiriki* (high-pitched reed instrument of Gagaku), in *Nishi Asakusa* there are especially low attacks of the taïko in the Buddhist ritual and in *Orients* rather the general management of the form of energy with also the allusions to Gagaku in the opening line of the piece.

5. How would you describe your personal history with Japanese culture? When did your interest begin and how has it evolved?

I answered this question in the first response (class of Olivier Messiaen); friendly meetings with the Japanese which have become gradually leading to my trips to Japan. Three Japanese were particularly important, at the beginning, composer Susumu Yoshida, then the dancer and Noh master Shiro Daimon and finally Mieko Miyazaki who plays the koto and sings. These meetings were active in ongoing duo concerts with piano.
6. How does your notion of ‘orality’ factor into your Japanese-influenced pieces and your experience with Japanese art forms?

Orality was most practiced in duo with Mieko Miyazaki and Shiro Daïmon, if it’s true that Japanese culture is oral, it is, nonetheless, very ritualized and therefore relatively fixed, this is not really with improvisation. The spectacle entitled “Mu” performed with Shiro Daïmon was developed orally, but gradually became definitively fixed. In general, rituals are not very improvised. Rather, they represent the sustainability of an attitude or a tradition. Nonetheless with Shiro Daïmon and Mieko Miyazaki we are with musicians and dancers who have a strong impregnation of tradition but are open to contemporaneity. This is the paradox of Japan visible in architecture, the environment, where old beautiful temples can be found next to extremely modern buildings. They are both very open to new technologies and steeped in secular tradition that gives them a sort of rigor and an aesthetic sense in all of the things in life (the way of eating, the ritual of tea and ikebana in the flower arrangements…etc).

7. What advice would you give to a saxophonist approaching Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa, and Orients? What advice would you give to a saxophonist approaching your repertoire more generally?

Beyond music there is the human, philosophical, political, economic, biological in every culture including our own, Western, which is not really targeted by the training of young musicians because our Western culture also involved orality (Bach, Mozart, …etc. were also improvisers and physically practiced their tonal language which is not often the case today). A work is like a mushroom, born in a given moment in the life of a composer; he, too, nothing but a mushroom in a moment of civilization in which he is integrated. So for a performer it is useful for the enjoyment of a work to be familiar with its memory, its chromosomes. It is always important to be familiar with the environment of a work in order to understand its reason for existence and allow an intelligent interpretation rather than an execution. The work does not even belong to the composer who wrote it, the composer, himself is connected to its environment, the history that contributed to his active culture. I did not invent the piano, nor tonal language, nor acoustic space, nor the technique of writing, so we are just a little grain in the chain of historical and geographical beings (time and space). This cultural knowledge however does not crush our biological dimension, the animal in us, there is an exercise linking the physical and the spiritual that is essential to healthily develop a whole instrumental gesture. I often speak of instrumental choreography; and at this level, Japanese culture is particularly interesting also for non-Japanese because it is constructed upon the conscience of forms of energy, zen concentration, the force of silence and that of the gesture itself. It is also interesting, at this level, to meet personalities, masters in the proper sense of the word who can suggest this dimension of attitude (and why not invite Shiro Daïmon to your university for a master class and spectacle?). I believe that even regarding budget nobody would lose for those who could benefit from such a meeting. It is important to occasionally meet personalities apt to give meaning to our artistic practice (I was myself happy to have lived with Olivier Messiaen who inspired a great moral energy); I am very happy to be complicit in this moment with powerful personalities like Shiro Daïmon, it is also part of my lifelong learning and not theorizing in pedagogies absent of all strong spiritual dimensions, without which instrumental practice would be limited to a simple exercise of integrated style in a static culture.
8. Since you dedicated your Japanese-influenced works to specific saxophonists, how does your connection with interpreters influence or guide your work?

These works were actually dedicated to the performers who were at the origin of the request and the premiere; concerning these two remarkable interpreters I knew that I could require a lot from them in terms of energy and the quality with which they would understand my proposals. However, the content of these works influenced by Japan is not directly related to the performers but simply to the Japanese idea that I wished to develop. Of course, certain technical questions regarding performance were negotiated with the performers in a necessary collaboration not being a saxophonist myself.

Email Interview with Marie-Bernadette Charrier (response received June 11, 2013)

1. When and how did your collaboration with François Rossé begin and how has it evolved?

During my music studies, I met him several times to work on interpretations of his works, but a true artistic collaboration began after my studies twenty or so years ago. This performer/composer exchange was steady and still exists today on various projects like a kind of apprenticeship.

2. How would you describe Rossé’s contribution to the saxophone’s repertoire and new music in general?

François Rossé has regularly written for solo saxophone or chamber ensemble and thus contributed to the development of today's repertoire for this instrument. He has collaborated with many saxophonists and that is why he has a great knowledge of the saxophone.

3. How is your approach to Rossé’s music different than your approach to works by other composers?

I can say that there is an intimacy and a special knowledge of F. Rossé’s works from regularly working with him on interpretation and on his music.

4. Which of Rossé’s works have you performed?

A number of works:

5. Where and when have you performed and/or recorded Orients, Bear’s Trio, or Nishi Asakusa?
6. When you first began working on these pieces, both your individual part and as an ensemble, to what extent did you factor in the Japanese influences of the works and was there any research involved on your end?

As with any work, the process of the interpreter is to find the appropriate style for the chosen work. Thanks to our acquired culture, we have certain insights on how to play this piece. Then extensive work, an analysis of the proposed gestures, and continued research allow us to propose an interpretation as close as possible to the author’s idea.

7. If you have prepared these pieces more than once, how has the learning process changed or developed over time?

We can say that in general, interpretation of works evolves over time. Also, a work lives, that is to say, it is played repeatedly, it acquires its own internal life. Over the years, we finish by appropriating the piece; it becomes intimate to us and various concert experiences provide access to a very personal interpretation.

8. Which specific Japanese elements or references did you find in these works?

Several parameters of the music have this extra-European influence, especially that of Japan in the works of F. Rossé. For example the management of time, these dilated tempos, suspension in juxtaposition of the concentrated lively gestures. The use of grace notes very close to Koto playing offers a palette of marked, nervous attacks. Concerning the aspect of melody, the use of the proposed methods recalls the colors of the Orient.

9. What advice would you offer saxophonists and chamber ensembles as they interpret and perform these works?

It is important to try to be more familiar with this culture. Listen to traditional music of this country, listen and watch Noh theater, have some knowledge of their philosophy to better understand the influences of the composer and thus better grasp his works tinted by this extra-European culture.

Email Interview with Jean-Michel Goury (response received June 26, 2013)

1) When and how did your collaboration with François Rossé begin and how has it evolved?

I was the student of F. Rossé from 1980 to 82 in music analysis class, shortly after his arrival as professor at the Conservatory of Bordeaux. This young man was still impregnated by
“Messiaenity” while rebelling against the Parisian establishment ... He seemed eccentric, quirky, very smiling, brightening the atmosphere that seemed to me very morose and conventional, at the time, at the conservatory.

Yet, he was as rigorous in his work as he was warm in his human relationships. This professor, bright, clairvoyant, was for me a great catalyst of creative energy. A critical encounter, in many regards, which, in hindsight, helped me to realize very young that most of the music profession was in the music itself: intensity and consistency in the study of a work at the service of a committed and uncompromising interpretation.

In fact, F. Rossé came into my life three years after the sonorous (wonderful solos in the music of French films of the 30s and 40s) and physical (jury Bordeaux and lengthy discussion on the finesse of phrasing in French music) discovery of M. Mule, that of J. Coltrane two years before, and one year before my immersion as a young interpreter of French jazz (Portal, Lubat, Louis...). This ebullience through the lectures of JM Londeix galvanized me, already far enough from the music performed by classical saxophonists of the era.

Tuesday nights, he hosted workshops of 20th century music, presenting important works since the Second Viennese School. Thanks to him, I was engulfed in a flood of incredible music (Ligeti, Berio, Zimmerman, Maderna, Nono, Xenakis, Cage...) that permanently marked the interpreter I became. This musical debauchery sometimes ended very late, kneeling in his superb classroom where together (the other students would leave long before) we would scrutinize the details of photocopied scores scattered on the floor to better understand the detail of a given genius composer and how I could understand and assimilate the given phrase as the interpreter. Absolutely fascinating and a fantastic learning experience! What luck.

From there began a long friendship that endures after 30 years. The educational pair Londeix-Rossé was explosive! I was obviously the first student to play Le Frêne after Londeix’ premiere in Chicago. A comical and, at the same time, distressing experience, uncomfortable, preparing one of most important national competitions of my career (CA in ’82), because these two artists flying high, driven toward the same musical goal, had in their approach, remarks often contradictory, sometimes even opposed!

This was due to my style of playing, already personal, which was more or less suited to the sensibility of these two characters. We agreed to let me “navigate” alone until the end ... This experience was essential in my approach to interpretation. Both in precise respect of the text and of an artist’s culture (listening, recordings) and of course the imagination, the feeling that must live, both the text of a composer and the creative sensitivity of the interpreter. Finally, tolerance, freedom of choice, in pedagogical matters. Why would the sensibility of a talented and hardworking student not be that of a teacher, as talented as he or she may be?

In ’83, starting my first post as professor in Creuse, Londeix called me during the first Bordeaux sax ensemble present in a world congress (Nuremberg). Spath was premiered before M. Mule completely stunned by such rich, unheard of sounds. Did he like it? No matter. For many so-called “classical” saxophonists of different generations, this captivating and very delicate piece was an initial approach of a work in a deliberately modern language.
Then came the adventure of *Triangle pour un souffle*, a concert piece for alto saxophone and string orchestra (11) written (1981) for Daniel Kientzy who could not play it (?), taken over by Claude Delangle who could not premier it due to an accident, proposed by radio France (for France-Musique) to JM Londeix to record it, who, aging, preferred in the end to entrust it to me with the Toulouse Orchestra. The official concert premiere took place at the World Congress in Pesaro in ’92!! with the orchestral ensemble of Italy. Big success (14 minutes of applause).

The same year, during the advent of the EEC (United States of Europe), François, an Alsatian of Strasbourg (European administrative capital), could not remain indifferent to this event. He composed at my request *Les berges voyantes*, luscious and provocative piece of chamber music full of symbols and citations (from Josquin to Hendrix), for baritone voice, mezzo soprano, prepared piano, alto and baritone saxes in succession and live electronics. Including a huge controversy in the media at the premiere (Festival of Duras).

1996. First tour of the USA (with Yves Josset). Premiere of *Silence for a disturbed yell* for baritone sax and prepared piano. 1998. 3rd tour in the USA with Étienne Rolin, F. Rossé, Y. Josset and Sophie. Premiere (in Evanston) of *Atlantic One* for basset horn, celesta, and soprano sax. Then during 15 years (1997-2012), 7 premieres for each one of my children, including *Aka* (flute and soprano sax) and *Nishi Asakusa* (alto sax and prepared piano).

2) How would you describe Rossé’s contribution to the saxophone’s repertoire and new music in general?

François Rossé occupies an iconic place in the literature of French classical saxophone. I consider *Le Frêne* as the historical solo piece par excellence that “changed” our listening, as well as Denisov (for the sonata) 10 years before, thus preceding other works that became “classics” written by Méfano (*Périple*), Berio (*Sequenza*) or Lauba (Hard). For him, since his “discovery” with Londeix, the saxophone was a field of investigations and sound research, a factor of human exchange essential for the creation of its pieces. It is the symbolic instrument of modernity that can “live” in all artistic situations (written or improvised).

François is also one of the most prolific French composers of his generation and takes a place in the center of the creation of contemporary art, because he is still active (overflowing) as composer, performer, improviser and poet. His music is human, emotional, carnal and intelligent. He possesses a most effective compositional technique. Never taking the easy route of “effect” he knows with ease to excite the sonorous material of an instrument, remaining an ingenious innovator. His understanding of our instrument is always limitless. Like all the "greats,” he feels he knows, and he does. For all this, disregarding my friendship, objectively, he remains for me one of the greatest French composers born since World War II.

3) How is your approach to Rossé’s music different than your approach to works by other composers?

Like all inventor-composers of sound combinations, these timbre magicians, François forces the interpreter to question his own faculties of knowing how to “sound” the instrument. He senses
what is possible then organizes his writing scheme based on the vernacular potential of the instrument. The importance of human exchange with the interpreter is essential to him. His unbridled writing, all the while remaining one of the most precise, requires a liberated virtuosity, similar to that of an improviser’s approach. To play Rossé is to wish to reach an “extreme” instrumental proficiency on all basic parameters (dynamics, articulations, registers, unheard of timbres, breaking of notes). This play thrives on the raw physique and excessive emotion of the performer. One must be able to accept this in order to truly “live” his music. In the same way, but in other musical genres, Frank Zappa and Tom Waits give me the same jubilations.

4) Which of Rossé’s works have you performed?

I have premiered about twelve to thirteen pieces by F. Rossé since the mid-’80s. For various solo and chamber concerts, I also interpreted, *Level 01*, *Scriti numele tau*, *Arianna*, *Mod’son 1*, *duos prêchants*, *Loan*...without a doubt also others (?) and today these recent written solo pieces (since 2006) have not been premiered or just recently: *Ixa*, *Hiedra*.

5) Where and when have you performed and/or recorded *Orients*, *Bear’s Trio*, or *Nishi Asakusa*?

*Nishi Asakusa* (Asakusa west in Japanese: highly populated business district of Tokyo) was written for the birth of my fifth son: Martin. The piece was given its world premiere at the NASA National Conference 2005 (Greensboro?) by Y. Josset and myself. It depicts percussive sounds (prepared piano and slaps) very impressive Japanese drums, that animated medieval battles (shogun period). But also, the poetic microtonal texture out of phase with the piano that give a feeling of vague impression and sensuality resembling music of common diverse ritual ceremonies among the nobility of the time (Ikebana, tea...).

6) When you first began working on these pieces, both your individual part and as an ensemble, to what extent did you factor in the Japanese influences of the works and was there any research involved on your end?

Not particularly. I like to first discover unusual sounds proposed by the composer to understand in a sensitive manner the piece’s story. Next, I rummage through the musical past of certain textures of sonorous colors so as to be able to take on the references to traditional music, unfamiliar aesthetics or from natural sounds. From this, I start to improvise the written text in order to seek a style of phrasing that is suited to various passages so it may sound better, with accuracy and sincerity. Lastly, I read the text and learn the score with precision, all while being able to interpret it.

7) If you have prepared these pieces more than once, how has the learning process changed or developed over time?

I feel Rossé’s music is organic. Its performers need really physical reflexes to take charge of the proposed playing techniques with precision. Breath, air, breathing dominate in Rossé’s pieces. In this way, [the interpreters] cannot forget what they are working on. On the contrary, this demanding but expressive and altogether more natural play, will thereafter influence the way they approach other even older musical scores.
1. When and how did your collaboration with François Rossé begin and how has it evolved?

I met François ROSSÉ for the first time at the Bordeaux Conservatory restaurant, on September 9, 1977. He had just been appointed Professor of Analysis. We immediately hit it off. I proposed to him a project to publish a whole collection of Negro Spirituals arranged for saxophone. This project was unsuccessful, giving way, three months later, to another project, the consequence: a work for alto saxophone.

I then passed him a list and recorded effects that I had previously sent to Edison Denisov for his Sonate for alto saxophone and piano. This tape included aside from classical examples, all kinds of sounds produced in different ways, with only the mouthpiece or neck, for example; different attacks; batteries of rare notes; multiphonics; etc.

In the spring of 1979, François gave me the manuscript of Le Frène égaré a substantial piece for solo alto saxophone, unparalleled innovation.

I premiered Le Frène in Chicago on June 30, 1979 and I played it twenty or so times since, in France, the United States, Sweden, Italy, Germany, Japan…

This work of incomprehensible novelty to many saxophonists (it still remains for some) established a friendship that has not ceased to grow ever since.

Le Frène égaré is historically the first serious work (with Périples by Paul Mefano, based on elements of jazz) for solo saxophone. Its impact was obviously very important, its influence even stronger. It has since resulted in more than 1,700 (one thousand seven hundred) pieces for solo saxophone, often, musically important.

(PS: The universal saxophone repertoire regarded as “classical” is currently at more than 30,000 pieces. In 2012, I catalogued more than 3,000 new titles, which means 8 new works every day!)

I played other works by François (notably Bachflüssigkeit many times).

In 1977 with my best upper class students, I created a saxophone ensemble, (an orchestra comprised of the entire saxophone family: 1 sopranino, 2 sopranos, 3 altos, 3 tenors, 2 baritones, 1 bass). François was again the first to honor me with an original and substantial work: Spath, premiered in Nuremberg by l’Ensemble International de Saxophones under my direction, on July 10, 1982, in the hall of the 7th World Saxophone Congress. Since, saxophone ensemble has multiplied through the entire world, accumulating several hundred original works, making this instrumentation a new type of orchestra.

2. How would you describe Rossé’s contribution to the saxophone’s repertoire and new music in general?
François Rossé is undoubtedly an innovator. The importance of intellectual, artistic, creative investment he has shown in his first opus (*Le Frêne égaré*) surprised, his teachers in particular (Betsy Jolas). This commitment was an unprecedented task. Therefore, the saxophone was no longer considered a minor instrument, insignificant, and anecdotal ... With thanks to François the instrument became worthy of musical reflections both higher and deeper. Never seen, never done!

Since Berlioz’ *Hymne Sacré* (1844) and among the several hundred works written with or for saxophone, we are familiar with works for the instrument by Vincent d'Indy, Debussy, Caplet, Schmitt as well as the outstanding scores of Alexander Glazunov (*Quatuor* op. 109 and *Concerto* in Eb) and Jacques Ibert (*Concertino da camera*), but none was truly idiomatic of the instrument (parallel to what Coleman Hawkins and Charlie Parker did in jazz).

François Rossé (more than Edison Denisov in 1970), took the saxophone for what it is and not for any kind of clarinet (Debussy), cello (Glazunov), flute (Ibert), making it an instrument necessary for the music he initiated ... This attitude (generally possessed by the greatest composers for the instruments they used) is now accepted. We seek less and less to disguise the saxophone.

As one of the first to follow François Rossé’s, Christian Lauba made idiomatic characteristics of the saxophone to such a degree of necessity, that like Chopin for the piano, the saxophone is irreplaceable to make this music a reality.

3. How is your approach to Rossé’s music different than your approach to works by other composers?

If the elements of rhythm, articulation, intonation remain standing in the music of François Rossé, as in any other known art music, the notion of freedom attached to it—that is to say pulse, seems primordial. Rossé’s music is essentially a human one, is conceived before played and must be appropriated by the player before a performance. The score is but a guide that leads to the work. Improviser by nature, François asks that the performance of his music renovates that inhabited freedom.

9. What advice would you offer saxophonists and chamber ensembles as they interpret and perform these works (*Nishi Asakusa*, *Bear's Trio*, et *Orients*) that were influenced by traditional Japanese cultural elements?

As always, be familiar with and stick to the composer’s objectives before playing the first note.
APPENDIX B.

EMAIL INTERVIEWS IN FRENCH

Email Interview with François Rossé (response received April 19, 2013)

1. How do you find a balance between the Western art music tradition and non-Western cultural traditions in your performance activities and as a composer? Have you thought about this balance consciously, or did this come about more or less naturally?

Le point de départ actif de la relation avec le Japon notamment s’est fait dans la classe d’Olivier Messiaen (1976-78) Messiaen était au Japon et aimait beaucoup ce pays entraînant le fait que beaucoup de japonais venaient étudier dans sa classe. Je m’étais lié d’amitié avec Susumu Yoshida, compositeur japonais vivant en France ce qui m’a permis d’aller au Japon en 2004 une première fois. Ce pays très impressionnant dans ses traditions n’a pas été sans influence dans ma conception de la musique et de ses formes d’énergie et donc de l’abord instrumental. J’étais au Japon une 2ème fois tout récemment, puisque revenu hier de Tokyo, en duo avec Shiro Daïmon, maître de Nô et de Kabuki, danseur.

2. How do your activities as a performer – particularly those involving improvisation in nonwestern traditional settings – inform your compositions? How has this developed throughout your career?

Mon premier contact avec la pratique musicale s’est faite de manière autodidacte, par l’improvisation avant d’avoir un professeur de piano. Ma formation tardive a été très classique occidentale m’entraînant plutôt vers la composition écrite. L’improvisation n’existait pendant longtemps que par le jazz, or je n’étais pas impliqué dans cette culture. Il a fallu attendre les années 1980 pour que la pratique de l’improvisation s’ouvre sur d’autres cultures dont la mienne au niveau des programmations possibles dans des festivals ou autres lieux de concerts. Il est évident que la réflexion sur les langages musicaux, sur la dimension acoustique qu’entraîne la pratique compositionnelle se répercute sur les moyens musicaux au niveau de l’improvisation. Déjà, au niveau de la composition écrite j’étais intéressé par les diverses attitudes traditionnelles dans différentes régions de la planète, ma démarche primitiviste m’a beaucoup aidé en ce sens aussi. Ma pratique de l’improvisation s’est donc ouverte de manière privilégiée sur les rencontres très diverses possibles, avec des musiciens d’autres traditions (Carlo Rizzo de l’Italie du Sud, Mieko Miyazaki dans un duo koto japonais/piano, Mixel Etxekopar, musicien basque...etc mais aussi avec d’autres disciplines artistiques, la compagnie de danse Jackie Taffanel, Shiro Daïmon, le théâtre, le cinéma, des performances avec des plasticiens...etc) Cela m’a ouvert le concept musical au niveau d’un concept artistique plus large et donc à l’essence humaine. Musicien ayant commencé tardivement, la carrière s’est développée lentement, progressivement mais toujours positivement jusqu’à présent, peut-être la chance d’avoir été surtout compositeur à une époque où cela était plus simple qu’aujourd’hui et d’avoir pu accéder à l’improvisation publique au moment opportun du développement de la pratique orale dans les programmations. Aujourd’hui les choses sont donc partagées entre l’écriture, les concerts en improvisation et les master-class
dans les conservatoires et universités qui m’invitent (la prochaine ayant lieu en Estonie au nord
de l'Europe, aux États-Unis c’était plutôt à North Western University et au Canada à Montréal,
Québec et Rimouski)... et pourquoi pas un jour à Bowling green?

3. Please describe the story or inspiration behind *Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa, and Orients.* For
each piece, can you describe specifically which Japanese art forms and philosophies have
influenced you or those you have incorporated?

*Bear’s trio* a été écrite pour une création à Tokyo par un trio conduit par le saxophoniste Takashi
Saito en 2004. Le titre est simplement lié au nom de l’hôtel à Megève (France) où j’avais écrit ce
trio. Néanmoins la pièce est très japonaise en rapport avec les inflexions du Gagaku, spectacle
rituel japonais. Pour les japonais le son, dans la nature, n’est jamais rectiligne (dans sa hauteur)
mais toujours flexible; la philosophie japonaise dans le shintoïsme se lie beaucoup à la nature.
*Nishi Asakusa* est une pièce liée à une tradition plutôt bouddhiste, proche d’un rituel entendu
dans le quartier “Asakusa” à Tokyo; ce rituel implique une récitation scandée dans le grave du
registre par la foule et ponctué par la percussion sur le taïko (grand tambour japonais frappé
horizontalement). “Orients” est construit comme un rituel dans les formes d’énergie proche du
théâtre Nô et le traitement des mouvements de tempo (qui n’est pas fréquent dans la musique
occidentale). Le rapport au Japon est surtout intéressant, au-delà de l’exotisme, dans la
conscience et la gestion de l’énergie dans le jeu instrumental ou vocal, et cela peut aussi
intéresser les musiciens occidentaux.

4. Looking back to your first works for saxophone, how has your approach to the saxophone
changed? More specifically, what role does the saxophone play in your Japanese influenced
pieces – particularly *Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa, and Orients*?

Je pense que le changement d’attitude n’est pas directement lié au saxophone mais à tout le
rapport physique entre l’interprète et son instrument; bien entendu dans Bear’s trio on peut
penser au hichiriki (flûte très aiguë du Gagaku), dans Nishi Asakusa c’est plutôt les attaques
graves du taïko dans le rituel bouddhique et dans “Orients” plutôt la gestion de la forme
d’Énergie de manière générale avec aussi des allusions au Gagaku dans la ligne au début de
l’œuvre.

5. How would you describe your personal history with Japanese culture? When did your interest
begin and how has it evolved?

J’avais répondu à cette question dans la 1ère réponse (classe d'Olivier Messiaen); les rencontres
amicales avec les japonais qui sont devenues peu à peu privilégiées puis plus profondes jusqu’au
voyages au Japon. Trois Japonais ont été particulièrement importants, au début, le compositeur
Susumu Yoshida, puis le danseur et maître de Nô Shiro Daïmon et enfin Mieko Miyazaki qui
joue le koto et chante. Ces rencontres ont été actives en concerts en duo avec le piano que je
tenais.

6. How does your notion of ‘orality’ factor into your Japanese influenced pieces and your
experience with Japanese art forms?
L’oralité a été surtout pratiquée en duo avec Mieko Miyazaki et Shiro Daïmon, s’il est vrai que la culture japonaise est orale elle n’en n’est pas moins souvent très ritualisée et donc relativement fixée, ce n’est pas vraiment de l’improvisation. Le spectacle intitulé “Mu” réalisé avec Shiro Daïmon a été élaboré oralement mais s’est peu à peu fixé définitivement. En général les rituels sont peu improvisés ils représentent plutôt la pérennisation d’une attitude, d’une tradition. Néanmoins avec Shiro Daïmon et Mieko Miyazaki nous somme avec des musiciens et danseurs qui ont une forte imprégnation dans la tradition mais sont ouverts à la contemporanéité. C’est un peu le paradoxe du Japon visible même au niveau de l’architecture, de l’environnement, ou de très beaux vieux temples cotoyent un building très moderne. Ils sont à la fois très ouverts aux technologies nouvelles et imprégnés de tradition séculaire qui leur donne une sorte de rigueur et un sens esthétique dans toutes les choses de la vie (la façon de manger, le rituel du thé ou l’ikebana dans la construction des bouquets de fleurs...etc)

7. What advice would you give to a saxophonist approaching Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa, and Orients? What advice would you give to a saxophonist approaching your repertoire more generally?

Au-delà de la musique il y a l’humain, philosophe, politique, économique, biologique dans chaque culture y compris la nôtre, occidentale, qui n’est pas vraiment cernée au niveau de la formation des jeunes musiciens car notre culture occidentale impliquait aussi l’oralité (Bach, Mozart, ...etc étaient improvisateurs aussi et pratiquaient physiquement leur langage tonal ce qui n’est pas souvent le cas aujourd’hui). Une œuvre est comme un champignon qui naît un moment donné dans la vie d’un compositeur lui-même n’est qu’un champignon dans un moment de la civilisation dans laquelle il est intégré. Donc pour un interprète il est utile pour déguster une œuvre de connaître sa mémoire, ses chromosomes. Il est donc toujours important de connaître l’environnement d’une œuvre pour comprendre sa raison d’existence et permettre une interprétation intelligente plutôt qu’une exécution. L’œuvre n’appartient même pas au compositeur qui l’a écrit, le compositeur, lui-même est en liaison avec son environnement, l’histoire qui a formé sa culture active. Je n’ai pas inventé le piano, ni le langage tonal, ni l’espace acoustique, ni la technique d’écriture, on est donc juste un petit grain dans le chainon des humains historiques et géographiques (temps et espace). Cette connaissance culturelle doit néanmoins ne pas écraser notre dimension biologique, notre animal en nous, il y a donc l’exercice du lien entre le physique et le spirituel qui est essentiel pour concevoir sainement un geste instrumental entier. Je parle souvent de chorégraphie instrumentale; et à ce niveau, la culture japonaise est particulièrement intéressante même pour un non-japonais car elle se construit sur la conscience des formes d’énergie, la concentration zen, la force du silence et celle du geste lui-même. Il est donc intéressant à ce niveau à rencontrer des personnalités, des maîtres dans le bon sens du mot qui peuvent suggérer cette dimension d’attitude (et pourquoi pas inviter Shiro Daïmon à votre université pour master class et spectacle? Je crois que même au niveau du budget personne ne serait perdant pour ceux qui pourraient bénéficier d’une telle rencontre. Il est important de rencontrer occasionnellement des personnalités aptes à donner un sens à notre pratique artistique (j’étais moi-même heureux d’avoir vécu auprès d’Olivier Messiaen qui inspirait une grande énergie morale); je suis très heureux d’être complice en ce moment avec des personnalités puissantes comme Shiro Daïmon, cela fait aussi partie de ma formation à vie et non de théoriser dans des pédagogies abstraites de toute dimension spirituelle forte, sans quoi la pratique instrumentale se limiterait à un simple exercice de style intégrée dans une culture figée.
8. Since you dedicated your Japanese-influenced works to specific saxophonists, how does your connection with interpreters influence or guide your work?

Ces oeuvres ont été effectivement dédiées aux interprètes qui ont été à l’origine de la demande et de la création; concernant ces deux remarquables interprètes je savais que je pouvais exiger beaucoup d’eux au niveau de l’énergie et de la qualité avec laquelle ils allaient appréhender mes propositions. Néanmoins, le contenu-même des oeuvres influencées par le Japon n’est pas directement lié aux interprètes mais simplement à l’idée japonaise que j’avais le souhait de développer. Bien entendu, certaines questions techniques de réalisation ont été négociées avec les interprètes en précieuse collaboration n'étant pas saxophoniste moi-même.

Email Interview with Marie-Bernadette Charrier  (response received June 11, 2013)

1. When and how did your collaboration with François Rossé begin and how has it evolved?

Durant mes études musicales, je l’ai rencontré plusieurs fois pour un travail d’interprétation sur ses œuvres mais une réelle collaboration artistique a commencé il y a une vingtaine d’années après mes études. Cet échange “interprète / compositeur” a été régulier et existe toujours aujourd'hui sur des projets divers, comme une sorte de compagnonnage.

2. How would you describe Rossé’s contribution to the saxophone’s repertoire and new music in general?

François Rossé a régulièrement écrit pour saxophone solo ou en formation de chambre et a ainsi contribué au développement du répertoire d’aujourd’hui pour cet instrument. Il a collaboré avec de multiples saxophonistes et c’est pourquoi il a une grande connaissance du saxophone.

3. How is your approach to Rossé’s music different than your approach to works by other composers?

Je peux dire qu’il existe une intimité et une connaissance particulière des œuvres de F. Rossé par le fait d’un travail d’interprétation régulier avec lui et avec son œuvre.

4. Which of Rossé’s works have you performed?

De nombreuses œuvres :

5. Where and when have you performed and/or recorded Orientes, Bear’s Trio, or Nishi Asakusa?
6. When you first began working on these pieces, both your individual part and as an ensemble, to what extent did you factor in the Japanese influences of the works and was there any research involved on your end?

Comme pour toute œuvre, la démarche de l’interprète est de trouver les justesse de style pour l’œuvre choisie. Par notre culture acquise, nous avons certaines intuitions sur la manière de jouer cette pièce. Puis un travail approfondi, une analyse des gestes proposés, une recherche constante permettent de réaliser une interprétation la plus proche de la pensée de l’auteur.

7. If you have prepared these pieces more than once, how has the learning process changed or developed over time?

On peut dire que d’une manière générale, l’interprétation des œuvres évolue avec le temps. Plus une œuvre vit, c’est-à-dire qu'elle est jouée plusieurs fois, celle-ci acquiert sa propre vie interne. Avec les années, nous finissons par posséder la pièce, elle nous devient intime et les diverses expériences de concert permettent d’accéder à une interprétation très personnelle.

8. Which specific Japanese elements or references did you find in these works?


9. What advice would you offer saxophonists and chamber ensembles as they interpret and perform these works?

Il est important d’essayer de mieux connaître cette culture. Écouter les musiques traditionnelles de ce pays, écouter et regarder le théâtre Nô, avoir une certaine connaissance de leur philosophie permettent de mieux comprendre les influences de ce compositeur et ainsi de mieux appréhender ses œuvres teintées de cette culture extra-européenne.

Email Interview with Jean-Michel Goury (response received June 26, 2013)

1) When and how did your collaboration with François Rossé begin and how has it evolved?
Je fus l’élève de F Rossé de 1980 à 82 en classe d'analyse musicale, peu de temps après son arrivée comme prof au CNR de Bordeaux. Cet homme encore jeune était imprégné de “Messianité” tout en étant rebelle face à l'établissement parisien...Il paraissait excentrique, décalé, très souriant, éclairant l’ambiance qui me paraissait bien morose et conventionnelle, à l’époque, dans ce conservatoire.

Pourtant, il était aussi rigoureux dans le travail qu’il était chaleureux dans les relations humaines. Ce professeur, brillant, clairvoyant, fut pour moi un formidable catalyseur d’énergie créatrice. Rencontre déterminante, à bien des regards, qui, avec le recul, m’aura aidé très jeune, de prendre conscience que l'essentiel du métier de musicien était DANS la musique elle-même: intensité et constance dans le travail d’une oeuvre au service d’une interprétation engagée et sans concession.

En fait, F. Rossé est entré dans ma vie 3 ans après la découverte sonore (merveilleux solos dans les musiques de film français des années 30-40) et physique (jury à Bordeaux puis longue discussion sur la finesse du phrasé dans la musique française) de M. Mule, celle de J. Coltrane 2 ans avant, et 1 an avant avec mon immersion en tant que jeune interprète du jazz français (Portal, Lubat, Louis...). Cette ébullition sublimée par les cours magistraux de J.M. Londeix, me dynamisait, mais assez loin déjà des musiques pratiquées par les saxophonistes classiques de l'époque.

Les mardis soirs, il animait des ateliers de musiques du 20 ème siècle, présentant les oeuvres importantes à partir de la 2ème école de Vienne. Grâce à lui, j'étais englouti dans un flot de musiques incroyables (Ligeti, Berio, Zimmerman, Maderna, Nono, Xenakis, Cage...) qui marqueront à jamais l’interprète que je suis devenu. Cette débauche musicale finissait parfois très tard, agenouillés dans sa superbe salle de cours où nous scrutions tous les deux (les autres élèves étaient parties depuis longtemps) les détails des scores photocopiés et dispersés par terre pour mieux percevoir le détail de génie de l’auteur et la manière dont je pourrais comprendre et assimilé le phrasé utilisé par l’interprète. Absolument fascinant et hyper formateur!! Quelle chance.

De là, a débuté une longue amitié qui perdure au bout de 30 ans. Le couple pédagogique Londeix-Rossé était détonant! Je fus évidemment, le premier étudiant à jouer “Le Frêne” après la création à Chicago de Londeix. Expérience cocasse et à la fois angoissante, inconfortable, pour préparer un concours national dès plus important pour ma carrière (CA en 82), car ces 2 artistes de haut vol, allant pourtant vers le même but musical, avaient dans leur démarche, des propos souvent contradictoires voire même parfois opposés!!

Cela venait surtout de mon type d’interprétation, déjà personnel, qui convenait plus ou moins à la sensibilité de ces deux personnages. Nous avons donc convenu de me laisser “naviguer” seul jusqu’au bout...Cette expérience fut capitale dans la manière d’aborder mon interprétation. À la fois dans le respect précis de la lettre (du texte) celui d'une culture artistique (écoute, enregistrements) et bien sûr l’imagination, le feeling qui doit faire vivre, à la fois le texte d’un auteur et la sensibilité créatrice d’un interprète. Enfin, la tolérance, la liberté de choisir, en matière pédagogique. Pourquoi la sensibilité d’un élève doué et travailleur ne vaudrait elle pas celle d’un prof, si important, soit-il?
En ’83, débutant mon premier poste de prof en Creuse, Londeix m'appelle au sein du 1er ensemble de sax de Bordeaux présent dans un congrès mondial (Nuremberg). “Spath” fut crée devant M Mule complètement abasourdi par tant de richesses sonores inouïes. À t’il aimé? Peu importe. Pour beaucoup de saxophonistes dit “classiques” de générations différentes, cette pièce était une première approche captivante et très délicat, d’une oeuvre au language délibérément moderne.


La même année, lors de l’avènement de la CEE (états unis d'Europe), François, l’alsacien de Strasbourg (capitale administrative européenne), ne pouvait rester insensible à cette événement. Il écrivit donc à ma demande “Les berges voyantes”, succulente et provoquante pièce de musique de chambre pleine de symboles et de citations (de Josquin à Hendrix), pour voix de baryton, mezzo soprano, piano préparé, saxs alto et baryton successifs et live électronique. Grosse polémique y compris dans les médias à la création (festival de Duras).


2) How would you describe Rossé’s contribution to the saxophone’s repertoire and new music in general?

François Rossé occupe une place emblématique dans la littérature du saxophone classique français. Je considère le “Frêne égaré”, comme étant LA PIECE solo historique par excellence qui “change” notre écoute, au même titre que Denisov (pour la sonate) 10 ans plutôt, précédent ainsi d’autres oeuvres devenues des “classiques” écrites par Méfano (Périple), Berio (sequenza) ou Lauba (Hard). Pour lui, depuis sa “découverte” avec londeix, le saxophone a été un champ d’investigations et de recherches sonores privilégiés, un facteur d’échanges humains indispensables à la création de ses pièces. Il est l’instrument symbolique de la modernité qui peut arriver à "vivre" dans toutes les situations artistiques (écrites ou improvisées).

François est en outre un des compositeurs français les plus prolifiques de sa génération et prend une place à part dans le milieu de la création contemporaine, car il est à la fois compositeur, interprète, improvisateur et poète toujours en activité (débordante). Sa musique est humaine, émotionnelle, charnelle et intelligente. Il possède une technique d'écriture des plus efficaces. Sans jamais tomber dans la facilité d'un "effet", il sait avec aisance faire vibrer la matière sonore d'un instrument en restant un innovateur ingénieux. Sa connaissance de notre instrument est
maintenant sans borne. Comme tous les “grands”, il ressent, il sait et il fait. Pour tout cela, et sachant faire abstraction de mon amitié, en toute objectivité, il reste pour moi un des plus grands compositeurs français nés depuis la 2nd guerre.

3) How is your approach to Rossé’s music different than your approach to works by other composers?


4) Which of Rossé’s works have you performed?

J’ai du créer environ 12 à 13 pièces de F Rossé depuis le milieu des années 80. Au gré des concerts, avec diverses formations ou en solo, j’ai pu aussi interpréter, Level 01, Scriu numule tau, arianna, mod’son 1, duos prêchant, Loan,...sans doute d'autres aussi(?) et aujourd’hui ces dernières pièces solo écrites (depuis 2006) non crées ou juste récemment: Ixa, Hiedra.

5) Where and when have you performed and/or recorded Orients, Bear’s Trio, or Nishi Asakusa?

Nishi Asakusa (Asakusa ouest en japonais: quartier d’affaires très populeux de Tokyo) a été écrite pour la naissance de mon 5ème fils: Martin. La pièce a été donnée en première mondiale lors de la NASA national conference de 2005 (Greensboro?) par Y. Josset et moi-même. Elle dépint les sons percussifs (piano préparé et slaps) très impressionnants des tambours d’ordonnances nippons qui rythmaient les batailles médiévales (période shogun). Mais aussi, la texture poétique des micro-intervalles tout en décalage avec le piano qui donnent une sensation d’impression vague et de sensualité proches des musiques illustrant les diverses cérémonies rituelles courantes chez les seigneurs de l’époque (Ikebana, thé,...).

6) When you first began working on these pieces, both your individual part and as an ensemble, to what extent did you factor in the Japanese influences of the works and was there any research involved on your end?

Pas particulièrement. J’aime à découvrir tout d’abord les sons insolites proposés par le compositeur afin de comprendre de manière sensitive l’histoire de la pièce. Après, je fouille le passé musical de certaines textures de couleurs sonores afin de mieux me confronter à des références de musiques traditionnelles, à des esthétiques ou à partir de bruits naturels. À partir de cela, je me mets à improviser le texte écrit pour chercher des types de phrasés appropriés à divers
passages pour mieux le faire sonner avec justesse et vérité. Enfin, je lis et travaille le texte avec précision tout en pouvant maintenant l’interpréter déjà. Suis-je clair?

7) If you have prepared these pieces more than once, how has the learning process changed or developed over time?

Je ressens la musique de Rossé comme organique. Ses interprètes ont besoin de réflexes réellement physiques pour savoir s’accaparer les techniques de jeu proposées avec précision. Le souffle, l’air, la respiration sont prépondérants dans les pièces de Rossé. De cette manière, ils ne peuvent oublier ce qu’ils travaillent. Au contraire, ce jeu exigeant mais si expressif et somme toute plus naturel, va influencer par la suite leur manière d’appréhender d’autres textes musicaux même plus anciens.

Email Interview with Jean-Marie Londeix (response received April 13, 2013)

1. When and how did your collaboration with François Rossé begin and how has it evolved?


Je lui passais alors la liste et l’enregistrement d’effets, liste que j’avais précédemment envoyée à Edison Denisov pour l’écriture de sa Sonate pour saxophone alto et piano. Cette bande comprenait outre des exemples classiques, des sons de toutes sortes produits de différentes manières, avec seulement le bec ou le bocal, par exemple; des jeux différenciés d’attaques; des batteries de notes inusitées; des sons simultanés; etc.

Au printemps 1979, François me remettait le manuscrit du « Frêne Égaré » pièce substantielle pour saxophone alto solo, d’une nouveauté sans pareille.

J’ai créé Le Frêne à Chicago, le 30 juin 1979 et l’ai joué une vingtaine de fois par la suite, en France, USA, Suède, Italie, Allemagne, Japon…

C’est principalement autour de cette œuvre d’une nouveauté incompréhensible à l’époque pour bon nombre de saxophonistes (elle le reste encore pour certains) que c’est établie une amitié qui n’a cessé de se développer depuis.

« Le Frêne Égaré » est historiquement la première œuvre sérieuse (avec « Périples » de Paul Méfano, basée, elle, sur des éléments de jazz) pour saxophone seul. Son impact a été manifestement très important, son influence des plus fortes. Elle a donné naissance depuis, à plus de 1.700 (mille sept-cents) pièces pour saxophone seul, souvent, musicalement importantes.
J’ai joué d’autres pièces de François (notamment plusieurs fois Bachflüssigkeit).

En 1977, avec les meilleurs étudiants de ma classe supérieure, j’ai inventé les Ensembles de Saxophones, (orchestre composée de tous les membres de la famille des saxophones: 1 sopranino, 2 soprano, 3 alto, 3 ténor, 2 baryton, 1 basse). François a été à nouveau des premiers à m’honorer d’une œuvre originale et substantielle: Spath, créé à Nuremberg, par l’Ensemble International de Saxophones placé sous ma direction, le 10 juillet 1982, dans le cadre du VIIth World Saxophone Congress. Depuis, les orchestres de saxophones se sont multipliés dans le monde entier, suscitant plusieurs centaines d’œuvres originales spécifiques, faisant de cette formation un nouveau type d’orchestre.

2. How would you describe Rossé’s contribution to the saxophone’s repertoire and new music in general?

François Rossé est incontestablement un novateur. L’importance de l’investissement intellectuel, artistique, créatif dont il fait preuve dans son premier opus (« Le Frêne Égaré ») ont surpris, notamment ses maîtres (Betsy Jolas). Cet engagement sans précédent a fait tâche. Dès lors, le saxophone n’a plus été considéré comme un instrument mineur, insignifiant, anecdotique… Avec et grâce à François, l’instrument devenait digne des réflexions musicales à la fois les plus hautes et les plus profondes. Du jamais vu, du jamais fait!

Depuis Hymne Sacré de Berlioz (1844) et parmi les quelques centaines d’œuvres écrites avec ou pour saxophone, nous connaissions les œuvres dédiées à l’instrument par Vincent d’Indy, Debussy, Caplet, Schmitt puis les remarquables partitions d’Alexandre Glazounov (Quatuor op. 109 et Concerto en Mib) et de Jacques Ibert (Concertino da camera), mais aucune n’était véritablement idiomatique de l’instrument (à l’encontre de ce que faisaient Coleman Hawkins et Charlie Parker dans le jazz).

François Rossé (plus qu’Edison Denisov en 1970), prit le saxophone pour ce qu’il est et non pour une sorte de clarinette (Debussy), de violoncelle (Glazounov), de flûte (Ibert), faisant ainsi de lui un instrument nécessaire à la musique qu’il suscitait… Cette attitude (qu’ont eu généralement les grands compositeurs pour les instruments qu’ils utilisaient) est aujourd’hui admise. On cherche de moins en moins à travestir le saxophone.

Christian Lauba des premiers disciples de François Rossé, portera les caractéristiques idiomatiques du saxophone à un tel degré de nécessité, qu’à l’instar de Chopin pour le piano, il faudra immanquablement un saxophone pour que cette musique soit en vérité.

3. How is your approach to Rossé’s music different than your approach to works by other composers?
Si les éléments de rythme, d’articulation, de justesse d’intonation demeurent permanents dans la musique de François Rossé, comme dans tout autre musique dite savante, la notion de liberté attachée à celle—sous-entendue—de pulsation, me paraît primordiale. La musique de Rossé essentiellement portée sur l’humain, se conçoit avant d’être jouée et demande d’être portée en soi avant d’être livrée. La partition n’est qu’un guide qui conduit à l’œuvre. Improvisateur de nature, François demande que l’exécution de sa musique rénove cette liberté habitée.

4. Which of Rossé’s works have you performed?

Le Frêne Égaré, Étude en balance, Étude en vocalise, Bachflüssigkeit, Connexions I, Lobuk constrictor, Lombric, Saodi II, Spath

5. What advice would you offer saxophonists and chamber ensembles as they interpret and perform these works (Nishi Asakusa, Bear’s Trio, et Orients) that were influenced by traditional Japanese cultural elements?

Comme toujours, connaître et adhérer aux objectifs du compositeur avant de commencer à jouer la première note.
APPENDIX C.

HSRB INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Informed Consent

Introduction: I am Noa Even, a doctoral student at Bowling Green State University, and my research advisor is Dr. John Sampen. My research topic is the influence of traditional Japanese art forms on François Rossé’s music for saxophone.

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to examine the influence of Japanese art forms on François Rossé’s saxophone music through the analysis of Bear’s Trio, Nishi Asakusa, and Orient in order to gain insight into the interpretation and performance of such works. By participating in the study, you will benefit from discussing and focusing your ideas toward collaboration, non-western elements, and interpretation of contemporary music. The scholarly community, listeners, and performers at large will benefit from these ideas and gain a better understanding of how to approach François Rossé’s music. There will be no monetary award for participating.

Procedure: You will receive a set of interview questions by email. The questions will be in English, but you may choose to respond in either French or English, depending on which is more comfortable. Noa Even will translate the responses along with a translator. Responses will take approximately one to two hours to complete, although the specific time is dependent on the participant. Once you receive the questions by email, it is requested that you return responses within one month. However, if you need more time, you may have up to three months to complete the interview. Follow up questions will be posed to clarify responses as needed.

Voluntary nature: Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University.

Confidentiality: This study is not anonymous and does not include sensitive information about participants. Participant names and interview responses will be published. All electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer. Only Noa Even, Dr. John Sampen and a translator will have access to the data.

Risks: The risk of participation is no greater than that experienced in daily life.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about the study, please contact Noa Even at (617) 921-0015 or noaeven@bgsu.edu. You may also contact Dr. John Sampen, Faculty Advisor at (419) 819-7839 or jsampen@bgsu.edu. For questions about participant rights please contact the office of Human Subjects Review Board at BGSU at (419) 372-7716 or email: hsr@bgsu.edu.

You have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of this study. You have had the opportunity to have all of your questions answered and have been informed that your participation is completely voluntary. You agree to participate in this research. By responding to interview questions, you indicate your consent.
APPENDIX D.

CPEA AUTHORIZATION LETTER

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à Madame Noa Even
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Paris, 8 octobre 2014

Madame,

suite à votre demande, ce dont nous vous remercions, veuillez bien recevoir notre confirmation pour une utilisation à titre privé d’extraits d’œuvres de François Rossé pour votre travail de recherche.

Merci de bien vouloir indiquer la mention : copyright by CPEA, Paris sous chaque extrait.

Au cas où votre document serait diffusé par internet, publication papier ou autre moyen existant à ce jour et dans les années à venir, vous devrez à nouveau soumettre une demande d’autorisation.

Vous souhaitant une excellente continuation et restant à votre disposition, veuillez bien recevoir, Madame, l’expression de nos salutations respectueuses.

Christine Paquelet
Gérante
C.P.E.A.