Miró to music: transformation and cross disciplinary processes

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Miró To Music
Transformation and Cross Disciplinary Processes

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Abstract

Usually people's inner emotions can be touched by the visual and acoustic arts. These two artistic genres appear to have significant differences. My own aesthetic perceives that the two arts share common concepts, a perception I have arrived at through my Eastern background and Western educational discipline.

This thesis expounds my creative philosophy through transforming Joan Miró's works of visual art into six of my musical compositions. Miró's artistic ideas, procedures, designs, and philosophies allow me to evolve and extend my musical compositions and express my innermost sensibility to echo his "sound".

The thesis is in four parts: Introduction, Identification, Progression and Conclusion. The introduction recounts my personal quest to seek the "painterly" factors within music, and ponder cultural distinctions. "Identification" further describes my "Oriental facet" and discusses the interactive relationship between painting and music. "Progression" covers the notion of the creative process: the "Behold," "Decode" and "Toward" in my music creations. Each of them involves the exploration of my creative ideas that are linked to Miró's visual images and are illustrated by the analysis of music examples. Ultimately, the conclusion reviews my creative journey.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Music or Painting

Someone, I forget who, told me he could trace his family tree back to J.S. Bach. That is, his family’s history was linked to orthodox, traditional Western music – a tradition that also includes Mozart and Beethoven. If this can be seen as the pedigree of Western music, I don’t have any connection with it at all.

There is no doubt these composers were great. Yet I am not always sensitive to their music. I come from a different world. Perhaps it is a culture gap, or maybe a generation gap?

For a long time, I have been thinking about this question and, as a part of my own compositional practice, have started to carefully listen to sounds which can arouse my musical sensibility and emotions. I perceive various emotional effects from piece to piece. For example, from Penderecki’s Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima I sense immense energy, extremely intense sonority and creative innovation. Takemitsu’s November Steps emphasises the nuances of traditional Japanese instrumental colours, and brings his Eastern philosophies together with the Western concept of “orchestra”.
Stockhausen’s orchestra piece *Gruppen* creates an extended expanse of acoustic space from three separate ensembles. As a result of examining and appreciating these works and others, I was gradually attracted by the individual and distinct creative factors that exist inside or even behind the music. Later, I started to wonder about traditional ways of hearing and understanding music.

In fact, I find the terms of “timbre” or “tone colour” are more interesting than the traditional concept of “harmony”. The musical materials that enable progressive growth, and evolve to become musical objects that interact and balance with others, is another point I have considered. Moreover, the music’s space, emotional structure, and cultural impact or fusion are also some of my musical concerns. Significantly, focusing on these aspects lets me see more from other arts and incorporate these insights into my composition.

Time after time I have looked for “sounds” which could be found in different artistic sources. I finally found these sounds in the great creative and vigorous Spanish modern artist Joan Miró’s (1893-1983) paintings. After that, I started to use my own musical language and emotional philosophy to communicate and express “Miró’s sounds”.
Do We Speak the Same Language?

In late 1991 I studied English in the South Brisbane TAFE (Technical and Further Education) College. One muggy afternoon, I had lunch at the school’s canteen. I heard one new overseas student using his less-than-fluent English to ask one of the sales staff at canteen’s counter: “I want to buy a chicken leg.” The staff member didn’t understand what he wanted. The student kept repeating the words “chicken leg.” Finally, the student gave up.

I still remember their conversation many years later. The student wanted to purchase a “drumstick.” I believe many people can guess the two words mean the same. Unfortunately, the canteen staff member didn’t.

From the point of view of language usage, that conversation prompts me to reconsider my own musical and emotional identity for my musical compositions. Therefore, I would like to inquire into the possibilities of Western contemporary composition practice for one, like me, who incorporates Eastern philosophy to a significant degree through the processes of transformation from the visual to the musical.
Thesis Aims and Structure

This thesis was written to explain and support the creative ideas that apply to my music compositions. The creative ideas were based mostly on the notion of transformation from Miró's visual arts and my Eastern emotions and philosophies.

Not only has Miró's visual art significantly provided the expressive role for my music, but his creative concepts also inspire me deeply. From Miró's works, I feel inspired to passionately experience the dialog and mutuality which exists between artist and arts. His spiritual ideologies constantly allow me to explore and envision the possibilities for further creations.

In addition, my Eastern sensibilities and philosophies provide plentiful nutrition for me to proceed with conceptual development. These conceptions identify who I am. From my music compositions, you may hear colour, structure or unfolding and such like. Importantly, behind those musical traits are my Eastern roots to integrate them — my own musical credo and creativity.

From this thesis, I would like to further express and explore my compositional concepts through the procedures of music analysis and idea explanation. The thesis can be summed up into four facets: Introduction,
Identification (one chapter), Progression (three chapters) and Conclusion.

The chapter “Identification” provides aspects of my musical background and my views of the reciprocal influence between painting and music. The three chapters that make up the Progression (“Behold Miró, Behold Ego,” “Decode Miró, Decode Ego” and “Toward Miró, Toward Ego”) express my interest about the notion of transformation from Miró to music. In each of these chapters, two of my compositions are discussed to demonstrate the result of a study of the different stages of Miró’s career. Each chapter will present and examine my creative behaviour and music compositional techniques through analysis of the expression of creative ideas and music. The “Behold” chapters discuss as... and Metamorphosis. Angel’s Paradise and The Nightingale’s Song at Midnight and The Morning Rain are discussed in the “Decode” chapter, and Mallorca and Musing, Colour, Space are discussed in the “Toward” chapter.
Chapter Two: Identification

I Heard Messiaen

A few years ago, as I walked into the garden, roses blossomed in the fresh morning, and I smelled the fragrance from the beautiful flowers. Busy twitters were gradually filling my ears. Suddenly, a flock of birds flew over my head with their rapid shrillness. At that time, subconsciously, the sound that went through my mind was not the birdcalls but the overall sonority. The sound was like 20 or 30 string virtuosos simultaneously playing counterpoint fragments from the Turangolila-Symphonie. Or perhaps, like different types of mallets in Chronochromie. Notwithstanding where the sound came from, I heard the music of Messiaen. Not from the orchestra, radio or compact disk — I heard Messiaen from the bottom of my heart through the birds.

My emotions were stirred by this impression, and I started to think about the fundamental idea of music. I looked into a dictionary to find out the meaning of "music", and the following definition helped me:

An art of organizing sound in significant forms to express ideas and emotions through the elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and colour. (The Macquarie Dictionary 262)
Although I found various definitions of "music" from other different sources, this vital, logical, but simple statement impressed me¹. For me, the definition can be summed up by two phenomena: "Idea" and "Emotion". This crystallizes my philosophy of music.

Commonly, we identify species of music heterogeneously. For example, stylistically, there are pop, classical, ethnic music, etc.; and, geographically, we have Western and Eastern music, etc. However, I find that aspects of idea and emotion exist in most of types of music, although each type may have its own values, characteristics and beliefs.

From the bird song, I heard the inner voice of Messiaen. This emotional experience led me to rethink my music. I began to explore the aspects of emotion and idea that are linked to my personal experience, aesthetic and musical creativity. My point of departure in this study will be an examination of my inner vision of the Oriental facet of my background.

¹ This quotation was from the pocket-size format of The Macquarie Dictionary, New Budget Edition.
In mid-January 1996, I made my first trip to Europe before my doctoral study. One chilly morning, I caught the train from Paris to Brussels. When the train was passing through the forest close to the Belgian border with France, I felt Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* sounding in my mind and evoking pictures while I looked at the scene.

Next day, I went to the conservatory in Brussels for a concert. All the music in this concert was by contemporary Belgian composers. The concert program was in French, and I tried very hard to guess some musical information and ideas in the pieces. Unfortunately, an M.C.'s announcement led me to believe the order of the program had been changed. Due to the language difficulty, I could not understand what had changed, which meant I lost the chance to gather the information from the program. Consequently, I could only concentrate on listening to the sound itself to appreciate the music.

This experience of listening to music without any helpful extra-musical stimulus led me to reflect on two things that have been important to me: musical geography, and the relevance of program music. These two played important roles in my musical compositions, and I decided to examine their
importance in my prior music experience.

First, I would like to discuss the question of musical geography. When passing through the forest on the train to the French border, did I “feel” Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony? I realised it evoked in me an intuitive inner vision of Europe when I saw this landscape. The European impressions of music and landscape all appeared together in my mind at that moment. Perhaps the view looked like what I “felt” in the Pastoral Symphony and I heard the music of Beethoven in my heart.

It may seem funny that I heard German music at the French border; however, they all belong to European musical geography to me. But where is my musical geography? My musical geography has changed through the years from Oriental to Western, and then shifting in between; a moveable geography. To seek my own musical geography, I began with my musical background.

My birthplace, Taiwan, is an island close to mainland China and Japan. Its music is influenced by Chinese, Taiwanese and Japanese music. These influences form my musical geography, and provide me with a resource of sounds and approaches.

Before I started to compose music, there were two stages of musical
experience that formed part of my personality. From very early childhood to the end of primary school was my first step. I remember three types of music that occupied my music life at that time: children's songs, pop music and traditional Chinese music\textsuperscript{2}. Pop and traditional Chinese music were most important to me.

The pop songs that I listened to were usually rearranged songs. Some of their tunes were borrowed from Japan, but with Taiwanese or Chinese lyrics. At the same time, the Taoist temple was one of my playgrounds. Subconsciously, I heard traditional music every day. The music played in the temple functioned as a form of communication between people and the gods. Large amounts of percussion and Chinese brass instruments were used to produce very loud music to attract the gods' attention and excite the people\textsuperscript{3}.

I also enjoyed watching Taiwanese opera on the outdoor stage of the temple. Taiwanese opera is performed to entertain the gods and their believers, and it employs a mixture of Taiwanese traditional folk tunes and, occasionally, pop songs. Not only does it use traditional instruments in the accompanying ensemble, but some Western instruments are also employed — among them a set of jazz drums and a saxophone. Members of the audience

\textsuperscript{2} The term "Chinese traditional music" for me also contains Taiwanese folk music and theater music.

\textsuperscript{3} This is the traditional Taiwanese music called Pei-Kuan.
could hear the music of their tradition and Western style pop songs together within an opera.

I joined a modern Chinese symphony orchestra when I went to junior high school; that was the second step in my musical experience. Chinese symphony orchestras follow the concept of the Western symphony orchestra. The orchestra is divided into four parts: strings, woodwind, plucked and percussion instruments. Generally, the orchestras use Chinese traditional instruments, but, in some cases to enhance the quality of the sound, 'cellos and double basses are used, as well as timpani and other Western percussion instruments.

Six years later, I enrolled in the Chinese Culture University majoring in Chinese music. I was educated as a musician who could comprehend both Chinese and Western music, and who could play Chinese traditional instruments as well as the piano. Later, I became a soldier, and played the xylophone and flute in the army band, in order to fulfil two years of military service. I both played and composed military songs, and performed pop music for soldiers’ galas or wedding banquets. Occasionally, I trained and judged military choirs for competitions.

Eastern music had provided my primary musical experiences. Then
my musical geography gradually moved from the East to the West. My education in both Western and Eastern music fused to become my musical domain. This fed my compositional appetite to locate my new musical geography between the East and West.

The next idea I would like to discuss is the relevance (to me) of program music. Since Franz Liszt introduced the term “program music,” it has become an important genre in Western music. However, many other composers were actually working with this idea; among them, Vivaldi, Berlioz and Stravinsky (Sadie 598). The night I attended the concert in Brussels and had to listen to the music without any supportive information, I thought about the subject of program music. The music I listened to, perhaps, was not intended to be programmatic, but without outside help, I was listening to “absolute music” the whole night⁴. After two hours, I asked myself: if I’d had the relevant information, would I have “felt” the music in the same way?

Due to the fact that traditional Chinese music is deeply linked to the notion of programmatic music, my musical experience and education were highly involved with program music. Usually, Chinese listeners do not attempt to appreciate traditional Chinese music using Western perspectives or

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⁴ This is not unusual; many people have this experience listening to music on the radio without having heard an announcer’s introduction.
theoretical aspects such as thematic material, music structure, tone colour, harmonic progression, counterpoint or development. Generally, they use their emotions and intuition to appreciate it. Consequently, music titles sometimes become the crucial clue to guide the audience to follow the music. The program of traditional music frequently uses emotional language to explicate and analyse the music (see Figure 2.1).

This manner of perception is part of my musical sensibilities: I visualise a specific image to correspond with the traditional music in my mind, starting from the title of the piece. My picture is gradually filled out as the music develops: it's a picture one can hear. In the same way, visual arts can achieve the "thinkable music," "music to read" and "pencil music" of Schnebel, Higgins and Rühm (Maur 112). For me, the music title is the dominant factor which determines the picture frame on first sight; next, the melody and rhythm outline the contour of the picture. Finally, the sonority from the instrumentation and chords colour the picture⁵.

Under this conception, I perceived and learned to summarise the music materials and transfer them to the graphic lines, objects and structural sense in

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⁵ I prefer to use the word "chord" instead of "harmony" in traditional Chinese music to show the difference from Western music.
Program Note

一、花傘與蘭花 Floral Umbrellas & Orchids

Music from Anhui Drum Dance Music; Arranged by Zhu Xiao-lin

Flower-drum is a folk dance of the Han people along the Huai River. The "umbrella head" (lead dancer) leads the "drum stands" (male dancers) and the "orchids" (female dancers) in a variety of dance formations. The side drum leads all instruments, which closely follow the changing rhythmic patterns and in tempo with the dance movements.

二、密林深處 The deep Forest

Composed by Zhou Cheng-long

The piece is based on the indigenous people of Yunnan.
Part I: mysterious and serene
Part II: cantabile
Part III: lively, humorous
Part IV: passionate; this section features improvised II (horizontal flute), which is closely followed by percussion
Part V: serene, restoration of tranquility after festivity

三、陝北抒懷 Expressing Feeling in Shanbei

Composed by Chen Yao-xing

The pain and happiness, the reality and illusion, the escape and strife, the sincerity and feelings of Shanbei people are portrayed by the melody and rhythm.

四一、百鳥朝鳳 A Hundred Birds Paying a Tribute to the Phoenix

Folk Music from Shandong; Arranged by Ren Tong-xiang & Gong Guo-tai

This lyrical and animated piece is buzzing with life of the rustic countryside. The adroitness of the performer depicts hundreds of birds and at the same time, espouses love and beauty for nature.

四二、扮仙 Pretended to be god

Composed by Chen Chung-sheng

Beiguan is a kind of traditional Taiwanese music and could be seen during the yearly festival, temple ceremonies and other rites. The genre was flourished everywhere in this island during the 40's. One of important features in this genre is Suona, or a Chinese oboe, playing theatrical roles, such as local deities. The melody pattern "pretended to be God" in Beiguan depicts the contrast feeling between men and deities' world.

Figure 2.1 Chinese Program note from "Melodies From Formosa" by Taipei Municipal Chinese Classical Orchestra, performed at the Sydney Town Hall on 21 November, 2000.
my mind. I conceive the music, albeit theoretically, from the thematic and
harmonic or rhythmic viewpoints. On the other hand, I sense the music from
my personal, emotive pictorial imagination as I would apprehend a painting.
As a consequence, I discovered a transcendental link between music and
painting, and this procedure has become my personal compositional tool.
Further, I embrace from Brendel and Marx's writings: "[...] program music in
Darwinian terms as a progressive evolution from picturesque imitations to
philosophical ideas" (Morton 7).
Twin Sides

The artistic phenomenon of music incorporates aesthetics, philosophy, culture, inspiration and creation. These are paralleled in painting to a certain degree. While discussing the symbiotic relationship between music and painting in 1783, Carl Friedrich Zelter articulated the concept of synesthetic intuition:

There is only one Art; painting and music are only different fields, part of this general Art; one must know the boundaries, but also how it looks from the other side; yes, the painter who is musical, just as the composer who paints, these are the true, genuine artists

[...]. (qtd. in Morton 1)

Zelter's notion, which emphasizes the reciprocal influence between painting and music, has bordered on my music experience and thought. His remarks effectively amalgamate the two arts into the domain of one. The significance of "two in one," consequently, broadens and stimulates the possibility of heterogeneity for the artists who wish to work in such an environment.
The relation of painting and music also has been considered in the light of their difference from one another. For example, Leonardo da Vinci regarded these two as “sister arts”; Delacroix and Mme. de Staël thought the two arts had the same language — “colours, forms or sound”. Music and painting belonged to the arts of “soul” and “spirit,” according to Sulzer, Wackenroder, Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel (Morton and Schmunk 6).

In 1839, Franz Liszt composed the piano piece *La Sposalizio*, this music was inspired Raphael’s painting of the same title when he travelled to Italy. It is one of the first Western music compositions motivated directly by a pictorial source as program music (Morton and Schmunk 6-7).

In 1996, I composed *Homing Wild Geese, Sandflats* for symphony orchestra, under the supervision of Dr. Christian Heim for my master’s degree studies at the University of Wollongong. The music was inspired and named after Kuan Ssu’s Chinese landscape brush painting of the 17th century. Most of the piece’s compositional idea and materials come from this scrolled brush painting. The process of viewing, gradually opening the scrolled picture from bottom to top, presents the painting as a formal structure in time for my composition.

The Czech painter Frantisek Kupka is perhaps the first artist who
succeeded in articulating his theories of incorporating movement into his
painting. He was motivated by dancers’ motion and his daughter’s movement
with a ball. He derived the “kinetic dimension in painting” successfully from
the combination of “sequential image” and “chromatic colour progressions”.
Kupka drew a parallel with music: “by using a form in various dimensions and
arranging it according to rhythmical consideration, I will achieve a
‘symphony,’ which develops in space as a symphony does in time” (Maur 46).
This artistry aims for progressive motion in space as parallel to music’s
progressive motion in time.

I perceive that Kupka’s kinetic notion of time is close to my intention on
Homing Wild Geese, Sandflats. As the letter from Boulez to Cage stated:

As you do in the music you are in the process of
writing, of samples sonorities [sonorités
échantillonnées], i.e. sound aggregates, linked by a
constant but movable within the scale of sonorities.
[...] I can build the construction with all the
possibilities afforded by the material, in other words a
construction where the combinations create the form
[...]. (Nattiez 85)
Although this comment establishes Boulez’ rationale of compositional ideas of sonority and form, I perceive his expression as very similar to Kupka’s kinetic notion. Boulez’ written, sampled and aggregated music processes for sonorities within a constant but movable situation, correspond to Kupka’s serial movement in time.

I sense the existence of motion in my music experience that links painting and music. As mentioned before, I drew a mental picture when I heard the traditional Chinese music. In other words, while I played the notes or listened to traditional Chinese music, the painting in my mind followed the processes of music sonorities in terms of development and construction. The speed of movement suggested by the unfolding music can also link and control the painting. Rousseau touched on this in his “Signification”, which states that “each sense has its own domain. The domain of music is time, while that of painting is space” (qtd. in Junod 25).

Many artists involve this analogy for their creative compositions. Düchting considered that Paul Klee endeavoured to convey “the most inner being of music — in rhythm — which [...] not only marks the movement of time in music but also in art” (13-14). Klee, in addition, accounted that “independently moving (lines — a product of contrapuntal techniques — need
not be confined to music” (Perloff 207). Paul Gauguin spoke of “the analogous means by which both sounds and colours are derived from basic units.” He raised the issue in the manuscript of “Notes Synthétiques” between 1884 and 1888, that the “harmonious colours correspond to the harmonies of sound” (qtd. in Schmunk 193-194). Berlioz suggested something similar: “instrumentation is, in music, the exact equivalent of colour in painting” (Lockspeiser 137). Saint-Saëns held another view. He believed that music was the most mystical of the fine arts, but was akin to painting and sculpture in lines, modeling and colour (Caballero 126).

Some composers use concepts from the visual arts to convey their more abstract thoughts. Alexander Scriabin was introduced to the synesthetic perception between music and colour by Rimsky-Korsakov in 1902. Subsequently, he composed the orchestral tone poem Prometheus from 1908 to 1910. His friend Sabaneyev, two years later, stated that “mystical exaltation through a synthesis of the arts” was the premier compositional theme of Scriabin. Essentially, he systematized the tone-colour correlation into his colour wheel. Each note of chromatic scale had its own colour, such as C (red), G (orange-pink), D (yellow), F sharp (bright blue), D flat (violet) and A flat (purple) (Watkins 165).
Similarly, Kandinsky integrated the system of the colour spectrum and musical timbre by correlating the primary and secondary colour with specific instruments. He considered the "yellow with the sound of trumpet or fanfare, orange with the viola or warm alto voice, red with the tuba or kettle drum, violet with the bassoon, blue with the cello, contrabass or organ and green with the sustained, meditative tones of the violin" (Maur 30-31).

Schönberg once indicated that music is easier to express "the illogicality which our senses demonstrate" than other arts (qtd. in Crawford 230). Berlioz considers that "music can by its own means act upon the imagination in such a way as to engender sensations analogous to those produced by graphic arts" (qtd. in Morton 8).

Schönberg and Berlioz composed music whilst acknowledging their own close relationship with pictorial arts. Schönberg was, of course, an accomplished painter. I believe their views are valuable when considering the reciprocal relationship between music and painting. In fact, Schönberg's work has built up a creative "free zone" for people who were working with music composition. Berlioz, on the other hand, seems to construct a sympathetic bridge between the two arts.

Many composers have stressed the importance of colour to their
expressive needs and demands. This should not be over-simplified. As Messiaen observed:

Truthfully, one cannot talk of an exact correspondence between a key and a colour, [...] colours are complex and are linked to equally complex chords and sonorities. (Glasow 42)

Messiaen relates his sense of colour with the chords and sonorities. Working from this insight, I am able to perceive my own basic colour conception and use it as one of the musical ideas in my compositions⁶.

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⁶ It will be discussed in Chapters 3-5.
Transformation

In 1886, Téodor de Wyzewa expounded the transformation between music and art from the aspect of human stimulation:

[...] humans can be stimulated in three ways: by sensation, notion, and emotion. Each of these corresponds to an art form. Sensation, an external stimulus, is addressed by the formal elements of painting. When the soul thinks in response to the sensations, notions are born; these pertain to literature. Gradually, sensations and thoughts accumulate and mix, creating imprecision, confusion, and even a rather drunken state; at this point emotions, the highest of the three modes of address, are born. Music alone stimulates emotional responses directly, and as such is the superior art form. (Norris 159-160)

Wayzew stated that a human being’s response to the external various art forms comes from those internal senses. This explanation suggests a progression from sensation to notion and emotion, which considering painting, literature and music, which similarly stimulate human sensibility, as
synonymous, could help people to understand and appreciate musical compositions as well as literary and visual works. This is particularly true for those who are inspired by ideas that can be applied across the boundary between the visual and musical arts.

Composers often appropriate ideas from visual arts in various aspects within their compositions. For example, Webern’s serial compositions — “brief and concentrated” — are often linked to Klee’s painterly ideas about the economy of meaning (Perloff 207). As mentioned before, Berlioz pointed out that instrumentation is, in music, the exact equivalent of colour in painting. The reciprocal influence of visual and acoustical sensation is usually juxtaposed by subjective insight. Miró summed up his entire work with a motto: “My work is intended as a poem translated into music by a painter” (Düchting, “Miró’s Later Works” 227).

In 1927, Miró painted Musique – Seine, Michel, Bataille et moi (Music – Seine, Michel, Bataille and me) (see Fig 2.2). This painting was inspired by an evening walk with Michel Leiris and Georges Bataille along
Figure 2.2  Joan Miró, Musique – seine, Michel, Bataille et moi (Music – Seine, Michel, Bataille and me), 1927. Oil on Canvas (79.5x100.5cm). Kunstmuseum Winterthur. Permanent loan from the Volkart Foundation since 1969.

the Seine after a concert.⁷ Roland Penrose discussed Miró’s intention of capturing visual and acoustical sensations within this painting:

[...] the painting as an eloquent visual document of auditory and visual sensations in which trees (and probably streetlights) take the form of musical spiral waves, an early attempt to translate music into pictorial

⁷ As Roland Penrose’s reports from Miró.
signs which, in later years, would strongly determine

Miró’s visual language. (Maur 74)

Visual and acoustical sensations can express artistic passion when personal artistic emotion is invited to link with them. As a result, we can perceive varied arts through the same emotional process. The French artistic critic Jules Laforgue expressed in the 1880s the ideas of impressionism in music and paintings that try, from the physical point of view, to measure aural and visual sensations:

Painting must provoke a “visual orgasm” [...] otherwise it will produce only “an effect of sentimental platonic love, an expurgated effect, or of love unlocalized!” Music must similarly be reduced to “sound vibrations” measured by the “auditory nerve”.

(Lockspeiser 103-104)

The “visual orgasm” and “auditory nerve” of his commentary were equally aroused in terms of the intimate inter-relationship of expression between painting and music.

The essentials of painting, music and poem are inextricably connected to Miró’s emotion, in both his own work and others’. In a letter to the widow of...
Kandinsky, Miró recalled Kandinsky’s small exhibitions at the Galerie Zak after he left Nazi Germany:

Those gouaches touched me to the bottom of my soul.

At last, one was allowed to listen to music and read a beautiful poem at the same time. (273)

Miró “heard the music” from Kandinsky’s painting. This is exactly same as my personal experience when I played traditional Chinese music. From the arts of Miró, I feel his enthusiasm for visual and sonorous phenomena through my emotion. After studying Miró’s experiences, I was able to invite this idea to join with the characteristically Oriental aspects of my personality to create my musical compositions.
Chapter Three: Behold Miró, Behold Ego

Provenance

Joan Parts, one of Miró's friends, said: "when I pick up a stone, it's a stone; when Miró picks up a stone, it's a Miró" (Malet 27). Miró inherited abundant talent from both his parents, and this, along with his Catalan identity, provided him with the ability to pursue a career as an artist.

Miró was named after his paternal grandfather, who was the blacksmith of the ancient village of Cornudella in the region of Tarragona Province. Miró's father, Miquel Miró i Adzeria was a goldsmith and watchmaker who had a shop in the Pasaje del Crédito in the city of Barcelona. His mother, Dolors Ferrá, was a daughter of a cabinetmaker from Palma de Mollorca.

Regarding the Catalan spirit, Miró said in one interview:

[...] We Catalans believe you must always plant your feet firmly on the ground if you want to be able to jump in the air. The fact that I come down to earth from time to time makes it possible to jump all the higher. (Chipp 435)

In 1910, his father bought a farmhouse near a hill-town at the south of Tarragona, called Montroig. The open spaces of the Catalan countryside
around the village were very important to his early creativity. These fields and the surrounding trees, vines, rocks, soil, animals and insects became the subjects and ideas that appeared in his Catalan landscape paintings.

Much of Miró's childhood was spent in his mother's hometown of Mallorca. In Mallorca he could feel the bright colours of the Mediterranean — especially the profound blue of the sea and sky, the predominant colours for his creative fantasies throughout his life (Malet 7). Miró began to enjoy Catalan poetry during his studies at the School of Art privately run by Francesc Galí. Indeed, Miró continued to read it for the rest of his life.

The Catalan spirit and landscape, the Mediterranean's exuberant colours, and an exquisite sense of poetry enriched his works from then on. During the summer of 1922, Miró concluded his realistic period after he finished painting The Farmer's Wife, Flowers and Butterfly, The Acetylene Lamp and The Ear of Wheat (Malet 10).

In the winter of 1923, Miró moved artistically and emotionally toward Dadaism, which he first encountered in Paris in 1919. Later, while working

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8 The name “Dadaism” was coined in New York by Marcel Duchamp. Originally, a group of artists from Zürich, including Hugo Ball, Hans Arp and Tristan Tzara, used nonsense text and performances, and abstract works of art that borrowed the techniques of Futurism. The Dada exploration of the irrational led to surrealism in Paris (Louis-Smith 62).
in the studio of Pau Gargallo on the Rue Blomet in Paris, he was closely involved with a group of poets and artists that had developed from Dadaism. Miró enjoyed the society of his friends, especially through the poetry that he was introduced to and discussed. In 1924, his group of friends began an association with André Breton and started to work toward what was to be called Surrealism. They absorbed the French Dada movement, sought methods and processes to challenge logic and used shock tactics to confront conventional arts (Lucie-Smith 181-182).

This new expression delivered the passion to Miró’s canvas that allowed him to contrive a new cosmos for his further creations. Miró merged the intention of anticerebralism with sensualism, especially when painting Catalan landscapes including Montroig. He observed and re-explored the nature of the Catalan landscape from his emotional imagination to transform them into a personal vocabulary of signs, colour and lines. Miró gradually left realism, the intrinsic quality and structure of his canvases changed. He introduced the elements of words, sentences and numbers to colour and objects, and created something new: the “poem-picture”. In 1936, around 20 years after he was first introduced to poetry; Miró considered the significance of the relationship between poetry and subject matter:
[...] I am attaching more and more importance to the subject matter of work. To me it seems vital that a rich robust theme should be present to give the spectator an immediate blow between the eyes before a second thought can interpose. In this way poetry pictorially expressed speaks its own language. [...] For a thousand men of letters, give me one poet. (Chipp 431)

Essentially, when the distinctions of the real world were progressively disintegrated, the value of the structures ingredients was significantly modified. As a result, the final result of forms, lines, colours and spaces achieves the greatest significance in Miró's works. Gradually, the atmosphere of his paintings points to a sense of abstraction, and the form is more organic (Mink 37-43). Miró's ambition at this period deeply impressed me from the perspective of music composition.

I believe Miró's works have a musical value when he starts to move to the stage of surrealism to introduce modified objects instead of real ones. This intention not only renews the objects within his paintings, but also raises the compositional perspective for me. Inspired by this perspective, I began to
seek out the musical profundities that are behind Miró's works and philosophies.

As mentioned earlier, Penrose implied that musical elements effectively determined Miró's visual language. Malet suggested a comparable aspect, but from the perspective of artistic expression:

Like any other language, it has an infinite number of ways of expressing itself. [...] It is no good trying to give a precise meaning to each and every one of the artist's works [...]. Miró's language has been compared to music, and there is indeed a certain parallel, for [...] music has no concrete meaning [...].

(20)

Penrose and Malet both provided the evidence to draw parallels between the musical and visual within Miró's work. Malet especially pointed out the idea of "no concrete meaning"; the characteristic where Miró's composition meets music. Malet's opinion seems similar to Miró's aesthetic when Santiago Amón asked Miró why he used French to entitle his works in the 1930s and Miró responded:

[...] French is a language that's rich in poetic sounds.
These paintings are fields of sound, fields of calligraphic and musical rhythms. They were conceived and painted as poems [...] (298)

Indeed, Miró unfolded his works to “calligraphy, harmonies and Miró-style eurhythmics” during that period. Those paintings were quite “large and sonorous, space filled with clearly euphonious words, generally in French” (298). From Miró’s explanation, we understood that only a French title could crystallize the expression of his inner vision of sound, calligraphy and musical rhythm within his compositions. He clearly draws a parallel line between the French language and painting that correspond to Malet’s mention of “no concrete meaning” between Miró’s painting and music. Idealistically, I follow Miró’s path and adopt his painterly persona to explore the innermost sound of my own persona through my music composition.

as...

In February of 1997, I saw Miró’s painting Composition (petit univers) from the exhibition of “Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century” at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (see Fig 3.1). After that, I started planning to
Figure 3.1  Joan Miró, *Composition (petit univers)*, 1933. Gouache on Cardboard (39.7 x 31.5 cm).
write the music which links to this work.

Composition (petit univers) is a small painting (39.7x 31.5 cm) created during Miró’s surrealist period of 1933; the characteristics of surrealism can be clearly seen in this work. According to Tamplin, that “was not a wallowing in fantasy but an engagement with a hidden truth which could be sprung from the world by bringing together things which seem not to be related (76).” Surrealists often appropriated well-known pictures and sculptures that were preferred by the bourgeoisie (McDonald and Regan 160). The arts of surrealism, as Tamplin indicated worked

[...] not so much by logic as by association, so that a poem or painting or piece of music can never be “explained” and its meaning exhausted. Art is not simply to be seen as communication. It is always more than simply rational [...]. (76)

I perceived those rationales quoted above to suggest the aspect of surrealism that exists in Miró’s petit univers. From his painting, I recognised some valuable music compositional conceptions from my point of view, which also link to the concepts of surrealism. Therefore, I invited the petit univers as creative inspiration to voice my inner sound.
Like many surreal artists, Miró brought Arnold Boccklin's characters of Spiel der Najaden into his petit univers (see Fig 3.2). The clear example is that "the crucial point in Boecklin's painting is located in the center of this (petit univers) composition" (McDonald and Regan 160).

![Figure 3.2 Arnold Boecklin, Spiel der Najaden (Game of the Naiads).](image)

I regard this idea as primary concept for my music. In parallel, the melody of Lung Tao Sha was introduced as... as underlying compositional material. The Lung Tao Sha was one of my pre-existing compositions, originally written for cello and tenor that was based on the pentatonic scale (see Example 3.1).
Miró's use of the primary colours of the spectrum — yellow, blue and red, indicating air, water and earth — that guide me to think about the choice of instrumentation for my as.... Those three dominant colours almost occupy the whole painting. To respond to this idea, I employed the instrumental colours of soprano, clarinet and violoncello for as....

As previously stated, we understood the surreal artists usually assembled
unrelated things together — for example, the body of a witch in Miró’s _petit univers_. The separate painterly objects need to fulfil this requirement. Similarly, this concept will form the basis for my music compositional ideas of “division” and “compound”.

The thoughts of division and compound can be explained and extended in the phenomenon of overlapping. For example, from the painting, the witch-like figure overlaps the whale’s tail. These two figures both are independent objects. This is the idea of division. But, when they meet, that can be considered as compound.

The musical material of separate objects gains from the _Lung Tao Sha_ initially. That is, the horizontal phrase extracts the short phrase from the original melody, and then distributes it to the soprano, clarinet or violoncello. Although the melody of _Lung Tao Sha_ was cut into small phrases that I used in _as..._, the same order or processing was always in the new work. When the original phrase is repositioned in _as..._, some stay the same and others change their own shape by variation. Five kinds of horizontal phrase applications can be found in _as..._ (see Figure 3.3).
A similar approach is used in the soprano part. The original English lyric of *Lung Tao Sha*, functionally, is treated the same as the melody for *as*... This lyric is extracted separately to the soprano along with the interruption of the word “as”. In other words, the words of *Lung Tao Sha* are modified and compounded with the title of *as*... and become the new lyric for the soprano part. Therefore, the new lyric perhaps may lose its primary lyrical meaning, and became a new nonsensical expression. However, the newborn lyric carries its creative value from the point of surrealism.

The technique of compound overlapping was another significant aspect in *as*... that reacts to Miró’s ideology. As in *petit univers*, the overlapping portion in the main section is created from the subject and object. We can
construct two kinds of sections to suggest the subject and object form: Composition (petit univers), which can be called the subject section, and the decorative section in as... In this music, the subject section involves the original and variant phase from the melody of Lung Tao Sha, and the decorative section was a few notes from this together with other effects. The following figures contain the subject section (see Figure 3.4):

**Figure 3.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10 to 17</td>
<td>Soprano and clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>39 to 44</td>
<td>Clarinet and violoncello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>56 to 62</td>
<td>Soprano and clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>74 to 78</td>
<td>Soprano and clarinet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decorative section can be heard in the figures shown in Figure 3.5:

**Figure 3.5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16 to 18</td>
<td>Violoncello plus bar 18 soprano and clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20 to 24</td>
<td>All three performers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>50 to 56</td>
<td>Clarinet and violoncello</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As previously mentioned, the pentatonic scale was the fundamental resource for as... However, to consider sonorous colours and to try to avoid
the stereotyped sound of the pentatonic scale, two additional techniques were used: performing techniques and interval usage. The use of sonority from the performing techniques of each instrument is meant to add to the variety of tone colour. For example, there was a range of techniques used for the soprano, such as glissando, grace notes and the use of highest and lowest notes. The clarinet used various techniques such as tremolo and sub-tone. The violoncello also produced many effects by using performing techniques, such as pizzicatos, *sul tasto* and *sul ponticello*.

The semi-tone interval, on the other hand, that derives from bar 16 of *Lung Tao Sha* (F to F sharp) was the initial material to expand the idea of interval usage. From this semi-tone as departure point, I further extended to the major 7th, minor 7th, major 6th and so on. This idea of interval, along with the original pentatonic interval, draws the new configuration of melody line for *as*....

The compositional motifs in *as*... for trio are distributed by the reusable materials of *Lung Tao Sha* to every instrument through the processes of abstraction, conversion and coalition. This is combined with the instrumental colours to gain new sonorities and, as a result, form the music.
Metamorphosis

In May 1928 Miró travelled to Belgium and Holland to visit the exhibitions and museums. While visiting the museum in Amsterdam he was intrigued by the 17th-century old masters. He purchased a series of picture postcards of these paintings; these later became Miró's model for transformation in his Dutch Interior I and Dutch Interior II. He chose the Old Dutch art forms as a starting point to create his concept of transformation, reflected in form and colours — among them, Hendrick Martensz Sorgh's the Lutanist (Figure 3.6) to Dutch Interior I (Figure 3.7) and from Jan Steen's Cat's Dancing Lesson (Figure 3.8) to Dutch Interior II (Figure 3.9). Through Mink's analysis, we understand something about Miró's transformation processes:

A closer look shows, however, that each form of the Dutch Interior refers to part of the original painting. Miró attempted an exact transformation of all the details into the realm of the fantastic, as the series of preparatory sketches illustrates: each element, the scene, and each person is retained. The process of
Figure 3.6  Hendrick Martensz Sorgh, *Lutanist*, 1661.

Figure 3.7  Joan Miró, *Dutch Interior I*. Montroig, 1928. Oil on Canvas (91.8 x 73cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund.
Figure 3.8  Jan Steen, *Cat’s Dancing Lesson*.

Figure 3.9  Joan Miró, *Dutch Interior II*. Montroig, 1928. Oil on Canvas (92 x 73 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, 1976.
transformation, however, also meant an exaggerated reduction or enlargement of parts of the composition.

(50)

Mink’s statement specifically points out the notion of transformation through the process of Miró’s painting techniques. Miró, on the other hand, also examined transformation by comparing the phenomenon of things “past and contemporary” and “culture shifting”. That is, Miró extracted the general shapes of art forms that were in use two hundred years earlier, and mirrored it in the structures of his modern compositions. He employed many techniques to develop his own style, such as reduction or enlarging an original object's proportions, so creating a surreal effect. He also made tiny shifts in the relationships between “colour blocks” and “objects” from the Old Dutch art forms to his Dutch Interior series. By altering the single point perspective, Miró altered the viewer’s perception of space. Moreover, he further modified the use of colour from the subdued into a polychromatic mixture, and decreased the *chiaroscuro* effect, which focused on dramatic contrast of light and shade.

As pointed out, McDonald and Regan suggested that “Surrealists often appropriated well-known pictures and sculptures which were preferred by the

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9 The painting technique of *chiaroscuro* is most evidence in oil painting in Italy, Holland and Lorraine in 17th century (Lucie-Smith 48).
bourgeoisie” (160). While Miró’s surrealism is a distinguishing feature of his works, from the aspect of painting technique, I am specifically interested in Miró’s idea of collage.

In 1932, the year after second Spanish Republic had been proclaimed, Miró left Paris and went back to Barcelona to stay with his mother due to financial difficulties. He persevered with creating despite the difficult circumstances. Among the works of the early 1930s, the implementation of a collage technique that uses media and material was most important to him.

The term “collage” in the visual arts refers to the use of snippets of cloth, newspaper, clippings and the like attached to a surface within the frame of a painting or drawing. Miró manipulated many different subjects and materials to present his creative design for his collage experiments. He used various techniques such as drawing, painting and collage on copper, sandpaper, wood, masonite and paper to achieve his multicoloured results (see Figure 3.10). In 1933, he further exploited collages as models to create a series of 18 paintings (see Figure 3.11). These works carried a simple vocabulary of signs and were usually accessible to the audience, allowing them to construct their own imaginative space to respond to Miró’s compositions. He customarily considered collage as a preparatory medium to transfer into his painting,
Figure 3.10  Joan Miró, Collage on paper, 1993. Preparatory collage for painting (47.1 x 63.1cm).

Figure 3.11  Joan Miró, Painting. 1993. Oil on canvas (130 x 162 cm).
keeping the approximate figure rather than any precise meaning. Picasso and Braque initially “invented the technique of collage during their Analytical Cubist phase.” Later, it was used by Dada and Surrealism as a means of creating irrational conjunctions of “found” imagery (Lucie-Smith 52).

Miró’s creations compared the progression of ideas between the Dutch series and collage exploration. I perceive the common language of “metamorphosis” under the surrealism. I believe Miró’s early surrealism period was an expansion of his abstract expression. The collage characteristic was the important trial that persuaded him to extend his creative range more, and provides a valuable bridge for me into my compositional process.

A link to collage can also be found in my Eastern arts experiences. Eastern performing arts, particularly traditional Chinese drama, always make very limited use of scenery and props, and the scenes are hardly ever changed. The most important prop of Chinese traditional drama is probably a set of desk and chairs, which indicates the different time and place according to where it is moved. Usually, the prop can be shifted quietly on stage by the propman during the act. The propman, who is never involved with the players and audience’s reaction during the performance, can walk through any time and place without interrupting any of the drama. The propman’s entering and
leaving the stage during the interpretation in Chinese orthodox drama, shifting and moving the stage elements, resembles the concept of collage in “time”, and is an approach in Miró’s painting.

Chinese traditional calligraphy landscape painting provides another notion of collage usage in the visual arts. In the ancient dynasties of Chinese society, the emperor employed most of the painters. They needed to present their works to the emperor for his enjoyment. The emperor then would set his seal on the painting surface to suggest the ability of artistic discernment and to show political power. Sometimes, the emperor even wrote a poem on the surface of a piece. Usually many different seals can be seen on the same painting. Not only could it be sealed by one emperor, but also by emperors from different dynasties, and in separate eras, as long as space was available (see Figure 3.12). The relationship between the painting and the seal is similar to the collage idea, that the seal itself can be treated as an artwork, which is added to the painted art form. Although the painting and the seal were different, independent arts, we examine it nowadays as a new, united object. This type of interactive function between the seal and painting is a cue to the collage aesthetics of “time and space” in traditional Chinese calligraphy landscape painting.
Figure 3.12  Traditional Chinese Painting (58.2 x 29.3 cm) by Wen Cheng-Ming, 1516. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
I was attracted by the impression of collage and by the thought of incorporating it in my music composition. The primary influence on my piece Metamorphosis was the series of Miró's large-format paintings produced from collage. In 1933, after returning from Paris, Miró lived in the garret of his mother's house in Barcelona and created a succession of 18 paintings. He culled a large amount of source material from different cuttings of newspapers, magazines, advertisements and catalogues which showed various pictures of machines and everyday objects. Miró randomly assembled them onto a plain white background as preparatory collages for paintings, each containing extremely disparate images with respect to their scale and positions.

He treated these as models and also used them as the starting points for a series of abstract works. Basically, this transformational process from collage to painting shares the essential principles of his Dutch Interior series. As mentioned earlier, Miró extracted and preserved the basic ideas from the Lutanist and Cat's Dancing Lesson to show the concept of transformation. He converted ordinary, everyday articles into radical abstract paintings.

Miró ignored the elements of shape and size difference and applied each collage component in isolation. In some he would join elements together to draw attention to the balance of the pictorial space. After long periods of
meditation on his "sketches", he would use the "primary pattern" to produce a new collage painting derived from his extended visualisation from the rough configuration. Through these techniques he created exciting and stimulating images, as the random collage components took on totally new meanings. He converted each element from "primary pattern" into the final canvas by amplifying, interweaving, distorting and using diverse colours. Miró’s path from "primary pattern" to final "oil painting" in his construction of the 18 abstract oil paintings became my musical compositional foundation reflected in Metamorphosis.

The instrumentation of Metamorphosis is made up of three groups: woodwinds, percussion plus keyboard and strings. It consists of flute, oboe, bassoon, two percussion players, piano, violin, viola and double bass, which were designed to respond to Miró’s collage idea of structural creation from the sense of sonority in the painting process. The grouping design is not only intended to echo Miró’s painting structure, but also balance in musical terms, and the musical process implies the idea of transformation from the "primary pattern" to a final collage.

The music was opened from each isolated "primary music group" by a distinct individual statement of the preparatory collage component. The
woodwind part opens this composition from bars 1 to 13, the strings start from bars 10 through 26, and the percussive sound appears from bars 22 to 28. Here the different length of each group’s contribution indicates the variety of size and shape of the small “cuttings”.

After the initial announcement each group gradually modulates by its relative exposure and instrumental combination within this group and across groups. The first new modulation object is played by the woodwinds with vibraphone from bars 29 to 48. The strings with glockenspiel follow up this idea from bars 45 to 60. Then, the whole ensemble progressively plays together irregularly from bars 61 to 63 to create a free expression of the object, using the aleatory notation to achieve the climax.

Thereafter, the three instrumental groups play together to evoke a homogeneous expression of the introductory impression. In bars 64 to 72, however, the flute, glockenspiel and violin carry a new combination to explore further constructional possibilities. Complementing this, at another level, from bars 69 to 84 the alliance of bassoon, keyboard and double bass refer back to the previous impression. After this, in essence, the structure focuses on the distribution of oboe, vibraphone and viola parts from bars 83 to 88. Finally the entire ensemble plays the score simultaneously afresh from bar 89 to the
end, to recapture the atmosphere of a massive sound block and to conclude the final declaration. This corresponds with the preceding massive sound block from bars 61 to 63, which pre-suggested the balance of the overall procedural structure (see Figure 3.12).

As in Miró's collage paintings, numerous objects are positioned apart from each other, while some of them are joined in synchronous interaction. Every group of sound patterns in Metamorphosis, reflects the idea of isolated collage objects, balanced elsewhere by some mutual interaction with others, found in each junction with others, found in each junction throughout the piece. That is, each “music pattern” through the processes of establishment, conversion and fusion will change its own intrinsic quality gradually. Finally, the music pattern of sound objects from Metamorphosis, like Miró’s visual objects, forms the whole compositional structure through a series of processing over time.
Figure 3.12

**Original**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woodwinds</th>
<th>Bars 1-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strings</td>
<td>Bars 10-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percussive Sound</td>
<td>Bars 22-28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**First Modulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woodwinds+Vibraphone</th>
<th>Bars 29-48</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strings+Glockenspiel</td>
<td>Bars 45-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole ensemble progressively plays together irregularly</td>
<td>Bars 61-63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Second Modulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flute+Glockenspiel+Violin</th>
<th>Bars 64-72</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bassoon+Piano+Double Bass</td>
<td>Bars 69-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboe+Vibraphone+Viola</td>
<td>Bars 83-88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The entire ensemble plays the score simultaneously</td>
<td>Bars 89-end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Miró’s collage action depends closely on the phenomenon of process art in time, especially when he prepared the daily materials as the model before he painted on the canvas. Based on this idea, the music of *Metamorphosis* emphasised the transformation idea from sound object to object. Musically, the basic unit at *Metamorphosis* is each different “sound pattern”.

In 1963, Josef Albers pointed out from the *Interaction of Colour*:

> As long as we hear only the individual notes in a piece of music, we do not hear music at all. The hearing of music depends on perceiving “between the notes,” their vertical and horizontal distance. (Maur 103)

In *Metamorphosis* the distinctive concern was the distance not between each note, but between each sound pattern. From Miró’s final collage painting we can see that each single object was the primary element to form the whole composition with the abstract sense. Each sound pattern of *Metamorphosis* was designed to mirror this idea of visual form. In other words, in the whole length of *Metamorphosis*, like the frame of Miró’s collage painting, each independent musical note may only attest the sonic idea. But a few different notes together can produce the quality of music in terms of musical value. This notion is close to Miró’s masterstroke of “object layout”.
Every single object derived from the daily materials carries the suggestion of transformation. Through the processes of disposition and fusion, Miró further created meaningful results. Finally, I would like to conclude this discussion by considering Miró’s words, which I relate to *Metamorphosis*:

Little by little I turned from dependence on hallucinations to forms suggested by physical elements, but still quite apart from realism [...]. I did not copy the collages. I merely let them suggest shapes to me [...]. (Chipp 434)
Chapter Four: Decode Miró, Decode Ego

Constellation

The Constellation series, 23 small works, are amongst Miró’s most important contributions to contemporary art. Those paintings, mostly in gouache (an opaque form of watercolour with a thick binding agent which gives a chalky consistency) and oil on similar-size sheets of paper, were begun on 21 January, 1940, and finished on 12 December, 1941. A complex textural line interconnects images of stars, moon and sun with the imaginative use of surface colours, to weave brilliant images. Roland Penrose relates Miró’s words about how he started these works:

After my work [on oil-paintings] I dipped my brushes in petrol and wiped them on the white sheets of paper from the album, with no preconceived ideas. The blotchy surface put me in a good mood and provoked the birth of forms, human figures, animals, stars, the sky and the moon and the sun. (100)

These techniques permitted him to create freely. Miró tapped into universal life experiences as his compositional themes with his leitmotifs of revolt, freedom and escape. As Carolyn Lanchner writes:
Yet the Constellations are a sublime expression of the spirit of revolt, understood as unconstrained freedom, and of escape as transcendence of the external world with its passing human catastrophe. (70)

After France was defeated, Miró rented a house at Varengeville. In this little village on the coast of Normandy he completed the first 10 paintings of the Constellation series. In June 1940, the German advance forced him to move back to Spain, where he used his mother’s maiden name, Ferrá, to hide in Palma de Mallorca until 1942 (Catoir 8). There he completed another 10 paintings, while the final three works were created in Montroig.

The whole Constellation series was an excruciating experience for Miró. Once he recalled in an interview with the Catalan art critic Lluís Permanyer a few days before his 85th birthday:

I was very pessimistic. I felt that everything was lost. After the Nazi invasion of France and Franco’s victory I was sure they wouldn’t let me go on painting, that I would only be able to go to the beach and draw in the sand or draw figures with the smoke from my cigarette. When I was painting the Constellations I had the
genuine feeling that I was working in secret, but it was

a liberation for me in that I ceased thinking about the

tragedy all around me. (294-295)

Miró's own words show how difficult things had become; the outer
world's precarious situation pressured him to concentrate more on his creative
work.

Miró's Constellations frequently contain the configurations of organic
human bodies, universes and so on. As explained previously, those images
were highly related to his spirits of revolt, freedom and escape. Visually
speaking, we can appreciate his paintings from the abstract structure of their
subjects, but there are still many meanings to discover. It is interesting for me
to consider Miró's Constellations from the viewpoint of symbolism. This
motivates me to examine the musical compositional values within Miró's
works.

Symbolically, an artist's subconscious emotion can sometimes be
revealed by his or her paintings. For example, Odilon Redon, the first
symbolist painter, and perhaps the first surrealist painter, admitted his early
memories were blended with music and penetrated the folds of his "soul".
Redon considered himself born on a "sound wave" (Lockspeiser 87). He
believed his painterly emotion "attempted to give form to subconscious motives" (Tamplin 28). About creative thought, Redon himself wrote in An Artists Creed in 1898:

Suggestive art is above all the exciting art of music, in this case more free and brilliant; [my art] is that, too, through a combination of different, reconciled elements, transmuted and transposed forms which, though without relation to accidental conditions, nevertheless have their logic [...]. (Maur 14)

We understand that Redon’s experiences were associated with music. Although indirectly, he juxtaposed music and painting in his mind. Redon’s artistic creation, through his combinational processions of reconciliation, transmutation and transposition to approach the arts of suggestion, indicated to me an empathy with music composition. In fact, he thought his drawings similar to music from the “indeterminate” into the “ambiguous realm” (Maur 14). Using symbolism, Redon’s paintings link to his conscious emotions. His emotions, subconsciously, perhaps were linked to his musical affections. As a result, I have become interested in symbolism in my music composition.

About the symbolic intention, Miró said:
For me a form is never something abstract; it is always a sign of something. It is always a man, a bird, or something else. For me painting is never form for form's sake [...]. (Chipp 432)

The painterly objects not only act as visual forms, but also express the meaning of the artist's inner emotions. From Miró's account, we perceive that he employed the various forms to symbolize his significant ideas for his viewers. The typical "ladder" form from his paintings, for example, usually denoted the intention of escape.

Miró's symbolic concept is actually very close to my cultural background. I saw the symbolism in Miró's works as a strong reflection of the painted face in traditional Chinese Peking Opera. The different facial textures and colours of the make-up in Peking Opera are used to identify each different character. Four dominant types of roles can be identified within the opera: Sheng, Tan, Ching and Chou (see Figure 4.1). Originally, the face paintings were icons for ancient Chinese ancestors in a wild and uncultivated environment. The vivid colours combine realism with symbolism in an exaggerated manner so the audience can clearly identify each character (Chang 42).
Traditional Peking Opera does not only rely on the fixed painted mask to communicate its symbolism. The dynamics of facial expression also link the actors and viewers in communication. The abstract facial make-up acts as a bridge to convey precisely the playwright’s message to the audience. This bridging function relates to Miró’s symbolism of Constellations for me. As a departure point, I applied this idea to my music.
Angel’s Paradise

My interest and study of Miró’s works led to my violin concerto Angel’s Paradise being based on his painting Ciphers and Constellations in Love with a Woman, which he finished in Palma de Mallorca on 12 June, 1941 (see figure 4.2). This composition involved the sense of reverie and demonstrates his highly personal philosophy and visual vocabularies for me. To decode Miró’s ciphers was the primary step in writing music for myself.

Figure 4.2  Joan Miró, Ciphers and Constellations in Love with a Woman. From the Constellation Series. Palma de Mallorca, 1941. Gouache and Ink on Ivory Wove Paper (45.7 x 38.1 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago.
In Miró’s *Ciphers and Constellations in Love with a Woman*, I classified several themes, and these later formed the basis of my *Angel’s Paradise*\(^{10}\). I chose four major subjects from his painting for my music, which were: woman, star, moon and sun. The woman, perhaps, is the most apparent and characterizes the role in this painting where she takes the foreground position and most of the space. I have similarly positioned the violin as the solo voice; it is like a beautiful woman and shares an interrelationship with the stars, moon, sun and others.

Determining the musical structure from this painting was not easy at the very early stage. Then I recalled a Taiwanese conundrum, usually learned at primary school. A student gave his teacher a blank piece of paper as his painting homework. It was entitled “Cow eating grass.” The teacher was very angry and asked the student, “Where is the grass?” The student answered, “The cow ate it.” “But, where is the cow?” the teacher asked. The student answered, “After the cow ate the grass it went away.”

In the same way a blank piece of paper can mean “Cow eating grass” when the imagination is unlimited, Miró’s painting meant a lot for me. I started to imagine how many structural possibilities there were in this painting

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\(^{10}\) Domence Corbella’s *Entendre Miró* analyses the artistic vocabulary of Miró’s Barcelona series.
that could transfer to music without losing the original substance. To start exploring this idea, I initially compressed the painting into a small rectangle for analysis, rearranging the spatial relationships. This had the effect of reassigning the relative importance of the major subjects. As a result, for example, the newly positioned images may have changed their shape, depending on their original size. My next step was to stretch this new rectangular format to an elongated rectangle, leaving the component images within the frame but distorting their original shapes.

As a result of this manipulation, every item of the painting changed its configuration into a more concentrated form. For example, when the largest female form in the painting is constricted it still retains the basic compositional elements but takes on a totally new facial expression. The new "body" now becomes a long, slim circular form, more linear than figurative. If, as part of a process of metamorphosis, I select a particular point of the new body and cut it, it can become a straight line. This new straight line can then act as the fundamental prototype for the melody of the solo violin. After establishing this line as the prototype, the limbs and other sub-objects then become the other constructs that interact with the line according to their pattern and relative status.
In summary, I abstracted and reordered the structure that existed in Miró's painting to form the basis for a new musical structure reflecting the same sort of imagery. I also echoed his visual treatment of the spacing of figure and ground to create Angel's Paradise. By manipulating the original visual image and relocating it in a pre-existing space, I defined a model of space and structure for my music. Once this model was set the musical evolution of the piece could proceed.

After modifying Miró's painting, I decided on six musical components which could form the structure of Angel's Paradise and reflect his visual elements, which are: solo violin, genesis, moon, star, sun and synchronisation. Each musical component bears the name that symbolizes the distinctive musical texture and sonority supporting the solo violin. The orchestral part recalls the concept of sonata form, as there are notions of exposition, development and recapitulation. But this is more from an "acoustic" point of view, rather than from any traditional development of the material.

For instance, the Genesis section of bars 1-26 is like the aspect of exposition, which involves the "musical values" of both declaration and uncertainty from Angel's Paradise. The primitive music materials here, in fact, were presented and involved the three sound elements of moon, sun and
star at their first hearing. Gradually, those sound elements contribute to the development section. Finally, we can hear the whole sounds together again from the recapitulation of the “synchronise” section.

The sound materials of my music reflect Miró’s images and visualisation according to my personal emotion. Therefore, for example, the smooth lyrical melody represents the image of moon, a string of rapid notes from mallets is the star and the brass instruments suggest the sun. However, these ideas are only the fundamental conception; most of them are modified and mixed with other instruments as the piece develops.

Angel’s Paradise opens with the “moon effect” melody in the horns, trombone, brass, strings and woodwinds. The “sun effect” that follows is created from horns and trombones from bars 11-13. Thereafter, the “star effect” gradually appears from bar 13 on mallets and is later joined by the combined sonority of violins.

After the first appearances, these three sound effects appear together again but with different instrumentation. The “moon effect” shifts to clarinets and bassoons at bars 16-19. The whole brass section in bars 20 - 24 produces the “sun effect.” Finally, the marimba and the pizzicato sonority of low strings at bars 23-26 suggests the “star effect,” and concludes the exposition
These principles of “effect creation” and “sonority distribution” were used through the entire work. However, starting from the development of bar 27, each sound effect dominates an independent section. In other words, one of the three sound effects accompanies the solo violin at any one time and constitutes the sonorities and emotional textures.

The relationship between the solo violin and orchestra echoes the female figure’s relationship with the other images in the painting. I used the unique sound and technical characteristics of the solo violin to bring it to the foreground, in much the same way that Miró used visual devices to highlight the woman. The strong lines used to depict the woman in the painting bring her forward visually. The musical equivalent is effected by the bowing technique of the violin. Several bowing effects achieve this goal; for example, using ordinary bowing to draw the lines, and augmenting this with harmonies and multiple stops.

The violin is featured to tell its own story. Although it depends on its interrelationship with the rest of the orchestra, the other instruments are very much an accompaniment. The solo violin unfolds the melody line with the orchestra’s support, which differs in rhythmic construction and timbral
characteristics from the solo part and is used to enrich and provide colour to the background for the featured sound. This combination builds into an archetypal motif for each individual section. The concept is then used to reflect back to the overall theme and deliver the musical sense of communication for each section.

The entire structure of Angel's Paradise was constructed from two separate sub-structural factors: orchestra and solo violin. Although the orchestral part implies a sense of sonata form, this idea was not considered for the solo violin. The orchestral part is only an accompaniment, and the solo violin dominates the development of the musical texture.

The tonality of the solo violin is based on no particular scale. However, the recurrent use of certain intervals gives it a "tonal" foundation. Essentially, the principle of using a group of neighbouring notes in conjunction with a note further away in the scale establishes a pattern that displays the violin's distinctive character from the beginning of the piece. The structural use of the solo violin in the melody line is based on this rationale, but the selective tonality and interval distance chosen reinforces the foregrounding of the solo violin.

The "group of neighbouring notes," can simply start from two notes, and
then may gradually to extend to four or more notes. Bars 34-35 of the solo violin part clearly show this idea. The notes of F E D A and B A G D both show the primary idea of "a group of neighboring notes in conjunction with a note further away" (see Example 4.1). This idea of pitch interval was the primary pattern for the solo violin throughout the work. However, this primary pattern can also modify to a more complicated pattern.

**Example 4.1**

![Example 4.1 Diagram](image)

In bar 80 of the solo violin, for example, in the pattern of notes D, A, Bb, F only A and Bb are neighbours, with D and F far away from each other (see Example 4.2). In bar 87, the pattern of four notes can be divided into two groups: Eb, Db and Ab, Gb (see Example 4.3). This idea is also used for the sonority of multiple stops for the solo violin. From bars 118-119, the multiple stops of C, D A and Eb, G A highlight this illustration (see Example 4.4).
As mentioned earlier, the rationale of pitch interval is the relative identification for both solo violin and orchestra. Therefore, the “group of neighbouring notes” is frequently applied to the orchestra. The opening orchestral chord of horn, trombone and low strings playing F, G, C illustrates this (see Example 4.5). A similar idea can be seen in the vibraphone of bar 8: C, F, G, A, and Bb (see Example 4.6).
Another idea that links the solo instrument and orchestra is the concept of “rhythmical sonorous connection”. The sound effect of moon, star and sun makes a distinction between each section of development. Rhythmically speaking, the lyrical line is the moon effect; rapid short notes indicate the star effect and the harsh brass chord suggests the sun effect. Similarly, the solo violin uses the lyrical melody to create the moon effect, the rapid notes for star effect and multiple stops for the sun effect.

Miró used meaningful objects to create his Ciphers and Constellation in Love with a Woman. This painting fully expressed passion. Generally, we
may be able to see the configurations within the frame expressing his intention. His symbolic language was intended to communicate between himself and others from heart to heart.

Angel’s Paradise for violin solo and orchestra was created with the same intent sympathetic understanding. What we can find in paradise? Perhaps stars, moon, sun and angels? I don’t know. From my cultural and musical background, using the imagination of painterly music language to mirror Miró’s painting was the primary concern. Music can be music, but when music meets painting, I believe the notes not only represent the value of music. They also exhibit the visual image from the musical self.

The Nightingale’s Song at Midnight and the Morning Rain

In 1940, Miró painted The Nightingale’s Song at Midnight and the Morning Rain at Palma de Mallorca as part of his Constellation series (see Figure 4.3). This painting’s structure was more hieroglyphic than Ciphers and Constellations in Love with a Woman, according to the information provided by the surface structure of painting. Although this painting was finished one year earlier than Ciphers and Constellations in Love with a Woman, we still
can see the common designs of the cosmic objects of sun, stars, moon, and figures filling the whole space of the painting.

I adopted the title of Miró’s painting for this piece for symphony orchestra. I was inspired to write the music not only by the visual images of this painting, but also from the creative idea behind it. I attempted not merely to work directly from the painting structure or colour chosen. I tried to pick and apply the elemental objects from the painting and use them as the musical reference materials. Miró’s creative philosophy of this painting acts as the distinguishing principle to support and direct the music.
Conceptually, the ideas in the early stage of the music composition were based on and linked to ancient Chinese literature. When I started to reflect upon and discover the musical significances from Miró's work, I found that it was not easy to achieve musical ideas from the painting's surface arrangement and meaning. There are only the visual objects of suns, stars, moons and the arabesque lines for his picture. One day, after a long period of consideration, I suddenly remembered a Chinese Yuan dynasty work of literature, "秋思" (Autumn Muse) that I had learned in high school.

枯藤、老樹、昏鴉

小橋、流水、人家

古道、西風、瘦馬

夕陽西下、斷腸人在天涯。


Ancient Path.  Western Wind.  Skinny Horse.

After Sunset.  The Sadness of People at Faraway Places.

This was written by Ma, Chi Yuan around the 13th century of the Yuan Dynasty. I was stirred by Ma's idea of textural structure. He conveyed the picture clearly to the reader by using very few words. The layout is like a
landscape painting that employs the meanings of Chinese literature to convey mournfulness. We can follow the verse, word by word, gradually realizing the whole meaning of the vision. This is literature, but also a picture, due to the order and formation of the words.

A parallel spirit can be found in Japanese haiku. The haiku is a genre of Japanese poem with three lines and, usually, seventeen syllables. In 1967, Miró was intent that his lithographs show the crystal-clear connection to Japanese influence. The whole series of works was entitled **Haiku**. According to Düchting, Miró’s poetic title “may be references to the affinity of Japanese Haikus, for example, *Bird Awakened by the Cry of the Azure Flies off Across the Breathing Plane*, 1968” (224).

Miró admitted his tight relationship with Eastern arts:

I was influenced by Far Eastern art, and the miniaturization of my vision corresponded naturally to a miniaturization of the means of expression. The arabesque became calligraphy. There was great modesty in all this, and there was almost something religious about the way I painted. (Chevalier 263)
The miniaturisation of Miró’s means of expression relates, in my opinion, to Ma’s “Autumn Sadness,” and to haiku. Along with calligraphy, these became the significant implements for me to decode Miró’s *The Nightingales’ Song at Midnight and the Morning Rain*. The whole painting is filled with many kinds of different objects and arabesque lines. In particular, some lines are associated with the signs of “eye,” perhaps symbolising the nightingale.

Ma’s poem provides a framework for me to import and abstract the dominant components from Miró’s painting to form my music. These are object, line and colour. Three of the painting’s components are treated as equal to the essential compositional ideas of *The Nightingale’s Song at Midnight and the Morning Rain*. The ideas of object and line will predominate the whole of the music’s structure and are supported by the idea of colour use.
Music Objects

My musical objects were constructed from various musical elements (rhythm, dynamics, pitch, articulation etc.) for the purpose of creating “vertical” sonorities. Simply, this design was aimed at imitating and transferring the visual objects of space into sound objects of time. The opening section illustrates this original plan with two different sound objects. These two sound objects share the opening chord of D, E, A, and B. However, three of the above-mentioned main musical elements (rhythmic pattern, instrumentation and dynamics) highlight the differences between them. Examples 4.7 and 4.8 show the two comparative sound objects.

Example 4.7

![Example 4.7](image-url)
In Example 4.7, bars 1-4 form a rapid, strong and full energetic object. In contrast, bars 5-6 (Example 4.8) are a long sustained sonority, representing the “soft” and “fuzzy” visual objects. As a result, the design of time signature, rhythm, choice of instruments and dynamics all come together to determine the significant quality of sound objects. In addition, from the point of musical development, slight changes of rhythm extend the music’s development and meaning. This is my fundamental conception in creating the objects within sound space. Later, it is altered and developed to become more complex.

From Section B of the music, a very clear-cut, typical and intensive layout of sound object idea was designed and evolved. Here, the sense of identifiable colours from the visual images was considered and transferred to
the sound objects. Therefore, the application of "grouping idea" was introduced to the instrumentation to reflect the passion of colourful visual objects. The whole orchestra was basically divided into five individual groups to experience the "pure" colours:

A: Mallet instruments + tambourine + harp
B: Woodwind
C: Brass
D: Strings
E: Low strings pizzicato

Figure 4.4 shows the layout of each distinctive colour object in the status of progressive sound.

Figure 4.4

Bars 97 – 135
Each sound object was created by the factors of rhythmic pattern and dynamic as well as instrumental colour. This concept is consistent until the end of the music; however, some factors are modified to suggest compositional process. For example, different rhythms from the same instrument can be applied to gain a compound result (see Example 4.9). The sound object also can be established from various instruments and rhythms (see Example 4.10).

Example 4.9

![Example 4.9](image)

Essentially, the sound objects were acquired from the visual objects of Miró. They were linked by my personal emotion from the point of music composition. Neither the visual nor the sound objects have any intimate relationship.
Once the transformation conception is established, the music unfolds by compositional choices alone. This thought came from and built on the comment of Lanchner, writing of Miró:

 [...] where a work is prepared by a drawing, it never shifts so sharply from the original conception. It would seem that it was the very absence of his hand in preparation, the impersonality of the source that allowed for broader creativity in execution. Confirming this is a comment Miró jotted down in one of his notebooks in the early forties about a series of pictures he was planning: Have someone else draw
these canvases by a mechanical process...[then] draw them over with great freedom [...]. It's not important if the drawings that serve as point of departure are very much changed (Lanchner 60).

This is very important for me in decoding Miró's painting. Sound objects in my music evolve and progress basically under this process.

**Lines**

Miró learned the idea of line from Modest Urgell during his early studies. The line of horizon enabled him to define “sky and earth, and for the constant presence of the stars” (Malet 8). I also knew my own “line” from a very early stage of my musical experience. The line I first recognized consisted of and was limited by the five notes of the pentatonic scale. For a long time, I could only recognise this type of line in my musical perception. I thought that the single line was equal to the world of music.

When I met Western classical music, I realized that melody lines not only involved five notes, but could be made up of 12 or even more (e.g. quarter tones). I held to the belief that this line is part of music, and not the only
element that defines the characteristic of complete music. Sometimes it was
used to delineate the musical contour, or maybe for the purpose of counterpoint,
or perhaps it was cut into several segments to be distributed in different layers.
Later, I learned Schönberg's twelve-tone technique. I further understood that
melodic line also could be created mathematically. I started to wonder about
this. The traditional concept of "line" gradually blurred in my mind. For me,
the melodic line is no longer limited to the culturally learned emotion
associated with the pentatonic anymore. It could carry any number of
emotions from abundant cultures. Perhaps the lines do not need to draw the
entire shape of music anymore because the melody line could become a
"dotted" line that hides in the separate instrument parts.

I attempted to rethink the meaning and significance of "line" for myself.
From the visual arts, I gained some ideas after I studied Miró's paintings. As
we can see from his painting of The Nightingale's Song at Midnight and the
Morning Rain, Miró used lines to depict the figures, signs and so on. Also,
we find the single line appears with diverse curves. Emotionally, I sense in
the lines he drew not only the degree of curve and length, but, importantly, the
impression that the lines were drawn to have a specific function. In other
words, my focus was on the application rather than the creation of the line.
Miro's drawn lines are like the melody lines that I usually created. The idea of the "application of the line" is reflected in my music composition. Although the lines in his painting may seem a little bit preposterous and disordered at first glance, the factor of balance still exists in the arabesque texture from many different aspects. For example, we see the premier bird-like figure dominate the center and slant to the left part of the painting. Miro created this figure to occupy almost two-thirds of the space from left to center. Three main sub-figures share another one-third space of the right-hand side. The rest of the space is filled by many small symbols. In the whole texture of the painting, we can see Miro carefully concentrating on symmetry by his techniques for drawing lines. My personal interpretation followed the curve, length, balance and freedom of Miro's lines, and reflected them in my music composition.

Example 4.11 shows the original idea of melody line in the music's English horn part. This melody line is simple and played in a free manner. The successive notes can be linked together to become a curved line that is similar to a drawn line (see Example 4.11). This melody line was created considering three aspects: linkage, derivation and balance.
Example 4.11

The first concern of the English horn here is to interconnect sections B and C. Section B finishes by gradually fading out the brass at bar 175, and then passes to very shrill sonority of string harmonic colour (see Example 4.12). I regarded both sections as corresponding to the significant “objects” of Miró’s painting. Thus, I attempted to use this line to connect those two “big” blocks of sound objects.

This English horn phrase is a very important source from which to derive the whole image and texture of “line” in the first half of section C. The line appears at section A for a while. However, it disappears completely at section B. Therefore, the first half of section C is a place to allow the reintroduction of a line. The various expressive progressions of melody lines were drawn from instrument to instrument after the English horn to suggest the aspect of derivation. I created those lines quite freely from my reaction to
Miro’s visual arts and the textural interest. I can illustrate this from the
derivative procedure of the sonorous idea at the beginning of section C. I
emotionally intended to employ the intimate hue of instrumental colour
followed by English horn. Consequently, the order was the middle- to low-
range strings (violas and cellos) and middle- to high-range woodwinds (flutes,
oboe, English horn and clarinets). This allowed me to derive the lines
smoothly from the sense of instrumental colour. At the same time, the
different range of instrumental frequencies extended the acoustic space.

As mentioned earlier, the melody line in the English horn from bars
175-182 was used to link sections B and C. In fact, I also used this melody as
a balance line to bridge Section A and B, and C.

Modest Urgell drew the horizontal line to educate and motivate Miró to
experience the linear perspective between sky and earth. As a result, the vitality of line was expressed from Miró’s canvas to canvas. Subconsciously, I perceived that a line could be used for various purposes, such as the idea of balance.

Section A contains the progressive texture of object and line both in vision and sound. It is a presentation of “simple” ideas and therefore functions as an introduction. Section B is mainly the section of “sound objects”. Section C reintroduces and develops the sound objects and line. Section A plus B can be balanced against Section C, and the English horn melody functions as a link between these balanced sections.

Structure Concept

The structure in my music The Nightingale’s Song at Midnight and the Morning Rain articulates Miró’s conception of object and line. Thus, the themes of object, line and a mixture of the two constructed the whole music. From the visual perspective, Miró displays them all together. In my music, each of three main themes gradually appears over time.

Through Ma’s technique used in Autumn Muse, I distributed the musical
materials, including themes, to a suitable place according to my compositional developments and my personal emotional reactions to Miró's abstract sources. From Ma's literature, I perceived that the quintessential ideas were contained in the object grouping, positioning and intention. Ma used the idea of grouping by denoting words as objects to form sentences. As an example, in the initial sentence, he gathered three relative and meaningful objects of Withered vine, Old tree and Dim duck to depict part of the scene. The second and third sentences continue the same description. When he wrote the third sentence, he finished the idea of object grouping. Effectively, Ma gave the scene an impression of desolation and emptiness by object grouping.

After this, he applied relative and meaningful word objects to describe, compose and denote the impression of a scene. Moving from word objects to sentences, he gradually placed the word objects in order. Each of the word objects can be regarded as an independent visual unit. Thus, we can imagine the different independent visual units of word objects distributed to the appropriate places. This rationale is like a painter who depicts a landscape painting by using, arranging and ordering many different kinds of visual objects on a canvas.

The last two word objects of Autumn Muse, "After sunset" and "The
sadness of people at faraway places”, are suggested and linked to inner personal emotion more than outer delineations of landscape. This sentence especially was intended to apply and relate to the title of Autumn Muse. Ma spent the dominant proportion of the work creating a landscape image from the very beginning. The last sentence emphasises the meaning and spirit of Autumn Muse.

The music structure of The Nightingale’s Song at Midnight and the Morning Rain implies this process of object grouping, disposal and intention. In section A, bars 1-96, is a section of object grouping whose purpose is that of introduction. The musical motifs of sound object and line are declared and gathered here for the first time. This section evokes an atmosphere of plasticity. Analogous music features can be grouped through the early unfolding of the material. Sound objects and lines are suggested, like Ma’s idea of object grouping, in this movement.

Section B demonstrates the effect of disposal from bars 97-174. As indicated earlier, this part involves the shifting idea of sound objects from instrument to instrument. However, I also consider that this situation of sound objects resembles the way the visual objects are disposed in the painting. In an acoustic space, we hear the progressive appearance of sound objects.
Simultaneously, we also can “see” or imagine the objects placed in order.

Finally, bars 175-360 are essentially a recapitulation. Crucially, this section was written to capture the soul of Miró’s *The Nightingale’s Song at Midnight and the Morning Rain*. The music motifs of line and object were evoked anew to execute the ideas of object grouping, disposal and mixture of the two in order to achieve the rationale of intention of Miró’s painting. I treat the music space of section C like Miró’s canvas. These sections, A and B, were designed to lead into the last section.

Musical ideas were based on the concept of recapitulation here. But, importantly, my emotional response as contained in my composition was following Ma’s rationale about the substance of visual arts.
Chapter V: Toward Miró, Toward Ego

New Inner Rediscovery

In his old age Miró said:

The more I advance in life and the more I go back to my first impressions:(sic) I think that by the end of my life I will have rediscovered all the values of my childhood. (Catoir 7)

In 1956, Miró settled in Palma de Mallorca for good. This was Miró’s holiday destination and a safe haven that finally became his Promised Land. Mallorca was synonymous with vacation for the young Miró, a place where he enjoyed a free, happy and colourful life with his relatives. The rich soil of Mallorca consistently supplied the nourishment for Miró’s roots to absorb.

Miró experienced and responded to Mallorca’s space, peace, starry sky and sea. The lucid light poetic blue sky and sea were the most important aspects of the island for him, and blended to become “the arched dome without any hiatus” (Catoir 49).

We can perceive Miró’s rediscovery of Mallorca’s beauty from his creations. Miró enjoyed walking along the beach and through the countryside.
He frequently collected objects during his walks. Commonly, those bits of anchor, starfish, old farm implements, tree trunks and stones appeared in his new compositions, especially the sculptures (see Figure 5.1).

During this time, the 1960s and early 1970s, Miró shaped dark and stark bronzes to produce half-human and animal shapes making gestures of consternation: a truly phantasmagoric world of living monsters that he intensely wanted to show (Catoir 79) (see Figure 5.2). When Miró moved to the island, he paid more attention to the exploration of three-dimensional space through sculpture.

By the February 1960, Miró started the preliminary sketches for a triptych, Les trois bleus, which he completed on March 4, 1961. This was Miró's first large triptych to be painted in the new studio in Mallorca. These paintings measure 270 x 355 cm for panels I and II, and 268 x 349 cm for panel III.

The sparse, monochrome canvases of blue achieve a maximum of intensity with a minimum of effort from Miró (Mink 87). Before he created this piece, Miró explained where his idea came from: "Ceci est la couleur de mes rêves", "an allusion to a big blotch of blue paint near the edge of an otherwise empty canvas" (Catoir 49). The colour blue represented Miró's dreams; he combines
Figure 5.1  Joan Miró, *Personage on Three Feet*. 1967. Painted Bronze, (215 x 55 x 50 cm).
these dreams with the elements of time, space, orbits and microcosms in Les trois bleus (Mink 87). After Miró finished this project, he acquainted
Rosamond Bernier with his work by saying: “These canvases are the culmination of everything I had tried to do up to then” (259). Miró continually evolved this form. From 1962 to 1963, *Mural Paintings for a Temple: Yellow, Green, Red* were completed. In 1968, he produced the *Paintings on a White Ground for a Hermit’s Cell*, and *The Hope of the Man Condemned to Death and Fireworks* was completed in 1974.

Those two prior matters of sculpture and triptych along with the colour blue, which figured in both Miró’s inner and outer world, are crucially linked to my conception of “Toward Miró, Toward Ego.” “Toward Miró” approaches Miró’s creative ideas that lie behind the scene. I was intrigued by Miró’s perceptions displayed in sculptures as well as triptychs. For instance, why did Miró assemble used or even abandoned materials to comprise, invent and create these unprecedented works? What is Miró’s subconscious philosophical link to his works? How does its meaning affect my music? These sorts of questions, as well as a musical analysis, will be discussed in the following paragraphs to demonstrate the creative idea of “Toward Miró” and “Toward Ego.”
Old but New

When Miró settled in Mallorca, he collected many cast-off materials to use in his sculptures. Perhaps he also intended to reassemble his childhood memories and spirit. However, Miró’s fresh ideas emphasise the creative message for me. Miró’s use of these cast-off materials reminds me of Edgard Varèse’s percussion composition Ionisation (1931).

The main idea behind Ionisation was to accentuate the traits of sonority and rhythm from 35 individual percussive instruments that required thirteen performers. Varèse created an energetic performing atmosphere for those instruments, which are usually subservient to melody and harmony (Machlis 540). The application of “new” instruments like the siren amplifies the compositional value and possibilities for the “old” acoustic sound. Machlis indicated that:

Varèse deploys this array of noisemakers on interlocking planes, analogous to the soprano, alto, tenor, and bass levels of the orchestra and choir.

Used in this fashion, the percussion instruments create a harmony and counterpoint all their own. (541)
Varèse's "noisemakers" parallel Miró's unusual materials of anchor, starfish, old farm implements, tree trunks and stones. To me this is a link between the acoustic and visual arts. I wrote Mallorca to reflect and approach their creative ideas.

Mallorca

Mallorca was written for two Marimbas, piano and string quartet. There were three intentions to approach and execute my essential conception of this chapter: instrumentation, structure and thematic implementation. These can also be considered as characteristics of sculpture.

Miró and Varèse introduced quaint objects and instruments to their compositions. My instrumentation of Mallorca, however, comes at this idea from a different direction. I recognised and divided instruments into three parts according to sonority: percussive sound (marimbas), percussive with string sound (piano) and string sound (string quartet). Each of those sounds corresponds to Miró's individual objects of sculpture.

The piano is like the central core of the "body" to link both of the other groups of instruments. Their percussive characteristics connect the piano and
marimba, and the string sound connects the piano and the string quartet. Additionally, the two marimbas together and the string quartet are treated like single instruments in some circumstances; the two single instruments groups also can be linked together. The whole concept of connection is very close to the aspect of a “Boolean Ring” relationship from the sonority point of view:

**Figure 5.6**

From the diagram of Figure 5.6 we see that the sonority intersection between marimba and piano is “percussive sound”, and “string sound” links the piano and string quartet. This instrumentation idea in “sound” was a reflection of Miró’s concept of “fundamental construction” and “balance approach”; it can be compared to the physical materials which Miró chose for

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11 A Boolean ring is a grouping of sets where each set shares elements with a neighbouring set, and the last set shares elements with the first.
his sculptures. Perhaps it is not immediately clear why he formed the shapes using dissimilar objects. Nevertheless, I feel that balance was a core concept in these sculptures. This is the reasoning that led me to conceive my instrumentation of “sonorous balance” at an early stage of composition, an idea I later used in the musical structure of Mallorca.

My piece’s musical structure also relates to the structure of Miró’s sculptures. Although, we may feel that Miró’s works show absurd figures, I find most of them are human-like. Like humans, they can be divided into three main parts: head, body and limbs. Accordingly, I designed a musical structure that comprised three main sections.

Due to Miró’s concern with balance, my three sections of music structure reflected traditional Chinese architecture of “San-ho-yuan (三合院)”: The combination of units of space in traditional Chinese architecture abides by the principles of balance and symmetry. The main structure is the axis, and the secondary structures are positioned as two wings on either side to form the main room and yard. (Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Houston, Texas, “The Art of Chinese Architecture”)
When I was a child, I sometimes stayed in my grandparents’ old, traditional house. I still remember that the central part of the house was the most important and interesting room. People usually gathered here for a meeting or to worship their ancestors; the room even served as a play space for children. Compared with the two wings, the main room emphasised multi-function and spaciousness.

The second section of my music mirrors the characteristics of the axis room, and first and third sections like two wings, aiming for balance and symmetry. Musically, section two of Mallorca employs proportional notation in vivid contrast against the conventional notation of sections one and three.

Figure 5.7 shows the length of sections one and three from the rhythmic point of view. This figure only approximately evidences the idea of balance and symmetry in “time”. However, all three sections become the integrated structure of Mallorca. This entire design suggests the “San-ho-yuan” influence and effect. It also reflects Miró’s notion of material combination in sculpture.

Finally, the third contributing factor to Mallorca is the inspiration of “thematic implementation”. I created the music themes from Miró’s sculpture. My personal intuition led me to ponder Miró’s whimsy and the material objects
Figure 5.7

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Section I</th>
<th>Section III</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>J = 72</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Units</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that he chose for his works. For example, I found Miró used many farm tools in his works. The frequent use of different shapes of forks especially attracted my attention. I start to think of a transformational process from forks to music. I attempted to create the pattern of "fork effect" (four repetitions of a motive) to reflect a fork's four sharp points. Example 5.1 shows these primary models.

Example 5.1

![Example 5.1](image)

Also in example 5.1, as we can identify, there are various patterns of combinative rhythms from different instruments. Despite the slight variant of
rhythm directions, these all belong to same idea of "fork effects". At the same time, the intervals between the piano, two violins and viola and cello are all perfect fifths. These two ideas of rhythm and interval repeat and are kept for further development from instrument to instrument.

Example 5.2 of the string parts demonstrates these ideas of material unfolding. As we can see from bars 20 - 21, the rhythmic pattern of "fork effect" appears again, but this time with two extended notes. On the other hand, the perfect fifth from the violins and cello at bar 20 is borrowed from the initial interval between the viola and cello, two violins and piano. Musical ideas like the "fork effect" and "perfect fifth interval" from section one will carry to section three for further compositional development.

Another musical idea that is linked to the inspiration of "thematic implement" is the "tone cluster". Many tone clusters are used in Mallorca. I sensed in Miró's works a "heavy beat", particularly in his dark and stark bronzes. I always imagine sculptors need to beat the "object" more or less before they form the shapes. This thought occupied my mind for a long while. I still had this picture in my mind when I wrote the music that reflects Miró's sculpture. This idea was especially suited to the piano part.
Example 5.3 is the idea of a tone cluster (which is displaced over several octaves) in the two opening piano chords from section three. The silent downbeat represents a preparation for a strike and the rhythmic character of the pianos imitates the energy of beating a carving implement. From the harmonic point of view, I gradually alter the chord structure to produce a sense of progress. Example 5.4 and 5.5 show the third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh tone clusters in the piano part from section three.
Example 5.3

Example 5.4

Example 5.5
One day between July and August 1961, Miró spoke to Bernier about his current creations and motivations in an interview, after he had virtually suspended painting from 1956 since moving to a new, spacious studio in Palma:

The very last works are the three large blue canvases. They took me a long time. Not to paint, but to think them through. It took an enormous effort on my part, a very great inner tension to reach the emptiness I wanted. (Bernier 258-259)

Miró’s passion over his triptych of *Les trois bleus* (see Figure 5.3-5.5) touched me. When I first saw these three paintings in early 1996, I was impressed and soon decided to write a piece based on these three large blue canvases. However, I couldn’t complete the music until the middle of 2000. Like Miró, I also spent a long time pondering the transformational status between the paintings and my music. Little by little, I built up the ideas from many resources and inspirations. Ultimately, I figured out the three dominant constituents within Miró’s paintings: musing, colour and space. These three
Figure 5.3  Joan Miró, Blue I. Palma de Mallorca, 1961. Oil on Canvas (270 x 355 cm). Collection of Hubert De Givenchy.

Figure 5.4  Joan Miró, Blue II. Palma de Mallorca, 1961. Oil on Canvas (270 x 355 cm). Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
elements subsequently became the central core of my composition for symphony orchestra entitled *Musing, Colour, Space*.

**Musing**

In 1962, Miró had a major retrospective in the Musée National d’Art Moderne of Paris curated by Denys Chevalier who was an art critic. Subsequently, within an interview, Miró spoke of “fascination with the void” when Chevalier wondered why Miró tended to avoid complicated texture in his
paintings. Miró replied that:

[...] you could call [my work] contemplative or meditative painting [...] So that people can sit down and contemplate them, so that they can immerse themselves in them [...] In front of these canvases, you should feel as though you are in a temple where nothing will distract you from the object of your meditation. (Chevalier 270-271)

Chevalier also pointed out that Miró had worked with this attitude of emptiness since 1925. We can pinpoint the reason why he approached and created emptiness for viewers. I believe Miró achieves this completely in his Les trois bleus. My creative intention was to translate the contemplative realisation from Miró’s visual arts to my acoustic sensibility. That is, the consciousness of “musing” became the first consequential element in Musing, Colour, Space.

Fundamentally, I attempted to adopt the notion of “emotional inducement” — using music to provoke a particular emotional state in the listener — to produce the effect of musing. As Rom Harré suggested, “music has sometimes been used by experiments to induce a mood or short-term
emotional state in participants in various experimental procedures" (114). My "emotional inducement" notion is close to Davies's "hypothetical emotionalism:"

In hearing sound as emotionally expressive, we animate the music through an imaginative engagement that leads us to hypothesize an abstract or virtual persona. The movements, tensions, and resolutions then heard in the music embody her actions and sensations. As a result, the music comes to life in our experience of it. Call this view "hypothetical emotionalism". (96)

I used "rhythmic stretch" to provoke the audience's emotion and create a particularly apt musing atmosphere. The two illustrations below demonstrate this.

First, in the beginning section of *Musing, Colour, Space*, two very significant rhythmic units are adopted in the viola and 'cello parts: demisemiquaver and semibreve. These two rhythms appear together and become the fundamental motif in conjunction with the rests of demisemiquaver to declare the opening phrase. As we can see from Example 5.6, the
Example 5.6

![Example 5.6 Example](image)

construction of serial rhythmic order of one demisemiquaver rest, six demisemiquavers and two semibreves with one demisemiquaver is a typical motivic phrase that is frequently imitated and expanded on.

I use a group of short and vivid demisemiquavers against the tied semibreves. I aim to create a kind of transcendental phenomenon by applying the rhythmic contradistinction. For example, the beginning of the demisemiquaver is a rapid offbeat rest that was intended to unify both performers’ and audiences’ breath precisely. Moreover, the long, sustained notes from the opening phrase were employed to stimulate the audience’s curiosity and induce them to hold their breath. This idea, one hopes, can draw the listener’s attention quickly to that which follows in the music in order to achieve a mood of hypothetical emotion. After establishing the first phrase, I evolve this pattern another three times. Basically, I keep almost the same length for every long note — two semibreves and demisemiquavers from
phrase two to four. But the demisemiquaver fragments gradually decrease from phrase to phrase. As a result, from bars 1-12 of the viola and cello parts, I build up the first segment of Musing, Colour, Space.

This segment embodies four rapid demisemiquaver fragments, compared with four long notes of two semibreves and demisemiquavers. However, it becomes very brief from the point of rhythmic value. On the other hand, the antecedent four long notes provide a space within which audiences can contemplate.

The foregoing segment of bars 1-12 repeats once after a very short fragment from bars 17-29. After this, a similar situation is imitated at bars 33-44. But this time, the second violins play the same rhythms with the violas and cellos, and the "long notes" mostly change to two dotted minims plus a demisemiquaver. The first violins finally join the "meaningful segment" start from bar 49 along with the second violins, violas and 'cellos. The "long notes" of the segment become shorter again: it only retains the two tied minims or two minims plus one, two or three demisemiquavers. At last, the flutes and clarinets echo the archetypal segment that brings the woodwinds’ warm colours to conclude this section, with strings from bars 72-95.

From bars 1-95, I would like further to point out the conceptual design
of “long notes”. Without doubt it is one of the most fundamental ideas for the notion of musing. I attempt to use this exaggerated contrast, in comparison with the rapid fragments of demisemiquavers, to create a contemplative atmosphere for audiences. I expect that abnormal “long notes” not only can draw the listeners’ attention, but also lead them, little by little, into the emotional status of musing. Although I believe the extended notes are used to create and enhance a thoughtful ambience, it is not necessary to employ the exact same length of notes every time. Consequently, I reduce the rhythmic value for the “long notes” of each segment time after time to avoid predictability. On the other hand, I think it is probably not easy for audiences to recognize the lesser shift of rhythmic change in an external physical sense; rather the listener perceives it emotionally.

Another example of “rhythmic stretch” can be found in bars 303 - 313. There are many fragmentary clusters that contain short and quick notes, with a soft dynamic to create a feeling of serenity. This short passage is intended to relieve the tension after the climactic section from bars 258 - 300. I employed the mixture of colours of glockenspiel, vibraphone, crotale, harp and celesta to weave this fabric, which allows the listener to quickly return to the mood of musing. Through the various rhythms and timbres along with the pianissimo
dynamic, I expect to gain a “misty” atmosphere of the opening.

**Colour**

It was not easy to obtain the idea of colour sensitivity for my music of *Musing, Colour, Space* merely from the blue background of Miró’s *Les trois bleus*. For a long time, I really didn’t have a feel for a way to approach Miró’s large-scale hue. Then I recalled Monet’s *Waterlily Pond* (200 x 600cm) (see Figure 5.8) when I saw it at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in early 1997. I remember that I was shocked by the painting at first glance, but very soon it captured my imagination through its transcendental gradations of colours.

It was an inexpressible experience for me to encounter the painting of Monet. When I stood at a distance, I could comprehend Monet’s creation of coloured distribution clearly. Yet, as I approached the painting more closely, I gradually lost the vision of the painting. This experience helped me to think about the idiosyncrasy of Miró’s “blue” sensation again.

I could only comprehend this picture by Monet from a certain distance. I may view the painting more closely, but it is very easy for me to lose the
Figure 5.8    Monet,  *Waterlily Pond.*
1916-26. Oil on Canvas (200 x 600 cm).
original attribution of colour. I borrowed this idea to investigate the possibilities in Miró’s blue expression for my acoustic colour idea.

Miró used red, black and blue to paint his Les trois bleus. I was chiefly attracted by the immense hue of blue. Unfortunately, only one visual colour is not enough for me to unfold the aural colours for my Musing, Colour, Space. Fortunately, I had seen the Monet. The realisation of distance between Monet’s Waterlily Pond and myself resembles Miró’s progressive creation for me. When I looked at Monet’s painting from a certain distance, I clearly saw the various colours that existed within his painting. But when I moved closer to the canvas, I only “saw” the oneness of “varied colour.”

I believe when Miró began to use blue to paint the background of Les trois bleus, it was the only colour he envisioned for the painting. Attempting to follow his imaginative processes, I feel the blue colour gradually became the “various blues” on Miró’s canvas. I regard the “movement” between Monet’s painting and myself as similar to the “consecutive action” while Miró painted his blue.

I sum up these two phenomena of a personal subconscious behavior to my music through acoustic colour application. The concept of “pervasive colours” is used for harmonic interest in my Musing, Colour, Space and was
inspired by the two emblematic motions.

I would like to further explain the idea of harmonic colour from two illustrations. Example 5.7 of “string sound” is a typical idea of harmonic colour in *Musing, Colour, Space* that I frequently use to reflect the background hue of Miró’s painting. From this progressive transformation of tone colour of the same timbre, I “paint” the orchestral background gradually. For example, from bar 94 the gradual addition of notes, dynamics and density in the strings achieves changes of colour. In addition, similar techniques can also be found in other parts of the piece such as bars 128 - 147 in the brass and bars 252 - 282 in the woodwinds and horns.

**Example 5.7**

![Example 5.7](image)

Another example of this approach to colour is the combination of different instruments that use the same pitches but play them in different orders. As indicated before, the section of bars 303 - 313 suggests an environment of musing, which employs brief but complicated rhythms for various instruments.
However, it also shows the application of aural colour in my music. Example 5.8 shows the dominate scale of D E F# A and B for bars 303 - 313, played by glockenspiel, vibraphone, crotales, harp and celeste. From bars 314 - 321, the notes C and G are introduced, with a new atmosphere of regular beats played by the same group of instruments (see Example 5.9). The new scale of D E F# G A B and C also continues for bars 322 - 325, where a similar rhythmic structure to bars 303 - 313 is applied. As a result, the harmonic colour is associated with the rhythmic element. This design uses these characteristic fragments as the constitutional units to gradually express the colour idea. Through the shifting of the related factors of scale and rhythm, from segment to segment, the colour idea unfolds like hues that are distributed on a canvas.

Example 5.8

\[\text{Dominant Scale}\]

(bars 303-313)

Example 5.9

\[\text{Dominant Scale}\]

(bars 314-321)
Space

Messiaen expressed his view of Gagaku after he visited Japan:

[...] Gagaku’s extraordinary elements, extraordinary for us, disciples of accompanied melody: the harmony is not placed under the melody; because, for the Japanese as for the Chinese, the harmony is above the melody as the sky is above the earth. (Glasow 100)

“The sky is above the earth,” for me, suggests a “conceptual space”.

Emotionally, it corresponds to Miró’s perspective of space:

[...] My forms in space have always influenced each other, constantly changing, shifting, until they reach an optimum point of dynamic balance. (Chevalier 267)

Miró noted that forms affected each other in space, where they exist and are allowed to move. I wanted to explore the substances of musical pattern and space: I considered the relationship between them very important to apply in my composition.

Miró expounded his intention of space in Les trois bleus:

It is important for me to achieve a maximum of intensity with a minimum of effect. That is why the
empty spaces in my pictures gain increasingly in significance. (Mink 87)

From the two Miró quotations above, I deduced two ideas for my Musing, Colour, Space. First, I used approximate rhythms within familial instrumental groups to reflect and imitate Miró’s “forms.” In other words, I attempted to use the resonance of pure, plain timbre to show the relationship between form and space in the design of acoustic ambience. I aimed to show the free movement of forms within a vast space.

If the listener can experience and follow the motion of different “forms,” space and form can coexist, because the existence of musical “space” provides the place for the forms to move. The enormous amount of silence for a lot of the individual parts in this work and the consequent empty space on the score gives the audience a perception of space.

I tried to avoid a complex blend of sonority and rhythm in the acoustic space. If we agree the direction of music is a one-way ticket from “now” to “later,” I hope the rhythm of “forms” in my Musing, Colour, Space is clear enough to allow independent music segments to appear, which can create an analogue in time to the structure Miró creates in space.

As Miró’s stated previously, his “forms in space [... ] always influenced
each other, constantly changing, shifting, until they reach(ed) an optimum point of dynamic balance.” I used this idea in Musing, Colour, Space. Most of my music segments use demisemiquaver rhythms, which I chose to impart a mood of active energy compared with the prolonged notes. Each music segment, however, has its own aural character. Significantly, the “impulsive rhythms” from the demisemiquavers are the element common to each segment. Under gradual progression, they interact and affect each other. Eventually, the segments arrive at an ideal balance. The design of music segments, carrying the explicit instrumental colour and shape along with the vigorous rhythms, lets me express Miró’s ideas.

The segments’ movement needs a satisfying place for them to adjust and balance each other’s position. Bars 1 - 95 progress in the strings from the fragment consisting of bars 1 - 4 in the violas and cellos. This first fragment contains only two elemental compounds: brief rhythms, which represent kinetic energy, and prolonged notes, which represent quiescent energy.

The fragment is steadily built up while the first violins play almost the same rhythmic pattern in bars 49 - 65. After this, six bars of “kinetic energy” appear, led by the flutes, clarinets, harp, celesta and strings. The very fragmentary tone colour of those instruments (except the strings) emerges in
bars 29 - 32 and bars 61 - 63. This is the first time and place where they meet each other. The flutes, clarinets and strings thereafter perform the primary fragments three times starting from bar 72. Then, the brass and woodwinds play variations on these primary fragments, supported by the low string sound of double basses until the end of the section. This reflects Miró's notion of the forms always affecting each other.

The phenomenon of balance in my musical space is the coalition of kinetic and quiescent energy. I minimise the musical materials of every fragment or segment to let the audience hear the interactivity between segments (or, using Miró's painterly term, forms) more easily. The musical segments display Miró's notion of "minimum of effect" from the limited musical elements. This concept is later extended to the "sonorous balance" of the strings with the woodwinds or brass.

The musical segments of Musing, Colour, Space, through the procedure of music development, grow and evolve — like Miró's painterly forms. They not only are related to each other by similar or identical rhythms and timbres, but also exist within and affect the "empty spaces".
Chapter VI: Conclusion

Creative Phenomenon

Once I told my wife, "Your face is getting to look like mine." She responded quickly, "Because you see my face all the time rather than yours. No wonder you think my face looks like yours." From her insight, I question myself, "Do I lose myself in Miró's image?"

The image of my wife's face is always in my mind day after day. Gradually, it has become part of my mind. Therefore, her face, perhaps like a mirror, can reflect me. In a parallel way, Miró's art acts like my wife's face, and my music is reflected in it. Miró's creative sensibilities echo the emotion and intuition of my music compositions.

Many artists in diverse fields have also had this experience. For example, Australian composer Nigel Butterley wrote in the introduction for his piano music Letter From Hardy's Bay in 1971:

Hardy's Bay is an inlet in Brisbane water, north of Sydney, a few miles from the place where I often go to write music. As writing music is such a solitary thing one's mind tends to be over-active, and filled with all
sorts of questions, relevant or irrelevant to the job in hand. I've walked to Hardy's Bay in this frame of mind, and the place has a strong personal significance. In a modest way this piece and its title are in line with what Aaron Copland said — *Every new work is in part an answer to the question "who am I?!"* I suppose the recurring gong-like chord, which halts the flow of the piece every time it appears, is like an idea which keeps on coming to the surface of one's train of thought, no matter how much one tries to get away from it.

Hardy's Bay is a narrow water passage between two banks. From Nigel Butterley's introduction, I perceive the existence of a reflective element from his mind throughout the piano sonority. Importantly, the flowing water not only mirrors Butterley's inner thought; it also answers his question "Who am I?"

"Hardy's Bay" is for Butterley as Miró's art works are for me. Both evoke, reflect and express the creator's inner emotion. The expressive artistic reaction of thinking, creation and interaction can allow artists to seek and
express their deepest emotions and thoughts freely and confidently. This point of view is close to the traditional Eastern notion of “相由心生 (Hsiang Yu Hsin Sheng)”, a Chinese proverb meaning “Your face will reveal what you are thinking.” In a similar way, Miró said:

I paint what I am, perhaps what I was in another life. These long paintings, for example, evoke Japanese writing. That is because I feel deeply in harmony with the Japanese soul. Why?

I believe in obscure forces. I believe in astrology. I am a Taurus, with Scorpio in the ascendant. Perhaps that is why there are spheres and circles in many of my paintings — to evoke the governing planets. (Bourcier 275)

Creative Journey

During the music compositional process of Musing, Colour, Space, my supervisor, Dr. Houston Dunleavy, told me that he believed my music has undergone a very significant change since 1996. I have been thinking about this question for a long time, and now I ask myself “Why?” The answer may
be considered from two aspects: visually and musically.

Visually, Miró's art substantially motivates my music. In fact, the various styles of Miró's works dominate my compositional direction. For instance, I started to conceive the transformational process from Miró's surrealism with the expressive notion of collage for as... and Metamorphosis. I then moved on to Miró's supernatural constellation series for Angel's Paradise and The Nightingale's Song at Midnight and the Morning Rain. The arabesque structures on his canvases led me to consider artistic structure, especially from my background of Eastern culture. Later, I was attracted by his sculptural works, which are associated with the idea of prefabricated materials. My piece Mallorca is written from this approach. Ultimately, the transcendental expression of distinct colour and immense space that form his blue triptych led me to create Musing, Colour, Space.

Miró's creative range was much broader, and my selection only covers a few of his works. However, those visual elements were gradually absorbed, blended and spread into my music. Those "Miró-specific" artistic atmospheres are essential to my compositions.

The connection between Miró's painterly components and my music allows me to establish my own "music idiom". My creative idiom is linked to
my subconscious behaviour and my culture, and can be affected and governed by Miró’s works. It is similar to Samuel’s comments about Picasso’s creative evolution:

 [...] Picasso’s women – I won’t say he intended them to be ugly, but by distorting them, he made them more expressive. (Glasow 46)

In Samuel’s view, creative achievement is not only dependent on the final result. More important is the significance of the original aesthetic motive and procedure. Although I don’t literally “distort” Miró’s works but only “assemble” them, my music can be treated as similar to Picasso’s distorting. They share the notion of transformation. In the same way as Picasso distorts his women, bit by bit, to achieve an expressive effect, I gradually convert Miró’s visual arts to become the conceptual basis for my musical composition.

The second concern is musical expressiveness and identity. As Messiaen pointed out:

In western civilization, in any case, melody appeared first, then harmony, followed by a concern for timbre, and later the concern of rhythm for which I’m
somewhat responsible recently. Oriental music has
long been characterized by traits only recently known
in the West: concern for nuance and tempo, and
oppositions and combinations of nuance and tempo.

(Glasow 54)

I extend Messiaen's observation to consider the conceptual perspective
for contemporary music applications. If the so-called "Western classical
ensemble" can express Western sound and culture, it also can convey Eastern.
But how? For example, I played my string quartet Orbit to Australian
composer and critic Dr. Andrew Ford. After listening to my music, he pointed
out the strings' sharp and short notes sounded like Eastern percussive sonorities.
I agreed with him. However, I didn't originally intend to bring this kind of
sonority into my composition. It has existed in my mind for a long time as a
cultural and musical "gene". This also happens in my more recent music.
Those Eastern cultural and musical "genes," whether they were planned or not,
all clearly show in my personal stamp.

Through the progression of painterly and acoustic metamorphoses, my
entire creative journey is always seeking balance and harmony between the
East and West. I use music compositional techniques that evolved out of
Western artistic culture. On the other hand, the transcendental philosophies from Eastern civilisation constantly support and inspire me to collaborate with the contemporary music arts.

It was Joan Miró who helped me to realize this for myself.
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