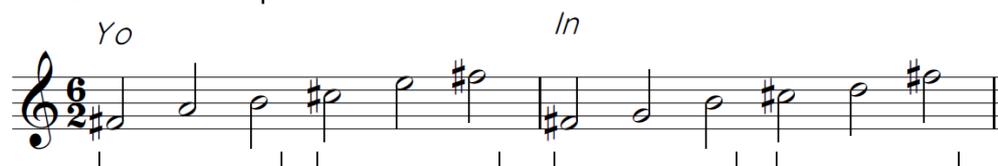


Introduction

At a certain point when writing *Memory Lane*, I thought mockingly of what I had written. Being in an early stage of development, the piece lacked coherency, which caused some sections to stand on their own. It reminded me slightly of the famous ride of theme park *De Efteling, Carnaval Festival*. Since it was a similar carousel-like experience of emotions, reminiscences and atmospheres to me, but lacking in an overarching theme and connected styles and music, I was irritated limitlessly. I thought to myself that *Memory Lane* ('down the memory lane') could convey this very idea, and thus the name was given. After a quick google I found a movie with the same name, but there are no further connections, I'm afraid. After thematic structure was established and the piece finished for a good deal, I managed to see the title in a more positive light. The passages I was previously discontented with, now contextually and strategically placed, aroused a deep sense of nostalgia in me. The title became something to be proud of, since I now actually enjoy those parts which sound the most nostalgic and memory triggering to me. I have always struggled with this nostalgic nature. On the one hand, I am often emotionally troubled, but on the other hand, I realize the importance of living and dealing with the present, in order to make good memories and thus live a life one could enjoy living.

Asian and specifically Japanese culture never ceases to tire my interest. In the ensemble piece *Oriental Grief* (summer 2017), I dealt and experimented for the first time with oriental colours, sounds, melodies, rhythms and harmonies. Oriental was what I that time considered oriental. At a certain point after getting involved into Japanese poetry in the summer of 2019, I made an effort to write a variation cycle on a traditional Japanese melody, *Sakura Sakura*. Somewhere in the progress, I got stuck and as of now, no significant progress has been made. Nevertheless, a specific taste for harmony and melody evolved over the time after. In the *Six Songs on Japanese Verse* (spring 2020), classical and modern Japanese verse is turned into a song cycle for voice and piano. As a tale of life, love and loss, and helped by the unique and intense poems, nostalgia slipped into the songs significantly.

Admittedly, the structure, instrumentation, performance, way of working, etc. of *Memory Lane* is far from traditional Japanese music. Still, some of the musical concepts and way of thinking I tried to integrate and combine with Western concepts as best as I could. For example the use of pentatonic scales: in classical Japanese music theory, pentatonic scales are formed by superimposing two identical tetrachords (Galliano, 2002, p. 54)¹. The most renowned scale is called the *min'yo* scale (*Yo*), which is associated with brightness and liveliness. The *miyakobushi* scale (*In*) is its sad counterpart, made with tetrachords containing a lowered 2nd. *Memory Lane* integrates both scales. To give an idea, the *min'yo* scale is primarily used for the main theme and supporting harmonies, while the *miyakobushi* scale is reserved to make harmonic nuances and other colourful contrasts. In addition, I love working with the colour possibilities resulting from stacking and interposing 4ths and especially the use of augmented 4ths. When learning of the *Java Suite* by Leopold Godowsky in the summer of 2018, I instantly fell in love with his way of working and the resulting tonal subtleties and sensitive atmospheres. Music by French composers like Fauré and Messiaen always manage to warm my heart and fascinate and inspire me as well.



1.1 Min'yo (Yo) and Miyakobushi (In) scales. Own source.

¹ Galliano, L. (2002). *Yōugaku: Japanese Music in the Twentieth Century*. Maryland, USA: Scarecrow Press, Inc.

The often improvisatory-like atmosphere and gamelan-like playing of *Memory Lane* tend to give the piece an oriental air. Moreover, while some moments are contemplative and feel endless, others are extremely real, dramatic or even mourning-like, while others are volatile, freely and carelessly happening in the moment. Seemingly happening without purpose, flowing in time, but still purposely created in a conspicuous organic way. Nonetheless, all moments are structured and related to each other somehow, for example by using recurring themes, motives, colours and instrumentation.

While working on this piece, I became aware of a new side of nostalgia: a feeling one can have while being in the present, but realising that a current special event will be the past soon and therefore memorable. It is as if the present has already passed and that one looks at it nostalgically in advance. Oddly, this feeling could encourage one to go back to the present and have a good time for as long as the event lasts. It's a more contemporary, innocent and accepting aspect of nostalgia to me.

I enclosed the poem below, *Sonnet 62* by Japanese poet Tanikawa, to show you what could inspire you when playing *Memory Lane*. Superficially looking, this poem tells a different story than *Memory Lane*, but the similarities are surprising too. Both works are structured according to Western classical tradition, but they both retain a somewhat improvisatory, nuanced and volatile style. There is something sad, serious and contemplative, but something light-hearted, simple and earnest too.

Sonnet 62

The world loves me
Sometimes brutally
Sometimes gently
So I can live for ever on my own.

Even when she first gave herself to me
I only heard the sounds of the world
For me only simple sadness and pleasure are clear
Because I am always of the world.

I fling myself
At sky, at trees, at her
That I might become the richness itself of the world.

. . . I call to her
The world turns to look
And I am gone.

~ Tanikawa Shuntarō (谷川俊太郎, b. 1931)²

In the performance for the Prinses Christina Compositie Concours, the repetition is to be omitted. In this scenario, the performance lasts about 7'50''. For the cello: lines between notes indicate a careful vocal-like portamento. Own portamenti, handled with taste to achieve perfect legato, are very welcome too. The fingerings in the piano part are based on my personal preferences. Specific tempo indications show nuances in character foremost and are therefore no absolutes. Have fun!

Maurick Reuser, 27th August 2020

² Bownas, G., & Thwaite, A. (2009). *The Penguin Book of Japanese Verse* (revised edition). London, England: Penguin Group.