Hisaishi’d Away: An Analysis of Joe Hisaishi’s Film Scoring Technique

by

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# Table of Contents

Introduction...........................................................................................................................................4

I. Miyazaki and Kitano: Collaborations..................................................................................................5

II. *Castle in the Sky*: Evolution of Style ..............................................................................................14

III. The “Signature” ................................................................................................................................17

IV. *Spirited Away*: A Thematic Analysis ............................................................................................21

Conclusion...............................................................................................................................................38

Bibliography.............................................................................................................................................40

The “Elemental” Symphony (Preface and Score) .................................................................................41
Introduction

Joe Hisaishi is one of the most prominent film composers in Japan. His evolution in style and maturity can be traced through the past thirty years of his prolific career, starting with a minimalist electronic style and progressing to full orchestral scores and Japanese pop songs. Most of his popularity derives from his collaborations with two respected Japanese directors: Takeshi Kitano and Hayao Miyazaki. These masters of cinema have very little in common in their filmmaking; straddling the lines of art cinema, Kitano creates hardboiled gangster films peppered with sections of shocking violence, while Miyazaki creates animated fantasy films that celebrate the beauty of youth and nature and which achieved high commercial success. Even when scoring for such contrasting genres, the scoring style can always be identified as Joe Hisaishi’s because of unmistakable signature techniques.

In this paper I will describe all the facets of Joe Hisaishi’s film scoring by comparing and contrasting the techniques he uses in his collaborations with Takeshi Kitano and Hayao Miyazaki; discussing the evolution of his musical style from his older version of Castle In the Sky released in 1996 to his newer version released in 1999 for an American audience, and addressing the “Hisaishi signature” and how Hisaishi uses it within his various scores. Finally, I will provide a thematic and melodic analysis of Miyazaki’s film Spirited Away.
I. Miyazaki and Kitano: Collaborations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miyazaki</th>
<th>Kitano</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984 - <em>Nausicaa</em></td>
<td>1991 - <em>A Scene at the Sea</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 - <em>Laputa</em> (Castle in the Sky)</td>
<td>1993 - <em>Sonatine</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989 - <em>Kiki’s Delivery Service</em></td>
<td>1997 - <em>Hana-bi (Fireworks)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 - <em>Porco Rosso</em></td>
<td>1999 - <em>Kikujiro</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997 - <em>Princess Mononoke</em></td>
<td>2000 - <em>Brother</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 - <em>Spirited Away</em></td>
<td>2002 - <em>Dolls</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 - <em>Howl’s Moving Castle</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 - <em>Ponyo</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Director Takeshi Kitano’s filmic style is not necessarily reflected in Hisaishi’s music, though they work in an interesting juxtaposition. Hisaishi’s melodies are deeply sentimental, while Kitano’s characters are often deadpan. Many of his characters are Yakuza (Japanese organized crime), ex-Yakuza, or hardboiled police officers who are opposing the Yakuza. Many of these individuals have traumatic pasts, resulting in them wearing a tough exterior while having a sensitive core. The film score often affords us a glimpse into a character’s inner emotions.

Kitano’s deadpan style extends to his cinematography as well. In his movies, the scenes are often static for extended periods of time. This stagnant feeling is reflected by Hisaishi’s style of scoring for Kitano films. His Kitano scores are rhythmic, especially in their first two collaborations, *A Scene at the Sea* and *Sonatine*. 
Referring to the film *A Scene at the Sea*, Hisaishi stated in an interview, “The atmosphere of the film matched perfectly with the style of solo compositions, where I approached the work of John Cage and Philip Glass. Kitano did not want an overtly melodic score, but a minimalist and repetitive score.”¹ These rhythms are highly minimalistic repetitions that usually repeat over a changing chord progression. The continuous rhythms balance well with the slow paced action on screen, giving a sense of motion when there is very little to see. This contrast in music pace to visual pace implies the motion is in the character’s thought process, not the physical actions. An excellent example of this comes four minutes into their first collaborative effort, *A Scene at the Sea*. The main character, a deaf garbage man whose greatest aspiration is to surf, is silently cleaning and repairing a broken surfboard he found by the side of the road. When the music starts, a certain emotion is added to the scene; the rhythm imbues the character with a drive that the audience recognizes as determination.

The orchestration styles of the Hisaishi-Kitano collaborations are different from those of the Hisaishi-Miyazaki collaborations. This reflects the contrasting nature of the movie styles of the two directors; Kitano makes live-action dramas, violent yet artistic, while Miyazaki makes animated fantasy adventure epics. This difference also reflects a combination of director style and budget. Because Miyazaki’s films are more mainstream, they often allow for a larger budget, enabling larger instrumentations. For *Spirited Away*, a concert hall was rented for the New Japan Philharmonic to play the film score. This full orchestra had individual

microphones for each instrument (approximately 60 instruments), which resulted in a sweeping orchestral atmosphere. In contrast, Kitano’s first films with Hisaishi in the early 90’s had synthesized scores, while Hisaishi’s scores for Miyazaki always used the full palette of the symphony orchestra. It is important to note that Kitano’s tendencies towards simpler orchestrations may be an artistic choice rather a limitation, because he creates very idiosyncratic films. Kitano’s later collaborations with Hisaishi use Hisaishi’s orchestral touch, starting with Hana-bi (released as Fireworks in the United States). However, because of the genre that Kitano works in, or, perhaps, Kitano’s idiosyncratic style, Hisaishi does not use the orchestra as brilliantly as he does with Miyazaki’s imaginative fantasy animations. The primarily synthesized instrumentation Hisaishi uses in the early years with Kitano is omnipresent in A Scene at the Sea and Sonatine. It also is used in Kitano’s 1997 film Hana-bi, in addition to the orchestra. The minimalist rhythms that are repeated in these films are done on an instrument that sounds like a marimba (perhaps it is an electronic marimba). This instrument is pervasive in these scores, but it is never heard in the Miyazaki film scores.

The length of the scores is also quite different between Miyazaki’s films and Kitano’s films. In Spirited Away, music is prominent in almost every scene, and the largest durations of time when there is none last about three minutes. In Kitano’s film Brother, which was made in 2000, there are scoreless sections that last up to fifteen minutes. This is common in all of Kitano’s films, and brings more attention to the score whenever the music reenters. This is a significant difference between the

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2 Miyazaki’s Spirited Away, Bonus Features: Nippon Television Special
compositional styles; the scores in Miyazaki’s films are more subliminal than those in Kitano’s, simply because of their amount of screen time. However, because Hisaishi focuses so much on melody in Miyazaki’s film scores, his music can never be entirely subliminal; it is too recognizable.

While music adds and changes emotions to filmic sequences, the lack of music does not subtract from emotion, especially in Kitano’s films. The lack of a continuous score in Kitano’s films almost creates music out of silence, where both music and silence may be equally important. Silence can just as easily portray the internal loneliness in a character, such as in his film Kikujiro. The protagonist, Masao, a young boy, arrives at soccer practice, only to find nobody there. He stands still on the field, alone, and the lack of music makes the audience empathize with his emptiness. The addition of music would highlight the scene, but it is not meant to be a critical scene. It merely allows the audience to get a better understanding of Masao’s character, and a lack of music is quite effective.

In Kitano’s films, Hisaishi separates his music from the violence depicted on screen. Often the action sequences are without music, and the static shots are scored, which is almost a complete reversal of the Hollywood style of scoring. In Hollywood movies, action sequences are often coupled with intense, driving music that highlights physical contact and impact. However, there are a few rare instances where Kitano uses music in violent scenes. In Brother, Hisaishi scores a montage sequence of violence when Aniki’s gang goes to war with another gang. Also, in Sonatine, there is music accompanying a slow-motion assassination where a gunman shoots three people. These acts of violence differ from the rest of the violence in Kitano’s films
because they have no set up to the killings. While it is understood why the people are being shot, there is nothing visually beforehand to add suspense to the shootings. When there is violence without music, Kitano will show a man calmly walking up to his victim with a gun, or perhaps a Yakuza member being dishonored and consequently chopping off one of his own fingers. Perhaps, Kitano feels music is needed when there is no suspenseful silent visual sequence to precede the violence.

There are also scenes in Kitano’s films where violence interrupts the music, for either dramatic or comedic effect. This technique is used in Sonatine for dramatic effect. At the end of the film, Murakawa has just killed off the rival gang and is driving back to his lover while the thematic music of the film, which entered at the beginning of the movie, finally returns. He stops a mile away before reaching her and commits suicide, an action that ends the music. This interruption shows that the theme was important to Murakawa’s character, and the death of Murakawa ended the theme. At the beginning of Hana-bi, Hisaishi halts the score for comedic effect, where the music acts as if it has a physical presence on screen. The gorgeous musical theme opens the film and plays until a scene where the main character, Nishi, returns to find two workers taking a break and eating sushi on the hood of his car. In the next camera shot, the music stops suddenly to the splattering sound of a mop wiping the car, because Nishi has forced one of the workers to clean up the mess they made. It is as if the workers hit the orchestra with his mop, interrupting the music. The one worker slips, falling onto Nishi’s car, which prompts Nishi to kick him in his posterior. The worker rolls off the car and lands on the pavement, cuing the music to instantly return for the title screen.
The different processes of collaborating that Hisaishi uses with the two directors may be partially explain the differences in the end products. It seems that his collaboration process with Kitano varies between films. For example, he scored *A Scene at the Sea* after the movie was already filmed, but was involved with *Sonatine* from the very beginning of its production.\(^3\) Their collaborative relationship was shorter than his collaboration with Miyazaki, where the collaborative process is always the same. Hisaishi says, “The basic process of our working relationship has not changed since 1984. I always make a “driver” (Otherwise known as an Image Album) before putting my music on the final soundtrack of film.”\(^4\) The Image Albums are albums of three to five minute pieces that have a certain motif or thematic material, and these pieces are assigned to motifs and themes in the film. This process may explain why Hisaishi’s scores for Miyazaki have strong thematic content. The Image Albums are often sold in addition to the original soundtracks; they are very appealing to people who become entranced by his melodies because it allows them to have an album composed just of the fully orchestrated melodies and themes.

Another difference between the two collaborations is Hisaishi’s treatment of culture and region. During his collaboration with Kitano, Hisaishi never changed his style despite marked cultural differences in the film settings. The score for *Brother*, for example, is the same in style as his other Kitano scores, even though the majority of the film takes place in America. However, when scoring Miyazaki’s films, he


\(^4\) Ibid, “Monsieur Joe.”
treats the scores for the films that do not take place in Japan differently than those that
do. Two of his films take place in Europe; Porco Rosso takes place around the
Adriatic Sea while Kiki’s Delivery Service takes place in Northern Europe, which can be inferred from the drawings. These two scores have many similarities that are uncommon in scores for other Miyazaki film set in Japan. There is a prevalence of 3/4 time signatures in the films set in Europe, which give the score a waltz feel that is common in Western music. In these 3/4 time signatures, Hisaishi emphasizes the downbeat, another characteristic of waltzes. Example of this in Porco Rosso are the pieces “Friend” and “Adoria No Umi E” on the Porco Rosso OST (original soundtrack). In the Kiki’s Delivery Service OST, examples of the 3/4 time signature with the waltz downbeat are “Hareta Hi Ni…,” “Sota Tobu Takkyubin,” “Soshin No Kiki” and “Ursula No Koya He.”

The instrumentation of the films with European settings is also stereotypically European. Many of the melodies in Kiki’s Delivery Service are played by the accordion, and the percussion in Porco Rosso features castanets and snare drum. Both scores prominently feature guitar, and often use tremolo techniques that are common in Spanish classical guitar music. Much of Porco Rosso’s music is an attempt to represent exoticism; Porco Rosso even has a piece that sounds like homage to Bizet’s Carmen. This piece, titled “Doom ~ Kumo No Wana” on the OST, uses the same accompanying motif in the lower strings that Bizet’s “Habanera” aria uses.6

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6 This motif is the oscillation of i – V – iii (an octave up) – V – i.
Although Miyazaki’s films can be appreciated by all ages, Miyazaki directs some of his films towards children, which affects Hisaishi’s style of scoring. This is shown in Miyazaki’s *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Ponyo*, and *Kiki’s Delivery Service*. The three film scores feel more childish, both in instrumentation and tonality, and employ sillier musical tactics. For instance, Hisaishi uses playing techniques like pizzicato and staccato strings in major key signatures to create whimsical effects such as tiptoeing. The emotions in these films are less deep and layered than in Miyazaki’s more sophisticated films like *Spirited Away*, so the harmonies are less dissonant and brooding. Hisaishi also includes a large amount of percussion and tuned percussion in the score for silly moments. This is not to say that there are no dramatic moments in these films in which characters are pushed to their emotional limits. In *My Neighbor Totoro*, the young protagonist Satsuki is searching for her lost sister. Even though she has run miles around the countryside looking for Mei, she continues to run through her exhaustion. This act of passion for her sister is bolstered by the delicate musical theme that bonds the sisters together.

These movies for children all feature pop songs at the end of the films that play over the credits. Two of the three aforementioned films, *My Neighbor Totoro* and *Ponyo*, use the thematic material from their film scores as the basis for the choruses of the pop songs. These songs are geared towards children, and always use simple pop progressions and catchy melodies. Hisaishi is quite effective when creating endearing pop music for children. This style of music is a major change in style from his artistic film scores. Outside of film scoring and classical compositions, he also writes jazz based pop music that sounds like a fusion of smooth jazz,
twentieth century minimalism and disco beats. For the pop songs featured on his film scores, Hisaishi taps into these seemingly extracurricular genres of music and combines them with his scoring style.

A similarity between the music for Kitano and Miyazaki is Hisaishi’s use of piano and strings. The orchestration is usually built around the piano; it often initiates the melody, which in turn is transferred to the strings and then the winds, or vice versa. This is heard at the beginning of Hana-bi; the piano introduces the melody, then the flute takes over. When the title displays, the violins pick up the melody. This simple form of theme and variation is very effective because of Hisaishi’s knack for catchy and romantic melodies.

The lushness of his string arrangements has also become a trademark of Hisaishi’s sound. It pervades both of his collaborations’ scores; the sweeping strings work perfectly with Miyazaki’s epic and beautiful animated landscapes, while the tasteful dissonances create brooding internal portraits of Kitano’s silent characters. One example of this is found in Miyazaki’s Princess Mononoke, when Prince Ashitaka is galloping across the mountainside to the piece “The Journey To The West” on the OST (Original soundtrack) about eleven minutes and thirty-four seconds into the film. A second example is at the beginning of Kitano’s Hana-bi, during the title at two minutes and ten seconds. The voicing of the chords is very similar between the two, except the Hana-bi piece is much more rhythmic, which is a previously mentioned difference.
II.

Castle in the Sky: Evolution of Style

“My musical style thirteen years ago was totally different from what it is today. And in some cases, the way that I write music has changed.”

– Joe Hisaishi

When Miyazaki’s film Laputa (Known as Castle in the Sky in the English release) was being produced by Disney for American audiences, Hisaishi was asked to extend the score of the film. According to Hisaishi, this was because Disney’s staff believed that Americans would feel uncomfortable if there was no music for more than three minutes. While Hisaishi’s original score was only sixty minutes long, the English version ended up including over ninety minutes of music. The process of adding thirty minutes to the score was not as simple as it seemed. He realized that his musical style had changed. He had honed his craft for thirteen years since writing the original score; in order to have a balanced score, Hisaishi ended up rewriting the entire score. Following the release of the Disney-produced English version of Laputa in 1999, Buena Vista Home Entertainment and Nausicaa.net, a fan website devoted to Miyazaki and his works, interviewed Joe Hisaishi about the process of rewriting the entire score to the film originally released thirteen years earlier to Japanese audiences. In his responses, Hisaishi indicated that his style had evolved in the thirteen years between the two releases in many different ways. Because the original

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score is very popular in Japan, he approached the rewriting process with a certain amount of deference for his previous work. There is a definite change in the music, but he still maintains the well-known themes, and a large amount of music from the new score is almost identical to the older music. The different changes that he mentions are his orchestration technique and his use of rhythm. Not only does he advance in these categories, but he also increases the score length, timing, playing style, and changes the acoustics when recording the instruments.

The original score uses synthesizers far more than the English version, where Hisaishi rearranges many of these synthesized segments for full orchestra. While he had access to all the sounds a full orchestra could create back in 1986, his newer style takes more advantage of them. The first segment of score in the original film starts with synthesizers playing in a continuous rhythm likened to music from an outdated video game. In his newer score, this repetitive motif is tossed playfully around the various sections of the orchestra, beginning in the lower strings and soon jumping to the wind and brass sections. The repetitive rhythm is accented with punctuating bass plucks, timpani, brass, and even xylophone. The changes in instrumentation keep the music engaging, and also reflect the personality of the characters in the film in different ways. This is the perfect example of the difference in Hisaishi’s style: orchestration color.

Instrumentation is one of the many ways that Hisaishi’s orchestration has evolved to better enhance the emotional content of the film. Another way he achieves this emotionality is by writing his original motifs and melodies in octaves. This use of octaves expands the score’s range in motion, allowing it more options in orchestration
color. He uses this technique in the theme for the opening credits of *Laputa*; at four minutes and fifty-nine seconds into the English version, the violins leap up an octave for the melody. This section of the theme pops out more than in the original score, where the melody remains in the same octave.

While Hisaishi stated that he wanted to bring out the rhythm a little more in the newer score, he is successful at this in some parts, and not so much in others. The new score is played with a larger musical dynamic range, letting the score become more fluid in order to follow the motion on screen. In the original score, the music is much more static in its use of musical dynamics, and the rhythms are often more apparent. Hisaishi replaces the repetitiveness in the synthesizer rhythms with marching drum sounds at one hour and three minutes into the new version. However, while the beat is stronger and more pounding in the original, the new rhythms are more sophisticated in the new version. At twenty-three minutes, the Dola Gang, a group of softhearted pirates, are chasing after Sheeta for her magical necklace. The music in the original score is a constant chugging of eighth notes grouped in fours (1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4), while the new score takes this part and syncopates the rhythm, grouped (1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2).  

Hisaishi is less successful in bringing out the rhythm because of his conducting style and how his orchestra plays in the new score. When compared to the original music, his newer music enjoys a new vibrancy, due to the strings swelling to a wide array of dynamics while playing with rubato, and additional tempo interrupters.

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9 Ibid., “Castle in the Sky – Joe Hisaishi Interview.”
10 The 1’s represent the accented notes of each measure, and the numbers are eighth notes.
such as ritardandos. Like his use of his new octave leaping, Hisaishi uses ritardandos to drag out dramatic moments and climax to greater and more epic proportions. This is found near the end of the title theme as Sheeta, the female protagonist is falling from the sky. Before she hits the ground, her magical necklace explodes with light and she begins to hover in mid air. Hisaishi ignored this visual cue of the glowing necklace in the original score, and instead brought the music to a climax five seconds earlier. It is more standard in the Hollywood style of scoring films to highlight this sort of action with a simultaneous musical climax, and in the newer version Hisaishi achieves this by creating an epic ritardando. This slows the music until the explosion of light catches up. The result of the synchronization with the music and this action is truly fantastic.

Even though Hisaishi has evolved as a film composer, the roots in which he grounds his sound are still the same. From his most recent work to his first collaborations with Miyazaki, there is always something in his music that screams “Hisaishi!” But what is it about his music that is so recognizable?

III.

The “Signature”

Like most composers, Hisaishi has a clearly recognizable style, whether his scores are for Yakuza gangster films or animated fantasies. His melodies and chord progressions take similar turns, and sometimes almost identical turns. This borrowing of melodies and musical tags happens all the way from his Miyazaki collaboration
Laputa in 1996, through his other Miyazaki collaboration in 2004, Howl’s Moving Castle.

There are multiple “Hisaishi Signatures” that render his film scores recognizable. One is a group of rolled chords in the upper range of the piano that have a tonally ambiguous feeling. This is featured in his films Spirited Away, Laputa, and Brother. These arpeggiated chords often contain stacked fourths like in his “Signature” in Spirited Away, and this use of fourths is also common in other aspects of his orchestration. In Spirited Away, he begins the “Signature” with a major seventh chord with an added ninth specifically voiced with the seventh on top. This is almost identical to the “Signature” in Laputa, where he uses the same chord voicing except changes the seventh on top to an octave. After this progression, the two “Signatures” differ slightly; Spirited Away’s “Signature” becomes much more tonally ambiguous, while Laputa’s “Signature” dissolves into a Baroque-style polyphony in the wind section. The “Signature” also appears in Kitano’s film Brother at one hour, twenty-seven minutes into the film. These mysterious chords work effectively in this scene because prior to this scene, everybody thought that their friend Aniki was killed by a car bomb, but he was actually sitting behind them. The music highlights their surprise, as if he magically appeared. The magical quality of this “Signature” also works in Spirited Away and Laputa, which both contain supernatural themes, but on the whole functions mainly as a tag, or a name written in the corner of a painting. It adds very little to what is on screen in the film, and is not necessarily related to the rest of the score, thematically or harmonically.
While Hisaishi has a catalog of beautiful melodies, some of them are very similar. This is because he reuses a simple “Signature” chord progression, or variations of it. The general, simplified progression is this: vi, V, IV, I6, (ii, IV, V). The best-known example of this progression is in Spirited Away, during the track “One Summer’s Day,” section C on the OST. This will be discussed later in Chapter four. He uses it in his other scores, such as in the main theme of Laputa. This progression can also be found in “Mei Ga Inai” from the OST of My Neighbor Totoro, “Ashitaka and San” from the OST of Princess Mononoke, “Mother’s Love” from the OST of Ponyo, and “Summer” from the OST of Kikujiro. This descending chord progression is always coupled with a melody that follows a descending arc, and this melody is usually similar as well. The melody in “Summer” during the second motif is almost identical to the melody in “One Summer’s Day” when the title displays, except it is more fragmented and simpler, as it omits some of the notes from the former melody.

Although he has mastered a graceful form of film scoring, his “Signature” might be seen as inflexibility. Director Takeshi Kitano stated in an interview that “Mister Hisaishi as a composer is not very flexible, so I decided to use someone else.” Kitano was referring to his film Zatoichi that was released in 2003. For an unknown reason, he and Hisaishi parted ways on Zatoichi and have not worked together since.

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11 The parenthesized section is where all the scores differentiate by changing the progression slightly, though the endings of the progression are often merely reharmonizations of the same thing.
Hisaishi has enough diversity in melodies to counter any negative accusations, but he uses this “Signature” progression and melody enough times that it sticks out like the beginning of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. One common characteristic between all the films that use this progression is a youthful protagonist; perhaps Hisaishi links this progression to the naïve wonder of youth, or child-like emotions. However, there are many other films that he has scored where the protagonist is young and do not feature this “Signature” progression. It is unlikely that he would give a progression meaning and not be consistent with this meaning. Whatever the case, it has become a “Hisaishi Signature” because of its repetitive use.

How does this reflect on Hisaishi? For some reason he is rarely criticized, even though his films often revert back to older similar material. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, but other composers who repeat themselves are often criticized by the public for their scores having similar traits. Hans Zimmer, while a respected film composer, is often attacked by critics for creating scores with similar musical characteristics. There are uncanny similarities between Zimmer’s Gladiator score and his Pirates of the Caribbean score that made many well-versed film music critics cringe when they heard the two back to back. Whether it be a difference in culture between American and Japanese audiences, the endearing quality of the melodies Hisaishi reuses, or perhaps the kind of films he scores, Hisaishi eludes the spotlight of such critical discussions surrounding his musical integrity.
IV.

*Spirited Away: A Thematic Analysis*

*Spirited Away* is one of Hayao Miyazaki’s most successful films, monetarily as well as critically. It was the first and only Japanese animation film to win the Academy Award for “Best Animated Feature Film” in 2002. The universal themes that resonate throughout the movie allow Joe Hisaishi to paint a palette of vibrant motifs in the score, covering emotions like love, loneliness, youth and acceptance. Hisaishi once said, “The Hollywood style of using music to introduce characters and explain what’s on screen is a method that I don’t normally use in Japan.” In this score he does not often put music to characters; sometimes he does, but for the most part the music expresses a certain emotion. It often happens that characters have reoccurring emotions. This style of scoring seems to give Hisaishi a greater sense of freedom when scoring his films, for he is not tied down by what is happening on screen.

The plot and feel of *Spirited Away* are unique and allow endless possibilities for the film score. In this film, Chihiro, the daughter, and her family, are moving to a new home when they become lost and end up at an abandoned theme park, which is actually a Japanese bathhouse for spirits. When her parents unwittingly eat the food

of the spirits, they turn into pigs and Chihiro becomes “spirited away” as she enters the Spirit world. She must then survive by working in the spirit bathhouse, where she meets an array of dazzling characters who help her in her journey to conquer her fears and return to the human world.

Hisaishi begins the score with one of his “Signatures,” the major seventh chord with an added ninth specifically voiced with the seventh on top. This seems to function as a tag in the Adventure theme (“One Summer’s Day” on the soundtrack); when the “Signature” is heard, the Adventure theme follows. Hisaishi writes the Adventure theme in the score before the family can get to their new house to start their new adventure (they never get there in the film). This score contrasts with the majority of Hollywood film scores that reflect the actions currently happening on the screen. In Spirited Away, Hisaishi brings in the Adventure theme not when the adventure actually begins, but when the realization of a new adventure occurs and the theme reflects a psychological state. Many Hollywood scores explain what is currently happening on the screen rather than foreshadow events in the minds of the characters. Often times in Hollywood movies the composer foreshadows by bringing in a future theme on a certain visual cue, but there are no visual cues in this scene for Hisaishi to utilize, requiring some expression of the characters’ state of mind.

At other times, it seems that Hisaishi skips visual cues when he scores films, probably to keep a sense of continuity of the piece within the score so it retains a structure of its own, even without the film. The general structure of the Adventure theme is A A’ B C C’ followed by a D section that changes every time the theme reoccurs.
The Adventure theme opens the film, when Chihiro and her family are driving to their new home. The theme evokes all the sensations involved with a significant change in one’s life, such as uncertainty. After the “Signature,” ominous atmospheric synthesizers softly underscore the action, and this begins the section A. This section portraits Chihiro’s uncertainty as she lies in the back of the car looking out the window clutching a bouquet of flowers she received as a goodbye present.

Joe Hisaishi adds to his distinctive sound with his use of intervals stacked in fourths in chords, which are mostly used in Spirited Away. This is how he voices the chords in the atmospheric synthesizers that are tonally ambiguous. In the four chords that make up the “Signature” in Spirited Away, the lowest note moves down in a scale with no sense of key while the upper three notes are in stacked fourths, further confusing the tonality. The freedom of tonality allows the melody to meander mysteriously, until the phrase repeats with the chords in the strings that change to fit the melody in a IV-V-I-vi progression, which is tonally resolving for the listener.

The piano melody takes full form in section B, and the windows of the car open. The hopeful melody washes over Chihiro, matching the animation of the wind blowing through her hair. The piano melody is played in octaves, which reinforces the promising sentiment it projects.

Section C, the most memorable and heart wrenching melody in the Adventure theme, happens when the full title is displayed, in Japanese, Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi, translated as Sen and Chihiro’s Spirited Away (In the United States the film is simply named Spirited Away.) This section truly brings out the feelings of
solitude and nostalgia that one feels when undertaking a new adventure, and recurs later on in the film.

At the end of the Adventure theme, Chihiro’s dad decides to take a shortcut through the woods. Their car ride becomes faster and bumpier and the music mimics this quality with variations on the melody in section A that plays over the atmospheric synthesizers that follows the “Signature.” This is the D section of the Adventure theme. When transitioning to this section, the woodwinds come in with short rhythmic variations of the A section melody. This orchestration style is very pervasive in the Spirit world. The transition to D is scored over Chihiro looking at spirit shrines, and the orchestration hints of the Spirit world to the audience. When D begins, the melody is tossed around and echoed more in the woodwinds, brass, and percussion, creating a boisterous ending to the theme. The D section becomes more playful with the rhythms and tempos. The orchestration is similar to that of the Spirit world, and many of the themes involved in the Spirit world are associated with woodwinds and brass. Hisaishi’s foreshadow technique is fully at work in this scene.

The Adventure theme returns three more times during the film, whenever Chihiro faces a new challenge or change in her life. Every time Hisaishi brings back this theme, the orchestration is almost identical in the score and tempo, except for the D section. The second Adventure theme returns for the first time forty-eight and a half minutes into the film, when Chihiro finally realizes the inevitability of the change in her future. She must work in the bathhouse in order to escape the Spirit world. She had been hiding in the bathhouse earlier; Chihiro did not truly recognize her fate until the next morning when she meets up with Haku, a boy from the Spirit world whom
she befriended. He shows Chihiro her parents who were transformed into pigs, and helps her come to terms with the Spirit world as well as gives her advice on how to survive and escape. She must work in the bathhouse in order to escape the Spirit world. Other composers might have returned to the theme earlier, when she was hiding, but Hisaishi uses the theme to express the emotions of her fate-recognition, not physical cues.

After Haku gives her advice, fear overwhelms Chihiro and she begins to cry. The second Adventure theme is still playing at this point, and Chihiro’s crying cues section C. The melody works so well in this scene because its power evokes loneliness and deep nostalgia for her home. Whenever this melody occurs, there is some sort of dramatic context on the screen evoking similar emotions.

When the D section occurs, Chihiro runs back to the bathhouse from the pigpen and looks back to see Haku transformed into a dragon and flying off into the distance. Haku, who is actually a river spirit, has a theme associated with him, which is hinted at in this abridged D section. The D section also alludes to the theme associated with No Face, who follows Chihiro off screen. These two additional themes are only associated themes, not character themes; they both will be examined later on. Hisaishi uses modulations and chromatic chord progressions to link these associated themes in the D section. After the D section, there is a reprisal of the section C theme; Chihiro falls asleep in the boiler room, and the boiler man gently lays a blanket over her. This scene seems a bit unfitting for the film because it does not add anything to plot or Chihiro’s character and emotion, but it does show her

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15 The theme associated with No Face will be discussed later in the section.
relationship with the boiler man, who is the second being to show her kindness in the Spirit world. Miyazaki must have wanted to emphasize the boiler man’s kindhearted personality, and Hisaishi may have decided to use the melody from section C to accompany the solitude of Chihiro’s sleep. The melody does not finish because the scene changes quickly, which is part of the reason the scene seems awkward. However, the abruptness of the melody ending may be because when the boiler man gives her the blanket to comfort her, she no longer feels homesick, and there is no more need for the melody that resonates with such a sentiment.

The third time the Adventure theme returns is at one and a half hours into the film when Chihiro is about to visit Zeneba, the sister of Yubaba. While Yubaba is the witch who owns the bathhouse and holds Chihiro captive in the Spirit world, Zeneba is her twin sister who is much kinder to Chihiro, though she is feared by all the workers of the bathhouse. Chihiro needs to visit Zeneba because her friend Haku becomes ill from Zeneba’s spell; he had stolen something from Zeneba, and Chihiro needs to return it. While this altruistic act does not help her in her progress towards saving her parents and leaving the Spirit world, she feels it is her duty to save her friend and return what he took. This concept of friendship and love that Chihiro and Haku share throughout the film makes the use of this Adventure theme more powerful because it enhances the emotional impact of the music. The difference between the context of this recurrence of the Adventure theme and the previous ones is that Chihiro is no longer afraid. This evolution of the Adventure theme mirrors Chihiro’s journey in maturity when adapting and facing frightening opposition. The orchestration, while similar to the first Adventure theme, is slightly bolder because
the French horns take the melody in the B section instead of the piano. There is no D section this time; it is cut short by the action in the scene directly afterwards.

The Adventure theme returns one final time near the end of the film at one hour and fifty-eight minutes into the film. Chihiro is finally returning home after saving her parents and Haku is giving her directions on how to leave the Spirit world. Because she must leave Haku and the relationship that they fostered throughout the movie, it is truly a bittersweet ending. The emotions of the Adventure theme capture this chemistry between the two characters.

Not only does the music blend with the mood of Chihiro, this return of the Adventure theme is exceptionally well timed with the action on screen. The B section enters right when their hands part and they separate, providing hope that they may meet again. The return of section C may be the most powerful moment in the film because it is scored underneath her parents’ voices calling out for her. This is the final evolution of the Adventure theme; what began as a theme of solitude and isolation has become a theme of reunion and love. After staying in a new place for so long, foreign becomes familiar and returning home becomes an adventure, which happens when this theme is played for the fourth time around. While it is uncertain how long Chihiro has stayed in the Spirit world, the duration was long enough for her to make life-risking friendships. Now, she leaves the Spirit world unafraid and ready for the new home that Chihiro had felt unprepared for in the beginning. The Adventure theme embodies this progression of maturity.

Chihiro is never alone when the Adventure theme is present. In the first scene, she is with her parents, in the second Adventure theme she is with Haku, in the third
she is with the boiler man and in the fourth she is with Haku and her parents. While this nostalgic theme creates a sense of loneliness, Chihiro is in fact never alone, and is supported in her journey from beginning to end. She realizes this by the end, which allows the theme to evolve into one of reunion and love. This positive force that drives the film is present in all the characters as well as the score. No character in this film is evil because Miyazaki always gives them a sweet side. While Yubaba shows disdain for Chihiro, Yubaba shows kindness to the little girl, after Chihiro works hard in the bathhouse, Yubaba keeps her end of the deal in the end, and allows Chihiro to leave freely. This is reflected in the score because there are no truly sinister sounds in the score. What could be frightening sequences of animation become magical at the flick of Hisaishi’s hand.

No Face is a mysterious spirit who sneaks into the bathhouse who can create fake gold and has an appetite for both people and grotesquely large portions of food. He has a theme associated specifically with him. It evokes a sense of foreign culture, mystery, and otherworldliness, with a hint of intimidation. This is what No Face is to the Spirit bathhouse. While No Face eats people and becomes a hideous monster, he tries to befriend Chihiro throughout the movie and finally succeeds in the end. When she brushes off his attempts at friendship, No Face becomes angry, and this triggers him to become a monster and start eating people. His thematic material uses bursts of East Asian percussion and is sparsely orchestrated with melodic material in string pizzicatos and woodwind/string doublings. The theme is hinted at by percussive bursts starting seventeen minutes and fifty seconds into the film and reappears every time No Face has screen time for the first half of the movie. However, the theme does
not take full form until one hour and eight seconds into the film. At this point, No Face is at his largest form, literally, and so is the score. During this part of the score Chihiro and No Face confront each other, just after No Face has eaten the people and is emotionally volatile. Hisaishi reinforces the intimidation of the theme here with gongs and Taiko, as well as western brass instruments. The theme dies down while the two characters converse, and soon Chihiro finds herself being chased by No Face. During the chase, the tempo picks up and the percussion part of the theme turns into constant sixteenth notes. Eventually No Face gives up the chase, and Chihiro allows No Face to travel with her. It seems that when No Face has experienced the bathhouse and finally befriended Chihiro, he loses his theme. He is no longer intimidating or foreign, especially now that he is associated with Chihiro who is amiable with everyone in the bathhouse. This theme therefore is considered to be associated with the emotions surrounding No Face in the first half of the film, rather than being a character theme.

The harp-like instrument that plays the minimalist arpeggiation motif is associated with Haku, and functions as the Magic theme. It surrounds Haku because there is something magical about him that is not revealed until the end of the movie. It is hinted at near the beginning of the film when Chihiro and her parents are first walking into the abandoned theme park. They had just become lost driving to their new house; this happens at around five minutes and forty five seconds into the movie. There is a mystical vibe about the place that is not perceived by the parents, but Chihiro is able to feel the magic and is resistant. She wants to turn back, but her parents refuse and continue. The wind also pushes her towards the bathhouse; there is
great potential for this section to seem threatening, but instead Hisaishi’s instrumentation and chord choices prevent such an atmosphere and depict mystery.

The main Magic theme appears when Chihiro runs into Haku at the beginning of the film at eleven minutes and fifteen seconds. On the OST, this piece of music is titled “The Dragon Boy”, referring to Haku. In this theme, Hisaishi dances around a C minor arpeggio in the harp-like instrument (possibly harp and celesta doubled, or Koto), while another harp enters in a triplet pattern, creating a polyrhythm. This arpeggiation in the harp-like instrument in the upper register gives the theme its magical impression. The woodwinds take over this arpeggiating theme in staccato style when the action begins to reach a climax. To add to the drama, the brasses provide a C pedal tone for the woodwinds to flit over. As the music strengthens, Chihiro runs to try to escape the Spirit world before nighttime and the music intensifies with her alarm. However, the music does not capture the fear in her emotion, but the excitement. There is nothing fearful about the music, because not only does it serve as background to simulate Chihiro’s mindset; it also represents the awakening of the Spirit world. This explains the grandeur of the motifs within the theme.

The Magic theme is used in an interesting way at forty-seven minutes. When Chihiro sneaks out of the bathhouse to meet Haku, Haku’s Magic theme starts playing before he arrives; it’s as if Haku has a magical aura that precedes him, and Chihiro could sense his arrival before he physically was present.

Just like with the repetition of the Adventure theme, the main Magic theme returns again, almost identical to the first main Magic theme, at one hour, twelve
minutes and thirty seconds. The music begins when Chihiro notices Haku, who is flying over the water. Haku, who is in his flying dragon form, is being chased by paper birds. The music begins identically to the first Magic theme, and the section with the brass blaring the C pedal tone is synced with the cut where the camera focuses on the paper birds pursuing Haku. It is unclear before this scene what the paper birds are doing, but after being set to the menacing brass, it is clear that the paper birds are not friendly. Hisaishi scores this second recurrence of the main Magic theme to be less frightening than the first, reflecting Chihiro’s growth in maturity. She is not as afraid as she was before, and as a result, Hisaishi does not use the high register dissonance in the violins that he used in the first main theme.

The orchestration of the Magic theme follows Chihiro out of the Spirit world at the end of the film when she is reunited with her parents. As they walk out of the tunnel, it is as if the magic is still with Chihiro. The motif in the harp reverberates and sounds like drops of water falling from a ceiling in a cave; it works as diatonic sounds and blends with the noise of Chihiro and her family’s footsteps echoing in the tunnel.

The piece named “Reprise” on the Spirited Away OST is an anomaly in the style of thematic events that Hisaishi has slowly built up throughout the film. The piece works as a theme and variations on its own, and this theme in Reprise appears first near the end of the film at one hour, fifty minutes and twenty-five seconds into the film. How does this work into the rest of the score? It seems to function as the reward piece for all of Chihiro’s tireless struggling and adventuring. The piece Reprise has no dark undertones, but evokes only pure nostalgia and bliss. It could also
serve as a love theme for Haku and Chihiro, as they are reunited happily at the end and show each other how much they care for one another.

Why Hisaishi chose to use this theme without developing it in the way he did all the others could have something to do with the music that plays in the credits of Spirited Away. Youmi Kimura, a singer and songwriter who plays the lyre, sent a song she wrote named “Itsumo Nando Demo” (“Always With Me” in the English version) to director Miyazaki, who believed the song contained the same ideas and themes that Chihiro did.\(^\text{16}\) The DVD of Spirited Away even suggests that the film was made because of this song.\(^\text{17}\) There are strong resemblances between Hisaishi’s Reprise theme and Yumi Kimura’s song, and it is possible that the one directly inspired the other. If the melody of the Reprise theme is played over the chords in “Itsumo Nando Demo,” the melody works with the chords perfectly. There is always a chord tone in the melody on the downbeats of the chord changes. The basic chord progression of “Itsumo Nando Demo” is I, V6, vi, I6, IV, I6, ii, V and in the key of F major. If the melody of Itsumo Nando Demo were placed in the key of F major, the downbeat notes would be:

- F (the root of I)
- E (the third of V)
- D (the root of vi)
- C (the fifth of I6)
- F (the fifth of IV)
- C (the fifth of I6)

\(^{16}\) Miyazaki’s Spirited Away, Bonus Features: Nippon Television Special
\(^{17}\) Ibid., Bonus features: Nippon Television Special
Hisaishi could have written the piece with the same chord structure in mind, but he also could have tried to make it unique by creating a different melody based on the chord progression of “Itsumo Nando Demo” and then reharmonizing the song’s chords. Both pieces are also in 3/4 time signature, which would not be enough evidence to link the two if it weren’t for the glaring similarities in melody and chord structures. In the behind-the-scenes footage of the making of Spirited Away on the DVD release, there are clips of Miyazaki listening to Yumi Kimura’s piece as he animated the movie. It is possible that he asked Joe Hisaishi to include a piece in the score that feels like “Itsumo Nando Demo” and enunciates the same feelings without words.

The variations used in “Reprise” have orchestration styles that match the action and emotions on screen. The “Reprise” begins near the end when Chihiro and her friends are waiting at the house of Zeneba (Yubaba’s sister). Zeneba treats them like her grandchildren, and the comforting theme floats along as Chihiro anxiously worries about the fate of her friend Haku. The audience knows there is nothing to worry about because the melody reassures us. Sure enough, the theme ends and Chihiro opens the door to find Haku in perfect health. At this moment, the music modulates down a minor third to E major and the orchestration shifts from the melody in the woodwinds to a full string section in a low register for the first variation. The

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18 This is not in the triad of ii, but it is an extension that Hisaishi uses commonly.
melody is then repeated an octave higher with all the strings in unison together, save the double bass. The impact of the minor third modulation reinforces Chihiro’s disbelief and shock of Haku’s arrival because it is a chromatic modulation coupled with the shift in orchestration.

When Chihiro and Haku are about to fly back to the bathhouse from Zeneba’s swamp, the orchestra drops out, leaving only the piano. The solo piano plays the beginning of the theme briefly, and this abrupt change in orchestration makes the audience dive into Chihiro’s mind which is still lingering behind with Zeneba. This piano section acts as a fond memory, evoking the warmth of Zeneba’s home. Chihiro waves goodbye to Zeneba, and the two share a brief moment before the brass and timpani snap Chihiro back to the present action as Haku begins to fly off in dragon form with her on his back. The next variation of the theme playfully follows Haku’s snake-like flying animation with the melody in the brass. The woodwinds slither along in a scalar fashion dancing around the chords that the strings are plucking underneath everything. This works perfectly with the snake-style animation, and the music changes tone half way through the variation when Haku begins flying straighter, and the music becomes calmer.

There are multiple other themes in the film that are interspersed and connected with emotions and events. The Spirit theme, which is first heard thirteen minutes and eighteen seconds into the film, begins with a short introduction of East Asian instrumentation that sounds like Gamelan underneath a zither-like instrument playing staccato notes. There is also a disembodied female voice humming in the background to signify the imminent arrival of the spirits. This theme soon follows the first use of
the main Magic theme where the terrified Chihiro is desperately trying to escape before nightfall when the spirits come out. She ends up finding that the place where she entered the abandoned amusement park is now a body of water, over which a luxurious ship carrying customers of the bathhouse is approaching. The Spirit theme is structured in three sections: A, B and C. The A section begins when Chihiro first notices the ship approaching, and frantically attempts to wake up from a bad dream. Unfortunately she is not dreaming, nor does the music care that she is distressed, because the music saunters on in a relaxing yet syncopated rhythm. This is an excellent example of how Hisaishi turns potentially frightening moments to be magical and uplifting. Chihiro is terrified but the music allays any fears that the audience might share with her. The lower brass enter in the B section with a serene yet slightly ominous melody as scene changes to the ship getting closer. When the ship finally docks, the theme becomes instantly triumphant and celebratory in section C and some spirits arrive, floating towards the bathhouse in single file. In this grand section, the full brass doubles the zither-like instrument in its staccato melody, and the woodwinds create a counter melody that is much more legato and graceful. This countermelody imitates the gliding of the spirits through thin air. This theme is also located around the spirits as if it were diatonic music coming from the boat, and the music slowly fades out as Chihiro runs away in fear.

At thirty-one minutes and seventeen seconds into the film the Spirit theme returns. Chihiro has worked her way into getting a job at the bathhouse to avoid being turned into a pig like her parents; she is now assistant to Rin, a sarcastic and blunt worker who grows fond of Chihiro. The scene where the Spirit theme occurs for the
second time is of Chihiro experiencing the bathhouse for the first time. Rin is leading her to Yubaba, the ruler of the bathhouse, and on the way Chihiro sees all the different spirits coming and going in the bustling bathhouse. Hisaishi times the score so that sections B and C are synchronized with different shots that have a significant impact to Chihiro. The A section enters as they sneak into the elevator which takes them up from the boiler room to the main areas of the bathhouse. When they reach the top, the Radish spirit is waiting for the elevator. He is a massive spirit resembling a combination between a radish and a sumo wrestler. The B section of the Spirit theme is synchronized with Rin’s surprised yet contained reaction to the size of the Radish spirit. Chihiro has the same frightened emotion as she had earlier in the film when the B section of the first Spirit theme played. After the B section, section C enters when the camera pans down to close up and more detailed animations of the spirits bathing. These imaginative images are well suited with the exultant music, and when Chihiro looks down at the spirits, the music mixes her frightened emotions with marvel.

Section C of the Spirit theme reprises a third time at one hour, six minutes and ten seconds. Section C scores the scene where the bathhouse guests cheer on Chihiro and the staff members after they complete the momentous task of cleansing the Stink spirit, which is later revealed to be a River spirit who was grossly polluted. This is a turning point in the film for Chihiro, as well as an evolution in this theme. Initially, Chihiro is looked down upon as a human by her coworkers, but after her success with the Stink Spirit, she is praised. The Spirit theme now serves a different purpose; at first, the theme contrasted Chihiro’s emotions and focused on the spirits, but now it is
connected to Chihiro’s feelings of accomplishment and displays the spirits’ approval of her.

The Spirit theme returns one last time at the end of the film. Chihiro takes Yubaba’s final test to return home from the Spirit world, and she answers the trick question correctly. When Chihiro finalizes her answer, Yubaba’s contract that kept Chihiro in the Spirit world vanishes and section C of the Spirit theme is reprised for the last time. This is the final stage of evolution in the Spirit theme: ultimate approval and acceptance in the Spirit world. All the bathhouse employees and the spirits cheer for Chihiro as she runs away with Haku. This segues into the final Adventure theme, which leaves the audience heart warmed.

The scene where Chihiro rides the train from the bathhouse to Zeniba’s house may be the most interesting scene in the film. While the film up to this point has shown Chihiro rushing from event A to event B and so on, this scene is a three minute train ride with no dialogue – just music. The piece on the OST named “The Sixth Station” is heavily piano based with strings creating an atmospheric pad underneath the piano melody. This will be referred to as the Train theme.

A shortened version of the Train theme occurs at one hour, seven minutes and ten seconds into the film. Chihiro and Rin are relaxing on a deck of the bathhouse at night, eating dumplings and looking over the endless expanse of water that surrounds the bathhouse. A train stops at the bathhouse and continues into the beyond; Rin ponders the idea of leaving the bathhouse on the train forever. The music in this scene is based around Rin and Chihiro’s belief in a happy ending to their bathhouse routines, and the train theme represents endless opportunity. It acts as a combination
of serenity, distant hope, and expansiveness. The orchestration and arrangement are extremely sparse and the theme lacks a general structure. For these reasons, the music feels like a gaping panorama. There is so much room for addition to the theme, which creates the belief that there is hope on the train. However, the minor mode signifies that it is not in the near future for Rin.

When the main Train theme occurs at one hour, thirty-seven minutes and thirty-five seconds, Rin has just dropped off Chihiro at the train station and is returning to the bathhouse. It is Rin’s lifelong goal to get a ticket for the train in order to leave the life of a bathhouse servant, and it cannot be easy to see Chihiro come and go so quickly on what she has been working towards for so long. This sadness that Rin must feel is reflected in the Train theme. Since there is no dialogue, the music’s ability to match the expansiveness of the scenery is important in this scene. Miyazaki’s beautifully animated shots need music that can reflect the open scenery and the trepidation of a child riding a train for the first time. As previously stated, the theme is sparse and can incorporate the vast array of emotions.

**Conclusion**

The melodies and orchestrations emanating in Hisaishi’s music are as beautiful as the breathtaking landscapes drawn by Miyazaki, and as painful as the experiences that Kitano’s characters silently suffer. Hisaishi manages to bridge the gap between genres as well as maintain an aesthetic signature to his music. His evolution as a composer can be traced through his works, and while his newer works
achieve a greater sense of sophistication, his older scores are still revered internationally by children and adults alike. Although Hisaishi embraces the Hollywood system, he simultaneously pushes against it with radical concepts of focusing on emotion. His minimalist scores for his early Kitano music were a breath of fresh air; yet as he grows in fame and success, his scores are becoming more globally recognized, and as a result his style is slowly losing their idiosyncratic minimalism. This may also be because of his evolution in composition style, which steps away from the synthesizers that Hisaishi used as the main instruments for his repetitive minimalism.

It is an unfortunate that he and Kitano no longer collaborate after creating such a legacy together, but one can hope that this will be changed in the future. Hisaishi does more than score films; he paints pictures with melodies and lush orchestrations. At his live performances, images and clips from the films are sometimes projected on a screen as his musical themes for the films soar through the auditorium, which begs the question: Is his music accompanying the film, or is the film accompanying his music?
Bibliography


The “Elemental” Symphony (Symphony No. 1)

This “Elemental” Symphony took me approximately eight months to complete. It was an arduous process that helped me grow astronomically as a composer. I first decided I would undertake this feat at the end of my sophomore year, and planned my next couple of semesters accordingly. I invested my time in Professor Neely Bruce’s orchestration tutorial, as well as formed an independent tutorial in orchestration and symphonic form with Professor Yonatan Malin. Despite my efforts, I never truly felt ready to write a symphony, but I forced myself to start composing because I knew it was going to be a long process. I owe a great deal of thanks to my advisor and orchestration mentor Professor Neely Bruce for teaching me, because without him my score would probably be a glorious mess of muddy harmonies.

My inspiration for my symphony came from various sources in all different kinds of music. I wanted to blend western orchestration with East Asian influences, and oddly enough I found this sort of blend in the score of an animated television series. *Avatar: The Last Airbender* was a series on the children’s television network Nickelodeon about a world with four nations: Earth, Water, Wind, and Fire. These nations try to live in equilibrium as the Fire nation expands to gain global supremacy. The score for the television show combines Taiko drums and East Asian instruments with western orchestration, and this inspired the style of my piece as well as the instrumentation. I have also been enamored by the sound of the Taiko drums
ever since coming to Wesleyan University, and found this symphony the perfect forum to use them. The Miyazaki films also inspired the “Elemental” themes because the films always exalt nature. The melodies and harmonies that Hisaishi uses to accompany these images as well as his use of minimalism in his Kitano film scores inspired much of the melodic and harmonic style of my symphony and has very much become part of my overall composition style. Finally, I drew great amounts of inspiration from the many great composers of the Romantic era, twentieth and twenty-first century; Beethoven, Berlioz, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, Wagner, Phillip Glass, John Williams and Danny Elfman. The line between film scores and concert works have always been blurred to me, for I am a very visual composer and often attribute images to what I write and what I hear. This is why I decided to use nature as the fundamental theme of my symphony.

The “Elemental” Symphony is a four-movement odyssey through the elements that is my attempt to capture the beauty and power of nature. Nature is the ultimate equalizer, pure and untamable, and each movement represents a different aspect of it. Movements, in order, are titled “Earth,” “Water,” “Wind,” and “Fire.” Like Hisaishi, who embraced some aspects of traditional film scoring while rejecting some, I do the same with traditional symphonic composition. My first movement follows standard sonata form, while the rest of the movements have their own fluid structures that are loosely based on the theme and variation structure. Symphony No. 1 is the culmination of
knowledge from my four years of music study at Wesleyan University, and I intend to write more in the future.
Movement 1 - Earth

Rob Rusli

Andante Cantabile  \( \frac{\text{b}}{\text{q}} = 72 \)

Piccolo

2 Flutes

2 Oboes

English Horn

2 Clarinets in Bb

Bassoon

Horn in F 1, 2

Horn in F 3, 4

3 Trumpet in C

3 Trombone

Tuba

Timpani

Drum Set

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Contrabass

\( \text{mm} \)

©2009
Movement 1 - Earth
Movement 1 - Earth
Movement 1 - Earth

[Sheet music with various instruments listed, including Pic., Fl., Ob., E. Hn., Bb Cl., C Tpt., Timp., Hn. 1, Hn. 2, Tuba, 2 Flutes, English Horn, Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., Cb.]
Movement 1 - Earth
Movement 1 - Earth
Movement 1 - Earth
Movement 1 - Earth
Andante Cantabile \( \text{q} = 72 \)

\( \text{S} = \) 

\( \text{p} \)
Movement 1 - Earth

Cymbal Roll----------------------------------------
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 2 - Water
Movement 3 - Air
Movement 3 - Air
Movement 3 - Air
Movement 3 - Air
Movement 3 - Air
Movement 3 - Air
Movement 3 - Air
Movement 3 - Air
Movement 3 - Air
Movement 3 - Air

CONTINUE TO NEXT MOVEMENT!
Movement 4
Movement 4

Slightly faster
Movement 4

Bocelli

Fl.

Fl. 2

Ob.

B. Cl.

B. Cl. 2

Bsn.

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

B. Tpt.

Tbn.

Tuba

Timp.

D. S.

Hp.

Pno.

Vln. 1

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

rit.

Staccato

Presto
Movement 4
Movement 4
Movement 4
Movement 4

Fl.
Fl. 2
Ob.
B. Cl.
B. Cl. 2
Bsn.
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
B. Tpt.
Tbn.
Tuba
Timp.
D. S.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. 1
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Movement 4
Movement 4
### Movement 4

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**Instruments:**
- Picc.
- Fl.
- Fl. 2
- Ob.
- Bb-Cl.
- Bb-Cl. 2
- Ten.
- Tuba
- Timp.
- D. S.
- Hp.
- Pno.
- Vln. 1
- Vln. II
- Vla.
- Vc.
- Cb.