

A PERFORMANCE GUIDE AND THEORICAL STUDY OF KEIKO ABE'S *MARIMBA*

D'AMORE AND PRISM RHAPSODY FOR MARIMBA AND ORCHESTRA

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Keiko Abe's contributions to the contemporary marimba repertoire have been a milestone in the development of the marimba as a solo concert instrument. Besides the creation of a new repertoire through commissions and her own compositions, Abe's contributions to the marimba include the improvement of the sound quality of the marimba and the establishment of the five octave instrument as the standard concert marimba. During the last four decades, Abe's compositions have been performed and studied worldwide and become standard literature for the marimba. Abe has written more than sixty compositions for marimba, including concertos, duets and solo pieces.

The goal of this dissertation is to provide a comprehensive method for the performance and preparation of two major Keiko Abe's compositions, *Marimba d'Amore* composed by Abe in 1998 and *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra* composed in 1996. This dissertation will discuss theoretical as well as performance issues related to these two compositions. Each piece is discussed with regard to its distinctive compositional approach and inherent performances issues. In order to provide the reader an explanation of the compositional procedures used by Abe, specific directions for the performance and preparation of these two works are offered.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past sixty years the marimba has achieved recognition as a solo concert instrument. This has been possible through the contributions of many players and composers who have transformed the marimba from a folk instrument into a “serious” concert instrument. Among those who have made valuable contributions in this matter are; Clair Omar Musser, Paul Creston, Darius Milhaud, Robert Kurka, Vida Chenoweth, Keiko Abe, Minoru Miki, Leigh Howard Stevens and many others.

The development of the marimba has thus followed a trend similar to instruments like the guitar or the violoncello with the innovations prompted by virtuoso performers. For example, guitarist, Andres Segovia was one of the most important interpreters and innovators of his instrument. Likewise Pablo Casals in the case of the violoncello. For the marimba, Keiko Abe is, without a doubt, one of the most influential and important figures in the development of the marimba as a concert instrument. Her artistry and compositions have made a huge impact in the development and establishment of the marimba on the concert stage. Abe’s compositions have been performed and studied all over the world and have become standard literature for the marimba. Abe has written more than sixty compositions for marimba, including concertos, duets and solo pieces.

This thesis will focus on theoretical and performance issues related to Keiko Abe’s compositions as well as historical aspects of her musical career. I have chosen two major marimba works by Abe that represent her artistry, *Marimba d’Amore* for marimba solo and *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra*. I will be analyzing and discussing compositional devices such as Abe’s use of folksongs, harmony, form, improvisation, the use of extended

techniques and performance practice issues in these two compositions.

Rationale for the Study

Despite the popularity and critical acclaim of Keiko Abe's music and the impact of her compositions and artistry, very little is written in a dissertation format about Abe's music. Rebecca Kite's book entitled *Keiko Abe: A Virtuosic Life*, published in 2007 by GP Percussion, concentrates mainly on her biography, historical information about Abe's musical career and the history of the marimba. In contrast this dissertation will provide a complete and comprehensive analysis of two of Abe's compositions, *Marimba d'Amore* and *Prism Rhapsody*. Also I will briefly discuss her contributions in the development of the marimba as a concert instrument, and her contributions in improving the quality of the instrument.

Additionally a comprehensive study guide will be provided for percussion students, teachers, and performers with specific and detailed suggestions for the study and performance preparation of these two pieces. The marimbist will gain insight into the phrasing, interpretation, sticking, selection of mallets, techniques, and preparation guidelines that do not appear in the score of these two major pieces.

CHAPTER II

KEIKO ABE'S BIOGRAPHY

Keiko Abe was born in Tokyo on April 18, 1937. After studying xylophone with Eiichi Asabuki (1950–59), she earned two degrees from Tokyo Gakugei University, studying composition with Shosuke Arita and Toshio Kashiwagi as well as percussion with Yukio Imamura and Yusuke Oyake. Around this time (1959) Abe organized the Xebec Trio, which was commercially very successful with the playing of light classical and popular music. Despite the great success of this group, in 1966 she disbanded the trio due to her interest in playing contemporary “serious” compositions for marimba. “I was not satisfied with this kind of music (pop music),” she explained. “I wanted to perform more serious work, and that’s why I started commissioning composers to write marimba pieces.”¹

While playing with the Xebec Trio, Abe joined the Tokyo Marimba Group in 1962. At her urging, the group began performing works by contemporary classical composers such as Akira Miyoshi, Toshimitsu Tanaka and Masanobu Higure. The resulting music contributed to an expansion of the instrument's sparse repertoire. Some of the works commissioned by the Tokyo Marimba Group are; *Suite for Marimba: Conversation* by Akira Miyoshi, *Dansho for Marimba* by Toshimitsu Tanaka, *Three Short Pieces for Marimba* by Haruna Miyake and *Torse III* by Akira Miyoshi.

Abe performed a series of concerts in 1968, 1969 and 1971 entitled, Keiko Abe – An Evening of Marimba: In Search of Original Works for Marimba with the intention of creating a new repertoire for the marimba. “The stated purpose of these programs was to introduce the

¹ Kite, Rebecca, *Keiko Abe Virtuoso Life*. p.42.

latest creative works of ardent composers for the marimba.”² Reflecting on the first concert, Abe observed, “The concert had a strong impact on the field of music, changing ideas about and appreciation for the marimba... it was finally recognized as an instrument for classical music.”³ Through the development of new technical skills and by expanding the repertoire with over 70 commissions and more than 60 original compositions, she has contributed significantly to the status of marimba music. For her achievements she was honored by induction into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame in 1993.⁴

Abe’s Career as a Marimba Soloist

In October 4, 1968, Keiko Abe made her debut as a marimba soloist in the Iino Hall in Tokyo Japan. This event changed not only Abe’s life but the history of the marimba in many aspects. For this concert Abe commissioned four marimba pieces, of which two have become standard pieces in the marimba repertoire: *Time for Marimba* by Minoru Miki and *Divertimento for Marimba and Alto Saxophone* by Akira Yuyama. Because of the great success of that concert, Keiko decided to do two more concerts devoted to new music for marimba. Other pieces commissioned by Abe for these two concerts were: *Concerto pour Marimba et Ensemble a Cordes* by Akira Miyoshi, *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra* by Minoru Miki, and *Mirage* by Yasuo Sueyoshi.

As a composer Abe has written more than sixty compositions for marimba. Her compositions have become the most frequently performed marimba pieces for entrance auditions, concerto competitions, recitals, courses of studies at colleges/universities and

² Kathleen Kastner “The Marimba in Japan” *Percussive Notes*, (February 1995) p. 72.

³ Keiko Abe, “The History and Future of the Marimba in Japan,” *Percussive Notes*, (January 1984), Vol. 22 no. 2, p. 42.

⁴ Keiko Abe is the first woman ever to be inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame.

recordings worldwide. Some of her best known compositions are: *The Dream of Cherry Blossoms*, *Michi*, *Variations on Japanese Children Songs*, *Wind in the Bamboo Grove*, and *Prism*.

Abe's Contribution to the Marimba

After her debut recital in 1968, Keiko felt that she needed a better instrument in order to obtain stronger intonation and sound projection.⁵ The Japanese instrument maker, Yamaha, adopted her ideas and decided to develop a new model under Abe's instructions. In 1971, the company finished a four-octave marimba that Abe used in performance, and throughout the 1970s the company worked with her to refine her vision of what the instrument should be. Many of her ideas were incorporated into the newer instruments, including a wider range, adjustable resonators, and an improvement in projection. By 1973 Yamaha developed a new marimba model with several features including an extension in the lower register down to a low F. In a short article that was included in a double-LP album titled *Keiko Abe Reveals the Essence of the Marimba* (Denon GL-7001/2, 1976), Yamaha described some of the features of the newly designed marimba YM 5000:

1. Deep, full-bodied resonance in the lower registers.
2. Clear, bright, penetrating tones in the middle and high registers.
3. Volume and carrying power sufficient to fill the largest auditorium.
4. Appearance befitting the concept of grand marimba music, unique, impressive dignity.⁶

⁵ In her 1968 debut recital Keiko used a Musser four octave marimba.

⁶ Rebecca Kite, "Keiko Abe's Quest Developing the Five-Octave Marimba" *Percussive Notes* Vol. 36 no.2 (April 1998) p.52-4.

Through the late 1970's and early 1980's Keiko continued working with Yamaha in improving the quality of the instrument. Finally in 1984, Abe's ideas resulted in the building of a five-octave marimba, which now has become the standard range. Abe says: "This day, I believe that if marimbists want to have serious concert activity, they must use a five-octave marimba. For a range lower than five octaves, very special bass mallets are necessary. For a higher range, a xylophone is already available. I believe for the near future that five octaves will be the standard marimba range."⁷

⁷ Rebecca Kite, "Keiko Abe's Quest Developing the Five-Octave Marimba" *Percussive Notes* Vol. 36 no.2 (April 1998) p.52-4.

CHAPTER III

INFLUENCES AND MUSICAL LANGUAGE

Keiko Abe's influence as a musician comes from her teachers, specially her composition teachers Shosuke Ariga, Toshio Kashiwagi and especially Masako Sasaya. With Sasaya, Abe studied piano, composition and music theory. Sasaya assignments included a synthesis analysis of jazz piano and harpsichord skills, part of which involved realizing figured bass to create accompaniments. Sasaya assigned popular music for which Abe would improvise an accompaniment, having only a written melody and chord symbols for the harmony to work with.⁸ With Sasaya, Keiko became familiar with the compositional styles of Beethoven and Brahms by doing compositional analysis of their work.

As a performer, Abe was influenced by various great virtuosos and innovative players. One of the biggest influences in her career was the world famous flutist Marcel Moyse. Abe learned how to phrase melodies by copying Moyse's breathing and phrasing in a recording of *Hungarian Pastorale*.⁹ Other musicians who have influenced Abe through her musical career are the cellist Pablo Casals, pianist Walter Gieseking, violinist David Oistrakh, pianist Arthur Rubinstein, singer Marian Anderson, and violinist Isaac Stern.

Abe's Compositional Style

Keiko Abe's compositions are characterized by the use of Japanese folksongs, improvisation and a wide variety of extended techniques. Technically challenging yet idiomatic for the marimba, her compositions employ two, four and sometimes six-mallet techniques. The majority of her works combine a melodic line with an ostinato bass line pattern. As a composer,

⁸ Kite, Rebecca, *Keiko Abe Virtuoso Life*. pp 22.

⁹ Ibid.

Keiko has been able to develop a unique musical language. Several characteristics contribute to this fact. Among them are; improvisation, use of certain rhythmic and melodic patterns, harmony/chord voicing, use of folk Japanese melodies and extended techniques.

One of the most important features of Abe's music is improvisation. As mentioned before, since her formative years, Abe had been exposed to this skill and was able to master it. In fact, most of her compositions emerge from improvisations that she later notates. As it happens with many composers, Abe developed a rhythmic and melodic "vocabulary" that she uses frequently in her compositions. One of the most common features of Abe's compositions is the use of bass ostinatos or bass line accompaniment to support the melodic line. When Abe was a student of Sasaya's, she studied bass accompaniment from harpsichord. The following examples show some of the most common bass lines patterns used by Abe in her pieces.

Example 1. *Variation on Japanese Children Songs* - Notice the use of a bass line ostinato. The melody is presented over this pattern (m.5-10).

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Variation on Japanese Children Songs". The score is written for piano and features a prominent bass line ostinato pattern. The tempo is marked "Grave" with a metronome setting of 126. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the bass line starting with a forte (ff) dynamic. The second system shows the melody entering with a piano (pp) dynamic, while the bass line continues with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The third system shows the melody continuing with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic, while the bass line continues with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The bass line consists of a repeating eighth-note pattern in the left hand, while the right hand plays a melodic line with various dynamics and articulations.

Example 2. *Michi* - Another example of an ostinato bass line as accompaniment for the melodic lines.



Another important feature of Abe's compositional style is the use of dissonance (mostly the use of melodic and harmonic intervals of minor seconds and augmented fourths) in her pieces. The following examples, shows a characteristic dissonant melodic pattern used by Abe. Notice in the bass line (Ex. 3) the uses of the augmented fourth intervals (Db-G). Also notice the dissonance (aug. 4th, major & minor 2nd) created by the A-A and E in the upper voice against the Eb-G and Eb in the lower voice in the first measure.

Example 3 - *Wind in the Bamboo Grove*



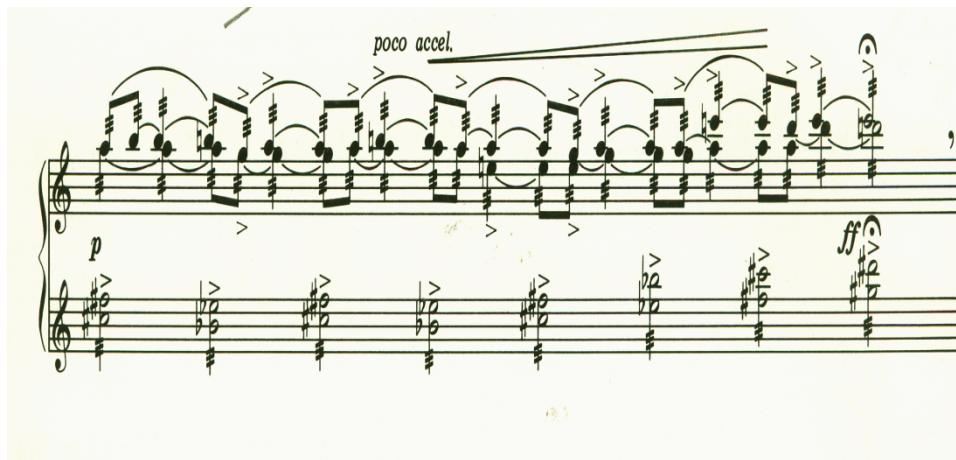
Also in Ex. 4 notice the use of minor second intervals: A against A# and E against D#. Also notice the ostinato bass line pattern (C#-A#-D#-A#) used by Abe in this section.

Example 4 - *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra*



The use of different types of chord voicings is another feature of Abe's compositional style. Some of the most common features of Abe's chord voicing are uses of quartal and quintal harmonies, and combinations of close position voicing with open position voicing. The following example illustrates how Abe combines close position voicing in the top line with open position (4th – 5th) voicing in the lower register.

Example 5- *Wind in the Bamboo Grove*



Like all the great players and composers, Keiko Abe always searches for new techniques to express her musical ideas. In that order, Abe created a series of concepts of extended techniques that influenced many other composers and players. Some of the extended techniques used by Abe in her compositions are: use of the wooden shafts of the mallets to strike the edges of the marimba bars, the creation of two-tone mallets that allowed her to play wide dynamics ranges, use of dead strokes and use of vocal effects. The following examples show some of these techniques.

Example 6 - *Dream of Cherry Blossoms* - Notice the indication of dead strokes(x) for the mallets to stay on the bars and dampen the sound.

Adagio ♩ = 58
X = dämpfen (dead Stroke)

Example 7 - *Marimba d'Amore*- Notice the vocal sound effects (Ha!)

Example 8 - *Wind in the Bamboo Grove*- Example of use of wooden shafts of the mallets (x).

CHAPTER IV

MARIMBA D'AMORE

Many of Keiko Abe's compositions utilize borrowed Japanese folksongs. *Marimba d'Amore* was written in 1998 and is based on the classic, eighteenth century song, *Plaisir d'Amour* by Jean Paul Martini (1741-1816). Example 9 shows the main theme as composed by Martini and Fig. 10 shows the lyrics as composed by J. P. Claris de Florian.

Example 9 - *Plaisir d'amour* Main Theme by Martini



Figure 1- *Plaisir d'amour* Lyrics
The Pleasures of Love
Poem by Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian (1755-1794)

Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.
J'al tout quitte pour l'ingrate Sylvie,
Elle me quitte et prend un autre amant.
Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

*The pleasures of love lasts but a moment
The sorrow of love lasts all life through.
I have given up everything for the
ungrateful Sylvia,
She left me and took another lover.
The pleasure of love lasts but a moment,
The sorrow of love lasts all life through.*

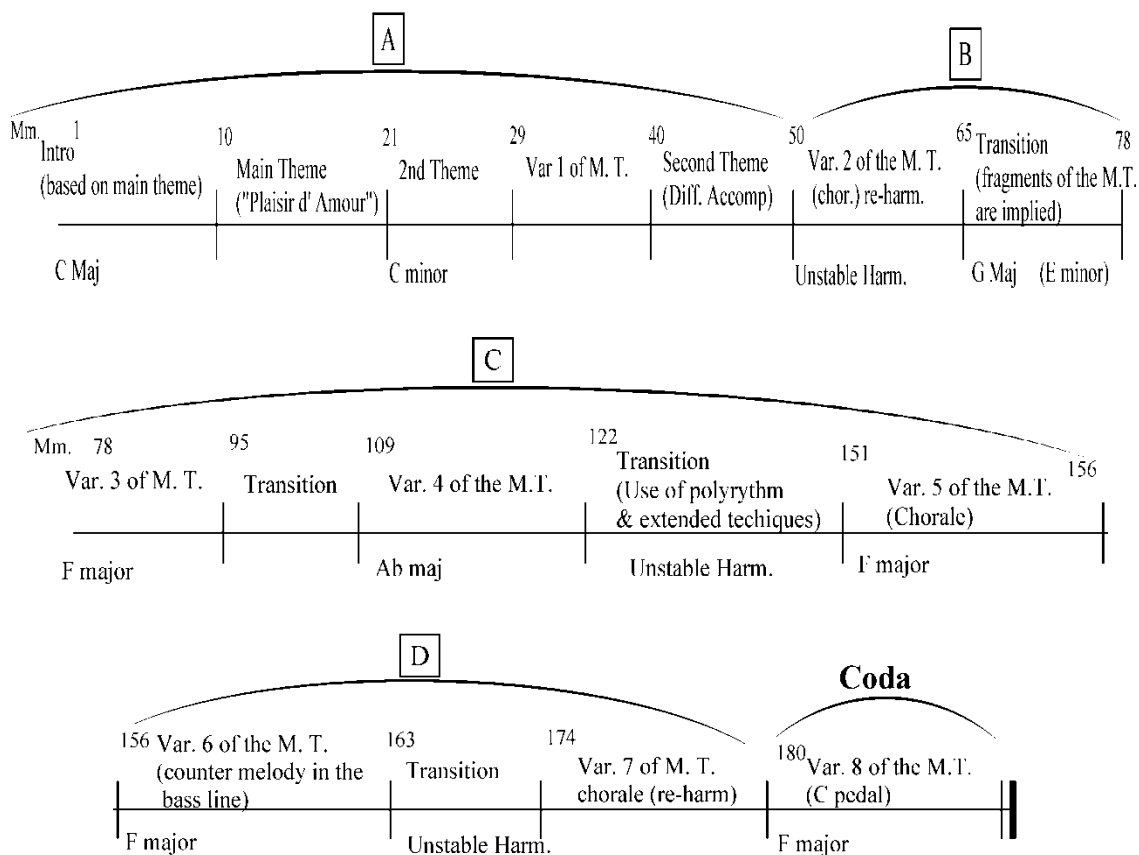
Tant que cette eau coulera doucement
Vers ce ruisseau qui borde la prairie,
Je t'aimeral, me repetait Sylvie.
L'eau coule encor, elle a change pourtant.
Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

*As long as this water runs gently
Towards the brook that borders the meadow
I shall love you, Sylvia told me.
The stream still flows, but she has changed.
The pleasure of love lasts but a moment,
The sorrow of love lasts all life through.*

Analysis of *Marimba d'Amore*

The overall form of *Marimba d'Amore* is a theme with variations. Fig. 2 outlines the form of *Marimba d'Amore* with the respective tonal areas, main themes and variations.

Figure 2- Overall Form of *Marimba d'Amore*



The main theme is presented in various keys. Augmented and diminished chords are frequently used to create tension and contrast between sections. These chords are also used to interrupt the main theme and introduce new melodic ideas. Abe uses quartal and tertian harmonies as well as cluster chords (see Ex. 12, p. 16). Abe also uses meter changes and polyrhythm throughout the piece.

Marimba d'Amore begins with a nine measure introduction based on the main theme by Martini. The first statement of the main theme appears in measure 10 in the key of C major (Ex. 10). Abe uses a (G) pedal tone in the bass to accompany the main theme. A four note grace pattern is used in the bass line to give some contrast and tension to the main theme. Abe also uses a 12/8 meter instead of Martini's original 3/4 meter.

Example 10 - Main Theme

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A second melodic idea is introduced in measures 21-31 in the parallel key of C minor with a new 7/16 meter (Ex. 11). This second melody derives from the original melody but Abe has added harmonic and rhythmic adjustments to make it contrast with the main theme. This second theme is followed by a variation of the main theme in measure 29. On measure 40 the second melody is presented with a different accompaniment. This second melodic idea is never presented again or developed in the piece. This leads to section B.

Example 11 - Second Theme and Variation 1

In section B (*dolce espressivo*, m.50), the first half of the main theme is presented. The harmony is different for this variation and is in chorale style (Example 12). There is a descending chromatic bass line mm.50-54 (B-Bb-A-Ab-G-Gb) of B Section. In this section, there is an example of Abe's use of quartal harmonies (Bb-Eb & G-C first chord in m.50) diminished chords (B half diminished-second chord in measure 50) and cluster chord on m. 54 (G-G#-A-B).¹⁰ Measure 65 to 77 are a transition to section C. This transition is in the new tonality of G major. Fragments of the main theme are implied in the bass line.

¹⁰ A cluster chord is a chord made of minor second intervals.

Example 12 – *Marimba d'Amore* Variation 2 (chorale) with New Harmonies

musical score for Example 12, *Marimba d'Amore* Variation 2 (chorale) with New Harmonies. The score is in 8/8 time and features a piano accompaniment. It includes markings such as "molto rit.", "Dolce = ca. 88", "espressivo", "ppp", "mp", "pp", "Cluster Chord", and "accel.". Measure numbers 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, and 55 are circled. A box labeled "B" is above measure 50.

In the C section, a third variation of the main theme is presented in mm. 78-94 (Ex 13). Only the first half of the main theme is used and it is presented in C major. The accompaniment is dissonant in relationship with the tonal melody. Once again, Abe uses a series of dissonance chords in mm. 83 and 86 to interrupt the main theme and create harmonic and rhythmic tension.

Example 13 - *Marimba d'Amore*, Variation 3 – mm. 79-82

musical score for Example 13, *Marimba d'Amore*, Variation 3 – mm. 79-82. The score is in 8/8 time and features a piano accompaniment. It includes markings such as "Risolutezza", "ff", "Section C", and "ca. 108". Measure numbers 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, and 86 are circled.

The dissonances created in section C are characteristic of Keiko's music as we previously discussed in chapter III. Measures 95-108 are a transitional section that connects to variation 4. Variation 4 is presented in the key of Ab major in mm. 109-121 and only fragments the first half of the theme is used. In this case the theme is not as evident as in other variations in this piece due to the rhythmic structure used by Abe.

Variation number five is in the key of F major. It occurs at measures 150-154, with a tempo change and *Grazioso* expression mark (Ex. 14). This variation is in a three voice chorale texture and only the first half of the main theme is presented. Abe ends the phrase using a dissonance chord, creating tension and avoiding the expected harmonic resolution to F major.

Example 14- *Marimba d'Amore*, Variation 5 - F major



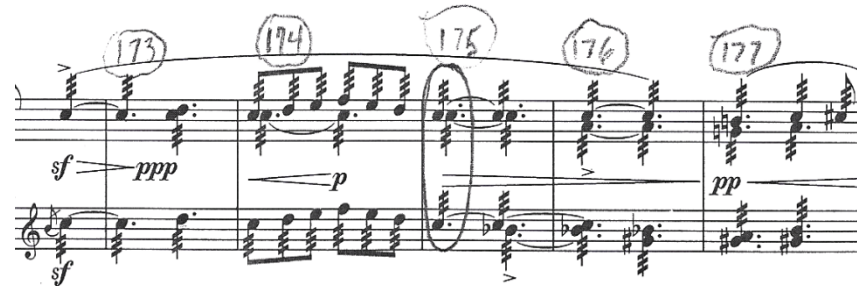
Section D begins with variation 6 in measures 156 to 172 in F major (Ex. 15). This time the melody is presented in the right hand while the left hand plays a counter melody in the bass. Simultaneously, the main theme *Placir d'Amour* is also presented in the bass and is emphasized with the *tenuto* mark.

Example 15 – *Marimba d'Amore*, Variation 6 mm. 156-172



Variation 7 is presented in measures 173 to 179. This variation is very similar to variation 2. It is a four voice *chorale*, and similar to variation 2 Abe uses a very dissonant harmonic texture, based on cluster chords (see Ex. 16).

Example 16 – *Marimba d'Amore* Variation 7 - Chorale



Finally the piece ends with a coda in F major which begins in m. 189 to the end of the piece. Once again another variation of the main theme is presented. Keiko uses the single pitch C in octave displacement (Ex 17) to create a low C pedal note. In measures 189-198 the first part of the main theme is restated. From measure 199 to the end fragments of the second half of the main theme are implied in the bass line.

Example 17 – Coda- *Marimba d'Amore* Variation 8 in F with C Pedal



In conclusion *Marimba d'Amore* is one of the most important compositions by Keiko

Abe for solo marimba. We can appreciate her maturity and artistry in this piece. She attempted writing this piece in 1955 when she was 18 years old, but she decided to wait until she matured further as a musician and as human being. Without doubt, this piece proves her attaining the maturity and mastery she sought.

As a performer it is important to study and understand Abe's compositional style and be able to fully understand her compositional procedures (form, harmony, melodies etc.). By doing this type of analysis the performer will achieve a more mature and clear interpretation of this piece. Also being aware of the original melody and its lyrics will help the performer understand the passion and drama that surrounds this composition.

Performer's Study Guide for *Marimba d'Amore*

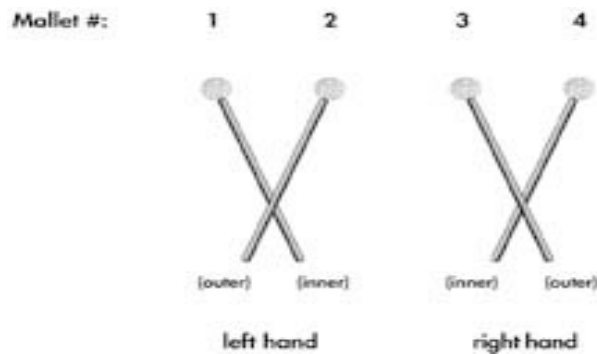
Introduction

This study guide examines the techniques used throughout Abe's *Marimba d'Amore*. Several excerpts have been chosen for one or more of the following reasons: technical difficulty, potential sticking problems, important primary themes, and the use of extended techniques. The musical excerpts are presented first, in order to provide readers and performers a general view and focus of the musical passage. These excerpts are followed by helpful suggestions for practicing the difficult sections, including instructional diagrams where necessary. The numbering system for the mallets is outlined in Fig. 3 and will be used throughout this paper.

One of the first things taken into consideration is the type of mallets to be used in the piece due to the contrasting dynamics changes, different tempo marks and the use of the entire range of the instrument. A combination of soft and medium hard mallets in the left hand and medium hard and hard mallets in the right hand will give the performer the appropriate sound of

the piece.¹¹

Figure 3- Numbering system for the mallets.



Performance Considerations

In order to achieve an informed interpretation, one of the first things the performer needs to understand is the genesis of this piece. The performer should be aware of the influence of Martini's song *Plaisir d'Amour* in Abe's composition. This awareness will be a major asset to the performer in the preparation of this piece. The Identification of *Plaisir d'Amour* as the main theme of the piece will help the performer with the phrasing, style, articulation and overall interpretation of the music.

For example the theme is partially presented first at the very beginning of the piece but highly ornamented and interrupted by a series of dissonant chords. Unless the performer is well familiarized with the original *Plaisir d'Amour* theme, it will be very difficult to identify it and as a consequence the phrasing and interpretation of this passage could be unclear or erroneous.

¹¹ Yamaha's Keiko Abe Signature Mallets; MKA09, MKA07, MKA06 and MKA05 or MKA09, MKA06, MKA05 and MKA05.

Example 18- *Marimba d'Amore* - Introduction

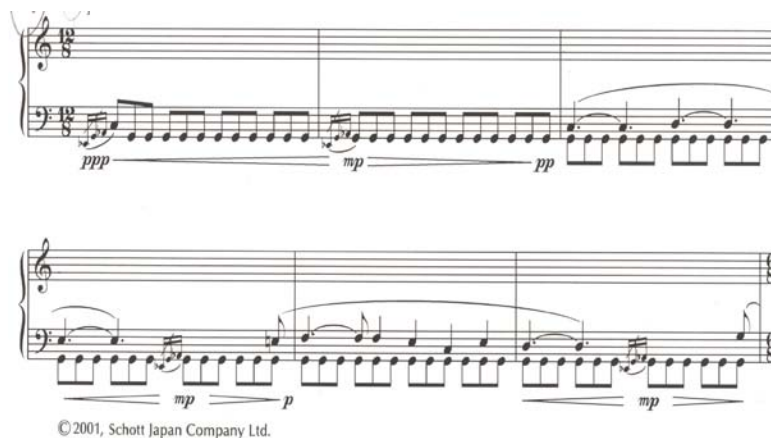
The introduction encompasses measure 1 to 9 (Ex-18). The first phrase of the main theme is presented in measures 1-7. Measures 8 and 9 include fragments of the second half of the main theme. In terms of the interpretation of this section the performer must identify the theme and give priority to it, since it is the most important melodic texture of this passage. For instance at mm. 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7, the melody is ornamented with a triple grace note appoggiatura. Here the appoggiatura is just an embellishment and it should be played softer than the melody note (C-D-E). An approach, to phrase it, is to make a little crescendo to the main note (ex.19). Also in order to get a clear articulation, the performer must use the sticking illustrated in Ex. 19.

Example 19- Correct Interpretation of Grace Notes and Correct Sticking

The chords in measure 3 and 6 are used to interrupt the theme and create tension and contrast. It is important to understand the function of these chords in order to play them with the correct interpretation. A full 'relaxed' stroke must be used here to obtain the *FF* dynamic required. At measures 8 and 9, the performer must pay close attention to the rhythm and accents to obtain the correct sound and phrasing. This passage should be played in an articulate manner, using a *staccato* stroke based on a wrist motion.

In the A section, the low G (pedal) should be played with the same mallet to get a consistent and articulate sound (ex.20). The last eighth note (G) in measure 11 should be played as a pick up to the melody. In the score, this note (G) is marked *pp* but it should be played *mf*. Notice that in Martini's composition (Ex. 9, page 10) the theme begins with a pick up note so one must play the last G in m.11 as the pick up note to m.12. The melody must be played legato (with a relaxed stroke) and it should be very expressive, almost *cantabile*.

Example 20 – *Marimba d'Amore* Section A- Main Theme



As we have previously outlined, one of the main characteristics of Abe's music is the use of ostinato rhythmic patterns (drum-like). For the performer these patterns present several performance issues. In the following example, the performer must play the melodic line with the right hand while playing an ostinato pattern in the left hand.

Example 21- Uses of Bass Ostinato Rhythmic Pattern



The performer must take into consideration the following things to achieve a clear interpretation of this passage. It is important to understand the rhythmic skeleton of the passage in order to phrase it correctly. Balance is another important factor because the performer must give emphasis to the melody line in the right hand over the left hand (ostinato) accompaniment. The constant interval shifts in the right hand is another technical challenge in this passage. This should be studied slowly and without the left hand accompaniment in order to gain more control and accuracy. This could be applied also to other similar passages such as mm. 40-43 and 78-89.

This piece presents several challenging passages such as mm 96–98 where A be uses quick double vertical strokes which require mallet control and dexterity (See Ex. 22). The biggest challenge here is accuracy, because of the tempo (quarter note = 100) and the rising line which implies quick body shifts. The performer must find a good body position to minimize feet movement to achieve more accuracy. Also achieving rhythmic clarity is another performance issue due to the rapid shift of registers. A practice exercise to help minimize difficulty in this passage is to realize the music in block chords instead of playing it as written (See Ex. 23).

Example 22- *Marimba d'Amore* Measures 96 – 98. Used of Double Vertical Strokes



Example 23- Block Chord Exercise based on mm. 96-98



This type of practice exercise could be applied also to other similar passages in the piece such as: m. 143, m m. 166-172 and m m. 203-204. The exercise must be practiced at a slow tempo first, to be able to work with body movement/posture, sound and accuracy.

Measures 78-84 are other examples of the use of rhythmic patterns in *Marimba d'Amore* which presents some performance practice problems (Ex. 24). This particular passage presents the problem of an uncomfortable hand position because both hands are playing in the same register, which by consequence create a potential hand/mallets collision problem.

Example 24- Correct Hand Position and Striking Area



Finding the correct hand posture will minimize the chances of having a collision of mallets and playing wrong notes. Also it will help the performer to achieve a better articulation and phrasing. In order to avoid hand or mallet conflicts, the left hand (F#-C#-Ab) should be played close to the center of the bar and the right hand (C-G-C) in the normal striking area as shown in Fig. 4. Also since this passage is written for the lower register of the instrument the performer must remember not to strike the notes in the center of the bar because doing so will result in undesired overtones and a dark, slapping sound. For this reason, lower notes should always be played slightly off-center.

Figure 4- Correct hand position and striking area.



Another important factor in this passage is phrasing. The performer must be aware that this passage is a variation of the main theme and therefore the melody line in the top voice (C-D-E) should be emphasized over the left hand ostinato (F#-C#-Ab). Also notice that Abe is using an unusual 6/8 meter subdivision by using groupings of three sixteenth notes (see Ex. 24). In order to achieve rhythmic clarity and to obtain the correct phrasing, the performer must make emphasis on each grouping by accentuating the first note of each group.

In *Marimba d'Amore*, there are several passages in this piece where Abe uses counterpoint. For example in mm.156-162 Abe presents a variation of the main theme in the right hand and a counter melody in the left hand. (See Ex. 25)

Example 25 – *Marimba d'Amore* – mm. 156-172



This passage presents several challenges for the performer in terms of phrasing and balance. Although the main theme is in the right hand, the left hand counter melody is also important and should be phrased in relationship to the top voice (like a call and response idea). The slow right hand melody must be legato and the left hand should be phrased using crescendos and decrescendos (like a cascade). Notice also that the main theme is in the bass line and it should be emphasized. As suggested by Abe, this passage should be played with expression and musicality. The descending bass line at the end of measures 157 and 159 are good places to breathe, and a slight *ritardando* emphasizes the bass line. Practicing each voice individually, will help the performer to understand how the two voices relate to each other and how they should be phrased. Measures 156-172 are a climax point in the piece and should be performed with intensity.

As we previously mentioned, another characteristic of Abe's composition style is the use of polyrhythm. This technique is used by Abe in *Marimba d'Amore*, in mm. 124-132. This passage presents several performance issues that must be carefully studied by the performer. (See Ex. 26)

Example 26- *Marimba d'Amore*, mm-124-132- Use of Polyrhythm

The musical score consists of four systems of two staves each. The first system shows a right hand with a complex polyrhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a left hand with a simpler pattern of eighth notes. Dynamics include *p*, *ppp*, and *ppp*. The second system continues the polyrhythmic patterns. The third system includes a tempo marking of 130 and a dynamic of *p*. The fourth system shows a change in dynamics to *mp* and *f*.

In this passage the performer must pay attention to the following things in order to play with rhythmic clarity and musicality: hand coordination, rhythmic clarity, articulation and dynamics. It must be understood that this passage is a transition and not an important theme or prominent section in the piece. In order to achieve rhythmic clarity, a *staccato* (wrist-based) stroke must be used throughout this section.¹² Notice that the left hand is notated in measure rhythm (sixteenth-notes), while the right hand is notated in non-measured notation. In order to

¹² The performer must remember not to strike the lower notes in the center of the bar because doing so will result in undesired overtones and a dark, slapping sound.

Contrary to other composers, Kikyo Abe does not provide sticking suggestions in her pieces. In *Marimba d'Amore*, one passage that presents sticking problems occurs at mm. 68-70. Due to the 8va change in the second group of triplets, the left hand (stick no. 2) has to cross over the right hand to play the high band g (Ex. 27). To avoid unnecessary body movement the performer must move only the upper body to make the necessary adjustment to reach the high note. Using the sticking notated in Fig. 2, the performer will obtain the correct sound and articulation of this passage.

1 3 2 3 2 3 4 3 2 3 4 3

8va

1 3 2 3 2 3 4 3 2 3 4 3

Example 28- *Marimba d'Amore* - Suggested Sticking for mm. 106

The image shows a musical score for 'The Swan' by Camille Saint-Saëns. It begins with a piano introduction in 4/4 time, marked 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The introduction consists of a descending scale in the right hand and a series of sixteenth-note chords in the left hand. The main melody is in 4/4 time, marked 'pp' (pianissimo). It features a descending scale in the right hand and a series of sixteenth-note chords in the left hand. The score is written on a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The score is for a piano and is part of a collection of piano pieces.

Use of Extended Techniques

The use of extended techniques is another important feature of this marimba solo. As a performer we must find the correct technical and musical approach to perform them as the composer has intended. Some of the extended techniques used by Abe in this piece are: vocal effects, the use of wood shaft of the mallets and dead strokes.

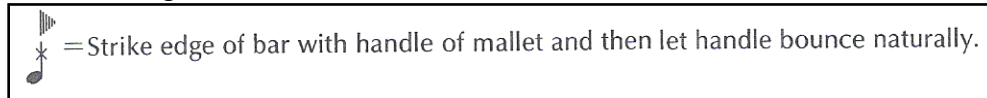
In this marimba solo there are several sections where Abe uses vocal effects to make the music more dramatic. This technique is used in m.98, m.102, mm.135-36 and m. 209. There are two syllables used by Abe as a vocal effect in this piece (Ha and U!). It is very important to find the correct pronunciation and articulation of those syllables in order to realize the desired effect by the composer. Ha, should have a very percussive sound. In other words, the performer must pronounce it with a clear articulation and accentuated (Há). The word, U!, has a similar effect but it should be longer and with a short glissando effect, (Uow!).

Another extended technique used by Abe in this piece is the use of the wooden shafts of the mallets to strike the edges of the marimba bars. This technique is used in mm.147-149. In order to create the desired effect by Abe in this passage the performer must find the correct stroke, striking area and body posture. The bars must be struck at the end letting the wooden shaft of the sticks bounce naturally. Notice that Abe uses a modern notation to indicate that the mallets should strike the bar several times (See Ex. 29 and Fig. 5).

Example 29 – Use of Wooden Shafts of the Mallets



Figure 5- Modern Notation to Indicate the Correct Stroke



In this section it is crucial to find the appropriate body position for playing at the edge of the bars. The key is to keep the spine as straight as possible throughout the whole passage. Begin by stepping and stretching the right leg while bending the left and putting most of the body's weight on the left leg. This posture will not only make the player more comfortable, but also lower the body slightly, which makes playing on the edge easier.

The use of dead strokes is another extended technique employed by Abe in *Marimba d'Amore* (Ex. 30 - the "x" designates the dead strokes). A dead stroke is accomplished by striking the bar and pressing the mallet into the bar at the same time to shorten the bar resonance. The angle between the mallets and the bars should be about 35 to 45 degrees in order to create the desired sound/effect of a dead stroke (Fig. 6).

Example 30- *Marimba d'Amore* - Dead Strokes - measures 146-149



Figure 6- The Angle between the Mallets and the Bars for the Dead Stroke



CHAPTER IV

PRISM RHAPSODY FOR MARIMBA AND ORCHESTRA

Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra is largely based on the original *Prism* - 1986 solo marimba version. *Prism* is a two-mallet marimba composition made up of a fleeting melody that showcases the performer's virtuosity. *Prism* was premiered in Poland by Abe in 1986 and according to Abe; she wanted to write a study which gave life to the instrument using only two mallets.¹³

This piece has several arrangements: for solo marimba and wind ensemble (*Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Wind Ensemble*) and also for two marimbas and wind ensemble (*Prism Rhapsody II for two Marimba and Wind Ensemble*); and also as a solo marimba duet *Prism for two marimbas*. Additionally there is another version for marimba solo and percussion ensemble entitled *Conversation in the Forest*. For the purpose of this paper I will be using the arrangement for Marimba and Orchestra, *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra* (Piano reduction) and also the original 1986 version of *Prism*.

***Prism* - 1986 Solo Marimba Version**

The original 1986 solo marimba version is approximately four minutes long. The piece is based on fast scalar and arpeggiated melodies combined with rhythmic patterns. In fact Abe utilizes a sextuplet rhythmic pattern as one of the main rhythmic motives of the piece (Ex 31).

Example 31- Sextuplet Pattern

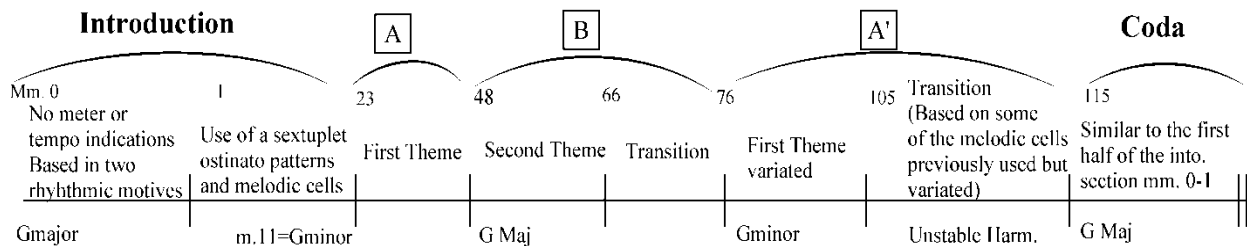


¹³ Keiko Abe, *Marimba Fantasy*, CD notes.

Analysis of Prism - 1986 Solo Marimba Version

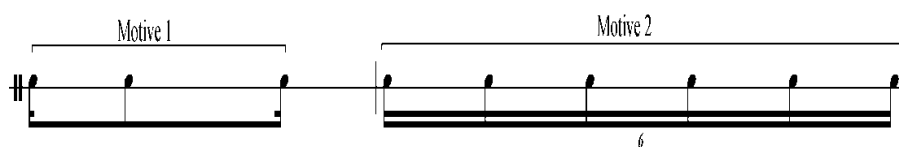
The form of *Prism* may be identified as an A-B-A'. It has an introduction and coda including transitional passages between the sections. The following graphic outlines the form with the respective tonal areas and main themes of the piece.

Figure 7- Form of *Prism*



This piece is constructed mainly around G, and Abe shifts between parallel modes (G major-G minor). Also this piece is based on two rhythmic motives that Abe uses thorough the entire piece (Ex. 32). She also uses melodic cells which are transposed and used as sequences to create melodic variety.

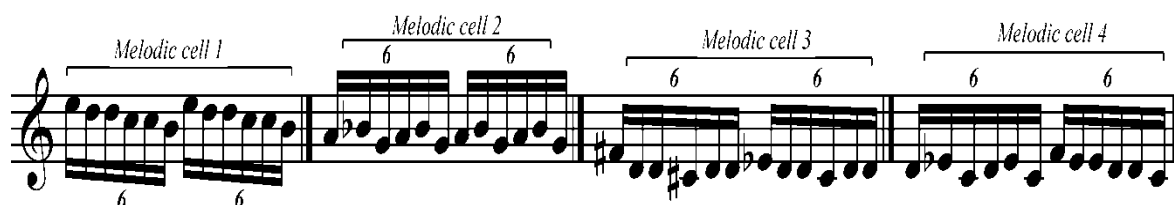
Example 32 - The Two Main Rhythmic Motives of *Prism*



The piece begins with an introduction that is divided into two sections, m.0-1 and mm.1-22. Since there are no meter indications at the beginning of the piece, I'm labeling the opening as measure 0 and measure one will be at the 2/4 meter indication in the sixth staff. Measure 0 to 1 could be interpreted as an improvisation based on the two rhythmic motives previously discussed (Ex. 32). In the second half of the introduction (mm.1-22) Abe begins to use melodic

cells that she will develop in sections A, B, and A'. The following example shows some of these melodic cells based on the sextuplet pattern.

Example 33 Melodic Cells



The A section begins with the first theme in the tonality of G minor (Ex. 34). This theme is followed by transitional material that connects to section B. This transitional section is based on rhythmic motives and melodic cells used in the introduction.

Example 34 *Prism*—First Theme



Section B begins in measure 48 with a new thematic idea, based on the same sextuplet pattern but in the key of G major (Ex. 35). Observe the use of dissonance in measure 53 and 55, where Abe uses the interval of augmented fourths (C#-G & A-Eb). Notice the use of sequences in m.m. 53-56. Also measures 57-59 features a sequence of descending scales pattern. The transition to the next section begins, in measure 66 with another variation of the sextuplet

motive. In measure 76 the first theme is presented again in its original key (G minor). The piece ends with a coda based on the rhythmic and melodic materials used in the introduction.

Example 35 – Section B – Second Theme of *Prism*

The image shows a musical score for a section of the piece 'Prism'. The score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. It consists of seven staves of music, with measures 48 through 65 circled and numbered. The key signature is G minor (one flat). The tempo and dynamics markings are as follows: 'poco rit.' at measure 48, 'pp' at measure 49, 'poco meno mosso dolce con gusto' at measure 50, 'p tempo rubato' at measure 51, 'in tempo' at measure 52, 'mf' at measure 53, 'ff' at measure 54, 'sf' at measure 55, 'fff' at measure 56, and 'poco a poco dim.' at measure 65. The score features various rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and rests. There are also some handwritten annotations, such as 'mayor' and '6' above some notes.

Analysis of *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra*

Keiko Abe's *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra* was premiered by the composer in April 18, 1996 in Sweden. The piece is scored for a five-octave marimba with full orchestra, strings, brass, harp and four percussionists. Although all the main themes and motives of the original *Prism* version are preserved, there are also new themes and motives unrelated to the 1986 original version. For instance Abe uses an ostinato pattern in the orchestra (strings)

during the introduction, unrelated to the original *Prism*-1986 marimba solo. (See Ex. 36)

Example 36- Strings Ostinato



Another new motive used by Abe in this piece is presented in the marimba in m.63, based on a characteristic dissonant pattern of Abe's compositional style.

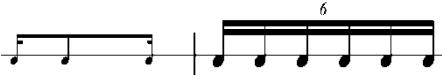



Example 37. New Rhythmic (Ostinato) Motive



The following graphic (Fig. 8) outlines the form with the respective tonal areas, motives and main themes of *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra*.

Figure 8 - Form of *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra*

Section	Measure	Description
Introduction	mm.1-29	Slow (mysterious) orchestral introduction which features a dialogue between the strings and flute followed by a fanfare in the brass. Harmonic structure of this section is static due to the Pedal on the note A from measure 4-23.
Interlude	mm.30-33	Marimba solo interlude. Use of six mallets.
Episode 1	mm. 34-62	Marimbist improvises over the string ostinato (Ex. 39) using the following notes (C-G-Ab-B-D-E-B). This section resembles the original opening section m.0-1 of the 1986 version. The tonal center of this section is C.
Episode 2	mm. 63-129	New theme (Ex. 37 & 40) in the marimba based on eighth notes and minor second intervals. (Use of 4 mallets). Use of bass ostinato pattern (C#-D#-D #). Harmonically Unstable

Interlude	mm.130-140	Percussion section solo interlude based on the two 1986 version main motives (using Japanese drums). 
Episode 3	mm. 141-159	This passage is based on one of the motives used in the original version but harmonized (use of 6 mallets). 
Episode 4	mm. 160-176	For the first time, the sextuplet's motives used by Abe in her original 1986 solo are presented. 
Episode 5	mm. 177-222	Based on the First Theme in G minor of the original 1986 solo version.
Episode 6	mm. 223-243	Cadenza. Harmonically Unstable. Use of chords based on the Aug. 4 th interval, ostinato bass pattern. Introduces new melodic ideas non-related to the main themes.
Episode7	mm.244-264	Based on the Second Theme in G major of the original 1986 version.
Episode 8	mm. 265- 284	Variation of the Main Theme: G minor.
Episode 9	mm. 285- 336	New variations of the sextuplet motive in the tonalities of D major and Eb major.
Episode 10	mm. 325- 337	Based on a rhythmic motive:  The piece ends in D major.

As it is characteristic of a rhapsody, this piece does not follow a specific form structure. To the contrary, the piece is episodic, featuring a wide range of highly contrasted moods and colors with an air of spontaneous inspiration and a sense of improvisation. As it was mentioned before, *Prism Rhapsody* is based on the main themes and rhythmic motives used in the 1986 original version. Abe uses modal mixture (G major-G minor and D major–D minor) as well as dissonance harmonies characteristic of her compositional style.

Prism Rhapsody begins with 29 measures of introduction, divided into three smaller

sections. Measure 1 - 4 is a fanfare and it features the use of cluster chords in the strings/woodwinds and bombastic sound effects in the percussion (crash cymbals-bass drum). Measure 5-14 is a slow “mysterious” section that features a dialogue between the flute and the strings. In this section, Abe uses a series of dissonant parallel chords in the strings based on the augmented fourth interval. This is followed by a faster section (quarter note = 132) that features the brass and percussion. In this section (mm. 15-25), Abe uses a new rhythmic motive that comes from the original *Prism* - 1986 version (Ex. 38). This motive will be presented again at the end of the piece (episode 10) in the marimba. The harmonic structure of this section is static due to the pedal on the note A from measure 4 to 23.

Example 38- Triplet Motive



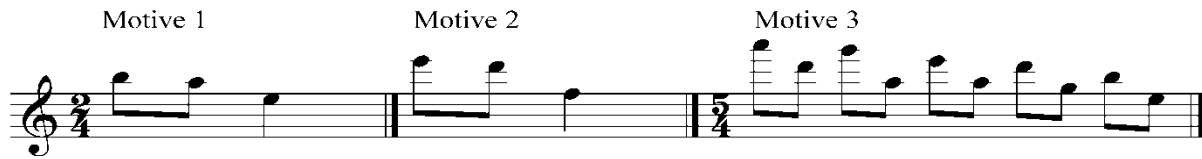
Episode 1 features an ostinato in the strings, while the soloist improvises; using a predetermined set of pitches (Ex. 39). This section resembles the introduction section of the original *Prism*-1986 solo version. The tonal center of this section is C.

Example 39- Strings Ostinato and Set of Pitch



On Episode 2 a new theme is introduced in the marimba. This new theme is based on the following three motives;

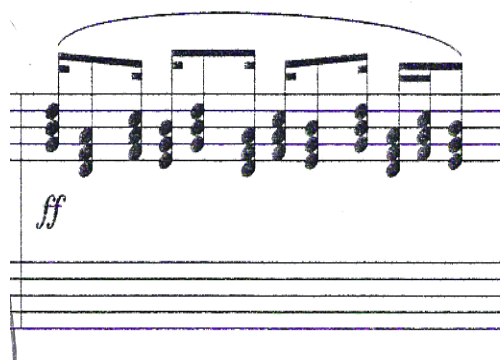
Example 40 – Motives used in Episode 2



Episode 3 is based on one of the motives (motive 1 - ex.32, page 33) used in the original 1986-*Prism* marimba solo. Abe uses six mallets to harmonize this motive and to obtain a strong, rich harmonic sound. This motive is varied harmonically and melodically throughout this section (See Ex. 41).

Example 41- Melodic and Harmonic Variation of Motive 1

A- Harmonic variation.



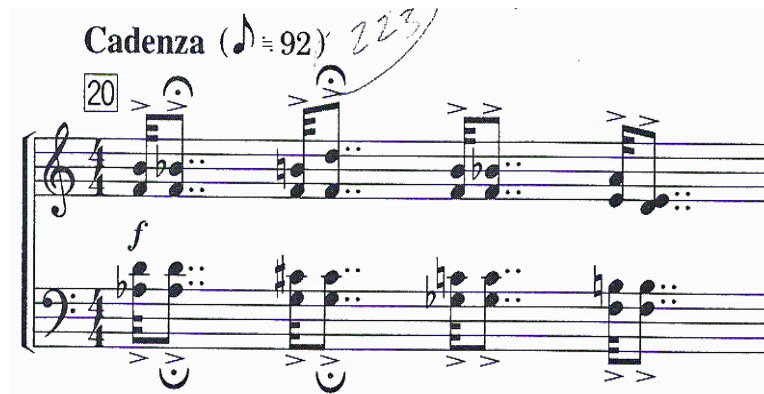
B- Melodic variation—notice the bass line (Bb-Eb-D), creating a two voice contrapuntal texture.



Episode 4, is largely based on the introduction section (mm. 1-22) of the original 1986 *Prism* marimba solo and it is in the original tonality, G minor. This section connects with episode 5 where Abe presents the first theme as it was used in *Prism* in the 1986 version. Episode 6 is the Cadenza. In this section we can see some of the trademarks of Abe's compositional style as previously discussed in chapter III. Throughout this section Abe uses dissonant harmonies (based on the augmented fourth interval), quartal and quintal harmonies, chromaticism and the uses of ostinato bass lines as accompaniment for the melodic lines

Example 42 shows some of the chord voicings used by Abe during this section. Notice the use of the augmented 4th which creates a dissonance and unstable harmonic structure. Also notice the descending chromatic motion in the bass line (Ab-G-Gb-F).

Example 42- Chord Voicings



As previously mentioned, one of Abe's characteristics as a composer is the use of bass ostinato patterns to accompany a melody line. The following example shows the use of a bass ostinato (G#-D-F#) in the left hand while the right hand plays a new melodic line unrelated to the main themes of the piece. (See Ex. 43)

Example 43- Use of Ostinato Bass Line



Episode 7 is largely based on the B section of the original 1986 version. As in the 1986 version the second theme is presented in G major. Episode 8 consists of a melodic variation of the original G minor theme. If one compares the original opening phrase of the 1986 version

with the variation used in *Prism Rhapsody*, one can see that Abe has added new melodic cells based on the sextuplet pattern and the G minor scale (See. Ex. 44). Also notice that the variation is written an octave higher than the original theme.

Example 44- Original G Minor Theme and Variations of the Theme

Original G minor theme- opening phrase.



Variation of the main theme as used in *Prim Rhapsody*.



Episode 9 consists of new melodic variations of the sextuplet (Ex. 45), and melodic material from the improvisatory section on episode I. These new variations are transposed to different tonalities; D, Eb. Since this piece uses modal shifts throughout the piece (G major to G minor), we can notice that the use of Eb can be seen as the Neapolitan key in relation to D major. At the very end of the piece (episode 10 - Coda), the final triplet motive includes a note (Bb) that also comes from the parallel minor mode of D major (see ex.46). The use of Bb in the final motive comes from D minor. If we harmonized this Bb note, we would probably use either a minor iv (g minor) or bVI (Bb major) chord. Both of these chords belong to the key of D minor, but the piece ends with D major.

Example 45- New Variations of the Sextuplet Motive



Example 46 – Triplet Motive



Performer's Study Guide for *Prism Rhapsody*

Contrary to *Marimba d'Amore*, *Prism Rhapsody* features the technical challenges of six, four and also two-mallet performance. Some of the topics that will be discussed in this guide are; improvisation, potential sticking problems, important primary themes, six mallets grips and mallet choices.¹⁴

As previously discussed in chapter III, one of Abe's characteristics as a composer and performer is the use of improvisation. In *Prism Rhapsody* the performer has the option to improvise during Episode I (See Fig. 8, page 37) over the strings ostinato (Ex. 39) using the following notes (C-G-Ab-B-D-E-B) or playing the written improvisation provided by Abe.

¹⁴ A list of suggested mallets to be used in this piece will be provided at the end of this performance guide.

Because of the improvisatory feel of the section the performer must be familiar with the original 1986 version (since the *Rhapsody* is based on that solo) to get ideas about phrasing and interpretation. Also listening to Abe's recording of *Prism* in her CD *Marimba Fantasy*, will give the performer a good idea of how to play this section with the correct phrasing, articulation and interpretation.

Episode I (mm.32-64) presents some challenges in terms of interpretation, style and phrasing. The grace notes used by Abe in this section should be played very open and clearly articulated. Although there are no dynamics indications, the performer should use a variety of dynamics in order to make the section more musically effective. Also Abe does not provide any phrasing indication. Articulation is a key component here, since Abe uses a lot of fast notes passages. Also using crescendos and decrescendos following the melodic line will help to shape this whole section more musically. Because of the improvisatory feel, the performer could be more flexible with time in some passages during this section in order to achieve clarity and be more expressive. Another important factor for the performer is to be familiar with the orchestra ostinato. This will help the performer in shaping the phrases and create a conversation between soloist and orchestra.

If the performer decides to improvise there are several important concepts to consider. First and foremost it must be understood that the improvisation should be related to the main themes and motives of the piece. In other words the performer should play within the style of the piece. An analysis of the music as the one provided in this paper, will give the performer a much deeper and clearer understanding of the form, melody, motives and harmonies used by Abe. This could be a big asset in the preparation of this improvisatory section. Also using Abe's improvisation as a reference tool will be extremely helpful.

Certainly *Prism* and *Prism Rhapsody* are probably two of the most difficult two mallet pieces written for marimba. One of the biggest challenges is created by the sticking patterns to be used in many of the principal motives of the piece. As a general rule the performer must use single strokes (R-L-R-L or L-R-L-R) rather than double strokes (RR-LL or LL-RR). The main reason for this is articulation. By using single strokes the passage will sound cleaner, balanced and articulated. Because of the fast tempo in which the piece is to be played, some of the passages are very difficult to play. Example 47 is one of the most frequently used motives in the piece.

Example 47 – *Prism Rhapsody* - Sticking Pattern for Sextuplet Pattern



The biggest problem here is the constant hand movements. To avoid unnecessary motions this passage should be played using the end of the accidental bars and the area between the cord and the resonator for the naturals. (See Fig. 9)

Figure 9- Correct beating area.



This type of motive should be practiced very slowly, using the wrist only to attack each note instead of the arms. This way the passage can be played faster and cleaner without fatigue.

Example 48 shows another motive used by Abe in *Prism Rhapsody*. This passage presents another performance issue because of the large intervals in the right hand.

Example 48- Sticking Pattern - Horizontal Motion



To avoid unnecessary motion that creates accuracy problems, this passage should be played using a horizontal motion to reach the high C rather than the traditional vertical up and down motion.¹⁵ Also instead of using only your arm to reach the high G and C the performer must rotate the wrist to compensate and make the arm movement shorter and quicker. This will help the performer to make this passage less awkward and improves the performer's accuracy. This type of technique (horizontal motion) could be applied to other passages like mm.88-96 in *Prism* and mm. 244-250 and 285-337 in *Prism Rhapsody*.

One of the most difficult sextuplet patterns used by Abe in both *Prism* and *Prism Rhapsody* is a descending line based on A7 arpeggio/scale. (Ex. 49).

Example 49- A7 Arpeggio/Scale

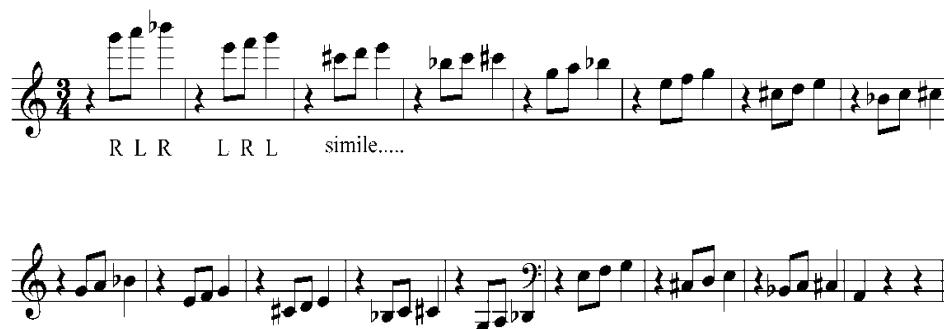


¹⁵ For more information about "The Horizontal Concept Marimba Technique" read the article by Julie Spencer in the PAS magazine published in fall 1987, pp.38-39.

Because of the fast tempo in which this passage is supposed to be played, and the note grouping used by Abe, several performance issues are of concern. First, since the passage needs to be played with single strokes (RLR-LRL) for articulation purposes it is very difficult to play it at the indicated tempo (quarter note = 126). Also the passage encompasses four octaves which imply body movement/adjustments. To facilitate the performance of this passage, the performer may stand in front of the high C# to begin this passage and adjust the body every other C#. This will minimize the feet/body movement to just three steps to play the entire passage.

The motion of the stroke is another important factor in this section. The performer must use a stroke no higher than six inches away from the bar. By keeping the mallets at a close distance from the bar, the performer will obtain more control, accuracy and dexterity to play this passage at the requested tempo. A relaxed grip thorough this passage will prevent tension and fatigue on the performer. The following two exercises are an example of how this passage can be studied.

Example 50 – Exercise 1 – Based on mm. 254-258



Example 51 - Exercise 2 - Based on mm. 254-258

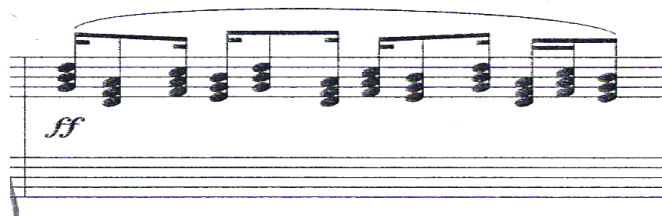


Six Mallet Performance in Prism Rhapsody

The use of six mallets is another unique feature of *Prism Rhapsody*. Although six mallet marimba performances is a concept that is still in development and is not fully studied in most percussion programs, Abe as well as other marimba players have been using it since the 1960's. One of the reasons this technique is not frequently used, is due to its limitation in terms of mallet independence and flexibility. Most of the pieces that employ six mallets use them to create consistent sonorities, especially triads, without any contrapuntal lines where all mallets move independently. This is the case in *Prism Rhapsody*; Abe uses six mallets to get a much bigger and richer sound from the marimba. Abe uses six mallets at the beginning of the piece after the introduction by the orchestra (mm.30-33) and in Episode 3 measures 130-140.

Episode 3 is based on harmonic and melodic variations of motive 1 as previously discussed. One of the performance challenges presented in this passage is stick placement and hand/body posture. Ex. 52 shows some of the voicing used by Abe in Episode 3.

Example 52- Voicing Use by Abe in Episode 3



Because Abe is using close position voicing and both hands are playing in the same register, this can create some problems for the performer. Unless the performer uses the correct hand position this passage will be difficult to play and the quality of the sound and articulation could be also affected. By using different types of hand/mallets position many of these chords can be played in an effortless way, achieving more rhythmic clarity. Some of these chords can be played utilizing the outer edges of bars (Fig. 9). If one plays the G in the right hand in the

outer edge of the bar it will be much easier to play this passage with accuracy and rhythmic clarity (Fig. 10).

Figure 10- Correct hand position and striking area.



Measures 151 -52 (Ex. 53), present a unique challenge for the performer. This single melody line would be easy to play with two or four mallets, but since there is no time to change mallets the performer must play it with six mallets. This passage could be played using only the two inner mallets (#3 in the RH and #4 in the LH) but because the tempo in which this passage is to be played (quarter note = 116) this could create accuracy problems. Also using the inner mallets could affect the sound and phrasing of this passage. If we use the outside mallet of each hand (1-3 RH/4-6 LH) the articulation and phrasing will be much clearer and also the passage will be played more accurately (See ex.53).

Example 53- Playing Single Lines with Six Mallets



A slight modification to the grip can be made to avoid any undesired contact with mallets 2-5. By lifting the middle mallet out of the way with the index finger (Fig. 11), it is possible to play the melodic lines with the outer mallets (1 and 3, 4 and 6 respectively) in each hand without hitting any undesired note with mallets 2-5.

Figure 11- Six Mallets “Burton” Grip Modification



Performance Consideration in the Cadenza

The cadenza in m.m.223 presents several performance issues that must be addressed in order to play this section in the correct style. Through this section, Abe uses several musical devices characteristic of her musical style. Among them are the rhythmic patterns, dissonance harmonies and ostinatos. The cadenza begins with a series of dissonance chords based on the augmented 4th interval. Those chords at m.m.223 must be played with the precise articulation and rhythmic value. These chords need to have a dramatic “surprise” effect in the piece (Ex. 54).

Example 54- Cadenza – m. 223



The performer must pay close attention to dynamics and particularly the rhythm in mm. 224-26. This passage needs to be played with rhythmic accuracy and clarity in order to achieve the musical effect desired by Abe. Starting at measure 227 (ex.56), Abe uses a rhythmic/melodic pattern characteristic of her style. Here the performer must play this passage with energy and rhythmic clarity. This passage needs to have a tension effect (always moving forward) that will be resolved at the end of the section in mm. 232.

Example 55 – Cadenza, mm. 227-232

Starting at measure 233, Abe does not use any meter notation which can create some performance problems for the performer. This passage has an air of improvisation and it should be played as such. However the performer must pay close attention to dynamics, articulation and rhythms. Notice that Abe uses regular rhythmic figures and non-conventional rhythmic notation. The notes without a stem must be played slightly faster than the others in Ex. 56.

Example 56- Cadenza mm. 233



During the cadenza Abe introduced a new melodic idea in the right hand accompaniment by an ostinato rhythmic pattern (G#-D-F#) in the left hand (Ex. 57). As with other patterns used in *Marimba d'Amore* the performer must pay close attention to hand coordination, balance, articulation, phrasing and hands/body posture.

Example 57- Cadenza - Use of Bass Ostinato Pattern



Finally, the choice of mallets is another important factor to be considered by the performer in the preparation of this piece. Since this piece employs two, four and six mallets passages, the performer must use a wide variety of mallets in order to obtain the correct sound of

this piece. The following table provides a suggestive list of mallets to be used in each particular section of *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra*.

Figure 12- Suggested Mallets for *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Orchestra*

<u>Suggested Mallet</u>	<u>Section</u>
<u>Left Hand</u> - 1.Soft- 2. Medium Soft – 3. Medium Soft	Interlude - mm. 30-33
<u>Right Hand</u> - 4. Medium Soft –5. Medium Hard- 6.Medium Hard	
Medium Hard Mallets	Episode 1 – mm 34-62
<u>Left hand</u> - 1. Medium soft – 2.Medium Hard	Episode 2- mm. 63-121
<u>Right Hand</u> - 3. Medium Hard – 4. Hard	
<u>Left Hand</u> – 1. Soft – 2. Medium Soft – 3.Medium Soft	Episode 3 – mm.141-159
<u>Right Hand</u> – 4. Medium Soft – 5- Medium Hard – 6. Medium Hard	
Two Medium Hard Mallets	Episode 4-5 –mm.160-174
<u>Left hand</u> - 1. Soft – 2.Medium Soft	Episode 6 – mm.223-243
<u>Right Hand</u> - 3. Medium Soft – 4. Medium Hard	
Two Medium Hard Mallets	Episode 7- mm. 244-264
Two Hard Mallets	Episode 8-10 mm.265-337

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Over the last 40 years, Keiko Abe has gained worldwide recognition and admiration for her compositions and her performances. Abe has thoroughly explored the musical and technical possibilities of the marimba and her compositions represent a valuable contribution to the development of marimba literature. Thanks to all her contributions, the marimba has gained worldwide recognition as a solo concert instrument, a genre typically dominated by the piano, violin, and other more traditional orchestral instruments.

Abe developed a unique compositional style that employed a harmonic language characterized by the use of chromatic sonorities intermingled with equidistant chords (quartal, quintal, tritone, cluster chords), pedal points as means to establish tonal centers or points of arrival, modal mixture and the use of melodic cells and rhythmic patterns. It is for that reason that today students, as well as teachers, must study her music more closely in order to absorb her style, understand her compositional procedures and be able to play her music with finesse and musicality.

Both *Marimba d'Amore* and *Prim Rhapsody* are two of the most important pieces within the marimba repertoire and they exemplify Abe's legacy as a performer and composer. The musical idioms encountered in *Marimba d'Amore* and *Prism Rhapsody* represent Abe's compositional style: melodic and modal harmonic influences of Classical and Japanese folk music, use of modern harmonies, polyrhythms, ostinatos, extended techniques and numerous other sources of inspiration.

Both pieces are technically and musically demanding but in different ways. Each piece has a different musical form and structure that must be carefully studied and understood by the

performer. Also both pieces feature unique technical challenges (two-four and six mallet performance) and unique musical/interpretation challenges as well.

In *Marimba d'Amore*, the performer faces the challenge of contrapuntal passages, hand coordination and independence (playing a melodic line over a bass ostinato pattern), and the use of extended techniques. In *Prism Rhapsody* the performer faces the challenge of improvisation, playing fast passages based on two mallet sextuplet patterns, six mallet passages as well as contrapuntal passages, hand coordination and independence.

In *Marimba d'Amore*, the performer needs to be aware of the relationship between *Plaisir d'Amour* by Martini and Abe's composition. This is a major component in the study and preparation of this piece since Martini's composition is the genesis of Abe's *Marimba d'Amore*. An analysis of the piece will help the performer to understand this major work in terms of the form, harmonic structure and primary themes. Since the form of the piece is theme and variations, the performer must be aware of all the variations of the theme, the secondary theme used by Abe and the transitional passages. Also studying Abe's compositional style will give the performer a better understanding of the piece in terms of sound, style and phrasing.

Marimba d'Amore also has several technical challenges. For example, the use of bass ostinato to accompany the melodic line presents the challenge of hand coordination, body/hand posture, balance, articulation, phrasing and accuracy. Those passages should be studied individually with each hand at a time as discussed in the preparation guide. Also Abe used extended techniques that must be carefully studied and practiced to obtain the correct sound/interpretation.

In *Prism Rhapsody*, the performer must be familiar with the original 1986 *Prism* version. Being familiar with the orchestral part is an essential component particularly during the

improvisatory section. One of the biggest challenges in *Prism Rhapsody* is playing fast scalar and arpeggiated passages which could create sticking, body/hand posture problems as well as playing with six mallets. By carefully studying those sections and finding the proper techniques to play them, the performer will develop a better interpretation of the music.

The practice guide provided at the end of chapter IV and V are intended to aid in the preparation of both pieces. This preparation guide addresses many musical and technical issues that students and performers may not understand or may not practice properly. It provides a step-by-step breakdown of each piece, describing technical and musical problems and how to overcome them and play the music well. Such guidance, paired with the player's own analysis of the pieces and Abe's compositional style, will be an advantage in achieving a more successful and musical performance of *Marimba d'Amore* and *Prism Rhapsody*.

Abe's musical legacy has established the foundation for new generation of marimba players and composers. Keiko Abe is the most important and prolific composer for the marimba in the twentieth century. As a performer, Abe is a virtuoso player who has built a worldwide recognition as the leading exponent of the instrument. The marimba, an instrument that in its origins was a folk instrument has achieved the status of a classical solo instrument equal to the guitar thanks to the musical contributions of Keiko Abe. Her music has pushed the boundaries of the instrument to reach a new plateau in the music world. Therefore her music is a milestone for the contemporary marimba and it will be an integral part in the future of percussion pedagogy.

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