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## SHORT REPORT

**Outline:** twice recipient of the JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship Award (2010-11 & 2011-13). Based at the Tokyo University of the Arts and Music, Department of Music Creativity and the Environment. I worked under the guidance of the host researcher Professor Tatsuhiko Nishioka. The primary aim of the research was to show the potential of *wabi-sabi* (refined simplicity) for contemporary music composition and ultimately promote the Japanese culture as seen through the eyes of a foreigner.

**Background:** the observation and study of Japanese arts and culture (i.e. literature and poetry, calligraphy and painting, architecture and landscaping, theatre and dance) can offer important information on *wabi-sabi*'s most important aesthetic principles (i.e. imperfection, ambiguity, simplicity, refinement, flexibility, asymmetry, quietness). On the other hand the study of Japanese traditional instruments, (*shō* and the 20-stringed *koto*), is a key to understanding the Japanese sensitivity of virtuosity and beauty. Virtuosity is more associated with an inner state of serenity rather than the exuberance in a performance while beauty is more concerned with grace, elegance, detail in sound and presence, rather than expressive indulgence. The Japanese instruments, which due to their constructive peculiarities seem to perfectly encompass those concepts, offer a valuable source of information for the contemporary composer, on how to maximize the musical effect through limitation and how such limitation can shift the composer's focus to the very fundamental questions on sound and its properties.

**Outcome:** with the support of the Tokyo University of the Arts, my host researcher and JSPS, a series of concerts was organised in Japan, UK and Greece featuring music for Japanese and Western instruments influenced by the aesthetic of *wabi-sabi*. The project involved Japan-based performers including

university professors as well as the UK-based music organisation Shonorities ([www.shonorities.com](http://www.shonorities.com)). Public performances were given of the newly composed work, which was also filmed and recorded at the state-of-the-art university studios with the invaluable help of Professor Toru Kamekawa. Some of those works have been already released on CD in 2012 under the UK-based label, Sargasso ([www.sargasso.com](http://www.sargasso.com)). In 2014 and 2015 two more CD's will be released under the same label.

**Additional Information:** in order for a non-Japanese to carry out research in Japan in the most efficient and satisfying manner it is advisable that the researcher should be able to at least speak and if possible write and read Japanese at an intermediate level. Ideally the language study should start prior to the commencement of the research and continued throughout its duration.

