

# Musical Expressions of “Hiroshima” in Aaltonen’s Second Symphony “Hiroshima”

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アールトネンの交響曲第二番 “Hiroshima” にみられる 「ヒロシマ」 の音楽表現

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人類史上初の核兵器被害を受けた都市、「ヒロシマ」については、これまで数多くの内外の作曲家によって作品の主題に取り上げられている。その数は、戦後半世紀間に創作された作品だけでも、少なくとも500曲以上にのぼる。しかしながら、「ヒロシマ」についての具体的な音楽表現法については、これまでほとんど顧みられることがなかった。そこで本論では、「ヒロシマ」の音楽表現法の一事例として、フィンランドの作曲家、エルッキ・アールトネン (Erkki Aaltonen, 1910-90) の交響曲第二番 “Hiroshima” を取り上げた。この作品は、被爆4年後の1949年に作曲され、同年ヘルシンキで世界初演された作品で、純器楽形式によって世界で初めて「ヒロシマ」を表現したものとして非常に重要である。

本論では、1955年の日本初演時のプログラムなど作曲者による作品解説の解説に楽曲分析を交えながら、アールトネンによる「ヒロシマ」の音楽表現について考察した。まず、未だ研究調査の行われていないアールトネンの創作活動を示した上で、その活動における本作品の位置づけを行った。次に、本作品の全体構造について、作曲者自身による解説を中心にまとめた。その上で、アールトネンの「ヒロシマ」の音楽表現法として本論が注目した2つの技法、標題的技法と主題変容技法について具体的に提示した。とりわけ後者による音楽表現が、その後の「ヒロシマ」の表象においてしばしばみられる「破壊から復興へ」という「ヒロシマ」の通時的表現をすでに内包していることを最後に指摘した。

## Introduction

Hiroshima, the atomic bombed city, has up to the present been the subject of many musical works. During the decades since the bombing, this subject has been tackled by not only Japanese composers such as Masao Ohki (1901-71), Yasushi Akutagawa (1925-89), and Ikuma Dan (1924-2001), but also by non-Japanese composers such as Krzysztof Penderecki (1933- ), Luigi Nono (1924-90), and Siegfried Behrend (1933- ). Presumably, no less than five hundred pieces have been composed during the half century from 1945 to 1995.<sup>1</sup> However, no one has studied musical expressions for “Hiroshima” in his or her musical works. Are there any typical phrases or structures for this, any common idioms or styles? Have such musical expressions been appropriate for “Hiroshima”? These questions have not yet been properly addressed.<sup>2</sup>

Composed and first performed in 1949 shortly after the atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima, this

<sup>1</sup> This presumption is based on the research about music related to the atomic bombing, which has been carried out by the “HIROSHIMA and Music” Committee since 1995. I have been engaged in this research project as a chair.

<sup>2</sup> There are some referential studies about music expressing “Hiroshima”. Shingo Shibata, a Japanese philosopher and sociologist, was the first person to advocate the significance of the musical work representing “Hiroshima and Nagasaki” naming them as “Genbaku Ongaku (The Atom Bomb Music)” in his editorial research regarding the anti-nuclear music, *Hankaku, Nihon no Ongaku: Music of No More Hiroshima*, Tokyo, 1982. Ben Arnold introduced some music in the category of “The Atom Bomb” in his exhaustive study, *Music and War: A research and information guide*, New York and London, 1993.

symphony is historically significant as “the first instrumental music” expressing “Hiroshima.” Therefore, this paper clarifies how the Finnish composer Erkki Aaltonen’s (1910-90) second symphony, “Hiroshima” is composed as a musical work and also discusses how Aaltonen used the musical techniques in order to express “Hiroshima.”

The first section of this study reviews Aaltonen’s music background and his music style in order to reconsider his second symphony in terms of his musical career. The second section illustrates the structure of his second symphony with reference to his words. Through music analysis and text analysis, the third section focuses on Aaltonen’s programmatic techniques while the last section sheds light on his thematic transformations.

## Aaltonen’s Music Background

Aaltonen was known not only as a composer, but also as a conductor, a viola player in the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra (HPO), and a teacher of the violin especially after his retirement. His career as a composer started shortly after the end of World War II when he finished his studies under Väinö Raitio (1891-1945) and Selim Palmgren (1878-1951), both of whom were significant figures in the Finnish music world after Jean Sibelius (1865-1957). The most prolific area in Aaltonen’s works was orchestral music. He composed five symphonies (1947, 1949, 1952, 1959, and 1964), two piano concertos (1948 and 1954), one violin concerto (1966), and the other small pieces. He also wrote a few chamber music works, vocal compositions, and pieces for the piano. His musical style is strongly influenced by Finnish composers in the beginning of twentieth century using a tonal system and classical forms (e.g. a sonata and a fugue), but he also occasionally employed the ‘atonal’ or ‘twelve-tone system’ in certain sections of his compositions. Such eclectic styles combining the old and new idioms had not been unique in Finland for a few decades after the war.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Aaltonen used local melodies or subjects in Finland for his works. These works could have been inspired by his patriotism in the same manner as other Finnish composers’ works of that period.<sup>4</sup> Thus, we could see his music style is more conservative than radical or exceptional.<sup>5</sup> That being so, within the composer’s oeuvre, where could we place the *Hiroshima Symphony*? Why did Aaltonen choose such a provocative theme? Curious to say, it has nothing to do with Finland. Indeed, it can be regarded as a glaring exception among his compositions.

Despite its fame during his lifetime, sadly enough, Aaltonen’s works have been hardly played after his death in 1990. Most of his music has gone out of print. Only his second symphony was appraised as his masterpiece, which is still now available in score.<sup>6</sup> As the study on Aaltonen’s music has not yet begun, it was difficult to find any primary sources. But fortunately, through my interviews with family members of Aaltonen,<sup>7</sup> it became clear that a part of the primary sources had been stored at the University of Helsinki. These materials were compiled by Aaltonen himself in 1981 and contained almost 200 documents related to his works such as letters, concert leaflets, and news articles.<sup>8</sup> Although some of the sources of these documents are unidentified, they are of great value as the only reference materials compiled by the composer himself. In this study these materials are referred to as Helsingin Yliopisto (henceforth, HY) with page numbers. Based on HY, this paper clarifies his second symphony and his composing technique.

<sup>3</sup> Kalevi Aho, Pekka Jalkanen, Erkki Salmenhaara, and Keijo Viltamo, *Suomalainen Musiikki*, a Japanese translation by Junichiro Okura, Helsinki, 1997, pp. 80-88. ; Kimmo Korhonen, *Inventing Finnish Music*, Helsinki, 2003, pp. 73-75.

<sup>4</sup> Kimmo Korhonen, “Composer in Profile: Erkki Aaltonen,” from website of the Finnish music information centre, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> As for further details of Aaltonen’s life and musical career, see Yumi Notohara, “Consolations to Hiroshima,” *Finnish Music Quarterly* 3 :: 2010 (2010), 40-42.

<sup>6</sup> Erkki Aaltonen, *HIROSHIMA Sinfonia per Grande Orchestra No. 2*, Helsinki: Finnish Music Information Centre, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Interviews were held on 18 and 21 February in 2010 at Helsinki.

<sup>8</sup> The title of the compilation is as follows: *Helsingin Yliopiston Musiikkitieteen Laitokselle: Aineistoa säveltäjä Erkki Aaltonen toiminnasta yli kolmen vuosikymmenen ajalta.*

## Aaltonen's Second Symphony

Aaltonen's second symphony "Hiroshima" was completed in 1949. It was the second of five symphonies he composed. Soon after its completion, the world premiere was performed by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Aaltonen himself at the Helsinki University Hall in the same year. The Japan premiere was given six years later at the city hall of Hiroshima on 15 August 1955. It was the memorial day of the ending of the war, exactly ten years after the atomic bombing.<sup>9</sup>

HY has two sources written about the structure of the second symphony. One is Aaltonen's German essay titled "Mine Hiroshima-symphoni" (HY17).<sup>10</sup> Another is the English version of a further detailed note, titled "The Symphony HIROSHIMA" (HY16, see Appendix). His attitudes towards working out the structure of his symphony are shown in these notes. In addition to these sources, a leaflet for the Japan premiere, tell us a little about Aaltonen's note for his second symphony in the Japanese translation (see Palte).<sup>11</sup> Here, based on three primary sources, the structure of this symphony is examined.

As seen in HY16, his second symphony has seven parts: Introduzione, Allegro, Scherzo, Fuga, Culminazione, Epitafio, and Finale which Aaltonen explained as follows ; "The symphony is, in spite of the division into seven parts, a free extensive Sonata Form in one part." According to him, "Allegro contains the exposition. Scherzo and Fuga constitutes the development." "The Recapitulation has the title Culminazione," which means 'climax' in Italian. And Epitafio, "which belongs to the Coda." The theme which returns in the recapitulation, however, is not the one played in Allegro as the exposition, but the first theme (Theme A, see Example 1) which appeared at the very beginning of Introduzione, for which Aaltonen referred to as, "from the proper structure apart is Introduzione." The key forms do not follow a sonata form, either. The exposition Allegro starts in G<sup>b</sup>-major but theme A which returns in the recapitulation starts in C-major, which is a parallel key of C-minor Introduzione. The development of the Scherzo and Fuga do not have any key signatures and their tonalities are unsettled in the most of this section.

### EXAMPLE 1. Theme A (Introduzione, mm. 1-6)

**Andante sostenuto** ♩ = 68

4

All these things make it clear that this symphony cannot be regarded as a sonata in the strict sense but that it is rather a work composed in the free style as Aaltonen explained. Moreover, it is notable that Aaltonen planned the entire work as a large sonata rather than a symphony with several movements. Indeed, this symphony is played without any breaks, so it can be regarded as a "symphonic poem" although he called this work a "symphony".

<sup>9</sup> For the details of the Japan premiere, see Yumi Notohara, "Aaltonen's Second Symphony 'Hiroshima': On the public performance held in Hiroshima 10 years after the atomic bombing," *Annual Review of HIROSHIMA SOCIETY FOR SCIENCE OF ARTS* 21 · 22 (2009), 87-96, (in Japanese).

<sup>10</sup> This is most probably published in *Tagebuch* as there are handwriting notes in the space as "Tagebuch - Wien IV."

<sup>11</sup> "Kansai Symphony Orchestra, The 10 years memorial concert of the end of the war," Hiroshima, 15 August 1955. This leaflet is stored in the Hiroshima Municipal Archives.

## Programmatic Technique

Aaltonen explained his attitudes towards his second symphony in his notes (HY16, see Appendix), from which we can find a clue to how he expressed “Hiroshima” in music. What is especially noteworthy is his programmatic technique. We will consider it in detail here.

Aaltonen expressed the background of his second symphony as follows:

The motives of Hiroshima were kindled in the composer's mind already in the year 1945, when the known shocking worldhistorical incident happened the 6<sup>th</sup> August the same year, and the symphony reflects the mood, the thoughts and the images, which it in the composer's mind created.<sup>12</sup>

These words can lead us to consider the second symphony as a programmatic work depicting the moment Hiroshima was bombed. Indeed, the following programmatic words are found in the other parts of his notes: “oriental middle parts,” “grotesque military march,” and “an explosive burst, which is by the composer called a fire-tempest,” and “the figures of those old people, women and children, who were slaughtered as victims to the horrible incident in a fraction of a second.” It is reasonable to infer that Aaltonen transferred his imagination of the sight of the destroyed city into his music.

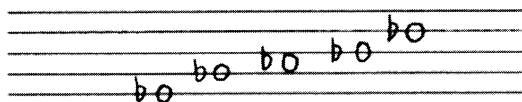
Aaltonen's musical techniques of representing these programs are relatively easy to find in the second symphony. The theme B (see Example 2) at the beginning of the Allegro consist of a pentatonic scale (Example 3), which has been used as an idiomatic expression to represent the ‘Orient’ since the beginning of the twentieth century. The theme B first appears in G<sup>b</sup>-major, to remind us of the peaceful state of Hiroshima. The next two parts, Scherzo and Fuga are technically developed using themes C and D employing chromatic repetition and twelve-tone technique respectively (Example 4 and 5), which might imply there is no change in our daily life. Soon after entering to the Culminazione, however, trumpets and drums play a military march suggesting the looming tragic event. And then an ascending conjunct motion extracted from the first four notes from theme A appears over and over intermingling previous themes. When the whole orchestra culminates in a climax, the falling of the bomb is depicted using a falling chromatic scale played by the flutes, followed by the explosion of the bomb by tremendous full-orchestral tutti. Aaltonen expressed these sections in his notes as follows: “the gloomy theme, which was in the begin of Introduzione, having gone through many variations during the symphony, points Culminazione in an explosive burst, which is by the composer called a fire-tempest” . This comment makes it clear that Aaltonen must have had a clear visual depiction of Hiroshima in his head. Indeed, the next part, Epitafio, is based on “a funeral march” as Aaltonen expressed in the following way: “he as if saw before his eyes the figures of those old people, women and children, who were slaughtered as victims to the horrible incident in a fraction of a second” . It follows from what has been said that he was thinking of transferring his imagination into music.

EXAMPLE 2. Theme B (Allegro, mm. 13-17)



<sup>12</sup> This text is the original unaltered text.

EXAMPLE 3. A pentatonic scale constituting the theme B



EXAMPLE 4. Theme C (Scherzo, mm. 1-4)



EXAMPLE 5. Theme D (Fuga, mm. 1-7)



### Thematic Transformation Technique Employed in Aaltonen's Second Symphony

In addition to his programmatic technique, another composing technique Aaltonen employed in his second symphony, was thematic transformation which is a technique often used by composers to unify the musical work consisting of several parts such as symphony. This resulted in adding more effects to the expression of the subject, "Hiroshima".

Table 1 shows the thematic transformations worked out in his second symphony. From the Introduzione to the Fuga, there are particular themes flowing at the core of each part, namely themes A, B, C, and D. As we can see from Table 1, every theme appears more than once with some transformations. The most frequently used is theme A which Aaltonen called "the gloomy theme" in his notes as we have already seen. It is exposed at the very beginning of the symphony in the Introduzione and appears frequently throughout the symphony. Moreover, it reoccurs in a parallel key not only in the Culminazione but also in the Finale, so it can be regarded as the main theme unifying the entire work. Theme B with a pentatonic scale is repeatedly used in the Allegro, Scherzo, and Culminazione. The chromatic repetition of theme C is played in the Scherzo. The theme reappears only once in the Culminazione in an augmented form, and theme D with elaborate fugal technique appears before returning in the Culminazione.

TABLE 1  
Thematic Transformation in the Second Symphony

Part	Measure	Theme
1. Introduzione	60	A, A(t), B(t)
2. Allegro	306	B, B(i), B(t), A(a), A(t)
3. Scherzo	155	C, B(t), D(t)
4. Fuga	142	D, D(i)
5. Culinazione	489	A (pk), A(t), B(i), C(a), D(t), B(t)
6. Epitafio	173	
7. Finale	140	A(pk)

t = transform, i = inversion, a = augmentation, d = diminution, pk = in parallel key

Interestingly enough, only in the Culinazione do we find the recurrence of all the themes returning together, but after the point depicting the sound of the explosion (mm. 395-449) these themes totally disappear. Perhaps Aaltonen intended to express the extinction of all life at that moment. Indeed, in the following Epitafio none of the previous themes are employed. There are only a few independent melodies to the rhythm of the funeral march. It is only in the Finale that theme A reoccurs in C-major, a parallel key of the original C-minor. The first seven notes of this theme are played from beginning to end, in lower parts at first, then in full orchestra at the end (Example 6). This energetic ending featuring a transposition from the minor key into the major suggests that Aaltonen felt that people in the devastated city could overcome the tragedy in the end.

EXAMPLE 6. Theme A in a parallel key (Finale, mm. 5-10)



Thus, we can see that thematic transformation employed along with the programmatic technique do indeed play very important roles in structuring the composition. What is most interesting here is that the thematic transformation could show us the 'diachronicity' or narrative of Hiroshima as a peaceful city destroyed and then recovered from the deadly devastation of the atomic bombing. This aspect should be examined much more deeply. Theme A as the main theme of this symphony could also play a leading role of telling this narrative so we could call it the "Hiroshima motif". It is first designated in the Introduzione. This "gloomy" theme is a harbinger of the historical tragedy about to befall the city. Theme B of the Allegro depicts a peaceful state of the Japanese city, but soon after that the Hiroshima motif reappears in an augmented form representing a bad omen. In the Culinazione, the catastrophe occurs as Aaltonen explained. We have already seen how the themes are used in this climactic part. To reiterate, following the military march, the Hiroshima motif reappears in C-major modulating into c-minor suddenly as if to imply the start of the tragic event. All of the themes reappear mingling together and then are dispelled by the sound of the explosion that calls to mind the destruction of everything. After the theme-less Epitafio shows nothing is left, the Hiroshima motif returns in a major key implying that the residents of Hiroshima would eventually overcome the disaster.

## Conclusion

The second symphony "Hiroshima" by Aaltonen is an historic work as the first instrumental music to express the atomic bombing of the city of Hiroshima. Although the composer called it as a "symphony", its structure can be likened to a "symphonic poem" in terms of the programmatic nature of this work. Aaltonen represented "Hiroshima" with some musical idioms such as a pentatonic scale, rhythms of a military march, funeral march, and an orchestral tutti describing the explosion. In addition, he used the technique of thematic transformation which not only unifies the overall structure of the symphony but also represents the narrative of "Hiroshima" diachronically throughout this work. The narrative of "Hiroshima" from its destruction to its recovery becomes a common subject in various areas of future artistic expression. So we can consider Aaltonen's second symphony to be an important precursor of future works employing this narrative. When he composed this work in 1949, Japan was still under the control of the United States and was unable to express the tragedy in public. Needless to say, most of the people abroad including Aaltonen himself had never seen the destruction of the city, nor its recovery. Most of the audience in the world premiere held in the same year might have been shocked by this music. Here, some significant questions occurred to me: why and how did Aaltonen envision this piece? How did people react to his symphony? How different were the reactions between the people in Helsinki and the people in Hiroshima? What does that difference mean? These questions could be discussed in further studies.

## APPENDIX

### The Transcription of Aaltonen's Notes for his Second Symphony "Hiroshima"<sup>13</sup>

#### The Symphony HIROSHIMA

Introduzione (Andante sostenuto)

Allegro

Scherzo (Vivace)

Fuga (lo stesso tempo)

Culminazione (Alla Marcia. Incom. allegro moderato)

Epitafio (Andante funebre)

Finale (Con moto)

The motives of Hiroshima were kindled in the composer's mind already in the year 1945, when the known shocking worldhistorical incident happened the 6th August the same year, and the symphony reflects the mood, the thoughts and the images, which it in the composer's mind created. The symphony is, in spite of the division into seven parts, a free extensive Sonata Form in one part. From the proper structure apart is Introduzione. Allegro contains the Exposition. Scherzo and Fuga constitute the Development, which does \*\*\*\*<sup>14</sup> not end in any decision and which is bound to the Recapitulation by an oriental middle parts, which contains a grotesque military march. The Recapitulation has the title Culminazione, because the thematic climax and psychological decision happens at the end of this part, when the gloomy theme, which was in the begin of Introduzione, having gone through many variations during the symphony, points Culminazione in an explosive burst, which is by the composer called a fire-tempest. After it comes \*\*\*\*\* Epitafio, which belongs to the Coda. When the funeral march rhythms of Epitafio were kindled in the composer's mind, he as if saw before his eyes the figures of those old people, women and children, who were slaughtered as victims to the horrible incident in a fraction of a second. The thoughts did not stop only in the victims of this incident. In this misfortune culminated the fury of mankind, which tears mankind itself and in the \*\*\*\*\* composer's<sup>15</sup> mind it rose as a symbol of this absurdity. Under these heavy thoughts was the part Epitafio composed. The work ends in Finale, in which the above-mentioned theme is found transfigured and energetic reflecting the immense richness of the primeval strength.

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<sup>13</sup> HY 16. This text is the original unaltered text.

<sup>14</sup> Asterisks for amending are showed as same as in the original.

<sup>15</sup> The misspelling of this word was amended by handwriting.



## ●交響曲“ヒロシマ”に就いて

この交響曲はフィンランドの若き音楽家、バイオリン奏者であり、同時に作曲家であるエルッキ・アールトネン氏によって作曲されたものです。

世界はじまって以来の不幸といわれる原子爆弾が広島上空で炸裂したとき、アールトネン氏は異常なショックをうけ、この人類を滅亡にみちびく原爆に対して芸術家として最大の抗議と平和への祈願をこめて作曲したのがこの曲です。

ところが、昭和28年、たまたまヘルシンキのシベリウス・アカデミー・ホールに招かれて同楽団を指揮した関西交響楽団専任指揮者朝比奈隆氏を訪れたアールトネン氏が「音楽家として広島の人たちを慰めるのは音楽以外にはないと知り、平和の祈りをこめて焦土からたち上る広島の姿をイメージとして丹精こめて作曲したのが、この「ヒロシマ」です。私が広島の人たちになし得る唯一のプレゼントでぜひあなたの楽団によって広島で初演奏していただきたい」とその楽譜を贈りました。

奇しくも終戦十周年のこの日、この広島の地でこの交響曲が演奏されるに至ったのは、こうした経緯によってであります。



アールトネン氏と朝比奈隆氏

## 作曲者の言葉

1945年8月、あの世界史に残るヒロシマの悲劇が起つた時、既に私はこの交響曲の作曲を決心していた。従つて曲全体に当時の私の心境、悲愴なる幻影が反映している。

この交響曲は7つの部分から構成されているにも拘らず、自由なソナタ形式を成して居り、最初のアンダンテは前奏曲である。アレグロに入り主題が現われ、スケルツォとフーガは展開部となり、いつ終るとなく続いている。やがてグロテスクな軍隊調の行進曲を含む東洋的な中間部から再現部に入る。この再現部は「火の嵐」と私は名付けたい。何故ならば、この部分の終りに主題の高潮である心理的な絶叫が現われるからで、そこでは前奏曲の始めにあり、そしてこの曲の到る処に変形されて現われている陰惨な主題が爆発音を表現して「火の嵐」を描写しているからである。そしてコーダに入る。その行進曲風なリズムは一瞬の惨事の犠牲者として殺されて行つた女や子供の往時の姿を恰も私の目で見えた様な錯覚を起させる。この心理的な衝撃は唯々犠牲者のみに止まらない。全人類がこの不幸を嘆き、その憤りは絶頂に達した。私の心にはこの矛盾が深くきざみつけられた。この苦しい心境でこの曲は作曲されている。

フィナーレでは上述の主題が変形され裡に激む力強い反抗を反映したエネルギーな形で現わされる。

エルッキ・アールトネン



A Leaflet for the Japan Premiere at Hiroshima on 15 August 1955, folio 1<sup>v</sup>  
 “Words of the Composer” by Erkki Aaltonen in Japanese Translation (under the picture)<sup>16)</sup>

By permission of the Hiroshima Municipal Archives, Hiroshima

<sup>16)</sup> According to a family of Aaltonen, the man in the picture indicated as “Mr. Aaltonen” is wrong person.