When I think of the Crab Fields...
For 15 Japanese Instruments and Voice
Instrumentation:
3 Ryuuteki (1 tuned to A=442, 2 & 3 tuned to A = 430)
3 Hichiriki (1 tuned to A=442, 2 & 3 tuned to A = 430)
2 Sho (tuned to A=442)
2 Sho (tuned to A = 430)

Solo Voice
1.8 Shakuhachi
Koto (NOT gakuso)
Shamisen
Biwa
Percussion
Shokko
Kakko
Tsuidaiko

When I think of the Crab Fields –Excerpts – Program Note

Composed during the summer of 2020, “When I think of the Crab Fields…” (蟹原楽を考えたら ...)is a large composition for 15 performers of different traditional Japanese instruments, and voice. The piece consists of four movements, which are constructed around loose palindromic melodies. The third and fourth movements are in large part inspired by poetry written by the Tokyo based pianist/performance artist Elico Suzuki. The text used in these movements are provided below.

The titular “crab fields” are a reference to a previous artist residency I participated in during my time at the University of Pittsburgh’s Astrophysics and Cosmology Department, where I collaborated with the astrophysicist Dr. Carles Badenes in Spring 2019. The resulting compositions were inspired by his research on Supernova Remnants. To use Dr. Badenes’s words:

“supernovae – titanic explosions that mark the end of the lifetime of certain stars. Supernovae play a central role in our Universe, because they are the place where most heavy elements are formed. The iron in our blood and the calcium in our bones were formed billions of years ago in supernovae that exploded before the Solar System was formed. This massive recycling scheme powered by supernovae seeds the birthplaces of stars with the raw materials that are necessary for life.”

To this day, I often think back on Dr. Badenes’ research, and how this “recycling scheme” can be noticed in different areas of our own daily lives, though not to the same degrees and intensities that would manifest in the event of a super nova. One such stellar body, the Crab Nebula, is a six light year wide remnant of a super nova that was seen by Chinese Astronomers in 1054. According to Nasa, the Crab Nebula can be spotted using a small telescope and is best observed in January. As a result of this, I chose to tune the gakubiwa using a traditional tuning called banshikicho, which is associated with the winter season.

I would like to add one final note regarding the title. I am fascinated by the idea of creating melodies that are inherently palindromic and can be presented both forwards and backwards. This is most apparent in the fourth and final movement, where the melodies are regularly divided in half where the original melody “ends” and, like a tape player is then slowly rewound to its original starting point creating a theoretically never-ending cycle. In essence, the melodies consume themselves like an ouroboros. The word ‘kanibaru,’ or crab field, is a play on the English word ‘cannibal.’

Much to my surprise, approximately a month after finishing the first complete draft of Kanibarugaku wo Kangaetara..., I discovered that crabs do in fact occasionally engage in cannibalistic activities.

Text:

閉じ込められ切り取られた五月空、きりきりと青い静寂が鳴る
Trapped and clipped May sky, the blue silence ring out.

覆われたくちびる唇を覆い、穏やしのことを白くてなくつぶやく
Covered and cold lips, murmuring words of healing endlessly.

String Instrument Tunings

Kanibarugaku wo Kangaetara... is approximately 11 minutes in duration.
蟹原楽を考えたら。。。
蟹原楽を考えたら。。
Like liquid mercury

Score

II.

Devon Osamu Tipp
III. 静寂・癒やし
III. Stillness/Healing

Like cold standing water \( \frac{j}{j} = 69 \)

吹き込む: blow into the pipe
息を吸う: inhale

Shamisen

Koto

Biwa

Percussion
龍筋 I
Ryu. I

龍筋 II
Ryu. II

龍筋 III
Ryu. III

鈴磐 I
Hichi. I

鈴磐 II
Hichi. II

鈴磐 III
Hichi. III

鐘 I
Sho I

鐘 III
Sho III

Voice

 Sham.

Koto

琵琶

Biwa

打楽器

Perc.

像原楽を考えたら。。。
freely inhale/exhale into pipe

息を呼く：inhale
息を吸う：exhale

freely inhale/exhale into pipe

息を呼く：inhale
息を吸う：exhale

freely inhale/exhale into pipe

息を呼く：inhale
息を吸う：exhale

三味線 Sham. Koto Biwa Perc.
楽譜を考えたら

龍図 I 　Ryu. I
龍図 II 　Ryu. II
龍図 III 　Ryu. III

篳図 I 　Hichi. I
篳図 II 　Hichi. II
篳図 III 　Hichi. III

聖 I 　Sho I
聖 II 　Sho II
聖 III 　Sho III
聖 IV 　Sho IV

歌 　Voice

三味線 　Sham.
琴 　Koto
琵琶 　Biwa

place teeth on reed; produce high, thin, quiet sound; gentle bend pitch
consistent stable pitch, or inconsistent rhythm start/end of sound is ok
very quiet; like the sound of crying insects at night

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Score

IV.

q = 48

accel.

q = 54

Score