

A vibrant, fantastical illustration of a forest. A massive, ancient tree with thick, gnarled branches and dense green foliage dominates the center. Numerous glowing, golden-yellow spheres of varying sizes are scattered throughout the scene, some appearing to float in the air and others resting on the tree's branches. In the background, a waterfall cascades down a rocky ledge, surrounded by more trees and lush vegetation. The overall atmosphere is ethereal and magical, with a color palette dominated by greens, blues, and warm golden tones.

Kodama

木靈

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Performance Notes

In Japanese folklore, **kodama** were spirits that inhabited trees. The word kodama comes from the kanji 木 “ko” meaning tree and 霊 “dama” meaning spirit, but throughout history, the spelling and interpretation of kodama has changed multiple times. Another kanji used for kodama, 囀, means “echo,” as it was believed that kodama were also echoes that reverberated through the mountains and valleys. In ancient times, kodama were said to be kami, nature deities that dwelled in trees, similar to the dryads of Greek mythology. Some believed that kodama were not linked to a single tree but could move nimbly through the forest, traveling freely from tree to tree, while others believed that kodama were rooted like the trees themselves and looked no different from other trees in the forest. In an alternate version, it was said that anyone who chopped into a kodama would be cursed; so knowledge of which trees were inhabited by kodama was passed down through the generations by elders.

Japanese spirits, gods, and demons collectively are known as **yōkai** and stem from a combination of folklore and **Shintoism**, which is the ethnic religion of Japan. Shintoism is an **animistic** religion, which believes that everything, from pebbles, animals, and plants, to forces of nature like the wind or a river, contains a distinct spiritual essence or **kami**. Yōkai are often believed to be malevolent or mischievous spirits, and in some stories and depictions are quite terrifying, while other yōkai called **obake** were animals such as foxes (**kitsune**), raccoon dogs (**tanuki**), badgers (**mujina**), and cats (**bakeneko**) that historically were known to shapeshift into human form and play tricks on people. Some yōkai were signs of good fortune, though, and were considered a benevolent presence while some were also protective spirits.

Yōkai were used to explain natural phenomenon and, as part of Shintoism, were also used to teach lessons, particularly of respect for everything in the natural world. In Aogashima, for example, people place small shrines at the base of cryptomeria trees where they still worship and pray to them, and in Mitsune village, a festival is held every year giving thanks and respect to the “kodama-san” as a way to ask for forgiveness and blessing for cutting down trees for the logging industry. Stories were told of household items and tools that were neglected or discarded that acquired a kami and turned into a type of yōkai called **tsukumogami**. One of the most popular representations of this is the **kasa-obake**, which is an umbrella, often depicted with one eye and one leg, that would jump around and usually inhabited haunted houses.

Japanese folklore maintains a strong presence even in modern-day Japan. A large portion of Japanese anime and manga include yōkai in their story and pull from the Shinto myths, including the animes *Naruto*, *InuYasha*, *Natsume's Book of Friends*, *Sarazanmai* as well as Studio Ghibli's *Spirited Away*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, and *Princess Mononoke*, the last of which is where part of the inspiration for this piece came from. In the film *Princess Mononoke*, the kodama are represented as small, white humanoid-type apparitions with heads that make a rattling noise when they shake and is represented by the rain stick and temple blocks.

In this piece, I wanted to create a sense of serenity and imbues a sense of respect towards nature that Shintoism teaches. For that, I researched and listened to a lot of traditional Japanese music and tried to adapt that for the concert band instrumentation, and as a result, *Kodama* predominantly uses versions of the pentatonic scale that are characteristic to Japanese music. With kodamas being forest spirits, the piece uses the woodwinds for the melodic material and “airy/breathy/wood”-sounding percussion extensively, while the brass forms a warm foundation, and since one interpretation of kodama is “echo,” a lot of the material is repeated as an echo while smaller motives bounce throughout the ensemble.

*Te wo uteba
kodama ni akuru
natsu no tsuki - Bashō*

**As I clap my hands
with the echoes, it begins to dawn -
the summer moon**

poco rall. **poco accel.**

Fl. *mf* *mp*

Ob. *mf* *mp*

Bsn. *mp* *mf* *p*

Cls. 1 - 2 *mf* *a2* *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

B. Cl. *mp* *mf* *p*

Alto Sax. 1 - 2 *mf* *a2* *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Ten. Sax. *mp* *mf* *p*

Bari. Sax. *mp* *mf* *p*

Tpts. 1 - 2 **poco rall.** **poco accel.** *a2* *mp*

Hn. *mp* *mf* *p*

Tbns. 1 - 2 *a2* *mp* *mf* *p*

Bar. *p*

Tuba *p*

Mallets 1 *mp* *p* (Medium yarn mallets)

Mallets 2 *p* Sleigh Bells

Perc. 1

Perc. 2 Mark Tree *p* *mp* *p*

Perc. 3 Sus. Cym. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Perc. 4

Timp. *pp* *mp*

6 7 8 9 10

11 a tempo
Play

Fl. *mf*

Ob. *mf*

Bsn. *mp*

Cls. 1 - 2 *mp*

B. Cl. *mp*

Alto Sax. 1 - 2 *mp* *a2*

Ten. Sax. *mp*

Bari. Sax. *mp*

11 a tempo

Tpts. 1 - 2 *mp*

Hn. *mp*

Tbns. 1 - 2 *mp* *a2*

Bar. *mp*

Tuba *mp*

Mallets 1 *mp* Bells

Mallets 2 *mp*

Perc. 1

Perc. 2 *mp*

Perc. 3 *mf*

Perc. 4 *mp*

Timp. *mf*

Fl. *p* *div.* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

Ob. *p* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mp* *mf*

Bsn. *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Cls. 1 - 2 *p* *mp* *p* *p* *mp* *mf*

B. Cl. *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Alto Sax. 1 - 2 *a2* *p* *mp* *p* *p* *mf*

Ten. Sax. *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Bari. Sax. *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Tpts. 1 - 2 *a2* *p* *mf*

Hn. *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Tbns. 1 - 2 *p* *mp* *p* *a2* *mf*

Bar. *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Tuba *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Mallets 1

Mallets 2 *p* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mute*

Perc. 1 *p*

Perc. 2 *mp* *mf* *mf*

Perc. 3 *p* *mf*

Perc. 4 *p* *mf*

Timp. *p* *mf*

poco rall.

Fl. *div.* *mp* *p* *f*

Ob. *p* *mp* *f*

Bsn. *p*

Cls. 1 - 2 *p* *mp* *p*

B. Cl. *p*

Alto Sax. 1 - 2 *p*

Ten. Sax. *p*

Bari. Sax. *p*

Tpts. 1 - 2 *p* *mp* *f*

Hn. *p* *f*

Tbns. 1 - 2 *p* *a2*

Bar. *p*

Tuba *p*

Mallets 1

Mallets 2

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3 *pp*

Perc. 4

Timp. *p*

29 a tempo

Fl. *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *div.*

Ob. *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *p*

Bsn. *fp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*

Cls. 1 - 2 *fp* *mf* *mp* *p*

B. Cl. *fp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*

Alto Sax. 1 - 2 *fp* *mf* *mp* *p*

Ten. Sax. *fp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*

Bari. Sax. *fp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*

Tpts. 1 - 2 *fp* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*

Hn. *mp* *p*

Tbns. 1 - 2 *fp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*

Bar. *fp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*

Tuba *fp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*

Mallets 1

Mallets 2

Perc. 1 Tam-tam *f*

Perc. 2

Perc. 3 *f* *mf* *p*

Perc. 4

Timp. *mf*

37

Fl. *f* *mf* *div.*

Ob. *f* *mf*

Bsn. *f* *mf*

Cls. 1 - 2 *f* *mf*

B. Cl. *f* *mf*

Alto Sax. 1 - 2 *f* *mf*

Ten. Sax. *f* *mf*

Bari. Sax. *f* *mf*

Tpts. 1 - 2 *f* *mf* *a2* *f* *mf* *p*

Hn. *f* *mf* *a2*

Tbns. 1 - 2 *f* *mf*

Bar. *f* *mf*

Tuba *f* *mf*

Mallets 1 *mf*

Mallets 2

Perc. 1

Perc. 2 *mf*

Perc. 3 *f* *mp*

Perc. 4 *mp*

Timp. *mp* *f* *mp*

35

36

37

38

39

40

Fl. *mp* *p* *mp* *mp* *mp* Ob. Solo *mp*

Ob. *mp* *p* Solo *mp*

Bsn. *mp* *p*

Cls. 1 - 2 *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

B. Cl. *mp* *p*

Alto Sax. 1 - 2 *mp* *a2* *mp* *p*

Ten. Sax. *mp* *p*

Bari. Sax. *mp* *p*

Tpts. 1 - 2 *mp*

Hn. *mp* *p*

Tbns. 1 - 2 *mp* *p*

Bar. *mp* *p*

Tuba *mp* *p*

Mallets 1 *p*

Mallets 2 *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4 *mp* *mp* *pp*

Timp. *p* *mp*

54 a tempo

Solo

Fl. *p* *mp* *expressively*

Ob.

Bsn. *pp*

Cls. 1 - 2

B. Cl. *pp* *ppp* **Tutti** *p*

Alto Sax. 1 - 2 *p*

Ten. Sax. *pp* *p*

Bari. Sax. *pp* *p*

54 a tempo

Tpts. 1 - 2 *p*

Hn.

Tbns. 1 - 2 *pp*

Bar. *pp*

Tuba *pp* *ppp*

Mallets 1 *pp* **Marimba**

Mallets 2 *mp*

Perc. 1 *mp* **Bells**

Perc. 2 *p*

Perc. 3 *pp* *mp* (Opt.) *pp* *mp*

Perc. 4 *mp*

Timp. *pp* *mp*

53 54 55 56 57 58

61

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

Cls. 1 - 2

B. Cl.

Alto Sax. 1 - 2

Ten. Sax.

Bari. Sax.

Tpts. 1 - 2

Hn.

Tbns. 1 - 2

Bar.

Tuba

Mallets 1

Mallets 2

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Timp.

Solo
mp *p*

61

Fl. *Tutti* *mp* *mf* *div.*

Ob.

Bsn.

Cls. 1 - 2 *p* *mp* *Play a2*

B. Cl.

Alto Sax. 1 - 2 *mp*

Ten. Sax. *mp*

Bari. Sax. *mp*

Tpts. 1 - 2 *Hn.* *Solo* *mp* *mf* *Tutti* *mf*

Hn. *Solo* *mp* *mf* *Tutti* *mp*

Tbns. 1 - 2 *mp*

Bar. *mp*

Tuba *mp*

Mallets 1

Mallets 2

Perc. 1 *Percussion*

Perc. 2

Perc. 3 *(Opt.)* *mf*

Perc. 4

Timp. *mf*

rit. al fine

Fl. *mp*

Ob. *mp* *p*

Bsn. *mp* *p*

Cls. 1 - 2 *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

B. Cl. *mp* *p*

Alto Sax. 1 - 2 *mp* *a2* *mp* *p*

Ten. Sax. *mp* *p*

Bari. Sax. *mp* *p*

rit. al fine

Tpts. 1 - 2 *mp* *p*

Hn. *mp* *p*

Tbns. 1 - 2 *a2* *mp* *p*

Bar. *mp* *p*

Tuba *mp* *p*

Mallets 1 *p*

Mallets 2 *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

Perc. 1 *p*

Perc. 2 *p*

Perc. 3 *mp* *p*

Perc. 4 *mp* *pp*

Timp. *mp* *p*