

The Joe Hisaishi Experience

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When we think about animated films especially in an American context, Walt Disney, and the Disney company in general certainly come straight to mind. Disney has become a cultural phenomenon over the last century or so, with what were originally short, animated films eventually transforming into internationally recognized name with characters that have stood the test of time. Another animation and production company, Studio Ghibli has made a name for itself, and I believe deserves to be mentioned in the same breath. Founded by Hayao Miyazaki in 1985, Studio Ghibli has produced twenty-four animated films, Miyazaki being the director for ten of these films with an eleventh coming out in July of 2023. Mamoru Fujisawa, known professionally as Joe Hisaishi, composed for all the films directed by Miyazaki. Hisaishi has been collaborating with Hayao Miyazaki since their first film together in 1984. With this partnership arose some of the most iconic films and film music to date.

I did not grow up with these films like many people my age did. I had heard of them as a child, but they were never part of what I liked to watch. As a kid I was drawn towards films like *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* partly because of their great soundtracks. I have always been drawn to film music and it seems in the modern era, many of the great composers are also drawn that way as well. Sometime during March of 2022, I was watching a YouTube video created by one of my favorite creators, Nahre Sol. She analyzed the music in these films and showed why they were so good and why they are so nostalgic to so many people. I was interested so I began to listen to some of the music. I was instantly drawn towards it and decided to create my senior capstone around this subject. I was slightly worried at first that I would lose interest in this topic as it was not something that I have been interested in for a long time, but thankfully this music is so interesting, and these movies are so compelling that I never lost steam.

I began by watching many of the Studio Ghibli films to decide which ones I believed were the most compelling. I ended up on these four films as I believed it captured a long span in Hisaishi's career and contained many different musical elements that were ripe for analysis. It is very interesting to me to see the resources Hisaishi used change throughout his career. For example, many of the instruments used in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* are synthesized because hiring an orchestra is so expensive, and not being a super famous composer yet, he didn't have as easy access to full orchestras as he does now. I believe the lack of orchestral arrangements in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* serves the film well as the futuristic aspect pairs with the use of electronic instruments. I also particularly wanted to talk about *The Wind Rises* as almost nobody has written about the score. I also wanted to talk about *Spirited Away* and *Howl's Moving Castle* as they are perhaps the two most famous films to come out of Studio Ghibli and there are many more resources on them. These films thematically also go well together with *The Wind Rises* and *Howl's Moving Castle*, both being films centered around this idea of love (which takes many forms) and *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* and *Spirited Away* not being centered around love. These contrasting themes help the reader obtain a holistic understanding of how Hisaishi composes for different types of films.

In this paper I use many different musical examples all transcribed by myself in either the lead sheet style with chord symbols or on a grand staff. Most of these are a reduction from the original score and may omit some details. However, these examples make it easy for the reader to understand what they are listening to when watching these films by having visual cues for the pieces I discuss. There are almost no official scores available for these pieces so nearly all my transcription was done using my own ear with some help from a few MuseScore fan transcriptions on the internet. Transcribing these pieces also helped me further understand these

pieces and the compositional decisions Hisaishi made, making the process of writing about these pieces much easier for me.

In movies such as *Howl's Moving Castle* and *The Wind Rises*, Hisaishi uses a single melody throughout the films as a reflection on the main character showing how the characters surroundings and feelings are changing as well as how the character develops throughout the film. In movies such as *Spirited Away* and *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, Hisaishi does not use a single melody throughout the entire piece. Rather, he orchestrates pieces that are seemingly entirely different for each scene. In this paper I will not only show that Hisaishi uses both methods but also why both tactics are effective in supporting character development and story building.

***Howl's Moving Castle*; released November 20th, 2004**

In *Howl's Moving Castle*, the Witch of the Wasted curses a girl named Sophie causing her to be transformed into an old woman. Looking to break the curse she sets off to the countryside where she eventually encounters Howl and his moving castle. With a war rampaging on, Howl has been told he must fight for the king as to not lose his magical powers. Howl, not

wanting to fulfill the king's request to fight in the war, escapes with Sophie. Because of this escape attempt, Howl is now a fugitive, avoiding the king and his henchmen.

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat major) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The first staff contains measures 1 through 7, and the second staff contains measures 8 through 14. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: Cm9, D7, Gm7, Cm9, F11, Bbmaj7 on the first staff; and Eø, Amaj7, Dm7, Fmaj7, Bbmaj7, Am7, Dm7add4 on the second staff.

Figure 1. *Howl's Moving Castle*. "Merry-Go-Round of Life" theme (transcription from soundtrack).

This film uses a melody entitled "Merry-Go-Round of Life" (Figure 1) which serves as the main theme in the movie as well as a representation of the love between Howl and Sophie. This theme plays many times in this film and in total I will be discussing five of those times to show how Hisaishi's compositional decisions are effective in creating a sonic experience that elevates the movie watching experience. The outcome of Sophie and Howl's love often feels rather ambiguous, and the arpeggiated G-minor (Figure 1, m.1) and D-minor chords (Figure 1, m.9), especially the inverted ones, emphasizes this ambiguity. The instrumentation, key, time signature, and texture often change throughout the film but the melody by in large does not change. The changes in the portrayal of this theme represent the different experiences Sophie and Howl have and the mood of the scene, but the constant of the melody represents the strong bond the two have with each other.

Hisaishi uses this theme as a love theme between Sophie and Howl, most of the time occurring when they are either together or the idea of their love comes up. For example, the theme played when Sophie and Howl first meet (0:06:15). Some soldiers harass Sophie in an

alleyway and Howl uses his powers to remove them from the situation. The theme occurs with Sophie's sparked curiosity and to emphasize this curiosity, pizzicato strings play the melody. While she is not in love with Howl yet, their story together begins here. Moments later the melody repeats, this time with full orchestral sound and a quicker tempo as Howl and Sophie escape the blob men. This moment begins the love story between Sophie and Howl and this theme will evolve as their love does.

Every instance of the theme differs slightly, often based on how Sophie and/or Howl are developing as characters. The theme repeats as Sophie, now transformed into an old woman, embarks on a journey to find out how to lift her, curse (0:13:49). The instrumentation of the theme begins with only a bassoon playing the melody emphasizing the fact that Sophie is now all alone, searching for a way to break the curse. The curse causes an inability to tell people she has been cursed so she must find a solution by herself. The theme repeats with a different instrumentation as soon as she begins her journey by hitchhiking her way out of the city in which she was living (0:14:38). Sophie is determined and while the curse startled her at first, she very quickly calmed herself and started looking for solutions. The curse has given her confidence which she may have lacked before. Previously, when Sophie was alone, the theme was mostly played by solo piano, with a slow tempo reflecting Sophie's loneliness and insecurity. However, the music, specifically the instrumentation, reflects her confidence directly with instrumentation as well as the increase in intensity and tempo. The driving waltz mirrors Sophie's confidence in her journey and even though people around her say she's crazy for doing this, she nonetheless confident in her decision. While Sophie is unaware of this at this point in the movie, her journey will lead her right to Howl's castle, further emphasizing the love theme between them.



Figure 2. *Howl's Moving Castle*. "Merry-Go-Round of Life (Vanity and Friendship)" (transcription from the soundtrack).

Hisaishi changes the instrumentation and texture of his music to match the mood of the scene. When Howl asks Sophie to go see the king for him, a variation of the theme plays again with pizzicato strings and staccato winds (Figure 2) (0:51:29). Like the last time the theme was played in this way, Sophie is curious. She wonders why he asked her to go, how the meeting will go, and what will happen to her and Howl after the meeting. She accepts Howl's proposition and confidently attends the meeting in place of Howl. The melody in figure 2 is in a different key than the original statement, however the arpeggiated minor chords are still very much used. In this recapitulation of the melody, the lower strings play a countermelody. Howl asks Sophie to fulfill a big task for him and while she is skeptical, she follows through because she loves him. The short articulation of the strings represents Sophie's concern and the melody and countermelody reflect their back-and-forth conversation.

Even when outcomes are uncertain, the melody plays as the love Howl and Sophie have for one another is strong. A variation of the theme plays after the castle gets bombed and Howl returns to protect Sophie and the others (1:32:38). Just as the theme varied when Sophie and

Howl escaped Suliman, the theme varies when the war rages right in their city. The variation of the theme happens when outside factors override their love, shown by the key and time signature changes. (Figure 3) “Love Under Fire” has a distinct arpeggiation as the melody however the arpeggiation is a suspended chord rather than a minor chord that is usually used in the main melody. Hisaishi changes this to emphasize a moment in which the outcome of the situation may not be so clear, hence the suspension. In this instance, Howl and Sophie are running away from something, escaping the evil of the henchmen.



Figure 3. *Howl's Moving Castle*. "Merry-Go-Round of Life (Love Under Fire)" (transcription from the soundtrack).

Howl's Moving Castle is a great example of how Hisaishi changes many musical aspects of his pieces without altering the melody to a point of unrecognizability. This constant of the melody brings the main idea of the movie, the love between Sophie and Howl, to life. Hisaishi does this again in *The Wind Rises* but instead uses two different themes and because he writes music for a less dynamic character than Sophie was, impact of the score on the film differs while nonetheless creating a cohesive and compelling soundtrack.

***The Wind Rises*; released July 20th, 2013**

The Wind Rises is a fictionalized biographical animated film about aeronautical engineer Jiro Horikoshi. The film follows him along his life journey, beginning when he is a young boy dreaming of building airplanes all the way up to his experience building them and seeing his creations be flown. The film also follows his love story with Nahoko Satomi.

In *The Wind Rises*, Hisaishi uses two themes throughout the film to represent two different parts of Jiro's life. In general, Hisaishi uses "A Journey" when a scene depicts Jiro working on his aeronautical engineering and "Nahoko" during scenes when Jiro and Nahoko are with one another. Like *Howl's Moving Castle* the instrumentation, key, time signature, and texture often change but the melody and harmony generally stay constant. In this film however, Jiro is a relatively static character and does not go through the same character changes that Sophie does. Because of this, the use of repeated theme does not reflect Jiro's character development but rather his life and the different challenges he goes through. These two themes are used many times throughout the film, but I will only be talking about a few instances to show how Hisaishi uses these themes to elevate the story being told by changing these certain aspects of each iteration of the themes. These two themes interact with each other and are interwoven

throughout the film so because of this I will be talking about each occurrence in chronological order.

The main theme of the film is entitled “A Journey.” This melody repeats often throughout the film (Figure 4). Hisaishi first introduces “A Journey” in the first scene, quickly setting up the film (0:00:19). Just as the title card introduces the film, it also introduces the main theme. Jiro sleeps soundly in his home when the camera suddenly cuts to him climbing up to a plane that sits



Figure 4. *The Wind Rises*. "A Journey" (transcription from the soundtrack)

upon his roof, and we quickly realize that Jiro dreams. Here we are introduced to Jiro’s goal of being an aeronautical engineer and the basis of the film. The beginning of the theme outlines a descending G major chord (Figure 4, m. 1-2). The melody often uses chromatic suspended notes and appoggiatura on the down beats of the measures (Figure 4, m. 3). This theme acts as a love theme between Jiro and aeronautical engineering occurring during big moments of his life with regards to his passion. The wide range of this theme, reaching two octaves, represents the flight path of an airplane as well as the many ups and downs Jiro goes through throughout this film.

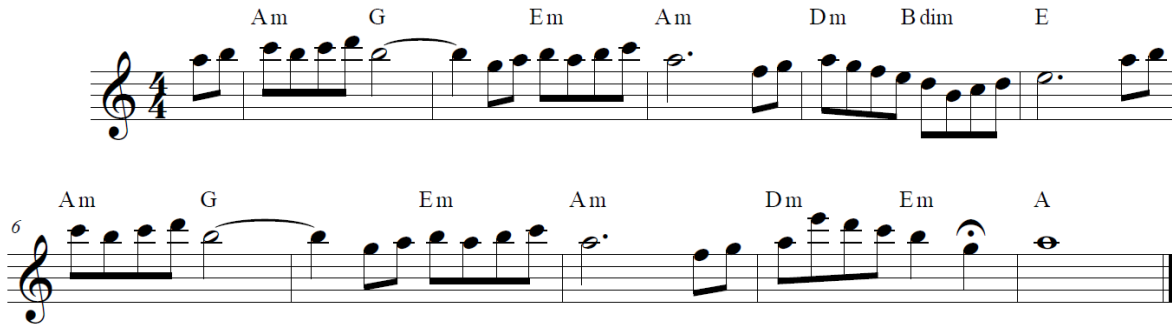


Figure 5. *The Wind Rises*. "Nahoko's Theme" (transcription from the soundtrack)

There are two repeated themes in this film representing Jiro's two loves, planes and Nahoko. "Nahoko's Theme" (Figure 5) plays when Jiro meets her on the train after the wind blows his hat away and she catches it (0:14:14). Hisaishi uses this theme as a love theme in moments when Jiro and Nahoko encounter each other. This theme feels melancholic, played with different instrumentation for different instances but the mood of this theme feels mournful even in happier situations. The theme's original statement is in A minor and almost all subsequent occurrences of this theme are in a minor key as well. Many of the instances of this theme are played by a single solo piano line. When it is accompanied, the harmony in the final measure often goes to an A major chord leaving the viewer and listener with hope for the future. The underlying tension beneath this theme is due to it being in a minor key and often played with minimal accompaniment foreshadowing Nahoko's untimely death at the end of the film.

Hisaishi uses different instrumentation to put emphasis on different aspects of the scene, even when using the same theme. "A Journey" plays once again as Jiro attends his first day at work (0:30:57). This time a cello plays the theme, mirroring Jiro's growth as an aeronautical engineer. The lower register of the cello indicates Jiro transformation into an older and wiser person, as well as a better aeronautical engineer. It also shows that Jiro has greatly advanced toward his goal of creating planes.

Hisaishi often keeps the same instrumentation of repeated theme if he wants the viewer to feel similarly to how you felt when the theme was originally stated. “Nahoko’s theme” plays again when she notices him from across the restaurant (1:08:42). This instance is again just a solo piano line. When Jiro sees her, he gets excited as well with a grinning look on his face. The somber solo piano line represents the brief but impactful interaction they have with each other. The recapitulation of the melody feels nostalgic as this is the first time they have seen each other in years. It feels like Jiro and Nahoko are meeting each other for the first time hence the use of just a single piano line again.

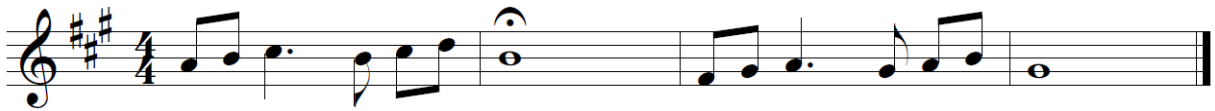


Figure 6. *The Wind Rises*. "Paper Airplane" (transcription from the soundtrack)

Hisaishi also uses parallels between the script and his own music to emphasize the story occurring. The next instance of “Nahoko’s theme” plays after Jiro and Nahoko escape a rainstorm (1:11:38). They find a clearing with a rainbow on the other side of the field. Violins play the theme with the rest of the orchestra accompanying. The flute then responds with the same melody as Jiro meets Nahoko’s father. The melody develops more with each instance representing their developing love for one another. The melody still plays with a nostalgic tone. It feels as if Nahoko and Jiro have known each other forever yet they are only just starting to get to know one another. Jiro emphasizes this feeling when he sees the rainbow and says, “I’d almost forgotten what rainbows look like.” He has not seen her in so many years that he perhaps almost forgot what she looked like. Prior to their encounter in the restaurant, the theme had not been played since they first encountered each other on the train.

Hisaishi uses the original “Nahoko’s theme” to reflect many different moods but sometimes slightly alters his original melodies to match the mood of the scene. The first few notes of “Nahoko’s theme” are quoted as Jiro and Nahoko are playing with a toy airplane (1:22:04). This time however, the snippet of “Nahoko’s theme” plays in A major, giving the scene a more cheerful tone than other instances of “Nahoko’s theme.” Jiro and Nahoko are becoming closer with each other, and their love does not seem so distant.

Hisaishi often uses his music as a foreshadowing tool, further supporting Miyazaki’s storytelling. Jiro receives a telegram from Nahoko’s father letting him know that she has had a lung hemorrhage (1:30:46). This shocks and upsets Jiro and he decides to get to Tokyo as fast as possible. Intense music plays that often quotes “Nahoko’s theme” reminding the viewer that Jiro’s urgency is for Nahoko. He apologizes for not arriving sooner, they kiss, and the full melody then plays in a heart wrenching manner telling us that their future together is clouded and dependent on Nahoko’s health. Both know that and choose to ignore it for the love they share with one another, but it appears the music knows what their futures look like and pleads for them not to fall in love with one another as they are both going to end up heartbroken.

Hisaishi uses subtle musical gestures to suggest certain things about the story. Jiro and Nahoko expedite their marriage as Kurokawa will not allow an unmarried couple to live together under his roof (1:43:23). The moment Jiro sees Nahoko just prior to getting married “A Journey” plays. At first it seemed strange to me that Nahoko’s theme would not be playing at a time like this. Almost all instances of the depiction of their love have been accompanied by Nahoko’s theme. So why not this time? I believe that aeronautical engineering and Nahoko were largely separate parts of his life and their wedding marks their coming together. The instrumentation is very similar to Nahoko’s theme when “A Journey” plays here. The solo guitar plays the melody,

and a string accompaniment then joins, very similar to how in Nahoko's theme, the solo piano line plays the melody and later the strings accompany. In a following scene, Jiro comes home late but must continue working on his plane design. Nahoko is in bed and asks Jiro to come closer to her as he works (1:49:36). Jiro moves the desk nearer to her. They hold hands as he works. "Nahoko's Theme" plays as she sleeps this time on accordion. The mood of this recapitulation is not as somber as the ones prior. This time, there exists an air of relief. At this moment, everyone has come to the realization that Nahoko does not have much time left. Instead of being sad and upset by it, everyone, especially Jiro, is happy to be able to spend these last few days with her. When we hear accordion, we expect to hear "A Journey" but instead "Nahoko's theme" plays. Hisaishi once again subverts our expectations to show us that Jiro's journey is now both aeronautical engineering and Nahoko together.

Joe Hisaishi uses similar techniques in each of these first two films. Both films utilize repeated themes to demonstrate both the changes in the scene's mood but also how the characters are developing. Both films utilize these repeated themes as love themes. In *Howl's Moving Castle*, "Merry-Go-Round" is a love theme between Howl and Sophie and in *The Wind Rises*, "A Journey" is a love theme between Jiro and aeronautical engineering and "Nahoko's Theme" is a love theme between Jiro and Nahoko. However, in *The Wind Rises*, the difference in meaning behind the two themes becomes clouded after Jiro and Nahoko get married. Hisaishi seems to use each theme interchangeably after the wedding. If there is an important or epic moment in the film Hisaishi will change the instrumentation to reflect that even while keeping the melody the same in most cases. Hisaishi does this to represent love. These two films are almost solely about the love between two people or in the case of *The Wind Rises* between a person and a career path. In films that primarily deal with the idea of love Hisaishi uses one or two repeated themes

throughout the film. Love can often change forms and look different however I believe that the core tenants of love stay the same no matter the situation and Hisaishi's music reflects that idea. When scoring films that are not directly about love, he takes a different approach while keeping the film score cohesive.

In many of his other films, Hisaishi takes a different approach to composing. In *Spirited Away* and *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, while some repeated melodies are used in these films, the film score is largely based around a variety of melodies and harmonies as well as instrumentation, tempo, tonality, and texture. Hisaishi seems to do this in films that are not directly about romantic love but achieves the same outcome either way; a cohesive film score that highlights character development and/or reflects the scene's mood.

***Spirited Away*; released July 20th, 2001**

Spirited Away is a film about a young girl, Chihiro, who moves with her family away from home. On the drive to their new house, her dad gets lost, and they stumble upon an abandoned theme park. There Chihiro's parents seemed to be possessed by the food, so she goes exploring the rest of the park. She soon finds out that the park is more than meets the eye when the sun goes down and the lights turn on. In *Spirited Away*, Hisaishi uses a variety of genres, tempos, instrumentations, tonalities, and textures to depict both Chihiro's development as a character and the changes in a scenes mood while keeping the score cohesive with the film and between pieces.

Even within one scene, Hisaishi changes musical aspects of a piece, here specifically instrumentation, to show many different emotions and emotional changes within a single scene. “One Summer’s Day” is the main theme for the film (Figure 7). It is one of the most famous Ghibli tunes and plays during the opening scene when moving to a new place upsets Chihiro, the main character (0:00:18). This piece reflects Chihiro’s yearning for her old home by using an instrumentation that often leads to a feeling of nostalgia: piano and strings. The piece then seamlessly moves to a triumphant section dominated by brass instrumentation as Chihiro and her family are quickly driving through the woods showing Hisaishi’s ability to transition his music gracefully from one mood to another in a single scene. The piece ends with mysterious chords as the family approaches the abandoned theme park once again showing Hisaishi’s prowess in changing music to match the mood of the scene.

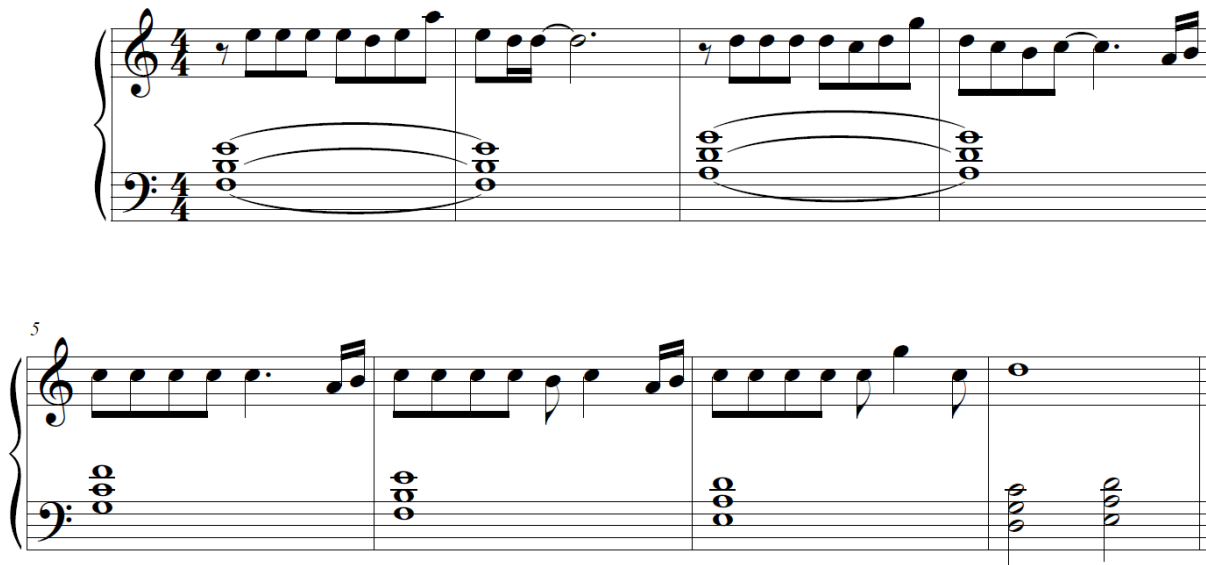


Figure 7. *Spirited Away*. "One Summer's Day" (transcription from the soundtrack)

Hisaishi strategically uses his previous motifs to show the audience Chihiro’s changing character. Chihiro’s parents are lured in by the good smelling food and no one attends to it

(0:08:15). They sit down and start eating while a hesitant Chihiro tries to tell them to stop as they might get in trouble. Chihiro, realizing her attempts to remove them are futile, leaves the restaurant and starts to look around the rest of the abandoned theme park (0:09:44). The “One Summer’s Day” theme is quoted as soon as she steps out to look at the rest of the park. The statement uses the original beginning to the melody, but it then developed more into a different melody. This foreboding music thickens in texture as Chihiro develops a sense of independence with her parents currently occupied. She is already growing from the Chihiro that was in the car earlier in the film and the subtle quote of the previous piece and the variation shows her changing character.

Hisaishi changes the tone of his music to represent Chihiro’s understanding of the strange world she is now engulfed in as well as her development into a more independent person. Chihiro encounters Kamaji the boiler man, from whom Haku told her to seek employment (0:24:50). Kamaji has put a spell on the soot around the boiler room that makes them haul the coal into the boiler. Because of this, he is not in need of any workers. However, Haku urged Chihiro to persist when asking for work, so she stays anyway. At one point, one of the sootballs drops a piece of coal. Chihiro picks it up and takes it to the boiler. Prior to stumbling upon this abandoned theme park and bath house, Chihiro never would have done manual labor. During this time, the stately theme being played in harmonic minor (the fourth scale degree is often raised) reflects the realization that she must work hard to get back with her parents (Figure 8). The chromaticism added by the raised fourth scale degree gives an uneasy feeling to the piece as the soot that has seemingly come to life confuses Chihiro, however, she has seen a lot of strange things today and this does not phase her. The lower end of the music, first occupied by the bass notes of the piano and then later by the tuba and bassoon, are playing a staccato pedal tone which

reinforces the monotonous work that the sootballs and Chihiro are doing. The melody repeats the same motif twice in a row, also emphasizing the labor being done. The key then changes but the same theme repeats representing Chihiro and her dynamism as a character.



Figure 8. *Spirited Away*. "Sootballs" (transcription from the soundtrack)

On occasion, Hisaishi will use instrumentation to directly represent certain characters. Chihiro is unsuccessful in getting a job with Kamaji, but he sends her with another bathhouse worker, Lin, to Yubaba, the boss of the bathhouse, to get a job. Chihiro's first encounter with Yubaba is accompanied by a piece called "Yubaba" (Figure 9) (0:34:43). It starts out with the very highest G on the piano played in conjunction with the lowest G. The high notes directly represent Chihiro while the low represent Yubaba. While it seems as if the low notes dominate the sound initially, you always hear the high notes reflecting Chihiro and her unrelenting begging for a job. Yubaba is cursed to give a job to whomever asks and even though she does not want to, she must. The low notes, Yubaba, try to drown out the high, Chihiro, to no avail. Chihiro signs her contract and is now employed but Yubaba steals her name and Chihiro is now called Sen.

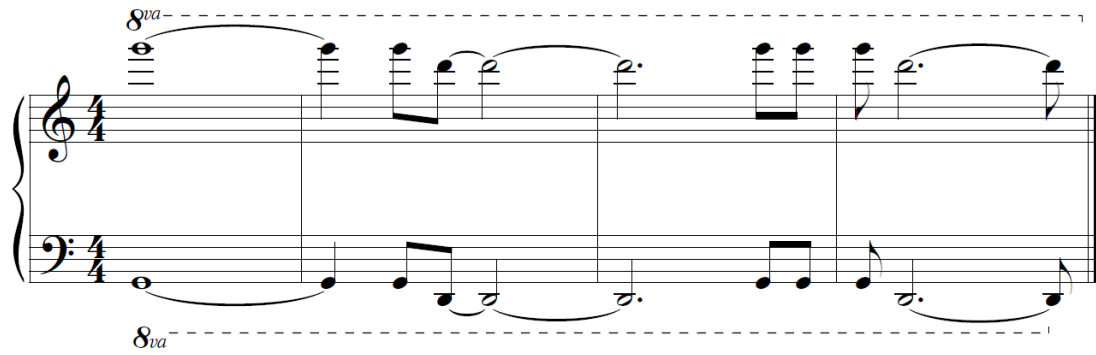


Figure 9. *Spirited Away*. "Yubaba" (transcription from the soundtrack)



Figure 10. *Spirited Away*. "One Summer's Day" (transcription from the soundtrack)

Hisaishi reuses "One Summer's Day" to show parallels between certain scenes. Sen (formerly Chihiro), having just seen her parents as pigs, unable to recognize her, realizes what she must do to get them back to normal so they can leave (0:47:50). Just as moving to a new place was a hard step for Sen in the beginning of the film, this realization is a hard step too so

because of this, “One Summer’s Day” plays once again, in its entirety. The beginning of the C section (Figure 10) is played by a solo piano while Sen cries as a representation of her reaction. She currently feels lonely and hopeless just like she did at the beginning of the film when she was worried about moving away and while that used to be her biggest issue, changing her parents back to their normal state is now her biggest concern. After a moment and Haku’s comfort, represented by the entrance of the orchestra, she refocuses on what must be done. The C section ends with a relatively ambiguous chord built on 4ths and 5ths when Sen walks back to the bathhouse.

Sen’s musical representation as the flute in “It’s Hard Work” (Figure 11) alters quickly between two scenes to show her development more clearly. Sen is now committed to rescuing her parents no matter what she must do, so, she continues to work with Lin because she cannot rescue her parents if she does not (0:52:10). The music reflects the hard work being done in the bathhouse to keep it running. The piece begins with a short ostinato that continues throughout the piece reflecting the repetition and monotony of working. The main melody played on a flute using a C minor pentatonic scale also matches the work theme of this tune. The melody has a lot of repeated notes in it and rather than a long slurred melodic line, it comprises of some dotted rhythms and short staccato notes. The C minor pentatonic along with the syncopation, dotted rhythms, and staccato notes, gives off a feeling of inexperience, uncertainty, and slight distress as Sen learns how to be a hard worker. In a following scene, Sen now encounters what is thought to be a strange stink spirit in the bath house and has been stuck with the job of tending to this spirit, as the rest of the workers are too afraid to (0:58:08). Hisaishi makes the music feel uneasy by using quartal harmony, chromaticism, and short horn interjections to represent the uneasiness felt amongst the rest of the bathhouse workers. On top of this uneasy accompaniment is a flute

melody played using the F major pentatonic scale to reflect Sen's growing confidence and initiative when working with the stink spirit. What plays while she takes care of the stink spirit is much more confident and rises above the accompaniment just as Sen rose above the rest of the workers to take care of this spirit.



Figure 11. *Spirited Away*. "It's Hard Work" (transcription for the soundtrack)

Hisaishi uses his music to emphasize the celebration of the end of Sen's journey. At the end of the film, Yubaba makes a deal with Sen and if she correctly identifies her parents in a group of a large bunch of pigs, they can all go home. The entire bathhouse staff looks on to see if she makes the right decision. When she says that none of the pigs are her mother and father, everyone bursts out into celebration and a triumphant piece plays. The celebration and music show Sen's maturation as at the beginning of the film all the bathhouse workers either did not like Sen or were indifferent to her, figuring her as a nuisance. However, this scene here shows how she has grown and conducted herself to become a very likeable person that everyone wants to cheer for.

Hisaishi uses these different pieces to highlight either the development that Sen goes through as a character or to highlight certain aspects of a scene. Either way, the film score stays interesting, and the pieces never feel so different from each other that it sounds strange. The changing music reflects a changing Sen. In *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, he uses similar techniques but this time on a less dynamic character. These techniques lend more to Nausicaä's changing surroundings rather than her dynamism as a character.

***Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*; released March 11th, 1984**

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind is a climate fiction film about a toxic jungle that consumes the entire world. With this toxic jungle people have differing opinions on how to solve the problem and this causes conflict between the different kingdoms.

Figure 12. *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. "Nausicaä Opening" (transcription from the soundtrack)

Figure 13. *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. "Nausicaä Opening" (transcription from the soundtrack)

Hisaishi uses main themes to introduce the tone of the film. The opening theme plays during the opening credits right after the opening scene (Figure 12) (0:01:57). Using harmonies based around a Cm9 chord, the main theme evokes a very mysterious feeling, one that fits very well with the said scene and the tone of the movie. The solo piano melody line is sparse and lonely, matching the feeling of the toxic jungle. The piece concludes with the lower strings of the

orchestra playing big chords on the off beats (Figure 13), lending to an epic feeling and preparing the viewer for the hero's journey to follow.

Hisaishi uses certain instruments for different settings within a film giving each location a sound, creating a sonic world to match what is on screen. While Nausicaä explores the toxic jungle, the accompanying music is all digital instruments (0:04:15). This creates a futuristic sound built around fast arpeggiations that lends to a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty to match the mystery and volatility of the toxic jungle. The pulsating feeling and electric piano flourishes that match the scurrying insects in the jungle characterize this piece. In the following scene, an Ohm, a large insect that rules the toxic jungle, chases Nausicaä while she tries to leave the jungle (0:09:43). A piece with a fast tempo, four chord loop and the driving rhythm, centered around a repeating eighth two sixteenth note rhythm, played by the percussion demonstrates the danger Nausicaä feels. This repetition of the harmony and rhythm emphasizes the chase and danger that is imminent, perfectly introducing the Ohm to the viewer and letting us know that this is not a creature to be trifled with. A similar sound will be used in many of the battle scenes henceforth once again creating a world within the music itself.

Hisaishi will alter melodies and their instrumentation to fit the mood of certain scenes. When Obaba and Nausicaä discuss the tapestry, depicting a prophecy, on the wall, Nausicaä's theme plays once again (0:19:52). While initially hopeful for the future, the threat of the toxic jungle still weighs on her mind. Hisaishi alters the melody slightly and this time it is doubled on koto (Japanese zither) and a flute (Figure 14). In the original statement of Nausicaä's theme, the B section rises and fills out with orchestra. In this instance, the melody descends, and the instrumentation stays unchanged between sections, giving a feeling that hope is fleeting. Nausicaä wants to help Lord Yupa study the toxic jungle to try and stop it from destroying

kingdoms but as shown by the descending melody and absence of full orchestral accompaniment, she feels helpless in doing so.



Figure 14. *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. "The Man in Blue" (transcription from the soundtrack)

Hisaishi uses subtle musical expressions to help guide the viewer throughout the film.

Nausicaä plans to work with the Tolmekians for now to try and figure out what she can do to stop the toxic jungle from spreading and the violence that occurs. Before she leaves on the Tolmekian ship, three young girls approach her (0:43:37). A melancholy but loving theme plays as she hugs the three girls goodbye (Figure 15). As she assures them that she will return the theme loses its sorrow and hope emerges from the music with a motif that parallels the now hopeful feeling of the three young girls. The modulation that eventually ends on a D major chord is where hope is highest and then as soon as Nausicaä boards the Tolmekian ship a C minor chord plays once again bringing the viewer back to a feeling of uncertainty.



Figure 15. *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. "The Valley of the Wind" (transcription from the soundtrack)

Hisaishi uses themes to reveal truths about characters, further supporting their character development. Nausicaä in the toxic jungle after a couple of ships had crashed (0:52:46). The leader of the Tolmekian army, Kushana, was stowed on Nausicaä's ship. Kushana threatens to use a gun on Nausicaä and the other people she saved from the crashing ship. Nausicaä warns her that this would cause the insects to descend upon them. Kushana ignores her advice and just as Nausicaä said, insects arrive. Nausicaä apologizes to the Ohm while they examine the situation. The Ohm warmly embraces her, and a theme (Figure 16) is played in F minor that a child sings (0:56:13). While this fact has not been revealed at this point in the film, Nausicaä has loved insects since she was a child and the use of a child's voice to sing this theme foreshadows that fact.



Figure 16. *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. "Contact With the Ohmu" (transcription from the soundtrack)

Hisaishi uses his music to directly reflect the feelings of characters. After Nausicaä returns to Pejite with Asbel, they discover that it has been destroyed and the people of Pejite plan to lure the insects to the Valley of the Wind to try and take the giant warrior out of the hands of the Tolmekians (1:19:05). Once Nausicaä hears of this plan, she knows it will bring instant destruction to her home and to her people. She begs the people of Pejite to stop the plan, but they take her prisoner instead. An ostinato plays using a repeated arpeggiation on an E minor chord until it moves for two measures to an F Major chord (Figure 17). Many of the people surrounding Nausicaä are hell bent on destroying the toxic jungle as opposed to looking for other

solutions. The E minor chord repeating many times over represents the destruction happening all around her and the occasional F major chord represents Nausicaä trying to stop the destruction.

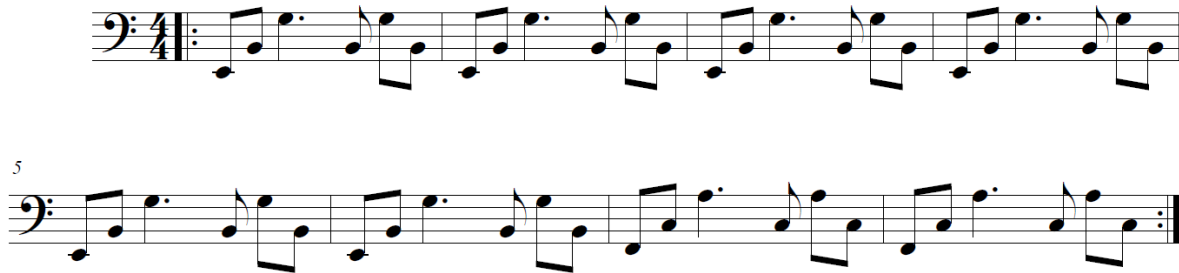


Figure 17. *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. "Annihilation of Pejite" (transcription from the soundtrack)

While the pieces I showed you are just a few of the many beautiful examples of Hisaishi's work, he has many other scores where his ability to use different musical aspects from film to film and piece to piece is on full display. It's because of this that his music is so compelling, cohesive, and serves well whatever is on screen, whether that be the magical bathhouse of *Spirited Away* or say the toxic jungle shown in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. I certainly hope this analysis showed why Hisaishi's music is so important especially when it comes to film scoring, showing how he uses many different musical techniques to emphasize the character development happening in the animation. With the 11th Miyazaki-Hisaishi movie coming out in July I think now is an especially good time to look back on what Hisaishi has done with the music in these films. There has been little academic writing on his music and especially given its global success I believe it is important to talk more about this music and hopefully inspire more people to not only watch the films and listen to the music but also to inspire people to write about this beautiful music.

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