Meet the Composer: 
**Tōru Takemitsu**

**Age Range:** Elementary  
**Introduction:** Composers write music, just like authors write books. In the Class Notes “Meet the Composer” series, we will learn a little bit about the achievements, backstory, and influences of a variety of composers. Get ready to learn about these influential composers and listen to some of their music.

**BACKGROUND**

Tōru Takemitsu [TOH-roo tah-keh-MEET-sooh] was born in Tokyo in 1930. At the age of 14, he was forced to join the Japanese army. During his time in the military, he was introduced to a lot of music. He had very little formal music training. Later in life, he often talked about how he learned a lot about music through frequent, careful listening. As a composer, Tōru Takemitsu had many influences, including European and American music, early electronic music, traditional Japanese music and instruments, and *gamelan*, a collection of percussion instruments from Indonesia. He also wrote books and was interested in experimental techniques in theater and visual art.

Tōru Takemitsu wrote music for all types of ensembles, from solo instruments to large orchestras. He also composed soundtracks for over 100 movies. He died in Tokyo at age 66.

**MUSIC**

1. Tōru Takemitsu composed music for many films. This piece is a *waltz*, which is a piece of music that goes together with a certain kind of dance. In a waltz, the beats are organized into groups of three to go along with the dance steps. As you listen, imagine graceful dancers waltzing across a dance floor.

   “Waltz,” from the movie *The Face of Another*. Composed 1966. Video approx. 2.5 minutes.

2. Tōru Takemitsu wrote a piece featuring five percussionists with full orchestra. Each percussionist is instructed to wear a different color. The colors match up with long ribbons connected to bells. In the next video, notice the colors and ribbons. The music blends elements of European and Japanese music to create something new.

   Excerpts from *From me flows what you call time*. Composed 1990. Video approx. 2.5 minutes.

3. Takemitsu’s style of composition changed over the years but many of his themes and sources of inspiration stayed the same. He wrote many pieces about rain, nature, and wind. Watch all or some of the next piece. Can you name each instrument you see and hear? Do any of them play in unexpected ways?

   *Rain Spell*. Composed 1982. Video approx. 10 minutes.
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MUSIC, cont.

4. *Sakura* means “cherry blossoms” in Japanese, and it is also the name of a famous Japanese folk tune. There are many versions of this folk tune. Tōru Takemitsu composed this version for choir.

*Sakura*. Composed 1979. Video approx. 5 minutes.

CREATE, CONNECT, & RESPOND

1. Tōru Takemitsu was influenced by nature and the seasons and wrote many pieces about rain. Explore several pieces about rain (including one by Takemitsu) in this [Themed Lesson: Rain](#).

2. Take your own nature walk and listen to sounds that inspire you. Use the [Themed Lesson: Nature](#) to guide your activity.

✓ Follow along with this lesson online! www.classnotes.org
✓ Broken link? Need help adapting a lesson? Contact [Katie Condon](mailto:katie.condon@yourclassical.com), education specialist
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