

Hexatonic collection centrality in Jay Alan Yim's "Rain Palace"

The primary source of the musical materials in Jay Alan Yim's "Rain Palace" is the group of hexachords known as the hexatonic collection. This collection, which can also be described as set class (014589), has a high degree of symmetry and therefore contains only four distinct members. These four pitch-class sets, when written as scales or in normal form, have the interval class pattern 1-3-1-3-1, alternating semitones and minor thirds. Straus identifies the four sets as follows, by the lowest pitch-class semitone unique to each.¹ See Figure 1 for these four hexachords as pitch-class sets.

Figure 1: The four distinct sets of the hexatonic collection, set class (014589)

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|--------------------|----------|
| HEX _{0,1} | [014589] |
| HEX _{1,2} | [12569T] |
| HEX _{2,3} | [2367TE] |
| HEX _{3,4} | [3478E0] |

¹ Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 149.

This group of four pitch-class sets comprises two complementary pairs: $HEX_{0,1}$ is the complement of $HEX_{2,3}$, and $HEX_{1,2}$ of $HEX_{3,4}$. Yim emphasizes the self-complementary nature of this set class throughout the piece, often presenting the hexachords in their complementary pairs. The pairs of complementary hexachords complete the aggregate of all twelve pitch classes, making the piece rich with chromatic saturation. However, Yim does not appear to be using serial procedures, so I have found it most useful to analyze the hexachords as unordered collections. The sonorities are most frequently heard with all six (or twelve) pitch classes converging in dense blocks of sound, though the hexachords may also be arpeggiated or used melodically.

Possible subsets of the hexatonic collection include major and minor triads, augmented triads, and trichords belonging to set class (015). Yim seems particularly interested in the (015) trichords, which appear frequently in melodies (creating a recurring motif of melodic perfect fourths and fifths) as well as in the hexachord voicings in some sections. He does not exploit the tonal possibilities as much as could be imagined (for example, a composer might use polytonal writing employing the dual major/minor keys implied by the hexachord, or have sections that are clearly in each of those keys), although he does hint at tonality from time to time. (Section D contains an example that will be discussed below.)

I hear the shape of this piece as a large wave, with a series of smaller waves within it. This watery metaphor may be reinforced by the title and some of the expressive directions (for example, letter C is to be “Pulsed, but fluid,” M is “Like a gentle shower,” and R “Like peals of thunder”), but it is also suggested by the purely aural experience of the piece. The changing meters give a sense of fluidity and unmeasured time, and the

