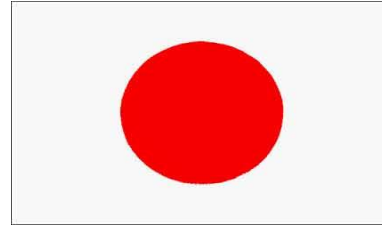


Music of Japan



Emperor Akihito



Overview



- Region=East Asia
- Consists of 3,000 islands, capital=Tokyo
- Constitutional monarchy with prime minister
- History traces back to 660 BC

Cultural Influences

- China (system of writing; music)
- India, Korea, China (religion: Buddhism)
- Europe and U.S. (Western classical music; popular culture)
 - During Meiji period (1868-1911, Western art music incorporated into educational system)

Japanese Isolationism

- Edo/Tokugawa period (1600-1867): period of extreme isolationism, lead to consolidation of traditional arts
- Japanese religions:
 - Shinto (animist, was state religion until WWII)
 - Zen Buddhism (Japanese form of Buddhism, emphasizing meditation to reach state of heightened awareness)

SHINTO

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgQ4eCc38dM>

ZEN

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WAi2fwUqN4

Zen Art Forms



Japanese Ethos

- Complex simplicity
- Emphasis on process
- Silence is just as important as sound

Arts important tool for spiritual development

THE MUSIC OF JAPAN

Traditional Japanese music genres have long histories but have changed little in hundreds of years. In a modern world, it could be perceived as stagnation, but it is in fact the reflection of the Japanese value of stability. The music is primarily pentatonic with auxiliary pitches.

- Performances are uniform with great decorum. Music types include court music, musical drama, chamber music, and chant. Traditional Japanese music is performed today in recital halls inside great department stores in the Ginza area of Tokyo.

Hogaku (Japanese Traditional Music)

- PITCH AND SCALES:
 - Octave divided into 12 intervals (NOT tempered) and not the same depending upon instrument
 - Pentatonic scales common
 - Scales=collection of intervals around “nuclear” tones located a fourth apart (emphasis on fourths)

Timbre and Melody

- Use of variety of timbres, including unpitched sounds
- Sparse textures
- Singing tonal quality=tense, narrow
- Emphasis on melody, not harmony
- Use of short motifs
- Open-ended pieces
- Varied repetitions

Rhythm and Form

- Use of flexible or “beatless” rhythm
- Percussion rhythm may be different from melody rhythm (“sliding door effect”)
- Most common form: jo-ha-kyu (based on tempo changes)
- Jo = slow introduction
- Ha=breaking apart (tempo builds)
- Kyu=rushing, tempo reaches peak, then slows to end

Hichiriki



Instruments

Shakuhachi



Koto



Shamisen

The Shakuhachi

- End-blown bamboo flute (4 holes in front, 1 in back)
- Wide range of timbres from “pure” to wide
- Flourished during Tokugawa period
- Associated with samurai/priest class, used as “spiritual tool”
- Music tends to be unmetered, phrases follow breaths

“Tsuru no sugomori” (Cranes are Nesting)

1 2

3 4 *tr* (to C#) 5

6 (*slightly faster*) 7 *tr* (to G#)

8 *tr* (to Bb) no *tr* 9

10 11 *tr* (to C#) 12 *tr* (to C#)

(continues)

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Tsuru no sugomori" (Cranes are Nesting). The score is written on five staves, each containing a line of music. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and trills. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is written in a style that suggests a traditional Japanese melody. The score includes several trills, indicated by the abbreviation "tr" and the target note in parentheses. The tempo is marked as "slightly faster" at measure 6. The score ends with the instruction "(continues)".

“Tsuru no sugomori” (Cranes are Nesting)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1XguDd43gc>

The Koto

- Zither with hollow sound board, 13 strings, and movable bridges.
- Originally used by elite as “spiritual tool”, later played by low/merchant class
- Famous piece for koto: Rokudan (“Six Sections”). Each *dan* has 104 beats, repeated with variations.

The Koto

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6ALjvjmjHg>

The Shamisen

- 3-string long-necked lute, wooden body with skin back and face.
- Includes “buzzing” string.
- Associated with dramatic music, used in *bunraku*, *kabuki*.
- Associated with geishas performing in tea houses.

SHAMISEN

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJhIX6Lkq_Y

Hichiriki and Shou

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRZ1eNlzhoA>

Nohkahn

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvK79-1G6xk>

Kabuki Theater

- Degatari — the onstage musicians in kabuki
- Geza — the offstage orchestra in kabuki who produce the sound effects
- Chobo — the pair of onstage musicians, one who narrates and the second who accompanies him on the shamisen

- Debayashi — literally “coming-out orchestra”; a music group in kabuki that comes out onstage to accompany a specific scene

- Nagauta — a lyric genre of shamisen music, also sung in unison chorus in kabuki
- Kyogenkata — the man who plays the woodblocks (*hyoshigi*) in accelerated beats to announce the rise of the curtain in kabuki

Kabuki / Dojoji

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtPIR6ouQTk>

Noh

- Noh was transformed into a serious Buddhist art by Kannami Kiyotsugu (1333-1384) by combining folk dances, theatrics, religious, and courtly entertainment
- Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1444) — the son of Kannami Kiyotsugu. He transformed noh into a refined court form.

- Uta - songs
- Hayashi – an ensemble of nokhan (flute) and three drums used in noh

- Ko-tsuzumi and o-tsuzumi –hourglass-shaped drums struck with the fingers, of hayashi
- Taiko – shallow barrel drum struck with two thick sticks of hayashi
- Kakegoe – calls shouted by the drummers in noh drumming
- Yokyoku – the vocal part of noh sung by actors and onstage chorus. There are two basic styles.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o36ykVEOYxs>

Bunraku (puppet theater)

- Patronized by artisan and merchant classes (Tokugawa period)
- Requires two musicians: singer/narrator (*tayu*) and shamisen player (in past, served as apprentices for many years)
- Uses large, elaborate puppets, some requiring several puppeteers
- Plots highly emotional, like today's soap operas
- Requires intense training and discipline

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UV938f46Wpg>

Buddhist Chant

- Shomyo — Buddhist chant, including syllabic and melismatic, in free rhythm
- The Nara period (553-794) and the Heian period (794-1185), with capitals respectively at Nara and Kyoto, where periods when the ruling clans adopted Mahayana Buddhism.
- Mahayana Buddhism - the theology that salvation from suffering and death was open to all

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ebpyu4rE7XE>

Gagaku

- In the ninth century, during the Heian period, a standard gagaku orchestra was created under the order of the emperor, and a repertory of two main categories became standardized: *togaku* (music of Chinese and Indian origin) and *komagaku* (music of Korean and Manchurian origin).

- Jo-ha-kyu — aesthetic scheme of exposition in gagaku. Jo is the *netori*, the slow beginning. Ha is the regular rhythmic section. Kyu is the rushing to the end.

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bm8XpWidUac>

Karaoke

- (Ka-ra-oh-kay) “Empty orchestra”
- Technology designed to support and enhance amateur voices.
- Used to reinforce traditional Japanese custom of group singing, considered vital for good group dynamics.
- Scoring based on accuracy of reproduction, but also “personal expressiveness”

Discussion of Different Cultural Values:

- In Japan, maintaining tradition is important. In pedagogy and performance, the emphasis is on playing music traditionally, without innovation.

Music and Theater and social class structure

- Musical/theatrical genres tell us about Japanese history and social values. Genres are linked to social class and historical epochs. For example, gagaku remains a symbol of the authority of the Imperial court while noh, the art of the samurai, emphasizes simplicity and personal enlightenment through self-understanding and self-reliance. Kabuki and bunraku illustrate the fondness of the townsfolk for theater.

Gender Issues:

- The koto is believed to originally have been a court musical instrument played by men; the shamisen was originally an instrument played by banished samurai who became wandering Buddhist monks who utilized the shakuhachi as a weapon when needed.

- women have come to play these instruments during the Edo period in sankyoku, an ensemble music that has been associated with the geisha. The term geisha literally means “arts person,” whereby most Westerners mistakenly think the term refers to prostitutes.

Layers of Activity in Ensemble Music:

- In ensemble music, certain instruments play the melody heterophonically, while others mark time in regular recurring ways (see gagaku)

Sensitivity to Sound Quality:

- Although ensemble textures are largely monophonic and/or heterophonic, great emphasis is placed on subtle differentiations of timbre and ornamentation.

Sensitivity to Tempo:

- Relatively slow tempos with constant, subtle fluctuations in basic pulse. Jo-ha-kyu aesthetic ideal is pervasive in both large and small forms: slow introductory exposition (jo); faster, more rhythmically regular middle section (ha); and still faster, more intense drive toward the end (kyu); often with a sudden slowing down at the end of a piece.

Discussion Questions

- Generally, in comparison to Japan, how does our culture regard the performance and listening of music 1,000, or even 500-years-old?
- In what ways may we compare Gregorian chant with Buddhist chant, and thus contrast it with Shinto music?

- May we find equivalents to court music in the West? Why or why not?