EIGHT

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East Asia/Japan

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Present-day Japan impresses the first-time visitor as an intense, fascinating, and sometimes confusing combination of old and new, of Eastern and Western and things beyond categorization (see fig. 8–1). Strolling through the Ginza area of Tokyo, for example, you find many colorful remnants of an earlier age sprinkled among the gigantic department stores and elegant boutiques; and always there is the ubiquitous McDonald's (pronounced *Makudonarudosu*). Tiny noodle shops and old stores selling kimono material or fine china carry the atmosphere of a past era. Looming over a central boulevard, in the midst of modern office buildings, is the Kabuki-za, a large, impressive theater built in the traditional style.

As the visitor begins to sense from the streets of Japan's capital, many aspects of Japanese life today—from architecture to social attitudes to music—are an intriguing mix of the traditional and the foreign. Japan has absorbed cultural influences from outside her borders for centuries, many of which originate in other parts of Asia. The writing system comes from China and one of the major religions, Buddhism, is from India, through Korea and China. Connections with Chinese and Korean music and musical instruments are a fundamental part of the history of traditional music in Japan.* In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, European and American ideas and objects have also had a major impact on Japanese culture.

Although cultural borrowing has clearly been important in Japanese history, the worn-out stereotype of the Japanese as "mere imitators" must also be laid aside. The Japanese have developed a unique culture, both through their own creativity and by imaginatively adapting foreign elements into their own culture. During much of her history, geographical and political circumstances have isolated Japan to the extent that such independent creativity and adaptation were necessary. A group of islands separated from the Asian continent by an often treacherous sea, Japan set herself apart for several centuries. This isolation reached its height in the Tokugawa, or Edo period (1600–1867), when Japan's borders were mostly closed to the outside world. Many customs and ideas that we consider "traditionally Japanese" were developed during this period. Most

* In this chapter, "traditional music" in relation to Japan will refer to those musical genres developed mainly in pre-Meiji Japan—that is, before 1868 and the beginning of a period of strong Western influence on Japanese music.

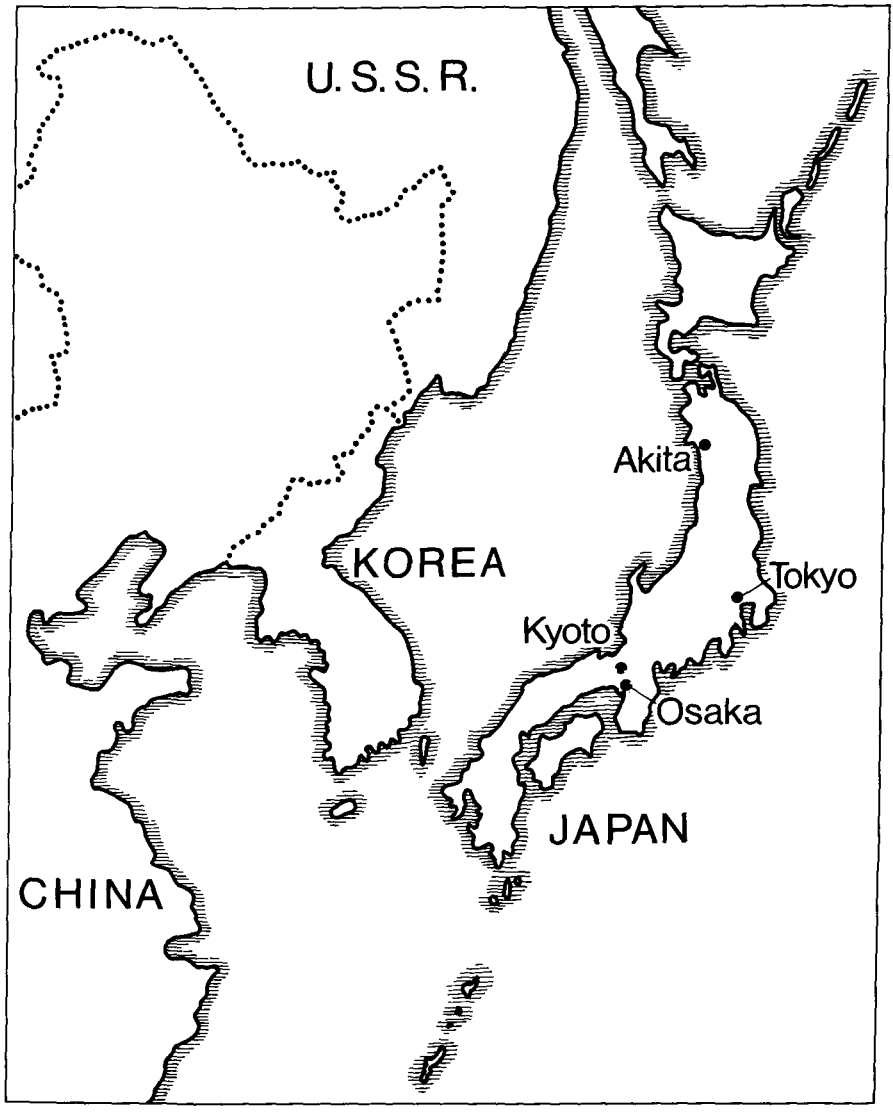


Fig. 8–1. ***Map of Japan. Cities mentioned in this chapter are shown.***

traditional music presented in this chapter, for instance, dates from the Tokugawa period, though its roots may go back farther.

On the whole, Japan's culture combines a deep respect for tradition with creativity and flexibility. Many layers of culture, musical and otherwise, exist side by side, different yet harmonious. One sign of this diversity lies in the music the Japanese listen to today.

LISTENING HABITS OF CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE

In concert halls, theaters, clubs, and bars, Japanese looking for entertainment find all kinds of live musical performances: Japanese traditional music, Western classical music, rock, jazz, punk, country and western, and music from around the world. In addition, television, radio, tapes, and compact discs provide recorded music of every imaginable type.

The kinds of music Japanese most enjoy listening to and performing usually vary by the age of the listener.* Japanese children learn to play the recorder and sing European, American, and Japanese folk songs in their schools; many also take private lessons on a Western musical instrument. Children learn and sing theme songs from television shows and commercials, and these sometimes become hit records. As teenagers, many Japanese listen to the latest hits from the West as well as to Japanese popular music. Teenagers know a great deal about the latest developments in sound technology and spend more on music—recordings and equipment—than any other segment of the population. Among young adults, tastes tend toward the more mellow popular music genres, such as contemporary folk and so-called golden oldies, or Western classical music or traditional folk songs. At this stage in life, singing with the *karaoke* machine (described below) can become an important form of musical entertainment. Middle-aged adults like to listen to older Japanese and Western popular songs, Western classical music, and Japanese folk songs. Along with older people, the middle-aged are most likely to enjoy traditional Japanese music, which they hear on television and at live performances.

Given the high quality of audio and video equipment available in contemporary Japan, it is not surprising that people use the mass media for most of their music listening. About one in four Japanese listens to music solely through television sets (NHK 1982:38). Each week, Japanese public and private television stations broadcast a dozen or more music-variety shows. Many of these feature popular music, but some offer performances of *kabuki* theater, Western opera, or symphonies. Young people in particular listen to music on cassette tape players, compact discs, and the radio (NHK 1982:47). Japanese also listen to many live performances featuring both Japanese and foreign performers. On the whole, however, Japanese listening is similar to that in many other countries: the people listen more to recorded music than to live performances and they are not always fully attentive to it. Music is heard in the background of everyday life, whether it is Muzak in a coffee shop or music coming from a radio or television set kept on while people go about their normal activities.

In the last hundred years, the Japanese have become more involved with new music, devoting less time to traditional music. Since the Meiji period (1868–1911), Western music has been influential and its spread has been officially

* The following statements are based on the results of a comprehensive survey of Japanese musical tastes made in 1981 (NHK 1982:68–77).

encouraged through the education system. Despite the overwhelming influence of music from outside Japan, however, traditional music remains very viable. The *kabuki* and *bunraku* theaters in the larger cities are still well attended, as are concerts of traditional instrumental and vocal music. Teachers of instruments such as the *shakuhachi* and the *shamisen* still find many interested pupils of all ages, and televised instruction for such instruments in recent years has helped bolster their popularity. Perhaps the large amount of Western influence has made young people more appreciative of the different beauty of Japanese music and its special relationship to Japanese history and culture.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE TRADITIONAL MUSIC

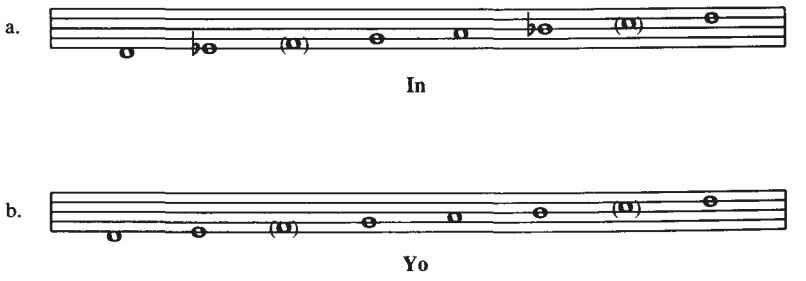
To begin to understand traditional Japanese music it is helpful to examine its general characteristics. There are exceptions to these generalizations, but they should be used as a point of reference for the musical examples that follow.

Pitch/Scales

Like Western music, Japanese music divides the octave into twelve tones. The Japanese tonal system is based on the Chinese system, which in turn developed in a similar way to the Pythagorian system of the West. These notes, when put in pitch sequence, represent an untempered chromatic scale of 12 semitones. While equal temperament has strongly influenced contemporary performers, the exact intervals between notes still differ in traditional music according to genre, school, the piece performed, and the individual performer (Koizumi 1974:73). No single set of pitches is used by all musicians. For example, the mode system used in *gagaku* (orchestra music derived from T'ang China) differs from that used in music for the *koto* (a thirteen-stringed zither). The *gagaku* modal system is linked to Chinese systems, while the *koto* system developed several centuries later in Japan.

Considering this diversity in scale systems, it is not surprising that music historians have developed a wide range of theories to describe them. According to one of the traditional theories, much Japanese music (excluding older genres like *gagaku* and Buddhist chanting) is based on two pentatonic scales, either with or without semitones. The scale used frequently in music for the *koto* and the *shamisen* (a three-stringed lute) is called the *in* scale and contains semitones (e.g., D, E^b, G, A, B^b). The *yo* scale, without semitones (D, E, G, A, B), is often heard in folk songs and early popular songs like "Nonki-bushi" in recorded selection 50. These scales are shown in ex. 8–1 with their auxiliary notes in parentheses.

A more recent theory holds that the traditional concept of the pentatonic scale (such as the *in* and *yo* scales) does not adequately explain what is found in the music itself. Instead, it is more useful to interpret Japanese music on the basis of



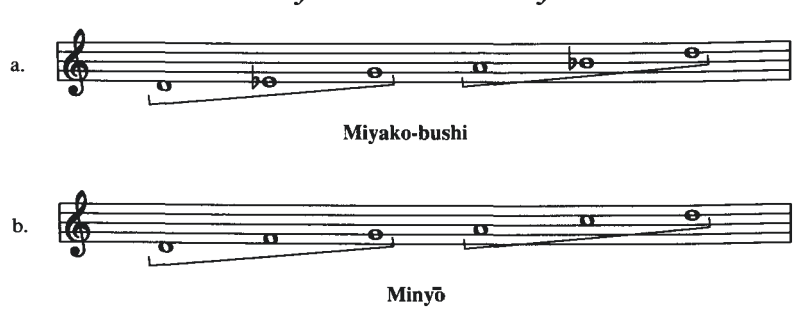
Ex. 8–1. ***In and yo scales***

"nuclear tones," located a fourth apart, and the main notes that appear between them (Koizumi 1974:76). Actually, the pitches thus produced are the same in the genres of music mentioned above: the *miyako-bushi* scale applies to *koto* and *shamisen* music and the *minyō* scale is found in folk song (ex. 8–2). What is new in this theory is the emphasis on fourths, as indicated here. In fact, much melodic movement tends to emphasize this interval (e.g., the use of *miyako-bushi* nuclear tones in "Hakusen no," recorded selection 47).

Timbre

The Japanese aesthetic sense favors the use of a broad range of sounds and tone qualities in their music. In particular, "unpitched" sounds are commonly heard in the middle of instrumental melodies. When we hear a sound wave with a stable frequency, it is easy for us to distinguish pitch. But if the frequency varies too quickly, we do not hear a pitch. A cymbal, for example, is unpitched compared to an oboe. In Japanese music, examples of unpitched sound include the very breathy sound made on the *shakuhachi* bamboo flute, or the hard twang produced when the plectrum strikes the *shamisen* lute. Just as Japanese poetry is full of appreciation for unpitched sounds of nature such as water flowing or trees whispering in the wind, Japanese music recreates such sounds for the enjoyment of their listeners. (An example of this characteristic can be heard in recorded selection 46, "Tsuru no sugomori.")

Ex. 8–2. ***Miyako-bushi and minyō scales***



Melody/Harmony

The diversity of Japanese melodies makes generalization difficult—the melodies of folk songs differ greatly in rhythm, pitch, and structure from those of *shakuhachi* music, for example. Japanese melodies often contain short motifs that are repeated, in part or in their entirety, throughout a piece. (See, for example, recorded selection 47, "Hakusen no," in which segments of phrases are repeated and varied.) In the theater, quoting melodic patterns from other contexts is a favorite device to inform the audience of the thoughts of a character or to foreshadow an upcoming event. Complete repetition of phrases sometimes occurs at the beginning and end of a piece, such as in the *shamisen* accompaniment to "Hakusen no," thereby lending an air of finality to the conclusion.

In the *shakuhachi* piece (recorded selection 46) the pitch movement in the melody strikes the non-Japanese listener as extremely slow; in fact, the dynamic and timbre changes give the melody its life, rather than rapid changes in pitch. In contrast to this, much vocal music contains elaborate vocal ornamentation, as heard in recorded selections 47 and 48.

The interval of the fourth often appears in the melodic material of Buddhist chanting and in instrumental music such as *koto* and *shamisen* music—even larger leaps occur often in the latter case. In vocal music, both syllabic and melismatic treatment of text can be found, but narrative styles like the music of the puppet theater described later tend toward syllabic text setting, which emphasizes the words.

Only Western-influenced Japanese music uses Western harmony; traditional music is dominated by a monophonic or heterophonic sound. Most common when two or more instruments (or voice and instrument) play together is a heterophonic texture—in which both or all parts play basically the same melody but in slightly different versions.

Rhythm

One distinctive characteristic of Japanese music lies in the flexibility of pulse in many pieces. We sense a pulse in music when we hear notes that are dynamically accented. In Western music, pulses almost always occur at regular time intervals (forming "beats"), and are arranged most commonly in groups of two, three, four, or six (creating a "meter"). Music can also have irregular intervals between the pulses, however, and this is sometimes called "beatless" or "flexible" or "free" rhythm. Those accustomed to Western music may have difficulty at first listening to music that lacks a steady beat because it seems "hard to follow" without the firm rhythmic structure they expect. But this music conveys a powerful expression of feeling because of its freedom and flexibility. Such beatless rhythm is found in many kinds of Japanese music, from folk song to music of the *shakuhachi* (recorded selections 46, 47, and 48). Even when a steady beat is present, there can be a sense of flexibility to it, as in the festival music example presented later.

When there is a sense of beat in Japanese music, those beats usually occur in groups of two, four, or eight. Triple meter is rare, though it can be found in some folk and children's songs.

Japanese music uses a wide variety of tempos, from very slow to very fast. Often, in music associated with the theater, the tempo accelerates as excitement and drama build in the play. A typical musical form called *jo-ha-kyū*, described below, is outlined through changes in tempo.

Tempos are not determined by metronome but are learned through imitation and trial and error. As in a Western classical music ensemble, when a Japanese ensemble sits down together to rehearse, it is not uncommon for one member to say, "That was a bit too fast last time, don't you think?" or "Why did we slow down at that point?" Through negotiation and trial and error, they settle into a tempo and changes in that tempo that are acceptable to most members. Experienced solo performers tend to play the same piece at almost the same tempo each time, though performances of the same work by different performers sometimes show a surprising tempo variance. This variation can be linked to difference in stylistic school or to personal interpretation.

Musical Form

The most common musical form in Japanese music is called *jo-ha-kyū,* and is based mainly on rhythmic rather than melodic changes. Found in music for the *gagaku* orchestra, this form profoundly affected *nō* theater as well as other instrumental and vocal genres.

Jo means "introduction" and is the slow beginning section: *ha* is literally "breaking apart," and here the tempo builds; finally, *kyū,* or "rushing," finds the tempo reaching its peak, only to slow before the piece ends. As a loose form, this tripartite structure applies in some cases to entire pieces as well as to sections of those pieces and individual phrases, as in the "Rokudan" piece described later.

To summarize, the three characteristics of traditional Japanese music that most exemplify its uniqueness and beauty are (1) variety of timbres, including unpitched sounds; (2) heterophonic treatment of voices in an ensemble; and (3) flexibility of pulse found in both solo and ensemble music. These elements occur in most of the traditional music described in this chapter.

In the following sections, several different kinds of Japanese music will be explained, illustrating some of the colorful diversity of musical life in that country today. The first four of these types developed largely during the Tokugawa period. The history of each instrument or musical genre provides a fascinating look into the rich, vibrant life of traditional Japanese cities and villages during the times of the *samurai,* wandering Buddhist priests, and *geisha.*

The *shakuhachi* flute is linked to the social turbulence of early Tokugawa times as well as to Zen philosophy and aesthetics. A *shakuhachi* piece provides an example of free rhythm, one of the most important characteristics of Japanese music. Also during the Tokugawa period, merchants took up the *koto* zither and

made it one of the most commonly played instruments. The example of *koto* music displays the *dan* form musical structure as well as the *jo-ha-kyū* principle. The *geisha* and a female composer of the late Tokugawa period were important in the development of the short *kouta* songs. These songs, sung to the accompaniment of the *shamisen,* exemplify heterophonic texture in Japanese music. A description of the *bunraku* puppet theater and its music, *gidayu-bushi,* illustrates the strong connection of music with the theater and describes teaching methods, old and new.

These kinds of music are generally labeled "art" or "classical" music. In comparison to "folk" music, art music has stricter guild systems, more regulation over skill level, and more professionalism. These terms are imported from the West, however, and the dividing line between the two categories has become blurred today as folk musicians become more professionalized.

Next, two kinds of music termed "folk" are described: folk song from northern Japan and instrumental festival music from Tokyo. While both of these date from the Tokugawa period or earlier, they will be described in their contemporary contexts to show the reader how traditional music is faring in modern-day Japan. Musically, the folk song example shows the intricate ornamentation and the use of "microtones" that are characteristic of folk music from this region; the festival music example illustrates ensemble practice. Finally, we will explore present-day Japanese popular music, which shows musical features of both East and West, and the world of *karaoke* singing, in which live singing and technology are mixed in a unique way.

SHAKUHACHI

Considering its range of tones from soft and ethereal to rough and violent, the *shakuhachi* appears surprisingly simple in construction. This flute is made of a length of bamboo from the bottom part of a bamboo stalk, including part of the root. The name *shakuhachi* derives from the length of the standard instrument. *Shaku* signifies a traditional unit of measure (equivalent to about 30 cm.) and *hachi* stands for 8, together meaning 1.8 *shaku,* or about 54 cm. (Players also use different lengths, sometimes to match the range of the other ensemble instruments.) The standard *shakuhachi* has four holes in the front of the instrument and one in the back for the thumb of the left hand.

The *shakuhachi*'s versatility in pitch and tone production is, in fact, due to its construction. Held vertically, the flute has a mouthpiece at the top which is cut obliquely on the side away from the player. By partially covering the fingerholes and changing the angle of the lips to the mouthpiece, a player can produce a wide variety of pitches and tone qualities. Not only does the *shakuhachi* easily produce microtones but it also generates tones ranging from "pure" with few overtones to very breathy, sounding almost like white noise. Many Western-influenced contemporary compositions have been written for the *shakuhachi* because of its varied pitch and tone quality.

Solo *shakuhachi* performance flourished during the Tokugawa period (1600–1867). This was a golden age in Japanese cultural life. It was a time of peace, during which the *shōgun* living in Tokyo ruled over a united country, while the Kyoto emperor held only nominal power. After centuries of violent struggles between different factions of aristocrats and military leaders, Japan welcomed peace and prospered under it.

But long-lasting peace meant trouble for members of the *samurai* class. *Samurai* warriors enjoyed high status during the years of fighting, but afterward many *samurai* of lower rank were released from their duties, becoming *rōnin,* or "masterless *samurai.*"* The Tokugawa regime found it expedient to uphold the social class system established in earlier times: at the top were *samurai,* followed by farmers, craftsmen, and finally merchants. By issuing edicts designed to set up boundaries between these classes, the government tried to prevent movement between them. For this reason, even though they were without a means of support, *rōnin* were not allowed to change their class status as *samurai,* though some managed to do so. A number became teachers or writers, others became farmers, and still others became hired bodyguards for rich merchants. The image of the proud, swaggering, brave *samurai,* as projected in *samurai* movies, is largely based on the *rōnin* of the Tokugawa period, who were actually unemployed *samurai.*

Another option for the *rōnin* was to take religious orders and beg on the streets and highways of Japan. In fact, in Tokugawa society, it was considered more honorable to beg than to "lower" oneself by becoming a merchant or farmer. One group of *rōnin* who took religious orders were called *komusō.* *Komusō* (literally, "emptiness monks") were Buddhist priests who wandered the countryside, playing the *shakuhachi* and begging. The standard *komusō* costume included a large, basket-shaped hat made of cane, through which the wearer could see but not be seen. It was rumored that the *komusō* were government spies, taking advantage of their right to travel throughout the country wearing a costume that shielded their identity (Blasdel 1988:103–107).

These *samurai*-turned-priests made their mark on the *shakuhachi* repertoire. The *honkyoku,* or main solo repertoire for the instrument, derives from the pieces played by the *komusō.* All of these pieces, the most spiritual and meditative of the present-day *shakuhachi* repertoire, have a free rhythm; that is, they lack a regular beat.

Komusō were organized into the Fuke sect of Buddhism, which propagated a Zen basis for *shakuhachi* playing. Zen Buddhism is a philosophy that has spread throughout much of Asia and the world in various forms, but it is based on the idea that intellect is not needed in the pursuit of truth. We can search to know *about* things, but we do not really *know* them. To know them, we must throw

* The term *rōnin* has been given a new meaning by the Japanese. High school graduates who fail college entrance examinations and must wait until the following year (or years) to pass the exams are also called *"rōnin."*

away our notions of scientific investigation and logical reasoning and instead rely upon a heightened awareness and intuition about life.

Various means for reaching that state of heightened awareness of enlightenment (*satori* in Japanese) have been proposed. These include pondering *kōan,* or paradoxical riddles (the most famous is "What is the sound of one hand clapping?") and the practice of *zazen,* sitting in silent meditation. In the Fuke sect, playing the *shakuhachi* also was regarded as a means for reaching enlightenment. For this reason, the *shakuhachi* was not called a "musical instrument" by its performers, but a *hōki,* or "spiritual tool." The spiritual approach to the "playing" or use of the instrument is called *suizen,* or "blowing Zen."

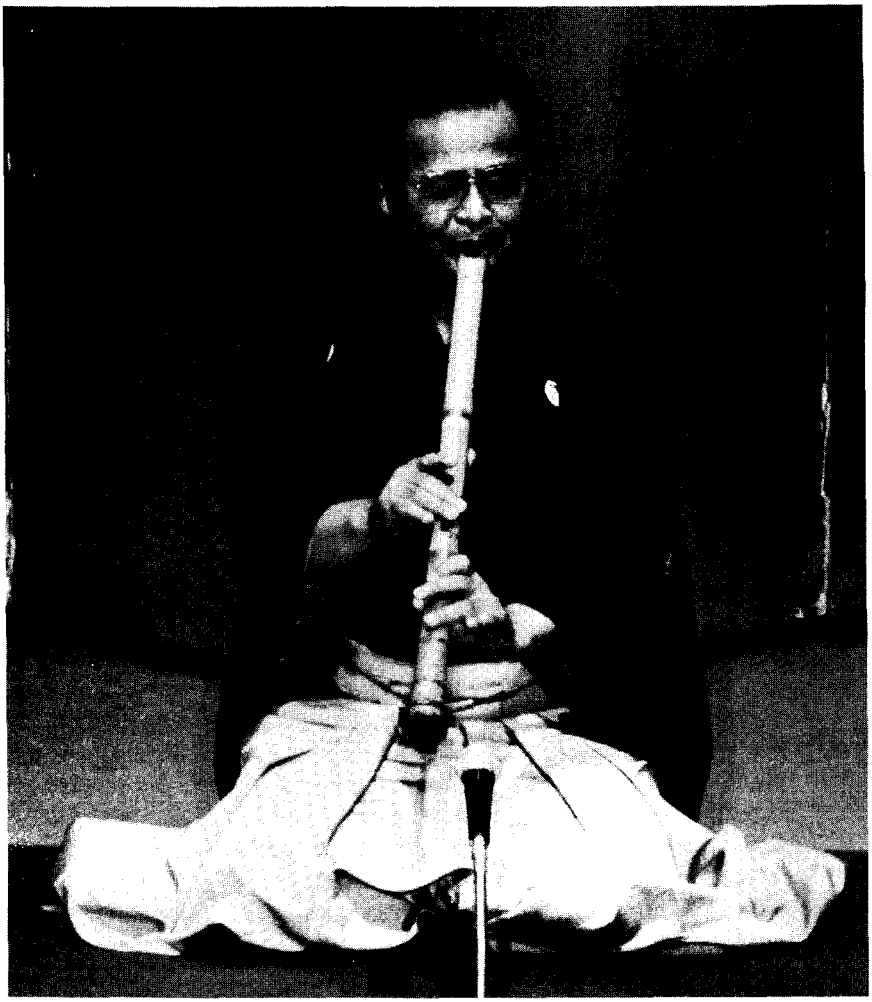
According to *suizen,* the goal of *shakuhachi* coincides with the goal of Zen: to reach enlightenment, proceeding into unlimited "knowing." How this is done is not formulated precisely (as it cannot be from the Zen perspective), but one common notion is called *ichōon jōbutsu,* or "enlightenment in a single note." According to this theory, one could reach enlightenment suddenly when blowing a single tone.

Breathing is crucial in *shakuhachi* playing and its connection with Zen. The exhaling of breath is heard in the dynamic level and tone quality of a pitch; at the same time, it carries with it the possibility of instant spiritual enlightenment. Thus, each moment of "performance," whether the intake of breath or its slow release, whether the subtle, delicate shading of a tone or the explosion of air through the instrument, can be interpreted in the context of a larger spiritual life.

The breathing pattern is important in learning to play the *shakuhachi.* Each phrase takes one full breath, with dramatic shifts in dynamic level according to how quickly the air is expelled. The typical phrase in *shakuhachi honkyoku* music follows the natural breathing pattern, the sound growing fainter toward the end of the phrase as the air in the lungs runs out. When this dynamic pattern is broken by a gradual or sudden increase in volume, it makes a pronounced impression on the listener.

The performer of the *shakuhachi* piece in recorded selection 46, Kawase Junsuke, is one of the best-known *shakuhachi* musicians in Japan and the head of a stylistic school of playing (see ill. 8–1). Here he is playing with his sister, Kawase Hakuse, on the *shamisen*—she is also an active performer, particularly in the *kabuki* theater.

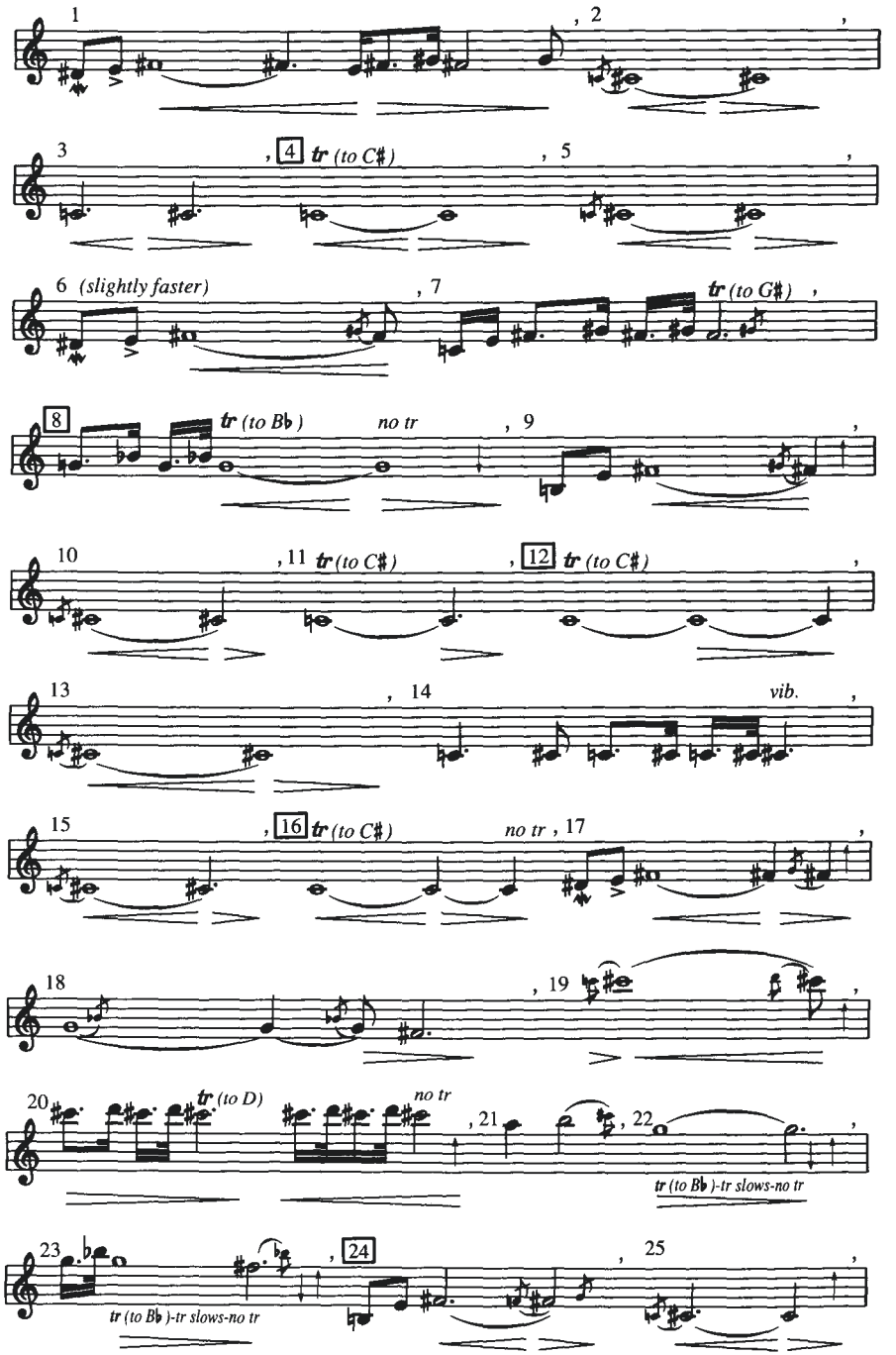
This piece, a part of the *honkyoku* (solo) repertory of the Kinko style of performance, is called "Tsuru no Sugomori," or "Nesting Cranes." (The version recorded here is performed in the *kabuki* theater and therefore is accompanied by *shamisen;* this part is not notated in the following transcription.) The music describes a winter scene during which cranes make their nests. The fast trills in the *shakuhachi* imitate the bird's fluttering wings. When played in the *kabuki* theater, "Tsuru no Sugomori" is performed in one of the most famous *kabuki* plays, *Kanadehon Chushingura,* or Treasury of Local Retainers, during a scene when parting lovers suddenly notice the scene outdoors.



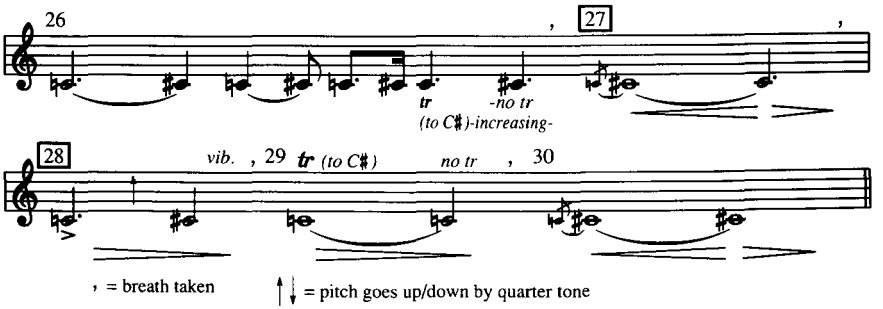
Ill. 8–1. ***Kawase Junsuke playing the shakuhachi.***

The first time one listens to this piece, it is best just to sit back and relax, appreciating the overall mood. For later listening, the transcription in example 8–3 shows in Western notation the general outline of the piece. Western notation is limited in conveying uneven rhythms, and so the transcription here is only approximate in time values. Phrases—defined by points at which a breath is taken by the musician—are numbered for reference.

After listening to this piece a few times, one may sense that certain phrases are repeated; in fact, this short piece has many repetitions of melodic material. For example, phrase 1 is heard again (with some modifications) in phrases 6, 9, 17, and 24. The group of phrases numbered 1 to 5 are repeated in phrases 9 to 13, and most of the other phrases are variations on previous melodic material.



Ex. 8–3. ***Transcription, "Tsuru no sugomori."***



Ex. 8–3. (*Continued*)

There is also a clear climax to the piece, created by changes in pitch and dynamics.

One of the most obvious characteristics of this piece is the constant change in dynamics within one phrase. Almost every phrase increases or decreases in volume; in many cases the musician increases the volume on one long note and decreases it on the next one. This careful breath control must be learned and practiced over years to prevent running out of breath too soon and to maintain constant control over tone quality.

A knowledge of some of the techniques used to play *shakuhachi* will help explain how some of the tones in this performance are produced. Sometimes the player flattens or sharpens a pitch by changing the angle of the lips to the mouthpiece. This is called *meri* when the pitch is lowered, producing a soft tone, and *kari* when the pitch is raised. (Occasionally the pitch is lowered and again raised, as at the end of phrase 22.)

The musician changes pitch also through finger techniques, depending on the effect desired. A finger can slowly open or close a hole, it can quickly tap a hole (creating an accent), or cover only a portion of a hole. These techniques are necessary because tonguing is not used to separate notes in *shakuhachi* playing.

Different techniques of breath release into the flute also create interesting effects such as *muraiki,* an explosion of breath into the instrument. In addition, *shakuhachi* players used flutter tonguing, finger tremolos and vibrato—all of which can be heard in the first few phrases of "Tsuru no sugomori". One common technique of producing vibrato is to shake the head while blowing into the instrument, either from side to side or up and down.

This piece shows at least two of the three basic characteristics of Japanese music listed above: a variety of timbres within one piece and a flexibility of pulse. Some notes have a thin sound, while other have a rich, full tone. Some notes sound "purer" to our ears, and others are breathier. The *shakuhachi* player expresses the music through such changes in timbre. With the exception perhaps of contemporary music, this variety of tone quality is rarely found within a single piece written for a Western wind instrument. In terms of Japanese musical aesthetics, however, this contrast of timbres is important to the texture and expression of the piece.

The lack of a regular pulse means that learning a piece requires a good ear and an excellent sense of timing on the part of the student. Most forms of musical notation convey the time durations of notes easily if the music has a steady pulse. But without such a pulse, the original time values are difficult to communicate in a written score. Perhaps this is one reason that musical notation never developed into an important teaching tool in most forms of traditional Japanese music. Because Japanese musicians could not rely on scores to teach them the rhythm of a piece, they used them more as a device to help them remember how the piece should sound. First, of course, performers must acquire this memory by listening to their teacher (and perhaps other students) many times.

The idea of *ma* (literally "space" or "interval") is linked to both rhythm and to the Zen background of *shakuhachi* playing. *Ma* refers to the overall timing of a piece—not just the pauses and rests, but also the relationship between sound and silence upon which all music is fundamentally based. It embraces the idea that sound enhances silence and silence enhances sound. This emphasis on silence conforms with Zen ideas concerning the importance of emptiness and space. The player who is aware of *ma* begins his notes with an instinctive care for the length and quality of the silences before and after. This concept applies particularly to music with a beatless rhythm, since the sounds and silences fall at irregular points and the player is more active in creating those moments.

Performers often link the concept of *ma* to the quality of a musical performance. Musicians speak of "good *ma*" or "bad *ma*," referring to the quality of the sounds and silences and their proportion to one another. When this proportion is deemed appropriate—a subjective judgment that is learned only from years of experience—then the performance has been successful.

Though the Fuke sect priests have long disappeared from the roads of Japan, many players keep the *shakuhachi* tradition alive today, both in Japan and abroad. Because of the instrument's versatility of pitch and timbre, composers and performers like to use it in various contemporary genres, such as jazz, fusion, and "new age" music. At the same time, the meditative, spiritual nature of the *honkyoku* is continually reaffirmed through performances given by several active *shakuhachi* masters, such as Yamaguchi Gorō,* Aoki Reibo, and others.

KOTO

The graceful music of the koto is familiar to many foreigners, since it has become well known outside Japan through concerts, records, and tapes. Whether played as a solo instrument or in an ensemble, with a vocal part or without one, the koto has for several centuries been one of the most popular traditional instruments of Japan.

*Japanese names are given in the Japanese order: family name followed by given name.

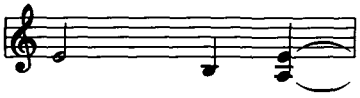
The contemporary koto is a long (about 1.8 meters), wooden instrument with 13 strings, traditionally silk but now also nylon. Bridges (called *ji*) hold the strings above the surface of the instrument, one for each string. These bridges are movable, so that the player can set them at different places along the string, depending on the desired tuning.

Like the prototype of the *shakuhachi,* the ancestor of the *koto* came to Japan from China during the early centuries of cultural exchange, after which the instrument was gradually adapted to its present form. After several centuries of use by an elite few, during the Tokugawa period the *koto* gradually spread in popularity to different segments of Japanese society. At this time changes in teaching and in the *koto* repertoire stimulated many men and women to learn it (Malm 1959:169). Growing numbers were merchants, the class that officially held the lowest status but which was gaining rapidly in wealth and influence. By the beginning of the Meiji period in 1868, the *koto* could be found in many private homes as well as in teahouses and theaters, and skilled *koto* performance had become a sign of good breeding for young women. Most of the *sōkyoku* (or *koto* music) pieces performed today were written during the Tokugawa period, when new schools and styles of playing arose. At this time the *koto* was used in ensembles with the *shamisen* and later the *kokyū* or *shakuhachi,* combinations that brought an important form of chamber music into Japanese life.

One of the most famous *koto* pieces is entitled "Rokudan," or "Six Sections." It is typical of the *danmono* type of instrumental pieces consisting of several "steps," or sections, known as *dan.* Each *dan* contains 104 beats and is repeated several times, with great variation. A short introduction of four to eight beats (four beats in the case of "Rokudan") begins the piece, and each *dan* follows the last without a break. The first four beats are followed by six *dan,* each 104 beats long.* Hearing the piece one time, however, can indicate that the *danmono* is anything but a simple theme-and-variation form, since the sections are difficult to tell apart. Even after listening to the piece several times, one might not be able to tell where a new *dan* begins because the melody of each *dan* is made up of short figures that are generally difficult to distinguish. The second and third *dan* are perhaps recognizable as related to the first, for they are closer to the melodic content of the first *dan;* after that the similarity in thematic material becomes less clear. Some basic melodic figures are heard again, but in a different part of the *dan,* or in a different range or rhythmic pattern.

Therefore, rather than trying to distinguish each section, it makes more sense to listen for the repetition of the short melodic figures as well as larger overall patterns. Some of the brief melodic-rhythmic patterns that recur include a descending dotted figure and octave leaps. As for larger patterns, the *jo-ha-kyū* structure mentioned in the beginning of this chapter may be applied to the piece as a whole. The first two *dan* make up the *jo,* or introductory section; the second

* Several recordings of this piece are available on LPs and tapes; one is on the record *The Music of Japan.* Record III: Music of the Edo Period. Kassel: Barenreiter-Musicaphon, a part of the series "UNESCO Collection–A Musical Anthology of the Orient." Also, a transcription of this piece appears in Adriaansz 1973:66–93.



Ex. 8–4. ***"Rokudan," introductory figure.***

two *dan* find the tempo increasing, as in a *ha* section; and the tempo reaches its height in the final two *dan,* or the *kyū* section. The tempo slows down only toward the end, in the last twenty-two beats or so, ending in a long glissando. This form is also followed in individual *dan,* in which one can also sense a gradual building of tension.

In listening to this stately piece, we hear in the beginning four beats of "introduction" a long note of two beats followed by a descending note a fourth away, and then an interval of a fifth (ex. 8–4). This figure is easy to hear throughout the piece. The following beat of silence represents the first beat of the material repeated in each *dan.*

A careful listener can hear a variety of timbres and interesting tonal effects. Sometimes the pick of one finger sliding down the string creates a pitchless sound; sometimes glissandos brush the strings. There may be changes in pitch that sound like a sliding from one note to the next and back again. This is a result of changing the pressure exerted in the left hand on the string as the right hand plucks it. Such delicate shifting of pitch and tone color give *koto* music a special beauty.

KOUTA

Another of the well-loved Japanese traditional instruments is the *shamisen,* a three-stringed long-necked lute (see ill. 8–2). In contrast to the *shakuhachi,* which has associations with austere spirituality and meditation, the *shamisen* is often used to convey an outpouring of emotion and drama. For this reason it is considered an excellent instrument for the theater, expressing highly dramatic situations in the *bunraku* puppet theater to great effect. It is also used in another major theatrical form, *kabuki,* and sometimes to accompany folk song, as in recorded selection 48. In a more intimate setting, the *shamisen* also accompanies short, evocative songs called *kouta* (literally, "short song").

The present-day *shamisen* is a descendent of a long line of related instruments stretching back to the *sanshin* of Okinawa, the *san-hsien* of China, and perhaps further back to the Middle East or Central Asia.* While the Okinawan *sanshin* is covered with snakeskin, on the Japanese mainland the instrument is traditionally covered with cat skin, or sometimes dog skin. (As these are now expensive, however, plastic is commonly found on *shamisen* used for practice.) There are different kinds of *shamisen,* varying in shape, weight, material, and overall size;

* Theories that the Chinese *san-hsien* derived from Egyptian or Persian sources are summarized in Kikkawa 1981:157–158.

Ill. 8–2. ***Geisha performing at a party. The woman on the right holds a shamisen.***

the type used depends on the musical genre played. The instrument used to accompany *kouta* songs, for example, is smaller and lighter than the one used in *bunraku* puppet theater.

The body of the *shamisen* is made of a wooden box roughly square in shape, covered on both sides with skin or plastic. A long piece of wood, forming the unfretted neck, is inserted into his box. Pegs at the top of the neck hold the three strings, each string of a different thickness. In some kinds of music, a large plectrum is used for striking and plucking the instrument. Sometimes in *kouta,* however, the bare fingers, or sometimes the fingernails, pluck the strings, producing a lighter, less percussive, sound.

A rather unusual sound in the *shamisen* confirms the importance of unpitched sounds in Japanese music. This is a special buzz or hum called *sawari* (literally, "touch") which is purposefully added to the instrument when it is made. The lowest string does not rest on the upper bridge but resonates against a special cavity made near the top of the instrument's neck. This string sets a noise in motion, to which the other strings can contribute in sympathetic vibration. The result is a pitchless buzzing sound that is essential to the tonal flavor of the *shamisen.* Whereas such buzzing noises are avoided in instruments used in Western classical music, Japanese instrument makers intentionally build such timbres into their instruments. Buzzing is also deliberately built into many African instruments (see chapter 3).

The *kouta* is a song form that evokes many images and allusions in a short (generally, one- to three-minute) time. *Kouta* as we know it today dates from the

mid-nineteenth century, though the same name was used to describe another kind of song in earlier centuries (Kurada 1982:894–895).

The development of the present-day *kouta* is closely linked to the participation of women in Japanese traditional music. One of the earliest composers of *kouta* was O-Yo (1840–1901). The daughter of the head master of *kiyomoto* (a style of *shamisen* music used in *kabuki*), O-Yo was an excellent musician. As a woman, she was not allowed to take over her father's position after his death; instead she married a man who then inherited his title. But O-Yo took up most of his duties.

O-Yo was not allowed to play the *shamisen* on the *kabuki* stage since only males appeared there. She was, nevertheless, an active performer at private parties in teahouses and restaurants. For such private gatherings she probably composed *kouta* such as "Saru wa uki," thought to be the first *kouta* ever composed (Kikkawa 1981:350). Although women were banned from participating in many of the elite forms of music performance in Japan, they played a key role in teaching that music to generations of male performers. O-Yo herself was an important transmitter of the *kiyomoto* tradition of her father, teaching it to many people from all parts of Japan.

O-Yo's musical world and her involvement with both an older form of music (*kiyomoto*) and a new form (*kouta*) can best be understood in the context of the *iemoto* guild system. This system, active also in O-Yo's time, is a powerful influence on the traditional arts—music, dance, flower arranging, the tea ceremony, and many other artistic areas. The guild is the transmitter of knowledge and the legitimizer of teachers and performers in each art form.

In music, several different guilds may be involved with one type of music (for example, music for the *shakuhachi* or for the *nō* theater) but each guild will have its own slightly different performance style and repertoire. By illustration, one who wishes to become a *shakuhachi* performer must decide which style he or she wants to learn, then become affiliated with the guild that follows that style. Often this affiliation lasts as long as the individual performs on the *shakuhachi*.

Guilds not only transmit knowledge; they also control quality. Each guild sets the standards for teachers and pupils. If an individual works diligently, he or she may be given a license to teach and an artistic name from the guild. The *iemoto* system thus provides a structure through which the arts have been taught, performed, and preserved for hundreds of years in Japan.

The hierarchy of this *iemoto* system is rigid, bearing some similarity to the familial-paternalistic social structures found throughout Japanese society. Traditionally, the leader of each school inherits that position and strictly regulates rights to perform or teach. In theory, this system controls the "correct" transmission of musical information, but it also allows some leaders to exploit their helpless students. A greedy leader, for instance, might demand large amounts of money for the licenses required to be recognized as a qualified performer and teacher of his school, and the student would have no choice but to pay.

On the other hand, the number of scrupulous *iemoto* leaders and teachers far outweighs the number of exploitative ones; most teachers provide a great deal

of support and encouragement to their students. Overall, the *iemoto* system has contributed positively to maintaining the artistic level in traditional Japanese music. Its strict regulation of performance standards has preserved musical traditions that could otherwise have changed drastically or even died out through the years.

According to the rules of this system, new composition in many genres of music was discouraged or even forbidden. This conservatism is linked to a reverence for tradition in the arts that is still prevalent among Japanese musicians today. Many believe that the "classic" body of music has been handed down with painstaking precision for decades, or centuries, through the toil of countless musicians. The composition of a new piece of music by an individual was for years considered "arrogant self-expression." If a new piece were composed and proved to have merit, it had to be ascribed to the leader of the guild, who in turn might attribute it to an earlier *iemoto* leader. This reluctance to accept new compositions meant that if they were written, they often had no official recognition. For this reason, when someone like O-Yo composed new music, it was in a new genre like *kouta.* Because there was no *iemoto* associated yet with that kind of music, the restrictions that would otherwise apply toward composition did not exist.

Today, among the forms of traditional music we can still see this restriction on new composition to some degree. New pieces are now written for traditional instruments in Japan, but they are often created outside of the traditional genres, such as in a mixture of *kabuki* music and rock known as *"kabuki* rock." Otherwise, as a rule, only high-ranking members of an *iemoto* create new compositions in a traditional mode.

By the end of the Tokugawa period, the *kouta* was linked to the *geisha* of the city of Edo (which became known as Tokyo in 1868) and the life of the teahouses. For many people today, the lively, intense world of Edo during the Tokugawa period epitomizes the Japanese spirit. Though the official Japanese capital was Kyoto, where the emperor resided, Edo was the actual seat of government where the *shōgun* held state in his castle. It was also the most populous city in Japan as well as one of the largest in the world. The influx of people from all over the country, crowded into tenements and wildly pursuing wealth, pleasure, or both, spurred the coining of the phrase "Edo wa tenka no hakidamari" (Edo is the nation's rubbish heap).

The streets teemed with *chōnin,* townspeople who were members of either the merchant or the artisan classes. With the expansion of the economy during the peaceful Tokugawa period, some *chōnin* became wealthy and powerful. They patronized the theaters, teahouses, and brothels, making their increasingly sophisticated mark on the aesthetics of the drama, music, and dance of the period: a sense of style that combines wit, sensuousness, and restraint. The Edo pursuit of momentary pleasure represents the epitome of the *ukiyo,* or "floating world."

The *kouta,* as sung by the *geisha* of such licensed quarters as the Yoshiwara area of Edo, reflects their world of beauty and style. The songs' lyrics often

convey romantic or erotic themes, but such references are subtle. Puns, double-entendres and poetic devices appear frequently in *kouta* lyrics and sometimes even a Japanese will miss their suggestive undertones.

In the *kouta* example found in recorded selection 47, entitled "Hakusen no" (A White Fan), both the image of a white fan and the beauty of nature are used as metaphors for romantic commitment. This particular song shows little of the whimsical side of *kouta;* it is considered suitable for performance at wedding banquets or private parties. At the wedding banquet, this song would be sung to the honored couple.

Though declining in numbers, *geisha* are still trained in Japan to entertain at such occasions. The traditional musical instrument of the *geisha* is the *shamisen,* which is used often to accompany vocal music such as the *kouta.* This recording was made by a *geisha* in the 1960s who lived near the former Yoshiwara quarter of Tokyo.

Figure 8–2 shows the lyrics of the *kouta* and an English translation. (The letters on the left-hand side refer to melodic material and will be explained below.)

Traditional Japanese poetry arranges lines according to their syllabic content, favoring lines with five and seven syllables. The lyrics of "Hakusen no" contains alternating lines of five and seven syllables. (Extended vowels and the letter "n" at the end of a syllable count as separate syllables.) A poetic device known as *kakekotoba,* or "pivot word," is found on the sixth line: the word *kagayaku* ("shimmering") can be interpreted as both referring to the silver node of the fan (the pin holding the fan together at the bottom) and to the pine tree boughs, "shimmering" in the shadows. Such pivot words are often found in Japanese poetry and are made possible by the flexibility of Japanese grammar.

Several auspicious symbols appear in the text. The pine tree has a special sym-

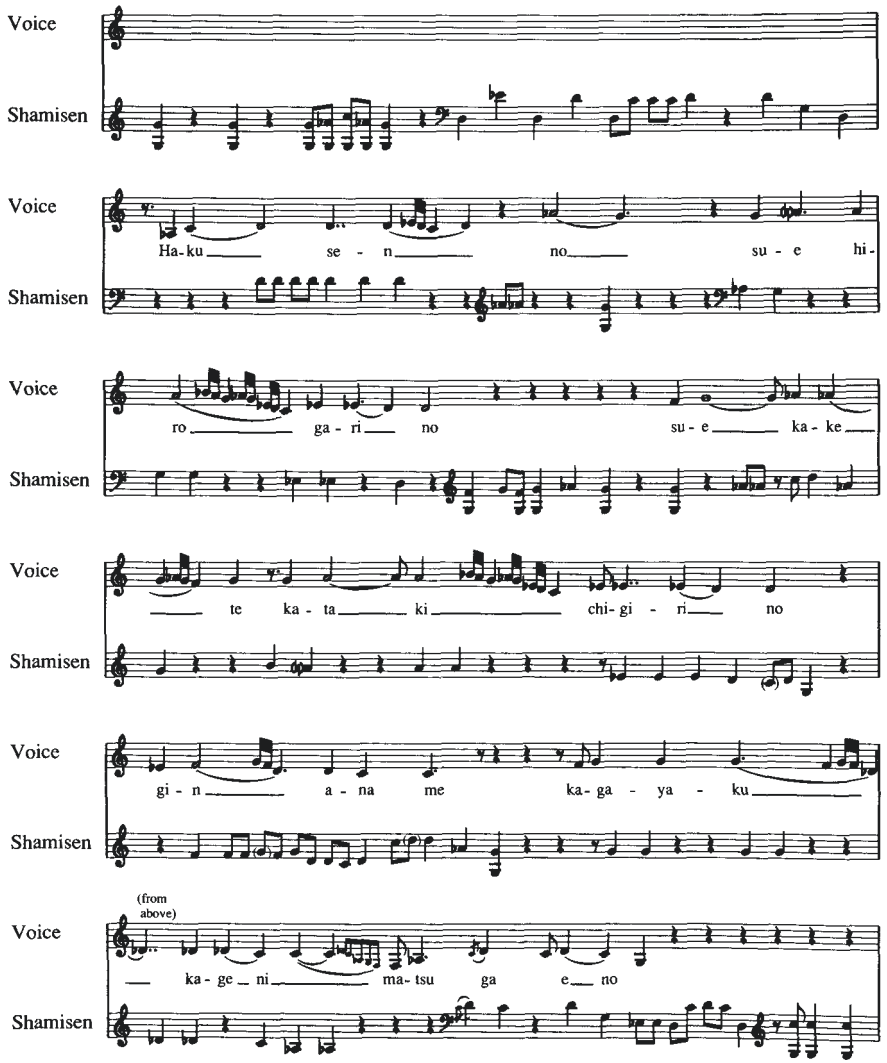
Fig. 8–2. ***"Hakusen no."***

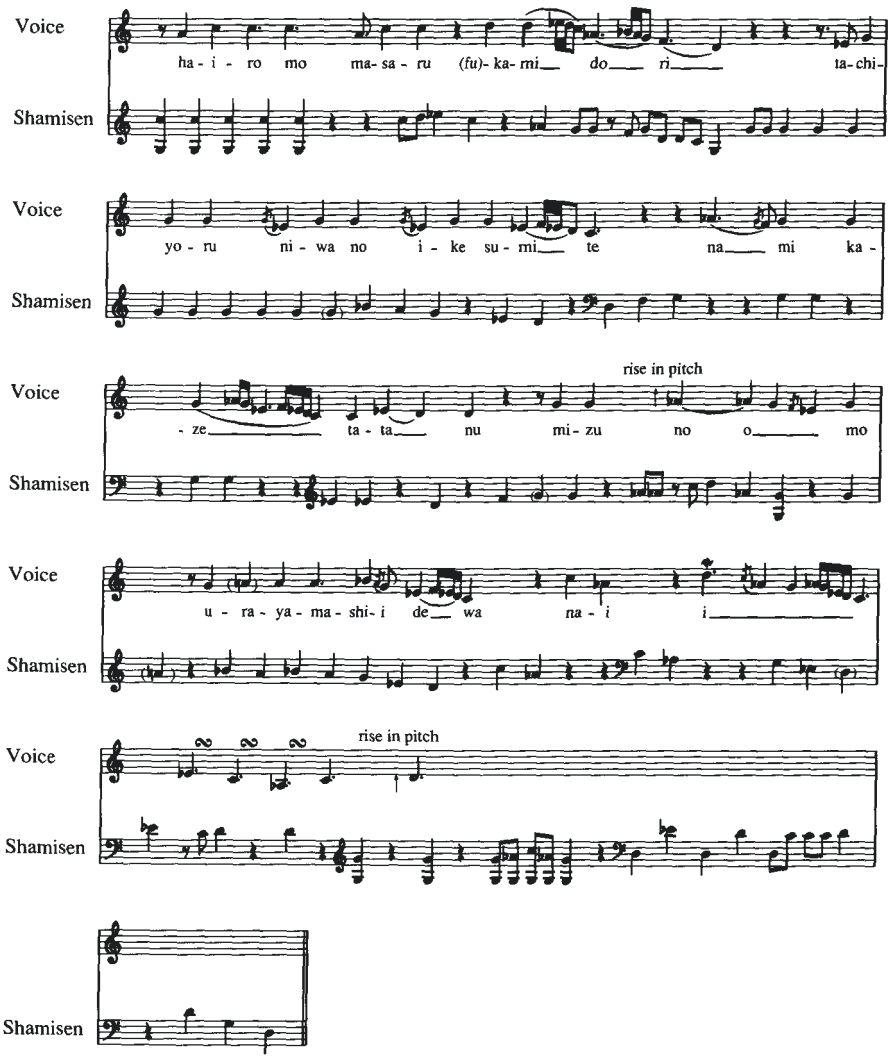
A	Hakusen no	A white fan
B	sue hirogari no	spreading out
C	sue kakete	lasting forever
B	kataki chigiri no	the firm pledges
(A)	gin kaname	like the silver node of the fan
(B)	kagayaku kage ni	shimmering in shadows
D	matsu ga e no	the boughs of pine trees
E	ha-iro mo masaru	the splendid leafy color of
(B)	fukamidori	a deep green
E	tachiyoru niwa no	the clearness of the pond
(E)	ike sumite	in the garden approached
(B)	nami kaze tatanu	undisturbed by waves of wind,
C	mizu no omo	the surface of the water
B	urayamashii de	What an enviable life,
(B)	wa nai ka na.	don't you think?

bolism for the Japanese as a tree of special beauty and longevity. A clear pond, "undisturbed by waves or wind," also presents a peaceful, auspicious image of the future life of a couple. The words *sue hirogari* literally refer to the unfolding of a fan, but can also mean to enjoy increasing prosperity as time goes on.

Ex. 8–5 is a transcription of "Hakusen no" and, as in the *shakuhachi* example, the difficulties of conveying uneven time values in Western notation are apparent. The vocal part has been inserted rhythmically in relation to the steady beat of the *shamisen,* which is the easiest part to follow:

Ex. 8–5. ***Transcription of "Hakusen no."***

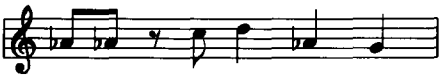




Ex. 8–5. ***(Continued)***

This transcription shows only the vocal and *shamisen* parts; in the recording, we also hear an accompanying ensemble made up of the *ko-tsuzumi* and *o-tsuzumi* drums and the *nōkan* flute. These instruments, typical of the *nō* theater, were added to the commercial recording of this song; *geisha* also sing "Hakusen no" with the *shamisen* alone. Another sound not transcribed above are the calls known as *kakegoe,* which help to cue the ensemble as well as add to the atmosphere of the song.

Earlier in this chapter a heterophonic relationship between two or more parts was defined as typical of Japanese ensemble music. In recorded selection 47,



Ex. 8–6. ***Motif in shamisen part, "Hakusen no."***

such a heterophony characterizes the voice and *shamisen.* Rather than sounding simultaneously on the same beat, the two parts tend to weave in and out; sometimes the voice precedes the *shamisen* in presenting the melody and sometimes the *shamisen* plays the notes first. The result of this constant staggering and shifting is a duet in which the melody is shared and enhanced by both voice and instrument. An example of this heterophony can be found in the third line, as the *shamisen* anticipates several of the sung notes. Listening carefully to the entire song, try to find other such examples. Are there also times when the voice anticipates what the *shamisen* will play?

One of the most interesting aspects of the vocal part is the flexibility of beat, which contrasts to the even beat of the *shamisen.* See, for example, how the rhythm of the vocal and *shamisen* parts fit together in the line beginning "tachiyoru . . ."; just as the listener thinks a predictable pattern has been established, the rhythm shifts. The sophistication of this kind of rhythmic contrast has appealed for centuries to the Japanese ear. Together, melodic and rhythmic variety in Japanese ensemble music create a complex, often exciting musical texture.

The vocal melody contains several thematic phrases that repeat in slightly varied forms. The letters next to the text in fig. 8–2 show one way of interpreting these phrases. Repeating letters indicate phrases that are repeated exactly or nearly exactly, while letters in parentheses signify more modified repetitions. For example, the seven different phrases marked "B" have in common long, repeated notes followed by a descending interval, highly ornamented, of a third to a sixth, or some part of this combination.

The *shamisen* part opens and closes the song with the same rhythmically emphasized theme and it occasionally plays a short solo phrase between lines of text. Occasionally, small motifs are repeated; one that occurs several times is shown in example 8–6:

This and other similar motifs in the *shamisen* part stress the notes D and G. The scale used in"Hakusen no" is the *in* scale (shown in Ex. 8–1), based on D. However, there are constant shifts to the same scale based on G, which is closely related to the D scale. A prominent difference between the two scales lies in the A-flat found in the G scale, whereas the D scale contains an A-natural. Another scale shift takes place in the line "kagayaku . . .", which stresses the notes G - D^{b} - C, denoting a temporary change to the C-based *in* scale. Such rapid changes from one scale to another is common in Japanese music even in short songs like *kouta.*

Hearing this song, the listener is drawn into the refined yet playful atmosphere of the Tokugawa teahouses. Now we shall turn to a more dramatic atmosphere, the highly charged puppet theater.

GIDAYU-BUSHI: MUSIC OF THE PUPPET THEATER

During the Tokugawa period, theater was one of the most popular forms of entertainment among the townspeople. While *nō* was a favored pastime of the elite, attendance at *kabuki* and *bunraku* (puppet theater) was restricted to members of the artisan and merchant classes (Ernst 1956:10). This restriction did not prevent members of the higher *samurai* class from sneaking into the theaters, sometimes wearing large hats or scarves over their heads to hide their identity.

Music is important in *kabuki* and *bunraku* theater, both as a background to the actions on stage and as an essential element of the play itself. In *bunraku,* for example, two musicians—a narrator-singer and a *shamisen* player—tell the story, speak and sing for the puppets, and provide scenes with background music (see ill. 8–3).

Japanese puppet theater utilizes elaborately costumed, large-sized dolls that are brought almost to life by skilled puppeteers and musicians. The *bunraku* plays include some of the most beautifully written works of Japanese drama, expressing intense emotions that appealed to the tastes of the Tokugawa townspeople. The skillfully manipulated dolls, realistic scenery and emotion-packed music, all part of a passionately dramatic scene, often reduced audiences to tears (ill. 8–4).

Ill. 8–3. ***Bunraku stage. From this high view, we can see the sunken stage, not normally seen by the audience. The doll on the left plays the shamisen.***

Ex. 8–6. ***Motif in shamisen part, "Hakusen no."***

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Ill. 8–3. ***Bunraku stage. From this high view, we can see the sunken stage, not normally seen by the audience. The doll on the left plays the shamisen.***

Ill. 8–4. ***Bunraku doll heads. On the upper left is a tough samurai, on the upper right is a more refined samurai, on the lower left is a plain young girl of the merchant class and on the lower right, the elegant head of a young beauty.***

Important puppets require three manipulators: one for the head and right hand, one for the left hand, and one for the feet. Apprentice manipulators normally require several years of training on the feet, and then several more

Ill. 8–5. ***Music of bunraku. On the left, the shamisen player, and the right, the tayu narrator.***

years on the left hand before they become chief manipulators who are allowed to manipulate the head and right hand. These manipulators wear black, with hoods over their heads, so as to "disappear" in the background.*

To the right of the main stage is a smaller stage on which the narrator-singer (*tayū*) and *shamisen* player sit. At the beginning of the performance, or in the middle of a play when a change in musical personnel is needed, the wall of the smaller stage rotates to reveal the musicians on the other side. (For some scenes, more than one *tayū* or *shamisen* player may be needed, and these make their entrance from the wings of the stage is a less dramatic way.) Before beginning the play, the *tayū,* who is sitting on the floor, lifts the text from the lacquered lectern on which it rests and bows with it—a sign of respect and a prayer for a good performance (see ill. 8–5).

Together, the narrator and the *shamisen* player try to fill the puppets with life, expressing emotion that is sometimes blatant and exaggerated, or sometimes

* Well-known manipulators can appear with their faces exposed, and even in festive costumes, but the emotional content of the scene ultimately dictates the costumes of manipulators. In solemn scenes, for example, all manipulators will normally appear hooded and in black.

subtle and subdued. As one *tayū* states: "The whole point of *bunraku* is to portray human emotions and situations in life so that people's hearts are moved, so that they feel something special about the particular aspect of life the play deals with, whether loyalty, sacrifice, one of the many forms of love, or a dilemma one encounters in life" (Adachi 1985:65).

Working toward this goal, neither *tayū* nor *shamisen* player is regarded as more important than the other; instead, they form a closely cooperating team. Sensing each other's feelings (as well as those of the audience), the two make subtle adjustments in their singing and playing in order to convey emotion through the dolls as effectively as possible. One narrator working in Osaka (the traditional capital of *bunraku*) told me: "When I play with a *shamisen* player that I've known and performed with for many years, we are so accustomed to sensing each other's moods and feelings from performing on stage that I can tell as soon as we sit down together whether or not he's had a fight with his wife that morning!"

To a listener unfamiliar with *bunraku,* the energetic narration of the *tayū* can sound startlingly exaggerated. Indeed, it seems amazing that one man can have the stamina to shout, growl and sing out for such a long time, filling the hall with his large voice.* Developing this kind of stamina takes years of training, and sore throats are not uncommon among those in this profession. One narrator describes his training this way:

> No matter how big the theater, we never use a microphone; all is produced from our bodies alone. You must practice producing the voice from your lower abdomen. When we become narrators, we're told "Make your voice come from your *hara* (lower abdomen)!" And we wonder how that is possible. We learn abdominal breathing, a breathing movement in your stomach. You take in big breaths and let out just enough. You must feel in every part of your body that the voice accompanying the breath is there. But before you understand how the voice can come out of the abdomen, you really have to suffer a lot.†

Some *tayū* even use a small bag of sand, inserted inside the kimono near the stomach, which they use as a kind of "leverage" for their hands and stomach muscles to obtain the air they need.

Traditional training of the *tayū* and *shamisen* player were more strict than at present. Until the early part of this century, the apprentice narrator or *shamisen* player normally moved into his teacher's home at the age of six or seven. After years of helping with household chores, he was permitted to help his master prepare for performances and then, finally, to receive lessons himself. In the meantime, before beginning his own lessons, the apprentice had already listened to thousands of hours of lessons and performances of those around him, absorbing much about the music. In actual lessons, it was important for him to

* The *tayū* is referred to as a male here, but there have been female narrators as well, particularly from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Today, female amateur *tayū* perform in some small theaters throughout the country (Motegi 1988:206–20).

† Personal communication with Toyotake Sakitayu, April 26, 1986.

learn to imitate what he heard quickly since new material might be presented only once or twice before he was expected to have memorized it. The *shamisen* player Tsuruzawa Juzō, born in 1899, describes his training in the following way:

> Nowadays people ask about the hardships of my early training. At the time I didn't think a thing about it. Life was that way then and young people were used to discipline, punishment, and grueling training. . . . My teacher would play a passage, maybe fifteen minutes long, just once. I was expected to play along with him. Next I was made to play the passage solo. My teacher would sit there scowling at me, scolding, sometimes hitting me in the face. Knowing the punishment that lay in store, I learned quickly to listen very, very carefully, straining every fiber in my body to absorb everything I possibly could with eyes, ears and mind.
>
> In those days, our whole life was Bunraku. We had no movies, no coffee shops, no radios, no popular music to distract us. . . . Our heads were full of Bunraku and only Bunraku. (Adachi 1985:79)

After World War II, however, this teaching process changed dramatically. The *bunraku* theater itself went through difficult times after 1945, partly because of a decline in the wealth of its former sponsors, and partly from an overall decrease of interest in the traditional arts. As professional *bunraku* performers found it more difficult to make a living, new trainees declined in number. Furthermore, even those who were willing to study for a career with such an uncertain future were often discouraged by the rigorous training involved. To counter these trends, new teaching methods were developed to ensure that *gidayū-bushi* would be passed on to future generations. These methods rely on relatively short training hours; one can finish the *tayū* training course of the National Theater in two years, for example.* New features of this training course include the use of standardized instructional methods, scores, and tape recorders to record lessons and performances. While these methods do produce an adequate narrator or *shamisen* player in a short amount of time, the resulting uniformity of performance and interpretation is deplored by older musicians:

> They [the performers trained by the new methods] make no distinction in their playing between scenes with different settings. Even the same melody should have different emotional tones, depending on the context. It all comes from practicing with tapes, without giving any thought to the meaning of the text. They master the form but cannot express the content. With tapes you can practice in your sleep. (Motegi 1984:105)

The modern methods used to transmit *bunraku* music allow students to learn faster and with less pain. But the new training produces a different quality of performer.

All of the musical genres described in this chapter so far are closely tied to the social life of the Tokugawa period from which several common threads emerge.

* The National Theater of Japan is a government-sponsored institution that contains facilities for the presentation of traditional theater, dance, and music, as well as for the training of future artists.

For one, we see how the four-tiered class system shaped and defined various aspects of musical life. Many musical and art forms were limited, even by official decree, to a specific class: the *shakuhachi* to the *rōnin* priests, or the *kabuki* and *bunraku* to the merchant class. Social change during the Tokugawa period also reflected changes in music and class, as formerly elite instruments like the *koto* were spread to the lower merchant class.

The next two kinds of music that we will examine, folk song and festival music, traditionally have belonged to the farming class or the poorer merchants in the cities. But people from many levels of society, in Tokugawa times as now, know these musics. Folk and festival music are still found in many everyday locations: in the streets, in the fields, and at social occasions of both the city and countryside.

FOLK SONG

In traditional Japan, people sang folk songs, or *minyō,* while they planted the rice in spring, threw their fishnets into the sea, wove cloth, and pounded grain. Folk songs accompanied many daily activities—to relieve boredom, to provide a steady beat for some activity, as encouragement for a group working at some task, as individual expression, or as a combination of these.

While the everyday uses of folk song have not entirely disappeared from Japan, fewer contemporary Japanese are finding them relevant to their lives. Seventy-six percent of the Japanese population lives in cities, where everyday activities involve riding crowded trains and sitting at desks all day rather than planting rice and weaving cloth (Sōri-fu 1982:22). Still, based on a 1982 survey of musical preferences, folk song, or *minyō,* is one of the most popular forms of music in Japan today (NHK Hōsō 1982:68).

The continuing popularity of folk songs is tied to their identification with the countryside and a sometimes romanticized vision of rural life on the part of city dwellers. Folk songs evoke a past thought to be simpler and more natural, and this appeals to many Japanese today.

In addition to an association with rural life, many Japanese folks songs connect to a specific region of the country. This is the case in "Nikata-bushi," in recorded selection 48, from the region of Akita in northwestern Japan. With the growth of industry in the years after World War II, many Japanese left the rural areas to find work in the cities, and today people from a particular region—or their descendants—gather in many of these urban areas and sing folk songs as reminders of the villages from which they came.

> Despite increasing geographic mobility and cultural homogenization, the Japanese identification of people and songs with their original home areas is still very strong: a Tokyo laborer whose family roots are in the northern prefecture of Akita will be expected to enliven a festive gathering with an Akita folk song. (Hughes 1981:30)

Furusato, or the concept of a home community, maintains a strong emotional grip on today's urban dwellers—even if they left home several decades earlier. The folk song, with its associations and allusions to a particular region, expresses their nostalgia for a faraway place. Thus, nostalgia not only for a different time, but for a different place as well underlies their popularity.

Finally, perhaps because *minyō* were traditionally sung by ordinary people, not trained professionals, the Japanese still find them easy to learn and appreciate—for the Japanese not only listen to folk songs, they usually learn to sing a few as well, either from family and friends or in elementary school. Often they sing them at parties, when they are called on to sing a favorite song. Real enthusiasts take lessons with a good singer and attend folk song clubs or other gatherings where they can perform in front of other enthusiasts. Amateur folk song contests have become a regular feature on Japanese television, presenting folk singers from around the country. In these contests, singers give their renditions of folk songs which are then evaluated by a board of "experts," who might tell the singer his or her vibrato is too broad or hand gestures too dramatic for that particular song.

Folk song preservation societies have sprung up around the country. These societies are formed by amateurs who aim to "preserve" a particular local song and a style of performing that song. The activities of these clubs help foster pride and a sense of identity among the dwellers of a village or a neighborhood within a city (Hughes 1981).

Folk song performance has become more professional and standardized in recent years due to televised *minyō* and the changing tastes of the public. For example, *kobushi,* the sometimes complex vocal ornamentation of a melodic line, is frequently used to separate the good performers from the bad. One critic of this trend claims: "There is a tendency to think that the most excellent kind of folk song is that sung by a person with a good voice who can produce interesting kinds of vocal ornamentation. But if folk song is valued only for interesting ornamentation, it becomes nothing more than a 'popular song' " (Asano 1966:211). The critic noted, however, that national tastes and way of thinking have changed so much since 1945 that perhaps there is no way of avoiding change in folk singing.

Training to sing folk song at a professional level demands years of study. In recent years, folk song has developed its own *iemoto*-like system, modeled after that found in traditional art music. Asano Sanae, the singer on recorded selection 48, for example, has been a pupil of the *shamisen* player, Asano Umewaka, for several years (see ill. 8–6). In the manner of the *iemoto* system, she received her artistic name from him, including her teacher's last name. As a teenager, she moved from Osaka to Akita to become his apprentice and she now participates regularly in concerts and competitions. Her teacher, in his seventies at the time of this recording, grew up in the Akita area and spent most of his life as a farmer, while slowly gaining a local and then a national reputation as a fine player of the *Tsugaru shamisen,* a type of *shamisen* used for virtuoso accompaniment of folk

Ill. 8–6. ***Folk singer of Akita. The woman on the right is Asano Sanae, who sings recorded selection 48. A fellow apprentice, Asano Yoshie, stands in the middle. This picture was taken in 1986 at the Folklife Festival of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.***

song. His former students live throughout Japan and teach his style of *shamisen* playing and singing.

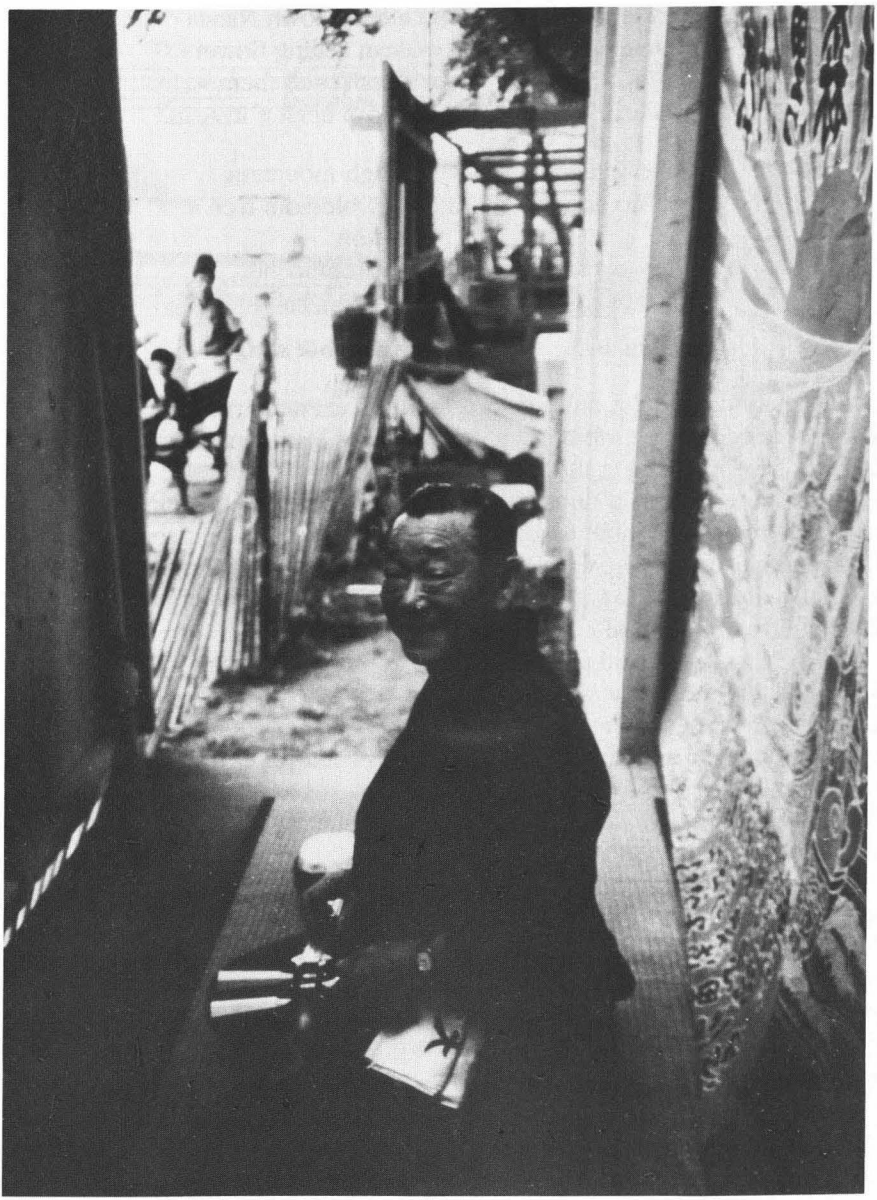
According to Sanae, Asano himself can be hard taskmaster, but he teaches his pupils with great care. She underwent a kind of apprenticeship, helping with household chores and her teacher's performances while receiving lessons. Therefore, she experienced the everyday exposure and learning from repetition that the *gidayu-bushi* apprentices of earlier times had (see ill. 8–7).

Listening to recorded selection 48, a song called "Nikata-bushi," we hear first the sound of the *shamisen,* but with a stronger tone than we heard in the *kouta* example. This *shamisen* is indeed different in construction, with a larger body, longer neck, and thicker skin. The first notes sound on the open strings, allowing the player to tune his instrument before beginning the piece. (You can hear the pitch change slightly as the player adjusts the strings.) The same "tuning" occurs later, in the instrumental interlude between verses.

The song text is composed of two verses, each set in the syllabic pattern typical of folk song: 7–7–7–5 (fig. 8–3).

The text of each verse is set to almost identical music, even down to the ornamentation used. Similarly, the patterns heard in the *shamisen* part between the two verses almost repeat the patterns played in the introduction.

As in the *kouta* example, the instrument plays a more or less steady pulse while the voice has a flexible rhythm. Look, for example, at the long notes and



Ill. 8–7. ***Asano Umewaka before singing Akita folk songs at the Folklife Festival of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.***

ornamentation in the vocal part, as seen in this transcription of the beginning of the second verse (ex. 8–7). In the transcription a time line underneath follows the regular beats of the *shamisen* part, so that the vocal part can be seen in relation to a steady unit of time.

This transcription was made at half speed, in order to catch the different

Nikata tera-machi	The temple town Nikata
no hana baasama	a woman selling flowers
hana mo urazu ni	she doesn't sell them
abura uru.	but enjoys herself instead.
Takai o-yama no	On a high mountain
goten no sakura	a cherry blossom tree at a mansion
eda wa nana eda	has seven branches
yae ni saku.	and blossoms abundantly.

Fig. 8–3. ***"Nikata-bushi" (folk song).***

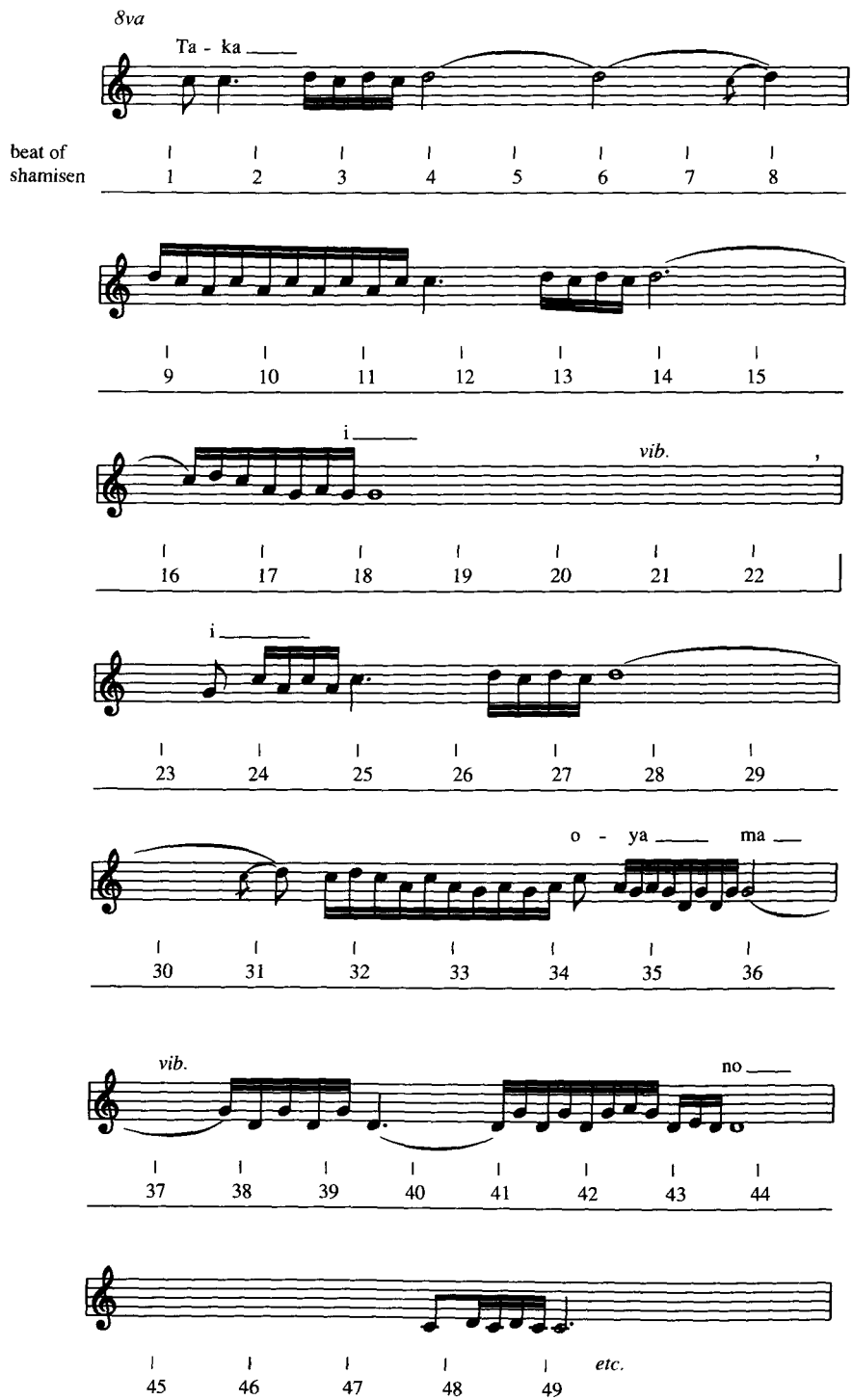
pitches that normally hit our ears at a rapid pace. Pitches that are discernible at that speed are notated; vibrato within a range of less than a semitone is simply marked "vib." Looking at the different methods of ornamenting notes, we find many instances of rapid fluctuations between the note just voiced and a new note, before the new note is sounded and held. We also find several instances (for example, during the word *o-yama*) when a trill is performed between two notes that are as far apart as a perfect fourth. This technique of ornamenting the line requires great vocal control.

The perfect fourth and perfect fifth are important intervals in many Japanese folk songs. In the transcribed section, for example, the longest notes are D", G' and D', and these tones are the pivotal notes throughout the song. Both the *yo* scale and *minyo* tetrachords can be discerned here. Just before the voice enters with each verse, the *shamisen* player makes an exclamation that sounds like "huh!" This is another example of *kakegoe,* as first heard in the *kouta* selection.

Sanae's elderly teacher might be considered a "true," old-fashioned folk singer and *shamisen* player in this Tsugaru style, having learned it from childhood in his own native area. On the other hand, Sanae has studied purposefully to become a professional folk singer. This training is reflected in many ways in her performance, such as her ornamentation, precision, clarity of voice, and general presentation. Her singing of *minyō* interests us, however, because Japanese increasingly value these qualities today in a *minyō* singer.

FESTIVAL MUSIC: MATSURI-BAYASHI

Strolling down the street, visitors to Japan may be lucky enough to run into a boisterous crowd celebrating a *matsuri,* or Shinto festival. As people spill over from the sidewalks into the streets, a parade marches by with people dressed up in *kimonos,* some riding in floats or carrying huge portable shrines. In the heart of all the activity is a Shinto shrine, with the distinctive red *torii* gate, where scores of vendors are selling steaming noodles and old-fashioned toys, or offering chances to win a goldfish. In the background, the music of the festival,



Ex. 8–7. ***"Nikata-bushi."***

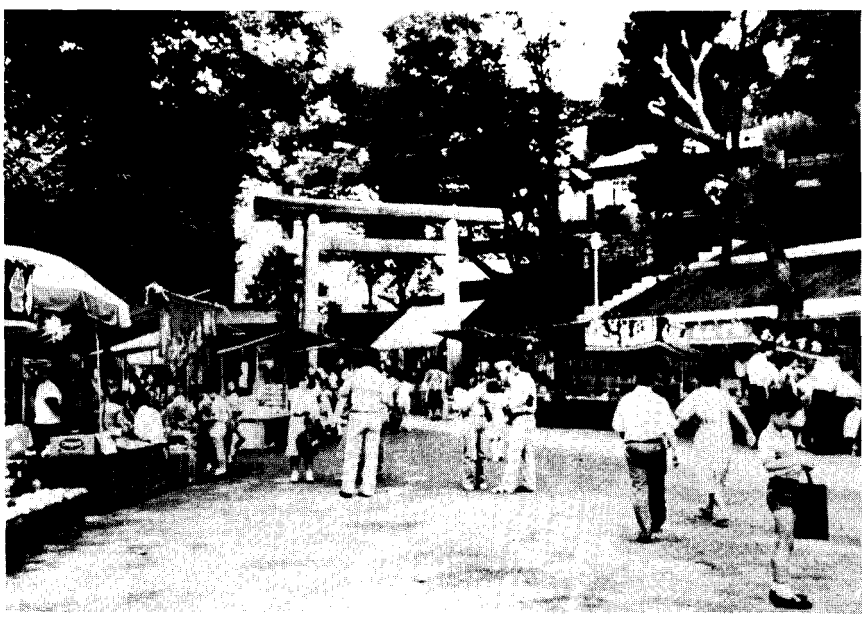
matsuri-bayashi, adds life and gaiety to the scene as the sounds of a graceful bamboo flute and booming drums fill the air (ill. 8–8).

Even in Tokyo, the capital and largest city of Japan, Shinto festivals are still held within the business districts and small neighborhoods scattered across the city. In every corner of the city—even in the most expensive commercial districts—a Shinto shrine can be found that serves as the tutelary or guardian shrine for that area. By offering prayers and festivities to the god-spirit, or *kami,* housed in the shrine, the residents receive the spirit's blessings for the year.

Although there is no legal or official relationship between a Shinto shrine and its neighborhood, many residents still feel it is important to help sponsor and participate in the traditional festival each year. They form committees and raise money to buy costumes, repair the parade floats, and so on. The festival is usually maintained in older neighborhoods with a stable population because of tradition—the residents have enjoyed their neighborhood *matsuri* for several generations. In Japanese cities, the neighborhood has been traditionally an important social unit—neighbors all knew one another and helped each other when needed, through both formal neighborhood associations and informal ties.

Since the end of World War II, however, there has been a dramatic rise in the mobility of the population as well as an increase in the white-collar sector of the population. As a result, urban neighborhood social ties have become more fragile because of shallower acquaintances with neighbors and fewer professional ties between them. Thus, some neighborhoods with a high turnover of

Ill. 8–8. ***A Tokyo festival. The grounds of the Shinto shrine are covered with the booths of food and game vendors.***



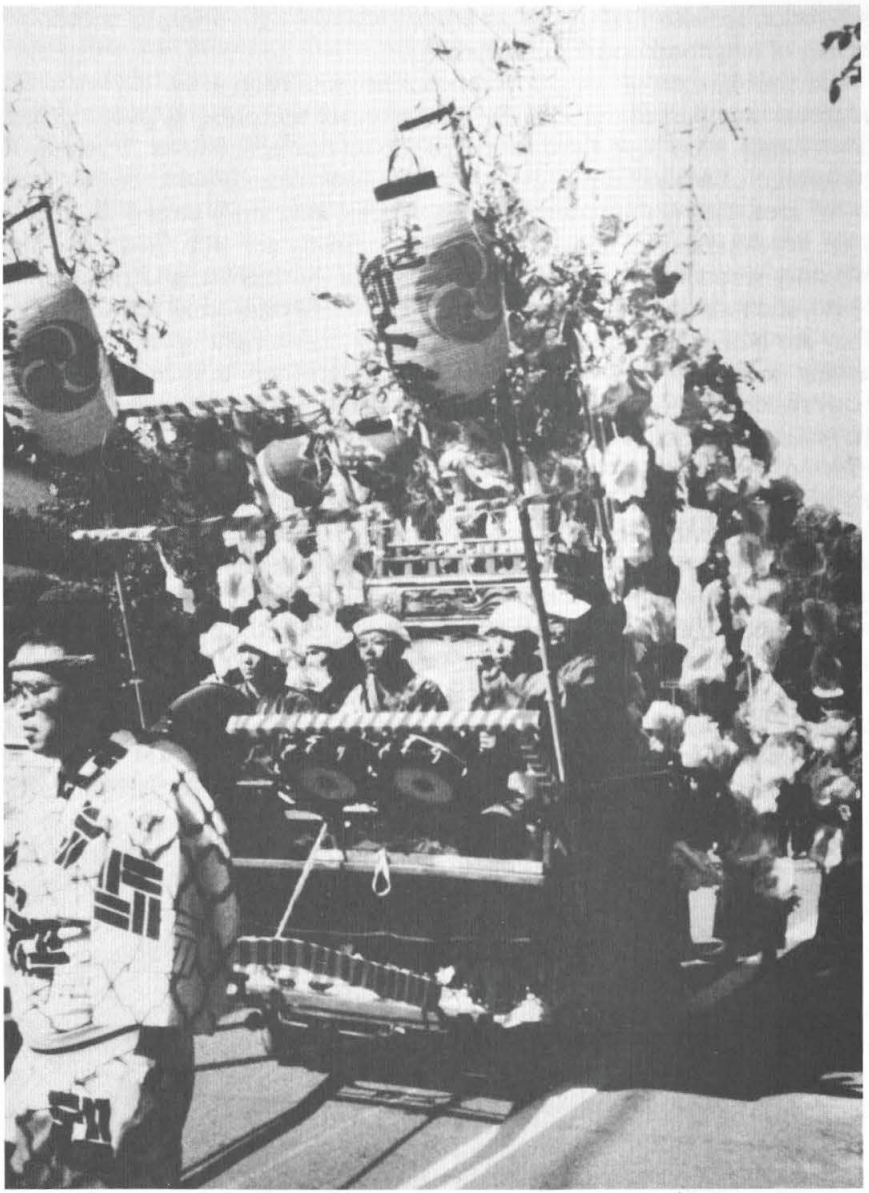
population are also finding the traditional *matsuri* a good way to encourage a feeling of neighborhood friendliness.

With the high cost of living in Tokyo, families with roots in that city are moving in greater numbers to the suburbs. But there still remain some people like the Ueno family, who have lived in Tokyo for several generations. Teachers and performers of festival music, they live in the heart of *shitamachi,* or the "downtown" area. This is the older commercial area, long since passed up in large-scale development projects, where narrow streets are still lined with small, two-story wooden houses. Tokyo has some of the highest land prices in the world, and most houses seem to take up an unbelievably small amount of land. They are built so that their sliding front door comes right up to the sidewalk, leaving no land left unused. To provide some greenery in their surroundings, many residents put out pots of flowers and small trees on the sidewalk. Because the walls of the house are so thin, one can often hear, just walking by, all that goes on within—the television blaring, arguments between children, dishes being washed, and so on. Some of the buildings have small shops on the first floor, above which the shopkeepers and their families live. The women go shopping for groceries at the neighborhood stores, though they also sometimes shop at the big department stores outside their neighborhood. If there are no bath facilities in the house, the whole family bathes in the neighborhood public bathhouse. Bringing soap and plastic bucket with them, they spend time there each day chatting with friends. This close proximity and everyday contact with neighbors brings about a spirit of cooperation and solidarity within the community rarely seen in the suburbs of Tokyo.

When it is time to hold a festival at the small neighborhood shrine, much of the neighborhood becomes involved. The festival is usually held over two or three days. On a stage on the shrine grounds, a musical group—the *matsuri-bayashi* mentioned earlier—plays throughout the day as a musical offering to the *kami* spirit. At some shrines, mimed skits and dances are performed as well to musical accompaniment.

The main event of the festival is a parade that winds through the neighborhood streets. Its principal element is the *mikoshi,* a portable shrine in which the *kami* of the shrine has been temporarily installed. The *kami*'s ride through the neighborhood blesses it for the coming year. The shrine is elaborately decorated in gold and black lacquer and sometimes weighs as much as two tons (making it less "portable" than the translation of the term suggests). From fifty to more than one hundred men (and, lately, women too) hoist it on their shoulders and, tossing it up and down, carry it through the streets for several hours. Shouting repeatedly *"was-shoi,"* or some such exclamation to coordinate their movements, the *mikoshi*-bearers make a colorful sight, dressed in traditional cotton jackets and pants. Along the parade route, spectators cheer them on. During this often rowdy parade, several festival music groups play at different locations: some remain at the permanent shrine, some perform on platforms along the parade route, and others play in floats in the parade (ill. 8–9).

Five musicians play the music of the *matsuri-bayashi* of Tokyo: two play the



Ill. 8–9. ***Matsuri-bayashi ensemble in the festival parade.***

shallow double-headed drums called *shimedaiko* (or, more commonly in Tokyo, *shirabe*); one plays the *ōdaiko,* a deep-barreled drum; one the *shinobue,* a transverse bamboo flute; and one the *yosuke,* a hand-held gong. In other parts of Japan, different instruments are used for festival music, but these almost always include flutes and drums (see ill. 8–10).

A close musical relationship is crucial to the performance of *matsuri-bayashi.*

Ill. 8–10. ***Matsuri-bayashi of Tokyo. The two shimedaiko drums are on the right, the ôdaiko on the left. This was a performance at Columbia University, New York.***

Each of the musicians, while specializing on one instrument, must learn them all to become proficient. Only then can each one listen to the others' parts and know exactly where every player is in the piece. This degree of familiarity is important because the different instruments often "bend" the rhythm slightly by either holding back or speeding up their tempos. The gong player must keep an absolutely steady beat, though not sounding all the possible beats. After treating the constant beat so flexibly throughout most of the piece, all the instruments should meet exactly together at the end of each phrase. When well done, this simultaneous finish is regarded as the sign of a truly skillful ensemble. But if a member of the ensemble gets "lost" while playing with the beat in this way, the result can be disastrous. Only the best ensembles, with years of experience performing together, can carry off this rhythmic game properly.

The example of *matsuri-bayashi* heard in recorded selection 49 is called "Yatai" and is the opening and closing section of a longer piece called "Kiri-bayashi" by the Ueno group. (The *yatai* is the wagon used to carry the *matsuri-bayashi* musicians in the festival parade.) The highly ornamented flute melody leads in and out of each section, while the vigorous drum patterns resound at increasing tempi. The main part of this section, after a short introduction, consists of seven repeated phrases (sometimes with variations thrown in) which accelerate with each repetition. At the end of one of these cycles the flute signals for the group to enter a final "coda" section.

In "Yatai," the first drum that enters is a *shirabe;* it sets the tempo for the entire piece. The flute enters with its introductory phrase, joined soon after by the two

shirabe drums; finishing this section is a two-beat stroke by the large *ōdaiko* drum.

Even in this piece, with a heavy regular beat provided by the *shirabe* drums, the flute part and the deeper *ōdaiko* can vary the tempo just a little in order to make the rhythm more interesting. The flute's heavy ornamentation masks some of this rushing and holding back, but still the player is expected to meet the others at the end of each phrase.

This is the first piece taught to a new pupil in *matsuri-bayashi* by the Ueno family of downtown Tokyo: rapid repetition occurs, student copies teacher. Comparing their typical *matsuri-bayashi* lessons to the lessons in *gigayu-bushi,* we see some similarities to the past but without the pressure of the old days. A lesson with Ueno Mitsuyuki and his son Mitsumasa might proceed as follows.* The student slides open the front door and calls out, "Good evening." Upon being invited to enter, the student immediately removes his shoes and takes a big step up to the level of the first floor of the house. There, on the *tatami* mats, the student bows to Ueno-*sensei* (*sensei* means teacher) and his family, who are all seated in an inner room. The lesson takes place in the room entered by the front door, and since musical instruments and household items are stacked along the walls, the sitting space is only about two meters by two meters. The family is still eating dinner and talking loudly to each other over the sound from the television set.

The teacher likes to chat with students before beginning a lesson. He might talk about his experiences in Tokyo during the war, or the latest *kabuki* performance he attended, or a recent argument with a neighbor. Then, after more students have arrived, either he or his son begins the lesson. In place of a real drum they use an old tire because of the neighbor's complaints about late-night practice sessions. This tire is placed in the middle of the tiny front room. Students and teacher sit on their knees around it, sticks in hand. The teacher begins to teach a new phrase of a piece by hitting the tire in mirror image to the way the performer normally plays, so that the students looking at him can easily learn the correct hand movements.

While striking the "drum" (the *shirabe,* or small drum, part is normally taught first), the teacher also calls out syllables to help the students remember the rhythm of the phrase they are playing. When there is no drum part, he hums or sings the flute melody and inserts some of the *ōdaiko* beats as well by hitting the side of the tire with one of his sticks. All parts are taught through a type of solmization (the syllables that stand for pitch or rhythm). Most genres of traditional Japanese music have their own solmization systems.

In matsuri-bayashi, the solmization of the *shirabe* part in the main section of the recorded selection is shown in fig. 8–4.

It is not difficult to reproduce this rhythmic pattern by tapping a flat surface with the fingers. Begin each phrase with the right hand and do not use the same hand for two consecutive beats, except at the beginning of a new phrase (which

* The elder Ueno passed away in 1983, but the present tense is used here to refer to his life and work.

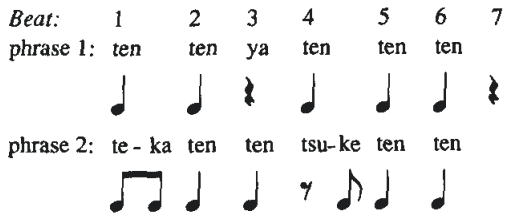


Fig. 8–4. ***"Yatai" (matsuri-bayashi).***

should start with the right hand again). Comparing this solmization (which is sometimes called *shōka* in Japanese) to the Western notation shown, we can see that "ten" equals two half-beats, "tsu" equals a half-beat rest, and "ke" equals a half-beat following a half-beat rest. (No syllables are spoken on the last beat of the phrase, though a rest of one beat occurs there.)

Students write down these syllables to help them remember the rhythmic patterns of the drums, and a similar system helps them to memorize the flute melody. However, merely hearing the syllables, without hearing them performed, gives only a vague notion of how they are to be played. The "score" that results is at best a memory device to help the student recall what was taught. As a consequence, Japanese music characteristically lacks a detailed notation system. The teacher is critical to a student's mastering any musical form. Without teachers who are willing to convey a great deal of their musical knowledge, students would be helpless, for scores do not give them access to real musical knowledge.

A good relationship with a knowledgeable teacher is also essential if a student wants to learn any *hikyoku,* or secret pieces. Found in many genres of traditional music, including *matsuri-bayashi,* the secret repertoire consists of rarely performed pieces handed down only to the most trusted of pupils. In the style of festival music taught by the Ueno family, the secret pieces were described by the son as not technically difficult but valued mainly because of their exclusivity. In the past, this knowledge was so guarded that some *hikyoku* have disappeared because teachers have died before finding pupils worthy of learning their secrets.

The lives of Ueno Mitsuyuki and his son vividly exemplify the traditional and contemporary backgrounds of those who love Tokyo festivals and festival music. *Matsuri-bayashi* is traditionally performed by amateurs such as the Uenos, while *kagura,* the mimed plays based on Shinto themes, is carried out by professional actors and musicians (ill. 8–11). According to the father, performing *matsuri-bayashi* strictly as an amateur is important because it is really a pious act of offering entertainment to the gods, not a"performance" or "show." Therefore, he performs only at the festivals themselves. The son, however, while preferring to play at festivals, also plays occasionally with some of the professional *kagura* musicians who have learned how to play *matsuri-bayashi.* These musicians are frequently hired to provide a musically festive atmosphere at secular occasions such as wedding receptions and department store openings.

For both father and son, however, *matsuri-bayashi* remains secondary to their

Ill. 8–11. ***Ueno Mitsuyuki playing matsuri-bayashi.***

main profession, which is *chōkin,* or metal carving. This intricate art uses silver and gold to create jewelry (such as pins and ornaments for the *kimono*), sword guards, Japanese pipe holders, and small elegant statues of Buddha. The technique, a combination of engraving and inlay, requires years of training and great patience.

The life of Ueno Mitsuyuki epitomizes the spirit of the Edo *matsuri-bayashi.* Born in 1900 in the old downtown area of Tokyo, Ueno proudly tells of his family's long history in Edo. They came to Edo at the beginning of the Tokugawa era (in the early seventeenth century) from Aichi Prefecture. His grandfather was of the *samurai* class, which was dissolved with the class system during the Meiji period. In the 1880s, Ueno's father learned metal carving and *matsuri-bayashi.* Ueno's mother, as the daughter of the priest of an important shrine in the area, was active throughout her life in their own neighborhood festival.

At the age of fourteen, Ueno began to study metal carving seriously, dropping for a time all other hobbies and interests. After he had finished his metal carving training with his father, Ueno studied *matsuri-bayashi* with his uncle, a talented musician. Ueno says: "In the old days, the teacher told the students they were stupid and played poorly and maybe even hit them, but without explaining exactly what was wrong. In this way, I learned both *matsuri-bayashi* and metal carving—the technique became a part of my bones. But these days, people want to be told exactly what is wrong so that they can learn the art quickly and start making money from it." He learned *matsuri-bayashi* easily and soon became well known for his flute-playing style.

Ueno was too old to be accepted in the military during World War II, and he became active in the neighborhood association, which organized drills and

fought fires in his area. He recalls the many times American planes dropped bombs on Tokyo, which quickly set afire the closely packed wooden houses, leaving thousands homeless within minutes. But he also blames the military leaders of Japan for dragging their country into such a bloody war, and laments the loss of life on all sides.

When he was thirty-six, relatively late in life, Ueno married a woman from his own neighborhood in Tokyo. His son Mitsumasa was born in 1953, when Ueno was already in his fifties, and he was therefore determined to teach the boy the skills he knew as early as possible. Knowing how long it would take to learn the intricate arts of metal carving and *matsuri-bayashi,* Ueno was afraid there would not be enough time for him to teach everything he knew to his son. He began teaching Mitsumasa the drum part of *matsuri-bayashi* when the boy was three, and metal carving when he was seven. Lessons were conducted every day for one hour after school. By the time he was fifteen, Mitsumasa had become proficient enough in both arts to satisfy his father that his skills had been faithfully transmitted to the next generation.

Ueno told me that he was never bored. Every day he rises after only four or five hours of sleep and, no matter what the weather, strolls to the various shrines in his neighborhood at 4 A.M. to offer prayers. He then begins his work day upstairs in his workshop, together with his son. Sitting side by side, they work almost every day of the week. Father and son stop for a meal at midday; in the early evening, with the disappearance of daylight, they finish their day's work. (Because the work is so intricate, working by daylight is much easier than by artificial light.) Around 7 at night three days a week, the first pupils arrive and the music lessons begin. As there is a great deal of chatting and serving of tea, the lessons sometimes go on until 10 or 11 P.M.

The father exhibits a characteristic typical of the *Edokko,* or "child of Edo"—a nonchalant attitude toward money. For instance, he refuses to sell pieces of his metal carving of which he is especially fond. Also, he readily turns down commissions for work, even when in need of it, if making the requested object does not appeal to him. As Ueno put it: "If you had the choice between gold and silver or paper (money), which would you prefer? And we're not talking about just plain gold and silver, but something you've created out of them which is unique in the world." Then he gave a self-deprecatory laugh and said, "Do you believe there are such innocent people left in the world as myself?" By the same token, the Uenos accept only a small amount of money for the music lessons they give. The father once confided that they would rather give the lessons free, but found that people did not take them seriously if they did not pay something for them.

In spite of their relative poverty and busy lives, the Uenos still find the materials and the time to create with their own hands many of the items needed for the annual neighborhood festival. These include masks and costumes for the mimed plays in which they participate, as well as the drawing of designs to be dyed into the material of the musicians' *kimonos.*

Ueno feels that his profession of metal carving and his hobby of *matsuri-bayashi* have one important quality in common. This is the feeling, as a practi-

tioner, that one is never "finished," or has reached a point of perfection. "This is what makes life interesting: that which you want to do is never in a state of perfection, so you always have to strive to do better. That's why I enjoy metal carving and why I enjoy *matsuri-bayashi.*"

As for the son, Mitsumasa, from the earliest moment he can remember, his father reiterated the importance of his learning both metal carving and *matsuri-bayashi* as soon as possible. In the beginning, Mitsumasa says, he was actually not very interested in carving; but his father said, "Just give it a try." And so, he says, "I've been giving it a try for over 25 years now!

Now the son is proud of carrying on the work of his father, both the metal carving and the festival music. Mitsumasa is one of the few young practitioners of metal carving, and already has won many prizes for his work. As for *matsuri-bayashi,* he says, "I've got that music in my blood now, so as long as I'm around, I want to be playing it." As was the case with his father, the son's flute playing has become well admired and professional musical troupes seek his services.

Today, both folk song and festival music are becoming professionalized and standardized. Folk song in particular seems to be adopting the standards of the "art" genres like *shakuhachi* and *koto* music, with their *iemoto* systems, rankings, and artistic names. As for *matsuri-bayashi,* not only the younger Ueno, but many other Tokyo *matsuri-bayashi* players feel the lure of professional troupes, aware of the income and prestige they could attain as a member of such a company. As musicians join *iemoto* and professional organizations, the pressure to conform to certain performance standards increases.

POPULAR MUSIC

The traditional music genres described up to now had been conveyed from performer to audience without electronic media for many centuries. At a single performance the audience of these traditional genres was relatively small, and establishing rapport with that audience was crucial to success. Today, music performances are regularly presented on radio, television, and other media. A single recorded performance may be heard by millions of people who are unseen to the musicians.

In addition to changing the ways traditional music is played and perceived, mass media and technology have also stimulated the growth of a new kind of music in Japan, which we shall call here "popular music."* Since 1907, when the first commercial music recording was released in Japan, the composition, performance, and appreciation of music has changed dramatically. Music recorded specifically for commercial release in Japan, with the aim of appealing to the mass audience, exhibits several characteristics:

* Popular music is defined here as music primarily created for and transmitted by the various mass media. While some genres of so-called popular song that flourished among the masses in pre-Meiji Japan also have exerted an impact on the popular music of today, only those genres particularly linked to contemporary popular genres are discussed here.

1. Performance within a set time limit (generally three to five minutes).
2. A focus on themes that appeal to a broad public (though regional or specialty audiences are also sometimes targeted).
3. Stanza form and a steady beat, making the music more accessible to the Japanese who have become more accustomed to Western music.
4. In live performance, performers aim to reproduce the recorded version of the music so as to fulfill audience expectations.
5. Music rises and falls dramatically in popularity over time.

This "Top 40" mentality was novel to the Japanese; in their previous experience it was common for many kinds of music dating from different eras in Japanese history to survive side by side as vital elements of the country's musical life. Now, through the association of songs with a specific point in time, generations have begun to identify with "their" songs, with the result that music can be used as an age marker.

Through the mass media, music performed by "others" (particularly professionals) became more available to more people than ever before. Today, there is scarcely a home in Japan without a radio, television set, or stereo, and many have all three. As people listen to the same recordings and to the same performance of a song, they are united by a common musical experience; they also develop certain expectations as to what music should sound like.

Of course, a similar process has occurred worldwide as popular music has penetrated all corners of the globe. In Japan, the spread of music through records, tapes, and compact discs has advanced very rapidly. In fact, since the mid-1970s, their combined sales have exceeded "those of all other capitalist nations, except the USA" (Mitsui 1984:107). Furthermore, the Japanese have far more opportunities to hear American and European popular music than Western listeners generally have to hear non-Western popular music. One industry survey shows that since 1970, about two-fifths of all popular music recordings produced in Japan were recorded by foreign musicians, most of whom were American or European (Mitsui 1984:107).

Historical Background

The types of popular music found in today's Japan developed as the modern Japanese state emerged. It is interesting that the present-day music scene has evolved into an exceedingly diverse one in a country known in the past for its high degree of cultural homogeneity. The rise of this contemporary heterogeneous music-culture and specifically "Japanese" popular music can be traced to the latter half of the nineteenth century. At this time, wide-ranging reforms were introduced to Japanese society to enable the country to deal with Western powers. The traditional class system was abolished and the authority of the Tokugawa regime was replaced by a government headed by the Emperor Meiji. He left Kyoto and set up a new capital in what was now called "Tokyo," or

Eastern Capital. This government introduced a constitutional monarchy and made many structural changes in the society to allow a mercantile and industrial economy to flourish.

After their long era of isolation, the Japanese felt it necessary to "modernize" life around them, which for a while meant adopting Western models. Leaders rapidly installed a system of compulsory education and decided, from reading about the Dutch and French school systems, that Japan also needed compulsory singing in its schools. In the late 1870s, Izawa Shuji, a Japanese school principal who had studied in Massachusetts, and Luther Whiting Mason, an American who was director of music for the Boston primary schools, developed a plan for music instruction in Japanese public schools.

In the following years *shōka* songs were introduced to meet a goal of teaching songs that blended Japanese and Western elements. The newly composed songs utilized melodies based on a traditional Japanese scale within the structure of a stanza form and a regular meter. Other songs introduced in the schools contained Western melodies such as "Auld Lang Syne" and "Swanee River" set with Japanese texts. Through songs like these, both *shōka* and Western songs, the Japanese masses were introduced to Western musical structure, scale, and rhythm.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, different opinions emerged over Japan's future direction. According to one faction, Japan should aim toward a democracy similar to that of the United States. Others, however, supported a strong monarchy and political power for the small group of advisers around the emperor. These people believed that the emperor should stand as the symbol of the nation and its long history and spirit; he would lead the Japanese to a new era of world leadership.

In the end, those who supported the monarchy gained political supremacy, and their spiritual descendants eventually led Japan to political and military expansion and World War II. But during the Meiji period, these arguments were still far from settled, and the public became highly involved in them. In the 1880s, when the People's Rights Movement urged further democratization through the establishment of a parliament, a new kind of song called *enka* evolved to express the goals of the movement. The words of one such song, "Oppekepe," written in 1887, show how political the early *enka* were:*

> I'd like to make those who dislike "rights and happiness" (for the people) drink the water of freedom. Those in their fancy Western hairdos and hats, who dress in stylish garb, their outward appearance may be fine but their political thinking is inadequate; they don't understand the truth of the land. We should sow the seeds of freedom in their hearts.†

The very title of another song, popular from 1886 to 1888, indicates its incendiary purpose: "Dynamite Song." Its first verse reads:

* Actually, the words to this song are not so much "sung" to a melody, but recited like a rhythmic chant.
† Author's translation.

Yamato [meaning "Japanese"] spirit is polished with rain
From the tears of the advocates of People's Rights.
Promote the national interest and the people's happiness
Foster the National Resources
Because if this is not done—
Dynamite! Bang! (Malm 1971:278)

These deeply political *enka* songs were transformed through the decades to become sentimental songs full of nostalgia and longing; but their early influence on the development of Japanese popular song as a whole is unmistakable.

The *enka* song called "Nonki-bushi" (Song of the Lazy Man) was composed in 1918, and was an early "hit." (Recorded selection 50.) Its composer was Soeda Azembo, one of the most famous of the early Japanese popular music composers. Soeda began his career as an *enka* singer, but by the early twentieth century the *enka* had already changed in character dramatically, as you will realize from listening to this selection. The lyrics exemplify a typical "silly" song that was popular in the vaudeville halls of the day and reappeared many times over the years in Japan (fig. 8–5).

The singer of this original recording, Ishida Ichimatsu, also wrote the lyrics to this song. Ishida, born in 1902, was studying law in Tokyo when he met Soeda through a musical club. He then began his career in song writing and singing, producing many 78 rpm hit records. In the post-World War II years, Ishida entered politics and was re-elected several times to the National Diet before his death in 1956.

Comparing this song to the earlier examples of Japanese vocal music found in this chapter, we find some astonishing differences: a steady beat in the melody, the repetition of stanzas, the quality of the voice and the narration of small stories in each verse. The effects of Western popular music here are obvious. On the Japanese vaudeville stage, the repetitive structure was convenient because it allowed the performer to add new verses—perhaps pertaining to timely political issues, or making fun of someone in the audience—as he desired.

One aspect of Japanese vocal music that remains, however, is a vestige of the rich tradition of ornamentation. Listen for the quick ornaments placed over some notes in this verse and in following verses. Recreating these ornaments is to this day still considered essential in the performance of *enka,* even among amateurs.

In the transcription of the first verse (ex. 8–8), a short introduction is played by a violin based on the melody of the last phrase, "He he, nonki da ne" (Ha ha, how lazy). This same phrase appears briefly between each verse and at the conclusion of the song. Otherwise, the violin follows the vocal line with only slight embellishments. When "Nonki-bushi" was written, the practice of harmonizing *enka* with chords had not yet replaced the single string instrument—first *shamisen,* then the violin, in later years the guitar—in supporting and occasionally embellishing the melodic line.

In the 1990s, the *enka* still has many fans, but it has undergone several

Nonki no tōsan
o-uma no keiko
o-uma ga hashirihajimete
tomaranai.
Kodomo wa omoshirosō ni
Tōsan, doko e yuku.
Doko e yukun da ka
o-uma ni kiito kure
He he nonki da ne.

The lazy man
rides a horse
and it begins to run
and won't stop.
A child enjoys this, asking
"Hey, where are you going?"
"If you want to know where I'm
going, better ask the horse!"
Ha, ha, how lazy!

Nonki na tōsan no
bōya ga hadaka de
kaachan ga kimono o
kiyo to shikattemo
bōya wa iya da to itte
kimono o kinai
. . . Choito Tōsan, bōya ga
hada de komarimasu wa yo.
Nanda nanda bōya kaze o hiitara
doo surun da
dete kita tōsan ga maruhade

He he nonki da ne.

The lazy man—
his son was naked
and the mother scolded him
to put on his kimono.
The boy said he wouldn't
put on his kimono.
"Hey, Father, our son is naked—
do something!"
"What's this! Son, what will
you do if you catch a cold?"
said the father, coming out
stark naked.
Ha ha, how lazy!

Nonki na tōsan
O-mawari-san ni natta kedo
Saaberu ga jama ni natte
arukenai
ichido koronde mata mata
korobi
Sakki okinakereba yokatta
mono ni to sa
he he nonki da ne.

The lazy man
became a policeman but
his saber got in the way
and he couldn't walk.
He fell once, then again
and again.
"It would've been better if
I hadn't gotten up again!"
Ha ha, how lazy!

Nonki na tōsan
teppo katsuide
haruka kanata o naganureba

tsugai no hato poppo ga
narande tomatteru.
Aida o neratte uttara
dotchika ataru daro.
he he nonki da ne.

The lazy man
carries his rifle
looking at a far-off tree
branch
a pair of pigeons are
sitting together.
"If I aim for the middle, I
should hit one, I guess.!
Ha, ha, how lazy!

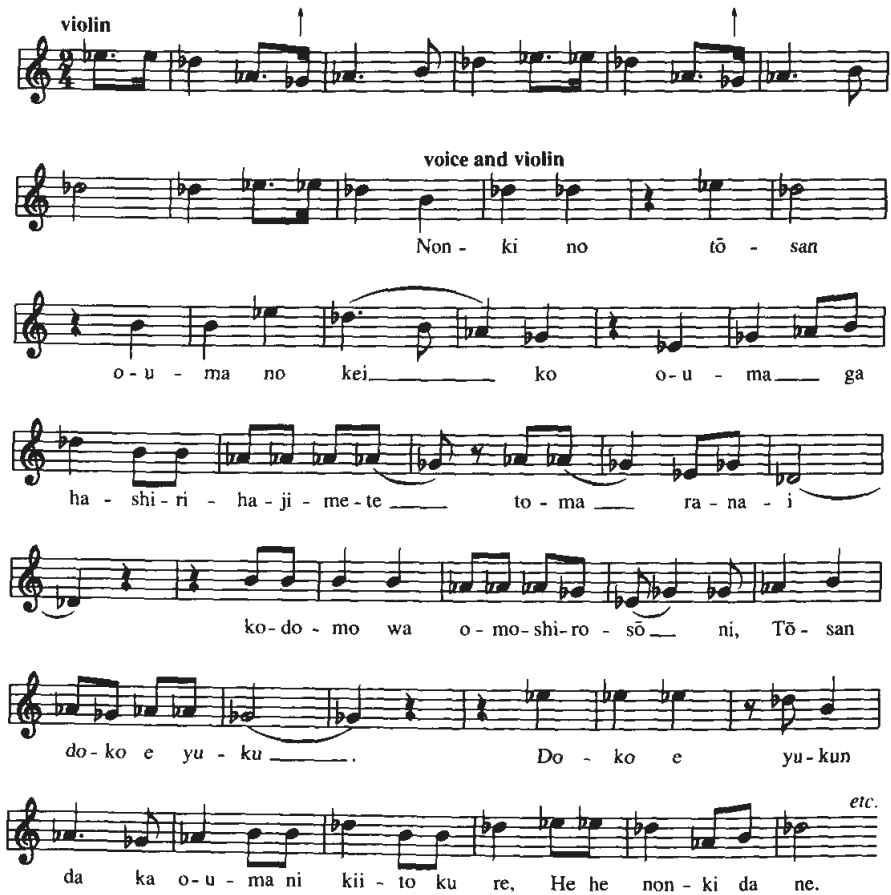
Fig. 8–5. ***"Nonki-bushi."***

Nonki na tōsan	The lazy man
koe hariagete	shouted to the others,
mina kite miro taihen da	"Everyone, come and see—
hayaku kite miro	come quickly and see
mattaku taihen da	it's incredible!
are miro suita densha ga	Look there—an empty train
tōtteiru	is going by!"
he he nonki da ne.	Ha, ha, how lazy!

Fig. 8–5. ***(Continued)***

transformations since the days of "Nonki-bushi." In the years after World War II, *enka* became a highly sentimental song genre which most commonly evoked images of *sake* bars, with the ubiquitous red lantern hanging outside, port towns (the site of many sad farewells), and foggy or rainy, lonely evenings.

Ex. 8–8. ***"Nonki-bushi," first verse.***



One might imagine that the older generation would be most likely to appreciate such nostalgic expressions of sadness. Indeed, for many younger people who grew up with rock music, *enka* sounds too old-fashioned and sentimental for their taste. By the mid-1970s, the audiences for *enka* were growing older, and the genre did not seem to hold much appeal for younger listeners. But then a new phenomenon called *karaoke* appeared on the scene, reinvigorating the *enka* and bringing it to a new, younger audience.

Karaoke means "empty orchestra" and designates the technological development that allowed anyone with the proper equipment to sing their favorite songs to a full orchestra accompaniment. A typical set-up includes a cassette tape playback machine on which is played a prerecorded tape of the musical accompaniment to a favorite song, and one or two microphones for amplifying the voice as the amateur sings the melodic line.

Enka were, and continue to be, the songs of choice for most *karaoke* users. Other kinds of music found on *karaoke* tapes include Japanese folk and contemporary "pop" songs, as well as Western popular songs, but the majority are some kind of *enka*. A *karaoke* singer may either sing the lyrics of these songs from memory or consult a book containing the lyrics to hundreds of songs.

A large variety of *karaoke* machines are produced in Japan, ranging in price (in 1986) from about $100 to $3,000, but averaging about $1,000. The difference in price is determined by the machine's features. The more expensive models are used in restaurants, bars, wedding halls, and banquet rooms. At these places, customers or guests sing songs of their choice from a wide selection available on tape, singing either alone or in couples. Models priced in the middle range are often installed in smaller bars as well as touring buses and trains so that Japanese traveling in groups can sing to each other on long trips. The inexpensive models are designed for home use, so that users can practice for these "public" performances. There are even battery powered models for outdoor use.

Sales of *karaoke* machines indicate how widespread its popularity has become. In 1978, 100,000 sets were sold, but within five years, this figure had jumped to 1,100,000 sets, resulting in $625 million in sales. A report in *Time* magazine noted that this is more than was spent that year in the United States on gas ranges (Closet Carusos, 1983:47).

The *karaoke* technology made available to the consumer was developed to support and enhance his or her voice as much as possible. One can adjust the volume of the vocal part in relation to the instrumental background, and even switch on an echo device when desired (to add a kind of "singing-in-the-shower" effect). Some equipment is digitized, permitting singers to change the key of the original accompaniment tape to one in their own register. Even the musical accompaniment is designed to be helpful to the singer; the orchestra stays in the background to avoid stealing the show from the singer, but one instrument reinforces the melodic line, in case the singer becomes lost.

This equipment has reinforced the traditional Japanese custom of group singing. Japanese feel that singing helps to establish a relaxed atmosphere and feeling of closeness with others. Social groups—based on professional, school,

familial, or community relationships—are important in Japanese life, and the Japanese put much effort into harmonious relationships within these groups. For example, to improve relations among company employees, management organizes special activities such as group tours to spas and drinking parties. On these occasions, *karaoke* is used to break down the social barriers created by the company hierarchy. For this purpose, mere conversation, even when mixed with drinking, does not suffice because it is based on knowledge and wit. But *karaoke* is a different kind of socializing, and the most sentimental, nostalgic idea can be expressed—and are even encouraged—when sung through the *karaoke* machine.

Karaoke singing also reinforces group harmony through the expectation that each member of a group will participate by singing in front of the group. Even if someone feels embarrassed and wants to refuse, he or she usually gives in and sings at least one song in order to maintain the spirit of group harmony. To be sure, some Japanese dislike the idea of singing in public under any circumstances, but most of them have fewer inhibitions about singing before others than people of the United States, for example.*

Karaoke technology works also as an outlet for stress. For instance, the echo feature gives singers a sense of removal from their everyday identity. One Japanese, living in America, stated: "Americans don't know the enjoyment of singing *karaoke* with a mike; it's great to hear your own voice, resounding throughout the room. You feel all your tension disappear." Some businessmen in Japan enjoy going to *karaoke* bars after work just for that purpose; to relieve the accumulated stress from a day of work by belting down a few drinks and belting out a few songs. One survey shows that *karaoke* is most popular among male, white-collar workers between the ages of twenty and forty-nine; the same survey also found that, within any age group, those who enjoyed *karaoke* the most were "those who like to sing" and "those who like to drink" (NHK Hōsō 1982:24–25).

Even Japanese businessmen living abroad find *karaoke* bars in which they can spend their afterhours. In New York City, for example, where a large population of Japanese businessmen work, some twenty or more *karaoke* bars had sprung up by the mid-1980s, and a fierce competition had broken out among them to install the latest technological developments in *karaoke*. One such development is the laser disc video machine, which shows a series of video-taped scenes to accompany each song. Besides the added visual stimulation, it is said that this apparatus also has the advantage that the singers need not have their heads buried in the lyric book but can look up at the screen and at their listeners.

While the content of the music is quite different, there is an interesting similarity in the way *enka* songs (as sung over *karaoke* machines) and traditional music are learned. Both involve aural skills—listening very carefully to an "original" version (of the recording in the case of *enka*, and of the teacher in

*Japanese manufacturers have tried for years to market the *karaoke* machine in the United States on the same scale as in Japan, but their failure is perhaps linked to this individual sense of inhibition where public singing is concerned.

traditional music) and imitating it as skillfully as possible. These days, some notation can also be involved. Real *karaoke* enthusiasts can even study with a teacher for pointers or technique but, for the most part, singers become familiar with the melody and interpretation of a song after listening to a recorded professional version many times.

At the top level of performance, though, *karaoke* performances are expected to produce more than exact imitations of another's performance. For example, more expensive models of *karaoke* machines can automatically score a performer on a scale of 1 to 100. One enthusiast told me that in his experience "exact" reproduction of a song in its original interpretation might bring you a score of 98 or 99, but not 100. For the highest score, an element of "personal expressiveness" is necessary, while at the same time one must show complete mastery of the original version. In the traditional music genres described earlier, we have seen this same standardization of music performance among the lower ranking performers, with expectations for more personal creativity at the master level.

By the same token, master performers of *gidayū-bushi* music, festival music, and other kinds of music discussed here also should go beyond imitating their teachers. For most, however, simply meeting the criteria of imitation—as promoted at most levels of the *iemoto* system—is a lifelong task. Few performers reach the stage where personal interpretation is acceptable, and even then it can be controversial.

Karaoke's impact on the musical life of the typical Japanese should not be underestimated. The use of these machines by people of all ages has widened the average person's song repertoire. The musical generation gap, prompted by the growth of popular music, has narrowed somewhat as a result of *karaoke* activity. Within one social group, members of different generations hear and learn songs from one another's repertoires. Singing together encourages this intergenerational learning process.

The music industry has had good reason to be pleased with *karaoke's* popularity. This technology not only provides a new avenue for merchandizing recorded music (the *karaoke* tapes) but in some cases stimulates sales of the original version of a popular song—when people like a song sung by someone at a bar, they sometimes purchase the record themselves in order to learn it.

Enka's popularity has spread to younger age groups because of social *karaoke* singing. At the same time *enka* composers have adapted their songs to the tastes of the younger generation. Background accompaniment ranges from the earlier simple guitar accompaniment to sophisticated orchestral arrangements to heavier, rock-type beats. More "up-beat" *enka* have been issued, with faster tempos and more optimistic lyrics, though these are still in the minority. Finally, vocal ornamentation, so emphasized in earlier *enka,* is toned down in the newer versions because the youth are more accustomed to hearing Western-style vocalization.

The *enka* song found in recorded selection 51 ("Naite Nagasaki," or Crying Nagasaki) is typical of the more old-fashioned variety of *enka* meant for a

middle-aged audience. Recorded in 1988 by a *geisha,* the mournfully romantic theme of the song, its orchestra background and vocal style appeals to people who visit a bar with a *karaoke* machine after a long day at work and want to indulge in a little emotionalism. The text (fig. 8–6) describes a woman alone in her room as she contemplates the departure of her lover.

Several images brought out in the song are common to many *enka* songs. The setting of the port town of Nagasaki conjures up romantic associations and particularly the sadness of lovers parting. The scenes of drowning oneself in *sake,* crying in the windy night, and—on top of all that—rain are also found in hundreds of other *enka* songs. For such themes, the Japanese prefer to use a

Fig. 8–6. ***"Naite Nagasaki" (Crying Nagasaki).***

Saka no mukō ni	On the other side of the hill
yogisha ga mieru	I can see the night train.
Anata noseteku	Taking you away,
nobori no ressha	the northbound train.
Okuritai kedo	I want to send you off
okureba tsurai	but if I do it will be painful.
Heya no mado kara	From the window of my room
te o furu watashi	I wave goodbye to you.
Naite naite naite	Crying, crying, crying
Nagasaki	Nagasaki,
Ame ni narisō, ne.	It looks like rain, doesn't it?
Wakarenakereba	That you were someone
naranaihito to	with whom I'd have to part—
shitte inagara	although I knew this,
moyashita inochi	a burning fate,
sugaritsukitai	wanting to cling to you,
Maruyamadōri	along the Maruyamadōri
jitto koraete	with steady endurance,
aruita watashi	I walked:
Naite naite naite	Crying, crying, crying
Nagasaki	Nagasaki.
Ame ni narisō, ne.	It looks like rain, doesn't it?
Minato yokaze	The night wind from the port
fukikomu kabe ni	blows against the wall
furete setsunai	making flutter
anata no heyagi	your robe hanging there.
nigai o-sake o	I drown myself
abiteru watashi	in bitter sake.
Naite naite naite	Crying, crying, crying
Nagasaki.	Nagasaki.
Ame ni narisō, ne.	It looks like rain, doesn't it?

natural minor scale, sometimes with the sharped seventh added. At times, the melody too emphasizes the sad mood, for example in the setting of the words "Naite, naite. . . ," as though the singer were sobbing (ex. 8–9).

The form of the song is also typical of *enka,* as we have already seen in "Nonki-bushi"—a simple strophe with a refrain. It opens and closes with instrumental sections, which also recur between strophes. As soon as the voice enters, the background accompaniment becomes minimal, consisting mainly of a bass guitar playing a bass line and other orchestral and electronic instruments filling in the harmony. This accompaniment begins to expand towards the end of the stanza as the vocal part reaches the climax at "Naite, naite . . ."

Harmonically, *enka* tend to use a conservative progression of chords, like most Western popular music. There is a brief modulation to the relative major (on the last "Nagasaki"), but otherwise the main movement is between the tonic, sub-dominant and dominant of A minor.

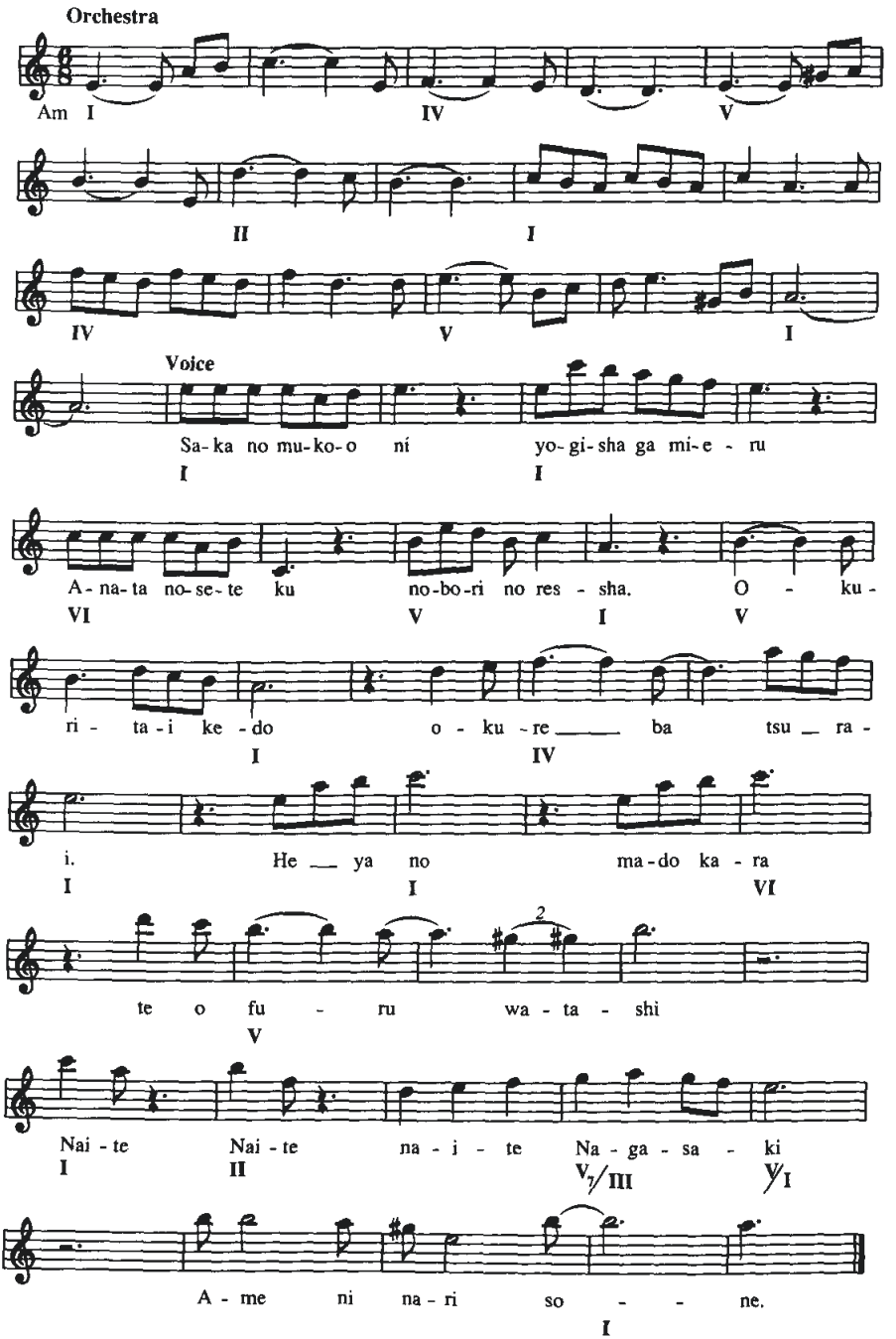
Compared to "Nonki-bushi," "Naite Nagasaki" contains far more complicated orchestration, the use of background singers, and other elements indicative of Western popular music influence. However, the occasional use of vocal ornamentation reflects Japanese taste in vocal quality. Examples can be found in the slight tremolo heard in the voice in the line "nobori no densha," the occasional use of vibrato before the end of a stanza and the final ornamented fall from the B to the A at the end of the transcribed stanza.

The large Japanese music industry produces many other kinds of popular music in addition to *enka.* Some are strongly influenced by Western genres, and some show connections to Japanese musical traditions. The term *kayōkyoku* describes Japanese popular song as a whole, and particularly the songs, including *enka,* that mix Western and Japanese musical elements. This combination is usually a blend of Japanese melodies made from pentatonic scales with Western harmonic progressions and metrical organization. Since the mid-1970s, however, many of the contemporary songs have been written in Western scales, especially major modes, conforming to the imported music listened to by Japanese youth.

The labels identifying different kinds of Japanese popular music are very confusing (as they can be in Western popular music as well) because they are so often inconsistently applied; but these are the most common:

Gunka

Literally "military songs," *gunka* were first composed and gained popularity during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. More songs were composed in succeeding military engagements. People in their sixties and seventies now strongly associate such songs with their youth during World War II and therefore are still extremely fond of them. Influenced by military music of the West, these songs are written in stanza form, often with trumpet and other brass instruments in the instrumental accompaniment. Not all are enthusiastic about fighting and war. Some songs were written from the point of view of a lonely mother waiting



Ex. 8–9. ***Transcription of "Natte Nagasaki" (first verse).***

for her soldier-son to come home, or of a soldier on the front who has just lost his best friend in battle.

Folk Song

Fōku songu can apply to either Western "new" folk songs, as sung by musicians like Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, or to the Japanese songs written mainly in the 1960s and 1970s that were influenced by such music. Japanese folk singers of this period typically wrote the words and music of the songs they sang. This practice was different from the separation of songwriter, lyricist, and singer that had formerly predominated in Japanese popular music. Musically, these songs can scarcely be differentiated from their Western counterparts; the lyrics, however, sung in Japanese, often refer to social or political issues that are specifically Japanese.

New Music

Also written phonetically to imitate the English words (*nyuu myuushiku*), this term developed in the late 1970s to designate a music that had grown out of the "folk song" style. Represented at first by singer-songwriters such as Yoshida Tokurō and Minami Kōsetsu, "new music" songs generally convey an introverted, personal point of view that appeals to today's young people. In these types of songs, the melody, usually written in the natural minor scale and in short phrases, is given more importance than the presence of a strong beat.

Pops

Appearing from the late 1970s and aimed at a teenage audience, music of this kind is ordinarily sung by teenagers themselves, some as young as fourteen. These singers, mostly female, are discovered by production companies that send talent scouts all over the country. Upon locating a promising candidate, the company decides on the appropriate image for the singer, trains her to sing in a certain way, and choreographs her performances. Television is an important medium for these teenaged performers, as a new singer can gain instant fame with an appearance on one of the numerous musical variety shows. Performing in costumes that accentuate an image of youth and innocence, dozens of these singers rise and fall in the Japanese music business each year, while a few lucky ones manage to maintain long-term careers.

These songs are usually Western sounding in arrangement and melody and, to add a touch of sophistication and exoticism, often include a few words of English in the lyrics. Typically, English words or phrases are alternated with Japanese lines, but the English may not be strictly idiomatic. Figure 8–7 shows an example from one song, with the Japanese phrases translated in parentheses.

In addition to *gunka, fōku songu,* new music, and pops, there are easy

I had understood your heart
Ima made wa kotoba ga nakuta tie
(Up to now, without any words)
Oh, please tell me your heart
Ima sugu ni . . . ru, ru, ru, ru
*(Right away, ru, ru, ru, ru)**
Fig. 8–7. ***"Himitsu no kata."***

listening, rock, punk, and many other kinds of popular music, mostly based on Western models but sometimes deviating from those models in interesting ways.

We have reviewed a small sample of the wide variety of music heard in Japan today. This sample contains many examples of the mixture of native with foreign elements in the evolution of new musical forms. The *shakuhachi* was developed from an instrument of Chinese origin that entered Japan around the eighth century. The Zen philosophy that underlay the instrument's use in meditation also originated in China. The prototype of the *shamisen,* used to play *kouta,* music of the puppet theater and to accompany traditional folk song, can be traced to Okinawa, China, and beyond. Most of the instruments of the festival music ensemble also originated in China, and underwent adaptation in Japan. Finally, popular music as a whole is based in form, rhythmic and harmonic structure and instrumental accompaniment on Western music; only the melodic component and the lyric content in some cases reflect Japanese traditions.

Of course, one can question the concept itself of "tradition" or the "traditional culture" of a nation or people, especially in terms of "purity" of origin. What culture group in the world has not borrowed cultural elements from another, with the roots of that borrowing going so far back that few think of the idea or custom as "borrowed"?

We find, in examining Japanese musical culture, the expression of some aspects of the varied Japanese character. For instance, popular nonsense songs like "Nonki-bushi" (recorded selection 50) find their roots in a certain outlandish sense of humor that the Japanese sometimes indulge in. (Anyone who has watched Japanese television for any length of time, particularly game shows, can attest to this.) On a more sober note, the idea of emptying one's soul and reaching a state of selflessness as preparation for the performance of both *shakuhachi* and the music of the *bunraku* theater reflects the strong underlying influence of Zen thought in Japanese culture. This influence touches many other areas of Japanese daily life, not only in mental preparation for a future task, but also with stress on self-control and self-discipline. Finally, the indulgence in pathos and extreme emotional anguish, as expressed in *enka* songs as well as in the music of the puppet theater, reveals another side of the Japanese character. Listening to Japanese music and learning about its connections to past and present society, we become aware of the richness of Japanese life.

* From the song "Himitsu no kata," sung by Iijima Mari. Victor Records VDR–6, 1984.

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