

# European Art Music and Its Role in the Cultural Interaction between Japan and the East Asian Continent in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Margaret MEHL\*

## Abstract

The fact that much of what the Japanese regard as part of their culture originally came to Japan from the Asian continent in ancient and medieval times is well known and has been extensively researched. For the period after 1868, however, the attention of scholars has tended to concentrate on Japan's comprehensive importation of Western civilization.

This exploratory article suggests a different perspective. Taking music in modern Japan as an example and based in part on the author's research for her recent book *Not by Love Alone: The Violin in Japan, 1850–2010*, the author will argue that music is a particularly rewarding field for examining transnational flows. Research on music in modern Japan has tended to privilege the introduction of European art music from the West and this was undoubtedly one of the most important developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There are, however, aspects to this development that merit more attention than they have received so far, including the relationship between Western music and other musics practised in Japan in the nineteenth century and the interactions between Japan and non-Western countries and in particular its East Asian neighbours. In this article, four general themes for further enquiry are introduced: 1. The possible relation between Meiji statesmen's and intellectuals' *kangaku* education and their views on the role of music in the modern state. 2. The Chinese origins and the place of *minshingaku* (Ming and Qing music) in the musical culture of nineteenth-century Japan. 3. Japan's role in the dissemination of Western Music in East Asia. 4. The role of the East Asian continent (particularly the cities of Shanghai and Harbin) as a place of encounter between Asia and Europe.

**Key-words:** music, East Asia, Japan, Korea, China, transnational flows, globalization

---

\* Margaret Mehl is an Associate Professor Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen

## 1. Introduction

It can be argued that music lends itself to globalization more than many other areas of cultural activity and expression.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, musicians in many societies have long been and still are characterized by their mobility. The nature of European art music with its heavy reliance on the faithful rendition of a composition through a written score means that it is especially suitable for transmission across cultures. As long as the musicians have received the relevant training, their rendition of a work from the Western canon will sound so similar that even the most discerning expert will rarely be able to say with certainty whether the performers are European or Asian.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, music has so far not featured prominently in general works of history, not even in newer ones informed by the increased interest in transnational cultural flows. For example, in a recent study of East Asia under Japanese colonial dominance entitled *In Transit: The Formation of the Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere*, the author, Faye Yuan Kleeman, discusses the relationship between colonialism and modernity, including the role of cities, movements of people, technology and media. Although dance is treated, music only receives a brief passing mention.<sup>3</sup> It seems that Bruno Nettl, one of the pioneers of ethnomusicology, still has a point with his claim that not only are American and Western European university professors in all fields particularly ethnocentric about music, but “they claim that music is difficult to understand and draw a sharp line between ‘musicians’ and others.”<sup>4</sup> The same point is made by the musician and neuroscientist Daniel Levitin, who speaks of a “chasm between musical experts and everyday musicians that has grown so wide in our culture (...), and for some reason this is uniquely so with music.” Levitin adds that this phenomenon seems to be specific to contemporary Western society.<sup>5</sup> In recent years some scholars have

- 
- 1 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009), 26–30; —, “Globale Horizonte europäischer Kunstmusik, 1860–1930,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38.1 (2012): 86–132, 86–87. The German historian Jürgen Osterhammel includes in the first chapter of his global history of the nineteenth century a brief section on (European) opera.
  - 2 Osterhammel, “Globale Horizonte europäischer Kunstmusik, 1860–1930,” 86. Osterhammel asserts that music needs no translation; however, he also admits that not all music is comprehensible to everyone, so the assertion might be debatable.
  - 3 Faye Yuan Kleeman, *In Transit: The Formation of the Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014), 8.
  - 4 Bruno Nettl, *Encounters in Ethnomusicology: A Memoir* (Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 2002), 64.
  - 5 Daniel Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music: Understanding a Human Obsession* (London: Atlantic, 2008 (2006)), 194. One might ask to what extent this is also true of non-Western societies, but for Japan at least, it does appear to be so: together

attempted to bridge the divide between “musical experts” and scholars of other disciplines but there is still some way to go.<sup>6</sup>

The history of music in modern Japan has most often been studied as the history of Japan’s successful adoption of Western music. This was, of course, an important development, as is demonstrated by the position of Japanese musicians on the stages of the world, the world-wide fame of the Suzuki Method of musical pedagogy and the equally world-wide dissemination of Japanese-produced musical instruments and sound technology. An exclusive focus on this bilateral, one-way relationship, however, obscures the wider picture of interactions and flows in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One aspect that has been almost completely neglected in Western scholarship and received very limited attention even by Japanese scholars is the introduction into Japan of so-called *minshingaku* (Ming and Qing music) from China at around the same time as the nineteenth-century reception of Western music.<sup>7</sup> Another is the significance of Japan’s interaction with the East Asian continent. Japan acted as a mediator of Western culture on the continent. Meanwhile, the Asian continent, particularly the cities of Harbin and Shanghai, represented space where East Asian and European culture met and from where Western, particularly Russian musicians brought their music to Japan. I became interested in this topic while I was working on my recent book, *Not by Love Alone: The Violin in Japan, 1850-2010*.<sup>8</sup>

The following sections address questions of music-related cultural flows between Japan and the East Asian mainland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which I became aware of in the course of my research. They are to be understood as a basis for future research rather than a report of research already completed.

---

with Western classical music the Japanese have adopted many stereotypical assumptions that this music has given rise to.

- 6 Two examples of edited volumes that can be understood as programmatic statements are Stanley C. Pelkey, “Music, Memory, and the People in Selected British Periodicals of the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Music and History: Bridging the Disciplines*, ed. Jackson, Jeffrey H. and Pelkey, Stanley C. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010 (2005)); Jane F. Fulcher, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 7 The most notable exception is Yasuko Tsukahara, *Jūkyū seiki no Nihon ni okeru Seiyō ongaku no juyō* (Tokyo: Taka Shuppan, 1993).
- 8 Margaret Mehl, *Not by Love Alone: The Violin in Japan, 1850–2010* (Copenhagen: The Sound Book Press, 2014).

## 2. Music and government: Did their *kangaku* education colour Japanese statesmen's and intellectuals' views on the function of music?

Until the Meiji government embarked on a course of modernization modelled on Western countries, China had for centuries held a dominant place in the world view of Japanese intellectuals and statesmen. Indeed, the Meiji Restoration did not put an end to this over night. It has even been described as “Japan’s attempt to inherit China.”<sup>9</sup> Most of the actors in the Restoration and the reforms that followed had been educated in the tradition of *kangaku* (Chinese Learning) and schools providing *kangaku* education continued to play a significant role at least until the 1890s.<sup>10</sup> Did their *kangaku* education and their knowledge of the Chinese classics influence the principal actors in the introduction of Western music?

The *Five Classics* were (at least nominally) part of the curriculum in the private academies of Chinese learning (*kangaku*) in Meiji period, reflecting continuity from the previous era.<sup>11</sup> They include the *Book of Rites*, part of which deals with music. Not much needs to be said about its contents here, except to point out that music, together with rites, laws and punishment, was regarded as an indispensable part of good government, and that music is associated with heaven, with harmony, joy, similarity and unity (in contrast to rites, which are associated with distinction and separation), with the spiritual and human affections and with order, including the regulation of physical movement.<sup>12</sup> The role of music in society was also discussed by Japanese Confucian scholars in the Edo period,<sup>13</sup> suggesting that music was regarded as a significant area for political reform.

And when Kume Kunitake (1839–1931), in his account of the Iwakura Embassy, reports on singing in schools, he makes direct reference to China, as he does in other parts of the work:

- 
- 9 Ben-Ami Shillony, “The Meiji Restoration: Japan’s attempt to inherit China,” in *War, Revolution & Japan*, ed. Neary, Ian (Sandgate, Folkestone, Kent: Japan Library, 1993).
- 10 Margaret Mehl, “Chinese Learning (*kangaku*) in Meiji Japan,” *History* 85. (2000): 48–66; —, *Private Academies of Chinese Learning in Meiji Japan: The Decline and Transformation of the Kangaku Juku* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2003).
- 11 Mehl, *Private Academies of Chinese Learning in Meiji Japan: The Decline and Transformation of the Kangaku Juku*, 128–135.
- 12 Ch’u Chai and Winberg Chai, eds., *Li Chi (Book of Rites): An Encyclopedia of Ancient Ceremonial Usages, Religious Creeds, and Social Institutions*, translated by James Legge, 2 vols., vol.2 (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1967).
- 13 See, for example, Demin Tao, “Tominaga Nakamoto no Ongakukan: ‘Gakuritsukō’ no kenkyū,” in *Nihon kangaku shisōshi ronkō: Sorai, Nakamoto oyobi kindai* (Suita: Kansai Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1999).

“Singing is taught every day in elementary schools. Through singing, students praise the divine, and it brings harmony to their heart. The piano accompaniment instils rhythm and timing into their dance-steps. Both boys and girls study singing, which stimulates and attunes the emotions. This corresponds in meaning to the appointment of the official K’uei Tzū as director of music by the legendary Emperor Shun so that spirits and men would be brought into harmony.”<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, accounts of key actors in the introduction of Western music, such as Isawa Shūji (1851–1917), tend to gloss over their *kangaku* education, while going into great detail about their encounter with Western learning. Isawa received his early education in *kangaku* at Shintokukan in Takatō domain in the 1860s. According to one of his biographers he had studied the *Four Books* and *Five Classics* of the Confucian canon by the time he was twelve or thirteen.<sup>15</sup> Most research about him stresses his Western education, but a closer examination of his *kangaku* training may well shed more light on his ideas about music and moral education.<sup>16</sup> Even superficial reading of the *Book of Rites* suggests that the concepts associated with music could easily be construed not only as compatible with what the Meiji leaders would have observed about music in the West but even as preparing the ground for their later efforts to actively appropriate Western music for nation-building. One might, of course, argue, that the usefulness of Western music for this purpose was obvious in the visible (not to mention audible) displays of power by military bands or the effects of school children singing together, or that Isawa’s training in Western arts and sciences was more significant for his thought and actions than his *kangaku* background.

But what about vast majority of Japanese actors at the lower levels of society who had minimal or no experience of foreign travel and very limited training in Western learning? Some of these nevertheless became pioneers of

---

14 Kunitake Kume, *The Iwakura Embassy 1871–73: A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary’s Journey of Observation through the United States of America and Europe*. ed. Graham Healey and Tsuzuki, Chushichi, trans. Martin Colcutt, Graham Healey, Andrew Cobbing, P.F.Kornicky, Eugene Sowiak, Chushichi Tsuzuki, 5 vols., vol.1: The United States of America (Kamiyakiri, Matsudo, Chiba: The Japan Documents, 2002), 75.

15 Hachirō Kaminuma, *Isawa Shūji*, Jinbutsu sōsho (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1962), 17. A recent, otherwise excellent work about Isawa’s role in the modernization of Japan, while mentioning his *kangaku* education, does not discuss its possible significance for Isawa’s thought about music and the state: Yasuto Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku: Isawa Shūji ga mezashita Nihon kindai* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2008), 90, 195.

16 A subject which Okunaka in his otherwise excellent biography of Isawa does not discuss: Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku: Isawa Shūji ga mezashita Nihon kindai*.

Western-influenced modernization, at least at the regional and local level. What was it in their background that enabled them to play such a role? Take the example of Shikama, Totsuji 四竈訥治 (訥堂) (1853–1928), and his brother Jinji 四竈仁爾 (静堂) (1863–1941). Both were important pioneers of Western music; Jinji as an educator in the provincial town of Sendai, Totsuji nationally (as well as locally) as the editor of the first magazine dedicated to music, *Ongaku zasshi* (subtitled, “The Musical Magazine”). It may well be significant that, although they had limited training in music (Western or otherwise), both were highly educated in *kangaku*, as was usual for men from the samurai class, and were highly regarded for their literary and calligraphic talents. There is reason to believe that the Shikamas, like others of their class, had little difficulty in integrating the new knowledge about music into the traditional system of thought they had been trained in.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. Music from China in modern Japan: The rise and fall of *minshingaku*

The tendencies observed in research on music in modern Japan described above mean that we rarely appreciate the sheer variety of music practised in Meiji Japan. One eloquent testimony to this is the magazine *Ongaku zasshi*, published by Shikama Totsuji from September 1890 until May 1896.<sup>18</sup> *Ongaku zasshi* included many articles and reports on traditional as well as Western musics. Most remarkably (from today’s vantage point), it included articles about *minshingaku* (Ming and Qing music). *Minshingaku* was widely enjoyed until the time of the Sino-Japanese war, after which it never quite regained its previous place in musical life, although it did not disappear entirely.

Although described in one word, Ming and Qing musics were actually distinct from each other and the period and actors of transmission differed, even if the distinctions blurred over time. Both came to Japan via Nagasaki

17 Here Suzuki Sadami’s “receptor methodology” approach might be relevant. Likewise, Hosokawa Shūhei states that Meiji intellectuals were not aware of the epistemological gap between the Western and indigenous concepts of music: Sadami Suzuki, “A Reevaluation of the East Asian Modern System of Knowledge,” in *Cultural Interaction Studies in East Asia: New Methods and Perspectives*, ed. Tao, Demin and Fujita, Takao (Osaka: Institute for Cultural Interaction Studies, Kansai University, 2012), 211; Shuhei Hosokawa, “Ongaku, Onkyō/Music, Sound,” in *Working Words: New Approaches to Japanese Studies* (Center for Japanese Studies, UC Berkeley, 2012), 3. The Shikamas are the subject of an article prepared by the author, entitled, “Between the Global, the National and the Local in Japan: Two Musical Pioneers from Sendai” for the journal *Itinerario*.

18 Publication continued until 1898. For a brief description of Japanese music periodicals in English, see Setsuko Mori, “A Historical Survey of Music Periodicals in Japan: 1881–1920,” *Fontis Artis Musicae* 36.1 (1989): 44–50.

in the Edo period. Ming music first came to Japan in the seventeenth century, Qing music in the early nineteenth. Most of the music that became popular in Japan was *shingaku*, that is, Qing music.<sup>19</sup> Such research, as has been published on the music, has tended to concentrate on its dissemination and popularity in Meiji Japan, rather than on its origins in China. It seems that it originated in a new type of popular song in late Ming and Qing China, that was different from folk songs in that they combined elements from both “refined” (Jap. *ga*) and “vulgar” (Jap. *zoku*) and were enjoyed by all classes of society, which may well have made them peculiarly suited to the changing values and increasingly fluid society of the late Edo and early Meiji periods.<sup>20</sup> *Minshingaku* became hugely popular in the Meiji period, at around the same time as Western music was systematically introduced.<sup>21</sup> Its early practitioners were Japanese literati (*bunjin*), who enjoyed it, together with Chinese calligraphy and poetry at social gatherings. Clara Whitney, who came to Japan with her family in 1875, describes a “tea party” in the residence of Matsudaira Sadaaki (1859–1908), the former lord of Kuwana (Mie prefecture) in her diary, where “Chinese musical instruments” were played: *gekkin* (a round plucked lute with frets), *fue* (a type of flute), *kokin*, *teikin* and *keikin* (violin-like bowed instruments), clappers and a *mokkin* (a xylophone-like instrument).<sup>22</sup> *Minshingaku* could also be heard at public concerts (an innovation derived from the West), which regularly featured a mixture of musical genres.<sup>23</sup> The *minshingaku* repertoire consisted of 349 different pieces, most of them first published before 1877. The publication of sheet music peaked from around 1877 to the mid-1890s.<sup>24</sup> Shikama Totsuji himself published a

19 This and the following is based on Kuei-Hsiang Yang, “Minshingaku: Nagasaki ni tsutaerareta Chūgoku ongaku,” *Ochanomizu Joshi Daigaku Daigakuin Ningen Bunka Kenkyūka (Journal of the Musicological Society of Ochanomizu University)* 2. (2000): 70–80; Chunli Piao, “Nagasaki no minshingaku to Chūgoku no minshin jichō shōkyoku kenkyū,” *Chūkyō Daigaku Bunka Kagaku Kenkyūsho/Fukuoka Daigaku Jinbun Gakubu (Cultural Science)* 17.2 (2006): 48–22 (!). For a discussion of Minshingaku in English, see William P. Malm, “Chinese Music in the Edo and Meiji Periods in Japan,” *Asian Music* 6 1/2 (1975): 147–172.

20 Piao, “Nagasaki no minshingaku to Chūgoku no minshin jichō shōkyoku kenkyū,” 47, 26. This is mere speculation, but it may well be worth investigating whether there is a connection between intellectual discussions about music and social class in this period and the popularity of *minshingaku*.

21 Most of what follows is based on Tsukahara, *Seiyō ongaku no juyō*, 265–313. Her work about the introduction of Western music includes an extensive treatment of *minshingaku*.

22 Clara Whitney, *Clara’s Diary: An American Girl in Meiji Japan* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1981), 171–175.

23 Tsukahara, *Seiyō ongaku no juyō*, 291–291. *Ongaku zasshi* and its successors regularly included concert programmes.

24 *Ibid.*, 300–307. Different notation systems, Chinese derived or Western, were used:

tutor for *shingaku* (Qing music) in 1891.<sup>25</sup> From the late 1880s the published pieces tended to be of Japanese rather than Chinese origin: traditional popular music (*zokukyoku*) and modern songs (*shōka* and *gunka*).

Unlike Western music, which was imported as part of the Meiji government's modernization package and featured at national events and diplomatic ceremonies almost from the beginning, *minshingaku* had no such official role. Rather, it occupied a similar place to most genres of traditional Japanese music, which although widely practised and enjoyed by the people, was largely ignored by the government. Once the literati who were the initial practitioners and supporters of *minshingaku* lost their dominance to Western education, which was increasingly widespread, the music had no significant network to support it. Moreover, in Meiji Japan *minshingaku* received no further stimulus from China and did not feature in exchanges between Japanese and Chinese literati; perhaps because it was too different from the kind of music the latter enjoyed.<sup>26</sup>

Even so, and although *minshingaku* suffered a steep decline in popularity with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1894 and never recovered its previous popularity, sheet music was still published after 1895 and a hereditary line of teachers in Osaka continued until 1940.<sup>27</sup>

The example of *minshingaku* shows, among other things, that the fate of a given type of music is intertwined with developments in society in general. Just as the international order in East Asia changed from a Sinocentric one to one dominated by Western imperialism and Japan increasingly looked to the West rather than to China as a model, so did Western music come to be dominant music, both because it was supported by the state and (closely related to this) because it was widely perceived as modern.

However, developments in the field of music and of cultural relations between countries in general do not necessarily directly reflect the political relations between countries. Fruitful cultural exchanges can happen between nations even when political relations are problematic, as the following cases

---

examples in Malm, "Chinese Music in the Edo and Meiji Periods in Japan." However, it is not clear to what extent transmission relied on sheet music: Yang's research suggests that direct transmission from teacher to pupil was more significant.

25 Totsuji Shikama, *Shingaku dokushū no tomo* (Tokyo: Kyōeki Shōsha, 1891). He is also reported to have published a collection sheet music for the *gekkin* ("moon lute", a round plucked lute with frets which was very popular in the early Meiji period) as early as 1881, although I have not yet been able to verify this.

26 According to Tsukahara, the Chinese origins of *minshingaku* are unclear, but appear to have been in Chinese folk music (*zokugaku*): Tsukahara, *Seiyō ongaku no juyō*, 313.

27 *Ibid.*, 293–296.



show.

#### 4. Japan and the Dissemination of Western Music in East Asia: Destination for Study Abroad and Colonial Power

In all three countries, Japan, Korea and China, Western music represented a significant element in the modernization package when they attempted to introduce comprehensive reforms in the second half of the nineteenth century. Japan can be described as an “extreme” example of what happened not only in East Asia, but in other parts of the world: the Japanese made Western music their own within the short space of a few decades while indigenous music was increasingly marginalized.<sup>28</sup> The successful centralization of political power after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 paved the way for the establishment of a centralized education system with compulsory education for all and a conscript army. I highlight just these two reform measures because of their importance for the reception of Western music. Japan became a model for other non-Western countries seeking to modernize following Western example.

After the Sino-Japanese war, Chinese students flocked to Japan to study. Among those who studied music was the pianist Xiao Youmei, born in 1884 and known as, “the father of music education in modern China.”<sup>29</sup> In 1901, at the age of just sixteen, he went to Tokyo where he studied at the Tokyo Academy of Music (Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō) and later at Tokyo Imperial University. He returned to China in 1909. Three years later, in 1912 he travelled to Germany where he studied music in Leipzig and Berlin, just as many Japanese students did. It seems safe to say, however, that the foundations of his musical training were laid in Japan. While Xiao Youmei studied at the state-sponsored Tokyo Academy of Music, many more studied at private colleges. One of the earliest was the Music College of the East (Tōyō Ongaku Gakkō), founded in 1907 by Suzuki Yonejirō (1868–1940). Just before founding the college, Suzuki had travelled to China to study the state of education there. Even before opening his college, Suzuki taught Chinese students music at the hall of residence for Chinese students opened in Kanda in 1902. The students had their own music society, established in 1904. Suzuki opened his new college in the same neighbourhood.<sup>30</sup> While the

28 “Extremfall”: Osterhammel, “Globale Horizonte europäischer Kunstmusik, 1860–1930.”

29 Heinrich Geiger, *Erbblühende Zweige: Westliche klassische Musik in China* (Mainz: Schott, 2009), 36–38. See also Sheila Melvin and Jindong Cai, *Rhapsody in Red: How Western Classical Music Became Chinese* (New York: Algora, 2004).

30 Midori Takeishi, ed. *Ongaku kyōiku no ishizue: Suzuki Yonejirō to Tōyō Ongaku Gakkō* (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 2007), 77–89.

number of Chinese students who specialized in music may have been small, significantly more studied music as part of a teacher training course. Waseda University, for example, opened a teacher training department for Chinese students in 1905, and *shōka* (singing as taught in schools) was one of the subjects taught; the same was true of the (accelerated) teacher training department of the private girls' school Jissen Jogakkō.<sup>31</sup>

In Korea, efforts to modernize the country were made in the years following the enforced opening of the country in 1876. In 1901, the German Franz Eckert was appointed to teach military music at the Korean court. Eckert worked in Korea for 15 years until his death in 1916.<sup>32</sup> He had previously taught Western music in Japan for 20 years, from 1879 to 1899, and his experience must have helped him in Korea, especially given that during his time in Korea, the country first became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 and then a colony in 1910. The colonial government introduced singing into the school curriculum and Korean schoolchildren learnt songs from Japanese schoolteachers. In 1925 a music department was established at the Ewha (or Iwha) College for women in Seoul. Japanese merchants sold instruments. The violin in particular, portable and relatively cheap, fascinated the Koreans no less than the Japanese. Wandering peddlers played simple tunes on it to attract potential customers. The Korean-born Japanese luthier Chin Shōgen (1929–2012) remembered hearing and seeing a violin for the first time in the hands of a wandering medicine vendor visiting his home village.<sup>33</sup> He also recalled a Japanese school teacher who played the violin. Chin later studied violin-making in Japan. In Taiwan too, the Japanese colonizers played a significant part the introduction of Western music.<sup>34</sup> When these countries regained their independence after the Second World War, they continued to assimilate European art music, for much the same reasons as the Japanese, and today Koreans and Chinese from Taiwan or mainland China vie with the Japanese on the international music scene.

## 5. Shanghai and Harbin: Mediators between Europe and Asia

So far I have presented examples of Chinese and Koreans being introduced

31 Hiroshi Abe, *Chūgoku no kindai kyōiku to Meiji Nihon* (Tokyo: Fukumura Shuppan, 1990), 86,100.

32 Hermann Gottschewski and Kyungboon Lee, “Franz Eckert und, seine Nationalhymnen. Eine Einführung,” *OAG Notizen* 12 (2013): 27–30.

33 Shōgen Chin, *Kaikyō o wataru baiorin* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 2007), 56–79. Hio-Jin Kim, *Koreanische und westliche Musiker Ausbildung: Historische Rekonstruktion - Vergleich - Perspektiven* - (Marburg: Tectum, 2000), 132–139.

34 Angela Hao-Chun Lee, “The Influence of Governmental Control and early Christian Missionaries on Music Education of Aborigines in Taiwan,” *British Journal of Music Education* 23.2 (2006): 205–216.

to Western music via Japan. But Japan, owes much of its success in assimilating Western music to impulses from the Asian continent. The rise of the symphony orchestra and the general rise in standards of music-making after the First World War can hardly be imagined without them. The cities of Harbin and Shanghai in particular with their significant foreign populations played a major role as sites of encounter and cultural interaction both between East Asia and Europe and within East Asia.

Harbin, sometimes known as the “St. Petersburg of the East,” had a distinctly Russian flavour as a result of the Russian treaty with China in 1896, which secured Russia a concession to build and operate a railway in northeast China. Russians in search of work and a living had settled there. After 1917 they were joined by Russian Jews and White Russians fleeing from the revolution, and by 1922 about a quarter of the population were Russians. Harbin had its own music academy and symphony orchestra.<sup>35</sup>

Shanghai too, with its foreign settlement, experienced an increase in its Russian population and these Russian refugees gave a considerable boost to the city’s musical life both as musicians and as audience. In 1919 the Italian conductor Mario Paci gave his first concert as the conductor of the Shanghai Municipal Council Public Band (founded in 1879), which under his leadership became a full symphony orchestra. This, the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra, has been described as the first permanent professional orchestra in East Asia, although it has to be said that it had hardly any Asian members and its audience, at least initially, consisted mainly of foreign expatriates. The Russian musicians in China played a large role in the growth of the symphony orchestra in Japan. In 1925, two pioneers of the symphony orchestra in Japan, the composers and conductors Yamada Kōsaku (1886–1965) and Konoe Hidemaro (1898–1973) succeeded in inviting over 30 Russian musicians for a well-publicized joint concert tour with Japanese musicians.

The so-called Japan–Russia Joint Symphony Orchestra gave several performances in Tokyo before continuing to Shizuoka, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe.<sup>36</sup> Most of the 33 Russian musicians were members of the symphony orchestra in Harbin. The first and second concertmasters were Josef König (1875–1932) and Nikolai Schifferblatt (1887–1936). They subsequently returned to Japan to become the first foreign conductors of the newly-founded New Symphony Orchestra, the forerunner of the NHK (Japan

---

35 Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*; Yasuko Enomoto, *Shanghai ōkesutora monogatari: Seiyōjin ongakukatachi no yume* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2006).

36 Details in Yūichi Iwano, *Ōdō rakudo no kōkyōgaku: Manshū - shirazaru ongakushi* (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1999), 46–52.

Broadcasting Association) Orchestra.<sup>37</sup> The concerts of the Japan–Russia Joint Symphony Orchestra caused a sensation; never before had orchestral music performed to such a high standard been heard in Japan.

Fourteen years later, in March 1939, the Harbin Symphony Orchestra toured Japan under its conductor Sergei Schvaikovsky. The concertmaster was Vladimir Trachtenberg, who had also played first violin in 1925. Many of the other members, however, had fled to Shanghai after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. The ranks had been filled by Jewish refugees from Europe and even by Japanese (two of whom came on the tour), but the orchestra's heyday had passed. The tour was advertised as “Japan–Manchukuo Defence Against Communism Friendship Artistic Mission.” The orchestras made a broadcast and gave six concerts in Tokyo before continuing to Nagoya, Osaka, Hakata and Nagasaki. Returning to the mainland it also performed in Seoul and the capital of Manchukuo, Hsinking (Shinkyō). The Japanese public appeared to enjoy the concerts, but the published reviews were for the most part damning. Tokyo's own New Symphony Orchestra gave its two hundredth subscription concert that year and embarked on its first tour overseas (albeit to countries occupied by Japan) to give two concerts in Seoul.<sup>38</sup> Thanks to the training received from Russian musicians from Harbin, the New Symphony Orchestra had become a highly disciplined ensemble. This and the stream of foreign artists in the 1920s and 1930s may well have made Japanese critics harder to please.<sup>39</sup>

In the Kansai region the development of orchestral performance received a major impulse when Emmanuel Metter (1878–1941), the conductor the symphony orchestra in Harbin was invited as a conductor of the Osaka Philharmonic Orchestra and then the Kyoto University Orchestra in 1926.<sup>40</sup> Under his baton the latter became a major orchestra of the Kansai region. In fact, several Russian musicians settled around Osaka and Kobe. Recent research suggests that the transnational flows between Osaka and Shanghai significantly contributed to the distinctive musical developments in the Kansai region.<sup>41</sup>

37 From 1927 to 1929 and from 1929 to 1935 respectively.

38 Yukihiko Sano, *N-kyō 80 nen zenkiroku* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2007), 41.

39 Iwano, *Ōdō rakudo no kōkyōgaku*, 140–161. Peter Berton, “Prewar, Occupation, and Post-Occupation Japan: Three Vignettes,” *JPRI Occasional Papers (Japan Policy Research Institute at the University of San Francisco Center for the Pacific Rim)* 35 (2005).

40 Ben Okano, *Metteru Sensei: Asahina Takashi, Hattori Ryōichi no Gakufu, Bōmeisha Ukurainejin shikisha no shōgai* (Tokyo: Rittōmyūjikkū, 1995).

41 Junko Iguchi, “Osaka and Shanghai: Revisiting the Reception of Western Music in Metropolitan Japan,” in *Music, Modernity and Locality in Prewar Japan: Osaka and Beyond*, ed. De Ferranti, Hugh and Tokita, Alison (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013).

The above examples should suffice to show that encounters and exchanges within East Asia played a vital role in the reception of Western classical music in that region. A similar case could be made for Jazz, and possibly other kinds of music.

## 6. Conclusion

Music in East Asia is a particularly rewarding field for studying cultural interaction and transnational flows, yet so far it has received only limited attention from scholars. Some work on contemporary popular music has been published: however, as I hope to have shown, there is much scope for historical research as well. If we look, for example, at the areas for future research on the history of cultural interaction in East Asia suggested by Huang Chun-Chieh,<sup>42</sup> it will immediately become apparent that musical interaction can be examined under all his headings:

1. Exchanges of people: Musicians in many cultures have long been itinerant, and before the advent of recorded music, the only way to experience different kinds of music was to hear them performed live. European art music with its heavy reliance on text (notation) is different in that respect, at least theoretically, but ultimately it would be virtually impossible to perform even this music without experience of the genre acquired through hearing it. Musical exchange therefore relies first and foremost on travelling musicians, whether professional or amateur, teachers, performers, managers, craftsmen or merchants for music-related goods and services.

2. Exchange of goods: Musical performance needs hardware, starting with musical instruments. Initially they may be imported, but then there will be efforts to produce them locally. Depending on the music in question, texts might play a secondary role, but in the case of Western music, as with Chinese music in previous times, texts about music were also imported, and for Western music the importation of sheet music was crucial. In the twentieth century, audio technology becomes another important part of the exchange of music-related goods.

3. Exchange of ideas: Music from China and from the West each comes laden with its own discourse.<sup>43</sup> The reception of these discourses in the

---

The role of the Russian musical community in the Kansai area, however, has yet to be examined in detail.

42 Chun-Chieh Huang, "Some Observations on the Study of the History of Cultural Interactions in East Asia," in *Cultural Interaction Studies in East Asia: New Methods and Perspectives*, ed. Tao, Demin and Fujita, Takao (Osaka: Institute for Cultural Interaction Studies, Kansai University, 2012 (2010)).

43 One might even argue that music as an abstract notion *is* discourse: Ian Hewett, *Music: Healing the Rift* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 2–3.

receiving countries depends very much on the local historical context. The relationship of music and identity is also an important topic for investigation. Music provides “a privileged point of entry” for, among others, “questions of cultural identity and its expression, or its constructions, representations, and exchanges.”<sup>44</sup> Musical meaning is constantly changing, and when the music of one culture travels to another its meanings may well be transformed beyond recognition. Japan is only one of many modern nations that has used music in the Western idiom as an expression of national identity; from the military band playing for the official opening of the first railway line in 1872 to the bombastic celebrations in 1940 with bands and a symphonic concert to mark the 2600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the legendary Emperor Jimmu’s ascension to the throne. Korean and Japanese composers have made efforts to create “national” music in the idiom of European art music. And perhaps it is a symptom of the search for a common East Asian identity that sometimes a performer from one country champions the works of a composer from another, such as Nishizaki Takako’s recording of the “Butterfly Lovers” violin concerto or Liu Wei’s recording of works by Japanese composers.<sup>45</sup>

Can music, then, tell us something about history that we cannot learn from looking at other areas of human activity? I believe that the answer is, yes, although it may be that we first need to do more research in this area to appreciate fully what we can learn from doing so. One important area to consider is the emotional power of music and how it might affect international relations, as Jessica Gienow-Hecht has done for trans-Atlantic relations; showing how playing and listening to German music in North America created affective ties that survived political tensions and even war.<sup>46</sup> Might we discern comparable cases in the history of interactions in East Asia, perhaps on a more limited scale or on a more local level?

Investigating music in the context of general history (rather than as a field apart) will promote our understanding of (among other things) transnational flows and the formation of local, national, regional and global identities, and

---

44 Jane F. Fulcher, “Introduction: Defining the New Cultural History of Music, Its Origins, Methodologies and Lines of Inquiry,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music*, ed. Fulcher, Jane F. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9, 10.

45 *The most Famous Chinese Concertos*, 1983/86; Nippon Columbia 8.240 158; *The Famous Japanese Violin Works Played by Liu Wei*. 2009. VZCC-1025. For Nishizaki’s discography, featuring several other Chinese works, see <http://www.naxos.com/person/Takako+Nishizaki/552.htm> (accessed 15 February 2016)

46 Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). See also —, “Introduction,” in *Music and International History in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Gienow-Hecht, Jessica C. E. (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2015).

I hope that more scholars will soon be engaged in this field.