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THE TEACHING OF MUSIC HISTORY IN JAPANESE MUSIC EDUCATION

In Japan musicology, as we understand it today, began with the introduction of a school system in 1872, the fifth year in the rule of Emperor Meiji (1852-1912, in office from 1867), the great-grandfather of current emperor Akihito (1933, in office since 1989). For the first time ever, this system made education in the Land of the Rising Sun available to individuals of every social class,¹ and included the teaching of music, which however, as was mentioned in a note in brackets, «is missing for the time being».²

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¹ The modern Japanese state began when Emperor Meiji, only fourteen years old at the time, ascended to the throne in 1868, after the collapse of the Tokugawa regime. The Tokugawa had dominated the life of the country from 1603 onwards, adopting a policy of closure (*sakoku*). With the restoration of imperial power, on the other hand, there was a massive introduction of elements from Western civilization. Indeed, the so-called Oath of Five Articles, issued by Emperor Meiji on April 6th, 1868, under the influence of the new leaders, with the aim of dismantling the feudal structure of society and the military government (*bakufu*) of the Tokugawa period, promised that professional careers would have been accessible to anybody, with equal opportunities, and Japan would open to cultural input from all over the world. Before the opening of the country, the only foreign culture known was that of China, with the sole exceptions of some branches of Western natural science, first of all medicine, which were regarded as “useful” and had already been introduced in the 18th century through the mediation of the Dutch merchants in Nagasaki, the only Westerners who were authorized to enter Japan. See E. O. REISCHAUER, *Japan: the Story of a Nation*, 4th ed., New York, McGraw-Hill, 1990, pp. 76 f., 89, 102.

² The school system followed the Western model, Dutch and French in particular, and therefore included the teaching of music. Its introduction, however, had to be postponed due to the lack of a clear debate about its foundations and about how to deal with the different genres of Japanese traditional music, which were incorrectly thought to be of little value (with the sole exception of *Gagaku* dance and music, which was associated with the Imperial court). To better understand this situation, see Y. TSUKAHARA, *Meiji kokka to Gagaku: Dentō no kindaika. Kokugaku no sousei* [The Meiji State and *Gagaku*: the modernization of tradition and the production of “National Music”], Tokyo, Yūshisha, 2009, above all chapter 5 [New forms of musical ex-

Meanwhile, Shūji Isawa (1851-1917), a young high official who directed the normal prefecture school of Aichi, and had a good knowledge of the educational theories of Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel (1782-1852) and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), was sent to the United States by the Ministry of Education as an inspector, to study the American teacher training school system.

In 1875 he enrolled in the Bridgewater Normal School, Massachusetts, and attended all the courses, including music. In his memoirs, written in 1912 in his old age, he confessed that he had found vocal music terribly hard to learn, especially singing in the Western heptatonic scale, while in all other subjects he had always managed to obtain higher than average notes. However, during his stay in Boston he had the chance to meet somebody who helped him overcome his problem, Luther Whiting Mason (1818-1896).³ Mason was one of the main US experts in music education for primary public instruction, and it appears that the Japanese government already knew of him before he met Isawa in person.⁴

With the help of Mason, Isawa also started experimenting with a new didactic approach to music, especially conceived for Japanese students. After some months of collaboration, in 1878 Isawa and another senior official, Baron Tanetaro Megata (1853-1926), submitted a report to the Ministry of Education, in which they advocated the need for research on music teaching.

Following up on their request, in 1879 the Ongaku Torishirabegakari (Music Investigation Committee) was instituted as part of the Ministry of Education, under the lead of Shūji Isawa himself, who had just returned from the United States. That was the first origin of the Music Faculty of Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku (1949, henceforth “Geidai”; in English, Tokyo University of the Arts, formerly Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music), which will be discussed later in this article.⁵

Although Isawa aimed at modernizing education in Japan by introducing, in all schools, the teaching of “national” vocal music as based on the Western

pression in the early Meiji period (1868-1887): Christian hymns (*sanbika*), songs for schools (*shōka*) and military songs (*gun'ka*), pp. 107-134.

³ About L. W. Mason, see entry by Bonlyn Hall in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., London, Macmillan, 2001, XVI, p. 37.

⁴ Y. OKUNAKA, *Kokka to ongaku: Isawa Shūji ga mezashita nippon kindai* [State and music: the modernization of Japan pursued by Shūji Isawa], Tokyo, Shunjūsha, 2008, pp. 139-151.

⁵ See *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi* [100 years of Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music], 12 vols., ed. by Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Henshū Inkaï [Editorial committee of *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi*], Tokyo, Ongaku no tomosha, 1987-2004.

heptatonic scale⁶ and accompanied by approved poetic texts,⁷ the Committee addressed not only the creation of a new vocal repertoire, but also the research

⁶ It could seem contradictory to build a “national” vocal repertoire on the Western heptatonic scale, but such was Isawa and Megata’s choice; referred to as *wakon-yōsai*, this style combines Japanese spirit and Western technique – more specifically, the music scale. In 1877 Megata held a conference in New England about the state of Japanese music at the time, i.e. at the dawn of the Meiji period. The paper, written in English, can be read in *Ongaku torishirabegakari jidai shōzō mokuroku* [Catalogue of documents from the Music Investigation Committee], III, Tokyo, Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Toshokan, 1971, pp. 1-5. On page 4 we read: «the Education Department of the Japanese Government has considered some years ago to establish the course of singing at public schools & they would take the first opportunity of introducing it, if the matter is practicable. But the task of assimilating these old distinction of music, as I stated or rather popularizing it is no easy matter. But recently I have been advised of the matter by my friends in Boston & am in believe that *we can assimilate our music and european ones* [my italics]». Reading between the lines, we can see that Megata had another mission, which he hoped to accomplish by building and spreading a new vocal repertoire for schools: a reform of Japanese music, divided into two categories, the former classical and refined, the latter common and popular. Indeed, in the previous section of the same text, after describing the categorization of the different genres of traditional Japanese music, Megata writes the following sentence in red ink: «Classical & common [music] can be mixed» (p. 4). According to Megata, genre distinction in music during the feudal period was dependent on the social class, with which each type of music was associated, and hence was felt to be a relic from the past. On page 3 we read: «I stated that we have a distinct division of music that is refined, and common, and their subdivision respectively divided. Now this is not only with music but it is with everything in Japan, and is to be attributed to a strong feudal system of the government, prevailing so long time as nearly 800 years ... Besides every barriers of social distinction is dying away and everything is blended together. I think we shall see the time when the same thing happens with music».

⁷ Because the Japanese spirit had to be preserved, the poetic texts for the new vocal repertoire for schools had to be thoroughly Japanese, and were constantly under the lens of Japanese scholars of classical literature. Until the Thirties of the Meiji period (1906 in the Western calendar), Western vocal music was neither sung on the original texts, for which it had been composed, nor in Japanese translations. Instead, new Japanese texts were composed especially for this type of vocal music (including choir music). The importance given to practice, which was referred to as “*sakka*”, literally “composing Japanese *waka* poetry”, was formalized in 1900 with the institution of two courses, one diploma course, and another post-diploma specialization course, focusing on *sakka*, at the Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō (Tokyo Music School). The courses were held until 1909, despite a very small number of applications (in 1900 the diploma course had only one student). See K. HASHIMOTO, *Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō jidai no syōzō gakuifu ni miru “sakka” no jissai to sono haikai* [The practice and socio-political and cultural background of “*sakka*”: research on the Japanese poetic text in the Tokyo Music School period, handwritten on the printed scores of vocal music works held at the library of Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music], in

on music history and the sound organization systems of different countries worldwide, including ancient Greece, China and India (not only the Western countries), considered in relation to the Japanese systems. Clearly, the kind of research carried out by the Committee had a purely musicological purpose.⁸

Unfortunately, in 1887, after eight years of activity, the Committee broke up. In the same year, however, the Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō was founded (Tokyo Music School), under the direct control of the Ministry of Education, and again directed by Shūji Isawa. The school had a twofold aim: to train professional musicians and music teachers. Obviously, the syllabus still included a number of musicological subjects, such as Music History, Music Theory, Music Aesthetics, Acoustics, etc. In 1907, in the same school, the Hōgaku Chōsagakari (Investigation Committee of the Japanese Traditional Music) was founded, with the task of transcribing traditional music works using staff notation and record it on waxed cylinders, as well as carrying out research on music history.

Authoritative musicological projects were conducted outside of the Tokyo Music School, as well. One example is Shōhei Tanaka (1862-1945), who graduated in physics at the Tōkyō Daigaku (the University of Tokyo, formerly Tokyo University), the most important and ancient University in Japan, founded in 1877, and went on to specialize in Germany under Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz (1821-1894). He carried out practical experiments on his theory of natural intonation by building a series of organs, one of which earned him the praise of Anton Bruckner and was described as *Enharmonium* by Hans von Bülow.⁹ After returning to Japan, he devoted himself to the education of young professional and amateur musicians in traditional Japanese music, providing them with his staff notation transcription

Kenkyū seika hōkokusho [Final report on the research project sponsored by “KAKENHI: Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B)”], n. 17320026, ed. by K. Osumi (principal investigator of the research project), Tokyo, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, 2008, pp. 51-75. According to Hashimoto (p. 73 f.), one of the purposes of *sakka* was to understand the Western world through the Japanese language, whereby the noble patina of the traditional *waka* verses could function as a filter against the “barbaric” invasion of Western culture.

⁸ On this topic see K. HATTORI, *Ongakugaku no kaiko to tenbō* [Musicology in Japan: a retrospective look and prospects for the future], «Ongakugaku [Journal of the Japanese Musicological Society]», XXVIII/3, 1982, pp. 181-184, and ID., *Geidai hyakushūnen to ongakukyōiku* [The 100th anniversary of Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music and music education], «Kikan ongakukyōiku kenkyū [Quarterly review of music education studies]», April 1988, pp. 2-14.

⁹ See S. ITO, *Tanaka Shōhei to junseichō* [Shōhei Tanaka and natural intonation], Tokyo, Ongaku no tomosha, 1968.

of about 300 pieces of the repertoire.¹⁰ One of Tanaka's pupils was Hisao Tanabe (1883-1984), a physicist and violinist, who specialized in Asian music and became the first president of the Tōyō Ongaku Gakkai (Society for Research in Asiatic Music), founded in 1936, which today has over 700 members.¹¹ Another remarkable figure was Kiyosuke Kanetsune (1885-1957), a pianist, acute and active critic, and collaborator of the above mentioned Investigation Committee for Traditional Music, as well as a collector of folk songs.¹²

However, the new age of musicology in Japan began as late as 1949, after the Second World War, when, following the reform of the school system, the Tokyo Music School and the Tokyo Fine Arts School fused into one entity, the State University of Fine Arts, which, as of today, is still the only one in the country. The Tokyo Music School, then, turned into the Music Faculty of the Geidai, and within it a Musicology Department was established, along with other departments, of composition, vocal music, instrumental music, and orchestra conducting.¹³ The following year also saw the foundation of the

¹⁰ See entry *Tanaka Shōbei* in *New Grove sekai ongaku daijiten*, X, Tokyo, Kōdansha, 1994, p. 240. This is the 23-volume edition, which is not a translation into Japanese, but a revised and extended edition, especially with regard to the music and musicians of the Land of the Rising Sun, of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 20 vols., London, Macmillan, 1980.

¹¹ For further information about the society, see website http://tog.a.la9.jp/index_e.html (in English). See also entry *Hisao Tanabe* by Masakata Kanazawa in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., London, Macmillan, 2001, XXV, p. 60.

¹² His most important writings are gathered in *Kanetsune Kiyosuke chosakushū* [The works of Kiyosuke Kanetsune], ed. by M. Gamou, E. Tsuchida and H. Kawakami, 16 vols., Tokyo, Ōzorasha, 2008-2010.

¹³ Autumn 1946 is the period in which the documents about the debate surrounding the management of the Tokyo Music School were written, following the school system reform. The minutes of the meeting that took place on February 10th, 1947, already mention the future Musicology Department among those planned for the new University. For further details see *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi* [100 years of Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music] cit., *Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen* [The Tokyo Music School period], part 2, 2003, pp. 410-414, as well as *Ongaku gakubu hen* [From the institution of the Music Faculty at the Geidai until today], 2004, pp. 19-41. Article 1 of the Geidai university regulation, which was issued on March 10th 1950 and entered into force on April 1st of the same year, stated that the goal of the University is to impart the knowledge, performance technique, theory and practical application of the arts, as well as to conduct research on them. The regulation can be read in *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi* cit., *Daigaku hen* [From Geidai instruction to our day], 2003, pp. 145-154. Traditionally, all Japanese universities adopt a limited number system. Candidates to the Musicology Department of Geidai must take entrance exams that also include an instrument playing test

Japanese traditional music department. The need was felt to also institute a theoretical department, in order to raise what was a technical-performing oriented school to the rank of University.¹⁴ There were four main actors in the establishment of the Department of musicology: Eishi Kikkawa (1909-2006), Eitaro Katayama (1894-1975), Yosio Hasegawa (1907-1981) and Yoshiyuki Kato (1893-1969).¹⁵ The latter became the first Head of the Music Faculty.

This meant that musicology in Japan ceased to be a discipline reserved for a few committed, dynamic scholars, and began to acquire a consistent institutional profile.¹⁶ In 1963 a further, higher study level was introduced, equivalent to the US Master's degree, while in 1977 the PhD was introduced. About 20 university institutes across the whole national territory established a Musicology Department or course.¹⁷

1952 saw the birth of Ongaku Gakkai (Japanese Musicological Society), which in 1986 changed its name into Nippon Ongaku Gakkai (Musicological Society of Japan); at the beginning it had 63 musicologist members, while today the associates are over 1300.¹⁸ The first President of the society was the above-mentioned Yoshiyuki Kato, who had also been the first Head of the Geidai Music Faculty.

(piano, harpsichord, organ, string, wind or percussion instrument, or a traditional Japanese instrument of choice), as well as a solfeggio and harmony test.

¹⁴ In March 1948, Eishi Kikkawa, one of four creators of the Musicology Department mentioned, and a teacher at Tokyo Music School, wrote on a music journal: «it is time to break loose from the idea of school as mere training ground for performing technique ... the ideal condition would be to study everything that concerns music in one single institute ... the entrance of musicology students in the institute will provide performer students with useful incentives in developing their own search for beauty and truth». Cf. E. KIKKAWA, *Ongakugakkō ron: Daigaku syōkaku ni kansuru siken* [Some personal opinions about Tokyo Music School: about its advancement to State University], «Ongaku geijutsu», VI/3, 1948, pp. 29-35: 30-31. About E. Kikkawa, see also Masakata Kanazawa's entry about him in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., London, Macmillan, 2001, XIII, p. 588 f.

¹⁵ K. HATTORI, *Ongakugaku no kaiko to tenbō* cit., p. 182.

¹⁶ For a lively report on the state of musicology in Japan at that time, see F. Y. NOMURA, *Musicology in Japan since 1945*, «Acta Musicologica», XXXV, 1963, pp. 47-53.

¹⁷ About the current situation, see for example *Ongaku daigaku, gakkō an'nai, 2013 nendo* [Annual guide for music institutes of various levels, Academic Year 2013], Tokyo, Ongaku no tomosha, 2012. For an overview of different music genres of today, including the traditional ones, see *The Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music*, ed. by A. McQueen Tokita and D. W. Hughes, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008 (see especially the first chapter: *Context and Change in Japanese Music*, pp. 1-33).

¹⁸ For further information see the website <http://www.musicology-japan.org/english.html> (in English).

Browsing through the anniversary supplement of the «Ongakugaku (Journal of the Musicological Society of Japan)»,¹⁹ entitled *Nippon Ongaku Gakkai 30 nenshi* [*The Musicological Society of Japan: Thirty Years On*], published in 1987, it emerges that in Japan, in the 1950s, a musicologist would encounter several material and mental obstacles in his activity, such as the difficulty of keeping up with foreign studies in Western Music History or, not infrequently, a certain mistrust or disinterest towards musicology on the part of professional musicians and music critics.

Luckily, musicology today is universally acknowledged in the Japanese music world, thanks to the daily effort of musicologist colleagues, who work in about 40 music Faculties or Departments at university level, scattered across the whole national territory, teaching Western music history to performer students as a compulsory subject.²⁰ According to a statistical survey conducted by the Musicology Department – based on the database of students who went on to obtain a degree, a Master's degree and a PhD in Musicology from 1953 to 2001 –,²¹ 330 of them (equal to 27,9%) now work as university teachers, and thus directly or indirectly succeeded in applying their musicological knowledge (Tabl. 1).²²

¹⁹ From its foundation in 1954 until 1985, the official English name of the journal was «Journal of the Japanese Musicological Society».

²⁰ The history of Western music is regarded as essential, also because the teaching qualification diploma for music in junior and senior high school, which is the only certificate that students of these faculties or departments can obtain besides their study title, can only be granted to students who have a sufficient number of credits in Western music history (as well as Japanese music history, ethnomusicology, solfeggio, singing, instrumental performance, conducting, several education science subjects, and a few weeks of training. After the music syllabus reform of 2002, a preparation in traditional Japanese singing, along with the knowledge of Japanese traditional instruments, is also required). Each music Faculty or Department tries to help its students (mostly performers) to find a job. The common opinion is that the chance to acquire a music teaching qualification diploma is an effective solution, although a graduate-diploma student still has to take part in recruitment competitions launched by local institutions or private schools. The result is that graduates have started to compete with diploma graduates from the music courses of the Education Faculty. On the Education Faculty in Japan see footnote 23.

²¹ All the students who have completed, or are attending, as teachers or students, the Musicology degree course, Master or PhD at the Geidai form an association called Rararikai. This association gathers data about its members by sending them questionnaires, asking them for their current address and profession. The information is fed into the database, and serves to periodically compile a list of members. The Rararikai office is based in the Musicology Department.

²² Data is available online at the following address: <http://www.geidai.ac.jp/labs/musicology/> (in Japanese). The list does not make any distinction between tenured and untenured positions. According to my calculation, for which I used the two member

University teachers	330	27,9%
Media system (tv, radio, newspapers, publishing houses, record labels)	67	5,7%
Performers, music teachers	51	4,3%
Teachers in elementary schools, junior/senior high schools	41	3,5%
Researchers at research institutes	23	2,0%
Public or private institutions	23	2,0%
Art management	17	1,4%
Music criticism	15	1,3%
Physicians	6	0,5%
Music instrument sales	5	0,4%
Other	41	3,5%
(subtotal)	619	52,5%

Tabl. 1 – Professional outlets for Musicology students at Geidai (percentage calculated on the total number of students, amounting to 1179).²³

lists of 1999 and 2003 (following a database update, the data used for the 2001 list no longer exists at the Rararikai offices, so in 2001 the list was not compiled), about 55 % of university teachers have tenure.

²³ Data regarding “Elementary schools, junior and senior high schools” turns out to be relatively low considering the total number of university teachers (330). In general, those who seek employment in elementary, junior and senior high schools do not choose Geidai, but one of the Universities that include an Education Faculty: there are over 50 across the whole national territory, mostly state universities, founded in 1949 following the post-WWII school system reform. In 1945 in Japan there were only 49 universities: 19 were state universities, 2 were local, and 28 private. In 1949, with the school system reform, they were increased to 180: 70 state, 18 local, 92 private (data taken from p. 175 f. of S. YOSHIMI, *Daigaku towa nanika* [What is university?], Tokyo, Iwanamishoten, 2011). There are currently 780 universities: 86 state, 95 local, 599 private. See chapter 16, *Education and Culture*, of *The Statistical Handbook of Japan 2012*, published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, which also explains the functioning of the Japanese school system. The Japanese population in 2011 was 127,80 million. See chapter 2, *Population*, of *The Statistical Handbook* cit. The total duration of music teaching, which is a basic subject in compulsory education, is 9 years between elementary (6 years) and junior high school (3 years). According to the administrative order for the enforcement of the school education law, in elementary schools music lessons take up 358 time units, equal to 6,3% of total units (5645) for all subjects (each unit is 45 minutes). In junior high school there are 115 music time units, equalling 3,8% of total units (3045) for all subjects (each unit is 50 minutes). In senior high school (3 years), however, music becomes one of four optional artistic subjects: music, *Bijutsu* (Art and Design), *Kōgei* (Craft production), and calligraphy. The minimum number of credits for a diploma is

A postgraduate specialization school was founded at the Geidai in 1963, offering not only a Master's degree course in musicology, but six other courses: Composition, Vocal music, Instrumental music, Orchestra conducting, Traditional Japanese music, and Musicology.

As for the relationship between musicologists and students of technical-performing courses, we can say that the latter very often turn to musicologists to get advice on writing their thesis. One of the reasons for this is that, unlike musicology students, who are used to writing texts as part of their exams for degree, a Master's degree or a PhD, for 'technical-performing' students the thesis is the first occasion in which they have to write down such a text in order to obtain a study title. The author of this paper, for instance, has been revising drafts by students from the Vocal Music Master's degree since 2000. In 2008, at the Geidai, the Ongaku Research Center (Research Center for the Graduate School of Music) was founded, thanks to a five-year subsidy by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology of Japan. The staff includes two professors (one full professor and one assistant professor) and five researchers, who conduct research on issues relating to practice-based doctoral programs in music, as well as helping 'technical-performing' doctoral students in the writing of their theses.²⁴ Conversely, musicologists can greatly benefit from the direct, practical experience of music performers for a deeper analysis of repertoires. We can therefore close by noting how, in Japan, the long tradition of Geidai testifies to a fruitful collaboration between *musicus* and *cantor*.

(Translation by Elisabetta Zoni)

74, of which at least 2 must be associated with an art subject, which is to be taken in the first year (each credit is obtained by following 35 lessons of 50 minutes each).

²⁴ On their activity until 2012, see <http://www.geidai.ac.jp/rc/english/index.html> (in English). Since 2013 the group has included two professors (one full professor and one assistant professor) and one researcher.