



MUSIC AND THE MAKING OF  
MODERN JAPAN  
JOINING THE GLOBAL CONCERT  
MARGARET MEHL





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## 5. Isawa Shūji: Music, Movement, Science, and Language

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It has even been averred that music is an [*sic*] universal language, inasmuch as it speaks straight to the heart of all men at all times and in all countries. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the universal language has branched off into many separate dialects. Japanese music is not the least attractive of them.<sup>1</sup>

The music of western nations originated in Greece. The eight sounds are elements from which all sounds spring. As the relation and value of these eight sounds are all founded on nature, the scale, pitch and all properties are precise and they are unchangeable. [...] Our country respects 'Rites and Music' [...] Yet I am afraid that they are not founded on nature [...].<sup>2</sup>

Both the idea of music as a tool for moral education and of Western music being the most progressive because it was rooted in science motivated Isawa Shūji (1851–1917) to promote the introduction of music education in the nation's schools. Isawa is rightly regarded as the man who played the most important role in the introduction of Western music into the education system. His importance as an educator and shaper of educational policy, however, went far beyond music: he contributed as a politician and practitioner to state-supported national education in general, both at home and in Japan's first colony, Taiwan. Based on expertise acquired through Western books (some of which he translated himself) and through study abroad, he pioneered specialist

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1 Chamberlain, preface to Kiyonori Konakamura, *Kabu ongaku ryakushi* (Tokyo: Konakamura Kiyonori, 1888).

2 From the memorandum and plan submitted by Megata Tanetarō and Isawa Shūji to the vice -minister of Education, Tanaka Fujimaro, 8 April 1878 (English version 20 April 1878): quoted in Ury Eppstein, *The Beginnings of Western Music in Meiji Era Japan* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1994), 34–35.



education in several fields besides music: teacher training, physical education, education for the deaf, and speech education, namely to correct stammering.<sup>3</sup>

Isawa's own education resembled that of many samurai from the lower ranks in his time: early training in Chinese learning at the domain school Shintokukan in Takatō domain, military training, and studies in Western learning. While his Western learning tends to be highlighted, his traditional education was equally significant. His study of the *Four Books* and *Five Classics* of the Confucian canon, which he claimed to have mastered by the time he was twelve or thirteen,<sup>4</sup> may well have predisposed him to take for granted the idea that music was indispensable for creating a harmonious society and therefore played a part in good government.

Isawa became a member of the domain's drum and fife band and learnt the basics of Western-style military drumming. He must have done well, for in 1866 he was dispatched to Kiso Fukushima as an instructor. Still as a drummer, he was part of a military detachment sent to Edo in 1867. In 1868 he followed his lord to Kyoto, where he engaged in Dutch studies (*rangaku*). Returning to Tokyo in 1869, he continued to study Western learning, including the English language, and in the 1870s he entered the new government's highest institution of Western studies.<sup>5</sup> For Isawa, as for other samurai of his generation, early military training followed by Western studies opened the doors to social advancement in Meiji Japan. Training in music was not normally part of samurai education, and whether Isawa's experience of drumming can be counted as experience of Western music is open to question. His recent biographer, Okunaka, argues that these bands, set up by domain lords in the 1860s, constitute not so much a Westernization of musical culture as part of the modernization process, in which music served as a tool for turning the Japanese into modern citizens and creating

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3 Hachirō Kaminuma, *Isawa Shūji*, Jinbutsu sōsho (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1962). For a newer biography with a focus on music, see Yasuto Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku: Isawa Shūji ga mezashita Nihon kindai* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2008).

4 Kaminuma, *Isawa Shūji*, 17. See also Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 89–90, 195. The information is based on Isawa's autobiography.

5 Daigaku Nankō: Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*. About the *kōshinsei* system, see Benjamin Duke, *The History of Modern Japanese Education: Constructing the National School System, 1872–1890* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 52–53.

modern physical bodies (*kindaiteki nashintai*). Military drill trained the ability to move in a group while following orders. The drumbeats, accompanied by Japanese flutes, served to provide the rhythm for exercises in military drill, and were not perceived as music. The rhythms were not even recorded with staff notation, but with special symbols, another indication that the auditory signals produced for military drill were not in the same category as the military music introduced later.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Isawa's experience of marching to the sounds produced by the drum and fife band, musical or otherwise, certainly constituted 'keeping together in time'<sup>7</sup> and may well have contributed to his interest in promoting 'movement games' (*Bewegungsspiele*) as part of physical education for young children, based on the kindergarten pedagogy of Friedrich Froebel.

## Keeping Them Together in Time: Froebel's Movement Games

One of Isawa's foreign teachers in Tokyo was Guido Verbeck (1830–98) who played (and sometimes taught) the organ. In 1873, Verbeck lent Isawa *The Child: Its Nature and Relations* by Matilda H. Kriege.<sup>8</sup> *The Child* was a modified translation of a German work, published with the intention to make the kindergarten pedagogy of Friedrich Froebel accessible to the public. Isawa became one of the first Japanese to learn about Froebel's pedagogy as it was adopted and interpreted by American educators.<sup>9</sup>

Kriege's book would presumably have spoken directly to Isawa right from the opening paragraphs: now that society was being completely remodelled, asserted the author, education too had to change. She described Froebel as the 'new genius' who had discovered just the right way to educate children in accordance with their nature.<sup>10</sup> After introducing Froebel's principles of education, Kriege devoted

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6 Details about the bands can be found in Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 3–40.

7 William McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

8 Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 96–99. Kriege, *The Child*.

9 Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 102–06.

10 Kriege, *The Child*, 15–16.

considerable space to what she called Froebel's 'mother-cosseting songs', designed to help mothers to further their child's development through 'physical play exercises'. In this context Kriege quoted (without naming a source) the statement quoted earlier (Chapter 4), attributed to 'a great man'.<sup>11</sup> Citing Froebel, she described songs as 'invaluable aids in moral training'.<sup>12</sup> Both may well have impressed Isawa. About the role of music in education more generally, Kriege wrote:

One powerful means of awakening the ideal side of the human being, is the early cultivation of art; and the blending of art with industry in our time makes it almost a necessity for all grades and classes of society. There is hardly any branch of industry in which drawing is not required. Music is more and more cultivated by all. "The Finger Piano" is an exercise for the fingers, and accompanied by song cultivates the ear, teaches time, rhythm and lawfulness of motion. Rattles, bunches of keys, all discordant noises, ought to be given up; songs, some pleasant instrument, the sounds of nature, are best for the young child.<sup>13</sup>

The 'physical play exercises' presented by Krieger impressed Isawa as much as the case she made for music. In fact, even before the systematic introduction of Western music in the form of *shōka* into the education system, educators experimented with kindergarten education, including songs combined with playful movements as taught by Froebel. Froebel's intention with his *Bewegungsspiele* was to encourage and develop children's natural inclination to engage with nature and with the everyday activities they observed around them. The playful movements performed to songs might represent simple activities or imitate animals, while games involving running or walking strengthened children's bodies and furthered their physical development, and circle games trained their ability to act as part of a group and identify themselves as members of a community and, ultimately, of society.<sup>14</sup> While Froebel's ideas were slow to spread in nineteenth-century Germany, they were

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11 Kriege, *The Child*, 92–93.

12 *Ibid.*, 122.

13 *Ibid.*, 124.

14 See Yoshiaki Katsuyama, 'Furēberu no undō yūgi ron ni kansuru ikkōsatsu: shūdan yūgi ni yoru ningen keisei ron o chūshin ni', *Nagoya Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu kiyō* 33 (1986); Ulf Sauerbrey, 'Froebelian Pedagogy: Historical Perspectives on an Approach of Early Childhood Education in Germany', in *Guóji jiàoyù réncái péiyù zhī cèliè yánjiū* (*Talent Development for International Education*), ed. Sophia Ming-Lee Wen (Taiwan: Tian Ming Sheu/National Academy for Educational Research, 2016).

highly influential in the United States, the first country visited by the Iwakura Embassy. Among its members was the future minister of education, Tanaka Fujimaro (1845–1909), who thoroughly researched education in the countries the embassy visited. His detailed reports after his return include descriptions of different kinds of institutions for pre-school education.<sup>15</sup> During his tenure as head of the Ministry of Education (1873 to 1880), the first public kindergarten in Japan was established in the Tokyo Normal School for Women (Tōkyō Joshi Shihan Gakkō), which opened in 1876. In April 1876 Tanaka travelled to the Philadelphia Centennial, where he spent several months, returning in early 1877.<sup>16</sup> Although pre-school education was only one of many areas of interest, Tanaka visited the model kindergarten based on Froebel's pedagogy at the exhibition and reported his observations, not least of songs (*shōka*) combined with gymnastics (*taisō*). His report included a description of a song with an accompanying game entitled 'Cuckoo'.<sup>17</sup>

Variouly described in the English-language sources as 'musical gymnastic exercises'<sup>18</sup> and 'running and walking games connected with song',<sup>19</sup> the playful movements to the accompaniment of songs came to be known in Japan as *yūgi* or *shōka yūgi*. *Yūgi* was a term rarely used before Meiji. In the Edo period, it could refer to adults' amusements or to children's play, but not in the context of education. In the early 1870s, Tanaka Fujimaro used it to describe unstructured play in pre-school institutions in Europe and America. Isawa, in his report quoted below, refers to *kigi*. From the late 1870s *yūgi* was regularly used by translators

15 Masae Fukuhara, 'Yōchien sōsetsuki ni okeru yūgi' no dōnyū ni kansuru kenkyū: Tanaka Fujimaro no hōkoku monjo o tegakari ni', *Taitikugaku kenkyū* 51 (2006). For a brief summary of Tanaka's early life and his activities as a delegate, see Duke, *Modern Japanese Education*, 81–83.

16 For details of the visit, see Duke, *Modern Japanese Education*, 219–29; specifically on the kindergarten, see Fukuhara, 'Tanaka Fujimaro', 640–43.

17 Fukuhara, 'Tanaka Fujimaro', 641. The song and movements appear in Bertha Ronge and Johann Ronge, *A practical guide to the English kinder-garten (children's garden): for the use of mothers, nursery governesses, and infant teachers: being an exposition of Froebel's system of infant training: accompanied by a great variety of instructive and amusing games, and industrial and gymnastic exercises, also numerous songs, set to music and arranged to the exercises* (London: J. S. Hodson, 1855). The work went through several editions and was translated into Japanese.

18 Ronge and Ronge, *English Kindergarten*, 43. 3

19 Adolf Douai, *The Kindergarten: A Manual for the Introduction of Froebel's System of Primary Education into Public Schools, and for the Use of Mothers and Private Teachers* (New York: E. Steiger, 1872 (4th ed.)), 18.

for Froebel's concept of structured games as part of his educational programme.<sup>20</sup>

Putting the ideas into practice, however, was another matter. At the newly established kindergarten, the lack of experts trained in Western kindergarten pedagogy meant that using Japanese material was the only way forward. Teachers there included Clara Matsuno (née Zitelmann, 1853–1941), a trained kindergarten teacher, who had married a Japanese ministry official. She was the only one at the school who could play the piano. The systematic introduction of Western music had not yet begun, and the songs taught to future kindergarten teachers (from 1877) were composed by court musicians, with lyrics in a highly Sinicized style. These *gagaku* songs are an early example of indigenous musical creativity inspired by the encounter with Western music.<sup>21</sup>

Kindergarten education was not a government priority; the one opened in 1876 remained the only state kindergarten until 1912. By then there were 221 other public kindergartens and 309 private ones, and a mere two percent of the nation's children attended kindergarten; the percentage rose to only 6.8 by 1945.<sup>22</sup> *Yūgi* nevertheless played a significant role in education, forming the basis for physical education in the infant years of elementary schools and in physical education for girls. According to a survey conducted in 1894, *yūgi* based on the principles advocated by Isawa and on the praxis at the government kindergarten were widely taught in schools nationwide.<sup>23</sup> Collections of *yūgi shōka* were published for use in schools as well as kindergartens.<sup>24</sup>

20 For a discussion of the terminology, including Tanaka's use of *yūki* and *yūgi*, see Fukuhara, 'Tanaka Fujimaro,' 639–40. The basic meaning of amusing and enjoying oneself is similar; before Meiji they usually referred to adults. Tanaka's use changes over time. Meanings of *kigi* include frisking, frolicking. On Isawa's terminology, see Haruko Takahashi, Sachiko Kishimoto, and Kichiji Kimura, 'Isawa Shūji no "yūki" ni kansuru ikkōsatsu', *Chūkyō taiikugaku kenkyū* (*Chūkyō Daigaku Gakujutsu Kenkyūkai*) 16, no. 1 (1975): 79.

21 Shigeo Murayama, *Meijiki dansu no shiteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Fumaidō, 2000), 32–35; Hermann Gottschewski, 'Nineteenth-Century *Gagaku* Songs as a Subject of Musical Analysis: An Early Example of Musical Creativity in Modern Japan', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 10, no. 2 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479409813000256>

22 Tōru Umihara, *Nihonshi shōhyakka: Gakkō* (Tokyo: Kondō Shuppansha, 1979), 46 (appendix).

23 Murayama, *Meijiki dansu no shiteki kenkyū*, 35.

24 The catalogue of the National Diet Library (NDL) records nine titles including the expression '*yūgi shōka*', published between 1887 and 1910. There are likely to have been more. Shikama's collection, for example, is not included. See Chapter 8.



Even before the founding of the first state kindergarten, Isawa, having become acquainted with Froebel's ideas through Kriege's book, began to experiment with some of Froebel's ideas when he was appointed head of the newly established Aichi Normal School (Aichi Shihan Gakkō) in 1874. He saw music, particularly singing, and physical education as belonging together. In February 1875, he submitted a report to Tanaka Fujimaro, which was published in the Ministry of Education's yearly report. His reasoning was as follows:

On Promoting *shōka kigi*

The benefits of [singing] *shōka* are great: First of all, it heightens perception (*chikaku*) and sensitivity (*shinkei*), and gives pleasure to the mind (*seishin*). Second, it enhances the ability of people's hearts to be moved. Third, it corrects pronunciation and regulates breathing. This is just a short summary of the arguments for why *shōka* are an absolutely indispensable part of small children's education. I will not be long-winded and go into details here. Our Ministry of Education realized this early on and decreed that *shōka* would be among the subjects taught in primary school, but even so this subject has not yet been established. Now, I have followed the ideas set forth in the writings by the prominent educator Froebel as well as several other notable pedagogues, and have adapted traditional children's songs of our own country and arranged two or three short songs. I expect that with time they can be performed to good effect and I can report success.

Here, I present a couple of examples. *Shōka* are pleasing to the mind, while movement refreshes the entire body. Both should in equal measure form part of education, and neither should be neglected. Currently, many kinds of physical exercise have been made compulsory for all as gymnastics (*taisō*). But making children of tender years, with weak muscles and soft bones, do vigorous exercise can be quite harmful. This the famous [pedagogues] state with certainty. Therefore, we now establish *kigi* in the infant years of elementary school.<sup>25</sup>

Three examples follow: *Tsubaki shōka* (Camellia song), *Kochō* (Butterfly) and *Nezumi* (Mouse). They illustrate Isawa's aim to adapt *shōka yūgi* by using Japanese songs, thus conforming to Froebel's recommendation

25 Shūji Isawa, 'Aichi Shihan Gakkō nenpō', *Monbushō nenpō* 2 (1875). See also Yasuto Okunaka, 'Shōka ni yorushintai no kokuminka: Isawa Shūji no kyōiku shisō no ichi sokumen', *Kaitoku* 68 (2000); Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 106–17.

that melodies familiar to the children be used.<sup>26</sup> Isawa described the movements, but did not include the music.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, as with military drill to the accompaniment of drum and fife bands, it can be plausibly argued that *shōka yūgi* had little to do with music. Both in the United States and subsequently in Japan, education in singing, whether or not in the form of *yūgi*, was perceived as health education and as moral training rather than art education. The continuity from Isawa's early experience of military drill to his interest in promoting *shōka yūgi* might thus be said to lie in creating modern bodies and mobilizing them in the service of the nation.<sup>28</sup>

Isawa's pragmatic approach to *yūgi*, as well as his emphasis on adapting Japanese songs for use in *yūgi*, reflected his aim, explicitly stated in his subsequent writings, to reform music by combining the best of Western and Japanese music. Aesthetic considerations or the idea of music as an art were not part of Isawa's educational agenda. For him, music was a tool for quite literally moving bodies, and, at the same time, disciplining them.<sup>29</sup> From a musical point of view the songs that accompanied *yūgi* may well seem forgettable. But their significance must be rated highly. Making infant bodies move together in time was an important part of forming modern citizens; not only in Japan. Together with other elements in Froebel's pedagogy, such as having children make things with their hands, these movement games served to prepare children for their place not only in a modern state, but also in a modern industrial society. It is, moreover, significant that the early reception of Froebel's pedagogy in Japan happened entirely through English-language sources, most of them American, whose pragmatic treatment of music Isawa followed.

Isawa's study of American pedagogy resulted in the publication of *Kyōju shinpō* (True method of teaching) during his time at Aichi Normal School. The work was based on *Theory and Practice of Teaching* by David Page, first published in 1847 and still highly regarded in the 1870s. Isawa

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26 Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 106-16. Okunaka characterizes Isawa's ideas as Froebel 'sono mama' (i.e. as essentially a replication of Froebel's ideas).

27 Murayama, *Meijioki dansu no shiteki kenkyū*, 25. *Nezumi* is an adaptation of Douai's 'Cat and Mouse', while the movements described for *Kochō* are the same as those for *Solar System*, described by Ronge and Ronge.

28 Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 106-17; Okunaka, 'Shōka ni yorushintai no kokuminka'.

29 Okunaka, 'Shōka ni yorushintai no kokuminka', 31, 40.

translated selected parts of the book and added material from other publications, including sample material from *The Teacher's Assistant* by Charles Northend, published in 1873.<sup>30</sup> Isawa's adaptation of Page's work shows his role as one of the pioneers of developmental education and of 'object lessons' as a separate branch of study in Japan.<sup>31</sup>

By the time Isawa was sent by the government to study at Bridgewater Normal School in Massachusetts in July 1875, he had acquired a sound knowledge of educational theory and practice in the United States.

## Music, Language, and Science

Isawa's training at Bridgewater included music, which reportedly was his worst subject; he was even advised to drop it by the school's principal, A. G. Boyden, who otherwise spoke highly of Isawa, describing him as 'well-trained in the schools of Japan'.<sup>32</sup> His difficulties with the Western tonal system led him to Luther Whiting Mason, with whom he took private lessons. Mason's credentials as a music pedagogue were excellent: his *National Music Course* was the most influential series of music textbook in America in the 1870s and early 1880s, and earned him honours at the world exhibitions in Vienna (1873) and Paris (1878) as well as the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876.<sup>33</sup> It is not surprising that Mason's work attracted the attention of Japanese studying education and teacher training in America. Megata consulted him about music education, and Isawa's lessons with Mason prepared him for supervising the introduction of music education in Japan's schools.

Similarly, his problems with English pronunciation brought him in contact with Alexander Graham Bell (1847–1922), and he began studying speech with him in 1876, around the same time as he studied with Mason.<sup>34</sup> Bell is, of course, known best as the inventor of the telephone.

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30 For an analysis of Isawa's work see Mark E. Lincicome, *Principle, Praxis, and the Politics of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 38–49.

31 *Ibid.*, 45.

32 Quoted in Sondra Wieland Howe, *Luther Whiting Mason: International Music Educator* (Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1997), 58.

33 For details of Mason's biography and work see *Ibid.*

34 Kaminuma, *Isawa Shūji*, 330.

He demonstrated an early telephone prototype at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, where the international audience included the Japanese, among them Education Minister Tanaka Fujimaro and the Japanese students, including Isawa.<sup>35</sup> Early the following year, Isawa cooperated with Bell in two demonstrations of his invention, and thus Japanese became what Bell later called ‘the first foreign language’ spoken over his telephone.<sup>36</sup>

As with Mason, Isawa’s contact with Bell (having been introduced by Megata) was about more than remedial teaching. Besides working as a speech instructor, Bell was a propagator of ‘visible speech’.<sup>37</sup> Alexander Graham Bell’s father Alexander Melville Bell (1819–1905), his grandfather Alexander Bell and his brother Melville James Bell (1845–1870) were prominent teachers of oratory and elocution. His father published several works on speech, including *The Standard Elocutionist* (1860) and *Visible Speech* (1867).<sup>38</sup> According to Alexander Melville Bell,

The fundamental principle of Visible Speech is, that all Relations of Sound are symbolized by Relations of Form. Each organ and each mode of organic action concerned in the production or modification of sound, has its appropriate Symbol; and in all Sounds of the same nature produced at different parts of the mouth, are represented by a Single Symbol turned in a direction corresponding to the organic position.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, Bell devised a kind of phonetic alphabet, which he believed to be so logical and clear that it offered numerous advantages over conventional alphabets. He believed its simplicity would greatly facilitate teaching literacy to ‘the illiterate in all countries’ as well as help prevent and cure speech defects. By visualizing every imaginable

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35 Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 134, 152.

36 Robert V. Bruce, *Bell: Alexander Graham Bell and the Conquest of Solitude* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 215, 18.

37 For the following, see Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 127–86; Seth Jacobowitz, *Writing Technologies in Meiji Japan: A Media History of Modern Japanese Literature and Visual Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1163/9781684175628>

38 Alexander Melville Bell, *Visible Speech: The Science of Universal Alphabets on Self-Interpreting Physiological Letters for the Writing of All Languages in One Alphabet, Illustrated by Tables, Diagrams and Examples*, Inaugural Edition ed. (London/London and New York: Simpkin, Marshall & Co./N. Trübner & Co., 1867).

39 *Ibid.*, 35.

speech sound and the way it was produced by the human speech organs, moreover, it provided the means to teach the deaf as well as to communicate ‘the exact sounds of foreign languages to learners in all countries’. Indeed, Bell went even further and outlined the political possibilities he envisaged: ‘The establishment of a Standard of the Native Pronunciation of any language’, and the ‘speedy diffusion of the language of a mother country throughout the most widely separated colonies’.<sup>40</sup>

His son Alexander Graham Bell had learned ‘visible speech’ as a child. At the time of his encounter with Isawa, he was using the system to teach the deaf. Having settled in Boston in autumn 1872, he gave private tuition, and had been appointed professor at Boston University’s newly opened School of Oratory in 1873.<sup>41</sup>

Isawa soon realized the potential of visible speech. Reforming and standardizing the national spoken language was a pressing issue in Japan, where local dialects could be mutually incomprehensible. In fact, both Bell and Isawa wanted to use the system to draw ‘marginal subjects into the national, or imperial, mainstream’.<sup>42</sup> Foreign language education was another highly relevant application, not just for the Japanese studying English and other languages but, once Japan became a colonial power, for teaching Japanese to their colonial subjects. Isawa later published several works about pronunciation and about visible speech.<sup>43</sup>

Both these potential applications were relevant for his practical work as a government official. *Shōka* education, after all, combined both music and language, while foreign language education became a major concern when Japan acquired Taiwan as its first colony in 1895, at the end of its war with China. That year Isawa was appointed acting chief of the education bureau (*gakumubu*) that was established in the civil department (*minseikyoku*) of the government general, which gave him the opportunity to put his ideas about state education, including

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40 Bell, *Visible Speech*, 20–21. The other advantages Bell envisaged were the effective telegraphic communication in any language, the study and preservation of languages threatened by extinction, as well as making it easier to trace the etymology of words, and, finally the possibility of creating a universal language aided by ‘the world-wide communication of any specific sounds with absolute uniformity’.

41 Biographical details in Bruce, *Bell*.

42 Jacobowitz, *Writing Technologies*, 154.

43 See Kaminuma, *Isawa Shūji*, 345–47.

language education, into practice.<sup>44</sup> Although his term as the head of the educational bureau ended in 1897, his plans for a system of public schools were implemented over the following years. Singing education was on the curriculum of the new schools from the start, and the song books compiled for Japanese elementary schools under Isawa's auspices were used until the Taiwan Government-General published its own collections, starting in 1915. Among the Japanese teachers whom Isawa recruited personally, Takahashi Fumiyo, a graduate of Tokyo Normal School, became the most influential music teacher in Taiwan, where he taught from 1896 to 1906.<sup>45</sup> He composed songs that were included in the Taiwan Government-General's song collections from 1915. The foundations for Taiwan's rise as a musical as well as an economic 'Asian Tiger' after 1945 were thus laid by Isawa in the early twentieth century.

After resigning from his post in Taiwan, Isawa was appointed president of the Tokyo Higher Normal School (Tōkyō Kōtō Shihan Gakkō), the former Tokyo Normal School, whose president he had been twenty years previously, on 30 August 1899, but illness forced him to resign the following year. This marked the end of his career in state employment (apart from his membership of the Upper House), but not of his public activities.

His most significant achievement after 1900 may well have been his work with people suffering from speech impairments, namely stammering. In 1901 he published *Shiwahō* (Visible speech; he sent a copy of the book to Bell).<sup>46</sup> This was followed by several works on pronunciation in which he applied the method of visible speech. In 1903 Isawa founded the association Rakusekisha. Its aim was to promote research and teaching in visible speech, and to promote good pronunciation of Japanese, English, Chinese, and Taiwanese, to correct non-standard pronunciation as a result of speaking dialects and stammering and to teach speech to deaf-mute people.<sup>47</sup> From January

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44 For this and the following see Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan, 1895–1945*, 14–21; Kaminuma, *Isawa Shūji*, 213–53.

45 *Shōgaku shōkashū* (1881–84), *Yōchien shōka* (1887), and *Shōgaku shōka* (1892–93). See Sondra Wieland Howe and Mei-Ling Lai, 'Isawa Shūji, Nineteenth-Century Administrator and Music Educator in Japan and Taiwan', *Australian Journal of Music Education* 2 (2014 (2011)): 102–04, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1061986.pdf>

46 Bruce, *Bell*, 81.

47 On the founding and development of the Rakusekisha see Kaminuma, *Isawa Shūji*, 291–311.



1909 the association published the journal *Rakuseki sōshi*. It turned out that there was a huge demand for the correction of stammering, especially from young people and their families. Within a few years the number of people treated reached thousands and training courses for teachers were organized at local centres. Tuition was also offered to the hearing-impaired and for the correction of pronunciation in singing, particularly for speakers of Tohoku dialects. The first initiative for the latter came from the governor of Akita prefecture, who had noticed the flawed pronunciation of children singing the national anthem during his official visits to schools.<sup>48</sup> During his final years Isawa also continued his work on teaching Chinese pronunciation, begun when he was appointed to the colonial government in Taiwan. He even extended his efforts to native Chinese speakers and in 1916 travelled to the Chinese continent and to Korea. At the time of his sudden death he was planning to extend his activities to North America.

Arguably, therefore, Isawa's interest in language education exceeded his interest in music: it remained a major preoccupation for the rest of his life. His studies both with Bell and Mason were highly significant: for Isawa, the use of the voice and vocal culture were also a subject of scientific enquiry and related to his interest in theories of evolution.<sup>49</sup> Having graduated from Bridgewater he enrolled in the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard University, a significant institution for the reception and teaching of evolutionist thought in America. Isawa's studies included the works of Charles Darwin, Thomas Henry Huxley, and Herbert Spencer.<sup>50</sup> By the time Isawa returned to Japan, he was well acquainted with both biological evolutionism and the cultural evolutionism of Herbert Spencer, including his writings on the origins and function of music. In 1879, the year he was charged with music investigation, Isawa published *Seishu genshiron* (On the origin of species), a partial translation of Thomas Henry Huxley's *On the origin*

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48 Ibid. The Meiji government targeted certain dialects, including the Tohoku dialect, as part of the efforts to standardize the spoken language, resulting in their stigmatization. See Mie Hiramoto, 'Slaves Speak Pseudo-Tohoku-ben: The Representation of Minorities in the Japanese Translation of *Gone with the Wind*', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 13, no. 2 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2009.00406.x>

49 Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 175–79.

50 Kaminuma, *Isawa Shūji*, 79.

*of species, or, The causes of the phenomena of organic nature: a course of six lectures to working men* (1863). He is credited with having translated the first work introducing Darwin's theory. He published a full translation in 1889 under the title *Shinka genron* (The principles of evolution).

Isawa's belief in science as a fundamental part of civilization lay at the root of his approach to education, whether in language or music. While Chamberlain, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, used 'dialects' to describe the different kinds of music in the world, Isawa's dialects included the varieties of indigenous music as well as variations of the Japanese language. Both had to be subjected to a national standard.<sup>51</sup>

## Music Education

Immediately after his return to Japan in May 1878, Isawa held several appointments in quick succession, some of them simultaneously. He was appointed to the Tokyo Normal School (Tōkyō Shihan Gakkō) in June 1878, and became its president the following year. Together with Takamine Hideo, who had likewise studied education in the United States (at Oswego), he set out to reform the institution based on what they had learnt about Pestalozzi's principles. It is significant that they did this without direct input from foreign advisors. Their reforms provoked opposition, especially from the imperial court.<sup>52</sup> At the same time Isawa was an official in the Ministry of Education, where he was employed in various capacities until 1891. In November 1878 he became head of the National Institute of Gymnastics (Taisō Denshū Sho) established in the Ministry of Education, where, together with the American physician George A. Leland (1850–1924), he worked to establish a programme for physical education in schools and to train teachers. As his efforts to introduce *yūgi* show, Isawa attached great importance to physical education. At Bridgewater he had learnt the system of gymnastics developed by the physician Diocletian Lewis (1823–86), to improve the

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51 Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 178–79. On Isawa's scienticism as a basis for his approach to music, see also Toru Takenaka, 'Isawa Shūji's "National Music": National Sentiment and Cultural Westernization in Meiji Japan', *Itinerario* 34, no. 3 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0165115310000719>

52 Duke, *Modern Japanese Education*, 196.

physical condition of children and adults who were not fit enough for the more demanding forms of exercise. Isawa set out his thoughts in a memorandum entitled, 'Shin taisōhō jissai' (On the implementation of new gymnastics), and in 1879, a month before his resignation, he submitted a report on the results of his work and outlined the merits of Lewis's New Gymnastics.<sup>53</sup>

Isawa left the National Institute of Gymnastics to become head of the Music Investigation Committee (Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari), a post he held concurrently with the presidency of the Tokyo Normal School. The Committee was established a result of Isawa's own efforts. Even before his return from America, in April 1878, Isawa and Megata Tanetarō submitted a report to Tanaka Fujimaro, then vice-minister of Education, about the need to firmly establish music in the education system. Music, the joint report stated, 'refreshes the mind of schoolchildren, provides relaxation from the efforts of hard study, strengthens the lungs, promotes the health, clears the voice, corrects the pronunciation, improves the hearing, sharpens the thinking, pleases the heart well also and forms a good character'.<sup>54</sup> In addition, music also benefits society by its 'capacity for providing recreation profitable for society, for turning it naturally toward the good and removing it from evil, for the advancement of society in civil manners, for elating the people, for praising royal virtue and for the enjoyment of peace'.<sup>55</sup> No suitable musical style existed in Japan, however, so Western music should be adapted to suit the Japanese. An additional document signed by Megata detailed the practical implementation.<sup>56</sup> He proposed setting up a 'singing course' in the Tokyo Normal School and Tokyo Normal School for Women, and employing Luther Whiting Mason as a teacher with Isawa Shūji as his assistant.

In spring 1879, Isawa persuaded a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Education to express his—Isawa's—ideas in a 'Plan for the Establishment of a Music Instruction Centre'. The plan referred to

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53 Kaminuma, *Isawa Shūji*, 89–94. For details on gymnastics at Bridgewater and Isawa's work, see Shūichi Nose, 'Kei taisō no kindai Nihon taiikuka kyōiku katei e no dōnyū ni kansuru shiteki kōsatsu (A historical review on the curricular adoption of light gymnastics into modern Japanese physical education)', *Taiiku kenkyū: Japan journal of physical education, health and sport sciences* 28, no. 3 (1983).

54 Quoted in Eppstein, *Beginnings*, 30.

55 *Ibid.*, 31.

56 Both documents (the second one in Megata's own English version) are quoted in full in Eppstein, *Beginnings*, 31–37.

combining Eastern and Western music to create a national music, and the Music Investigation Committee functioned both as a research and experimental committee and a teacher training institute. Its tasks were to investigate music at home and abroad in order to develop suitable educational materials and to implement musical education, starting with singing, at the kindergarten and primary school affiliated to the teacher training school. In June Mason was formally appointed 'Instructor of Musics in the School of Musics' for a period of two years, although no institution of that name existed. Mason arrived in Japan in March 1880.<sup>57</sup>

In preparation for his work in Japan, Mason had bought musical instruments and tools to tune and repair them, and collected pentatonic folk songs from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. His work with Japanese students in America had led him to believe that these were most suited to Japanese ears. His responsibilities in Tokyo were similar to those he had had at home: teaching children, training teachers, organizing and directing performances, and creating educational materials. He taught at the Tokyo Normal School, the Tokyo Normal School for Women and the affiliated schools and the kindergarten, at the Peers' School, and the Music Institute of the Music Investigation Committee.

The most immediate task was the selection of songs deemed suitable for teaching in schools. A committee was set up in order to compile a series of graded music textbooks, chaired by Isawa and including Mason, an interpreter, three poets, five court musicians, and two general scholars.<sup>58</sup> The inclusion of poets demonstrates the importance attached to the lyrics, which were intended to provide suitable content. After all, singing education (*shōka*) in Isawa's view was a means for moral education.<sup>59</sup> The first song book was published in 1881. Most of the melodies came from Western sources, while the lyrics were composed by Japanese. Many of the songs are still popular in Japan today.<sup>60</sup>

Mason left Japan for Europe in July 1882, intending to learn more about music education there, particularly for the blind. He expected

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57 For Mason's work in Japan, see Howe, *Luther Whiting Mason*; Eppstein, *Beginnings*.

58 According to Mason; see Howe, *Luther Whiting Mason*, 95.

59 Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 190.

60 For a discussion of the contents of the early song books, see Eppstein, *Beginnings*; Masato Sakurai, Heruman Gochefuski [Hermann Gottschewski], and Hiroshi Yasuda, *Aogeba toōtoshi: maboroshi no genkyoku hakken to 'Shōgaku shōkashū' zenchikuseki* (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 2015).

to return to Japan, but his contract (he had been granted a one-year extension of his original contract) was cancelled that November. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but by the 1880s, the Japanese government was aiming to reduce the number of foreign teachers. The government and Isawa may well have felt that they could now continue implementing Western vocal music in the education system without Mason. Besides, disagreements between Mason and Isawa may have influenced the decision. Mason, who regarded Japanese music as having 'a wrong scale' and was convinced of the necessity of converting his pupils to 'civilized music',<sup>61</sup> presumably had little time for Isawa's vision of a national music.

Isawa, meanwhile, began to lobby for transforming the Music Research Committee into a fully-fledged conservatoire. The Tokyo Academy of Music was established in 1887 and Isawa was appointed president. He had submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Education, signed by seven like-minded intellectuals as well as himself, in November 1886.<sup>62</sup> They stated that, while educational reform had improved physical and intellectual education, educating the emotions was equally important and, to this end, training in the arts needed to be more firmly established. The proposal referred to the theatre reform movement and asserted the necessity of training performing artists (*geijutsuka*). Besides teacher training, the new Academy included a specialist department for particularly talented students. This, together with the appointment of Rudolph Dittrich, marked the beginning of a change of course. The wording of the proposal, however, as well as most of Isawa's subsequent pronouncements suggest that Isawa's utilitarian approach to music education never really changed. Even as president of the academy (he resigned in 1891, having been suspended from his duties the year before), he held other appointments, acting as president of the Tokyo School for the Blind and Dumb (Tōkyō Mōa Gakkō) from 1890 to 1891. After 1891 he held no official appointment related to music, although he did continue to be deeply involved with education, both as

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61 Quoted in Howe, *Luther Whiting Mason*, 90.

62 They were Sakurai Jōji, Yatabe Ryōkichi, Toyama Masakazu, Hotsumi Nobushige, Muraoka Ken'ichi, Mitsukuri Kakichi, and Kikuchi Dairoku. See Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkaï, *Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, 285.

a government official and privately.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, in 1907, he criticized the Tokyo Academy of Music for over-emphasizing music as art for its own sake even in the teacher training department.<sup>64</sup>

In sum, while music for Isawa was an essential part of national education, he had little time for music as an art. Moving together in time and singing together in tune, with correct, standardized pronunciation of suitably edifying lyrics, all served the same purpose: to unify the nation and advance its level of civilization, so that Japan could compare itself favourably with the dominant Western powers. As for the music itself, Isawa's belief in science and in theories of evolution led him to conclude that Western music provided a useful model. Ultimately, of course, Japan should create its own national music, by using that model to reform existing music. This, however, proved to be far from straightforward, as the discussions about music reform and the activities of would-be reformers illustrate.

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63 For details about Isawa's career, see Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*.

64 Quoted in Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*, 226.