



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





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6. Civilizing Citizens: Music Reform

[...] our aim is not entire adoption of European Musics but the making or refining of Japanese Music by assimilating the elements of both Native and European Musics [*sic*].¹

At such a time, what is more fitting than to publish a music magazine in order to present that which will correct such abuse and prevent such harm; support what is right and guard against wrong; to help promote ever more correct and refined music, and thus ensure that we reach the realm of civilization (*bunmei no eiiki*)? I therefore believe that the time has indeed come to establish this magazine.²

Isawa Shūji, who wrote the lines quoted above in a letter to Luther Whiting Mason dated 1 July 1880, four months after Mason's arrival in Tokyo, was not the first to advocate the reform of Japanese music. Reform or improvement (*kairyō*) was one of the watchwords of the 1870s and 1880s, applied to many areas, including the *noh* and *kabuki* theatre.³ The topic had already been discussed by Kanda Kōhei (1830–96), a founding member of the Meiji Six Society (*Meirokeisha*), in his article 'On Promoting Our National Music' published in the society's journal in October 1874.⁴ Kanda asserted that the reform of music and the performing arts needed to be addressed immediately, as this would

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- 1 Ury Eppstein, *The Beginnings of Western Music in Meiji Era Japan* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1994), 77.
 - 2 Totsuji Shikama, 'Hakkan no shushi', *On'gaku zasshi* 1 (1890), 2.
 - 3 See Yoshihiro Kurata, *Geinō no bunmei kaika: Meiji kokka to geinō kindai* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1999), 260–88.
 - 4 Kōhei Kanda, 'Kokugaku o shinkō subeki no setsu', *Meiroke zasshi* 18 (1874). For a full translation, see Kōhei Kanda, 'On Promoting Our National Music', in *Meiroke Zasshi: Journal of the Japanese Enlightenment*, ed. and trans. William R. Braisted (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976).

take time. When he claimed that Japan was unskilled in music (*onritsu*), he was presumably referring to cultivated music.⁵ He expressed the criticism that had already been expressed by Ogyū Sorai in the previous era and would be repeated many times in the following years: the music enjoyed by the common people (*zokugaku*) was vulgar and its influence on public morals pernicious. Kanda called it coarse and obscene (*hiri waisetsu*). With both the music of Tang China, brought to Japan in ancient times, and *sarugaku* (a predecessor of *noh*) having lost their appeal, there no longer existed any music suitable for the enjoyment of refined people and they had lost all interest in music. In order to remedy the situation, the science of music had to be studied as a branch of knowledge in its own right. The study of music was fairly advanced in China, but even more so in Europe and America. For promoting music in Japan, the most appropriate instruments were to be selected, whether Japanese, Chinese, European, or American. The lyrics, on the other hand, had to be Japanese. The ones currently sung were unsuitable, but the words of *noh* plays, *gidayū* ballad drama, or the Utazawa school of vocal music might be adapted for the purpose.

Kanda then went on to discuss theatre reform and concluded with a note on *sumō* wrestling, which he described as barbaric (*yaban*) and wished to see discontinued. Kanda's article shows that he regarded public entertainment as highly important: the aim of reforms should be to create performances that the entire population, from emperor to common people, could enjoy together.⁶ Kanda did not mention education, although he was writing two years after the introduction of the Education Law. Clearly, he was more concerned with public entertainment.

Education, on the other hand, was a central concern for Ono Shōgorō, another early advocate of music reform. A samurai from Sendai and educated at the domain's school, Yōkendō, Ono's activities were largely limited to his home town and his views are unlikely to have been circulated widely, but they suggest that the need for music reform was not only felt by the elite in Tokyo. Ono fled to Hakodate during the war in 1869, where he converted to the Russian Orthodox faith. Back in Sendai, he opened a private academy in 1872. Although

5 See Chapter 3, opening quote, and note.

6 *dōyū kairaku*: the entire phrase is apparently an allusion to Mencius. See Kotobank <https://kotobank.jp/word/%E5%81%95%E6%A5%BD-458657>

he was active in the Orthodox church in Sendai, education was his main concern. In 1877 he published a series of lectures in his magazine *Kōshū yoshi* (Training course magazine), in which he advocated training in Western-style choral singing.⁷ Unlike other commentators introduced in this chapter, Ono laid stress on the pleasures of music. He began his first article, entitled 'Ongaku okosu beshi' (Music should be promoted), by stating, 'It is a fact that human beings must have their enjoyment.'⁸ All humans, he continued, regardless of era, state of civilization, intelligence, or location, seek enjoyment. For 'pleasures', Ono used the word '*tanoshimi*', written with the same character as the '*gaku*' in *ongaku*. In the body of the article Ono used *gaku* rather than *ongaku* for 'music'; surely a conscious choice, emphasizing the close relationship between music and enjoyment expressed by the Chinese character.⁹

Having asserted the universality of a need for enjoyment, Ono argued that the nature of what people enjoyed varied widely, not only from place to place (he mentioned the capitals of England and France, Formosa, and Hainan Island), but also between gentlemen of high standing and villains. The level of civilization (*kaika*), as well as intelligence and virtue, and nobility, was reflected in what people enjoyed. The sages recognized the universal craving for pleasure, and so music (*gaku*), vocal and instrumental (*kaei kangen*), became a tool for leading people to virtue. Music and rites served to rectify customs and support government. Music, Ono continued, was thus a necessity, but getting the people to enjoy the right kind of music and preventing regression into barbarian pleasures was difficult. In the realm of Japan (Dai Nihon Teikoku), there existed various kinds of music, but none that might be named together with rites. Instead, barbarian instrumental pieces and obscene songs prevailed. Nevertheless, it would be impossible to abolish them outright. Because civilization (*bunmei*) was characterized

7 Shōgorō Ono, 'Ongaku okosu beshi', *Kōshū joshi* 14 (1877); Shōgorō Ono, 'Ongyoku no fusei wa jinmin no hinkō o midaru', *Kōshū joshi* 15–17 (1877): Documents relating to the Ono family in the Sendai City Museum. The articles are reprinted in: Kanako Kitahara and Sumire Yamashita, 'Kyū Sendai hanshi Ono Shōgorō no ongakuron, Ongyoku no fusei wa jinmin no hinkō o midaru', *Hirosaki Daigaku kokushi kenkyū* 143 (October 2017), <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1010282256804517896>

8 Kitahara and Yamashita, 'Kyū Sendai hanshi Ono Shōgorō', 39.

9 On the significance of the character's dual meaning in ancient China, see Wolfgang Bauer, *China und die Hoffnung auf Glück: Paradiese, Utopien, Idealvorstellungen in der Geistesgeschichte Chinas* (Munich: dtv, 1974), 32–33.

by the flourishing of rites and music, Ono concluded, and because Japan aspired to be civilized but had no appropriate music, it was essential to promote refined music (*ongaku*) in order to transform manners and customs.

Why the different kinds of music in Japan were not suitable and what kind of music he proposed instead was the subject of 'Ongyoku no fusei wa jinmin no hinkō o midaru' (Improper musical performance corrupts the moral conduct of the people), published in the following issues, in three instalments.¹⁰ Ono began by naming native genres: instrumental music (*ongaku*) with *shō* (a reed organ-like wind instrument), *hichiriki* (double reed wind instrument), and *taiko* (drum); *nōyō* (noh chanting), and *jōruri shibai* (narrative *shamisen* music and drama). In his discussion, *hichiriki*, typically used in court music and music performed at Shinto shrines (*kagura*), stood for highly refined music, whose entertainment value Ono judged deficient. Noh, he regarded as too bound up with the elite of the previous era and with Buddhism. *Jōruri*, other theatre performances, and all other vocal and instrumental music (*kakyoku kangen*) he condemned as irredeemably obscene (*inji*) and coarse (*hiya*), and their effect as harmful as poison. Even gentlemen enjoyed lowly songs such as *Kappore* and *Jinku* at banquets, making them no better than their grooms and coachmen.¹¹

Next, Ono discussed the effects of bad music on children and young people and the need for education in the arts.¹² Ono argued that even if they received moral instruction at school, they would still be exposed to harmful music. Many took lessons in *gidayū* and *tokiwazu* (genres of narrative songs with *shamisen* accompaniment), and those who did not would go to the theatre or variety shows behind their parents' backs and hum songs such as *Kappore* and *Jinku* when out of earshot.

After elaborating on the harmful influence of bad music, Ono finally revealed what kind of music he proposed: 'organ', here in the meaning

10 Ono, 'Ongyoku no fusei'. See Kitahara and Yamashita, 'Kyū Sendai hanshi Ono Shōgorō', 40–42.

11 *Kappore* is the name of a folk song that accompanies a comic dance. *Jinku* is likewise a folksong with the lyrics varying from place to place. The lyrics of present-day versions have presumably been sanitized.

12 Kitahara and Yamashita, 'Kyū Sendai hanshi Ono Shōgorō', 41–42.

of *organum*, that is polyphonic *a cappella* singing.¹³ According to Ono it was suitable for men and women of all ages; the sounds expressed joy and sorrow, bravery and gentleness, love and yearning, and the ancient lyrics all promoted righteousness and virtue. This type of music, moreover, was performed in Europe and America. Elaborating on his proposition in the final part of his article,¹⁴ Ono stressed the importance of fostering a sense of beauty in children and the role of beauty, rites, and music as an essential part of moral education.

Finally, Ono discussed the relationship between a people's music and disposition. He recounted an anecdote about French troops invading Russia and being moved to dance when they overheard Russians singing. Ono concluded that Russia's efforts to enrich their country and strengthen their army were reflected in their invigorating music. Meanwhile, Europeans judged the melodies of Japanese songs depressing and the instrumental pieces unrefined. Now that Japan was emerging from the shackles of the past and the people could be free, it was time to rejoice and, instead of deriving enjoyment from sad and coarse music, to abandon the voice of barbarianism and promote refined music (*gagaku*). 'For this reason', Ono concluded,

I desire that organum music be speedily promoted; that singing lyrics by saints and sages be introduced; that we develop in the young the wisdom that will make them love beauty; that we have them sing with exhilaration in order to stimulate a lively and enterprising disposition, and that by suppressing obscene songs and coarse music wash off the laughter and scorn of the people of foreign countries.¹⁵

Ono's view of music as a means of transforming the people's conduct and (together with rites) as a tool of government is characteristic of the 'Rites and Music' (*reigaku*) view of music that informed most of the debates on music reform. While it is unlikely that Ono knew much about the ideas that informed Russian Orthodox Church music, his encounter with its practice would have made it seem entirely compatible with the aims of 'Rites and Music'. At the same time, his desire for music that expressed the exhilaration and joy of a new departure suggest that he regarded

13 Ibid., 45; Rihei Nakamura, *Kirisuto-kyō to Nihon no yōgaku* (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1996), 62.

14 Kitahara and Yamashita, 'Kyū Sendai hanshi Ono Shōgorō', 42.

15 Ibid., 42.

organum as modern compared to Japanese music, even while he praised its ancient lyrics. His claim that it was widely practised in the West and his reference to Western opinions of Japanese music, meanwhile, show that transforming musical practices was not just a domestic affair, but also aimed to improve Japan's standing in the eyes of the world. Ono did not mention reforming Japanese music. His discussion gives the impression that he was resigned to its continued existence as a source of pleasure, but that it would gradually be marginalized once people, especially the young, learned to prefer more refined music. Ono's thoughts were not widely disseminated, but they demonstrate both the prevalence of the 'Rites and Music' view of music and the variety of ways in which musical practice could be imagined.

Isawa Shūji and the Tokyo Academy of Music

Isawa Shūji, then, was not the first to stress the importance of music education. Like Ono, he was convinced that music was a significant tool for reforming manners and customs, and that the music enjoyed by the common person was not fit for purpose and therefore needed to be reformed. Unlike Ono, however, Isawa's appointment to the Ministry of Education placed him in a position to put his ideas into practice on a national scale. As he stated in the letter to Luther Whiting Mason quoted at the beginning of this chapter, music reform meant, 'the making or refining of Japanese Music by assimilating the elements of both Native and European Musics [*sic*]'.¹⁶ He outlined his argument in more detail in a memorandum entitled, 'Zokugaku kairyō no koto' (On the improvement of popular music), circulated in the Ministry of Education in 1883.¹⁷ The music enjoyed by the common people was morally corrupt and obscene (*inja waisetsu*), and its melodies lewd in manner (*inpū*). It corrupted morals and obstructed progress, and damaged Japan's prestige in relations with foreign countries. Clearly, music reform was not just a domestic matter.

16 Eppstein, *Beginnings*, 77.

17 Shūji Isawa, 'Ongaku kairyō no koto', in *Isawa Shūji: Yōgaku kotohajime - Ongaku torishirabe seiseki shinpōsho*, ed. Masami Yamazumi (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1971 (1884)). Partial translation and discussion in Eppstein, *Beginnings*, 69–70.

In the English translation the criticism of common music is not quite so harshly expressed, however. Presumably this is a reflection of 'Isawa's dilemma':¹⁸ he despised common music, but at the same time he wished to convince Mason and other foreigners that Japan had a highly refined culture, and a wholesale condemnation of common music was hard to reconcile with this claim. Of course, there was *gagaku*, the music of the imperial court and of Shinto ritual, which could be sharply distinguished from the music of the common people. It had to be anyway, since it represented the institutions and ideology that formed the basis of the modern state. Indeed, Isawa went even further: he argued that that the Japanese music of his time was similar in tonality to ancient Greek music.¹⁹

The English version of Isawa's discussion was included in the collections of exhibits provided by the Music Investigation Committee for the International Health Exhibition in London in April 1884,²⁰ the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans, held from December 1884, and for the International Inventions Exhibition in London in 1885.²¹ Alexander J. Ellis (1814–90), one of the pioneers of music research based on scientific experimentation, and of comparative musicology, made good use of the information in his paper, 'On the Musical Scales of Various Nations', read in London at the Society of Arts on 25 March 1885.²² Ellis, who was entrusted with

18 See Eppstein, *Beginnings*, 68–69.

19 'Extracts from the Report of S. Isawa, Director of the Institute of Music on the result of the Investigations Concerning Music Undertaken by Order of the Department of Education Tokyo Japan. Translated by the Institute of Music.' In *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai*, ed., *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku hyakunenshi: Ensōkai hen 1* (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1990), 167–77. Japanese versions in Masami Yamazumi, ed., *Isawa Shūji: Yōgaku kotohajime - Ongaku torishirabe seiseki shinpōsho* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1971). See also Eppstein, *Beginnings*, 70–74.

20 It was entitled, 'Extracts from the Report of S. Isawa, Director of the Institute of Music on the result of the Investigations Concerning Music Undertaken by Order of the Department of Education Tokyo Japan. Translated by the Institute of Music', and dated February 1884.

21 *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai, Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, 189–97. See also Liebersohn, *Music and the New Global Culture: From the Great Exhibitions to the Jazz Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 98–104.

22 Alexander J. Ellis, 'On the Musical Scales of Various Nations', *Journal of the Society of the Arts* 33, no. 1688 (27 March 1885), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41327637> In addition to Isawa, Ellis cited a 'Japanese gentleman who is studying physics in Europe', who wished to remain anonymous. This was presumably Tanaka Shōhei, inventor of the enharmonium and another advocate of music reform.

the exhibits after the 1885 exhibition (most of which were given to the South Kensington Museum), subsequently received from Isawa three sets of tuning forks and two sets of pitch pipes representing the tuning of the *koto* and *biwa* and of basic Japanese scales (*ritsu*) for his personal use. He discussed these in a lengthy addition to his previous paper. In return Ellis sent Isawa a set of French tuning forks, which, he wrote 'may prove serviceable for tuning your pianos by'.²³

Besides giving Japanese music, or at least court music, added prestige both at home and abroad, downplaying the differences between Japanese and Western music made Isawa's aim of creating a modern 'national music' (*kokugaku*) by combining elements of the two seem achievable. In order to qualify for this synthesis, Japanese music was to be reformed by referring to what were deemed desirable qualities of Western music. As in other areas, the idea was to modernize Japanese culture by selectively imitating Western models. Meanwhile, since prohibiting the music of the common people was hardly realistic, it was to be reformed by selecting the least offensive pieces, and improving them; particularly the lyrics. Adding harmonies was intended to make them equal to Western art songs, while publishing them in staff notation would make them available for teaching and study.²⁴

In practice, the early efforts made by Isawa's Committee and subsequently by the Tokyo Academy of Music seldom produced more than transcribed traditional melodies in staff notation (with all the limitations the notation entailed) and, in the case of songs, sanitized lyrics. One of the few tangible results was a collection of *koto* pieces, published under the auspices of Isawa in 1888. The publication was bilingual: the English title page and the addition of romanized lyrics (except for *Rokudan*, all the works had a vocal part) suggest that the collection was published at least in part with a foreign audience in mind. Japanese studying the *koto* in the traditional way with a teacher would not have needed sheet music, since transmission was largely by

23 Letter to Isawa, 11 and 24 October 1885, published in Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkaï, *Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, 196–97. For Ellis's discussion of the Japanese tuning forks, see Ellis, 'Appendix to Mr. Alexander J. Ellis's Paper on "The Musical Scales of Various Nations" Read 25th March 1885', *Journal of the Society of the Arts* 33, no. 1719 (30 October 1885), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41335239>

24 Isawa, 'Ongaku kairyō'.

ear. The preface included the following information about the selection and editing process:

Though most of the pieces contained in this collection are selected from the better portion of the old Koto music, yet for those words and tunes occurring therein, which are liable to offend the public feelings on account of their vulgarity and meanness, pure and elegant ones have been substituted, thus preventing their baneful effects upon the social character.²⁵

New tunes had also been added, but great care had been taken ‘not to injure that virtue which is inherent in our old Koto music’. The collection included a revised version of the traditional song *Sakura* (no.2), which gained international currency when Puccini used the tune in *Madame Butterfly* and generally acquired iconic status as a ‘traditional’ Japanese song.

Although musically ‘Western’, European songs with Japanese-themed lyrics arguably represented an attempt at blending Japanese and Western elements (*wayō setchū*) as part of the effort to create a national music; particularly when the songs were art songs rather than children’s songs. In the 1880s and 1890s, several such songs were published and performed at the Tokyo Academy of Music. Most of the original Japanese lyrics are now forgotten: today these songs are either sung in the original language or in direct translation. An early example is *Yasumasa*, first published in 1889 in the collection *Chūtō shōka shū* (Intermediate level song collection). Fujiwara no Yasumasa, a courtier from the Heian period, was known for his ability to play the flute, and the lyrics tell the story of how he stopped a robber in his tracks with his music. The music of the three-part chorus was *Das klinget so herrlich* from Mozart’s opera, *The Magic Flute*. The lyricist thus took his inspiration from the title of the opera (although in the actual chorus it is Papageno’s glockenspiel, rather than his flute, that ‘enchants’ Monostatos and his men). The tune, however, does not lend itself easily to the sounds of the Japanese language, which may well be why the song never became popular.²⁶

25 From the preface: Tokyo Academy of Music, ed., *Collection of Japanese Koto Music* (Tokyo: Department of Education, 1888); Monbushō Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari, ed., *Sōkyokushū* (Tokyo: Monbushō Henshūkyoku, 1888.)

26 Yasuto Okunaka, *Wayō setchū ongakushi* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2014), 11–14. Okunaka names Kōzu Senzaburō as the composer, but the publication does not give the

A more successful example was *Satsuma-gata* (Satsuma Bay) with lyrics by Torii Makoto (1855–1917), a poet who had studied French and then Western music and was appointed Professor at the Academy of Music in 1891. The lyrics tell the famous story of Saigō Takamori and his companion, the monk Gesshō, and their attempt to drown themselves in Kinko Bay in Kagoshima in 1859. Gesshō died, but Saigō was rescued and went on to become one of the most celebrated heroes of the Meiji Restoration.²⁷ The words are set to the music of Robert Schumann's *Zigeunerleben* (Op. 29 No. 3), and the first recorded performance was at a concert by the Alumni Association (Gakuyūkai) of the Academy on 27 November 1892.²⁸ The programme in English described the work as *Zigeunerleben* without any reference to the Japanese lyrics. Several more performances followed, and by 1902 when it was performed at the graduate concert of the teacher training department on 29 March 1902, a newspaper described the work as a signature piece (*meibutsu*) of the Academy. The programme names Torii Makoto as if he were the composer.²⁹ This, however, may have been the last Academy concert featuring Torii's lyrics. In subsequent concerts, Schumann's work has the Japanese title *Rurō no tami* (The vagrant people/gypsies), and was sung with a translation of the original lyrics by Ishikuro Kosaburō.³⁰ Ishikuro (1881–1965), having graduated in German literature from Tokyo Imperial University, taught at several institutions, including (in 1906–07) the Tokyo Academy of Music. He wrote several books about German literature and music as well as translating from German.

The change may well reflect the changing priorities of the Tokyo Academy of Music, resulting in the privileging of Western music at the

names of either composers or lyricists. Kōzu is also named in an exhibition catalogue compiled by the library of Kunitachi College of Music; they cite a different edition of the collection (Dai Nihon Toshō, 1889).

- 27 Ivan Morris, *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1982 (1975)).
- 28 Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkaï, *Ensōkai hen 1*, 13–14. For Torii's text see p. 631.
- 29 Subsequent performances are recorded on 30 May 1896, a charity concert for victims of the Meiji Sanriku tsunami, and on 2 May 1899. Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkaï, *Ensōkai hen 1*, 35, 81–82, 115–16. The review in *Yomiuri shinbun* is quoted on p. 117.
- 30 First record, concert on 9 October 1908. Ishikuro Kosaburō is not mentioned in connection with the work until a concert on 8 (repeated on 9 June) 1912. See Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkaï, *Ensōkai hen 1*, 279, 343–44.

expense of traditional music. The change of policy happened gradually: its founding in 1887 did not mean that the reform agenda of the Music Investigation Committee was abandoned. Indeed, when in 1890 the Academy became a subject of debate in the newly opened parliament and its closure was proposed, the need for music reform was cited by its defenders as a justification for its continued existence.

The Debate about the Existence of the Tokyo Academy of Music

The National Diet convened for the first time on 23 October 1890, an event that was celebrated even at the Tokyo Academy of Music.³¹ The celebration turned out to be premature. Less than a month later, when the government's budget was debated, some members of the Diet suggested closing three of the government's schools in order to reduce government expenditure, including Tokyo Academy of Music. In January 1891, the question was discussed in the Diet, and a committee was set up to investigate. The chairman published a report on 20 February recommending the closures, but the vice-minister of education, a member of the committee, disagreed. The controversy over the continued existence of the Tokyo Academy of Music (*Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō zonhai ronsō*) had begun.³²

Ultimately, the Tokyo Academy of Music survived the crisis, although government support was reduced and it was temporarily demoted to a department within the Tokyo Higher Normal School. But the threatened existence of all three schools sparked off a heated debate in the press that reveals how their proponents thought about the role of music in relation to education, the state, and the people.

An early contributor to the debate was Yatabe Ryōkichi (1851–99), better known for his contributions to the science of botany. In 1885 he had been one of the signatories of a memorandum to the Ministry of Education calling for the establishment of the Tokyo Academy of

31 *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai, Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, 294–96.

32 *Ibid.*, 297–337.

Music.³³ He published an editorial entitled, ‘Ongaku Gakkō ron’ (On the Academy of Music), which received considerable attention from the press.³⁴ His arguments were not new. In his first section, ‘Ongaku wa fūkyōjō kyōikujō kaku bekarazu’ (Music is indispensable for public morals and education), Yatabe asserted that the importance of music for public morals was agreed upon in East and West, and cited titles of *shōka* designed to promote patriotism and virtue. He went on to discuss what appears to be his main concern: the state of popular music and the need to reform it. In ‘Wagakuni zokkyoku no hiwai naru koto’ (The popular songs of our country are obscene), he cited a collection of *hauta* (short *shamisen* songs) licenced for publication in 1883 as one example of many that he believed should not be allowed and that constituted infringements of Paragraph 259 of the criminal law.³⁵ He quoted short phrases from several songs, each followed by the remark, ‘I cannot bear to write more’. Such songs, with their numerous allusions to the brothel and to illicit love, Yatabe asserted, were destructive to public morals. In his next section, ‘Zokkyoku wa katō shakai no kyōkasho nari’ (Popular songs are the textbooks of the lower classes), he even claimed that such songs with lewd content were the ethics textbooks and the bible (*baiburu*) of the lower classes. It was meaningless, he continued, to strive for equality with Western countries (*Seiyō shokoku to taiji suru koto*) and to call for the abolition of prostitution while neglecting to reform the education of the lower classes.

Yatabe nevertheless realized that simply prohibiting the objectionable songs would not be effective. In his last section, ‘Zokkyoku kairyō no hōhō’ (How to reform popular songs), he proposes three methods: 1. Promoting *shōka* in schools; 2. Correcting and improving popular songs,

33 Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkaï, *Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, 285.

34 Ryōkichi Yatabe, ‘Ongaku Gakkō ron’, in *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku hyakunenshi: Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, ed. Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkaï (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1987 (1891)). It was first published in *Nihon* on 13 January, and then in *Kokka kyōiku* (No. 5) on 12 February. See Kimiko Hirata, ‘Meiji 20 nendai no Nihon ongaku kan: Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō zonhai ronsō o tōshite’, *Ningen hattatsu bunka gakurui ronshū*, no. 8 (2008), <https://www.lib.fukushima-u.ac.jp/repo/repository/fukuro/R000002158/16-51.pdf>

35 This was one of several collections of *hauta* published in the 1880s. Paragraph 259 of the 1880 Penal Law stipulated that the display or sale of books and other material harmful to established customs or of obscene character was punishable with a fine.

and 3. Encouraging people to develop a liking for refined and elegant (*kōshō yūbi*) music. In order to succeed with the last two objectives, new versions of popular songs should be disseminated with the help of sheet music in Western notation, and concerts should present appropriate music. The Tokyo Academy of Music, he pointed out, was already working along these lines. The task, Yatabe concluded, was far too important to leave to private individuals or to religious bodies (presumably he was referring to missionary schools).

Inoue Tetsujirō (1856–1944), professor of philosophy at the University of Tokyo and recently returned from study in Germany, was another prominent contributor to the debate.³⁶ In an open letter to the journalist Asahina Chisen, published in the newspaper *Tōkyō shinpō* in February 1891, he gave his own answer to the question asked by the Diet member Yasuda Yuitsu, who had demanded to know how the Ministry of Education would categorize music in its classification of education as intellectual (*chiiku*), moral (*tokuiku*), or physical (*taiiku*). For Inoue, the Ministry's classification was itself questionable. He stated that it was based on Herbert Spencer and that English philosophers like him, unlike ancient Greek and German philosophers, hardly discussed the role of aesthetics in education. After introducing alternative classifications by the ancient Greeks and several German philosophers respectively, Inoue concluded that it was best to include aesthetic education (*biiku*) as a separate category, although he also argued that music had a positive effect on intellectual, moral, and physical education.

Inoue then enumerated the benefits of music: it could enhance pleasure, make work go more smoothly, and dispel worries and depression. He even suggested that the members of the Diet took time off from their heated debates and visited the Academy of Music in order to listen to sonorous music (*ryūryō naru ongaku*) to calm their hearts and cool their passions. The benefits of music for the state, he continued, had often been pointed out by the ancients. As well as the *Book of Rites*, he cited Plato, Aristotle, Strabo, Theophrastus, and Plutarch.³⁷ Given such

36 *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkaï, Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, 356–57.

37 Plato, Aristotle, and Pseudo-Plutarch are the most important sources for ancient Greek thought on music. Strabo (64 or 63 BCE–c.24 CE) is known for *Geography*, his only extant work; Theophrastus (c. 371–287 BCE), a Peripatetic philosopher who

widespread agreement since ancient times, the government should invest in music education. Inoue concluded by expressing concerns about the democratic process itself as represented by the new parliament: while making decisions by majority vote could be positive, it could also cause harm if the majority vote resulted from short-sightedness and ignorance.

Kōzu Senzaburō (1852–97), who had studied teacher training in the United States at the same time as Isawa and taught at the Academy, likewise emphasized the importance of reforming music as part of reforming customs and public morals, for it was these that determined whether a country was civilized and progressive (*bunmei kaika*) or barbarian and backward (*yaban mikai*). For this reason, reforming public morals and continuing to support the Tokyo Academy of Music in its work was clearly the responsibility of the state.³⁸

Other contributors to the debate argued largely along the same lines as Yatabe and Inoue. They referred to the ancient Greeks or the Confucian classics as evidence for the benefits of music in general and for the relationship between music and public morals and the prosperity and decay of states. The music enjoyed by the common people in Japan was coarse, even obscene, variously described in the debate as *hizoku* (vulgar, coarse); *hiwai* (obscene); *inwai* (obscene); *inja* (morally corrupt and evil) and generally associated with the pleasure quarters and prostitution. Such music needed to be replaced with more appropriate music, described with terms such as, *kōshō yūbi* (noble and graceful; refined), *kōshō tenga* (noble and refined), or *junsei* (pure; perfect) and *zenryō* (good, virtuous).

Creating the right kind of music and training teachers who would disseminate it was, of course, the task of the Tokyo Academy of Music, a task too important to be left to private individuals.

Several writers alluded to the competitive global climate and to Japan's efforts to join the ranks of civilized countries. In order to be recognized as civilized, the customs and morals of the people needed to be reformed, and music had an indispensable part to play in this

was Aristotle's close colleague as well as his successor, wrote about all areas of philosophy. His significant treatises on music are largely lost.

38 Senzaburō Kōzu, 'Mondai tōgi', in *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku hyakunenshi: Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, ed. Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1987 (1891)).

process. 'Ah, given today's world winners and losers where the strong defeat the weak (*yūshō reppai jakuniku kyōshoku*), who would say that the Tokyo Academy of Music is an unnecessary institution, if we want to raise the rank of our country and have our civilization progress?'³⁹ declared a Niitaku Ichiin (pseudonym), who also pointed out that music was a regular part of both private and public ceremonial occasions. Niitaku was one of two writers who drew a connection between the alleged decline of music in the Tokugawa period and the decline of the Tokugawa regime. He conceded, however, that while the Tokugawa rulers did not establish their own formal music, the imperial court had their *gagaku* and the warrior class cultivated *noh*, while in the better families, the *shamisen* was forbidden and their daughters learnt the *koto*.⁴⁰

There were dissenting voices. The author of an article in *Tōkyō shinpō* asserted that the defenders of the Academy were overstating their case. Children, he claimed, did not understand the lyrics of either the new patriotic songs or of the obscene popular songs, so they were not significantly influenced by them.⁴¹

His assertion was rejected by Suzuki Yonejirō, a graduate from the Academy in 1888 and the future founder of the private Music College of the East.⁴² Quoting several *shōka* with suitably uplifting lyrics, he asserted that children could well be taught to understand their content, as he knew from his own experience as a teacher. Unfortunately, he added, they also understood the less edifying content of popular songs all too well.⁴³

39 Nitaku Ichiin Koji, 'Aete yo no shokusha ni shissu', in *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku hyakunenshi: Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, ed. Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1987 (1891)), 361. For another writer who referred to global competition, see Shōken Koji, 'Ongaku Gakkō no hitsuyō ni tsuite', in *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku hyakunenshi: Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, ed. Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1987 (1891)). Both names are pseudonyms; 'koji' means a layperson.

40 Nitaku Ichiin Koji, 'Aete yo no shokusha ni shissu', 362. The other writer was Iwasaki Kōji from Gumma prefecture: *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai, Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, 364.

41 Kitarō Nakai, 'Ongaku Gakkō haisezaru bekarazu', in *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku hyakunenshi: Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, ed. Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1987 (1891)), 358–59.

42 See Chapter 3.

43 Yonejirō Suzuki, 'Ongaku Gakkō zonhai ni tsuite', in *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku hyakunenshi: Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō hen 1*, ed. Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1987 (1891)).

Shikama Totsuji's Contribution

The most significant commentator not affiliated with the government or its educational institutions was Shikama Totsuji (1859–1928). A native of Sendai, Shikama had graduated in 1885 from the Music Investigation Committee's nine-month course for prospective music teachers seconded by the prefectural governments, and stayed on in Tokyo (see Chapter 8). On 25 September 1890, just a couple of months before the debate about the existence of the Tokyo Academy of Music took off, he published the first issue of *Ongaku zasshi* (The musical magazine), Japan's first magazine devoted to music. An avid supporter of the Tokyo Academy of Music, Shikama published several articles of his own in its defence in *Ongaku zasshi*, as well as reporting on the controversy and printing or reprinting speeches by Isawa and others.⁴⁴ His stated intention was to promote music reform, and his first editorial began as follows:

These days our country follows a course of reform in many areas, day by day, and we are reaching the realm of civilization (*bunmei no iki*) month by month. The old appearance of the education system is being reformed on a large scale, social interactions are being completely freed from evil customs, and in every way a new Japan is being created. Accordingly, people's knowledge is being developed with immense speed and their sensibilities are being directed towards refinement and elegance (*kōshō yūbi*). However, in order to foster this taste for refinement and elegance, the power of art and music is of utmost importance. Therefore, the government early on issued a law for all schools in the country, and as a result music courses were established far and wide.⁴⁵

Shikama went on to detail government measures and musical activities, starting with the Music Investigation Committee, now the Tokyo Academy of Music, which had recently completed a new school building (the Sōgakudō, which housed Japan's first purpose-built concert hall) in May 1890. His other examples were the performance of Western music by the army and navy military bands; the Department of Ceremonies at the imperial court, where both *gagaku* and Western music were performed; performances at the Peeresses' School (Kazoku Jogakkō), where 'the

44 The chapter in *Tōkyō Geijitsu Daigaku hyakunenshi* cites *Ongaku zasshi* as its source for several of the texts.

45 Shikama, 'Hakkan no shushi'.

beautiful sound of the piano and the violin harmonize warmly with the nightingale song of the graceful young ladies', as well as several other schools. He also mentioned churches and ladies' and gentlemen's clubs, and added that even in the suburbs, there was a lively music scene, not to mention other parts of the country. However, Shikama continued, 'where there is thriving activity, abuses result and harm emerges. There is no escaping the general rule under heaven that every advantage has its drawbacks.'⁴⁶ Shikama's new magazine was intended as a timely contribution to the renewal of music. He assured his readers that he was well aware of the difficulties associated with his venture, but that despite these and his own inadequacies, he was determined to dedicate himself to the task. He concluded,

For this journal, from now on, and for as long as it continues, I will from the bottom of my soul, with all my strength, and with sincere effort research and collect all that has to do with music, whether great or small, rough or refined (*gazoku*) and will strive to publish it in this magazine and will report everything without neglect. Thus, I will not cease to work hard in order to bring music of our country to the highest level of refinement. I beg you all, if you are making any effort at all to reform and aggrandize (*kyōsei kōchō*) the music of our country, to support our intentions and humbly hope that you will do us the honour of regularly reading our magazine.⁴⁷

While Shikama's launch statement gives the impression that reform meant the dissemination of Western music, this is not what he had in mind. *Ongaku zasshi* in fact covered the entire musical spectrum of the time, including the various traditional genres of Japan, and Ming-Qing music (*minshingaku*). Shikama emphasized his inclusive stance in a short note in the seventeenth issue of *Ongaku zasshi*:

Reviewers of our journal *Ongaku zasshi* have described it as a journal of Western music and I hear that it is disliked by some for this reason. The intention of this journal, however, is certainly not to proclaim Westernism or to advocate contempt for all things Japanese. It is to cover the whole world of music, whether Western or Eastern, to adopt what is right and reform what is wrong, to gather what is superior and reject what is

⁴⁶ Shikama, 'Hakkan no shushi', 2. The quoted lines are followed by the statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

inferior, to adopt the strengths and to compensate for the weaknesses, and to act as a guide towards musical reform (*ongaku kairyō*). In this way, as we plan musical reform and progress, what else would we do but follow the course of fairness and integrity (*kōmei keppaku*).⁴⁸

Shikama Totsuji elaborated on his views in further articles in *Ongaku zasshi*. In June 1892 he published an article entitled, 'Nihon ongaku' (The music of Japan).⁴⁹ Beginning with the assertion that every human society had its own music, corresponding to its level of progress and knowledge, he sketched a brief outline of music in Japan, described as part of the East (*tōyō*) with a 4,000-year history, since the age of the gods. Describing the Tokugawa period, he distinguished three kinds of music: *honpōgaku* (literally, 'the music of our country'); *hiwai naru zokugaku* (the obscene music of the common people), and *Shinagaku* (music from China). The first was music performed at the court and the shrines; he appears to mean *gagaku*, which Isawa too had singled out as a genre worth of consideration. The Meiji revolution (*kakumei*) brought a huge change with the introduction of Western or Western-derived music (*Seiyō chokuyaku-teki ongaku*) which was in the process of sweeping up (*sōtō*) the music of Japan. Japanese music, Shikama asserted, was not so much based on scientific principles (*gakuriteki*) as on the practice of technique (*shujutsu no shūren*). Moreover, seen from the rationale (*iron*) of Western music, it sounded sad by nature. Since Japan's music was born from Japan's national essence (*kokutai*), from the people's likes and dislikes, it did not suit the people from other nations and races. Making radical changes by force might be damaging. The music of Japan, whether refined or otherwise, had been part of the Japanese's sentiments for thousands of years and could not simply be classified as inferior to Western music. 'However', he continued,

now that the tide of civilization does not permit us to continue with a half-baked situation, our best course is to compare and contrast East and West, and subject the music of our country to revision. Even so, our feelings and tastes do not allow us to merely add lyrics to Western scores. So, today's musicians must thoroughly comply with the character of our country's music: they must strive to achieve progress without acting against our national polity and tastes. Those who are first and foremost

48 'Waga Ongaku zasshi', *Ongaku zasshi*, no. 17 (February 1892).

49 Totsuji (Shōsen Itsudo) Shikama, 'Nihon ongaku', *Ongaku zasshi* 21 (1892).

responsible are institutions such as the Tokyo Academy of Music and the music department at the imperial court (Gagakusho). But we cannot help doubting whether the Tokyo Academy of Music and the imperial music department are following this principle. This is not the time when each can raise their own independent flag. Let all of us do our best to unite at this important time when our country's music is to be amended (*shūsei*) and bring forth something that is appropriate for advancing human intellect, as well as sentiment and tastes. We must not dishonour the wisdom of our ancestors!⁵⁰

Shikama's opinions largely reflected Isawa's, but his remark about the Tokyo Academy of Music and the Gagaku Office suggests that he had reservations about their efforts. He clearly saw a role for private individuals like himself in bringing about reform. The implication seems to be, and in this he may well have been right, that the representatives of the Academy and the court were too far removed from the common people to understand or care about their musical preferences.

That Shikama did not equate music reform with the introduction of Western music is even more evident from his longest statement on music reform (*ongaku kairyō*), a two-part article entitled, 'An outline of music reform', published in *Ongaku zasshi* in late 1893.⁵¹ He began by stating that the introduction of Western music had brought about an impasse in the musical world of the country. Western music was welcomed by educated people, because of its scientific principles (*seiritsu naru gakuri*), but it also excited people's taste for all things new.⁵² The problem, according to Totsuji, was that many members of the musical world of Japan treated the new musical current as irrelevant and remained ignorant of it. The practitioners of indigenous music held on to what was transmitted exclusively from teacher to disciple from ancient times (Shikama Totsuji is here referring to the practice of *hiden*, that is, secret transmission, in the traditional arts of Japan), and valued only their own repertoire of musical pieces. Consequently, any plan to renew music would come to nothing. The music of the common people was obscene

50 Shikama, 'Nihon ongaku' 11.

51 (Totsuji) Senka Shikama, 'Ongaku kairyō ippan', *Ongaku zasshi*, no. 38 (November 1893); (Totsuji) Senka Shikama, 'Ongaku kairyō ippan (ctd.)', *Ongaku zasshi*, no. 39 (1893). Although, 'to be continued' is printed at the end of the second part, Shikama does not seem to have published another instalment.

52 Shikama, 'Ongaku kairyō ippan', 1.

(*hiwai*), but as it was widely popular, it hindered the progress of the right kind of music (*seigaku*). As a result, the world of sentiments and emotions was contaminated.

The present musical genres of Japan, Shikama continued, had all come from abroad.⁵³ But the conditions of the country and people's tastes caused them to transform. For the renewal of Japan's music, anything from Western music that could be usefully applied to improve Japanese music should be adopted in order to remedy its shortcomings. For this purpose, its principles (*gakuritsu*) should be studied thoroughly and then transferred to Japanese music as needed. Shikama specifically mentioned scales and harmony, which he declared were underdeveloped in Japanese music, making it inferior to Western music. A full-scale transfer of Western music he rejected, because any music is the product of its environment and could not simply be imported from abroad. The ultimate aim must be to create a new music (*shin ongaku*) by combining the strengths of both Japanese and Western music. For this purpose, suitable instruments had to be selected and unsuitable lyrics improved. Shikama stressed the importance of producing sheet music in staff notation, which as he explained, made it possible to understand the composer's intention to the last detail. In particular, the transcription and publication of pieces that had always been transmitted secretly from teacher to disciple would make it possible for individuals to learn new pieces without needing a teacher, as well as making the music widely accessible to the public and for researchers. Musicians must therefore make available to the public the pieces they learnt by direct transmission from their teachers. 'The present times', Shikama asserted,

no longer allow secretiveness, so the secret pieces should be made public, our country's music should be carefully selected, the lyrics of songs that are wrong should be discarded and instead right lyrics created from traditional or new texts; and by copiously taking Western works as a model, new instrumental works and songs should be composed. In this way we will achieve for the first time that which most of our compatriots hope for, the creation of a new music that suits the people of this country, and even the primitive and vulgar common music, which

53 He lists *gagaku*, *wagaku*, *shingaku* (Qing music), *zokugaku*, and *Seiyōgaku* (Western music).

cannot be expected to disappear quickly, will fade as a result and world of sentiment (*kanjōkai*) can for the first time be purified.⁵⁴

Music reform, Shikama continued in the second part of his article,⁵⁵ was advocated particularly by those who prioritized education. It was, however, an immense task that had to be combined with the transformation of learning (*gakujutsu*) and with influencing sentiment for the better (*jōsho no kanka*) in order to create new customs. Many of the people who advocated music reform did not have the expertise needed to effect this, while performers of Japanese music were set in their ways, had dubious morals, and were less concerned with education than with making a living by providing popular entertainment. Meanwhile, the attitude of those studying Western music did not help matters: they concentrated their efforts exclusively on Western music and treated Japanese music with contempt, failing even to distinguish between refined and vulgar (*seiga hizoku*) music or to consider common people's economic needs or their preferences. Conditions could change however, Shikama argued:

Behold, we need only to look back to the people who threw themselves into Western music a few years ago: they knitted their brows and covered their ears when they heard the music of our country, and hated it greatly; like the cholera or snakes and scorpions. But is it not so that, gradually, influenced by the conditions of the times (*jisei*) and public opinion, our country's *Miyasan*-song was composed, and sheet music was produced for *sōkyoku* (*koto* music), as well as other instrumental music? This then was how the development of a new music for our country began and progressed without ceasing, and so we saw the first examples of music that reconciled Japanese and Western music by combining elements of both (*yūwa naru setchū no ongaku*).⁵⁶

Shikama envisaged a single, right music (*seigaku*) for the entire nation. But he realized that this was not likely to happen overnight, and one of the reasons was the existence of different social classes, upper, middle, and lower, and their musical preferences. The musical tastes of the lower classes were quite different from those of the middle and upper classes:

54 Shikama, 'Ongaku kairyō ippan', 2.

55 Shikama, 'Ongaku kairyō ippan (ctd.)'.

56 Shikama, 'Ongaku kairyō ippan (ctd.)', 2.

Currently elite society performs on the piano elegant and refined songs and compositions with great pleasure, but even so the lower classes cannot be made to do the same. Not only would it not work, but it would not be possible to supply the musical instruments. For this reason, it will be extremely difficult to unite the country and unify its music. Moreover, the existence of the refined and vulgar (*seizoku*) music has been a natural truth in all places at all times. So rather than try to abolish or disregard common music, it is better to include it and to infuse it with refined music and thus cause the obscene and the vulgar to disappear naturally: this, I believe, will be an expedient means for the reform of music.⁵⁷

As a practical contribution to the perceived need for suitable musical instruments that would appeal to people accustomed to common music, Shikama developed a hybrid instrument of his own, the *senkakin* (see the following chapter). In an article in which he introduced it to his readers, he continued his discussion of music reform and again stressed the need to incorporate the music of the people into the reform efforts rather than abolishing it outright. He began,

Not only music, but all things begin by being quite uncomplicated (*kantan*); merely taking the form that is in step with the simple tastes, knowledge, and feeling of people's lives. But when it comes to music, its natural, unaffected sounds harmonize with the human body and because of this its development precedes those in other areas, and it is an obvious fact that it imperceptibly changes into something more complex.⁵⁸

Music, Shikama continued, originated in India and continued to the East and the West. In the West, the Caucasians developed it continuously, while the Mongolian race in the East, including the Japanese, was more conservative. But although lagging behind in the development of music compared to the West, the Japanese were artistically inclined, and this extended to music, as the widespread performance of music among the common people testified. Intellectuals wanted this kind of music abolished, and to see only the most refined music widely disseminated, and even to replace Japanese music with Western music, but Shikama did not believe this was realistic or even desirable. Western music, he asserted,

57 Shikama, 'Ongaku kairyō ippan (ctd.)', 2.

58 Totsuji Shikama, 'Senkakin ni tsuite', *Ongaku zasshi*, no. 27 (December 1892): 10.

is composed according to scientific principles and by using harmony it gives a feeling of truly wondrous elegance, while its well-ordered melodies unite the hearts of the people (*jinsin o tōitsu narashimu*). But one cannot say that this music just as it is, is constructed in a way that allows it to be adopted by all countries. It is suited to national conditions, tastes, and sentiments of the people of the white race and expresses their attainments.⁵⁹

Like Isawa and Kanda, Shikama identified the scientific basis and the use of harmony and systematic composition as the chief merits of Western music, and like Isawa and other government officials and teachers of the elite government schools who advocated music reform, he believed that Japan's indigenous music, with the possible exception of *gagaku*, was unsuitable for the needs of the modern nation they were striving to create, and that Western music should serve as a model for reform and become the basis for the creation of a new national music. The vulgar and obscene music of the common people needed to be discouraged and, ultimately, replaced.

For Isawa and those like him, however, music *per se* did not ultimately feature highly on their overall agenda of modernizing the country and creating a body of loyal citizens. Having limited (if any) musical expertise, they were hardly in a position to articulate how exactly their advocated synthesis of indigenous music with European art music might be successfully achieved in practice. Nothing, moreover, suggests that they were aware of the different kinds of music in Western countries, or of contemporary debates about music, such as, for example, the ongoing tensions in America between those who revered European art music as the gold standard and those who regarded modern popular genres as true American music. Ultimately, lack of musical expertise, and the absence of any genuine interest in music for its own sake, together with contempt for what they regarded as base music—and scorn for the lower classes in general—played a major part in determining the course of the development of the Tokyo Academy of Music into a Western-style conservatoire almost exclusively devoted to Western art music. When, in the early twentieth century, efforts to research indigenous music were initiated, it was with the aim of preserving it rather than developing it further.

59 Ibid., 10–11.

Shikama, on the other hand, while similarly dismissive of the music of the common people, was more sensitive to their needs and preferences. He had a genuine interest in music and engaged in a wide range of musical activities. He also had a better understanding of Japan's musical culture. He realized that traditional practices were closely bound up with social divisions, and that the ways in which traditional music was transmitted and practised were as much in need of reform as the music itself. Direct transmission from teacher to disciple hindered free access to the repertoire. Many players of traditional music, moreover, made a living by performing for popular entertainment, often in establishments of ill repute. On the other hand, Shikama appreciated the skills that went into performing traditional music and realized that the supposedly vulgar traditional genres appealed to the people and could not simply be abolished. He understood that music reform was a major modernization project that involved transforming not only the practice of music but also deeply rooted social and cultural practices, as well as the musical preferences of the people. He appreciated the immensity of the task that music reform represented. Above all, he was determined to take it on himself.