Music and the Making of Modern Japan

Joining the Global Concert

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Cover illustration: 'Picture of the Tokyo Youth Band', *Fūzoku Gahō* (8 October 1895), p. 4. Public domain
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10. Foreign Actors: Kate I. Hansen

> The whole system of so-called Occidental music is founded on the Christian religion [...].[1]

> If she had been a man, she could have been president of the United States.[2]

While local pioneers were obviously central to the dissemination of Western music, their knowledge and experience of it (and, in some cases, of any kind of music) hardly matched their missionary zeal. In this situation, the presence of a significant foreign community of missionaries and teachers in Sendai played a key role. Not all of them had special expertise, but in the early years even the ability to sing in tune qualified them as models when they performed at local concerts. Several of them could also play an instrument (or even more than one), and a few had trained professionally.

Among these Kate Hansen stands out. Not only was she a trained music teacher, who, moreover, used her furloughs to further qualify herself, but she also had the leadership skills that enabled her to build up a music department whose standards rivalled, and in some respects exceeded, those of the Tokyo Academy of Music. Many of the school's graduates went on to teach music in the northern region and in other parts of Japan. Hansen was unusual, if not unique in other respects. She

1 From her last annual report to the Mission Board: quoted in William Mensendiek, *To Japan with Love: The Story of Kate Hansen and Lydia Lindsay of Kansas and Japan* (Sendai: Hagi no Sato Publishing Company, 1991), 107; Dane G. Bales, Polly Roth Bales, and Calvin E. Harbin, *Kate Hansen: The Grandest Mission on Earth from Kansas to Japan, 1907–1951* (The University of Kansas Continuing Education, 2000), 318, https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/21766

2 Final statement from a panel discussion by Japanese who know Kate Hansen, summarized by William Cundiff as 'A Word Picture of the Missionary'. See Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 248–54.

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taught music in Japan longer than almost any other Western teacher, and certainly longer than those employed by the government. Arriving in September 1907, she worked for Miyagi College until the eve of the Pacific War in 1941. Returning in 1946 to help rebuild the school, she remained for another four years. Her work, and that of her long-time colleague Lydia Almira Lindsey (1880–1971), was recognized by the Japanese government: they were honoured with the Fourth Order of the Sacred Treasure (in absentia) in 1955 and received by the Empress during their visit to Japan in 1961. Nevertheless, like many local, non-state actors, her contribution to music education and musical culture is not widely recognized and she remains largely unknown outside of Miyagi College, which has an auditorium bearing her name.

For the historian, Kate Hansen's significance lies not only in her achievements, but also in her role as an observer of musical life in Sendai, particularly the local people's efforts to master Western music. As well as reports to the mission board and countless personal letters, she wrote two academic theses about music in Sendai: *My Impressions of the Musical Consciousness of the Japanese People*, written during her first furlough in 1912–13 as part of the requirements for the Bachelor of Music, and *Experiences in Founding and Developing a Music School in Japan*, submitted for the Master of Music in 1927 (updated 1933).[3] While her writings show that she took the superiority of Western music for granted and shared the prejudices of her Western contemporaries concerning Japanese music, her description of the occasions and settings in which she heard it and its reception by the Japanese audience highlight the differences between musical worlds. Her reports on local efforts to master Western music are even more illuminating. They might appear excessively derisory and harsh in places, but that is easy to observe with hindsight and in the knowledge of Japan's enormous success in making the foreign music its own within a short time. Hansen reminds us that this success was the result of determined, hard, and sustained effort against considerable odds.

3 The letters and thesis manuscripts are kept in the Personal Papers of Kate I. Hansen, University Archives, PP 19, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries. Hansen wrote regular reports for the mission board, many of which are cited in Mensendieck's biography. However, I was not able to consult these.

A Transnational Life and a Musical Mission

Kate Ingeborg Hansen was born on 5 July 1879 in Logan, in Phillips County, Kansas to Peter Hansen and Alpha Gray Hansen. Her mother's family had British, her father's Danish roots. Peter Hansen emigrated after Denmark's defeat in the war with Prussia (1864) resulted in his native Slesvig being annexed. Like many young men at the time, he had no wish to be conscripted into the Prussian Army. After four years in Wisconsin, he moved to Kansas in 1872. Within a few years, he became a successful businessman and an active member of the local community. He married in 1878. In 1893, the family, which besides Kate included her siblings George Troup (1881), Dane Gray (1883), and Alpha Florence (1886), travelled to Denmark to visit Peter Hansen's Danish relatives.[4] Before leaving America, they visited the Columbian International Exposition in Chicago. The visit may well have sparked Kate Hansen's interest in Japanese culture. The Japanese Phoenix Pavilion was one of the highlights. Among those impressed by it was the twenty-six-year-old Chicago architect Frank Lloyd Wright who later designed several buildings in Japan, most famously the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo (1912–22).[5] Unfortunately, the first volume of Hansen's diary of the trip is lost, so we have no record of her impressions of the American part of the tour.[6]

Arriving at Peter's family home, Ravnskobbel near Sønderborg, Kate and her family spent several months with his Danish relatives. Kate herself was sent to live with her father's sister Marie Thietje, who had married a German. Her father believed that German was a more useful language for his daughter to learn than Danish, and given her later career in music he was proven right. Her early experience of another culture may well have helped prepare her for her work in Sendai. Certainly, it affected her deeply, as her diary shows: her observation of life in the

4 Two younger sisters died in infancy. Biographical details based on Mensendiek, *To Japan with Love*; Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*.

5 See 'Japan Took Center Stage at Chicago's 1893 World's Fair', Norton Center for the Arts, 2015, http://nortoncenter.com/2015/01/07/japan-took-center-stage-at-chicagos-1893-worlds-fair/ The Kate I. Hansen Collection at the University of Kansas includes (Box 11 Folder 17) *The History of the Empire of Japan*. Printed in English for the Chicago World's Fair 1893. Of course, this in itself is inconclusive, since it is not clear who acquired the book and when.

6 The diary is published in Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 36–105.

disputed borderlands between Denmark and Germany later found its expression in her musical composition, *Schlesvig* (sic), and she kept in touch with several Danish relatives for the rest of her life.

The family left Denmark in early June 1894, and travelled to New York via Hamburg, Hartlepool, Edinburgh. and Glasgow. On the way, they briefly visited another border region with a history of violent conflict when they made a day trip to Stirling Castle. Kate wrote, 'Everything has seemed like a dream today. The old heroes of Scotland have seemed almost as living beings, while this practical age has seemed far away.'[7] The day appears to have left a lasting impression: years later, a conversation with a Shinto priest at a shrine near Sendai castle about the region's history reminded her of stories about the Highlands and 'their endless clan wars, and you know how I've always liked those.'[8]

Following the family's return to America, Kate attended the public high school in Beloit (about eighty miles from Logan, in Mitchell County), graduating in 1896. During the two previous summers she had attended the Normal School at Phillipsburg, and in August 1896 she passed the Phillips County teacher examination. After a couple of years spent teaching at local schools, giving private music lessons and working in her aunt's millinery shop in Beloit, she enrolled at the University of Kansas at Lawrence in 1899. She earned a music teacher's certificate in 1901 and taught music and German in Denver, Colorado before returning to the University of Kansas in 1903 and graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in 1905.

During both her periods at university, Hansen pursued extracurricular activities and was active in Christian organizations. One of them was the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, and in 1901 she pledged to become a student volunteer with the purpose of becoming a missionary.[9] By 1905 she was determined to work as a missionary teacher. On 31 December 1906 she and her friend Lydia Lindsey were appointed by the Reformed Church in the United States to teach at Miyagi Girls' School in Sendai. In a letter to her sister Alpha (b. 1886) Kate wrote, 'Just the school work I have always wanted, in the country

7 Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 102.
8 Kate Hansen (KH) to her mother, 31 January 1926, SRL Box 1, Folder 34.
9 Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 148.

and even in the very town (or rather city, for Sendai is second only to Tōkyō) where I have always had the greatest interest.'[10]

Kate Hansen and Lydia Lindsay set sail for Japan in August 1907, arriving in Yokohama on 2 September and travelling to Sendai on 5 September. They would both spend most of their subsequent lives in Sendai, teaching at Miyagi College for a total of around forty years. They even took most of their furloughs at the same time.[11] After their arrival at the school in 1907, both mainly taught English and studied the Japanese language. Lindsey continued to teach English language and literature and staged regular school plays. Hansen increasingly devoted herself to teaching music as well as performing in concerts.

At this point a brief examination of Kate Hansen's relationship with music is appropriate. She grew up in a family where music was an integral part of family life: both her own family and her Danish relatives enjoyed playing instruments and singing together as a form of entertainment.[12] Not only Kate herself but also her younger sister Alpha trained as a music teacher. Kate was moreover deeply influenced by her piano professor at the University of Kansas, the German-born Carl Preyer (1863–1947), with whom she worked during all three of her periods of study.[13] Trained in Stuttgart (he subsequently returned to Europe twice to study in Vienna and Berlin respectively), Preyer was one of many German musicians who contributed to the rise of European art music in the United States. He headed the piano department at the University of Kansas for almost forty years. Hansen expressed her passion for music, as well as her awareness of her limitations as a musician, during her long process of soul-searching which resulted in her deciding to devote

10 KH to her sister Alpha Florence Hansen (AFH), 27 January 1907, quoted in Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 156. See also Mensendiek, *To Japan with Love*, 18. The two friends had both applied for the two positions, which were advertised in the *Student Volunteer Magazine*. It is not clear when they first met; Lydia Lindsey entered Kansas University in 1900. Both received their B.A. in 1905. See Mensendiek, *To Japan with Love*, 11, 16, 18.

11 Hansen returned to America for five furloughs between 1907 and October 1941: 1912–13; 1919–20; 1926–28; 1933–34, and 1939–40.

12 There are several references to music-making in her diary of the trip to Denmark.

13 Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 111–12, 26, 43, 208. Howard F. Gloyne, *Carl Preyer: The Life of a Kansas Musician*. Published by Preyer Memorial Committee, University of Kansas, 1949.

her life to Christian mission.[14] On one occasion she recorded having practised the piano for seven hours that day without feeling tired. A Christmas concert represented 'the seventh heaven': 'Our Professor Preyer outdid even himself. He is wonderful, he is grand.'[15] On another occasion, she wrote what looks like a summary of her feelings:

> My music! I shall never be a great musician, that is certain. I have not the Divine call of genius. Yet I love it. Yet I understand some of it, until it seems a part of my very soul. Yet I can make some people understand good things through it. Yet I can make of it a good and honorable profession.[16]

Ultimately, her love for music was subjected to her work as a missionary and became a way of leading her students to the Christian faith. The role of music in Christian education is a recurring theme in her writings.[17] While this might in part have served to justify her devoting so much of her time not only to teaching music but also to working on her own performance techniques, there is no reason to doubt that it reflected her true belief. She summed up her point of view in 1950, in her last annual report to the Mission Board, in a succinct paragraph:

> The whole system of so-called Occidental music is founded on the Christian religion, and its greatest masters have been saturated with Christianity. They have expressed their Christian thought and feelings in their works, even in supposedly secular ones. A Christian teacher of music, who knows and comprehends these facts, can in the most natural way make music teaching a powerful Christian force, following the august example of Bach himself, a music teacher for most of his life, who said that music must be studied 'to the glory of God,' for if written otherwise it would be nothing but an infernal howling. The teaching of music history is one of the greatest opportunities for Christian influence,

14 A 'long diary entry' is quoted in Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 119-50. It covers the years 1895–1900 and the first entry is dated 5 December 1900. Whether Hansen did not date all her entries or whether the authors of her biography omitted them is not clear.

15 December 1900, Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 126. Underlined by Hansen. All underlines in the following quotes are by Hansen.

16 Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 142.

17 For example, Kate Hansen, 'The Japanese Are Learning to Sing', in *Kate Hansen: The Grandest Mission on Earth from Kansas to Japan, 1907–51* (The University of Kansas Continuing Education, 2000 (1914)); Kate Hansen, 'Music Hath Charms', in *Kate Hansen: The Grandest Mission on Earth from Kansas to Japan, 1907–51* (The University of Kansas Continuing Education, 2000).

> if done with the right emphasis on religion in general, and our music and the Christian religion in particular. A book should be written on this subject![18]

Hansen's acknowledgement of the close ties between Western music and the Christian religion almost inevitably implied that Western music was superior to any other. Her many dismissive comments regarding Japanese music reflect that assumption. In this she was a typical representative of her times. Her attitude did not change fundamentally, although she later spent a good deal of time and effort on studying Japanese music, created musical arrangements of Japanese songs, and composed works with Japanese themes. Several other foreign teachers did the same, without their expressed views about Japanese music becoming less condescending or coloured by Orientalism.[19]

Hansen's love of music and her ambitions for the school gave her good reasons to continue her musical training during her regular furloughs. For her first furlough she left Japan in July 1912 and returned in March 1914. During this time, she wrote in an article entitled 'Misconceptions and Present Problems' about mission work in general, 'that Japan demands of mission work and workers American standards of efficiency, and is rapidly coming to demand our standard of equipment. "Palm-tree methods" no longer avail here [...].'[20] She followed her own advice to the board by making sure her own qualifications kept up with the rising standards in Sendai. For most of her first furlough she once again enrolled at the University of Kansas to study for a Bachelor of Music, which she was awarded in 1913. During her second furlough from late 1919 (or early 1920) until spring 1921, she studied piano and counterpoint in New York at the Institute of Musical Arts, now the Juilliard School of Music. Most of her third furlough (spring 1926 to summer 1928) Hansen spent at the Chicago Musical College, a private conservatoire founded

18 It is quoted by both her biographers. See Mensendiek, *To Japan with Love*, 107; Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 318.

19 Examples in Irene Suchy, 'Deutschsprachige Musiker in Japan vor 1945. Eine Fallstudie eines Kulturtransfers am Beispiel der Rezeption abendländischer Musik' (Ph.D. doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1992). Kate Hansen may well have been advised to make use of Japanese material by her teachers at Chicago.

20 *The Outlook of Missions*, Vol. VI, 2 (February 1914), pp. 81–84. Quoted in Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 230.

in 1867, studying for a Master's degree in music.[21] She was awarded her Mus.M. with honours in 1927, but continued her studies throughout spring 1928 with the intention of obtaining a doctorate.[22]

Hansen was awarded an honorary doctorate in absentia in January 1930, '[i]n recognition of your broad musicianship, of your general cultural background, of your musical experience, and especially because of the great contribution you are making to the cause of musical education in Japan'.[23] This ended Kate Hansen's formal training, but evidence suggests that she continued to spend substantial amounts of time on piano practice and study.

Kate Hansen and the Music of Others: Sendai's Concert Culture Through Foreign Ears

Hansen's love of music as well as her professional interest made her a keen observer of local musical activities: thanks to her writings, we can almost hear the sounds she describes as well as picture the scenes. The many years she spent in Sendai meant that she was witness to the enormous progress the locals achieved in making Western music their own, as well as the dedication and effort that it cost. At the same time her writings include revealing observations about the practice and performance of traditional music in Sendai during this period of transition. Of course, her descriptions are far from unbiased. Her experience of traditional Japanese music was, moreover, limited: most of it appears to have occurred within the framework of concerts featuring a mixture of Western and Japanese items; that is, in a modern setting rather than in any of the traditional settings for musical performances. For example, only in October 1923 did she attend a Japanese theatre performance for the first time. She did not enjoy it:

21 Founded in 1867, Chicago Musical College (now part of Chicago College of Performing Arts) offered Master of Music Degrees from 1917, and became a charter member of the National Association of Schools of Music in 1924. See 'Roosevelt University: The Music Conservatory' (written by Don Draganski, edited by Brian Wis): https://web.archive.org/web/20080417220323/http://ccpa.roosevelt.edu/music/history.htm

22 Mensendiek, *To Japan with Love*, 36, 46, 54–55.

23 Copy of letter in Bales, Bales, and Harbin, *Kate Hansen*, 347.

> Last night I was at a Japanese theatre, for the first time in my stay in Sendai, and I hope, for the last time. It began at three in the afternoon, and lasted until midnight. What with the smoking, the bad air, and the terrible racket – for there were gongs and other supposed musical instruments –, and the actors all shouted and yowled at the tops of their voices [...] It was a barbarous performance, with murder and revenge as almost the only theme, and I am glad that it belonged to an art that is dying out, and that we are doing our share to get rid of it. The audience were nearly all older people, and lower-class, old-fashioned looking ones – a great contrast to the audiences we are used to seeing at concerts, for instance.[24]

Hansen's letter obviously reflects her prejudices, including her assumption that Western music was superior and audiences at Western-style concerts were more in tune with modern times. More importantly, it reminds us that there was a whole world of stage performances outside the Western-style concerts, which she hardly experienced at all. One might, moreover, ask how she would have reacted to a comparable class of entertainment in her home country.

First Impressions

Hansen wrote to her family almost every week, and her early letters in particular contain detailed descriptions of performances she witnessed. References to music are most frequent in the letters addressed to her younger sister Alpha Florence Bales, herself a music teacher, until her early death in September 1926 during Hansen's third furlough.[25] In some cases her descriptions of concerts can be compared with the concert programmes published in *Ongakukai*. Her observations contrast starkly with the generally positive reports in that magazine. Hansen's first detailed description of a concert appears in a letter addressed to her sister towards the end of September, which also contains her first descriptions

24 KH to her family, 7 October 1923, SRL, Box 1, Folder 31.

25 Personal Papers of Kate I. Hansen, University Archives, PP 19, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries. Due to limited time, I was only able to consult the letters for the period from her arrival in Japan until the end of 1931, as well as a few around selected dates, but the later letters tended to have fewer reference to music.

of hearing performances on traditional Japanese instruments.[26] According to a brief report in the local newspaper, *Kahoku shinpō*,[27] the concert took place on 23 September and was organized by the music club of the Second High School and held in the school's auditorium. Hansen reported, accurately, that the club had been organizing concerts for the last four or five years, 'and in other ways trying to improve the musical life of the city. As our mission [*sic*] are the musicians they've all been helping and usually give about half the programme.'[28] Hansen too was expected to perform in local concerts, and she played in this one, possibly her first public performance in Sendai. The short newspaper report stated that the concert was a successful affair, attended by several hundred guests. The author of the report also mentioned the items that 'sounded pleasing even to a layperson's ears': an unnamed society member's voice solo, *Ōunabara* (The great sea) and *Coming through the Rye*; J. Monroe Stick's mandolin solo; E. H. Zaugg's vocal solo, *Anvil Song*; Hansen's piano solo; Florence Seiple's solo (voice) recital etc. He particularly praised Takeuchi Imako's voice solo. From the second part he highlighted a society members' recital of *Haisho no tsuki* (The moon in the place of exile); Professor Okamoto's violin solo; Stick's cornet solo and Seiple's and Takeuchi Imako's singing.

Hansen was less impressed, at least by the Japanese musicians:

> They say that the Japanese part of the concert [that is, the Western music performed by Japanese rather than foreign missionaries] has improved immensely in these years – I don't see how it could be worse! They announced an 'orchestra,' and four fellows with violins came out and tried to play a Wagner (think of it, Wagner!) piece; and they all tried to play on the tune, and they were all out of tune and couldn't even keep time together. I thought I should die! But they kept right on – didn't seem to have the least idea they were not giving the finest performance in the world! They were just a sample of the Japanese performance, except one girl who has been through the music school in Tokio, and has a voice and a style of singing we would consider good, even in America [Takeuchi Imako]. And as for the mission we had all kinds of numbers, but they all had accompaniments, and you should have heard the tin pan of a

26 Kate Hansen to Alpha Hansen, 22 September 1907; the letter appears to have been continued on 28 September; KH gives a day-by-day description of the previous two weeks, including the concert on 23 September.

27 *Kahoku shinpō*, 25 September 1907.

28 Kate Hansen to Alpha Hansen, 22/28 September 1907.

> piano there! As an outlet for my feelings when my turn came (I was especially honoured (!) by being put on twice) I swore [?] that Heller[29] piece at them – just hammered it and banged it out – and it seemed just to suit them; they about went wild over it, and clapped and cheered in the craziest way; and I've been told ever since by Japanese that that was the best thing they had!! [*sic*] Do I need to say any more about Japanese musical taste? I suppose I'm contributing to the prestige of the school – but my conscience really hurts!
>
> O, but you should have heard the 'aftermeeting' or 'side show', after the foreign music was over; nothing else but the Japanese Satsuma biwa, the great war instrument. One person described it as 'playing violin music without any violin', another as 'singing the full history of the Revolutionary War to the accompaniment of a dish-pan'; but neither is sufficiently vivid. He sang (?) for three-quarters of an hour; first a vocal spasm, then a biwa spasm. And whenever the audience approved his sentiments, they gave out short, sharp yells, like Indian war-whoops. The first time they did it I thought they must be going to massacre the performer; and I really wouldn't have made a move to rescue him; I thought he deserved it![30]

Earlier in the same letter she had described a 'big jollification in our honor' where the entertainment included a *koto* quartet: 'They played a piece a mile long, that certainly was great! The Devil's March can't hold a candle to that! I was really delighted. When I want to swear, I'm going to get a girl to do it for me on a koto!'[31]

The concert she played in, only a week later, apparently appalled her even more:

> O, that makes me think of the 'concert.' It was a big charity affair, and I was invited to play an organ solo! I thought nothing could be worse than the Koto Gakko pianos, so I consented. It was in the theatre; a regular big barn, with a gallery; and all the seats were boxes! Literally boxes, the whole lower floor, each about four feet square, and two feet high, and the partitions with about six inch boards nailed to the top for the people to walk on the aisles, of course. The 'concert' began at one o'clock and lasted all day and all night, about. The people came and brought their lunches and camped in those boxes – all on the floor, of course – and

29 Stephen Heller (1814–88), pianist and prolific composer of piano works.

30 Kate Hansen to Alpha Hansen, 22/28 September 1907; Box 1, Folder 21.

31 The 'jollification' appears to have taken place on Tuesday, 16 September. *The Devil's March* presumably refers to the *Teufelsmarsch* by the Austrian composer Franz von Suppé (1819–95), from his operetta, *Der Teufel auf Erden* (1878).

> tea was served between numbers! I'll not try to describe the Japanese numbers – see the Koto Gakko, only a great deal more of it. But mine! I'd purposely selected a loud march-time piece, to fill the room, and the ancient excuse for an organ with all its stops and loud things out and the pedals going like mad – with all that, it sounded like last dying whisper! But it must have impressed the people; today the minister brought me a Japanese newspaper, with a most wonderful article on me, giving my full history – what they knew – and telling what a wonderful musician I was – 'the greatest musician in Sendai,' as O Masa San translated it![32]

The programme of the concert may well be one of two published in the second issue of *Ongakukai*, dated 26 October 1907 and 9 November 1907 (see Chapter 9). The first programme seems to fit Hansen's description, although the date does not.[33] Even if it is not the one described in Hansen's letter, it provides a good example of the kind of event she experienced soon after her arrival. The programme consisted of two daytime and two evening parts, and Hansen performed in three of them, although what she played is not specified. In the second concert, Hansen played in the second part only: a solo, and a duet with Florence Seiple.[34]

The surviving letters do not include a description of that concert, but playing in at least three concerts in as many months from the day of her arrival must have been a first for her. A letter dated 26 November and addressed to her sister contains a short remark about what seems to have been yet another concert: 'How you would have laughed to hear our "concert"!' Most Japanese, she continued, had no more idea of Western music than monkeys. Because all of it was so unfamiliar, 'they understand the greatest piece of Beethoven's as much and as little – as a rag-time selection. […] The thing the Japanese appreciate most is length, I played an endlessly long piece out of The Creation for one of my stunts.'[35] Hansen's comment illustrates what she must have realized within a few weeks of her arrival: the people of Sendai, unless they had travelled to Tokyo or spent time abroad, had minimal experience of Western music. While concerts seem to have been fairly frequent, the

32 KH to her family, 6 October 1907, SRL, Box 1, Folder 1.

33 'Sendai-shi no gakukyō', *Ongakukai* 1, no. 2 (1908): 45–46. See Chapter 9. I have not been able to verify the date from other sources.

34 Concert of the Sho Gakkō Rengōkai (Federation of Schools) *Ongakukai* 1, no. 2 (1908): 47–48.

35 KH to Alpha, 26 November 1907. Papers, Box 1, Folder 21. I could find no letter for the period between 29 October and 26 November 1907.

scope of music performed was limited. Even 'a rag-time selection' was hardly standard fare, much less 'the greatest piece of Beethoven's'. Far more common were *shōka*, marches, and other short instrumental pieces, or extracts from larger works, presumably taken from instrument tutors and albums.

Some concerts seem to have been spontaneous, disorganized affairs; perhaps particularly the ones staged by students. In January 1908 Hansen wrote to her sister describing 'the funniest mixup' about a concert at the Second High School, where she and other foreign musicians found their names on the programme without having been notified or formally invited. She observed, 'We'd had an experience like that in the fall', after which they told the organizers that they would 'never play again under such circumstances'. In the end only Stick performed at that particular concert.[36] While the students' apparently casual attitude understandably irritated the foreign performers, it demonstrates that it was they who were in charge. Indispensable as foreign participation might have been (at least for the time being), it was not necessarily on their own terms.

Hansen's next detailed description of musical life in Sendai is in a letter to her sister dated 27 May 1908, which starts with a vignette about music in the streets: 'It's really summer today, and except for an awful streetband, which sounds as if all the E flat horns were playing in B flat and all the B flats in something else, it's as quiet and beautiful a Sunday as any one [sic] would want.' The concert held the previous week (23 May) nevertheless showed signs of promise: 'That concert certainly will give Sendai something to talk about for awhile [sic]. It was the first one I've attended out here that didn't have some dreadfully discordant numbers.'[37] Because this concert took place in the school chapel, Hansen was one of the organizers as well as a performer. The chapel offered space for an audience of 700, although chairs had to be borrowed from Tohoku College. Among Hansen's tasks was organizing the checking of *geta* sandals, which had to be left outside the entrance. The audience included school servants but also Count Date with his family, a mix

36 KH to Alpha Hansen, 26 January and 2 February 1908. The concert was presumably the one held on 29 January 1908. See 'Sendai shi no gakukai', *Ongakukai* 1, no 4 (1908): 51. Several foreigners, including Hansen, and Stick are named with the piece 'to be determined', although one of Stick's items is billed as *Evening Star*.

37 KH to AFH, 27 May 1908. The concert took place on 23 May: See 'Miyagi Jogakkō ongakukai', *Ongakukai* 1 no. 6 (1908): 49.

of social classes that would surely have been unthinkable a few years previously. Hansen was scarcely in a position to appreciate the novelty and significance of this, however: she was most impressed by the fact that she knew so many people in the audience.

The progamme was eclectic:[38]

Part One

1. Opening Address by president of the Seinenkai (youth association), Tanabe Hisa
2. Gramophone – (five unspecified items) – Prof. Stick
3. *Shōka – Nagare* (Mendelssohn) – Choir of Miyagi Jogakkō
4. Piano – *Spring Song* (Mendelssohn) – Miss Schwartz
5. Banjo and vocal solo – *Asleep in the Deep* (H. W. Petrie[39]) – Prof. Zaugg
6. Cornett solo – *The Lost Chord* (Arthur Sullivan[40]) – Prof. Stick
7. *Shōka – Calm on the Morn* (song celebrating Easter) [41] – Choir of Higashi Rokuban-chō Church
8. Piano Duet – *Rosamunde* (Schubert) – Mrs. Miller, Miss Hansen
9. Koto – *Azuma jishi* (Lion of Azuma; *sōkyoku*) – Tanaka Torako
10. Vocal solo – *Silent Reprehending*[42] (Mozart) – Mrs Seiple

Part Two

11. Piano ensemble – Bolero (Streabbog)[43] – Tonimura Ikiko, Kozasa Aiko, Ujie Tokiko

38 'Miyagi Jogakkō ongakukai', 49.
39 1897: lyrics by Arthur J. Lamb.
40 Written 1877: originally for voice and piano. Lyrics by Adelaide A. Proctor (published in 1858).
41 By A. Beirly (see Copyright Catalog, Dec 30–June 27, 1895–96 10, No. 235, Library of Congress. Copyright Office, p. 15).
42 Presumably Mozart's song *Die Verschweigung* (lyrics by Christian Felix Weiße). English translations I have found of titles include 'Discretion' and 'Keeping mum'. Seiple, who studied music in Germany, may well have sung in German, providing her own translation of the title.
43 Louis Streabbog (Jean Louis Gobbaerts, 1835–86), *Bolero pour piano*.

12. Vocal solo – *Violets*[44] – Miss Schwartz
13. Piano solo – Sonata Opus 7 (Beethoven) – Miss Hansen
14. Gramophone – (Five items) – Professor Stick
15. Vocal solo – *Solomon Levi* (University student song)[45] – Prof. Zaugg
16. Poem – *Chikugogawa o kudari*[46] – Professor Naganuma Hakudō
17. Vocal solo – *Heart's Delight* (Gilchrist)[47] – Mrs Seiple
18. Koto ensemble – *Rokudan*[48] – Isawa Nobuko, Iwasaki Kiyoko
19. Piano duet – *Fanfare des dragons*[49] – Uda Masako, Satō Kotoko
20. *Shōka* – *Niji* (Rainbow[50]) – (Rossini) – Miyagi Jogakkō Chorus
21. Closing address – Miller, Principal
22. *Kimi ga yo* (twice) – All

The performances aroused mixed reactions from Hansen:

> How you'd have enjoyed Prof. Naganuma's Chinese poem! It was a wierd [sic] wild chant; every once in awhile it would rise with a regular howl, and then the audience would all howl in chorus; when he'd get extra excited, he'd stamp his foot or shake his fist, and there'd be a chorus of whoops that would make a band of wild Indians look silly. I simply lost all control of myself, and laughed until I was sore – disgraced myself probably. It greatly edified Mr. Degenhart especially, and he threatened next time Mrs. Seiple sang, to join in the chorus the same way. I wonder that the Japanese don't. They had the Satsuma Biwa too – the 'Conquest

44 Hardly an unambiguous title. A possible candidate is Roma (words and music), Violets, New York: Leo Feist, 1903.

45 Appears to be associated with college singing: page 27 of *Selected Songs Sung at Harvard College: From 1862 to 1866* (Cambridge: Press of J. Wilson and Sons, 1866).

46 From a poem by Rai Sanyō; composition by Kimura Gakufū; the National Diet Library has a recording of the work dating from 1935. The poem is about the battle of Chikugo River in 1359, during the period of two imperial courts.

47 The American composer and organist William Wallace Gilchrist (1846–1916), *Heart's Delight*, published New York 1886.

48 The famous *koto* (*sōkyoku*) piece.

49 *Fanfare de dragons, esquisse militaire pour piano*. Op. 60 (1867), composed by Frédéric Boscovitz. (Washington, D. C., 1885).

50 Lyrics by Takeshima Matajirō (Hagoromo, 1872–1967), who is better known for the lyrics to Taki Rentarō's famous song, *Hana* (Cherry blossoms). See Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai, ed., *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku hyakunenshi: Ensōkai hen 1* (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1990), 99.

> of Formosa'.[51] But it took only twenty minutes, and during that time I found it convenient to have important business in the hall, so escaped. [...] The audience didn't seem to be as excited about it as they generally get; maybe our training is doing them good.
>
> For the rest we had all sorts of things, from Beethoven to a phonograph. The latter was pretty bad, but it wasn't loud and piercing as they generally are, so I managed to get through it. Mr. Zaugg and Mrs. Seiple each sang twice; Mrs. Miller and I played a duet that lasted fifteen or twenty minutes and nearly tore the insides out of the piano; Ruth Schwartz sang and Miriam played one of Mendelssohn's (Miriam's about fourteen and really has some musical talent); Mr. Stick played; one girl played a koto solo and two a so-called duet (they both play the same thing – there's no idea at all of harmony or different parts); I played the first movement of Beethoven's Op. 7, and mightily astonished the audience with two crashes [?] of chords that about raised the roof; three of our girls played a little piano trio [...].[52]

Whether the audience really was losing interest in the *biwa* is open to question. They may well have shown more restraint in their reactions because of the foreigners' obvious disapproval. But there were Japanese who agreed with them, such as the reviewer of the Second High School concert in October that year (see the following chapter). The audience reactions to the 'Chinese poem' and the *biwa* performance remind us of the novelty of the Western-style concerts in the form they had taken in the nineteenth century: a quasi-sacred event demanding adherence to a strict etiquette that demanded a passive audience.

The concert indeed became the talk of town it seems: in a letter to her sister dated 7 June, Hansen wrote that it had been 'quite a topic of conversation' and had been reported in 'the Tokyo English paper and by the Tokyo musical magazine'. Tohoku College was planning a concert in imitation of the Miyagi one. Hansen suspected that it would result in an anti-climax as they were asking the same performers to feature at short notice, meaning that they would either have to play the same music or perform under-rehearsed. She herself had claimed a lame wrist

51 Presumably *Taiwan iri*, composed by Nishimura Tenshū to commemorate the Japanese invasion in 1895 and the death of Prince Kitashirakawa Yoshihisa (1847–95). See Tadashi Shimazu, *Meiji Satsumabiwa uta* (Tokyo: Perikansha, 2001).

52 KH to AFH, 27 May 1908, Box 1, Folder 22.

and thus avoided having to perform a solo.[53] The concert did indeed take place and Hansen wrote about it to her mother:

> [...] and last night we went to the concert at the Tohoku Gakuin, given in imitation of ours. It was not nearly so good, though – the boys are like the Logan Methodists, and get things up on the spur of the moment. We all did our usual stunts – I should think the Japanese would get tired of hearing us at every concert or public affair of any kind. They had some Japanese music that can only be described as similar to the noise old Tom makes when he is put inside the screen, only I believe of the two I'd rather hear Tom! It was enough to make one's hair stand on end. And they had a 'band' – a cornet, two alto horns, and a big bass round [?] horn – all out of tune as I didn't know they could be put out. I'd give two cents to have D.G. hear some of those awful 'bands.'[54]

Even if Hansen did not play solo in this concert, she presumably accompanied other soloists, although the concert programmes in *Ongakukai* only name her in solo items. She mentioned accompanying musicians in several letters. At a concert at the Second High School on 1 May 1909, she accompanied a local violin teacher. This instance of a relatively prominent local musician's effort at performing Western music, together with a *koto* performance at the same concert, represented highlights that provided material for entertaining, if unflattering, descriptions in the next letter to her family:

> Oh, we had a wonderful concert at the Kōtō Gakkō Saturday. I had to play for a man with a fiddle, who never hit the right note, even by accident. The only way I could tell whether we were together was to play in strict time and trust to luck. You never heard anything so appalling in your life – people never play fiddles out of tune at home do they? This one was so bad that even the Japanese – some of them – were amused. Most of the crowd, however, couldn't tell the difference. I never imagined anything could sound as bad. If I don't find some way to get around ever playing for that Fiddler again, I'll know the reason why. And the worst thing is, that he makes his living – giving violin lessons! It would be rather pathetic if it weren't so disgusting – I played the 'Devil's March,' and it pleased the crowd immensely, and they gave me a flowery write-up in the next day's paper!! Guess it sounded so much like their music that it just struck them. – O, that reminds me – they were having an endlessly

53 KH to AFH, 7 June 1908, Box 1, Folder 22.

54 KH to her mother 19 June 1908, Box 1, Folder 22. I have not been able to find a programme of the concert. D.G. may be her brother Dane Gray Hansen.

> long piece on the kotos, the women who played them singing a little too, by fits and starts. But they'd had a long interlude, and I was nearly asleep, when they both broke out at the top of their voices – 'Miau' – just like an old tom-cat. I couldn't get my handkerchief stuffed in soon enough and snorted out right before the crowd. It was probably part of a Lament for some dead hero or other, for the Japanese all around had very solemn faces all the time, and I've probably disgraced myself forever, but that was one time too much for me.[55]

According to the programme, most of the concert featured performers from the Tokyo Academy of Music, while locals only played in the third part (six items).[56] Presumably the duet with the violinist she described in the letter was the unspecified violin solo by 'Professor Okamoto' (fifth item on the programme; for Okamoto, see previous chapter). The programme does not mention a *koto* performance. The last item is a *shakuhachi* solo.

Possibly, Hansen did not manage to avoid playing with the 'Fiddler' again, for she includes a description similar to the one above in the thesis she wrote some three years later. The 'orchestra' she refers to may well be the ensemble of the Second High School's music club, which in the early years was led by Okamoto.

> The violin is, next to the organ, the most popular Western instrument in Japan, and the most abused. The 'orchestra' of Sendai consisted of about twelve first violins, a 'cello, and a piano. No two of those violins are ever tuned alike, and they are supposed to be played in unison. Here in America, I marvel how any Westerner can go to one of those concerts. However, to the Japanese audience, the effect is beautiful, and pieces by the orchestra are always encored. One evening, after a peculiarly atrocious performance, one of my piano students said, 'Didn't the orchestra flat a little, Miss Hansen?' I was thankful for small mercies.
>
> The leader of this 'orchestra' is the violin teacher of the city, and is, I believe, a graduate of the Ueno school, but of ten or more years' standing. He, too, finds it quite impossible to tune his violin correctly. When escape was impossible, I have at times played accompaniments for him. He lacks some of the conceit of his countrymen, and is not insulted when told that his instrument is out of tune. But even when the violin is at last in tune, he is unable to hit more than about half of the notes with appropriate correctness. The only [way] in which an accompanist

55 KH to AFH, 9 May 1909 Box 1, Folder 22: capitalization is KH's.

56 *Ongakukai* 2, no. 6 (1909): 42. See the following chapter; *Kahoku shinpō*, 26 April 1909.

> can keep with him is to play the accompaniment straight through, in metronome time. Usually, in that case, the two end together. And his favorite composer is Bach![57]

Hansen mentioned the popularity of the violin in letters to her family as well. In 1910 she wrote, 'And when they try to play foreign instruments, they all prefer violins, and they've no idea of playing in tune, but play just as the notation strikes them, generally in good time, but in all sorts of tune. – O yes, and they all insist on playing first – nobody will play second, so they all play at the tune!'[58] Neither the popularity of the instrument nor the inability to play in tune are surprising. The violin was at the time among the most widely played Western instruments worldwide. One of the most versatile, it appealed to all social classes and could be played in an almost unlimited variety of musical contexts. Playing unfamiliar music on the violin is, however, extremely challenging because it requires the ability to imagine the desired pitch and sound in order to produce them. In the early years of Hansen's time in Japan, most people in Sendai (and elsewhere) simply did not have sufficient opportunity to familiarize themselves with Western music.

Beside her many negative accounts in these early years of her work in Japan, Hansen also reported signs of progress. In a letter to her sister dated 29 March 1908, she wrote: 'But O Kiku San astonished me by playing "the Heavens are Telling" exactly as I had showed her, notes, time, expression and all – it was the best piece of organ playing I've heard from any Japanese! And the class song turned out well too, [...].'[59] Musical expression was something she usually found lacking in her Japanese pupils. In a letter to her sister dated 15 November 1908 about teaching the piano, she wrote about one of her weekly classes, 'the Japanese are good at technique, and Miriam at expression, and they help and spur each other on.'[60] The notion that Japanese musicians excel

57 Hansen, *Musical Consciousness*, 55–57. By November 1910 Okamoto had been replaced by Kumagai Senta (or Sentarō). The composition of the ensemble is likely to have varied over the years.

58 KH to her family, undated, SRL Box 1, Folder 24 (1910). The sheet seems to be part of a letter, not dated, but '[1]' has been written at bottom. It ends with 'Merry Christmas ...' and refers to a gramophone record of Japanese music Hansen sent to her family.

59 KH to AFH, 29 March 1908, SRL, Box 1, Folder 2.

60 KH to AFH, 15 November 1908, SRL, Box 1, Folder 22. Miriam Schwartz was the daughter of Dr Herbert W. Schwartz (1857–1921), a physician, and his wife Lola B.

at technique but have difficulties with expression has since become a stereotype. During Hansen's early years in Sendai, however, the local people had hardly any opportunity to hear Western art music performed well and thus to learn how expressive playing sounded. Moreover, music teachers, whether in Japan or in Western countries, to this day often fail to convey to their students what exactly is required in order to play expressively.[61]

The last concert described in Hansen's letters before she left Japan for her first furlough took place at Miyagi Jogakkō on 10 May 1912:

> The one thing this week has been our wonderful concert. I'll put in a program. I played all the accompaniments too, so you may imagine how busy it kept me for the last few weeks. People are saying, it was the best thing musically that's ever been given in Sendai, and that's quite a bit, for we've had some very good performers from Tōkyō and Germany. It was certainly the best our school-girls ever did, on the whole, so this five years' music work is ending well.[62]

According to *Ongakukai*, most of the programme was performed by foreigners. Hansen herself played an unspecified sonata by Grieg and Wagner's *Walkürenritt*, together with Mrs Dening. Performances by Japanese (presumably students) included a march for piano (eight hands) by Engelman[63] and a three-part song, *Haru no uta* (Spring song) by Mendelssohn.

Hansen's early descriptions of musical performance suggest that most of the inhabitants of Sendai had not yet gained sufficient understanding of Western music to appreciate or play it. Most of them preferred traditional music, which was performed even at concerts featuring predominantly Western music. Hansen's pupils were eager to learn, however, and by 1912 Hansen's efforts to teach had begun to bear fruit. This no doubt motivated her to pursue further her own understanding and performance of music during her first furlough.

Reynolds Schwartz (1864–1935), Methodist missionaries.

61 See Aaron Williamson, ed., *Musical Excellence: Strategies and Techniques to Enhance Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 247–70.

62 KH to her mother, 12 May 1912, Box 1, Folder 26. A version of the programme was published in *Ongakukai* 5.6. The programme in *Ongakukai* does not specify all the performers and pieces.

63 Probably Hans Engelman (1872–1914). See http://ragpiano.com/comps/engelman.shtml

Traditional Japanese Music

Back in America (from autumn 1912), Hansen studied for a Bachelor of Music at the University of Kansas. This temporary return to her homeland represented an opportunity to reflect on what she had observed and learnt in Sendai during her first five years there. Working on her thesis, *My Impressions of the Musical Consciousness of the Japanese People* (henceforth, *Musical Consciousness*), served both purposes. It was almost certainly written for a course she completed in the spring semester of 1913.[64] The work combines a lively narrative detailing her first-hand experiences with more detached descriptions, and efforts at systematic and thoughtful treatment of the indigenous music enjoyed by the people of Sendai, as well as their attempts to master Western music. Hansen expressed her feelings about what she heard more openly than would be considered appropriate by today's academic standards. Her descriptions, moreover, illustrate just how inaccessible Japanese music seemed to her. She realized, however, as her title and introductory remarks show, that her impressions might prove 'misleading' and should 'be taken for what they are, impressions merely, and not scientific facts' (p. 2).

Of her position as an observer she wrote, 'As music teacher in the oldest of these girls' high schools, I was continually in contact with whatever musical life there was in the city, and became quite widely acquainted among its musical people.' (p. 3.) In reality, there is reason to suspect that 'whatever musical life there was' is not entirely accurate: apart from music-making overheard, such as singing in the streets, most of Hansen's encounters with Japanese music took place either at public concerts, themselves a modern innovation, or on other formal occasions.

64 College Record, Chicago Musical College; includes award of Doctor of Music, 1 February 1930, and transcripts for her courses at the University of Kansas, SRL PP19 Box 6 folder 1:3 According to the Record, the course was entitled, 'Thesis 2 and 3'. Hansen was awarded the grade I (90–100). Hansen, *Musical Consciousness*. The manuscript is undated, but within it, Hansen refers to her five years in Japan and writes, 'here' in connection with America. Both in the table of contents and in the introduction (bottom of the first of the sixty-three numbered pages) Hansen refers to the work as a 'thesis'. When quoting from this thesis hereafter, I give the page numbers in the text in brackets.

Her experience of performances of Japanese music was largely limited to such occasions.

Hansen described four traditional musical instruments, the *koto*, the *biwa*, the *shamisen*, and the *shakuhachi*, which, she stated, 'are heard everywhere, are commonly studied, and are almost the only native instruments used in concerts'. These, she concluded, were fundamental to the musical consciousness of the Japanese; 'the various gongs, bells, and drums used in the temple worship' (p. 4) apparently did not merit her consideration. Even so, she opined that 'the average Japanese, in my experience, cares more for his Japanese music than the average American cares for anything musical, with the possible exception of the ubiquitous ragtime.' (p. 5.) True to her title, she introduced her treatment of each instrument by describing her impression on the first occasion she heard it. Her subsequent generalizations appear to be based on several performances she had the opportunity to listen to. The *koto* appears to have been the first instrument she heard at length, judging from her letters. In the thesis, she wrote:

> My first impression of the koto was quite pleasant. It was during my first month in Japan that the school gave a tea-party in honor of the new teachers. [...] At last the platform was cleared. Heavy blankets were spread over it, and four cushions were laid carefully on the blankets. Then four of the larger girls appeared, each carrying a wooden instrument, considerably taller than herself, consisting of a box a foot wide, with the top convex; twelve to fifteen strings stretched from one end to the other of the sounding-board; and the same number of triangular bridges, one under each string, at varying intervals up and down the board. The four kotos were placed parallel to each other, at such an angle as to bring the performers' cushions in a straight line, facing the audience. The preparations completed, four of the daintiest little girls, no taller than ten-year old American girls, took their places, sitting flat on the cushions, and began tuning their kotos, moving the bridges up and down the sounding-boards. As they bent over their work, their gay Japanese clothing and their graceful movements made a series of delightful pictures.
>
> Finally, the tuning was over, the four players bowed together until their heads touched their kotos, and the performance began. [...]
>
> There was nothing which I could distinguish as a melody, and the whole piece sounded alike, except that some parts were faster than others. It was all about equally loud. It was all a series of leaps, queer minor intervals mostly, which my Western ears could not classify. It

> sounded savage. At last, in the middle of the excitement without any warning, it ended with two slower notes, somewhat like the ones in the beginning. It had not been like anything I had ever heard before, it was rude and weird, but the general effect had been at least more musical than the discords of the English songs sung off the key. Musically, there was something left in Japan to be thankful for. (pp. 5–9.)

Hansen then elaborated on the limitations of the *koto* as she perceived them, concluding that it was not capable of much musical expression (she did, however concede that 'even a musical foreigner' could not appreciate Japanese music). She described the ways it is tuned and the pieces played, which she said were characterized by great leaps from one note to the next. She illustrated her point by giving the intervals of the opening bars 'of a well-known *koto* piece' (*Rokudan*).[65] She continued with a description of how the *koto* was taught:

> While the koto cannot be compared in difficulty with any of our serious musical instruments, the Japanese consider it very hard to master. Most little girls of the present day, in fairly well-to-do families, begin to study the koto when very young, usually before the age of seven. They go every day to the koto teacher's home, and take a lesson of from fifteen to thirty minutes. For several years, they are not supposed to do any practicing, except during their lessons. Everything is taught by rote, there being no printed music. 'Make haste slowly' must be the motto of the koto teacher. The tuning of the koto is supposed to be enough to occupy at least the first three months of the pupil's time. (pp. 11–12.)

To illustrate what she considered the exaggerated claims about the difficulties of mastering the *koto,* Hansen described the experience of her colleague Florence Seiple, who shocked her *koto* teacher by tuning a *koto* within minutes during her first lesson (albeit with the help of a piano), although this process was supposed to take months to learn. She added, however, that Seiple 'did not find all of her study quite so easy as this beginning' (p. 13). The repertoire of the *koto* was limited, according to Hansen, with *Rokudan* being the most popular piece, which was often heard in concerts, 'played on three or four kotos, usually by pretty little girls. It is my opinion that the pleasure the audience derives from this repetition is not one of the ear, but of the eye. The poses of

65 The piece is not named. *Rokudan* was one of the pieces available in staff notation in the edition by the Tokyo Academy of Music.

the players, as carefully practiced as their music, would put to shame a teacher of Delsarte.' (p. 13.) She concluded, that while the *koto* was not a superior musical instrument, it was incomparable 'as an instrument for displaying the beauty and grace of a Japanese girl' (p. 13), and speculated that this was a major reason for its popularity.

Whether or not Hansen was right in concluding that even the Japanese audience derived more pleasure from watching the performer than from listening to the music, she had a point when she stated that the visual element in the performance was as significant as the sound. She was also right in identifying *Rokudan* as one of the most popular *koto* pieces. It was also a staple of blended performances (*wayō gassō*), but although these were popular at the time, Hansen described only one experience of hearing one; a concert in the nearby town of Furukawa in 1910: 'O, if you could have heard the koto and violins played together! Nobody would ever believe they were playing the same piece – it was Japanese music too, and they surely ought to be able to do their own music.' Presumably, the problem lay with the violins rather than the *koto*, since they were 'out of tune as only Japanese can make them'.[66] While such performances could occasionally be heard at the kind of concerts Hansen witnessed, in Sendai, they seem to have occurred most frequently at the private music studio Tōhoku Ongaku Gakuin (see the following chapter).

Next, Hansen introduced the *satsumabiwa*, which judging from her description of audience reactions, enjoyed great popularity. She did not share the enthusiasm. Her treatment of the *satsumabiwa* consists of descriptions of two performances, including the first one she heard, at a concert featuring both Western and Japanese music, described in her letter of September 1907 cited earlier. Here is her description of the performance:

> There was a concert, one evening, in the big bare assembly room of the government college. The thousand or more Japanese in the audience had listened patiently and politely, while Japanese and Americans attempted to entertain them with 'foreign' music. They had applauded at the proper times, as far as they knew them, and had done their best to enjoy themselves. The foreigners present, sitting in the front seats, which the courteous Japanese insisted on their occupying, were congratulating

66 KH to AFH, 23 October 1910, SRL, Box 1, Folder 24.

themselves that the performance was nearly over. It was time for the last number.

Just then two students appeared with blankets, and spread them on the stage. 'Koto', I thought. They placed a cushion in place. 'Only one koto'. But no pretty little girls and no kotos appeared. Instead, a student brought in an instrument about three feet long, that looked like a cross between a mandolin and a banjo. 'Satsuma biwa', the experienced foreigners whispered, and settled back in their seats. Another student escorted the performer to his seat. He was only an ordinary respectable-looking man, in ordinary dark gray Japanese clothes.

He sat down on his cushion, however, with an air of the gravest importance, and tuned the four strings of his biwa with great care. He looked impressively, first at his audience and then at the ceiling. He closed his eyes, and his face assumed an expression of devout mysticism. Surely, some low, soulful strain would soon delight our weary ears. He opened his mouth – but nothing soft nor sweet came forth. It was a wail, loud enough to be heard half a mile, a high-pitched, strained, discordant yell, that stayed on one note, apparently, nearly as long as the man could hold it with one breath, then wavered in a rude trill that sounded like the last gurgles of a dying man, and ended on a short lower note, thus: [here Hansen included music notes]

While he was getting his breath, after this effort, he played a few notes with a triangular plectrum, about four inches long, that looked like one of the [a proof mark inserted here might indicate a missing word] squares from a drawing class. The tones were about midway between those of a banjo and the noise made by pounding a tin pan, and had no harmonic effect which I could discover. The interlude over, the song, if such it can be called, began again, in about the same style as the first strain, and went on, almost entirely unaccompanied, in a monotonous recitative effect. Whenever the singer paused for breath, the formless interlude was repeated. The performance had gone on for a quarter of an hour, and we were almost exhausted, when the audience began to show signs of excitement. To us, the singing seemed just the same as in the beginning, but it was evidently working up to a climax. All at once, like one man, the whole audience gave a shrill, blood-curdling yell! We nearly jumped out of our seats. Our experienced friends smiled, pulled us down, and whispered something reassuring. After that, for the next half hour, whenever an exciting point was reached, the same short, sharp yell came out. We began to think the performance would last all night, but at last, without any apparent reason, the singer stopped short and made his bow. The house fairly rocked with the applause. Its volume was greater than that called forth by the whole twenty numbers that had

> preceded this wonderful biwa. This, evidently, was what appealed to the musical consciousness of the people of Sendai. (pp. 14-17.)

Hansen's description of the audience's reaction is as revealing as that of the performance itself. While the foreigners found the performance monotonous and longed for it to end, the Japanese, who had endured rather than enjoyed the preceding Western-style items, clearly knew the piece and eagerly anticipated its climactic moments. Their enthusiastic applause expressed their appreciation and possibly their relief that the entire concert was over.

Hansen's failure to understand Japanese music is dramatically revealed in her description of another performance. By then she had attended local concerts, and on this occasion, she accompanied a recently arrived American teacher (whom she refers to as Miss T.):

> Only once, to me, did the biwa express anything, and then it was the wrong thing! [...] When the interludes came, they were different from any we had ever heard before. The jangling, uncouth instrument gave out such dainty, tinkling notes as we had never believed possible for it. It suggested to me some of Mendelssohn's gay fairy marches, mixed with the clown dances. Between the laughter of Miss T. and the fun of the interludes, even our seasoned gravity was upset. We laughed more than once.
>
> After the concert, we praised the biwa player to some of our Japanese friends, and asked what it had all been about. To our horror, they informed us that it had told the story of a military expedition, only a few years before, in the mountains near Sendai, which had been overtaken by a terrible blizzard, in which hundreds of officers and soldiers had perished. The dainty interludes were supposed to describe the falling of the snow-flakes. As we realized what an unpardonable offence we had committed, for half the audience, probably, had had relations or friends in the luckless expedition, we made a firm resolution never to imagine again that we comprehended any Japanese music. (pp. 17–19.)

The composition that Hansen heard on this occasion was *Fubuki no teki*, and its story is based on a major disaster that occurred in January 1902, in the Hakkōda mountain range in Aomori prefecture (about 350 km from Sendai).[67] During training in preparation for a possible war with

67 Known as the Hakkōda Mountains incident (*Hakkōda-san sōnan jiken*). The lyrics of the piece are by Inoue Tokujō (1869–1944), and the work was first published in

Russia, a unit from the Fifth Infantry Regiment of the Imperial Japanese Army's 8th Division was surprised by a blizzard, and 199 out of 210 soldiers died. In more recent times, the tragedy has inspired novels and films; most recently *Hakkōda Mountains* in 2014. The embarrassment Hansen suffered as a result of her blunder may well have increased her dislike of the *biwa.* All in all, she had little to say about the instrument, despite its obvious popularity with the locals:

> The biwa, to the Japanese, is what the minstrel with his harp was to our forefathers. The biwa songs are old legends of battles and heroes, sometimes historical, sometimes mythical, but always exciting. No concert is really complete, in the opinion of the average Japanese, without one of these lengthy recitations. The shortest one I ever heard lasted twenty minutes; the longest, an hour. The biwa is supposed to be a difficult instrument, and many boys and men study it for years. It is not nearly as common, however, as the koto. It has fewer musical possibilities than the koto, its effect depending almost entirely on the words of the song. (p. 17.)

That Hansen had limited opportunity to experience Japanese music in more traditional settings is evident from her discussion of the last two instruments, the *shamisen* (or *samisen*) and the *shakuhachi*. Unlike Hansen's characterization of the *koto* and the *biwa*, her section on the *shamisen* does not begin with the first time she heard it performed at a formal occasion, for reasons which are obvious from her opening paragraph:

> A certain class of tourists place the samisen first among Japanese instruments, because they hear it first, and sometimes hear nothing else. Unfortunately, this ancient instrument, formerly the delight of court ladies and the study of every girl of the middle and upper classes, has fallen into disrepute, probably because it is used so much by geisha and by people even less respectable than geisha. Only a very few good families are still old-fashioned enough to permit their daughters to study the samisen. Accordingly, as it is not considered proper for teachers to witness geisha performances, it was some time before we had an opportunity to hear this instrument at close range. It was associated in our minds with unpleasant encounters with noisy geisha parties, at the tea-houses or hotels, for no such house excludes these parties. It

1905 in a collection by Yoshimizu Tsunekazu. See Shimazu, *Meiji Satsumabiwa uta*, 184–86.

> is not pleasant to be kept awake half the night by endless thrumming and screaming, like serenades of cats. It is still more unpleasant if one understands the words of the songs, if one may misuse a good word by calling them such. The paper partitions of the rooms did little to deaden the noises, of course. From a few such experiences, I had gotten the opinion that the samisen must be the very worst of Japanese instruments, and must represent the most rudimentary form of the Japanese musical consciousness. (pp. 19–20.)

That, of course, was also the opinion of the music reformers. Hansen did eventually witness a performance after a dinner party when she 'had the opportunity of hearing some of the older songs, with the dances which always accompany them.' (p. 20.) Clearly not impressed with what she heard, she compared the singing style to that of *biwa* performances; the effect, however, of 'the three women wailing in unison' being 'even more doleful than any single biwa singer could produce'. As with a *koto* performance, she felt that the visual impressions, in this case provided by dancers, were far more pleasant than the music:

> However, our attention was soon directed from these unpleasant noises, by the entrance of three or four girls, in beautiful ancient dresses, who began to act out a little play, describing the feelings and the impressions of pilgrims on first beholding Matsushima, the Pine Islands, known and loved by every Japanese as the loveliest spot in all Japan. Whatever might be the defects of the musical setting, the play was very pretty. With few words, but with much of gesture, dances slow and graceful, and tableaux full of picturesque beauty, the players succeeded very well in recalling to us the spell of Matsushima. (pp. 21–22.)

Like the *shamisen*, the *shakuhachi* did not feature prominently in the settings from which Hansen derived most of her experience of Japanese music. This is, perhaps, surprising, for at the time the *shakuhachi* was becoming increasingly popular, with several teach-yourself manuals being published and new schools (*ryūha*) established, most prominently that of Nakae Tozan.[68] Much of the activity, however, appears to have been in the capital and in the Kansai region, and it may well be that the fashion had not reached Sendai.[69] Another reason may be that,

68 See Chapter 8.

69 In the concert programmes, the *shakuhachi* appeared in concerts at the Second High School, which had a *shakuhachi* club, as well as at Tōhoku Ongakuin, as part of a

as Hansen noted, it was not played by women at the time. When she did hear it played, she was not displeased with the sounds she heard, judging it 'the most musical of Japanese instruments' (p. 22). Since the *shakuhachi* is the only instrument of those Hansen described that has gained popularity abroad, her verdict comes as no surprise. She also opined that it was the most difficult of the instruments she described: 'To its difficulty, I can bear direct testimony, having had one in the house for some months without being able to make it produce any kind of a sound whatsoever.' (p. 23.) After a brief description of how the instrument is played, she concluded:

> With this very primitive instrument, a good player can produce a great variety of notes, from husky, breathy tones, suggestive of earth-goblins, mists and mysteries, to soft, clear, high notes, like those of the red-birds of Lawrence. He can make trills, almost as beautiful as those on a flute. Certain effects of the wind he can suggest very vividly. In contrast to the barbarian quality of the koto, the harshness of the biwa, the crudeness of the samisen, he can express melancholy tenderness, pleasing fear, even gentle gayety. He uses, in general, the same Japanese scale as the koto player or the biwa or the samisen singer, but the better quality, the power of expression in his tones gives his instrument and entirely new effect. (p. 24.)

Hansen's positive verdict suggests that she had heard at least one performance by a skilled artist. In concerts, on the other hand, it was usually played in ensembles with one or more *koto* and accompanied by singing. The description of such an occasion with which she concluded her discussion of the *shakuhachi* suggests that she did not appreciate the result:

> In Sendai, at one of the concerts, I heard a much-lauded ensemble of three kotos and a shakuhachi, which lasted about half an hour. During the first part, the shakuhachi played alone a great deal, the kotos coming in as interludes, and, as the player was unusually good, the effect was really musical. At about the middle of the piece there was a long passage, lasting about ten minutes, for the kotos alone. It was neither fast nor slow, nor otherwise interesting, and we were growing very sleepy, when, after a short rest, the three women players, with one voice, and that a powerful one, let out a prolonged mi–a–u! From my front seat, I too gave vent to

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sankyoku ensemble, but there is no evidence of Hansen having attended concerts at the latter.

> one short, not-to-be repressed snort of laughter. It was so exactly like the first prolonged yowl of a cat serenade, that even my years of training in Japanese politeness proved powerless. My Japanese neighbors looked at me in mild surprise; to them there was nothing funny in the sound. It was only the beginning of the voice part of the ensemble, a song which lasted ten or fifteen minutes longer, accompanying the koto and the shakuhachi. (pp. 24–25.)

Indigenous singing receives relatively little attention in the thesis, although Hansen mentions the human voice first as expressing 'the purely Japanese musical consciousness' (p. 4) and states that 'unaccompanied singing is heard everywhere in Japan' (p. 26). (I will discuss singing in connection with Hansen's work as a music teacher.)

Hansen summed up her impressions of native music as follows:

> It is music well developed above that of barbarous nations, yet retaining many characteristics of barbarism, in its lack of harmony and of design, its harsh tones, its lack of power to express the higher emotions, usually associated with civilization. It gives one the impression that in this art the nation has lagged far behind. [...] When we try to appreciate Japanese music, the best we can say of any piece or instrument is, that it is pretty good, considering that it is Japanese. Japanese music, unlike Japanese art, cannot be measured by a world standard and called good. The Japanese themselves show their comparatively low musical state, in the fact that they also know no names of great musicians which they can place alongside those of their great artists in other lines. The aesthetic nature of one of the most artistic of all races in the history of the world, seems to have spent its force upon arts other than that of sound. In these arts, while learning from the West, they can give as much as they receive. In music, they can give us practically nothing. (pp. 27–29.)

Here, Hansen essentially reiterated the views expressed by Western intellectuals of her day, based on the assumption of a 'world standard' shaped by Western notions of refined music, such as being able to name 'great musicians' (a concept alien to many cultures and of relatively recent date even in the West). Her conclusion that, in contrast to the pictorial arts, no flow of music from Japan to the West could be imagined, has by now proven wrong. Still, it cannot be denied that the exchange has been profoundly asymmetrical, and Hansen regarded this asymmetry as proof 'that the Japanese themselves realize that something is lacking in their music' (p. 29). What she neglected to mention is that even the

most avid promoters of Western music regarded it as superior only in certain specific aspects deemed essential to their (and the Japanese government's) modernization project.

Efforts to Master Western Music

Given Hansen's assumption that Western music was superior, she saw no need to discuss the motives for its adoption by the Japanese, and in her treatment of Japanese efforts to master Western music she merely described the process (pp. 29–63). Unsurprisingly, she highlighted the role of Christian missionaries, including the dissemination of hymns and organs; first portable ones, then the larger reed organs. Music education by missionaries preceded government measures, and by the time she arrived in Japan the effects were noticeable:

> Wherever there was a girls' school, the people began to be familiar with the sound of easy Western music. Here and there, a graduate of a girls' school was able to buy a reed organ for herself, and became a musical wonder to her entire neighborhood. In singing, too, the girls' schools took the lead. Their students practiced incessantly, and in addition to their simple hymn tunes they attempted some two- and three-part work. They did, and are still doing good service in teaching Western songs to many thousands of children in Sunday schools. (p. 33.)

Hansen followed her general survey with a brief description of work at her own school in Sendai, before treating the government's measures to disseminate Western music through the education system. She felt ambivalent about the results, particularly in elementary education. Her impression of singing in primary schools was so negative that she felt it might even be counterproductive. Music education in the public schools, she concluded, had so far done little to improve 'the musical consciousness of the mass of the race' (p. 38). Even teachers at secondary level who had trained at the Tokyo Academy of Music were insufficiently qualified for the task:

> Generally speaking, a teacher does his or her best work during the first year or two after graduation. After that, the carefully trained musical sense seems to deteriorate. Also, it is very rare that a Japanese teacher has sufficient musical sense to learn a new piece without help. They are unable to grow. The deterioration shows itself most markedly in the case of those teachers who sing solos, with piano or organ accompaniments.

> At first, they sing reasonably true to the music, but gradually their songs get out of tune, so to speak, and in a few years they are quite unable to sing anything without flatting and sharping most atrociously. Nevertheless, they are doing a great deal to familiarize the people all over the country with Western music, and some of the part-singing of their pupils is quite correct and even pleasing. (p. 27.)

This brought her to the difficulties of teaching singing (pp. 39–52). Although she discussed this subject more thoroughly and systematically in her later thesis, she had already acquired a keen awareness of the specific challenges faced by music teachers, even those who, like herself, were well-trained and had an intimate knowledge of Western music. Teaching the piano was easier, because determination, patience, and persistence went a long way towards mastery of the instrument. Many Japanese, however, underestimated the difficulties of learning music. Hansen gave several examples to illustrate not only the ignorance but also the conceit of some of the Japanese she encountered, particularly of boys and men. A student from the government college (presumably the Second High School), for example, visited Florence Seiple expecting her to teach him to play a Beethoven sonata for a concert the following week (p. 52), although he had never played the piano before. 'The average Japanese boy', Hansen continued,

> indeed, in his attitude toward Western music, is one of the most disagreeably conceited beings imaginable. Profoundly ignorant of it, and with ears which cannot distinguish one tune from another, he yet patronises or criticizes the girls who have studied the piano for years. His respect for the Western teacher prevents his correcting her to her face, but often the playing of certain hymns by pupils of mine has been 'corrected' by boy students who did not know one note from another. Indeed, I learned indirectly that my own hymn-playing in church had been pronounced incorrect by certain boy students, because the hymns were not played as they sang them! However, in a country where students of English have been known to object to imitating an American teacher's pronunciation, on the ground that imitating a foreigner in such a way is derogatory of their 'national pride', almost anything may be expected.
>
> As for the conceit of the young man who has studied a little Western music, it may be imagined. One of my most ridiculous experiences was with the music teacher of a normal school in a provincial city, himself a graduate of the Ueno school [Tokyo Academy of Music]. The friends I was visiting had asked me to give a piano recital, and had invited a number of guests, mostly Japanese ladies. This music teacher was very

> patronizing to these ladies, explaining to them what wonderful things they were to hear, with a pompous air which said, 'Of course, I know all about it.' I had chosen descriptive music from Grieg and Schumann mostly, and before each piece, I tried to give them some idea of what it was about, but I did not mention any names of composers. When I had finished, the music teacher made the usual flowery speech of thanks, and then said that in his school, they often had 'classical music'. Could I play anything of that kind, just to let the ladies know how it sounded? [55] 'Why, certainly', I replied politely, 'I will play you a very famous piece by Schumann.' Turning to my pile of music, I slipped out one of the pieces I had played a few minutes before, and repeated it. He explained to the ladies, with great impressiveness, that this was classical music, and much better than any other kind! About that time, my host found it necessary to retire to the hall, whence he did not reappear for several minutes. (pp. 53–55.)[70]

Girls and young women would occasionally display a similar attitude. One of Hansen's former piano students told her that while her husband had bought her an organ so that she could continue to play, she preferred to play the violin, and after two lessons from a local teacher was now continuing by herself (p. 55). The violin was extremely popular, as Hansen noted in her letters more than once. Next to singing and the reed organ or the piano (for those schools who could afford one, including Miyagi College, where Hansen taught), the violin, played solo or in an ensemble, and performances by brass bands, were the most commonly heard. Both appalled Hansen. She summarized what she called the violin situation' by citing the words of a local missionary's daughter who returned to America to study at an Eastern college. In the seven years the daughter lived in Japan she had heard the violin only in the hands of Japanese, but at college she had the chance to hear a recital by the famous violinist Maud Powell (1867–1920). 'The girl wrote home a vivid description of the concert, which had quite carried her away. She ended it thus, "But, Mamma, I never dreamed before, that the violin was really a musical instrument, like the piano!"' (p. 57.)

70 Something of this arrogance survived well into the twentieth century. Yoshihara describes the 'hardcore classical fans' as 'a tribe comprised mostly of highly educated men with a penchant for snobbish pride in specialized knowledge'. See Mari Yoshihara, *Dearest Lenny: Letters from Japan and the Making of the World Maestro* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 66.

The wind bands were no better in Hansen's estimation. Wind bands were among the earliest manifestations of Western music in Sendai, and performed frequently. In a letter to her family in 1909 she referred to 'the wonderful Sendai band which was never known to keep the time for two consecutive measures'.[71] As with singing and the violin, however, intonation rather than rhythm was the main problem:

> Even the brass band is out of tune in Sendai. There is a band, with about ten horns of different kinds, which often plays on the street. No two horns are ever tuned to go together. I had grown up in a family of boys who played every instrument in a brass band, but had been quite ignorant before that it was possible to play a horn entirely out of tune. On the occasion of the revision of the American treaty with Japan, the officials of the prefecture, to show their friendly spirit, invited all the American residents to a great tea party in the Court House. We were seated in the place of honor, just below the judges' seats, and behind us were about five hundred of the 'four hundred' of Sendai. After the usual speeches and replies, a band began to play. Nobody at first knew what it was trying to play, but as our hosts all rose, we did likewise. We had been standing some minutes before I realized that it was the 'Star-spangled Banner' in our honor! My neighbor, who was not especially musical, refused to believe my assertion, but it proved correct, and I was quite elated to have been able, once, to identify one piece by a Sendai band. Their favorite piece, by the way, is 'Marching through Georgia', which they assert, is a Japanese tune! (pp. 57–58.)

Hansen nevertheless ended her discussion of Japanese efforts to study and perform Western music on a positive note. Serious students of Western music, Hansen asserted, 'do excellent work' (p. 59). She was particularly impressed with the dedication of her female piano pupils:

> It is possible that in Germany there may be faithful, careful, persistent practice, equal to that of the average Japanese girl student of organ or piano. I have rarely met it in America. Such a girl does exactly as her teacher tells her, down to the smallest detail. They are natural mimics. (p. 59.)

The expression 'natural mimics' appears in Hansen's letters as well.[72] While this sounds like a tired cliché today, for Hansen this clearly

71 KH to her family, 7 March 1909, SRL, Box 1, Folder 22.
72 For example, KH to AFH, 22 September 1907, SRL Box 1, Folder 21.

represented her own first-hand experience, as did the now very familiar observations about their ability to master technique but not musical expression. Her students, she asserted, practised for hours, starting at six o'clock in the morning. They were content to practice scales and finger exercises rather than demanding to play 'pieces'. As a result, they generally became more proficient than the average American pupil. But where musical expression was concerned, 'they were absolutely dependent upon their teacher or upon their American classmate. Not more than one pupil in fifty has any feeling for the expression in the music whose notes she knows perfectly. It has not yet penetrated her musical consciousness.' (p. 61.)[73] Still, her best students did well even on that count, and Hansen concluded that the 'musical consciousness' of the Japanese would eventually be transformed successfully, although she expected it to take several generations:

> Such students as these, in the first generation of music study, give one hope that, some day, the Japanese will be a fairly musical race. At present, I should not call them so, even with regard to their native music. This Japanese music, being a lower form, must inevitably give place to the higher form, the Western music. The Japanese are wise in recognizing this fact. They have patience, energy, enthusiasm on their side. They have begun with the best, with Bach and Beethoven. They know nothing of our musical trash. Whether all these things in their favor will be able to make musicians of them, will take several generations to decide. Meanwhile, the lot of the foreign music teachers among them is full of interest. He, or she, is both watching and helping the complete transformation of the musical consciousness of the Japanese race. (p. 63.)

Hansen thus ended *Musical Consciousness* by summarizing a widely held contemporaneous prejudice. But even in Western music, Hansen distinguished between 'the best' on the one hand and 'musical trash' on the other. Not much more than a decade after Hansen wrote her thesis, the increased availability of gramophone recordings and radio broadcasting gave the Japanese ample opportunity to acquaint themselves with both.

That her Japanese students were quicker to learn the mechanics involved in playing the piano than musical expression is hardly

73 Interestingly, some of the Japanese music reformers, including Takaori Shūichi and Tanaka Shōhei, expressed the view that Japanese music had an emotional power that Western music lacked.

surprising, given that the latter requires considerable familiarity with the music by hearing it performed. In early twentieth-century Sendai, opportunities to hear European art music played well were extremely limited. Hansen's descriptions, together with the concert programmes, demonstrate as clearly as the written word can do how the people of Sendai inhabited a musical soundscape where indigenous music and poorly performed foreign music, or blended forms, predominated. Only gradually did this change, as Hansen outlined in her Master's thesis, written fifteen years later and based on almost twenty years' experience of teaching in Sendai. She devoted particular attention to the teaching of singing. Compared to the organ or piano, singing posed the greater challenge.

Teaching Japanese Girls to Sing

'The Japanese are born singers. Good voices and good ears are frequent.' Such was the verdict of Eta Harich-Schneider (1894–1986), a pioneer both of modern Cembalo playing and research on the traditional music of Japan. Being 'born singers', they mastered the Gregorian chant taught to them by the first Christian missionaries in the sixteenth century. The Japanese folk song, moreover, 'in its unimpaired condition has always been the best part of Japanese music'.[74]

Nevertheless, learning to sing Western songs well proved a challenge. Western singing differed fundamentally in two ways: first, the use of the voice and the kind of sound aimed for and, second, the tonal system of the music. A singer has to have a precise idea of what sound quality and what notes she is aiming for and then to learn how to produce them. No wonder then, that the first efforts by Japanese at Western-style singing were unlikely to impress foreign observers. Basil Hall Chamberlain, for example, remarked that August Junker, who taught at the Tokyo Academy of Music from 1899 to 1912, had managed to develop 'a pleasing chorus of some eighty singers out of a chaos of disagreeable nasal voices'.[75]

74 Eta Harich-Schneider, *A History of Japanese Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 460, 594.

75 Basil Hall Chamberlain, *Things Japanese: Being Notes on Various Subjects Connected with Japan*, Yohan Classics (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2007 (1905)), 368.

Kate Hansen would have been the first to acknowledge that this was no mean feat. In her early letters and in *Musical Consciousness* her comments about singing were, if anything, even more scathing than her descriptions of instrumental performances, and she made no attempt to maintain academic detachment in the descriptions of spontaneous singing that followed (p. 26). After two vivid accounts of men breaking into 'gruesome sounds', or a 'howl' on their way home in the evening, she concluded: 'Groups of men on the street, making noises which in this country would result in their making a speedy acquaintance with a police station, are probably neither drunk nor disorderly, but are only giving vent to their feelings in some heroic ballad.' (pp. 26–27.) Hansen must, or course, have been well aware that drunken youths in the street hardly reach *bel canto* standards in the West either. Nevertheless, she felt (or claimed to have felt) the sounds to be so alien that only her experience after some years in Japan enabled her to identify them as singing.

Hansen was more nuanced when describing the singing of Western songs. Even at missionary schools the quality of teaching varied and depended on the initiative of individuals. Many of the first missionaries, Hansen reported, did not even believe that the Japanese could learn to sing.[76] Her own first impressions of singing by the girls at Miyagi College were not entirely negative. In a letter to her sister Alpha, dated 15 September 1907, a week after her arrival in Sendai, she wrote: 'Then they sang an English song, a hymn of some sort. I was surprised at the way they sang. There was no attempt at part singing. But their voices were very clear and they did not screech or strain.'[77] A week later, commenting on another performance at the school, she wrote that the girls 'sang beautifully, in a high, clear voice. The Japanese girls are natural mimics, as I found out.'[78] A few months later, however, she was more critical: 'I sympathize with you about the boys' voices – but they can't hold a candle to the girls, who flat and drag and everything else. However, when I hear Japanese music, and realize that's the kind

76 Hansen, 'The Japanese Are Learning to Sing', 235. (First published in *The Outlook of Missions*, Vol. VI, No. 3 (March 1914), pp. 129–30, 138; The Reformed Church Messenger, February 19, 1914, pp. 2, 20.) See also Hansen, *Musical Consciousness*, 29–30.

77 Spencer Research Library Box 1, Folder 21.

78 To Alpha Hansen, 22 September 1907, Box 1, Folder 21.

they've inherited, I wonder they can do as well as they do.'[79] In *Musical Consciousness* she wrote about those early years:

> In the little churches that began to arise, and especially in the Sunday-schools, hymn-singing was carried out with great vigor and enthusiasm, although the tunes were more or less difficult to recognize; neither pitch nor time being much regarded. The tunes, such as they were, became so popular, that many of them were taken over by the Buddhists, supplied with new words, and used in the Sunday-schools started in imitation of the Christian institutions. This practice still persists, and I often heard tunes from the Buddhist boys' school across the street from us, which I could recognize, more or less easily, as familiar American Sunday-school airs. Often the words would be almost unchanged, except by the substitution of the word Buddha for Christ. (pp. 30–31.)

She could, however, report that the situation was improving, thanks to developments like the publication of the union hymnal for all the protestant churches, the increasing number of trained American teachers, and the replacement of portable baby reed organs with larger ones or even with pianos imported from Germany in the 'more advanced' schools (pp. 32–33).[80]

Progress in the government schools, on the other hand, appeared slow to Hansen. By the time she arrived in Japan, graduates from the Tokyo Academy of Music were teaching at high schools (especially those for girls) and teacher training colleges nationwide, but most teachers at elementary schools had minimal training and the results of their efforts reflected this:

> But generally, the singing is done unaccompanied. As few of the teachers are able themselves to sing a major scale, or to tell whether one is sung correctly, the Western singing in public schools is generally unrecognizable as such. Indeed, it is a question in my mind whether this wholesale teaching of Western music by entirely incompetent teachers does not actually hinder Japanese advancement in that art. It is more difficult to teach a Western tune to a graduate of the public schools than to a little child who has never gone to school. So far, as regards Western

79 To Alpha Hansen, 20 January 1908, Box 1 folder 22.

80 Hansen was, presumably, referring to *Sambika* (Hymn book). 'Prepared by a Union committee' and published by Kyōbunkan in 1908 (Romaji edition). Data from the National Diet Library. The preface is dated 1903.

> music, the musical consciousness of the mass of the race does not appear to have been improved by the public schools. (p. 38.)

The government, in Hansen's estimation, failed to 'recognize the magnitude of the task'. She compared it to teaching a new foreign language in her thesis, *Experiences in Founding and Developing a Music School in Japan* (henceforth *Experiences*), submitted in 1927 as part of the requirements for the Master of Music and updated in 1933.[81] *Experiences* covers some of the same ground as *Musical Consciousness*, but is more concise and tightly structured. The style is sober and more appropriate to an academic thesis. Hansen presents a thorough and systematic account of her efforts to teach her pupils to sing and her work at Miyagi in general. By the time she wrote the thesis, her hopes of a 'fully-fledged conservatory', expressed in a letter to her sister already in 1908,[82] had become a reality. Training at college level, with a three-year higher course and a two-year preparatory course, was added in 1916. 'From next April on, we will have the best music course of any mission school in Japan', Hansen proudly reported to her sister.[83] The course, including the entrance requirements, were based on the one at Kansas University, adapted to local circumstances. Requirements for entry into the postgraduate course were so demanding that in practice, 'nobody but our own very best graduates can get into the higher department, so it will never, or at least not for a long time, have more than five or six in a class [...].'[84]

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81 Hansen, *Experiences*, 11–12. Mensendiek's biography includes a substantially abridged version of the thesis. See Mensendiek, *To Japan with Love*, 121–31. Mensendiek does not give any information about the manuscript he consulted, which does not seem to be the same as the one in the SRL. For example, in Mensendiek's version (which is also included in Bales' biography), Hansen describes *Musical Consciousness* as an 'essay' rather than a 'thesis'. The most obvious differences are the only musical example with staff notations he cites (although this looks like a mistake by an uninformed copyist). My discussion is based on the manuscript in the SRL.

82 KH to AFH, 21 June 1908, SRL Box 1, Folder 22.

83 KH to AFH, 12 February 1916, SRL, Box 1, Folder 28.

84 KH to AFH, 12 February 1916, SRL, Box 1, Folder 28. Training at college level, with a three-year higher course and a two-year preparatory course, was added in 1916. For the higher course, students had to demonstrate the 'ability to sing at sight, with accurate pitch and rhythm, exercises of the grade of the Ginn Third Music Reader'. On the piano they had to master the first book of Czerny, Op. 299, Heller Op. 47 as well as 'Bach works preparatory to the Inventions, and easy sonatas'. (*Experiences*, pp. 25–26.)

The school now offered a level of training that could compete with the Tokyo Academy of Music and was only matched by one other missionary school, Kobe College, which had established a music department in 1906. By 1924 Hansen could report to the Mission Board: 'We are getting the benefits of all the years of careful work done in our school before the Japanese public had developed an understanding of western music. That pioneer period in music education has passed.'[85] Hansen thus completed *Experiences* fully aware that Western music at Miyagi and in Sendai had come a long way in the twenty years since her arrival.

The path to success, however, was arduous. Missionary boards, like the Japanese government, did not fully realize the difficulties, Hansen asserted, and had failed to send trained teachers. Moreover, music teachers, like teachers of the English language, were apt to lose their own sense of what was correct.[86] To prove her point, she illustrated the difference between the tonality of Western and what she called 'Sino-Japanese' music by describing the popular *koto* piece *Rokudan*, basing her analysis of its tonality on an edition in Western notation.[87] She concluded, 'It is this music, so radically different from Western music, which is even now being heard constantly in the homes, the tea-houses, the theatres and the temples. It formed and still forms the "musical mother-tongue" of the great majority of the Japanese people.' (*Experiences*, p. 11.) Summarizing her early experience in Sendai, Hansen wrote: 'My most vivid musical recollection of those first months and years is of the intense pain I suffered in class, in chapel, wherever Japanese tried to make Western music. The school authorities, Japanese and Americans alike, saw, or rather heard, nothing wrong.' (*Experiences*, p. 16.)

Hansen had already pinpointed specific obstacles ('defects') in *Musical Consciousness*, naming four: 1) the failure of female students to open their mouth; 2) yelling; 3) inability to grasp triple time (although not triplets); 4) pitch. About the first, she stated that Japanese etiquette forbade a woman 'to open her teeth when she talks. This speaking and singing with the teeth firmly closed is so much a habit with all Japanese

85 Mensendiek, *To Japan with Love*, 49.

86 On the analogy of learning foreign music and foreign languages, see also Alison M. Tokita, 'Bi-Musicality in Modern Japanese Culture', *International Journal of Bilingualism* 18, no. 2 (2014 (2012)): 159–74, https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006912458394

87 Most likely the one published by the Tokyo Academy of Music: see Chapter 6.

girls, that they are really unconscious of it.' (p. 39.) Still, the habit was relatively easy to deal with, since it could be overcome by having them sing with their finger between their teeth. (*Musical Consciousness*, pp. 39–40; Hansen, *Experiences*, pp. 18–19.)

The second problem she described as 'the idea that Western singing means yelling with all the power of their lungs'. She continued,

> Just why this idea should be so universal, I have never been able to understand fully. [...] In public schools, and in Sunday schools wherever permitted, the accepted method of singing a Western song is to bellow it forth, with all the power of harsh chest tones, until a note is reached so high as to make this impossible. Then there comes a break in the voices, and each singer whatever note he or she can [*sic*], in strained falsetto. (p. 41.)

In a previous letter to her mother in May 1910, Hansen had expressed her satisfaction with the results of a singing lesson she had given to around one hundred children at a Sunday school in what she described as a 'back-woods' (although it may only have been one of the remoter parts of the city). She succeeded in getting them to 'sing their tune straight, and with a musical tone too – you don't hear that often, for in their common schools they are taught to sing at the top of their lungs and the key doesn't matter at all.'[88] Possibly, the habit derived from the custom of reciting texts aloud together as a means of rote-learning in traditional education, because in a previous letter Hansen had remarked on the noise that she regularly heard from a school she passed in Karuizawa: 'When one goes by, there's a deafening noise of children's voices, for they keep up the, "good old way" in this school of having all the pupils study out loud, and the one with the loudest voice is presumably the best student. The custom seems to have been given up in the Sendai schools.'[89]

At any rate, belting out *shōka* may well have been common, especially among boys. A vivid impression of a first singing class with a new, male teacher in upper elementary school in 1895 is given by the anarchist theorist and labour activist Ōsugi Sakae (1885–1923). Contrasting the

88 KH to her mother, 29 May 1910, SRL Box 1, Folder 24.
89 KH to AFH, Karuizawa, 8 August 1909, Box 1, Folder 23.

new arrival with their previous, female teacher, Ōsugi corroborates Hansen's observations,

> Sitting there in front of the organ with his dark face, he held his body erect and his chest stuck out like a soldier's. We waited eagerly to hear what sort of sound was going to come from that organ. It wasn't particularly different from the sound produced by the women teachers with their gentle faces. Yet despite the dark face and dishevelled hair, his large fingers raced across the keys with a liveliness and skill that were not at all clumsy, and his playing gave us a feeling of exhilaration. Then he began to sing. His wide mouth filled his whole dark face and from it came a deep bass that reverberated throughout the classroom. Up to then we had heard only women teachers sing, their lips pursed and voices barely audible. Now under his influence we became exuberant, opened our mouths as wide as possible and sang as loudly as we could.[90]

The difficulties with rhythm observed by Hansen, particularly triple time rhythms (pp. 42–43), are attested in other sources. Foreigner participants in the balls held at the Rokumeikan back in the 1880s remarked on the Japanese dancers' problems with the waltz.[91] But Hansen observed problems even with hymns (not known for their rhythmic complexity), and, during the rehearsal of Mendelssohn's *Wedding March* for a pupil's wedding, the bridegroom 'went along with his head down. anxiously watching his feet and counting time until Okayama San, who seems to be O Masa San's best friend at present, got alarmed lest he do the same at the ceremony.'[92] Of course, in this case, apprehension rather than a lacking sense of rhythm may have been the cause. The same o-Masa-san, now Masa Sato, wrote about another wedding, where she herself played Mendelssohn's march and neither bride nor groom could keep time and arrived at the altar far too early: 'Probably they lost their minds and their feet were going fast.' She explained, 'As Miss Hansen knows well, Japanese are very stupid to keep time to the 6/8 time. Miss Hansen has a hard time to let the school girls keep time straight when she plays

90 Sakae Ōsugi and Byron K. Marshall, *The Autobiography of Ōsugi Sakae translated with annotations by Byron K. Marshall*, Voices from Asia; 6, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992), 42.

91 Examples in Margaret Mehl, 'Dancing at the Rokumeikan — A New Role for Women?', in *Japanese Women: Emerging from Subservience, 1886–1945*, ed. Gordon Daniels and Hiroko Tomida (Folkestone, Kent: Global Oriental, 2005).

92 KH to AFH, 23 April 1910, Box 1, Folder 24.

march.' Chieko (presumably her daughter), on the other hand, was good at keeping time, 'even to the 6/8 time march.'[93]

Nevertheless, rhythm was relatively easy to correct, as Hansen reported in an early letter to her sister:

> [...] and to their other great fault, not keeping time, I've been able to apply a remedy since we've had the chapel piano, for I make so much noise they simply have to keep time. We've put them through a regular siege of the songs they were the worst on; I've played the bass so heavy that it sounds like a bass drum and they can't help keeping time; and at last I've got them 'broken in' so that when I begin a prelude, they listen as attentively as if their lives depended on it, and come in in exactly the same time, for they've learned I won't either wait or hurry for them. But such times as I've had bringing it about! I'm afraid some mornings the foreigners present haven't gotten much out of chapel, for sometimes I've gone through a whole song, perhaps with the whole school a half measure or so behind me, or afterward, when the more musical ones began to 'catch on,' there have been whole songs when part of the school sang all the way through in one kind of time and part in another! Two or three songs I would never let them sing – 'Lead, Kindly Light' is one, but they persisted in choosing it at prayers, so I've just succeeded in getting them so they can sing it and actually keep together! They sing low, though, in fear and trembling, and listen to the piano at every note. They'll get it, though; and there's one comfort, so long as the piano and I stay, we'll never have this kind of a siege again, for the majority will always know how to sing, and the rest will learn from them.[94]

Pitch, on the other hand, presented the greatest difficulty and the one on which most of the efforts described in *Experiences* were concentrated. Hansen mentioned inability to sing or play at correct pitch in several early letters. Of a Sunday school she attended soon after her arrival, taught by o-Masa-san, she wrote to her family, 'the Japanese don't seem to have any idea of feeling or the key. O Masa San led and the other girl played, and they did their best, but those youngsters just opened their mouths and yelled, [...].'[95]

93 Miyagi Jogakkō, 6 April 1916, Masa Sato to 'My dear friend' (AFH?), SRL, Box 1, Folder 28.

94 KH to AFH, 21 June 1908, SLR Box 1, Folder 22.

95 KH to her family, 6 October 1907, SRL, Box 1, Folder 21. There seems to be a bit more on the subject, but next part of the letter is illegible.

Despite the daunting obstacles, Hansen could report a measure of improvement even in her earliest letters. She was greatly helped by the appointment of Florence L. Seiple in 1908. Trained as a singer at the Peabody Institute and in Berlin, she taught music alongside Hansen until at least 1931.[96] As early as June 1908 Hansen wrote to her sister about a 'really wonderful change in the chapel singing this term; and the other piano. [*sic*]'. 'Mrs Seiple', she continued, 'has certainly done wonders in improving the quality of the voices this term – they imitate her and they don't flat any more, to speak of – [...].'[97]

Getting their pupils to sing in tune consistently remained a challenge, however. Hansen devoted systematic efforts to investigating the cause even in her earliest years in Sendai when she could not concentrate all her time on teaching music. *Experiences* contains a concise account of her conclusions. (*Experiences*, pp. 17–22.)

She soon ruled out 'lack of interest or effort' in the face of her pupils' obvious determination and enthusiasm. Likewise, 'lack of knowledge of musical theory'; the students had learnt some rudiments of musical theory in primary school, on which they could build by studying the available books. Lack of rhythmic sense, being comparatively easy to resolve, she also ruled out.

Eventually Hansen identified two 'fundamental defects'. The second of these, not mentioned in her earlier thesis, was 'the lack of power of paying concentrated attention. Japanese girls were not expected to think very deeply' (*Experiences*, pp. 17–22). Even this was relatively easy to resolve, by strict drills, making them sing alone during lessons, and generally bringing home to them the realization that studying music was as serious and difficult as studying English or maths. In a postcard addressed to her sister and dated 13 December 1914 she describes how she went about this task:

> They've gotten to the point where they beg me to just let them have <u>plenty</u> of chances to sing alone in class – when it used to take all my diplomacy to induce them to try it alone on very special occasions. You see, I flunked about a fourth of the school last spring! I enjoyed doing it too, for they'd

96 She was married to William George Seiple, who taught at Tohoku College from 1905 to 1936 and acted as director at Miyagi from March 1908 to 1911.

97 KH to AFH, 21 June 1908, SLR, Box 1, Folder 22.

> gotten the idea while I was gone that they didn't have to work in music. I believe they are convinced now that they were mistaken.[98]

The first and greatest 'fundamental defect', however, was pitch, and this could only be remedied by intensive, constant practice that targeted its root. Hansen's thorough investigation revealed that difficulties with pitch were specific rather than general. She tested her incoming students and discovered a number of what she called 'deaf spots' (*Experiences*, p. 19). Most of them centred on the ascending major scale. Within this the most difficult succession was from the sixth to the seventh to the eighth degree. The next most difficult point was the (major) third step; most students had difficulties distinguishing a major third from a minor third.

A key experience that gave Hansen valuable insights into the problem of pitch occurred when she practised Schubert's *Erlking* with her best chorus in 1910 (in a three-part arrangement).[99] In October 1910, she wrote to her sister:

> I've attempted a most ambitious thing in the chorus arrangement – three-part – of Schubert's Erlking. It really isn't much harder for them, though, than a single major tune that any American youngster could sing. Their ideas of difficulty aren't ours, anyway, and easy intervals for us are next to impossible for them, and vice versa. But the Erlking appeals to them mightily, and they get into a white heat of enthusiasm at every practice – as do I![100]

She again mentioned rehearsing 'Erlking' in a subsequent letter, and after the successful performance of the work, she wrote at some length about what she called an 'experiment'.[101] She had made them learn it all by ear, 'just to see if that would get the Japanese flatting out of their voices – and it did; there was only one false note in it and that an inconspicuous one. But it took from a half hour to an hour's practice every day for two months!' The tutor who helped her drill the students 'developed such an ear that on the night of the performance she said she couldn't hear a thing but the one false note!' She described the tutor,

98 KH to AFH, 13 December 1914, SRL, Folder 27.
99 Hansen, *Experiences*, 19. Hansen wrote, 'in about my fifth year', but according to her letters home, she rehearsed the work in her fourth year, autumn 1910.
100 KH to AFH, 9 October 1910, SRL Box 1, Folder 24.
101 KH to AFH, 3 December 1910, Box 1, Folder 24.

whom she could trust to conduct individual practice, as a 'great help in getting the kinks out of the altos, who would flat on sol – do every time it came in'. The tutor did equally well in drilling the altos in a Brahms song, 'when I'd despaired'. Summarizing the students' strengths and weaknesses Hansen told her sister,

> you should have heard the way they'd all sing augmented seconds and all such outlandish intervals perfectly true on the first trial, and flat and get away miles from the tune whenever it struck a major scale! Beside sol-do, the thing that floored them most was la-ti-do. They were weeks getting that! But those chromatic passages were play to them, and the queer intervals at the end they sang unaccompanied, with almost no trouble at all. It was an interesting experiment; but I'm glad it's over. [102]

When she discussed the experience in *Musical Consciousness*, she expressed her surprise at the ease with which the fifty girls memorized the three-part arrangement and mastered its at times intricate rhythms: 'The passages with the eight notes in the song against the three in the accompaniment were no more difficult than any other passage.' (pp. 33–34.) But what intrigued her even more was the immense difficulty they had with short ascending scale passages, in contrast to the diminished fifth in the last phrase of the melody, which they sang correctly 'from the very first time they heard it, while an American singer, who was learning at the same time, had considerable trouble with this interval.' (p. 46.) In *Experiences* (pp. 19–20) she described her observations in more detail, again contrasting the difficulty the girls had with the ascending notes in the passage, 'Willst, feiner Knabe du mit mir gehn?' with the ease with which they mastered, 'In seinen Armen das Kind war todt', singing the final phrase 'with absolutely true pitch after I had played it for them once on the piano'. Even after extended and intensive practice, however, the problem had not been overcome for good: two weeks later 'when the concert was repeated unexpectedly with only two or three days for practice, they sang it almost as badly as at the beginning.'

It has to be said, though, that the difficulties with the scale passage described by Hansen here may well be experienced by European or North American choirs, depending on the age and experience of the

102 KH to AFH, 3 December 1910, Box 1, Folder 24.

singers and the musical context.[103] Possibly, after years in Japan, Hansen overestimated the abilities of the average American church or school choir.

Having identified the specific problems with pitch, Hansen set about developing a remedy. After returning from her first furlough with a Mus. B., she put together a series of books with ear-drill exercises, similar to those of the Ginn series for teaching music reading that the school had adopted as text books in music theory,[104] but based on the specific difficulties her students wrestled with. She was helped in her drill work by competent assistants, as her letters about rehearsing *Erlkönig* show. In *Experiences* (p. 24) she described how she recruited tutors from the most promising graduate students whom she had singled out for informal classes, covering 'all the mechanical parts of teaching the subject'. When she compared the students' achievements in the written ear-drills with those in their other subjects, she discovered that 'musical intelligence and general intelligence', and particularly English reading, corresponded closely.

Relentless ear-drilling, combined with written exercises and regular graded tests produced results,

> even beyond my hopes. The singing classes learned very quickly what concentration meant. Remarkable accuracy in pitch was developed in a year or so. Chapel and entertainments ceased to be painful. Real singing became possible, and independent singing of parts. I was able to organize a choir of schoolgirls to sing every Sunday in the largest church in Sendai, learning a hymn or a simple anthem in two or three parts for each service. (*Experiences*, p. 23.)

Letters to her family described other early successes. At a show in November 1914, a few months after her return from her first furlough, the students performed a pantomime based on Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. The accompanying 'incidental music' included a song by Charles Wakefield Cadman, 'slightly altered in the title to fit the proprieties in Japan'. The song (sung as Hiawatha stands by Minnehaha's grave) is

103 This was confirmed to me by Mark Baumann, organist of the German church St Petri in Copenhagen, who has experience with both adults' and children's choirs (conversation, August 2016).

104 Ginn's *The New Educational Music Course* (1906) by James Mc Laughlin and W. W. Gilchrist.

billed in the programme as 'Along the Spirit Way', which is the last line of the verse. The actual title is, 'Far Off I Hear a Lover's Flute', one of Cadman's *Four American Indian Songs* (Op. 45). Hansen gave a glowing evaluation of the singer's performance:

> The girl has a really good voice, and can get good tones up to high a; and Mrs. Seiple drilled her. You should have heard her do that last octave jump, landing absolutely true on high g, with a very soft tone, then swelling into a long full tone and letting it die away very gradually. It was the best thing of the kind we ever had here.[105]

From Hansen's description we can conclude that her student, in mastering the challenges posed by the deceptively simple melody in terms of intonation and breath control, succeeded in conveying the kind of expression Hansen otherwise found performances by Japanese tended to lack.

The best instrumental performance in the same show, wrote Hansen, was a sonata played on two pianos (four hands), the allegro from the Mozart's Piano Sonata No. 5 in G major, K. 283 with an added accompaniment of a second piano by Edvard Grieg. Compared to singing, Hansen discussed her experiences with teaching the piano and organ only briefly in *Experiences*, presumably because they presented less of a challenge.

> During all this time, I had been teaching piano and organ. Mechanically, the results had been good. Japanese girls as a rule have good hands, are excellent mimics, and are far more zealous in practicing than American girls. Memorizing had, however, been almost impossible, and of course spontaneous expression was almost unknown. After the introduction of ear-drill, memorizing became very easy. Japanese girls have naturally good memories, for their former education, especially in Japanese music, consisted almost wholly of memorizing. All that was necessary was for them to learn really to <u>hear</u> the Western music they were studying. (*Experiences*, pp. 24–25.)

Thanks to effective training of the musical memory, a student from the first graduating class of the newly established college department astonished her audience by playing Beethoven's entire 'Moonlight'

105 KH to AFH, 30 November 1914. Details of the pieces performed according to the programme: 'Twenty-third Anniversary of the Miyagi Jo Gakko Literary Society', 27 November 1914. SRL, Box 5, folder 13.

Sonata, 'the one Western piece known by reputation to every educated Japanese' (*Experiences*, p. 27) from memory. Two years later, another student gave the first graduating recital at which she both sang and played the piano, performing 'a Bach Fugue, a Beethoven sonata, several modern pieces, and the last movement of the Mendelssohn G minor concerto' from memory (*Experiences*, p. 28).

Singing, meanwhile, progressed to the point that the school could boast a chorus of eighty to one hundred voices, with all members having passed an examination in sight-singing equivalent to the entry requirements for the music course. In 1926 they performed Mendelssohn's *St Paul Oratorio*. According to Hansen, 'it marked a step in the musical history of Japan, for it was the first time that a Japanese chorus had sung the whole of a standard oratorio.' (*Experiences*, p. 32.) Even the contralto solos were sung by a Japanese graduate from the college course. Voice graduates, like the piano graduates, had to prepare graduating recitals (Hansen attached programmes of the 1933 recitals in the appendix of the thesis).[106]

Some of the school's graduates stayed on as teachers in the music department. At the time Hansen wrote *Experiences*, the department usually employed six Japanese teachers in addition to three conservatoire-trained Americans. To prevent the problem of deteriorating skills soon after graduation that Hansen had observed earlier, the teachers were carefully supervised and given sufficient opportunity for study and practice in the school's studios. In addition, they each received a weekly lesson with their head of department. According to Hansen, these measures were effective: 'Although Japanese music teachers as a rule do their best work during the first year or so after graduation, this policy has made our Japanese faculty increasingly efficient the longer they teach.' (*Experiences*, p. 34.) Retaining the Japanese teachers, however, was a problem, as they usually gave up their job when they married, 'and music teachers seem to be especially desirable in the marriage market' (*Experiences*, p. 34).

Besides training school teachers, the music department obviously laid stress on training church musicians who could play the organ and instruct children at Sunday schools to sing hymns. Hansen reported that

106 Hansen also began to refer to the music department as a 'Conservatory' from around 1926: see Mensendiek, *To Japan with Love*, 54.

Miyagi was currently providing organists and pianists for about twenty-five Sunday schools, and that she herself made an effort to visit one of these schools each Sunday to give advice to her students. In this work too, Hansen reported remarkable achievements, citing the National Secretary of the Christian Literature Society, who, during a visit to the Sendai churches remarked, 'Such church music is impossible in Japan anywhere outside of Sendai.' (*Experiences*, p. 35.) Hansen, however, did not let herself become complacent: 'Ear-drill, largely written, continues to be the foundation of all instruction. "Eternal vigilance" is certainly the price of true pitch in Japan.' (*Experiences*, p. 32.)

Hansen's detailed description of the challenges she faced as a teacher of Western music to the Japanese, the measures she developed to overcome them, and the successes she achieved, provide us with a clear idea of what a tortuous process the adoption of Western music was for the Japanese and how slow it was in the early years—something that we rarely hear about in the predominant narrative of the success story. Ultimately, however, Kate Hansen, like her fellow missionaries, regarded mastery of Western music as a means rather than an end in itself. In this they resembled the Confucian-educated Meiji leaders who advocated music as a tool for reforming the people's manners and customs. In her reports to the mission board, Hansen identified teacher training as one of the department's most important tasks, both in order to secure the future of the school and to extend the influence of Christian teachers.[107] Even in her academic thesis, Hansen made no bones about this: 'From the beginning, the historical relation of Western music to Christianity has been made clear to all music students. The majority of those entering the Conservatory are already identified with some church, and all of the others have become Christians before graduation.' (*Experiences*, p. 34.)

But while both the Japanese leaders and the foreign missionaries promoted music as a tool for their respective non-musical ends, Hansen's personal passion for music extended well beyond her work as a missionary and educator. This fact would not have been lost on the Japanese. They would also have observed that making music was an important leisure activity for foreigners; one that was, moreover,

107 Reports for 1934–36; 1942, quoted in Mensendiek, *To Japan with Love*, 61–62, 75–76.

perceived as entirely respectable—at least when it was enjoyed in genteel homes, in church, and at public concerts.

Hansen's characterizations of the different kinds of native music serve as a useful reminder of how different traditional Japanese and modern Western music were. It is difficult to gauge whether the fact that most of her hearing experience took place in concerts rather than traditional settings diminished or increased the sense of alienness. Either way, Hansen's experience of alienness reminds us that most Japanese must have experienced similar feelings when confronted with Western music. The difference, however, was that Hansen had no qualms about dismissing Japanese music as backwards, while for the Japanese the alien music represented modern times. Hansen's attitude towards Japanese music was, moreover, to a significant extent shared by the Japanese elite.

Given the alienness of Western music, it is hardly surprising that initial efforts by the Japanese to perform it produced mixed results. But the examination of concert programmes in the following chapter demonstrates the zeal with which local actors in Sendai organized concerts and performed in them. Arguably, the quality of the resulting performances was less important than the act of performing.