Music and the Making of Modern Japan

Joining the Global Concert

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Conclusion

> The international environment Japan found itself in in the late nineteenth century meant that in order to survive without being colonized it had no choice but to somehow unite the people in solidarity and strive to enrich and strengthen the country, and become a civilized nation. The Meiji government intended public education to foster a new type of citizen that, while submitting to the demands of the nation, would act as an independent individual, and for this purpose music (singing *shōka* with one voice) was deemed indispensable. One aspect of songs is that they move people with the literary quality and content of the lyrics. Equally important, however, is the act of matching them with sound [...] We should note that, however hackneyed the lyrics may be, it is song which, just as the drum call creates discipline, synchronizes the pitch and tempo of the all the voices of people present in a given place.[1]

> When we reflect on some of the conclusions reached in this exploration of musical universality, irony may seem to abound. We share perceptual mechanisms and processes, but the result is that we develop mental schemata that make some foreign music sound strange. We share some universal preferences, but most are not on the surface, and their compatibility with many structural possibilities results in musical diversity, not similarity. Music's impact on our sense of security and its power to create group cohesion makes it serviceable for sectarian purposes.[2]

By the early 1920s, musical culture in Sendai had been transformed: 'We are having real professional concerts in Japan now, even in Sendai, and the way the Japanese are getting to appreciate them is wonderful. [...] The

1 Yasuto Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku: Isawa Shūji ga mezashita Nihon kindaika* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2008), 237. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 145.

2 Kathleen Marie Higgins, *The Music between Us: Is Music a Universal Language?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 181–82, https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226333274.001.0001

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0374.12

Japanese are going to be ahead of us in music in a couple of generations, if our folks don't improve',[3] wrote Kate Hansen in 1923. In her thesis in 1927, she gave three main reasons for the transformation. First, Japan's increasing wealth as a result of the war boom allowed more people to buy instruments, even pianos, and practise playing them at home. None of her early pupils had a piano at home, despite coming from wealthy families. Second, phonographs became popular (no doubt also a result of increased wealth), as did recordings of Western music, with the effect of 'training their ears in a remarkable way'. Third, 'real artists' (Hansen's expression) began to visit, including European refugees, particularly destitute White Russians after the revolution. Hansen added a fourth reason that was applicable in Sendai: the efforts by professors of Tohoku Imperial University, who had often studied abroad and heard concerts in Europe, and worked hard to promote concerts by top-class artists in Sendai.[4]

Hansen's letters in the 1920s contain several references to rising musical standards. On 10 February 1924, she wrote to her family that a local primary school had acquired a piano, 'the first one for that purpose in the city'.[5] She herself was invited to play at its inauguration, and some of the teachers at the school had taken lessons at Miyagi College in preparation for the event.[6] A few months later she mentioned an example of increased familiarity with Western music: 'Curiously enough, as I was walking home the day before the concert, I heard a man, a very ordinary-looking one, whistle the airs of both the Mendelssohn and the Lohengrin marches, somewhat out of tune, to be sure, but quite recognizably.'[7]

Foreign artists touring Japan began to include Sendai in their itinerary, and found an appreciative audience. About Efrem Zimbalist's

3 KH to 'Aunt Kate' (Troup Cookingham), Karuizawa, 1 August 1923, SRL Box 1, Folder 31.

4 Hansen, Kate. Thesis: Experiences in Teaching and Developing a Music School in Japan. (1927, updated 1933. Personal Papers of Kate I. Hansen, University Archives, PP19, Box 3, Folder 1, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries, Lawrence, Kansas), 27–30. Research tends to back up her observations. See Margaret Mehl, *Not by Love Alone: The Violin in Japan, 1850–2010* (Copenhagen: The Sound Book Press, 2014), 121–31.

5 KH to her family, SHL Box 1, Folder 32.

6 KH to her family, 17 February 1924, Box 1, Folder 32.

7 KH to her family, 8 June 1924.

visit in 1930, Hansen wrote, 'The great event of this week was the concert by Zimbalist, the first one in Sendai by any artist of his reputation. [...] I think Mr. Zimbalist had expected a very backwoods kind of audience, and was extremely surprised to find a lot of conservatory students and people who know about music.'[8] In subsequent letters, Hansen wrote about concerts in Sendai given by Leonid Kreutzer, the French pianist Gil-Marchex, Jascha Heifetz, Zimbalist again, Konrad Liebrecht, and Mischa Elman.[9] Kreutzer and Liebrecht had fled from the Nazis and settled in Japan. Other refugees from Germany included the German philosopher Karl Löwith (1897–1973), who taught at Tohoku Imperial University from 1936 to 1941. His wife was 'an excellent amateur violinist', and playing together with her gave Hansen 'a chance to know things I've never played in before'.[10] That same year, 1937, Hansen had her first experience of hearing music broadcast by radio from Germany at the house of an acquaintance: 'the very first time we've done this in Sendai, and now, for the first time, I'm really wishing for a radio.'[11]

By the 1930s, then, the provincial town's links to the wider world had noticeably increased. Europe, meanwhile, was becoming 'provincial' in the sense that its cultural dominance was eroding. Emigrants from Europe in the early twentieth century mostly settled in America rather than Asia. By the end of the century, however, European art music was just as much at home in Asia as in Europe or the USA, if not more so.[12]

Until well into the twentieth century, narratives that assumed the superiority of European art music in order to explain its dominance were common. Since then, it has become fashionable to link the spread of Western music with 'the crimes of colonialism'.[13] While such a link

8 KH to her family, 18 October 1930, SRL Box 1, Folder 36. Zimbalist toured Japan six times between 1922 and 1935: see Mehl, *Not by Love Alone*, 138–39. KH's papers include a programme of a recital in Sendai on 5 June 1935 (Box 5, Folder 13).

9 Leonid Kreutzer: KH to her family 10 May 1931; Henri Gil-Marchex (1894–1970) and Heifetz: 25 Oct 1931, Folder 37; Konrad Liebrecht: 3 June 1935; Elman 14 February 1937.

10 KH to her family, 28 February 1937, Folder 42.

11 KH to her family, 11 January 1937, Folder 42.

12 Nicholas Cook, 'Western Music as World Music', in *The Cambridge History of World Music*, ed. Philip Vilas Bohlman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1017/CHO9781139029476 Spitzer makes the same point: see Michael Spitzer, *The Musical Human: A History of Life on Earth* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 272.

13 For a recent example, see Spitzer, *Musical Human*, 258–67 and passim.

cannot be denied, the reality is more complex. As Liebersohn rightly observes: 'To capture the complexity of musical encounters is to go against the cliché of an imposition tout court of Western culture on the rest of the world, countered by the revolt of indigenous cultures.'[14] Japan is a case in point. It is worth repeating here that not only did Japan escape being colonized: Japan itself became a colonizing power and contributed to the global dissemination of Western music in its colonies. Comparing Japan with the United States, which in the period examined here became the most powerful of Western nations, demonstrates that political and cultural dominance did not necessarily go hand in hand; a sense of inferiority and a reverence for Europe as the musical heartland persisted in both Japan and the USA.[15]

In what follows, the five assertions presented in the introduction and elaborated upon in the preceding chapters will be revisited in order to shed further light on the complex processes involved in Japan's musical modernization and to attempt to answer the question posed in the introduction about what music might contribute to our understanding of Japan's modern history.

First, Western music attracted the attention of government officials and individuals not because of its intrinsic merits, but because of its functions within the modern state. For the general public it came to be associated with modernity, because it was performed in and by modern institutions. Second, while government efforts centred on strengthening the nation and moulding its citizens, all the actors we have examined, both official and non-official, were acutely conscious of being part of a global community of nations in which they wanted to be accepted as equals by the leading powers. Third, and closely to related to the first two, the ultimate relegation of traditional music to a niche existence did not mean that it became insignificant. Indeed, it assumed a vital role in the re-imagining of Japanese culture. Fourth, 'Western music' is a blanket term, and European art music proper was arguably the least important genre to be introduced, at

14 Harry Liebersohn, *Music and the New Global Culture: From the Great Exhibitions to the Jazz Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 9, https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226649306

15 The same point has been made regarding China. See Richard Curt Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 202.

least initially. Our examination of concert life in Sendai reveals that concert programmes were dominated by *shōka*, marches, pieces from the pedagogical literature, and items that might be subsumed under the term 'salon music'. And fifth, there is good reason to accept that many of the effects of hearing and making music described in the research literature on the subject are real and support the argument that engaging with Western music (as well as approaching traditional music in a new way) was a means of engaging with global modernity itself and playing an active part in shaping it.

Beside the army and navy, the school system was the most significant modern institution through which Western music was first introduced. Isawa Shūji, the most important actor behind the introduction of music into the public education system, had limited musical expertise or interest in music *per se*. Emphasizing these deficiencies, however, obscures the breadth of his educational vision. This becomes clear when his role as a promoter of Western music is related to his other activities.[16] Isawa understood the power of music when combined with movement, and with language, to promote all aspects of education: physical, intellectual, linguistic, and moral. This is evident from his pioneering efforts in Aichi to introduce movement games as part of elementary education. Both schools and the military employed synchronized movements to music to support the Meiji government's agenda of educating citizens. If the Japanese really are more group-orientated than most—and the cliché persists, although scholars have long been critical of it[17]—then the systematic promotion of singing together and of synchronized movement to music since the Meiji period may well represent a more plausible explanation than the demands of rice cultivation.

Indeed, performing synchronized movements to music is not limited to schools or the army. In 1928, the national broadcasting cooperation (NHK) introduced an institution that has endured almost continuously to this day: radio callisthenics (*rajio taisō*). The concept originated in the United States in 1925, the year radio broadcasting was introduced

16 This is the major contribution of Okunaka's book: see Okunaka, *Kokka to ongaku*.

17 See, for example, Hans Dieter Ölschleger et al., eds., *Individualität und Egalität im gegenwärtigen Japan: Untersuchungen zu Wertemustern im Bezug auf Familie und Arbeitswelt* (Munich: Iudicium, 1994), 31–47.

into Japan, and aroused Japanese interest almost immediately.[18] It took the form of a three-minute series of simple exercises to piano accompaniment broadcast every morning at the same time. As with the drum and fife bands, one might question the description of the simple piano accompaniment as 'music', but the sounds are certainly what we would call 'Western'. Moreover, over the years, *rajio taisō* (together with the merits of rising early) became the subject of several *shōka*, including *Rajio* in the Ministry of Education textbook for primary schools (second year) issued in 1932.[19]

More recently, song and movement in the form of dance were mobilized in support of the upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympics by the organizing committee, who in 2017 released a video with an updated version of the 1964 classic song *Gorin ondo*, complete with a new choreography that included a version for the wheelchair-bound.[20]

Isawa is often described as having given little consideration to aesthetic education, but that is not entirely true. For the early collection of *shōka* compiled under Isawa's auspices, poets and prominent stylists were engaged to compose suitable lyrics. Many of the songs in the first song book are about nature and the seasons and exemplify basic Japanese poetic conventions. Others express longing for home and family. The lyrics of *Hotaru* (Fireflies), sung to the tune of *Auld Lang Syne*, one of the most culturally significant songs from the early *shōka* repertoire, combined nostalgia with love for the nation and the need to protect it. Today, the strongly patriotic verses are forgotten, and the main reason for its significance and enduring popularity may well be

18 Kerim Yasar, *Electrified Voices: How the Telephone, Phonograph, and Radio Shaped Modern Japan, 1868–1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 118–26, https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.7312/yasa18712/html; Mark Jewel, 'The First Primary School Songbook of 1881: A Study and Translation (1)', *Journal of Liberal Arts* (*Waseda University*) 143 (2017). See also Ryan Moran, 'Securing the Health of the Nation: Life Insurance, Labor and Health Improvement in Interwar Japan', *Japan Forum* 31, no. 2 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2018.1461677 For a recent description of current practice in present-day Japan, see 'The Lifelong Exercise that Keeps Japan Moving', WorkLife (Japan 2020), BBC, updated 19 June 2020, https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200609-the-life-long-exercise-that-keeps-japan-moving

19 See liner notes to the compilation, *Rajio taisō no subete: Rajio taisō 75nen no ayumi*. CD, King Records, 2003, KICG 3079.

20 See, for example, 'Tokyo 2020 Olympics get song and dance treatment', BBC News, Asia, 25 July 2017, https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-40712985

the tradition, transmitted from America, of singing it at graduation.[21] Whether or not lyrics of *shōka* were overtly nationalist, their melodies and rhythms helped shape the words and phrases and made them more memorable, while the act of singing together reinforced the sense of belonging to a community, whether local, national, or even global.

Research on singing in schools and on sports has often focused on their use, or abuse, in the service of the nation. The abuses of music by dictatorial regimes and for fuelling aggression have, of course, been identified and analysed. Unsurprisingly, musical culture in Nazi Germany, where the myth of a special German link with music persisted, has received particular attention.[22] In Japan in the period from the 1930s to the end of the Second World War, the already patriotic content of *shōka* in the textbooks issued by the Ministry of Education became increasingly militaristic and thus provides a stark reminder of music's potential to divide as well as to unite. Combining the unfixed emotional power of music with specific meanings expressed through the power of words can produce a formidable tool for the manipulation of minds and emotions. During the Second World War, *shōka* sung in schools played a significant role in mobilizing pupils for the war effort and did so far more effectively than more obvious propaganda forced on the people by an authoritarian government.[23] Discourse analysis of a large number of letters written by kamikaze pilots, for example, has revealed that their

21 For a translation of all the songs in the first songbook, see Jewel, 'The First Primary School Songbook of 1881: A Study and Translation (1)'. For the significance of fixed occasions for singing *Auld Lang Syne*, see Morag J. Grant, *Auld Lang Syne: A Song and its Culture* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021) https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0231

22 For a summary of Germany's ambivalent relationship with music, see Celia Applegate, *The Necessity of Music: Variations on a German Theme* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 296–313, https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487511593 Synchronized, rhythmical movements have been similarly discredited: see William McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 151.

23 For a detailed linguistic and discursive analysis of *shōka* in the government textbooks and the psychological mechanisms behind them, see Luli van der Does-Ishikawa, 'A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Japanese Children's Official Songbooks, 1881–1945: Nurturing an Imperial Ideology through the Manipulation of Language' (Doctor of Philosophy, University of Sheffield, 2013), https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/19775967.pdf

self-representations in their writings reflect the contents of *shōka* they grew up singing in school.[24]

But while nationalism causes division and conflict between nations, it also constitutes a set of shared assumptions about the world: internationalism and globalism represent the other side of the same coin, and music can serve both. Kume Kunitake may have had difficulty making sense of the musical performances he heard at the Boston Jubilee, but he had no trouble in understanding music's usefulness for promoting patriotism when he observed military bands of different nations performing their brand of patriotic music. Music, as well as being a tool of patriotism, can and does serve as a force of global integration. While the bands of different countries had their own repertoire, the musical idiom was shared, as were musical practices and innovations, which circulated across national borders.[25]

Japanese reformers realized that, in order to join the concert of nations, they needed a distinctive national music that—literally—harmonized with that of the other nations. Westerners solved the paradox by cultivating the myth of music as a universal language. The national musics of Western countries could be regarded as dialects, that is, in essence, compatible. Japanese music, however, differed fundamentally from Western music, and when Chamberlain applied the notion of dialect to Japanese music, he must have been aware that it was far-fetched. Isawa, in his writings, tried to prove that Japanese and Western music have shared roots, an even more far-fetched idea.

Ultimately, the dilemma was resolved by allocating Western and Japanese music to separate spheres and by placing European art music and the various genres of traditional music (in some cases in sanitized forms) on their separate pedestals. Western music was the music of global modernity, performed in modern spaces, including occasions when the nation—as a member of the world of nations—was affirmed and celebrated. Meanwhile, indigenous musics—re-imagined as *hōgaku*, a term that brought together previously separate musical worlds—represented national distinctiveness. Horiuchi Keizō (1897–1983), music

24 Luli van der Does-Ishikawa, 'Contested Memories of the Kamikaze and the self-representations of Tokkō-tai youth in their missives home', *Japan Forum* 27, no. 3 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2015.1045540 See in particular 370–73.

25 Applegate, *Necessity*, 228, 30.

critic and author of a history of (mostly Western) music in modern Japan (1968), presents the case in a nutshell, characterizing *yōgaku* and *hōgaku* as follows:

> *Yōgaku* is based on the folksongs and folk dances of all the peoples of Europe and America, and so the artistic progress in each country has influenced the others, and thus the distinctiveness of each people has gradually weakened and their musical compositions have taken on a mode of expression that gives rise to a shared emotion that transcends ethnic feelings. This characteristic of transcending ethnicity must be a major reason why *yōgaku* has so many devotees in Japan.
>
> *Hōgaku*, on the other hand, relies on modes of expression that are completely rooted in the nature, language, and customs of Japan. Because of this, rather than compositions that might arouse emotions shared by the whole human race, it tends to be limited to specific characteristics that only appeal to people within a narrow sphere.[26]

By the time Horiuchi was writing (the 1960s), this process of role allocation was complete. *Hōgaku* (in the meaning of traditional music) was marginalized, but treated as an essential national asset. By this time, the solution also satisfied more recent Western expectations, that non-Western countries remain faithful to their own culture and preserve its supposed authenticity, rather than adulterate it in the name of modernization.[27] The exaggerated respect for *honba,* the heartland of European art music as the only place where allegedly authentic classical music can be heard,[28] has its correlation in the cultivation of (supposedly) pure Japanese musical tradition.[29]

The close association of Western music with modernity is illustrated in an episode described by the writer Nagai Kafū (1879–1959), who had far more first-hand experience of Western music than the early reformers, having spent five years in the United States and France and attended numerous opera and concert performances. During his voyage

26 Keizō Horiuchi, *Ongaku Meiji hyakunen shi* (Tokyo: Ongaku no tomo Sha, 1968), 2.

27 Hiroshi Watanabe, *Nihon bunka modan rapusodi*, (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2002), 17–21. Yasar seems to adopt the same attitude when he alleges that the Japanese committed 'cultural suicide' by adopting Western music: Yasar, *Electrified Voices*, 82.

28 The attitude is alive and well, even while scholars such as Cook are stating that East Asia has in effect become the new centre of European art music. See Beata M. Kowalczyk, *Transnational Musicians: Precariousness, Ethnicity and Gender in the Creative Industry* (Routledge, 2020), 47.

29 Watanabe, *Nihon bunka modan rapusodi*, 8.

from France back to Japan in 1908 he felt the urge to express his feelings in a 'beautiful [Western-style] song in the most beautiful voice I can muster.' He found the various Japanese musical genres inadequate for the purpose, even while lamenting his inability to express his sentiments in music. That his dismissal of Japanese genres as unsuitable for his intention was almost certainly related to his specific situation rather than a blanket rejection of Japanese music, is suggested by his observation that noh chanting was 'completely out of place on a state-of-the-art steamship in the twentieth century.'[30]

The opera fan Kafū can be assumed to have had in mind an aria rather than a *shōka*. For most Japanese at the time, however, Western music would have meant the mixture of musical genres played by military and civilian bands: the songs taught in schools, as well as popular songs and transcriptions of popular classics for performance in the home. The works from European art music included in this mixture would have been either chamber music with piano and violin or arrangements of extracts from the symphonic and operatic repertoire. Most Japanese never had the opportunity to even hear the latter in the way the composer intended them: defining genres of European art music could not be directly experienced in Japan until well into the twentieth century. Even small-scale works could rarely be heard performed competently.

This also means that before the advent of recorded music, the possibilities for faithfully imitating Western examples were limited. This is a fact that needs spelling out in order to counter another conventional narrative, which claims that the Japanese (and by extension other Asians) have not fully mastered European art music, but that they merely imitate. They are, so the stereotype goes (and as we have heard) technically proficient but lack the ability to express the music. Those who continue to repeat this narrative are clearly not aware of the extent to which Western music has dominated the Japanese soundscape since the late nineteenth century. To be sure, Japanese students (like the ones taught by Kate Hansen) proved to be accomplished mimics, but learning by imitation is not limited to certain cultures. Even Mozart, that icon of the European notion of 'genius', was a mimic.[31] It is the

30 Quoted in Yasar, *Electrified Voices*, 74.
31 Spitzer, *Musical Human*, 45.

'corrosive and misunderstood conception'[32] of 'genius' that underpins the assumption that, while technical accomplishment can be acquired, musical expression requires some undefined special quality that cannot easily be learned. Until recently (and perhaps even today), expressive skills were rarely explicitly taught.[33] Hansen's early observation that most—not all! —of her pupils were unable to play expressively cannot be dismissed, but is easily explained by the fact that the girls had hardly any opportunity to hear and familiarize themselves with the sound of the music they were studying. Expressive skills can be learned, but the musician has to know what quality of sound they are aiming for and that knowledge is acquired through the experience of listening to performances.

Gramophone records were therefore a major game-changer. By the time they became widely available and affordable, in the 1920s, the early channels for the reception of Western music were well-established, which meant that there was a firm basis for the reception of art music—as well as other kinds of music—through recordings. The timing was an important factor in the thoroughness with which the Japanese made Western music their own, because in the early phase of its introduction the only way to experience music was by live performance. Gramophone recordings did enable and even encourage imitation, not only in Japan.

This did not apply solely to art music or even Western music in general. Recordings also made indigenous musical genres more widely accessible. Even before that, and before the introduction of Western music could make itself felt, the traditional musical praxis transformed as a result of political, social, and economic changes. These included the regulation and standardization of court music, the abolition of guilds and monopolies, the gradual disappearance of barriers between social classes and geographical locality, as well as changing gender roles. The commercialization of artistic and leisure pursuits, which had already begun in the Tokugawa period, offered new opportunities, and musicians, such as Nakao Tozan, made good use of them. Publishing and selling self-study manuals, song texts, and sheet music, whether

32 Ibid., 44.

33 Patrik N. Juslin et al., 'Feedback Learning of Musical Expressivity', in *Musical Excellence: Strategies and Techniques to Enhance Performance*, ed. Aaron Williamson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 247.

of Western, Japanese, or blended music, could be both part of a reform agenda and a way to generate income by catering for new markets. Either way, these were largely grassroots activities, but the result was that, even without direct government intervention, traditional genres were transformed by a certain amount of standardization and by the nationwide dissemination of repertoire. Self-study manuals, moreover, made it possible to learn a traditional instrument without binding oneself to the traditional system of transmission.[34] Recordings made and issued by indigenous companies reinforced this trend.

While arguing that Western music, when it was introduced in the nineteenth century, represented universal civilization, progress, and modernity, we have not discussed how far the music itself was inherently 'modern'. Cook suggests that music of the Western classical tradition may well have even more power than music in general to transcend time and place. He names the omnipresence of European art music in (contemporary) Seoul as an example, but he could just as well have named Tokyo. According to Cook, 'classical instrumental music signifies autonomy, the availability of values not tied to time and place', or, in other words, universal values. To what extent this is an 'ideological deception' is of limited significance, as long as it is widely believed. Western classical music serves as a 'musical utopia',[35] which can become a powerful force when it is combined with collaboration.

To people unfamiliar with Western music (classical or otherwise), it would have been first and foremost modern (a universal value, one might say) by association. Essentially, it constituted the soundtrack to the nation's modernization project.[36] Advocates of music reform did occasionally mention musical elements: they would describe Japanese music as doleful, implying that Western music was experienced as more upbeat and suggested progress. Certainly, the musical character of marches and the majority of *shōka* would seem to justify that perception. Nevertheless, in this book, I have treated the nature of the music itself as secondary even while insisting that that music was more than just another element in the reform package.

34 The *shakuhachi* in particular appears to have been well served with published manuals, if the NDL holdings are anything to go by.

35 Cook, ''Western Music as World Music', 93–94.

36 My use of the word 'soundtrack' here is inspired by Spitzer, *Musical Human*, 67–99.

What, then, makes music special? What do we learn from our examination of music and music-related activities in Japan in the period under investigation? In order to attempt an answer, we must first and foremost remind ourselves that music results from human activity, and that this activity always takes place in a particular historical, geographical, social, and cultural context, with which it is inextricably bound up and upon which its effects and efficacy depend.

The 'power of music' (or *ongaku no chikara* in Japanese) is a long-standing cliché and the subject of myths, whether Orpheus' lyre or Yasumasa's flute. Perhaps it was never invoked more fervently than in the wake of the triple disaster in Northern Japan in 2011. Among the many musical initiatives, the concerts given by members of the Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra were among the earliest, and, with the founding of the Center for Recovery Through the Power of Music in Tohoku, the orchestra placed their efforts on a firm organizational footing. These and other musical activities received much media attention. On closer examination, however, the effects were mixed, and depended very much on extra-musical factors. Nakamura Mia, who examined media reports and conducted ethnographic fieldwork, concluded that 'music as social mediation is distinctly capable of amplifying empathy', but that the power of music depends on 'what music is played and how it is contextualized'.[37] She also concluded that, while in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, those affected could derive comfort from listening, as time went on, the role of active participation increased.[38]

From a different angle, but with similar emphasis on active participation, Tia DeNora and Gary Ansdell argue that music certainly has the potential to enhance health and well-being, or what they call 'a capacity to flourish', but they ascribe this not to the music per se, 'but rather what is done with, done to and done alongside musical engagement'.[39] Citing a longitudinal study involving music therapy, they

37 Mia Nakamura, 'Reconsidering the Power of Music: Recovery Concerts and Songs after the 2011 Japan Earthquake', *Senri Ethnological Studies* 105 (2021), https://minpaku.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/8708/files/SES105_06.pdf

38 Mia Nakamura, 'Music Sociology Meets Neuroscience', in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and the Body*, ed. Youn Kim and Sander L. Gilman (Oxford University Press, 2019 (online)), 136.

39 Tia DeNora and Gary Ansdell, 'What Can't Music Do?', *Psychology of Well-Being: Theory, Research and Practice* 4, no. 23 (2014): 9, https://doi.org/10.1186/s13612-014-0023-6

present a list of seventeen positive effects observed over time. Several of these would seem applicable to the case of Sendai examined here, in particular the following: musical activity provided,

1. 'a pretext for social relating'
2. 'a set of events that can be recalled and thus contribute to a sense of accumulating identity'
3. 'opportunities for interaction with others (and thus opportunities to forge relationships)'
4. 'opportunities for musicianship'
5. 'a medium for reframing identities'
6. 'a means for sharing information that might be harder to share through talk alone'[40]

As we have seen, music brought together individual actors, local and foreign, in order to promote music according to their respective goals. The modern institution of the concert became an important creative space for musical encounters. While Kate Hansen and other observers with knowledge of Western music derided or bemoaned the low standards of performance or the audience's lack of understanding, these were not the most significant aspects of the encounters. Arguably, the experience generated by performing (or listening) is what mattered. European art music represented the apex of Western civilization and what Cook calls 'musical utopia', in the sense that it was imagined as much as (or more than) it was performed. The fact that the Western music played in Sendai came, as it were, from the lower ranks of the art music repertoire is of limited significance compared to the player's consciousness of being part of a larger edifice: great music and, ultimately, modern civilization. The 'four fellows with violins' attempting to play an extract of a Wagner opera were perhaps not so different from the British amateur string quartet at the other end of the twentieth century attempting one of Beethoven's notoriously challenging late works, whose violinist told their coach: 'I know that to you we're all making a horrible bloody noise,

40 DeNora and Ansdell, 'What Can't Music Do?,' 7–8. The numbering is mine. The study, referred to as 'BRIGHT' is not the main focus of the article and not described in detail.

but we're not hearing that! We're hearing Beethoven.'[41] Of course, we cannot know for sure what exactly the four students were hearing, but we can be sure that it was not mere noise.

Participating in a concert of Western music or even blended music, whether as a performer or a listener— often the audience would be expected to join in the national anthem— meant sharing a space with people one would not usually associate with. *Shōka* with patriotic Japanese lyrics, whether of foreign origin or composed by Japanese in what we might call an international idiom, reinforced their awareness of being citizens of the modern nation of Japan. The increasingly global repertoire, meanwhile, linked the people in Sendai with those in other parts of the world. They could imagine themselves as actively participating in the modern world of nations. As Cristina Magaldi has argued for Rio de Janeiro in the early twentieth century, cultural connections among the urban centres worldwide were strengthened through the international circulation of music. The music popular at the time thus created a 'community of transnational feeling' and fuelled curiosity about foreign places.[42]

In sum, if we refrain from regarding the performance of a musical work as a faithful representation of a piece whose meaning is perceived as unchanging, and instead focus on the performance 'as an opportunity in which music allows people to do something with it while it itself does something', we can appreciate even a musically excruciating performance as a positive act in which new meanings are produced and a new future is imagined.[43] The students of the Second High School, and performers and listeners throughout the country and across social divides, were thus involved in imbuing the music they played with new meanings and imagining themselves as citizens of a democratic nation and of the modern world.

41 Quoted in Peter Mountain, *Scraping a Living: A Life of a Violinist* (Bloomington IN and Milton Keynes, UK: Authorhouse, 2007), 246.

42 Cristina Magaldi, 'Cosmopolitanism and World Music in Rio de Janeiro at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *The Musical Quarterly* 92, no. 3–4 (2009): 335, https://doi.org/10.1093/musqtl/gdp021

43 Nakamura, 'Music Sociology Meets Neuroscience', 136. Nakamura's main focus is 'retelling' and memory work after experiencing trauma, but the 'retelling' is part of an effort to imagine a better future.

The role of music not only in social bonding within a society but as a bridge for cross-cultural communication and solidarity is discussed by the philosopher Kathleen Higgins. The author's evident love for music might cause a reader to suspect that she is excessively optimistic about what music can accomplish, but her treatment is nuanced, and she draws upon work from several disciplines. Higgins's central argument is that 'people from around the globe can be brought together by one another's music.'[44] She ends by making a case for familiarizing oneself with music from other cultures. Music, according to Higgins, 'intimates [...] a sense of a broader world beyond music'.[45] It 'communicates vitality and engages our sense of connection with the larger environment and those within it.'[46] Higgins further argues that the 'powerful awareness of sharing life with others in the world' impressed on us by music represents 'a source of basic security'.[47] This sense of security is a condition for music's potential to 'shake people up and encourage change'.[48]

Higgins admits that the claims she makes for music providing a sense of security 'presupposes that the music is in a style that is familiar (or becoming so)'.[49] In the absence of familiarity, the awareness of sharing in something larger might still be there, but the emotions aroused may well be negative. We saw an example of a *shōka* with lyrics that presented the wider world as a threat,[50] and the history of modern Japan certainly shows an ambiguous relationship with the outside world. On the other hand, by combining the foreign music with familiar language, poetic conventions, or historical events, *shōka* also served as a way to render the music familiar and indigenize it. In concerts, familiarization was further promoted by including traditional Japanese as well as foreign music and by blended performances. By the time concerts of predominantly Western music were staged in Sendai, marches and *shōka* at the very least had become an integral part of the musical soundscape and may

44 Higgins, *Music between Us*, 1.
45 Ibid., 105.
46 Ibid., 168. More broadly, on the significance of shared sonic experience, see Ruth Finnegan, *Communicating: The Multiple Modes of Human Communication (2nd edition)* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014 (2002)).
47 Higgins, *Music between Us*, 144.
48 Ibid., 147.
49 Ibid., 148.
50 See Chapter 11.

well have contributed to feelings of security and of being at home in the modern world.

Western music in Japan, then, was linked to modernity right from the arrival of Perry's ships. Japan's modernization owed much to the fact that the Japanese, both at the state and at the individual levels, successfully harnessed the power of music, or more precisely, of 'doing things with music'.[51] Engaging with Western music not only became an important way to create a powerful national community, but also, through musical experience shared across time and space,[52] to actively participate in the emerging global community of nations.

51 DeNora and Ansdell, 'What Can't Music Do?', 7–8.

52 As Ruth Finnegan points out, 'sonic symbols' can transcend time and space. See Finnegan, *Communicating: The Multiple Modes of Human Communication* (*2nd edition*), 90.