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Jiuta - an explanation of traditional Japanese music Transcript

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Jiuta **An explanation of traditional Japanese music**

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I hope you all know about the extensive Japan content for the City of London Festival this year. The word "jiuta" in the title of this talk is one type of music that I will touch on, but I am trying to cover a wide range of genres and just give you some hints as to how you would approach Japanese music in general. I am going to try to cover a lot of ground in a fairly short time here.

I will start with a bit of an apology or warning: imagine if somebody asked you to give a lecture introducing British music in 45 minutes! But which music? Are we going to do folk, popular, classical? And if we are going to do folk, is it Scottish, Welsh, Irish? Is it Northumbrian pipes, is it Morris Dance? What popular music? Which one do you like? Which classical? Only that stuff by British composers? Is that what British classical music is? They do Beethoven in this country – is that British music?

I have got exactly the same problem for Japan. What about immigrant communities? Same problem again. Which Japanese music? Folk, classical, popular? Which minorities? The Ainu, the Okinawans, the recent Korean immigrants, the ancient Korea? There's no end to it, and I am going to have to leave out a lot, as you can tell. One year at SOAS, I spent an entire term, 22 hours I guess it was, on lectures just on the music of the Noh Theatre in Japan, and we only scratched the surface, which is good because that's about as much as I know about it! But still, that was a whole term; you have 45 minutes; and now it's 43!

We will move on, and I hope at the end of this at least you will have some of the right general background, so that if you hear a style of Japanese music you have not already learned something about, maybe you will be able to think about it in a different way. Maybe you will have some questions answered already; maybe you can then ask the right questions about it. That is the aim here I guess.

I cannot really cover history as such, except to mention that all of the major Japanese instruments basically have come across to Japan from China, often via Korea, sometimes of course from further west into China. Most of these came in the 7th or 8th Centuries. They have then been indigenised in Japan, and developed very different from their Chinese ancestors or their Korean relatives. The music has also developed in totally different directions. Oddly enough, I teach a course on East Asian music, and yet China, Korea and Japan, these are really very different music cultures, despite similarity of instruments. That's the end of history pretty much, for today!

I am going to have to ignore most of the Western music in Japan. Now you can hear the Tokyo String Quartet, as part of the City of London Festival; I don't think you need my help to understand that. Maybe I can help you a little more with some genres you know less well.

One little piece of background that relates to Western music is the history of Japanese music education in the school systems. It was in the 1870s, more or less, that Japan began its mad rush to modernise, or to westernise. Their doors were, in a way, forced open by Admiral Perry and his black ships and, from that time on, Japan was trying very hard to compete with the West, which included adopting a broadly similar educational system – a national curriculum eventually, etc – and of course Western-style music. From that day to this, in the schools in Japan, until three years ago, no student in Japanese music was ever required by the national curriculum to play a Japanese instrument, which is amazing to me. In the early '70s, briefly, middle school students were required to learn to sing one Japanese traditional folk song a year – three years, one song each. After four or five years, they gave up, because the teachers could not teach them, because all the music teachers in Japanese schools are trained in a typical Western-style conservatory to teach Western-style music. I would ask such teachers – I've done this many a time – "Why didn't you just go down the street? There's a little old lady around the corner from the school who sings these songs wonderfully. There's an eight-year old kid around the corner who sings them wonderfully. Why don't you bring them in to teach?" They reply: "Oh, but they haven't got qualifications!" That's the end of that little diatribe. But I always get very upset when I start thinking about this. Just think: an entire heritage has been left out of the public school system. Fortunately, this music is passed on in other ways. It is still popular and, in the last three years, the new national curriculum now requires middle school students to learn to perform on one Japanese instrument, any one that the school chooses. It does not say how much they have to be taught – it could be an hour a year, which is unfortunate, but some schools have really delved into this, so there is hope for the future of traditional Japanese music. As most of you know, the music you hear in your early childhood often is the music that really means something to you, and if you wait till you are 25 to begin to discover another music, sometimes it is almost too late. The schools have a role to play.

I have 12 very diverse types of Japanese music, and I will say a little about each before I play it. I am going to play you first a piece of court music. It is a piece that is taught in Japanese schools in the sense that it is kind of a music appreciation item. If you get the CD that comes with one of the standard textbooks in a Japanese school, this will be on it. The teachers might well play this. That may be all that happens. I can't do a lot more, but I would ask you to tap your foot to this one if you would like to, or at least mentally tap whatever one taps mentally! Here we go, a piece called "Etenraku".

[Track 1 – "Etenraku" plays] I'm counting 4 slow beats... This music used to be very lively, 1,300 years ago...

[Track 1 continues] ...but at some point the Japanese decided to make this even more dignified. It has been slowed down, according to researchers, to about a twentieth of its former speed. It used to be quite lively. Now, it is a very slow music. There is a beat to it, but it is often stretched out. This you will hear when we talk about metre and rhythm a little later, but Japanese rhythm is often very flexible. It can still be counted out quite often, but instead of the steady 1, 2, 3, 4, you may have 1, 2...3.....4, 1, 2...3.....4, which is what we have here. The Vienna Waltz does the same thing. If you try to dance to that, then you had better not just go 1, 2, 3. So it is a similar sort of phenomenon. Court music, I admit, is a minority interest to most Japanese.

We now move to a rather contrasting style. This is music for Tsugaru Shamisen. This has become very popular with young Japanese today through, for example, the Yoshita Brothers, and other people who play a kind of world music fusion style of this. Here is the more original, traditional style, accompanying a folk song, and let's just hear how it is a rather different mood from the court music.

[Track 2 - "Tsugaru Aiya Bushi" plays]

That is a dance piece actually, sort of up and down on your toes...it's quite nice, if you do it right. Japanese folk singers are very proud of the ornamentation in their vocals. You will hear another example a little later. They make fun of Western folk songs, and say, "Your Scottish or Irish or English folk songs are so boring! You take the high road, and I'll take the low road: too many words! We go, "a-i-ya-na." And it goes and on and on, "a-a-a-a-a, a-a-a-a-na." and they just go on. We are only in the fourth syllable of a nonsense word, but there is a lot of ornamentation.

Now, quite a different piece. We have in the audience a master of this instrument, but I won't force him to the front to play it at this point! Shakuhachi - it is usually a bamboo flute, but bamboo does crack in the central heating countries, so I have a maple one. It has been around for about 13 centuries in Japan. It has developed quite a bit, and for a long time was associated with Zen Buddhism as an instrument of meditation. The idea was that if you played one note just right, you might manage to suddenly reach enlightenment. This is just one piece, not by any means the most exciting, but it gives you some idea of how this instrument would manipulate. You are not going to hear a very lively melody here. You are going to hear tones that are played just right, will have the power they need. This is in free rhythm. I don't think you should tap your foot to this one.

[Track 3 - "Hifumi Hachigaeshi" plays]

We will hear another example a little later. There are only five finger holes on this. [Plays instrument.] That is all it does, but there are nice little in-between notes created by half-holding, and by changing the angle of blowing. The shakuhachi master can get a lot of effect out of what seems a remarkably simple instrument, with no keys, no nothing, just those five holes. In modern times, sometimes you have seven or nine holed shakuhachis, for those who would like to play Bach on the shakuhachi. This is done, but the traditionalists don't see the point of that. For me, it is very hard to play an 'in-between' note. [Plays instrument.] This note is supposed to come out fuzzier, quieter - it's not just that I'm not very good. The idea is that there should be a difference in tone colour and volume between some of the pitches. If you add an extra hole so you can play that just as loud as the other, as on a recorder or a Western flute, you miss the point of the effect of the one sound.

As a slight contrast to that, we are going to the Kabuki theatre. Some of you may have seen this at Sadler's Wells recently, a bit of Kabuki dance. This is a self-meditative instrument, at least in the way we heard it. It is also used in jazz. Georgie Hyroto was playing with the Britain Symphonia recently as part of this Festival, playing shakuhachi at some point. "Echigo-jishi" now, we are going to hear a bit of nagauta dance from the Kabuki theatre, which is meant for the masses, not for some sort of meditation. You sit there with your lunch box and your friends and your saki and you make a lot of noise, you yell greetings to the actors and all that, and cheer, and while that is happening, some very lively, over-the-top dancing is also going on.

[Track 4 - "Echigo-jishi" plays]

That is quite lively. We have several three-string plucked instruments called the sanshin, we have got a number of drums, like the one on the table there, a stick drum, and a flute player who is playing a totally unrelated melody to everybody else, kind of representing a folk dance. We have lion dancers from the countryside on the stage at this point, so the flute has its own independent melody, nothing to do with tradition. This piece is from the 1800s, but this is the kind of thing that took most Western composers until the 20th Century to experiment with, these conflicting tonalities, etc.

There is another type of theatre called the Noh theatre, the ancestor of Kabuki, but this has maintained its stance. It is not a populist theatre, but it is a theatre for some sort of self-designated elite at various times; for many years, the military aristocracy. They saw this as a theatre for developing self-control, limiting the expression of emotion. If you do Kabuki, you must be over-the-top in your music and your dancing. If you are crying in Kabuki, you are going to do it quite loud, with great sobs: "Uh-ho-ho-ho-ho!" and things like that - maybe not quite like that! If it is in the Noh, there is no sound for crying; you are simply sort of raising a hand up to some proximity to your face, which has a mask on, for the lead actor; you cannot even see an expression, but this tells people that you are sad and you are crying. You do that maybe three times. Expression in Noh is very limited, musically as well; it is a very different sort of animal.

[Track 5 - "Shakkyo" plays]

You can perhaps hear that there is a very different effect here. The voice, the singing, is in a much lower pitch. There is a lot of yo-ing and ho-ing from the drummers, playing a drum something like, "Ho" [Drum], "Yo" [Drum], "Hoo" [Drum]. As you are playing the drum in Noh, you are often doing these various calls. The flute is playing in a rather, you might say, other-worldly sort of tuning. The Noh flute can be quite surprising to the West, because it is not in any tuning we are used to or that any other Japanese music uses. Somewhere in the middle of this, the bore is narrowed. The theory is that at some time in history somebody had to repair a crack in this instrument. They shoved some sort of bamboo tube in there, and it is still in there today. When you over-blow a flute, usually it will play a note an octave higher. Not on this one. The intervals get progressively slower as you go along, and the resulting melody on this is not in tune with anything else in the music system. The theory behind this, scholars sometimes think, is that the Noh plots tend to involve spirits, ghosts; for example, a priest is on a trip and he meets a local farmer, who turns out to be the ghost of some historical figure who died in this area long ago in unfortunate circumstances and needs some help, some prayers, etc. So the Noh creates a very other-worldly effect, with the drummers, which to Westerners and to many Japanese sound rather spooky and other-worldly yells - "Yo-oh, Ho-oh," things like that. So the Noh and the Kabuki.

My magic word for this tends to be context. If you want to appreciate these different sorts of genres and how each one has its own aesthetic, you need to remember these historical contexts, these physical contexts. The Kabuki theatre is huge - the Noh stage is smaller than this room, whereas the Kabuki stage is much bigger. Remember the intellectual and philosophical context. Are we trying to be meditative with the shakuhachi? Are we trying to please the masses of urban townfolk with Kabuki, to make some money? Each type of music has its own role and style.

Now, just a taste of Western music. We are going back to 1937 and the arrival of jazz in Japan.

[Track 6 - Yamadera no Osho-san" plays]

This is about a Zen mountain priest playing football! A very traditional melody, but the setting is rather interesting! He could not find a football, so he put a cat in a paper bag and kicked it, and when he kicked it, "pon!" the cat went "nyan!" It's a nice bit of sort of musical fusion!

Now, briefly, we have some jiu-tai later. I have finally got to a track that will relate to that. The jiu-tai concert tonight will feature shamisen, a three-string lute, a 13-string zither, koto, and the shakuhachi, in-blown bamboo flute, and singing. Here, we just have koto and singing. Now, this music, it was a sort of chamber or parlour music, meant for very small groups of people together, perhaps just a musician and a client. For many centuries, until the 1870s, this was music performed by blind musicians, officially. They taught many sighted students, but the ones who could do this professionally were blind males, and then from the 1870s, lots of liberalisation took place in the Japanese music world. Court music could be played by anyone, the Noh was no longer military aristocracy - anybody could do that, and this music now has spread quite widely, and most of the koto and shamisen musicians today seem to be women. Here is an example. The koto, plucking along with its 13 silk strings, will tend to keep a fairly steady beat. The voice will syncopate against that somewhat. This is a piece, the "Autumn Wind," "Akikaze no Kyoku".

[Track 7 "Akikaze no Kyoku" plays]

This is a female singer. If you notice, near the beginning, there was a very low passage where she was straining to hit the lowest note - "Haw.." very breathy. Different musicians have different theories about how to perform this today. Some insist on trying to stay with the more or less original tuning level of the days when the musicians were all men, and so a female musician now, singing this part, will be singing at the bottom end of her range and may have to strain. Others take a different approach and simply tune up to accommodate the generally higher female range. To appreciate this particular performance, it helps to remember that this was a male genre for many centuries.

We move on to some modern music: a composition by a composer named Nagasawa Katsutoshi in 1997. This was written for a group called the Pro Musica Nipponia, and it is played on traditional Japanese instruments, but this ensemble exists to try and use these for more modern music as they see it. This one for example is in a 5/4 metre that you will not find in traditional Japanese music, and a few other changes. It is mixing a number of instruments, including modern versions of the koto. Instead of 13 strings, we now have 17 string bass kotos, we have 20 string kotos, or 21, or 24 strings, to increase the range, mainly under the influence of Western music. Let us just hear what this piece sounds like...

[Track 9 - "A Day in Spring, 2: Flower Garland" plays]

There is some Western harmony in there as well; Western type chords.

If you see a film called the Lower Depths - in Japanese it is Donzoko - by Kurosawa, this is based on a 1902 novel or play by Gorky, but we have a number of urban poor, the lower edge of the working class, having a tough time. They are sitting around and have no money and no food. Someone is in the corner in very bad physical shape, and one of them suddenly says, if you pardon my Japanese, "konchikisho", which is something

like, "Oh, damn it!" Then he suddenly thinks, "Pom, pom, tshiki-sho, tschiki-sho," and he realises what he has just said, it also reminds him of the oral mnemonics, the syllables you use to teach the hand gong of the festival music of Tokyo - "Chonchon chikichi chon chikichi," and they suddenly all start singing, in this film, these mnemonics. They have no instruments, but they can sing "Teketen tsuku tetetsuku ten tororon," the drum part, and then somebody sings the flute part, "hyaitor hyaitoro hya riyari," and then they start singing: "Whether you go to heaven or hell, it depends on whether you are rich." So they are singing a while, and what they are actually singing is this music. You are going to hear the original music. I do not have the film soundtrack, I regret, but here is the music on which they are basing it. It is a piece called "Nimba," and this would be played at many times of the year, in Tokyo. We call this matsuri-bayashi festival music.

[Track 10 - "Nimba" - plays]

There is a nice little dance beat under this. This is one of the few improvised styles in Japan. There is room to be creative here on the flute, drums and hand gong.

Many Japanese tell me, when they hear this music, they really remember that they are Japanese. They may be Western music symphony fanatics or whatever, but this music speaks to all Japanese it seems. There is just something about it.

We are going back to folk song briefly, an unaccompanied folk song that used to be performed, for example, if you were going to cut down a tree or something. You might want to sing this first to the tree spirit, just to make sure things are all all right with the tree. There is a lot of ornamentation in this, and free rhythm again.

[Track 11? - "Shiiba no Haru Bushi" - plays]

Just to complete the 'mini-tour' of some of the genres of Japanese music, and then we will talk about specific features. This is a composition from 1988 by Mamiya Michio. He is a Western-trained composer of Japanese music, not a traditional musician, but he is writing this piece called "Kio" for shakuhachi and cello. You heard the shakuhachi, the meditative Zen instrument. He uses it in a number of interesting ways, rather more lively than typical solo shakuhachi music, but so what, this is a modern composition - he can do what he likes! The cello is in there too. This has to stand for all those modern compositions by Japanese, some of which have been performed already at the City of London Festival.

[Track 12 - "Kio" plays] [DH talking through music] That's the cello.

Well, you get the idea! I have never been very good with modern music, but if you like that, it's great!

There is one more example I need to play. We will try one of the minority groups: the Ainu. Oki is a Japanese who is half-Ainu. The Ainu are the aboriginal population of northern Japan, related more to some of the Siberian groups than to the rest of Japanese in many ways. Linguistically, we have no idea where that language fits in. There are very few Ainu left, very few pure blood, but the culture is holding on, and they have their own very interesting vocal styles. Oki plays - he discovered at some point in his life that he was half-Ainu, and he's gone into that, with his background as a sort of Western pop musician as well, with that part of his music life. He has added a zither, which he will be playing on Thursday night with a rock band in some way, so that could be interesting to see. But just to give you a taste of Ainu music, this is a piece of vocal music from the Bear Festival. Ainu music is mainly vocal actually, and it is often hard to hear a melody. What you hear instead are kind of puffs of voice, very breathy. There is one style called where two people sing into each other's mouth; make sure you have brushed your teeth well before this! You get mouth-to-mouth, and both parties are doing something very rhythmical like that - "Ho-ho, ho-ho-ho-ho, ee-ee-ee-ee," and they will do that until they burst out laughing and cannot continue! This is a little different. This is the Bear Festival. The bear has not got a part in this, but the rest do.

[Track plays]

I am not sure you can tell much from that, but basically you have a crowd of people, each doing a quite different vocal part, with the same rhythm, a lot of that breathiness, no precise scale, and that is the music of the Ainu of northern Japan. No connection with any other part of Japan, but I thought it was important to let you hear that - thank you Ainu.

I would like now to talk about a few specific aspects of Japanese music, with that as a general background.

People tend to ask, when I get started on Japanese music, something about the musical scales - is it all pentatonic? Pentatonic, I hope that means something to you - "Da-da-da-da-da-da" whatever. This shakuhachi, five holes, if you just go up more or less one at a time, with a little cheating, you get a little [plays], and if you are not totally out of breath, "La-la-la-la-la" - you can play that on the black keys of a piano with no problem, but actually the shakuhachi throws in lots of other notes as well. A lot of Japanese folk song is in fact just using five notes of the octave, where we start with seven. Of course we say seven - "Da-da-da-da-da-da-da", "Doh-rah-me-fah-so-lah-te-doh," but then we have those black keys, or those in between notes, as well, so we do have 12 to the octave in the standard Western system. Japan has extra notes too, which they use in some pieces, but it is fair enough to say, yes, a lot of the music is pentatonic, but there are different pentatonic scales. I do not

think I have time to tell you much, but I will just name two of these, because they have an interesting name. Scholars sometimes call one of them the Yin, and one the Yan. Those are Chinese words you have heard, yin-yan, right? But we say in and yo in Japan, or they have other names for them. The "in" is sometimes called the miyako-bushi scale, the urban scale, the capital scale, because it is common in urban music traditionally. Then there is the inaka-bushi scale or the min'yo scale; this is the one that is used in a lot of folk songs. So most of the traditional music you will hear, if we throw out Noh and Gagaku for a start, will be on one of these scales.

Here is the famous Japanese cowboy song, deep breath here, from Nambu in the North, "Nambu Ushioi Uta". It goes something like this: [sings "Nambu Ushioi Uta"]. Some say it is a dark-sounding scale. That is why they call it the "in": the moon, the night-time. That is very common in urban music, but in some folk songs as well. Or, the one they tried to teach all the first year middle school students back in 1971 but it turned out to be too difficult for the music teachers, goes something like this: [sings "Kokiriko"]. That could be your black keys on the piano, pentatonic at heart. You need to throw in some ornaments.

The Southern Islands of Japan have a quite different linguistic and musical culture. This instrument I brought along just because it was more portable than the main shamisen from the main part of Japan, but tonight if you go to the juta concert, you will see a bigger version of this. Instead of snake skin, or in this case fake snake skin, to preserve Vietnamese pythons, you will see cat or dog skin, or sometimes now artificial skin to preserve cats and dogs! This is from Okinawa though. This is the kind of instrument that came in from China in the 1300s to the Southern Islands. In the late 1500s, it went up to the main part of Japan and became the shamisen. This is called the sanshin, 3-strings, good name, and there is a very distinctive Okinawan scale - [plays], 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (singing). That is our typical Okinawan scale. There are some other notes going in occasionally. Only in Okinawa do you get this. It sounds rather like a Western major scale with maybe a note or two missing. For some reason, maybe that's the reason, in a Westernised Japan, this music is very popular in other parts of Japan. It is also sometimes very lively, and sometimes not. With the samba here, not to be confused with the Brazilian anything, and a few other features that Gina will add. This is a fishing song that tells us some nice things about life in a fishing village. When the men catch the fish, the women put them in baskets on their heads and walk around from village to village selling the fish, and when the women come back to the village from selling the fish, how nice they smell. That is what it says; what can I say?! We will only sing one verse.

[Plays and sings - audience applause]

On Thursday on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral in London, if you want to see some more City of London Festival, the SOAS and London Okinawan music fanatics will be together, playing about eight or nine songs of this type, slow, fast, with about 15 people, and will be doing a drum dance. So you can hear more Okinawan music on Thursday, followed in the evening of course by the Ainu rock music of Oki, not to be confused with Okinawa. They make it difficult here!

I just want to mention a couple of other features. I have mentioned rhythm and metre a little, in the sense that a lot of Japanese pieces like the cowboy song I just sang are in free rhythm. There is no beat. Japanese musicologists have trouble notating these, but I am going to get to notation in a second. The good news is, you do not need to notate them! But otherwise, what is missing from Japan, from a Western point of view, is the kind of 1-2-3, 1-2-3. There is not much 3/4 music in Japan, but there is 2-4-6-8, normal kind of metres as well, quite lively. You just cannot waltz in Japan! Having said that, of course you can. I had the embarrassing situation of playing the shamisen to accompany a folk song teacher who was running a weekly class at her local community centre, and then, when that class ended, they had their weekly shaku dance fest. This is social dance, which turned out to be the foxtrot, the waltz, etc., and I, being a Westerner, was assumed to be brilliant at this, and was dragged on to the floor to dance, and soon they realised why I was actually playing the shamisen!

I would like to mention notation briefly, because it was very little used in Japan. On the one hand, we have notations from the 700s for court music, and from the 900s and the 1300s, 1100s - we have a number of manuscripts from those periods, a notation system which is almost identical to what the court musicians use today. It is precise, but they actually add all kinds of things stuff to it. It is exact, perfectly legible notation. You see the symbol, you know what it means, except you have to play all these other things as well, but that notation is there. The oral tradition is more important. A court musician today, judging by one who is about 70 now who told me about his childhood, his father was a court musician, and at age five, he began to be trained as a court musician. For ten years, he learned the repertoire orally. He was not allowed to touch the flute, of which he became a master later, until he was 15. What did he do for ten years? "To ra ro ruro" except much slower, "ta ro ra, ta-ah" etc. He learned the piece that way first. Those syllables do have a meaning - very clever the Japanese.

Try this one! If you were to whisper - you won't hear it in here I don't think, but if you go home, get alone somewhere and whisper to yourself, ["I-E-A-O-U"] the five Japanese vowels, [whispers] - it probably won't work, but they are going right down the scale. Linguists call this the second form of frequency in a vowel. So what is the significance of this? You learn the Noh flute and you sing, as I did at my first lesson - I bought a new flute and excitedly gave it to my teacher, and he said, "No, no, put the flute down. We are singing today." We went [singing vowel sounds]. All the high notes are "E", the low ones are "OO" - the order is I, E, A, O, U, but they are not specific pitches, they are just relative pitches. You learn the pieces this way.

Now for the drums. Gina and I are going to do two drum parts. This is an interlocking part. Most of the music is

taught orally. Now it is all notated – that's the 20 th Century Western influence. There are notations for all of this, but teachers still believe that you must learn it orally.

There are a lot of things I can't touch on. If you wanted to learn this music yourself, then what do you do? Well, there are teachers in London – that's a start. They will use notation now – that is probably helpful if you do not have time to do the traditional thing of living with your teacher for years, sometimes being what we call a briefcase carrier, learning by absorbing that way. This is hard to do even for young modern Japanese, so we do need notation. There are ways to do it.

My first magic word was context. Think of all these things. Why is notation not used much? I will just add that in as an example of context. One is, for certain things, the musicians are blind. Another is, you want to control the product. There is a hierarchy of teaching structure in Japan. These musics are taught in schools, and I don't mean a building, I mean a conceptual school. You have a teacher, with students, top level who teach other students – part of the fee from the lower student goes up to the top level, to the head teacher. These teachers must keep control of their art. If anybody could pick up a teach-yourself CD with booklet, where would their income be? Well, now you actually could pick up a teach-yourself CD, but this is one reason notation was either not around or was very imprecise, or needed a lot added by oral tradition.

All of these things may help you the next time you run into some sort of Japanese music. Try to give each one its full due. Remember that if you listen to it and you think, for example, "Why is that flute playing out of tune?" maybe the right question – that is the right question. The wrong question to me would be, as a musicologist, "That flute is playing out of tune" – that is not a question, that's just an observation, and the follow-on to that is, "It's out of tune because I say it is and I don't like it!" Try this one instead: "*Why* is it out of tune? Why do *I* think it is out of tune? Why would they do that?" They must have a reason. People don't torture themselves musically, you know. So if you hear a type of music from any culture and you are not quite getting the message, there probably *is* a message, it's just someone from that culture, or occasionally some poor academic in the West, may be able to help you find the way. I hope I have done some of that tonight anyway – so good luck with Japan!

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