HOGAKU PERFORMANCE IN TOKYO

Tokyo, Japan's capital, is a crowded, bustling modern city with almost twelve million people, nearly 10 percent of the country's population. Although a formidable city at first glance, Tokyo is more like a conglomeration of small towns and neighborhoods clustered together, each with its own shops and narrow, winding streets.

Tokyo is both new and old, Eastern and Western. The variety of Japanese, Asian, and Western musical performances that take place in Tokyo during the concert season (spring to fall) is a reflection of this fact. Any day during the concert season, the visitor is likely to find performances of Western art music or popular music, as well as performances of hogaku, Japan's traditional music. Some hogaku performances may take place in the concert halls clustered around the Tokyo Railroad Station, others in the recital halls inside great department stores in the Ginza area, Tokyo's chic shopping district, and still others in the National Theater, situated across the street from the grounds of the Imperial Palace.

During one of my recent visits, I attended two musical performances at the National Theater, which was opened in 1966 for the promotion and development of traditional Japanese performing arts. It actually comprises two theaters: a large one seating nearly 1,800 people, which is used principally for the performance of kabuki musical drama, and a small one seating
about 630, which is used to stage a variety of concerts of hogaku music and dance, as well as performances of puppet musical plays known as *bunraku*. Two restaurants are also attached to the National Theater: a larger one on the second floor that serves a set menu for dinner, and a smaller one at the front of the theater grounds that serves snack food.

A Mixed Concert

One of the hogaku concerts I attended at the National Theater was a gala event commemorating the sixtieth birthday of a respected master. It took place in the small theater and started at 6:30 PM, but most of the audience arrived before curtain time to have dinner at the restaurants. It was a sold-out concert, and I was lucky to have obtained a standing-room ticket—the least expensive kind—at 4000 yen (equivalent to about $40 U.S. in 1995). As in a Western concert, the audience was greeted by ushers at the door of the theater and handed program notes (in Japanese) about the four items to be performed; this included song texts and instrumentation and was followed, as in the West, by many advertisements. The inside of the theater was very similar to a Western one, with a proscenium stage and rows of seats. The members of the audience were primarily well-dressed Japanese men and women wearing Western-style clothing, but some older women wore the Japanese kimono.

The relatively long concert, lasting more than three hours, began with three pieces for a chamber ensemble consisting of six musicians. The final piece of the program, which came after an intermission of about twenty minutes, called for a chorus and orchestra, each consisting of a dozen or so performers, as well as dancers. All the performers wore traditional attire and knelt on the floor of the stage with low music stands placed before them.

As each piece began, the performers picked up their instruments from the floor in front of them in a deliberate and uniform fashion. Their erect posture and great decorum was complemented by the attentiveness of the audience. At the end of each piece the performers replaced their instruments on the stage floor in the same way that they had taken them up, and only then did the audience applaud. The performers acknowledged the applause by bowing very formally and then remained stationary until the curtain had descended completely.

The first piece in the program was an ensemble played by three *kotos* (long thirteen-stringed zithers) and three *shamisens* (three-stringed lutes played with a plectrum). The musicians, who included both men and women, sang as they played; I noticed that the first and last sections were sung with instrumental accompaniment, whereas the middle section, which was the longest, was entirely instrumental. I also noticed that although the music was primarily pentatonic, it occasionally used auxiliary pitches. The voice, the kotos, and the shamisens
seemed to share a basic melody, but each performed the melody in a somewhat different fashion, rhythmically as well as melodically, resulting in a texture that may be described as heterophonic.

The second piece was zjiuta. Broadly speaking, the term denotes a type of vocal piece having a lyrical text that is accompanied principally by the shamisen and sometimes by a koto as well. This performance included both shamisen and koto accompaniment, the former was supplied by the vocalist herself. Like the previous piece, this too had three sections, of which the middle was a purely instrumental interlude.

![Two kotos and a shamisen (center)](image)

The third piece was a trio for solo voice and two shamisens that was derived from a narrative genre called shinnai-bushi. The vocalist, who did not play any instrument, sang with a penetrating voice. The type of shamisen used in this piece had a thicker neck than those used in the previous pieces. While one shamisen played the basic melody, the other played a lighter and higher part, hetero-phonically elaborating the melody. In contrast to the others, this piece was divided into six sections.

During the intermission, people who had not had dinner before the concert—I among them—went to the theater restaurants to have a quick bite. The food was delicious and was served in beautifully decorated lacquered bowls and plates, but when the bell rang indicating that the curtain was about to go up, I hurriedly finished my dinner and returned to the auditorium.

The final piece, featuring some two dozen musicians, made me realize how much I was a foreigner to Japanese music. Despite the magnificent costumes of the dancers, I had difficulty
concentrating on the performance, because I found it disconcerting to have a variety of musical genres and instrumentations mixed in a single modern composition, yet most of the audience appreciated the piece greatly and even seemed to prefer this composition to the others. The different types of instruments used included a number commonly associated with solo or narrative genres, such as the koto and shamisen, various types of fue (horizontal flute), the shakuhachi (end-blown, notched flute), and the nohkan, the horizontal flute of the noh theater. Among the other instruments used, some were borrowed from the gagaku court music ensemble, such as the ryuteki (a horizontal flute), the hichiriki, a double-reed oboe, which has a very distinct and penetrating sound, and the sho, a mouth organ something like a harmonica. There was also a small percussion ensemble, comprising a small pair of cymbals, a small drum, a wooden clapper, and a small gong. This modern attempt to combine various kinds of traditional music and dance in a single new composition encompassed: fragments of a jiuta (played by a trio made up of shamisen, koto, and shakuhachi) from the nagauta ensemble of the kabuki theater, a bit of Buddhist chant called shomyo, a shamisen duet, and finally, materials deriving from folk song and dance. At the end of what seemed to this perplexed foreigner to be a tediously long and incongruous composition, the audience surprised me by rising and giving the performers a standing ovation. As soon as the curtain fell, however, the audience disappeared quickly, and clearly no encore was expected.

A Kabuki Appreciation Class
The second performance I attended at the National Theater was an appreciation class for the kabuki theater, which was extremely interesting and educational.

Kabuki, Japan's main popular theater, is regularly performed in several venues in Tokyo; among these, the most famous and best known is the Kabukiza (za means "seat," but today it has come to mean "theater"), which is situated in the Ginza and contains, aside from the theater, six restaurants. The Kabukiza has about eight or nine kabuki productions a year, each of which runs about twenty-five days. Usually two different programs are performed daily; matinees run from about 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM, and evening performances run from 4:30 PM to 9:00 PM.

The Kabukiza was built in 1887 and has been reconstructed many times since then. It is an impressive theater with more than 2,000 seats, a wide
orchestra, and two balconies. The stage, almost ninety-three feet wide, is equipped with revolving platforms and trap lifts. In addition, there is a long runway, the *hanamichi*, connecting the stage with the rear of the theater, which is also part of the stage. In the lobby, various recordings of, and books in Japanese and English, about kabuki are sold along with various souvenirs. Foreigners who do not understand Japanese or are novices to the theater can rent earphones and listen to a simultaneous translation of the libretto.

Kabuki performances are also held several times a year at the larger hall of the National Theater, which also runs a "Kabuki appreciation class" for young people every summer. There are two such classes daily at 11:00 AM and 2:30 PM, and I bought a ticket for the morning one.

When it was time for the class to start, all the lights in the theater were turned off except those on the bare proscenium stage, and a man in a kimono appeared on the stage.

"Hello everyone, my name is Iwai Hanshiro, and I am a kabuki actor. I am going to tell you something about the kabuki theater today so that you can appreciate it better. It is a pity that too many Japanese people nowadays cannot appreciate kabuki because they do not understand it. The purpose of this appreciation class is to tell you some of the fan and secrets of the kabuki theater, so you will come to the theater again and again.

"Let me first tell you a bit of the history of kabuki. The first performance was done in 1596 entirely by women. The government immediately banned female performance of kabuki, so the stage was taken over by a troupe of boys, but since 1652, kabuki has been performed by adult males, as it still is today, and female roles are impersonated by male actors. In the eighteenth century, when Japan was ruled by a succession of military strongmen known as shoguns and entered a long period of peace, kabuki developed into a definite cultural form for urban dwellers (*chonin*). You must remember that kabuki is predominantly a dance theater with musical accompaniment; it makes use of extensive and elaborate scenery, costumes, and properties, which I will show you later.

KABUKI: The main form of Japanese popular musical theater.

Togashi, a character in the kabuki theatre in a piece called *Kanjincho*. Written in the 19th century, it takes place in 12th century Japan.
"Kabuki has borrowed a lot from other types of theater, such as the classical noh theater and the puppet theater bunraku. It has also absorbed folk dance and popular dance. How many of you have been to the noh theater? Only a few hands were raised.

"How many of you have seen bunraku?" More hands were raised.

"Let me demonstrate some kabuki gestures that were derived from bunraku and noh."

At this point our lecturer made a vigorous gesture with his arms and legs, which was very masculine, abrupt, and angular. "This gesture is an adaptation of puppet movement of the bunraku theater, known as aragoto, meaning 'rough business.'"

He then walked in stately, gliding steps, moving without any perceptible upper-body motion. "This gentle and refined movement came from the noh theater.

"Dance is very important in kabuki theater. A kabuki actor is primarily a dancer, and dance is an essential movement toward a climactic static posture."

He now struck and held a dramatic pose, and then turned to us and said, "Now, this is the time for you to applaud me. We kabuki actors like to know that you appreciate what we do!" The young audience, encouraged by the lecturer, giggled and applauded enthusiastically. At that moment, a middle-aged woman sitting next to me shouted, "Bravo!" in Japanese, which was acknowledged by our lecturer with a deep bow in her direction. The young audience turned to look at her with puzzled expressions on their faces, whereupon our lecturer said, "This is a very appropriate and common way to give praise to actors. You may try it yourselves!" "Bravo! Bravo!" shouted the audience, greatly energized. Our lecturer bowed graciously to them.

"It is now time to show you something about the kabuki stage. It is equipped with several trap lifts, which are used to bring scenery or musicians from below the stage to the level of the stage floor, and vice versa." As he spoke, several men, who were holding musical instruments in their hands, suddenly rose up through the stage floor. The young audience, obviously loving this, burst into applause.

"There are more fun things to follow. The stage is also equipped with two revolving stages in the center, an outer one and an inner one, which are capable of being moved in opposite directions. These revolving stages are used to change the entire set at once and have been in use since the sixteenth century." As he spoke, a realistic set depicting a large rice field complete with stacks of grain, trees, and thatched huts suddenly revolved into the center of the stage. A few seconds later, this set disappeared from sight, and another one showing the inside of a house, with cooking utensils and straw mats on the floor, appeared in front of us.
Then our lecturer pointed in the direction of the raised runway connecting the stage to the rear of the auditorium, and asked: "How many of you know the name of this runway?" A few treble voices shouted, "Hanamichi!" "Good!" our lecturer said. "You have been studying this in school, no doubt! The hanamichi is a unique feature of the kabuki theater. It serves as an additional acting space for the actors and as a more intimate acting area within the audience. There is a passageway built beneath the floor of the theater for actors to go from the dressing rooms behind the stage to the entrance of the hanamichi without being seen by the audience."

Suddenly, a man dressed in the costume of a peasant appeared on the hanamichi at the rear of the theater. He walked a few steps, paused, gently moving his head from side to side as if hesitating, and finally moved forward to the stage proper with an attitude of determination.

"Meet Hayano Kanpei, the hero of the play you are going to see after my lecture! Have you guessed that Kanpei is no peasant? He is really a ronin—that is, a samurai who has lost his master. He is disguised as a peasant to avenge his master's death. If you have been observant, you should have noticed that before he finally proceeded to the stage proper, he moved his head gently from side to side. A peasant does not move in such a refined fashion! The connoisseur would know from this gesture that his real social status is higher than that of a peasant." At this point, the actor who portrayed Kanpei gave the audience a bow and exited.

"Another important element of kabuki theater is music, and it is time to introduce the musicians! In general, there are two groups of musicians: those who appear on the stage, and those who do not. The onstage musician group is called the degatari, and the offstage group is called the geza." He gave a signal, and a pair of men were elevated from below to stage left. Both were kneeling, and one was holding a shamisen.

"This is the chobo, a pair of onstage musicians borrowed from the puppet theater. One is a narrator; the other one accompanies him on the shamisen. Even though they may sometimes participate musically in the events taking place on the stage, the chobo musicians are not actors.

"Let me give you an example. Suppose that I am a character in a play who is sobbing; the chobo narrator can take over the sobbing for me without a break, and the shamisen player in turn can imitate the sound of sobbing on his instrument, while all the time the sobbing is supposed to be that of the character onstage, and the accompanists do not participate in the action. The chobo musicians not only participate musically in the events on the stage, they also narrate and explain the plot to the audience; you could say that they are storytellers.

"Sometimes a character in a play may want to sing about his feelings, or another may want to perform a dance. Who will provide musical accompaniment? Another group of onstage musicians is called the debayashi, meaning 'coming-out orchestra.' These musicians are singers
as well as instrumentalists, and their number varies according to the needs of the drama." He gave a signal, and from the rear of the stage a trap lift raised a two-tiered platform covered with red cloth on whose upper tier knelt six men holding shamisens; below them, on the level of the stage, six singers knelt behind low music stands.

LISTENING GUIDE

LISTEN: KABUKI NAGAUTA MUSIC FROM THE PLAY "POJOJI"

0:00-0:23  Highly ornamented vocal, accompanied on shamisen and drum; at 20" drummers enter, beginning with vocal cry called 'kakegoe' as a rhythmic enhancer and cue
0:23-1:04  High-pitched flute (nohkan) enters to take melodic lead, acc. by shamisen and drum, for extended instrumental interlude
1:05-1:23  Nohkan drops out momentarily; shamisen melody prominent (1:05-1:13); flute returns (1:14-1:19), then shamisen alone again (1:20-1:23)
1:24-1:40  Vocalist returns with fuller accompaniment, including small, bell-like gong
1:41-2:07  Instrumental with nohkan in the lead acc. by shamisen and drum
2:40-2:59  Vocalist returns, with fuller acc, including bell
3:00-3:14  Shamisen leads (until 3:04), then nohkan rejoins for another instrumental interlude
3:15-fade  Vocal returns, without the nohkan or bell; track fades out

"Let us hear their music!" the lecturer commanded, and the ensemble started to play. "This music is called nagauta, meaning "Long Song," our lecturer said. "It is the heart of kabuki music. The music is produced by an ensemble consisting of singers, several shamisen, and sometimes a bamboo flute, plus a percussion ensemble borrowed from the noh theater that includes several drums and the flute called nohkan. Two or three of the singers are soloists; the rest of the singers sing the chorus part in unison."

"Now let us bring on the geza musicians." At this moment both the chobo and the debayashi musicians were lowered beneath the stage, and downstage left another group of instrumentalists and a large drum appeared.

"These are offstage musicians called the geza," we were told. "They normally sit in a room situated at stage right, where they can look out to the stage and the hanamichi through a bamboo curtain, and the audience cannot see them. Their job is to provide sound effects for the dramatic action. The instruments are: the o-daiko (big drum), shamisen, nohkan, and gongs and bells. Let me show you the strokes of the o-daiko." As he was talking he picked up the two drumsticks and hit the drum with several types of strokes. "Some strokes indicate curtain calls; others create different atmospheres and moods; some strokes represent raindrops, the sound of wind, or thunder, and others represent the appearance of a ghost." When the demonstration was over, the geza musicians disappeared from the stage.
I know you are very eager to see today's play, but I have yet one more important instrument to show you, and that is the *hyoshigi.* Immediately, a man appeared at the corner stage right, holding two rectangular woodblocks in his hand; he knelt and began playing the blocks in a series of accelerating beats.

"The player is called the *kyogenkata*; he is a stagehand, and the rhythmic pattern he just played announces the rise of the curtain." With this final demonstration, the actor concluded his introduction and called for the play to begin.

The play, about Kanji's revenge, employed all the devices, mechanisms, and musical groups we had just learned about, and using the simultaneous translation of the dramatic dialogue and explanation of the plot in English transmitted through the headphones I wore, I found that I could easily understand the plot and enjoy the drama.

Vocal and instrumental chamber music recitals and performances of kabuki can be heard and seen in Japan nowadays with some frequency, particularly in the four major cities: Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, and Nagoya. These types of hogaku music are essentially products of Japan's most recent "ancient" period—that is, the time from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century known as the Tokugawa or Edo period, when Japan, ruled by the Tokugawa clan in the capital Edo (present-day Tokyo), experienced a period of uninterrupted peace. Cities such as Edo and Osaka grew into populous centers of trade and government, where a large and prosperous bourgeoisie developed, including tradesmen and artisans, who vigorously supported the developing arts and culture. It was under the patronage of this bourgeoisie that the kabuki theater and the many chamber vocal-instrumental genres involving the koto, shamisen, and other instruments came into being and flourished.

**THEATER MUSIC**

The culture of the bourgeoisie, essentially urban and popular, was characterized by a taste for romantic or comic novels, for salacious or witty lampoons, for brightly colored prints and paintings, and above all, for spectacular theatrical entertainment. The kabuki theater, with its lavish costumes and staging, its elaborate stage machinery, and its fondness for plots of romantic love, is representative of this culture.

**The Bunraku Puppet Theater**

The other important popular theater of the Edo period, which can also be seen today, principally in Osaka and in Tokyo's National Theater, is the puppet theater called *bunraku.* Growing up at about the same time as kabuki and under the same circumstances and patronage—primarily that of the bourgeoisie or chonin of Osaka—bunraku both borrowed from and exerted influence on kabuki theater.
The bunraku puppet, made of wood, is moved by three puppeteers who manipulate its arms, fingers, legs, body, head, eyes, mouth, and even eyebrows. These movements are so realistic that the spectators can easily forget the actor is made of wood, even though the puppeteers are not hidden behind or above the stage. The two junior puppeteers are, however, completely shrouded in black and hooded, and only the senior puppeteer's face is visible.

Bunraku puppeteers operate a warrior puppet during the Kumagai Jinya scene from the play *Ichinotani Futaba Gunki*.

The narration of the bunraku, both sung and spoken, is provided by a narrator/chanter, who is accompanied on shamisen, a three-stringed, long-necked, fretless lute, whose sound box is covered with cat or dog skin front and back and whose strings are plucked with a large plectrum; this is the same combination as the chobo ensemble we encountered in the kabuki demonstration. When a kabuki play is derived from the bunraku theater, the narrative and music accompanying the dramatic actions are provided by the chobo, in the same manner as in the bunraku theater.

The narrative style used in bunraku is called *gidayubushi*, after its developer, Takemoto Gidayu (1651-1714) of Osaka. The vocal style of gidayubushi includes chants, heightened speech, and lyrical songs. The shamisen, whose music is made up of various arrangements of stereotyped
patterns, plays preludes, interludes, and postludes to the singing. Bunraku rose to its artistic and popular height when Takemoto collaborated with the famous playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725).

**The Noh Theater**

Edo-period musical theatricals are by no means the only kinds of traditional stage genres one can hear and see in Japan today. Among genres originating in other historical periods of Japan, the noh theater is particularly important. Combining various folk dances, musical theatricals, and religious and courtly entertainment of medieval times, noh was transformed into a serious Buddhist art by the performer Kannami Kiyotsugu (1333-1384) and into a refined court art by his son, Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1444). Wearing a mask, brocade robes, and white socks, the chief actor moves and dances slowly on a bare stage with perfectly controlled and restrained movements. Accompanied by a male chorus and a small instrumental ensemble (*hayashi*) made up of a flute and three drums, he carries the spectator into the austere world of a medieval Japan deeply influenced by Zen Buddhism.

Noh was a product of the Muromachi period (1333-1615), which was marked by continuous military strife among the various clans of warriors (samurai). Exclusively an art of the ruling samurai class from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, noh, with its performing style of elegant simplicity and restraint and its major themes of redemption of human suffering through the love of Buddha, is a direct antithesis of the flamboyant, colorful, and lavish theatrical entertainments of the Tokugawa bourgeoisie such as kabuki and bunraku.

In Zeami’s day, a performance of noh consisted of at least five plays—a god play, a warrior play, a female-wig play, a possession play, and a demon play—interspersed with comic plays called *kyogen* for a change of pace. Today the usual program consists of two or three noh plays (each lasting about an hour) and one or two kyogen (lasting about thirty to forty minutes).

Supported mainly by intellectuals now, noh is performed in major cities in special indoor theaters that are owned and operated by five traditional schools of noh performance. In addition, noh plays are performed on various festival occasions throughout Japan on outdoor stages that are built in the compounds of Shinto or Buddhist temples.

The main element and action of a noh play is linked closely with its major actor, the *shite*. The supporting actor, or *waki*, provides a foil for the revelation of the shite's character and the explanation for his actions.
Noh plays are typically in two acts. Thematically, these acts can be organized into five major *dan* (sections or units). The first act comprises the first *dan*—an introduction—and the second, third and fourth *dan*—which together make up the exposition of the play—and ends with a dance called *kuse*, its high point. This act provides a full exposition of the spirit of the *shite*. The second act consists of only of the fifth *dan*; in this denouement the *shite* is transformed into a new character (usually a supernatural being), sings a couple of songs, and performs another dance, called the *mai*, which reveals his new essence after his transformation.

Music for noh consists of songs (solo and choral) sung by the actors or chorus, recitative-like heightened speech for the actors, and instrumental music played by an instrumental quartet (a flute and three drums). The functions of the instrumental ensemble are to play introductory music and interludes, to set the scene or mood of individual units within the two acts, to accompany entrances and exits of actors, to accompany songs and dances, and to provide a rhythmic background for dialogue and action. The songs (*uta*), sung by either the actors or the chorus, are of two types—the *sageuta*, which are short, slow, and in low range, and the *ageuta*, which are longer and higher.

The instruments making up the instrumental quartet for noh are a flute called nohkan and three drums of different sizes.

Unlike most bamboo flutes, which simply consist of a tube of dried bamboo, the nohkan is constructed from such a tube split lengthwise into strips that are then turned inside out, wrapped with cherry bark, and lacquered. It has seven finger holes and a mouth hole. Other elements of its construction and playing technique lend this flute a distinctive, piercing sound, and rather than blending with the other components of noh, like them it retains a strong individuality.

The music of the nohkan is made up of various arrangements of a large number of stereotyped patterns; different pieces are produced by rearrangement of the sequential order of these patterns, and the use of certain sequences is determined by the dramatic conventions of the noh theater. The music for the nohkan serves as a marker for certain subunits of a *dan*, sets the tempo for the dances and accompanies them, adds a melodic layer to the drum patterns, sets the pitches for the chorus and accompanies it, and provides emphasis for certain lyrical passages of the songs.

The nohkan and the three drums used in noh are collectively called hayashi (a generic term for ensembles of flute and drums). The three drums are: the *ko-tsuzumi*, the *o-tsuzumi*, and the *taiko*. The first two are hourglass-shaped drums, while the *taiko* is a shallow barrel drum. Of the three, the smallest but most important is the *ko-tsuzumi*; although it derives from Chinese and Korean models, the manner of playing it in noh theater is entirely a Japanese development.
Sakiji Tanaka playing the Noh drum Taiko. Photo courtesy Mr. Shozo Sato.

Sakiji Tanaka playing the Noh drum Kotsuzumi. A ko-tszuzumi is an hourglass shaped drum held at the shoulder and used in Noh theater. Other instruments include the nohkan (transverse flute), the okawa or otsuzumi (hourglass shaped drum placed on the lap), and the taiko (barrel shaped drum placed on a small floor stand and played with two sticks). Photo courtesy Mr. Shozo Sato.
The three drums have wooden bodies with two skin heads that are stretched over iron rings and stitched tied to the drum bodies with ropes. The special tone of the ko-tsuzumi is achieved by carving special patterns on the inside surface of the body and affixing bits of damp paper to the rear head, which is not struck. The ropes holding the heads to the body may be squeezed to increase tension on the heads. The tension of the head of the o-tsuzumi is always at a maximum and thus cannot be altered by further tightening the ropes; in fact, before a performance, the drumhead is heated over a hibachi grill to increase the tension still further, and during a performance a newly heated drum may be substituted. All this tension creates a dry, hard sound that may be increased by the use of hard thimbles on the player's fingers.

The taiko is played with two thick sticks instead of the hands. The drum is placed on a special stand that grips the encircling ropes, lifting the drum off the floor for better resonance. The taiko is used sparingly, normally joining the other instruments for dance sections.

All three drums are capable of producing several basic sounds, and their varying combinations form stereotyped patterns that are identified onomatopoeically.

An additional but integral part of noh drumming is the use of drum calls by the drummers. These kakegoe, as they are called, may have originated as practice devices, but they are now part of the overall sound of the music for noh and are certainly one of the distinctive elements that add to its strangely rarefied atmosphere.

Like the chobo ensemble of gidayubushi, the noh hayashi, too, has been adopted for some kabuki performances, where it always introduces a reference to classical, courtly culture.

The vocal part of noh, called yokyoku, is sung by both the actors and the onstage chorus. The melodic style of yokyoku is solemn and spare, betraying its origin in Buddhist chanting of medieval Japan. The articulation of every textual syllable is deliberate and prolonged, and their pronunciation is based on a stage convention different from everyday speech. Together with the actors' stately bodily movements and gliding steps, the music of yokyoku and hayashi contribute to the overall impression that noh theater is ethereal and otherworldly.

Yokyoku has two basic styles: the heightened speech called kotoba (words) and the aria called fushi (melody). Fushi is sung in two basic ways: the yowagin (soft) style, which is delivered softly and is used in lyrical scenes, and the tsuyogin (strong) style, which is delivered with strength and is used in masculine and warlike scenes.

The tonal system of the yokyoku is based on the interval of the minor seventh, coinciding with the same interval when the uniquely constructed nohkan is overblown. (Most flutes produce the octave when overblown.) Within this minor seventh, three notes making a conjunct pair of perfect fourths provide important tonal centers. If we designate the minor-seventh interval as being from A down to B, then the three tonal centers are A-E-B, in that order of importance.
Around each of these tonal centers there is a cluster of notes forming a tonal system for melody.

The rhythmic structure of noh singing, like that for the hayashi, is based on an eight-beat framework, but in a very flexible manner. The number of textual syllables in each poetic line to be sung within these beats varies, but a five-syllable line is most common.

The individual musical elements of noh are conceived in a linear fashion, and the key to appreciating noh is to follow the various lines of the voices and the instruments. For example, the chorus and the nohkan may be involved in two completely separate melodic lines, while the drums may be playing a rhythmic pattern of a different length from either. As mentioned, the strong individuality of the components of noh is a characteristic feature, and relying on this, noh can create a complex art from few resources. The center of this art is the poetic text, and the musical elements revolve around it.

Noh plays are produced by a group of people: the poet supplies the text, and the actors, the chorus, and the hayashi compose their own parts according to the text. This creative process works for noh because the music is highly systematized.

The performance of a NOH drama. The musicians are on the left, the shite is in the center, and the chorus (ji) is on the right.
LISTENING GUIDE

**LISTEN:** HAYASHI (instrumental ensemble) and chorus.

One of the most famous noh plays is *Hagoromo* ("The Robe of Feathers"). One of the category of "female-wig plays," this one-act play in two scenes tells the story of a fisherman (portrayed by the waki) who stole the feather robe of an angel (portrayed by the shite) and thus prevented her return to heaven; however, he was so moved by her distress that he agreed to return it if she would dance for him. The second scene, consisting of a series of dances accompanied by choral chanting and the hayashi, is considered the high point of the play.

The excerpt heard here basically alternates rather free-rhythm and ornamented vocal sections sung in the soft style with a more strident vocal and more regular rhythmic accompaniment.

- **0:00-0:25** Waki sings to accompaniment of drums, including dance drum taiko with its characteristic low, dull pitch; drummers intersperse rhythmic cries, kakegoe
- **0:26-0:42** Entrance of chorus (ji)
- **0:43-1:13** Waki sings alone; note increase in drum and regular rhythm toward the end
- **1:14-end** Chorus returns, picking up the regular rhythm established at the end of the solo; track fades at 1:58

THE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

**Shintoism and Shinto Music**

Among the ancient types of Japanese music that can still be heard today are court Shinto music, or *mikagura*; court orchestral music, or *gagaku*; and the Buddhist chant, or *shomyo*. The latter two were originally Chinese inspired, whereas the first one is entirely indigenous.

The earliest Japanese religion shared many elements with the religions of other peoples of East Asia and only became designated Shinto ("the way of the gods") when confronted with Buddhism and Confucianism. Shinto is a loose agglomeration of local and regional cults with a diversity of gods and spirits, and it includes a variety of religious elements such as nature worship, animism, shamanism, ancestor worship, hero worship, fertility rites, phallicism, fortune-telling, and so on.

Constant change and adaptation is the norm of Shinto. It adopted and adapted gods and cults with ease, and there has seemed to be no clear conception of divinity and no real attempt to articulate a theology on a rational basis, nor is there an organized, hereditary priesthood.

Five elements or objects stand out in Shinto worship: the sun (or fire), water, mountains, trees, and stones. In ritual practice, Shinto ceremony consists essentially of attendance on a god and offerings to him or her, accompanied by invocations and prayers. Festivals represent
special occasions for honoring the gods and establishing good rapport with them by offering food, drink, and music and dance. Shinto rituals generally take place during important occasions of life and of the agricultural year, such as birth, marriage (always celebrated at a Shinto shrine), the New Year, plowing, planting, and harvesting. Shinto has nothing to do with death, however.

Until the Edo period, musical creation was regarded as a gift from god and, like the beauty of nature, a miracle. Thus in the Shinto view, an appreciation of music sprang from admiration and awe at what is "natural," pure, and simple, rather than from a rational admiration of the artfully organized.

One type of ancient Shinto music, mikagura, can still be heard today in court Shinto ceremonies. It is performed by a male chorus and accompanied by the wagon (a six-stringed zither), the kagura-bue (a transverse bamboo flute with six holes), the hichiriki, and the shakubyoshi (a pair of wooden clappers). Fifteen songs are still preserved in the present-day repertory, and they are of two main types—the torimono, songs paying homage to the gods, and the saibara, songs meant to entertain the gods. Since the nineteenth century, mikagura songs have been performed by two choruses, each having its own repertory. The performance is initiated by the leader of each chorus, who sings the initial phrase of a song and accompanies himself on the clappers and is then followed by a unison chorus accompanied by the rest of the instruments. In Shinto ceremonies, dance is an integral part of the ceremony.

In folk Shinto rituals, the music used is called satokagura. There are two main types: The one used in shamanistic rituals paying homage to the gods involves a priestess who sings and dances and is accompanied by the wagon, the transverse flute, and the suzu (bell-tree); the other, used in Shinto festivals and called matsuribayashi (festival music), is performed by a hayashi consisting of the o-daiko, two taiko, a transverse flute, and a small gong, kane. This music is characterized by a lively syncopated drum rhythm, which accompanies a repeated melodic line played by the flute.

**Buddhism and Buddhist Music**

Buddhism came to Japan in the sixth century C.E. from Korea and China. By this time it was already a thousand years old and a highly developed religion. The essential tenet of Buddhism concerns suffering and its elimination through the cessation of desire—the achievement of Nirvana. When it came to Japan, Buddhism gave the Japanese a means of dealing with death and suffering, something that Shintoism had not provided. It affected the Japanese deeply, but
their innate delight in the simple joy of life also modified Buddhism by infusing it with an appreciation for life and nature.

During the Nara (553-794) and Heian (794-1185) periods, when Japan's capitals were in Nara and Kyoto, respectively, the great aristocratic clans adopted the Mahayana form of Buddhism. Great monastic systems were established and integrated into the court and its civil administrative system. The theology of Mahayana Buddhism asserted that salvation from suffering and death was open to all, and it attracted a huge following among the populace. The government decreed the building of many great monasteries and demanded religious services praying for peace and prosperity for the state. Scriptural verses called sutras were chanted in these ceremonies to secure good harvests and the welfare of the state.

The chanting of Buddhist sutras is called shomyo; it is performed by a male chorus in responsorial style, and the texts are in several languages. Those in Sanskrit are called bonsan; those in Chinese, kansan; and those in Japanese, wasan. The music consists of a series of stereotyped patterns belonging to two different Chinese-derived scales, the ryo and the ritsu, each of which has five basic notes and two auxiliary notes. Shomyo chants may be syllabic or melismatic, and their rhythm may be more or less regular or free. A chant usually begins slowly and gets faster.

During the Nara and Heian periods, the aesthetic aspect of Buddhism predominated, not only because of native Japanese sensitivity but also because the aristocrats admired beauty and elegance above all things. Aesthetic cultivation (the playing of music being one of the requirements), together with physical training and psychological discipline—all aspects of one personality—were involved in the attainment of Buddhahood, which was the goal of the Esoteric Buddhism practiced in the Nara and Heian periods. Consequently, ritual, art, and music were as important as scriptures and meditation. It was not just a matter of enlightening the mind but of affecting and transforming the whole world. This view of the world and of man gave great impetus to Buddhist art (including images of Buddha and mandala paintings) as well as Buddhist music.

The collapse of the Heian court and its civil administration in the eleventh century brought about profound changes in Buddhism. Religious institutions bound up with the fortune of the court nobility declined, while a highly aestheticized and sentimentalized religion, based on the refined enjoyment of beauty, could not meet the challenge of the difficult time ahead. With the constant warfare, famine, pestilence, and social disruption of the ensuing Kamakura (1185-1333), Muromachi, and Azuchi-Momoyama (1333-1615) periods, a new form of Buddhism arose, whose primary mission was to bring salvation immediately within reach. This Buddhism for the masses, called Amida Buddhism, had little to do with the arts and aesthetics.

Another form of Buddhism that arose during this difficult period was Zen Buddhism, whose roots were in China and India. Zen emphasizes personal enlightenment through self-
understanding and self-reliance by means of meditation, using practices related to the yoga practice of ancient India. In Japan, Zen Buddhism was supported by the military class during the Azuchi-Momoyama period.

Aesthetically, Zen inspired many of the traditional arts of Japan, such as landscape painting, landscape gardening, swordsmanship, the tea ceremony, and noh drama. It was under the patronage of the Ashikaga shogun that Zen and its allied arts, including noh, evolved and developed.

LISTENING GUIDE

LISTEN: First dan of "ROKUDAN NO SHIRABE"

Performed by sanyoku trio of koto, shamisen, and shakuhachi by the Zumi-Kan Instrumental Group

This is the first section of "Rokudan No Shirabe" performed by sanyoku trio of shamisen, koto, and shakuhachi. Each instrument realizes the melody in an idiosyncratic way, resulting in a hetero-phonic texture. The piece begins with an free statement of the basic melody and then becomes increasingly rhythmic as it progresses.

0:00-0:42 Slow intro prominently stated by koto and shamisen as lead instruments; the shakuhachi is heard primarily as an occasional drone instrument; listen at 0:36 for a brief passage of flickering vibrato played on the shamisen

0:43-1:31 Shakuhachi enters more prominently, mirroring the koto/shamisen melody

1:32-2:02 The strings improvise in the upper octaves, while the flute continues at a lower pitch; there is an audible pause at about 2:02

2:03-3:03 Regular rhythm increases as the melody continues to move into the upper octave

3:04-3:35 Shamisen is heard prominently, stating an elaborate variation that is mirrored by the others, bringing the piece to a conclusion

A CONCERT AND A COURT TRADITION

Sokyoku

Popular koto-and-vocal music of the Edo period is known under the generic name of sokyoku. The koto is a long zither whose thirteen strings are stretched over movable bridges. The player places the instrument on a mat or low table and plucks the strings using plectra on the thumb and the first two fingers of the right hand. With the left hand, the player presses on the strings to the left of the bridges to create ornaments and new pitches by altering the tension of the strings.

There are two types of sokyoku. The first, kumiuta, is a koto-accompanied song cycle; the verses of each individual song, called uta, are derived from pre-existent poems whose subjects are unrelated. Typically, an uta has duple meter and is in eight phrases, each divided into four
measures. The second type, *danmono*, for koto alone, is in several sections (dan), each consisting of either 64 or 120 beats. The structure of *danmono* is akin to a loose rondo-variation form. The famous piece "Rokudan" (Six Sections) is a classic example of this form. A basic theme is presented and within each of the six dan the theme undergoes variation with interpolation of new material. "Rokudan" can be played by one mi koto as a solo piece or by two koto as a duet; sometimes other instruments, such as the shamisen and the shakuhachi may join in, as they do in the listening example "Rokudan No Shirabe".

*SOKYOKU:* Popular koto-and-vocal of the Edo period in Japan.

Jiuta is an important hybrid form of koto music that combines the techniques of both kumiuta and *danmono*. It is sometimes called *tegotomon*, after the *tegoto*, the important instrumental interludes between vocal sections. Tegotomono usually contain three parts—a foresong (*maeudt*), an instrumental interlude (tegoto), and an after song (*atouta*). This basic structure may be extended.

Today, jiuta is played by an ensemble called *sankyoku* (trio) consisting of koto, shamisen, and shakuhachi (an end-blown bamboo flute with four finger holes and one thumbhole, with a notch cut in the lip to facilitate sound production). The koto plays the main melody, while the shamisen and shakuhachi play an elaboration of the main melody, producing simple heterophony.

The koto tradition is perpetuated by various schools, the most important of which are the Ikuta School of Kyoto and the Yamada School of Tokyo, whereas the Meian and Kinko schools, also based, respectively, in Kyoto and Tokyo, are the main traditions of shakuhachi performance. The latter have an interesting and colorful origin; they were founded in the Edo period by masterless samurai, who combined the profession of street musician with that of spy and informer and used their heavy bamboo flutes not just as musical instruments but also as clubs!

The koto and the shamisen best represent the music of the Edo era. Although the shamisen belongs primarily to the world of the theater, with its colorful and exciting entertainments, the koto, by contrast, developed from a court tradition and gradually entered the home, played by members of the rising merchant class as an emblem of cultural accomplishment. In the modern era, the koto maintains a position in Japan similar to that of the parlor piano in nineteenth-century America. It is a popular instrument for middle-class Japanese girls, who play it as a sign of good breeding.
LISTENING GUIDE

LISTEN: "CHIDORI"

Played on koto, shamisen, and shakuhachi, with voice, by the Zumi-Kan Instrumental Group

One of the most famous koto pieces is called "Chidori." It is set in a four-part jiuta form (introduction-song-interlude-song) and can be heard as a solo piece, a koto duet, or a koto and shamisen ensemble. It is also used as geza music in the kabuki theater.

0:00-1:22 Lengthy heterophonic introduction in slow tempo for two kotos and shakuhachi; melody rises as the introduction progresses
1:22-1:58 Vocalist enters, singing a slow melody with only a few notes, but with considerable vibrato and ornamentation
1:59-2:04 Brief instrumental interlude
2:05-2:35 All rejoin and the recording fades out
Gagaku

Gagaku, meaning elegant or refined music, is the instrumental and choral music and dance that has been under the continual patronage of the imperial court for more than a thousand years. Influenced by the ancient music of China, Korea, and Sinicized Indian music, it has been carefully transmitted by generations of court guild musicians to the present day and is perhaps the oldest ensemble music in the world. Gagaku is also used to accompany dance; in this role it is called bugaku.

Gagaku was first adopted in the Nara period (553-749)—the first major historical period in Japan, during which the Japanese struggled to establish a national government modeled after that of China. Prior to the Nara period, Japan was ruled by various rustic clans, the most dominant of which were the Yamato, who originated on the southern island of Kyushu. Until the Nara period, Japanese history and mythology focused on the gradual northern extension of the imperial Yamato power and the justification for its dominance over other lesser clans of the land.

The construction of the city of Nara was begun in 708, and the court was moved there in 710. Fashioned as a miniature of the Chinese capital of Changan (present-day Xian), it captured perfectly the spirit of an age in East Asian history dominated by the pervasive influence of the great empire of the Chinese Tang dynasty. Nara was the first urban center in Japanese history. Its founding was accompanied by a great burst of economic, administrative, and cultural activities. One of the administrative measures taken was the establishment of a music bureau staffed by musicians from Korea and China. Musicians performed music and dance for court entertainments and rituals.

Nara’s founding also ushered in the age of the court nobles, a period that lasted until the later twelfth century. Members of the imperial household, court ministers, and Buddhist priests contended for political power. The constant court intrigues suggest a fundamental instability in the ruling institutions. A century later, this instability was exploited by one court family, the Fujiwara, who were able to dominate the throne and subsequently the political affairs of the country for a long time.

The emperor Shomu and his consort, who was a Fujiwara, were fervent Buddhists, and their influence helped spread this foreign faith. In 737, Shomu ordered the construction of the Todaiji (Great East Temple) in Nara. Housed within the central building of the Todaiji is a huge bronze statue of the Buddha. The casting of the Great Buddha was an impressive technological feat for eighth-century Japan, and it also represented the first Japanese artistic representation of the human form.
At the "eye-opening" ceremony for the Great Buddha in 752, during which the statue was symbolically given life by having the pupils of its eyes painted in, all the great court dignitaries were in attendance. In addition, there were visitors from China, India, and other distant lands and some 10,000 Buddhist priests. It was without doubt one of the grandest occasions in all of early Japanese history. Hundreds of musicians and dancers performed, and many instruments dating from this occasion are still preserved in the imperial treasury of Nara, the Shosoin. Music thus became a part of important rituals pertaining to religious and court affairs.

Nara court music all was of foreign origin and was played primarily by foreign musicians in its original style. The subsequent Heian period (794-1185) showed signs that the Chinese influence was beginning to be assimilated and modified.

Heian (Kyoto), the newly constructed city to which the government moved in 794, remained the capital of Japan for more than a millennium (until the Meiji Restoration in 1868). At the end of the Heian period in 1185, a new military national government was established in Kamakura by the warrior family of Minamoto, bringing an end to the age of the court nobles and ushering in nearly seven centuries of dominance by the warrior class, until the restoration of the Meiji emperor in the late nineteenth century.

During the Heian period, great changes occurred in the governmental system, with the power of the emperor becoming eclipsed by that of the regent, who was controlled by the Fujiwara family. Buddhism continued to flourish in the Heian period, and it had become the principal intellectual system and one of the most important institutional systems in Japanese life. Heian nobles were preoccupied with etiquette and ritual, and they lived in a world governed by formal standards of beauty and the cultivation of poetry and music.

Heian court music still employed a host of Chinese instruments and forms, but the musicians themselves were mostly Japanese. In the ninth century, a standard gagaku orchestra was created under order of the emperor, and a repertory of two main categories was standardized. The togaku repertory includes music of Chinese and Indian origin, whereas the komagaku includes music of Korean and Manchurian origin.

Gagaku music was extremely popular in the Heian court. Not only was it a necessary component of all court ceremonies, but it was also practiced by the court nobles themselves. Amateur gagaku clubs flourished. The famous novel of the Heian period, *The Tale of Genji*, is full of descriptions of musical activities of the noblemen. Today about twenty gagaku musicians who are descendants of musicians of the professional guilds are maintained by the emperor and amateur ensembles also exist outside the court.

The ensemble for gagaku consists of percussion, strings, and winds. The various instruments used in gagaku are described briefly under separate headings.
Percussion:

1. The *da-daiko*, a huge drum struck by two thick sticks. It is only used in bugaku dance.

2. The *tsuri-daiko*, a suspended two-headed drum, only one side of which is struck with two sticks. It is a "colotomic" instrument—that is, it serves to mark off the larger phrase units.

3. The *shoko*, a small suspended gong played with two sticks. It is usually played on the first beat of every measure.

4. The *kakko*, a small drum whose two heads are struck with thin sticks. The kakko is the leader of the togaku ensemble. Its three basic rhythmic patterns are two types of rolls (a slow roll done with both sticks and a faster roll done on the left skin) and a single tap with the right stick. These patterns are played to regulate the tempo of the piece, and they are found mostly in free rhythmic sections; they are also used to mark off beats or phrases. The kakko is only used in togaku.

5. The *san-no-tsuzumi*, an hourglass-shaped drum with two heads, only one of which is struck. Korean in origin, it is played only in komagaku, by the leader of that ensemble.

Strings:

1. The wagon, a six-stringed zither used in kagura.

2. The *gaku-so*, a thirteen-stringed zither, a predecessor of the koto. The strings are plucked by the bare fingers or with finger picks. The music for the gaku-so is made up of two basic patterns that are played to mark off sections.

3. The *biwa*, a pear-shaped lute with four strings and four frets played with a small plectrum. It is also used to mark off sections in a piece. The music for the biwa consists primarily of arpeggios, which may end with short melodic fragments. The effect of biwa music in gagaku is primarily rhythmic. This instrument is similar to the old style of Chinese *pipa*.

Winds:

1. The hichiriki, a short, double-reed bamboo oboe with nine holes, originating from China. Through use of the embouchure and fingering technique, tones
smaller than a half-step can be produced. Its tone quality is penetrating and strong, and it is the center of the gagaku ensemble.

2. The kagura-bue, a six-holed bamboo flute that produces a basic pentatonic scale; other pitches may be produced by using special fingerings. The length of this flute varies, and thus also its actual pitch. It is used for Shinto ceremonies.

3. The ryutuki, a seven-holed bamboo flute of Chinese origin used for togaku music. It is the largest of the gagaku flutes.

4. The koma-bue, a six-holed flute of Korean origin used for komagaku music. It is the smallest of the gagaku flutes.

5. The sho, a mouth organ with seventeen reed pipes (two of which are silent) in a cup-shaped wind chest with a single mouthpiece. Its predecessor was the Chinese sheng. Chords are produced by blowing into the mouthpiece and closing holes in the pipes. Its primary function is harmonic. Typically, each chord is begun softly and gradually gets louder, whereupon the next chord is produced with the same dynamic swelling; this process is repeated continuously by inhaling and exhaling air.

The gagaku orchestra
The wind instruments are the heart of the gagaku ensemble; they play roles analogous to those of the strings in a Western symphony orchestra.

Different instrumentations are used for togaku and komagaku. The former uses three sho, three hichiriki, three ryuteki, two biwa, two gaku-so, one kakko, one shoko, and one taiko. Instrumentation for komagaku is basically the same, except that the koma-bue is used instead of the ryuteki, the san-no-tsuuzumi instead of the kakko, and the strings are not used.

The musical style of gagaku is characterized by smoothness, serenity, and precise execution without virtuosic display. The melody, played on the hichiriki and the flutes, is supported by chords produced on the sho. An abstraction of this melody is played on the gaku-so in octaves and on the biwa in single notes. While smaller sections of a piece are marked off by a biwa arpeggio, larger sections are delineated by tsuri-daiko and shoko strokes. Drum patterns played by the kakko or san-no-tsuuzumi serve similar colotomic functions and also regulate the tempo of a piece. When a chorus joins in performing the melody of gagaku, it sings in a natural voice using very little ornamentation.

The melodies of gagaku use six modes theoretically based on the Chinese-derived ryo and ritsu scales; the rhythm is organized so that slow pieces have an eight-beat rhythm, moderately fast pieces have a four-beat rhythm, and fast pieces have a two-beat rhythm.

Gagaku music, like most Japanese music that came after it, was conceived in an aesthetic scheme of introduction-exposition-denouement known as jo-ha-kyu, which has also influenced the aesthetic of noh. In gagaku, jo is the netori, a slow prelude that introduces the musical mode in which the piece is written. In a full-blown gagaku piece, the sho generally starts the netori, followed in turn by the hichiriki, the flute, and finally the kakko. The mood of the netori is generally subtle and serene and has a tentative feeling like a warm-up.

During the ha section, the rhythm becomes regular. Here the main body of the composition begins. The hichiriki and flute play the basic melody, the sho provides a harmonic background, and the percussion provides accompaniment; shortly, the strings also join in. Once the entire ensemble is playing together, there is no further change in the full ensemble sound.

Kyu is the rushing to the end. Here the tempo gets very fast; toward the end, the pace slackens once again, and the instruments drop out one by one as the texture becomes thinner. Finally, only the biwa and the gaku-so are left; they play two or three very slow notes, the biwa ending by plucking the dominant or the tonic of the mode, and the gaku-so completing the composition with one stroke on the tonic.

**COLOTOMIC**: Marking or delineating major phrases in a musical composition. Used to describe percussion instruments that have this function.
Listening to the archaic sound of the gagaku, one may imagine going back into the rarefied time of the Heian court nobles and sharing with them, for a brief moment at least, their profound preoccupation with aesthetic self-cultivation.

**LISTENING GUIDE**

**LISTEN: Excerpts from a GAGAKU piece: NETORI (prelude) and ETENRAKU in HYOJO**

Performed by Nippon Gagku Kai (Gagaku Society of Japan)

Ettenraku is the most famous instrumental piece in Gagaku and has no dance accompanying it. It was imported from Tang dynasty China, but over the centuries various tunings have been developed, so there are now three versions. The melody of Etenraku was also used to sing Imayo poetry, and this was the technique used to compose the folk song Kuroda Bushi.

0:00 Plays dronelike chord to begin netori (jo section of jo-ha-kyu structure) prelude in hyojo mode
0:09 Hichiriki enters, following prescribed order of entries in netori
0:27 Kakko first heard
0:34 Ryuteki flute enters
1:01 Gaku-so (left channel) and biwa (right channel) enter
1:28 Netori ends
1:34 Ryuteki introduces Etenraku melody in slow tempo, beginning ha section of the composition
1:41 Kakko and shoko heard; taiko stroke first heard at 1'45"—listen for shoko part throughout, marking the beginning of a measure
2:04 Kakko plays longer roll
2:21 Sho and hichiriki enter
2:42-3:12 Biwa and gaku-so first heard; ensemble complete
3:12 Track fades out

**GENERAL TENDENCIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOGAKU**

Before closing, it may be helpful to provide some summary observations on the general tendencies and characteristics of traditional Japanese music, hogaku.

The rise and fall of a particular style of music through Japanese history has been closely linked with changes in political life, social conditions, and religious developments. For example, the gagaku of the Nara period was regarded as a symbol of authority and power of the newly evolved imperial and national government, and no effort was spared to increase its grandeur.

The noh theater, with themes of redemption of human suffering through the love of Buddha, was exclusively an art of the ruling samurai during the long ages of military strife; it is, in particular, an expression of the samurai class's preoccupation with Zen Buddhism, which
emphasizes simplicity and personal enlightenment through self-understanding and self-reliance. Noh was also a political symbol of the samurai class. During the Edo period, it continued to be performed in the Edo castle, the political center of the Tokugawa military government. Finally, the popular rise of the kabuki and the bunraku theaters was due entirely to the rise of the urban bourgeoisie and their patronage. As the bourgeois arts par excellence, they represent a fondness for popular entertainments and, in particular, lavish theatrical entertainments.

Japanese music is closely tied with ritual, literature, and dance, and these ties have remained unbroken through the ages. It was said that in ancient times, when the emperor or his courtiers asked for the pronouncement of an oracle, it was habitual to offer a musical performance first; therefore, the court has always kept musicians in its service.

In hogaku, vocal music predominates. Music serves primarily as a vehicle for words and literature. All Japanese instruments were developed to emulate the human voice. It is noteworthy that the first significant instrumental solos, the tegotomono, were created to serve as interludes to the verses of songs.

Among Japanese music genres, theatrical music is the most important. The course of Japanese music history is marked by a steady growth of theatrical music. This is due again to the Japanese love of storytelling and preoccupation with ritual.

Finally, we have noted the basic Japanese aesthetic concept of jo-ha-kyu (introduction-development-denouement) and the application of this concept in various kinds of music. We have also noted the propensity of the Japanese to use stereotyped melodic patterns in creating new compositions. It remains to be noted that Japanese music is predominantly a chamber music in its conception; even the gagaku ensemble is essentially a chamber orchestra.

**SUMMARY**

- Hogaku, or traditional Japanese music, comprises many different styles, from religious and dramatic music to court and popular genres.
- The earliest known Japanese musical style is gagaku, the traditional music of the court.
- Also fairly ancient are the religious Shinto music and the chanting of Buddhist monks known as shomyo.
- The major Japanese theatrical styles are the kabuki drama; bunraku puppet theatre; and the earlier noh theater.
- Typical Japanese instruments include the shamisen (plucked lute), koto (plucked zither), shakuhachi (end-blown flute), sho (mouth organ), and various drums.