

Compositions of German musicians in Japan from 1872 to 1945

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Introduction

The introduction of European art music in Japan has been chosen as a case study on cultural transference. Complementary to existing studies that have dealt with institutions or single Japanese composers, this paper is based on the research on a group of musicians who played a significant role in the process of cultural transference up to 1945. In particular, musicians who received their education in German-speaking societies composed the largest documented group of foreign musicians in Japan. This paper deals with German musicians who worked for the official music-import at national institutions as well as with those who formed an unofficial stream by working apart from national schools. During the time-period 1872 to 1945, Japan idealized Germany strongly.

Objectives

Analyzing the activities of German musicians in Japan they were expected to

- a) introduce European art music to Japan;
- b) "to make new Japanese music". (GEIDAI: 93)

The latter one proved to be a problem of musical synthesis which Japanese and foreign musicians shared. The five approaches towards a solution can be seen as ascending steps towards an appreciative understanding of Japanese culture, roughly corresponding with ascending time periods.

Group 1: Compositions without any connection to the Japanese environment;

Group 2: Arrangements of Japanese melodies;

Group 3: Compositions based on Japanese tonal material;

Group 4: Compositions based on westernized Japanese melodies;

Group 5: Compositions based on Japanese impressions and literature.

The five categories reflect the levels of westernization Japanese composers went through. Additionally to musical analysis, the compositions have been examined in regard to

- their contemporary socio-cultural origin;
- the positions of the composers in Japanese society;
- their acceptance and function in Japanese society.

Group 1: Compositions without any connection to the Japanese environment

a)

Josef LASKA

Reichsmarsch zum 1. Uhu-Baumfest der Koba Japonica 1927. (Autograph in Vienna National Library)

March No.3 for the Graduations Ceremony of the Kôbe College 1932. (Autograph in Bruckner-Conservatory, Linz)

Karl VOGT

Lieder aus 1915. Prisoner Camp Bandô: 1915.

Vaterländisches Lied (Patriotic song)

Kein schöner Tod ist in der Welt (No beautiful death in this world)

Soldatenbraut (Soldier's bride)

Lieder. Prisoner Camp Bandô: undated.

Sehnsucht (Nostalgia)

Ankunft (Arrival)

Geige am Abend (Violin at night)

Des Gefangenen Lied (Prisoner's song)

Ernst PUTSCHER

27 Clerical and other *Songs*

4 *Cantatas* (Autographs in Kagoshima University)

b)

Heinrich WERKMEISTER

Suite d-Moll for violoncello with piano-accompaniment. Berlin: Ries und Erler, 1925.

Kompositionen for violoncello with piano-accompaniment. Berlin: Ries und Erler, 1925.

Ernst PUTSCHER

Collection of piano-pieces. Tôkyô: Zen-on, 1978.

Sonatas for violin, organ and piano. (Autographs in Kagoshima University)

c)

Rudolf DITTRICH

Kenpô happu no uta (Anthem on the declaration of the Constitution) in: *Shuku Nihon Saijitsu Shôka*. Tôkyô: Tôkyô Ongaku Gakkô, 1904.

Franz ECKERT

Trauermarsch "Kanashimi no kiwami" 1897. (Emperor's funeral march) (Autograph in Tôkyô Police Archives)

Pieces for brassband (autographs in the Academy of Fine Arts, Tôkyô.):

Souvenir de Tokyo, undated.

Fest-quadrille, undated.

Potpourri: Gaudeamus igitur, undated.

The largest group of compositions are without any connection to the host-country. The majority of composers chose to avoid the problem of musical synthesis and wrote mostly romantic style music at the level of highly advanced pupils. This reflects the starting point of Japanese composers. The German composers' reservations about Japanese music were caused by

- the wish to avoid the problem;
- their profound knowledge of 19th century German music theory which they had received in the centers of musical education such as Vienna and Berlin;
- expectations of their Japanese environment.

With regard to its function, music hiding its Japanese origin can be seen as:

- a) means of distinction, of stressing difference;
- b) didactic pieces for instrumentalists;
- c) written for Japanese purposes.

- a) German prisoners of World War I in the prisoner camps of Bandô and Kurume satisfied their patriotic feelings not only by performing Beethoven's *Ninth symphony*, but also by compositions like *Patriotic song*, *No beautiful death in this world* or *Soldiers bride* by Karl Vogt (1884-1960). As an example for a composition for an exclusive society, Laska (1886-1964)'s *Reichsmarsch for the Koba Japonica*, a German speaking international society can be noted.
- b) In the beginning of Japanese education in European art music, study material was difficult to obtain. To cope with the shortage of notes the German teachers wrote their own music. This was the case with Heinrich Werkmeister (1883-1936), Japan's first cello teacher.
- c) After the Meiji Restoration, European music was forcedly built up as a symbol of the new social elite — primarily on two occasions: dance parties at the famous *rokumeikan* and military parades (Tanaka: 136). The Germans consequently wrote a quadrille, arrangements of waltzes and other dance and marches for brass bands. One of them gained high status: Franz Eckert (1852-1916) composed the Emperor's funeral march *Kanashimi no Kiwami* (1897), a sacred piece not allowed to be copied, written down or even listened to except on such solemn occasions as in 1989.

Group 2: Arrangements of Japanese melodies

V. HOLTZ

Japanische Lieder, (Japanese songs) Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für die Natur-und Völkerkunde Ostasiens I / 3:13-14, I / 4:45-47, Yokohama 1873-1876. II, 20:423-428, Yokohama 1876-1880.

Franz ECKERT

Kimi ga yo. 1880. National Anthem.

Japanische Lieder, (Japanese songs) Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für die Natur-und Völkerkunde Ostasiens II: 423-428, Yokohama 1876-1880.

Rudolf DITTRICH

Nippon gakufu 1. Sechs japanische Volkslieder gesammelt und für das Klavier bearbeitet. ("Six Japanese popular songs" collected and arranged for the pianoforte) Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1894.

Nippon gakufu 2. Zehn japanische Volkslieder gesammelt und für das Klavier bearbeitet. ("Ten Japanese songs" collected and arranged for the pianoforte) Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1895.

Rakubai. Fallende Pflaumenblüten. Japanisches Lied mit Koto für Klavier bearbeitet. (Falling plum blossoms. Japanese song with *koto* arranged for piano) Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1894.

Konju raku. (Schlangentanz — Snake dance) *Butoku raku*. Zwei altklassisch chinesische Tanzmelodien aus dem Repertoire der kaiserlichen Palastkapelle. (Two old-classical Chinese melodies from the repertoire of the Emperor's court music) Wien: Josef Eberle, undated.

Tekona-Marsch aus durchwegs original-japanischen, persönlich gesammelten Motiven und Liedern zusammengestellt. (*Tekona-March* consisting of original Japanese

motives, personally collected by) Wien: Josef Eberle, undated [1904]

Yoi! Marsch aus durchwegs original-japanischen, persönlich gesammelten Motiven und Liedern. (*Yoi! March* consisting of original Japanese motives, personally collected by) Wien: Josef Eberle, undated.

Ernst PUTSCHER

Klaviervariationen über Sakura-Sakura (Variations on *Sakura-Sakura*) op.62, 1931. Tōkyō: Zen-on, 1978.

Josef LASKA

Japanische Melodien. (Japanese melodies) 1. Heft 1929, 2. Heft 1931. Berlin: Ries und Erler, O. J.

Etenraku for piano and flute. undated. (Autograph in Vienna National Library)

As a first attempt at getting into contact with the foreign musical environment, German composers, in all positions, began to arrange Japanese melodies. Before the turn of the century, composers such as Dittrich and Eckert did not go beyond this kind of approach. For Laska, this was only a preparatory step for further studies. Although the melodies are of Japanese origin, Western and Eastern art are not treated as equals. European instrumentation such as brassband, piano and violin, lied forms and simple rhythmical structures, dominate the pieces. The melodies have been transformed to fit into 4 or 8 measure schemes and harmonized according to classic-romantic principles. This music is the practical adaptation of research into Japanese music by Germans and Japanese musicians: "to make [Japanese] melodies acceptable to European music lovers by arranging in a European style — polyphony, harmony, free piano-part" (Dittrich:376). Although caught in his ethnocentric view, Dittrich recognized "that we must not harmonize the music of other times and cultures which is based on anything other than major-minor scales according to our schema. Definitely, this view on art has not yet succeeded" he admitted (Dittrich:390). In spite of this understanding he "could not resist the temptation" — and his employer's orders — to arrange the melodies. By his arrangements, the artistic director of the Academy, Rudolf Dittrich, helped to set a standard for editing Japanese music in Western notation. This is illustrated by the close connection between Dittrich's arrangements and the *Sōkyoku shū* (Collection of Japanese *koto* music) whose first volume was published in 1888 by the Cultural Ministry. Two songs of the *Nippon gakufu 2 — Himematsu* (Young pine tree) and *Hanakurabe* (The union of the blossoms) and *Rakubai* are melodically identical with the versions in the *koto*-collection. Jugged by stylistic homogeneity, those three arrangements set the standard for the remaining songs whose written sources have not been identified. Interpreted by their function those arrangements are;

a) souvenirs for the home country;

b) music according to the intentions of the host country.

a) Printed in Germany, compositions based on Japanese melodies functioned as "souvenirs" — as Dittrich's *Nippon gakufu* which influenced Puccini. "In order to find new blood to be injected" (Tanabe: 5) composers in Europe based their musical exotism on such arrangements. The exotic element — reinforced by beautifully designed covers and explanation — was an additive element of attraction for editors and customers.

b) Although Japanese music was treated from the viewpoint of European superiority, Japan did not hesitate to use the arrangements for national purposes. A popular example is the

- Japanese Anthem *Kimi ga yo* by Franz Eckert. It is a harmonization of a melody by the contemporary *gagaku* musician Hayashi Hiromori (1831-1896), strongly resembling the Easter sequentia *Victimae paschali laudes*. Functional harmonization meant strength to Izawa Shūji (1851-1917); "The tonic is the leader or commander-in-chief of the music, and strong music cannot be formed under a weak leader" (GEIDAI: 177).

Group 3: Compositions using Japanese tonal material

Klaus PRINGSHEIM

Konzert für Orchester C-Dur, op.32. Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō:1935. Preface by the composer.

A superficial analysis of Japanese music resulted in the identification of pentatonic scales as the most important characteristic. "Japanese" to Klaus Pringsheim meant that "intervals are of a half tone less-pentatonic system." He used his understanding to develop a method Japanese composers should base their music on. His idea was derived from various reasons:

- a) He recognized the attempts of Japanese musicians at building "a redeeming synthesis for the future" as "a Japanese problem" and at the same time, the insufficient means and shortcomings they employed.
- b) By his rigorous academic training the feeling for being a leader was raised. "What the European composer possibly could do, is to show and lead on a possible way." "Form and language of occidental music" he considered adequate to fit to Japanese musical intuition.

The piece, dedicated to the Academy in 1935, resembled the idea of his friend Bertolt Brecht of a *Lehrstück*, a didactic piece. Pringsheim wanted to prove that a Japanese melody — according to his identification — could be treated in a polyphonic way based on a "harmonic treatment that does not withdraw from the censorship of analytic functional thinking" and that "Bach's harmony can do justice to pentatonic melodies". Listening to the *Konzert für Orchester* evokes feelings walking through an exhibition of styles from Brahms, Mahler, Strauss and Stravinsky.

Although the piece was performed only once before the end of the war in 1935, Pringsheim's educational ideas spread among a generation of Japanese composers who received his lessons in music theory. He expected his pupils "to find stimulations" but was already rejected by other contemporary composers. Mitsukuri Shūkichi (1895-1971) repeatedly published "Discussions on Mister Pringsheim" quoting the famous Tanaka Shōhei (1862-1945): "One has to fear Pringsheim's faulty method, his knowledge based on wrong acoustic ideas and his influence . . . on Japanese composers. And this is a public problem — not only the one of Mitsukuri Shūkichi" (Mitsukuri: 34).

Pringsheim's career is typically for Japan's musical history: a highly educated professional craftsman who theoretically had the vision of a synthetical music, but lacked the musical ability to make it a realization.

Group 4: Compositions based on westernized melodies of Japanese origin

1. Ernst PUTSCHER, *Variations on aikoku-kōshinkyoku*, (Patriotic march) op.93. undated. [after 1937]
2. Klaus PRINGSHEIM, *Variations on "Kono michi wa"* for cello and piano, 1941.
3. Manfred GURLITT, *Variations on a theme of Nobutoki (Umi yu kaba)* for piano / orchestra, 1944.

To the European listener, the music of this group could never be recognized as being of Japanese origin. And yet, by their ideological-political function, these compositions are clearly defined as Japanese nationalistic music. The reasons why German composers based their compositions on contemporary Japanese melodies were:

- a) It was easier to base a composition on a westernized Japanese melody than on a traditional one.
 - b) Compositions based on westernized Japanese melodies satisfied the wish for musical synthesis on an easy level.
 - c) They hoped to gain popularity by taking up popular melodies.
 - d) They had to respond to nationalistic demands.
 - e) Considering the generally inferior roles foreign musicians had to accept in Japan during the process of introducing European music, the variations on *Umi yu kaba* and *Kono michi wa* can be seen as dedications to very influential Japanese composers whose support might have been crucial during war time.
1. With his six *Variations on the patriotic march "Aikoku"* for piano, Ernst Putscher chose an opening piece which had been played for many army band concerts since 1930, composed by Setoguchi Tokichi (1868-1941) (Rikugun:252, 253).
 2. *Kono michi wa* (The road, I have been going already) was written in 1927 by the maker of Japanese European style music life, Yamada Kōsaku (1886-1965). Considering the title of his biography the song has become Yamada's brand-name (*Kono michi*). With *Kono michi wa*, Yamada obviously created a romantic song that allowed Japanese listeners to accept it as part of their own culture. The striking similarity of the *Kono michi wa* with one of Siebold's *Japanese melodies* (2nd edition Vienna 1874) leads to the assumption that Yamada's composition already existed as a song.
 3. *Umi yu kaba* was composed in 1937 by Nobutoki Kiyoshi (1887-1965), who held the influential post of a teacher of composition at the Academy from 1923 to 1932. In fact the text can be interpreted also as an anti-war song, *Umi yu kaba* became the signal tune for war-announcements — a counterpart to Liszt's *Les Préludes* in Germany. Considering the names of 20 Variations on a theme of Nobutoki (*Umi yu kaba*), Gurlitt seemed to have set the history of Japan during the Pacific War to music.

The music of the pieces is characterized as not going beyond late romantic tonality, somewhat denying the development of European music. By writing nationalistic music, German composers built themselves a conservative niche.

Group 5: Compositions based on Japanese impressions and literature

Josef LASKA

Lieder des Ostens (Songs from the East) for voice and piano, 1928-1930. Based on poems of H. Bohner, J. Shiger, Li hung Tschì, Tu Moh, Tsu Tsu Niang. (Autograph in Vienna National Library)

7 Tankas aus Hyakunin-isshu for voice, flute and piano, in: Jubiläumsband der OAG, Teil 1:156-176, Tōkyō 1933.

Die Himmelsflöte (Flute from Heaven) for orchestra, 1932. After a Chinese Drama by Maria Piper. (Autograph in Vienna National Library)

Japanese Suite for orchestra, 1933. (Autograph in Bruckner-conservatory, Linz)

10 Japanische Kurzgedichte (10 Japanese short poems) for voice and piano. Kôbe-Osaka-Press: 1933.

Die Jahreszeiten von Japan (Japanese seasons). 4 *Tanka* for speaker and orchestra, 1934. (Autograph in Vienna National Library)

Bilder aus Japan for piano, undated. (Autograph in Bruckner-conservatory, Linz)

Nara. 3 pieces for flute and piano, undated. (Autograph in Bruckner-conservatory, Linz and Kôbe College)

Manyôshû-Lieder for voice and piano. Partly published in: Ignaz Herbst ed. *Musik-Anthologie des Dt.-österr. Autorenverbandes*, undated. (Autograph in Bruckner-conservatory, Linz)

Ernst PUTSCHER

Satsuma-Suite for piano, undated, (Autograph in Kagoshima University)

Klaus PRINGSHEIM

Yamada Nagamasa. Radio Drama for tenor, baritone and orchestra, 1939. (Autograph in possession of Hans Erik Pringsheim, Tôkyô)

Hans RAMSEGER

Chûshingura. Symphonic Poem 1917-1926. Partly published in: Prisoner Camp Bandô, 1918.

Generally, their music, although based on Japanese literature, is European music, stylistically covering a wide range from an early classical style music to a style going beyond tonality.

German composers who chose this way of approach:

- were not employed by the National Academy;
- were not invited by the government to teach music in Japan;
- came to Japan for non-music related reasons;
- had at least a superficial understanding of the Japanese language;
- were willing to study Japanese culture and history;
- were able to appreciate Japanese music without studying it theoretically;
- were open to new ways of composition.

The *Satsuma-Suite*, Putsch's (1896-1962) musical reminiscences of Chopin and Bach, blended with *shamisen*-like chords that accompany a half tone-less melody remind a Japanese author of an "especially Japanese mood, where his [Putsch's] long Japanese life is well recalled" (Miyazawa: 31). Almost from the beginning, there were musical elements that allowed a musical synthesis. The first steps were undertaken by Hans Ramseger (1867-1933) in his symphonic poem *Chûshingura* (Suchy: 40). Ramseger's attitude was continued by his Austrian friend, Josef Laska (1886-1964), who came to Japan in 1923 after a ten-year-stay in Siberian prisoner-camps and study in the music-conservatory of Vladivostok. He "graduated" with a thorough education in ethnomusicology and training of foreign students. Already, in 1929, he composed Chinese poems, Japanese literature and selected *tanka* of *Man'yôshû* and *Kokinshû*, of *Ise monogatari* and *haiku* by Bashô. With the *Hyakunin-issu* in 1931 and the *10 Japanese short poems* in 1933 Laska had developed a new composition style originating from Japanese texts. The musical interpretation of the Japanese poems, structured in five or

seven syllable periods, does not allow 4 or 8 bar periods and leads to extremely short compositions lasting only a few seconds, with no tonality. Single musical events serve the words without appearing superior due to their ingenious variety.

During his stay in Siam, Klaus Pringsheim composed the radio-drama *Yamada Nagamasa*, his first composition based on a Japanese text (*Japan Times* 15.10.1939). Considering the content, *Yamada Nagamasa* does not only glorify Japan, but was an insult to Pringsheim's Siamese host (Gunji, Parish).

Conclusion

Compositions of Germans staying in Japan between 1872 and 1945 show:

- a feeling of superiority towards Japanese music and culture;
- a tendency to improve Japanese music;
- a lack of courage and ability to try new ways of musical approach.

Those tendencies can be seen in reaction with their:

- highly virtuous training as performers at music academies in European music centers;
- a nostalgia for their home country;
- the wish to be accepted and successful;
- the nationalistic demand as faced by the host country.

Analyzing the situation it can be concluded that music written by foreign composers has been adopted as Japanese nationalistic music which is characterized as a music:

1. without any musical connection to the host country (*Kanashimi no kiwami*);
2. based on traditional melodies (*Kimi ga yo*);
3. didactic pieces for Japanese composers (Pringsheim *Konzert für Orchester*);
4. played at occasions which developed and promoted a Japanese motion in an ideological-political way as intended by the government (*Kono michi wa*);
5. based on Japanese literature (*Yamada Nagamasa*).

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DISCUSSION: chaired by FUJII Tomoaki (Ôsaka).

Andrew Dalgarno McCREDIE (Adelaide): How far back can one trace the translations of German tracts on musical theory into Japanese, especially those which were written after 1870? There is a huge repertory of German theoretical material. One only has to think of the early translations of Riemann, Ludwig, Rudolf Louis and so on to see how early these mass translations took place. They were not only made available to the Anglo-saxon or Slovanic world, but also elsewhere. And in English translations they would have been known also here. What I would like to know is to what extent can one view the case of some of these composers? I believe it would certainly apply to Klaus Pringsheim and Manfred Gurlitt as falling into that popular classification that we now hear about in Central Europe, the so-called *Musikimmigration*. As you are aware perhaps, the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek and the Houghton Library at Harvard University now have a combined project which is looking at mainly the German composers who immigrated to the North America. But they have also taken up the case of Wolfgang Frankl, a composer who now has spent many years in Shanghai in an almost comparative series of capacities to those which you have been just describing. There is room for a small conference somewhere on this whole question of the transplantations into the Southern West and West Pacific basins.

SUCHY: Thank you for your comments. Maybe I would give you two answers. The first is the literature on Japanese music written by non-German musicians in Japan. And looking at all this literature and categorizing it again, as I did last year at the ICTM, but by comparing the different articles, especially in regard to the positions the writers had, I was able to recognize the positions that German musicians held in Japan. The second is the question of immigrants, and I also think that there are composers that don't show up anywhere. The other day I went over a new check-list of Japanese composers at Kunitachi, and I missed the German ones. No Gurlitt, nor Pringsheim. Where are they now? They are not included in the German list, nor in the Japanese. For my radio job, I must say something about Gurlitt and am collecting his music for a program on his one-hundredth birthday. I am interested in your suggestion about the conference and would like to hear about the details later.

McCREDIE: Gurlitt was a very interesting figure even before he left Germany. For example, he made his own setting of *Wozzeck* around the same time as Berg did. There are some

very interesting points of contrast between these two operas. In 1976 the first performance in Australia of Berg's opera took place in Adelaide, and I arranged a performance of Gurlitt's *Wozzeck* two nights before. Then Gurlitt subsequently made a setting of *Soldaten* by Lenz, which is curiously anticipatory of some of the things in Zimmerman's dramaturgy. Is there any evidence of, for example, Manfred Gurlitt showing a creative reflex to Japanese literature?

SUCHY: I don't think he did. While in Japan, he wrote the variations on *Umi yukaba*. I don't know any piece based on a Japanese story.

NAKAMURA Kôsuke (Tôkyô): I have two questions. First, what does the year 1872 mean in connection with German musicians?

SUCHY: It was the year that the first German musician came to Japan. It was to Yokohama, and written in the guide to theatre. He has his grave there, but I don't know the name.

NAKAMURA: In spite of their composing activities, they really did not have a significant influence on Japanese composers. You talked about *Kanashimi no kiwami* by Franz Eckert, but it was performed only twice. You also mentioned the *Umi yukaba* variation, but it is a minor work in comparison to other works by Gurlitt, such as *Wozzeck*, *Soldaten*, *Klavier Quintet* in 1911 or *Sechs Romantische Lieder*. Anyway, in my opinion, their influence on Japanese composers is not very significant.

SUCHY: I disagree with you. The influence of German music until World War II was extremely strong. For instance, Pringsheim raised a whole generation of Japanese composers; nearly everybody at the time was his pupil. But the influence is not only due to the activities of German musicians in Japan. It is due to extra-musical reasons, too; due to Japanese who studied in Germany, including novelists, doctors, lawyers, and others.

Luciana GALLIANO (Torino / Tôkyô): Concerning your reference to the compositions based on Japanese tonal material, I would like to add the compositions of Mitsukuri Shûkichi. He studied and invented a solution for harmony in Japanese compositions and published a lot of articles between 1930 and 1935. He composed ten *haiku* by Bashô that can be defined as compositions based on Japanese tonal material. In his writing, he says that two other compositions can be possibly thought as using Japanese tonal material, although unconsciously: *Harusame* (Spring rain), a song by Yamada Kôsaku, and *Agakari* by Nobutoki Kiyoshi for women's chorus.

SUCHY: Thank you for mentioning Mitsukuri, because he and Pringsheim published their conversation for many years. Mitsukuri even published them in German so that Pringsheim could read them. There is an influence which strengthened their critical senses. And at least Mitsukuri and Kiyose dared to publish dissenting opinions against this authoritarian teacher.