

Review

Tokita, Alison McQueen and David W. Hughes, eds. 2008. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music*. Aldershot: Ashgate. ISBN 978-0-7546-5699-9 (hbk). 446 pp.

It is a delight to see a new collection of essays on aspects of Japanese music being brought together with the researcher in mind. Music in just about every nation state comprises an array of traditions and styles, each embracing a multitude of musical and social complexities that often sees entire tomes dedicated to the smallest of subject areas. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music* focuses on Japanese traditional music (*hōgaku*) with a small contribution on several other styles (e.g., folk, popular and western).

The editors have assembled 16 chapters by 15 contributors on music they consider to be representative of Japanese music. The very first chapter outlines the immense complexity of the task by asking 'What is "Japanese Music"?' The theme of this opening chapter is illuminating and sets the scene for a book that celebrates cultural diversity in music, particularly as the editors note that 'we might do better to talk about "Japanese musics"' (1). It is in this contextualization of musical diversity where a plurality of musics is emphasized in a setting of unprecedented cultural change and blurred classifications and terminology that the book offers hope to music research in the twenty-first century. The opening chapter situates the text within more of a cultural studies reader, pointing out the effects of globalization, diaspora, local-global flows, transmission, social contexts, concepts and theories. But how can a research companion of just 446 pages possibly attempt to cover everything a researcher needs to know about Japanese music(s)? It obviously cannot, but what it can do is offer a series of vignettes or case studies that attempt to present some of the musics that make up the Japanese cultural soundscape, a glimpse into the diversity alluded to in the book's introduction. By p. 28, the editors' primary concern is foregrounded, which is to critique the decline of what is known as traditional Japanese music (i.e., the musics of Japan that were evident before mass westernization from the latter half of the nineteenth century, and have continued to be transmitted to the modern day whether through cultural transformation or other means). Indeed, the lament on the decline of traditional Japanese music is stressed when the editors ask, 'but what does the future hold for the more traditional genres discussed in this book?' (29).

The two chapters on court and religious music by Steven G. Nelson provide an historical overview covering around 1300 years of two genres, *gagaku* (court music) and *shōmyō* (Buddhist chant), and a more analytical discussion of instrumentation, notation and performance practice. For the novice, there are a few black and white pictures showing instruments, and also of interest is an extract of the Japanese notation of the opening of the *gagaku* piece 'Goshōraku no Kyū', which is followed by a transnotation in five-line western staff. A few other examples of *gagaku* and *shōmyō* help outline the basic features of these genres.

A literature theme is the subject of the chapter by Komoda Haruko. *Heike monogatari* (*The Tale of the Heike*) is a musical narrative that dates from the thirteenth century and performed by blind *biwa* (short-neck lute) players. Komoda provides an historical overview, pictures of performers and a summary of musical elements such as scale, rhythm and vocal style. The two sections at the end of this chapter on research history and research challenges are particularly helpful for anyone wishing to look into this topic further. As the author notes, 'research not only on *heike*, but also on the *Heike Monogatari*, is crying out for a concerted effort by all disciplines' (103).

The *biwa* theme is continued into the next chapter with Hugh de Ferranti's exposition on the Kyūshū traditions. Japan's largest southern island, Kyūshū, has a long history of *biwa* performance, and de Ferranti expeditiously enlightens the reader on the range of performance schools, styles and practices (ritual and secular) that have emanated from this region. For anyone interested in this particular sphere of Japanese music, the heterogeneity that de Ferranti portrays in detail is reflective of the immensity of Japanese music in general.

Chapter 6 moves to the music of the theatrical traditions of *nō* (Noh) and *kyōgen*. Outlining basic structures and musical elements, Fujita Takanori offers a summary on an art form that is so often viewed as secondary to the theatrical performance that dominates on stage.

A further Japanese scholar offers in the following chapter a summary of the *shakuhachi* (end-blown bamboo flute) and its music. Tsukitani Tsuneko provides an historical overview, in much the same way as each of the other chapters in the book, and also including a succinct discussion of music and notations. Again, as with de Ferranti's chapter, the profound diversity that underpins the musical and social structures connected with and associated to Japanese traditional music is seen with the various historical and contemporary *shakuhachi* styles and schools of performances. While this overview offers a guide to this diversity and complexity, the author acknowledges the relative lack of research on the instrument and its music (168).

Rather than focusing on a single instrument, as with several of the previous chapters, Philip Flavin's contribution to this research companion offers a delib-

eration on the collection of music genres for *koto* (13-string zither) and *shamisen* (three-string lute) known as *sōkyoku jiuta*. Flavin succinctly discusses the history of *sōkyoku jiuta*, along with a summary of its two main instruments. The various transnotations of traditional pieces will help the reader understand some of the complexities of the different styles discussed.

Chapters 9 and 10 are a return to the music of other theatrical traditions. In chapter 9, Yamada Chieko discusses the music of *bunraku* (puppet theatre). Known as *gidayū bushi* and founded in the late seventeenth century, *gidayū bushi* developed both within *bunraku* and as a genre performed without puppets. Chapter 10 focuses on the music of *kabuki* theatre, which provides a discussion of the various contexts in *kabuki* in which music is found (on stage and off stage). Several very helpful black and white pictures help show the musical contexts of the theatrical form.

The field of popular music is introduced in Chapter 11, although the focus here, as mostly found in the book thus far, is distinctly on music before the Meiji era (1868–1912). In this chapter, Gerald Groemer provides a detailed historical study of the origins of Japanese popular music forms and the performers who delivered the music to the masses.

A slightly different approach is presented in the following chapter by David W. Hughes. While introducing the notion of Japanese folk song and performing arts, among other definitions of related terms, Chapter 12 includes a modern element that explores social change in connection with folk song. Moreover, a large part of this chapter outlines folk song today and questions the future of the genre, which is a refreshing approach to contemporary music scholarship.

A study of the music of a geographic Japanese periphery is introduced in chapter 13. Here, Robin Thompson discusses the music (or rather musics) of Ryūkyū, a kingdom that held semi-autonomous status until the late nineteenth century. It is in this type of chapter that one can really capture the cultural diversity of Japanese music: its geographic differences, social connections and cultural associations. There are, of course, other Japanese geographic regions with their own unique musical styles, and chapter 14 introduces the music of the Ainu who are nowadays geographically rooted in Hokkaidō, Japan's largest island to the north of the country. Both the musics of Ryūkyū and of the Ainu have received very little serious scholarly attention in the recent history of music research, yet each has a rich cultural history and profound social and political significance.

A further chapter on popular music is presented in chapter 15, by Christine Yano and Hosokawa Shūhei. Focusing on the popular music of modern Japan, one wonders why a genre such as this occupies such a miniscule part of this tome. Indeed, popular music dominates the Japanese cultural soundscape, alongside its counterpart, *yōgaku*, or western (classical) music. While portraying a brief history

of popular music in Japan, the authors emphasize the emergence of the youth market, rock overground and underground, and idol singers. Another phenomenon of popular music is outlined near the end of the chapter, which looks at Okinawan pop, a style of music that has received widespread interest across Japan and outside too. This chapter closes with an array of short subsections relating to research, present and future: production, audience, industry, nationalism, Americanization, transnationalism, gender and sexuality, technology and musical sound. Each helps show the way forward towards a new engagement with the music that in contemporary Japan has mass appeal and currency for many.

As noted in connection with Yano's and Hosokawa's chapter, western music is predominant in Japan vis-à-vis *hōgaku*, or Japanese traditional music. With this in mind, chapter 16 is a refreshing overview of this mass music culture that inhabits the lives in one way or another of many (if not all) Japanese. Judith Ann Herd looks explicitly at western-influenced 'classical' music in Japan. The author skilfully avoids talking exclusively of western music per se, but stresses that this style of music is indeed both a genre from the west and one that is the musical style of many Japanese composers.

The Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music includes a substantial bibliography that will be of help to many researchers, although it may have been easier to use had a separate list of references and further reading/listening/viewing been included at the end of each chapter. Other useful aspects of the book include its index, pictures (all in black and white), notations (many have been translated into staff notation), and an accompanying compact disk inserted into the back cover.

One of the strengths of this book is its mix of Japanese and non-Japanese scholars who have contributed their own perspectives on Japanese music. Each chapter provides an historical summary of a particular topic rather than new research of a subject area. The last part of each chapter offers a research resource for checking relevant literature on any of the subjects outlined in the book. This research companion is a valuable addition to literature on Japanese traditional music, as well as offering a summary of some genres that fall outside this sphere. But that said, perhaps a different title or even an extended series of companions on the vast range of Japanese music(s) would have helped the modern-day music researcher. In summary, the book does deliver a much needed summary and re-thinking of several genres, and it points the way forward for further in-depth research of some other styles (e.g., popular music, indigenous music, peripheral music, diaspora music, etc.).

Henry Johnson
University of Otago
henry.johnson@otago.ac.nz