

# **Between Koenji and Brooklyn:** Tokyo, New York and the Circulations of Musics in a Global World



Yagi Michiyo, Winteroor Festival, Hasselt, Belgium. December 3, 2016.  
All photographs by the author.

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*Prelude: Twilight in Amsterdam*



Yagi Michiyo, Makigami Koichi, Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and Honda Tamaya performing at *Bimhuis* in Amsterdam. December 1, 2016.

It is twilight in Amsterdam. I watch the sun go down through the windows behind the stage. It is quiet now but soon the room will be filled with people who have come to hear jazz—or should I call it experimental music? I am not an audience member tonight, however; I am with the band, travelling and assisting my teacher, Yagi Michiyo, who is a *koto* (Japanese traditional transverse harp) musician.<sup>1</sup> The band is made up of my teacher; Makigami Koichi, voice; Honda Tamaya, drums; and Ingebrigt Håker Flaten, bass, from Norway. Some of these musicians have already been on tour for a couple of weeks, playing at concert halls, clubs, festivals, collaborating with local musicians improvising along the way. Today is the first day

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, for all Japanese names, I have followed the Japanese convention of last name first, followed by the given name.

that Flaten has joined the group, but he will be with us until the end of the tour in two weeks.

The Dutch sound engineer and I talk in English, me translating for my teacher, conversing about how best to amplify the two *kotos* that she will use for the concert. Both *kotos* have already been electrified by a guitar maker back in Tokyo but the Dutch sound engineer wants to amplify the acoustic sound as well as use a DI to connect the *kotos* to the sound system.<sup>2</sup> My teacher, misunderstanding, thinks they want to give her multiple vocal microphones. I insist that we do not need microphones for the acoustic sound; as the *koto* itself is old, it no longer makes enough reverberations to let out a loud enough, or beautiful enough, sound to be worth picking up. “Fine, fine. I just thought it would be something nice for a change. Whatever you say.” The engineer, unsatisfied but having given up, goes to his booth. The sound check begins.

It is now completely dark outside. I cannot see the train station or the canals, even though I know they are there. We sit in the restaurant outside the hall, eating meatballs, fried fish, pasta and salad provided by the venue. Honda is talking with Mark Rappaport, the producer of the tour, at one end of the table. I sit at the other end. The sound engineer sits next to me and smiles. His ponytail sways a bit as he turns towards me.

“So what are you doing with this group? Are you like an assistant to the group or something?”

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<sup>2</sup> “DI” stands for “direct input”. It refers to sound equipment used to connect a high impedance signal with an unbalanced output to a low impedance mic level input. Mostly frequently it is used to connect an electric guitar or bass to a mixing board’s microphone input via an XLR cable.

“Actually I’m Michiyo’s student. I’m also working as her assistant on this trip to learn about touring and working as a musician. I’m still at university also, so this is part of my thesis research.”

“Oh that’s why you are so young.” He leans closer towards me. “Can I get you a drink?”

“No thanks. Not while I have work to do.”

Yagi walks into the room and I immediately shift my chair away from the sound engineer.

“After the show I’ll get you that drink, then. That’s a promise, you know.”

The audience is about half full. I hear a smattering of Japanese—this is the first city with a sizable Japanese population that the group has toured in. They will have almost all left before the concert ends, probably because the music is too different from what they expected when they saw *koto* in advertising for the show. In the front are the older audience members—they look as if they have been attending concerts since the dawn of free jazz in the 60’s. They are mostly couples, wearing comfortable shoes, windbreakers and colorful glasses. There are a few younger listeners in the back; the women have short dyed hair and almost every one of them is wearing combat boots. The house lights begin to dim as Makigami Koichi walks on the stage.

### *An Intricate Web*

This short scene exemplifies the web of languages, identities, geographic locales, gender relations, and musical genres that combine to shape just one instance during one concert. I find myself in the thick of it—I am a white *koto* musician who

grew up in Japan from age two and I am constantly straddling the borders between East and West: musician and academic; observer and participant; visitor and community member; English speaker and Japanese speaker. The more I try to unravel my identity, the role I occupy and the spaces I inhabit, the more entangled I seem to be.

Yet it strikes me that to try to untangle the threads that make up this web of music in order to find something that is “authentically” jazz or uniquely “Japanese” is impossible. Just as I cannot separate my work as a *koto* musician from my work as an academic or as a translator, it seems futile to try to figure out where Yagi’s music becomes “jazz” and not “experimental” or “Japanese” music. Instead, I hope in this paper to highlight the intricacies and beauty of the web itself; it is precisely through this unending intermingling of seemingly disparate places and things that music in the twenty-first century is created.

### ***Introduction: Japanese Music in the Twenty-First Century***

What is Japanese music? For those in Japan and those at a distance, Japanese music is epitomized by Japanese instruments like the *shamisen* and the *shakuhachi*; it is music played by Japanese people on instruments that are considered to be premodern and authentically Japanese. There is something fundamentally modern—or even post-modern—and reified about this idea of Japanese music. As Marilyn Ivy writes, “the search to find authentic survivals of premodern, prewestern Japanese authenticity is inescapably a modern endeavor” (Ivy 1995, 570). That is, it was only after, and in response to, rapid Westernization and modernization during the Meiji

Period (1868-1912), that there was a desire to search for a premodern and untouched Japanese “traditional” culture. This understanding of Japanese music takes for granted a kind of exoticist belief that Japan is a homogenous, mythical and untouched culture unaffected by modernity and encounters with the West.

Yet though Japanese music is often thought of as the performance of unchanged, uniquely Japanese classical music played on traditional Japanese instruments, Japanese traditional music was born from Chinese music. Many Japanese instruments are derivatives of Chinese instruments brought over during the sixth and seventh centuries, and it was based on these initial exchanges that Japanese created their musical tradition.<sup>3</sup> In addition, what is considered to be traditional music was profoundly altered in the Meiji Period (Wade 2014, 19). *Hogaku* and other Japanese musical traditions were affected by Western musical notation, structure, tuning, and theory.<sup>4</sup> Since the late nineteenth century onwards, all traditional Japanese music genres have in some way interacted with Western music theory and performance. For example, most traditional music concerts are held in concert halls, something that would have been unimaginable in the pre-Meiji Period.

Even for those who acknowledge that Japanese culture has changed profoundly in the past century and a half, for many Japanese and non-Japanese alike, Japanese traditional music is thought to somehow preserve a timeless and yet ancient

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<sup>3</sup> Many instruments came over through trade and court travel around the Nara period (710-794). The royal treasurehouse Shosoin, which dates to the eighth century, houses about 128 extant musical instruments of various kinds (“正倉院宝物検索-楽器 [Shosoin Treasures Search-Instruments]” 2017). These instruments were brought to the Japanese by Chinese and Koreans. They formed the basis of what we now think of as Japanese Music—*gagaku* and *hogaku*.

<sup>4</sup> *Gagaku*, imperial court music is somewhat of an exception to this. It seems to have mostly been mostly unaffected by Western musical influences though this is difficult to ascertain. At the very least, there has been no effort to create a new canon of *gagaku* music that is influenced by Western music.

Japan that is mostly lost, but not entirely. If you ask many Japanese, Japanese music, and traditional arts more generally, are an important and significant marker of Japan and what it means to be Japanese. Rarely is music played on non-traditional instruments considered in relation to these so-called ancient musical forms; a Japanese playing a guitar or a *sitar* is somehow not really Japanese or not authentically Japanese. Even those who play Japanese instruments in experimental or non-typical ways are often discouraged or considered to be doing something unrelated or even hostile to tradition. These stereotypes are just as widespread outside of Japan; musicians who perform traditional pieces on traditional Japanese instruments are the ones who are lauded in concerts sponsored by the Japan Foundation at Carnegie Hall. Those who choose to perform outside the box are often not afforded the same respect as those who do.

This static conception of Japanese music is no longer useful in the twenty-first century. The vast majority of Japanese cannot read traditional Japanese music notation, let alone play the *koto* or *shakuhachi*; though all school children learned to read Western notation starting in the Meiji Period, until very recently traditional Japanese music was not taught in public or private school music classes (Wade 2014, 23).<sup>5</sup> Most popular musical genres are mostly or entirely non-Japanese in origin—J-

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<sup>5</sup> The Japanese government only began to include Japanese traditional music within the mandatory music curriculum for all Japanese students attending either public or private schools in 2015. Starting in elementary school, students both listen to Japanese traditional music and learn to play traditional instruments. It remains to be seen what effect, if any, inclusion of traditional music in the curriculum will have on the number of musicians playing Japanese instruments or the overall audience size for traditional Japanese music (小学校学習指導要領 (Elementary School Curriculum Guidelines) 2015). It also remains to be seen whether these new guidelines will bolster or help dismantle the current *iemoto* system.

pop, Japanese reggae and hip-hop to name just a few.<sup>6</sup> Jazz has had a constant presence in Japan from the 1920's (Atkins 2001). Even 演歌 *enka*, the genre often called 日本の歌、*nihon no uta*, or “songs of Japan,” is deeply reliant on Western musical forms and techniques. Though sometimes considered to be premodern or pre-Western and innately Japanese, *enka* combines primarily post-war new-folk-style music produced in cities with Western backing tracks and instruments (Yano 2002, 3).

Music making in Japan, in all genres, is often heavily non-Japanese oriented. Musicians are just as likely, if not more likely, to cite non-Japanese, Western music as their source of inspiration. Successful Western classical music training programs, including the Suzuki violin program, have created generations of Japanese classical musicians. Similarly with jazz, starting with the jazz pianist Akiyoshi Toshiko in the 1950s (who made a name for herself as a performer, composer and big band leader in the United States), Japanese musicians have studied abroad at places like the Berklee College of Music in Boston (Akiyoshi 1996, 119). Many musicians cite the strict hierarchical nature of Japanese society as the reason they left to pursue music in New York, Paris, or London. They perform with non-Japanese musicians as well as Japanese musicians in a variety of contexts and genres.

Those who do play Japanese instruments often have far more limited options. They most commonly remain in traditional hierarchical schools where their performances are at expensive yearly showcases or at appropriately traditional celebrations such as New Years and their livelihood is based on teaching students

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed analysis of Japanese reggae fans and their utilization of cultural and musical symbols related to reggae, see Sterling 2010.



within the schools.<sup>7</sup> They may teach lessons as members of their hierarchical school but performance opportunities are few and far between. There is little demand for Japanese traditional music outside of confined “traditional” performance spaces and almost no performance opportunities abroad except within the context of Japanese cultural promotion. These musicians are, however, afforded a measure of respect; as Japanese traditional musicians, they occupy a special place in the pantheon of export-ready cultural products that serve as ambassadors for Japan abroad.

Japanese music has come to be a shorthand for old Japan; the average Tokyo citizen will only hear traditional music piped through the shopping mall around New Years—and it is always *Haru no Umi* by Miyagi Michiyo<sup>8</sup>—in commercials for green tea chocolate or at the odd performance of *kabuki* they might attend.

Anthropologist John Pemberton describes how, in the post- colonial period, Javanese *gamelan* music has become ritualized background music for wedding ceremonies. The music is mostly a symbolic presence that is rarely paid attention to and leaves no room for surprises (Pemberton 1987). Japanese traditional music plays a similar role in contemporary Japanese culture. Specific instruments and melodies have become shorthand for Japan and Japanese tradition but are not themselves the object of intense listening or focus. They are merely symbolic. Yet despite its seemingly

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<sup>7</sup> During the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese changed their calendar from the previous Chinese system to the Western system. Similarly to China, New Year remains the single most important holiday in Japan. In recent years, perhaps due to the gradual erosion of everyday cultural traditions, New Years has come to be a sort of showcase for Japanese tradition. Public venues including shopping malls, parks, department stores, temples and office buildings have Japanese music concerts, sell Japanese artisanal crafts and have exhibits related to Japanese culture during the month of January.

<sup>8</sup> Though the composition *Haru no Umi* by Miyagi Michiyo has come to be a standard piece of background music on “traditional” occasions, the composition was in fact meant to be a blending of Western and Japanese musical traditions.

inauthentic and distant presence, Japanese music, or music from Japan, continues to be an important site of cultural and social creation.

This paper does not argue that Japanese music, in this sense, is in steep decline or no longer exists. Rather, I seek to complicate the term “Japanese music,” and examine the ways in which Japanese musical creation in the twenty-first century is both rooted in regionality *and* born out of global circulations. Marilyn Ivy, in her book *Discourses on the Vanishing*, writes that “Japan assimilates, if not immigrants and American automobiles, then everything else, retaining the traditional, immutable core of culture while incorporating the shiny trappings of (post)modernity in a dizzying round of production, accumulation, and consumption” (Ivy 1995, 1). Japan’s ability to assimilate new ideas and technology while maintaining an ever-present and seemingly trans-historical “core of culture” is what allows Japanese music to be what it is. Being Japanese, making Japanese music is syncretic and ever changing. It is precisely the malleable, flexible and amorphous nature of Japanese music that *makes* it so Japanese. Within this expansive understanding of Japanese music, the *sitar* player or the guitarist is just as Japanese as the *biwa* musician.<sup>9</sup>

This malleability extends to ethnicity. There is more than one way to be Japanese and there is no unitary Japaneseness. Japanese culture is based on a bricolage of countless social cues and expectations, everyday rituals and watered

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<sup>9</sup>I have chosen to remain ambiguous about the connection between the expansive understanding of Japanese music that I am arguing for and ethnicity. Though at first it may seem that Japanese citizenship or Japanese ethnicity is the gatekeeper for determining who is or is not a Japanese musician, I do not believe it to be this simple. I have chosen to leave the definitions of Japanese and Japanese music ambiguous in order to allow for any number of musicians with different ethnicities performing any number of instruments in a variety of situations to be included in this expansive definition of Japanese music. The boundaries of who is or is not Japanese and what is or is not music is ambiguous precisely because of the syncretic nature of Japanese identity and culture.

down folklore, mysticism, gender roles, pressure to conform in bodily comportment. Everyone bows when talking on the phone, despite the fact that the person being bowed to is on the opposite end of the phone, because it is so ingrained into their unconscious. Everyone knows not to eat on the train and that to arrive five minutes early for a meeting is to be ten minutes late.

Though many Japanese believe that Japan is a homogenous ethno-state based on shared fundamental values and culture created by a people all with the same phenotype, this is simply incorrect. The nationalist Japanese who claim that Japan is a 単一民族国家, *tannitsu minzoku kokka*, mono-ethnic state, seek to erase those who do not fit the standard narrative (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993, 64). Those who choose to ignore the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural history of Japan are choosing to ignore Japan's history as an imperialist power. Whether it be the 2.38 million current foreign nationals living in Japan, or the descendants of Koreans brought over to Japan as laborers during the colonial era, or even the few indigenous Ainu people left after the forced assimilation processes of the previous century, Japan has never been a country of one racially distinct people (Tonomura 2013; Kyodo 2017).<sup>10</sup>

Japan, Japanese music and Japanese ethnicity are also based on the history of empire. Western inspired Japanese popular music was used as a weapon during the colonial period. As Cho writes, "Music was an integral component of the colonial enterprise" (2009, 315). Colonial subjects were indoctrinated with Western influenced Japanese art forms, particularly music, that were considered a useful tool

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<sup>10</sup> In a widely used university level ethnomusicology textbook, the section on East Asian music specifically highlights Ainu and Okinawan peoples as having a separate and little considered musical culture (Tsuge Genichi and Tsukada Kenichi 1999). This reflects the general tendency towards leftist politics within academic discourse in Japan. It also however may suggest a slowly increasing broader understanding of the complicated nature of Japanese cultural history.

in the effort to assimilate all colonial subjects. Despite the fact that traditional Japanese music is based on Korean and Chinese music, scholars have used *gagaku* and its history as a way of affirming Japanese cultural superiority, and traditional music was shaped in discourse with the Other (Hosokawa 1998; Cho 2009). An authentic Japanese music is a neat, uncomplicated way of promoting Japaneseness. Those who propagate the myth of a pure Japanese race and a pure authentic Japanese music ignore historical fact and buy into nationalist narratives.

Japanese music is no more monolithic or unitary than Japanese ethnicity and identity. Japanese experimental music is a prime example of culture that is performed through constant adjustment to new forms of musical creation. Musical advances and new genres have been emerging from Japan for the entirety of the post-war period, starting with the experimental music group Group Ongaku—group music—in the immediate post war era. In the 1980s, noise, a whole new rock and punk inspired genre, emerged from basement clubs in the Kansai region and became an international sensation among a range of audiences starting in 1990 (Novak 2013, 10). Individuals like the recently deceased Ikezumi Hideo of PSF Records served as conduits to channel new forms of Japanese music to mostly Western consumers (Lowenthal and Kolovos 2017).<sup>11</sup> As is evidenced by organizations such as *Music from Japan* or the website and record label called *Improvised Music from Japan*, the category of music from the nation of Japan—and perhaps the culture of Japan as a

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<sup>11</sup> Psychedelic Speed Freak Records (PSF) was a record label started by Ikezumi Hideo in 1984 that promoted underground Japanese music both domestically and internationally. Incredibly influential, he was one of the first label owners to promote indie Japanese music abroad. He helped make Japanese noise and other genres known abroad.

whole—is perceived as a meaningful category, in many musical genres both within Japan and abroad.

Western artists, musicians, and scholars too have often continued to play into orientalist and essentialist tropes about Japan and its premodern music. From the use of Japanese motifs in Impressionist paintings to the way many Western ethnographers have tried to isolate a pure and authentic Japanese sound, Japan has long been the subject of exoticization. John Corbett has discussed how a wide range of experimental and avant-garde composers during the last hundred years broke down musical and genre boundaries while continuing to propagate exoticist ideas of Japan through their music (Corbett 2000, 183). Composers—from the venerable John Cage to crossover composer/musicians like John Zorn—continue to buy into the idea that Japanese people are different and unique and that their music is reflective of that fact. Whether it be *hogaku* quartet performances at the Asia Society or rock concerts in Brooklyn, Japanese music remains for many Westerners a place of exotic otherness.<sup>12</sup>

### *Argument and Methodology*

This thesis will explore how Japanese experimental music takes part in a global avant-garde while continuing to maintain a sense of Japaneseness. I will argue that rather than the “greying out” of folk or regional music traditions, to use Alan

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<sup>12</sup> Topics that deserve to be further explored are the connection between economic development and musical creation, and the connection between imperialism and success in the avant garde musical and artists worlds. One possibility is that due to Japan’s developed economy, Japanese citizens have material circumstances similar to those of other developed countries, and consider themselves to be on a more equal footing with Western musicians than their earlier counterparts. Educational and monetary barriers are lower also. This is not to say that Western audiences do not continue to see Japanese as outsiders or others.

Lomax's anxious term, globalization has allowed for regional musics to become part of global circulations of music in at least some cases like Japan. It is precisely these global circulations that allow for new forms of music making and listening. Japanese music foreshadows how regional culture will take part in the globalized twenty-first century international culture.

Instead of turning experimental and jazz musicians from Japan into Western musicians or some kind of robotic facsimile of Western musicians, the changes in the past few decades have allowed for many Japanese musicians to take part in international experimental musical scenes while continuing to create and maintain a sense of regional and cultural musical identity. This identity is reflected in the music itself, in the relationships artists have with each other and in the contexts in which the music is performed. Due to a variety of factors, including language, location, schooling and cultural heritage, non-mainstream musicians in Japan and abroad continue to create Japanese music. It is precisely the way that Japanese musicians take part in international music making and draw the vast majority of their inspiration from worldwide musical traditions and have audiences and fans around the world that makes Japanese music an important category to this day.

In this thesis, I will argue that it is because, and not in spite, of international circulations of genres and musicians that "Japanese music," or music from Japan, is such a flexible yet complex analytic category. My argument is based on a historical narrative; by comparing the model of influence and inspiration that was the basis of Japanese musicians' involvement with Western modernists in the twentieth century—particularly in New York—I will show how different the current model of

circulations is from the previous model. By using analyses of the effect of globalization on regional music, I will show that much music making remains regional and is an important site for identity performance and creation, despite the prevalence of international industrialized mass culture and popular music.

My approach to the issues in this thesis is deeply ethnographic; I use four case studies, in addition to drawing on my own experiences relating to Japanese music, to show how the circulations between individuals—through live performance, teaching, discussion and movement across continents—continues to be a key feature of experimental music making and perhaps music making of all kinds. The first two studies focus on how Japanese traditional music has become part of international musical scenes while remaining deeply embedded in Japanese cultural production. The final two case studies focus on artists whose careers are defined through circulations; these artists' lives and music, are based on a complex web of music, cultural understandings and geographic locations.

Finally, I compare Japanese experimental music with *enka*, perhaps the genre that most epitomizes post-war mass popular culture in Japan. Through this example I show both that all forms of Japanese music are complex and created through circulations and that they are sites for Japanese identity creation, maintenance and performance. Though the types of music, venues where the music is performed and audiences differ, Japanese experimental music and *enka* show how Japanese music is a site for identity performance, construction and creation. In both cases, from a variety of disparate influences both traditional and Western, Japanese music is created.

### *New York and the Promise of a Freer Tomorrow*

New York has represented an artistic utopia for multiple generations of Japanese artists and musicians in the twentieth century. Starting with modernist musicians and artists in the immediate post-war era,<sup>13</sup> and continuing with jazz musicians in the 60s and punk and New wave musicians in the 70s, New York was a place where Japanese artists and musicians studied, created and collaborated. Though Germany and France were the focus of much of the artistic influence on Japan in the interwar years (Weisenfeld 2002, sec. Introduction), by the 1950s, New York was considered the center of avant-garde art, and Japanese artists began to turn to New York for inspiration. Starting in 1964, Japanese were allowed to get tourist visas to the United States, and artists and musicians trickled to New York (Yoshimoto 2005, 30). However, currency controls and rampant poverty in Japan meant that travel to New York in the 50s and 60s remained almost entirely the prerogative of the very wealthy and well-connected including such luminaries as Yoko Ono<sup>14</sup>, who had previously lived in New York due to her father's business. Though there were a few less established musicians who managed to procure enough funds for the one-way plane ticket and find ways to work through the black economy, a larger influx of musicians would not come until the 1970s.

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<sup>13</sup> Here I am referring specifically to the modernist artistic, literary and philosophical movement that took place primarily in the Europe and the United States starting at the end of the nineteenth century until around the 1970s. While there is much academic debate about when modernism started and who exactly is or was a modernist, for the purposes of this thesis, I simply posit that many of the artists and musicians that Japanese musicians interacted with in the immediate post-war period were in fact modernists and part of the mid-century American modernist movement. Within my loose definition I include musicians such as John Cage and his collaborator, Merce Cunningham; artists like Jackson Pollock; philosophers like Buckminster Fuller; and designers such as the wife and husband team Ray and Charles Eames.

<sup>14</sup> Here I refer to Yoko Ono with her preferred Western order of given name followed by family name. Given her fame outside of Japan, it seems only natural to use the name order she is most associated with.



Perhaps because so many of the Japanese artists and musicians who travelled to New York were elites and part of the status quo in Japan, this first wave of musicians worked primarily within the better established and more respectable classical or new classical music realms.<sup>15</sup> Japanese musicians and artists also thrived in the mixed-media and intermedia collectives of the 1960s as well as in the new classical music scene (Kaneda 2015, 89).<sup>16</sup> By the early 1960s, New York quickly became a kind of artistic paradise; artists and musicians came to the city to become part of the avant-garde scenes in New York and they were widely accepted and successful. Avant-garde Japanese saw New York as a welcoming and experimental place, especially compared to the strict rule-bound culture of post-war Japan. As the video artist Shigeko Kubota has said, if John Cage was accepted in New York, then she could be too (Yoshimoto 2005, 17).

Western twentieth century modernists were fascinated by the “modernity” of Japan and they welcomed these artists, who in their mind were representatives of Japanese culture. Musicians like John Cage, or artists like the Fluxus collective organizer George Maciunas, were interested in what they termed “Eastern” philosophy. It is now a cliché to discuss the modernity of Japanese culture—be it Cage reading Daisetz Suzuki or John Coltrane playing *shakuhachi* on the *shinkansen*. In many senses, however, mid-century modernity was a Western concept that was

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<sup>15</sup> Though out of the scope of this thesis, there were, and continue to be, many highly regarded Japanese born classical musicians, composers and conductors including Seiji Ozawa, Takemitsu Toru, Keitaro Harada, Hitomi Kaneko and Mitsuko Uchida. In addition, beginning with musicians such as Ichianagi Toshi in the 1950s, there have been many Japanese born composers and musicians who have performed and created new classical music.

<sup>16</sup> After the Gutai Movement, the rise of post-war art in Japan was swift. By the 1960s, intermedia collectives had proliferated throughout the archipelago. Undoubtedly part of the reason Japan musicians became part of these New York collectives is due to the large numbers of similar collectives in Japan at the time. See Miki Kaneda’s work, specifically her dissertation and article for a detailed analysis on intermedia collectives in Japan during the 1960s (Kaneda 2015, 2012).

readily applied to decidedly non-Western situations, and too often with a heavy dose of condescension. In *Art Since 1900*, Yves-Alain Bois writes that the Gutai movement, the first post-war modern art collective in Japan, was based on a “creative misreading” of the modernist Jackson Pollock by the Japanese (Foster et al. 2004, 2:373). Because these Japanese artists had no historical understanding of Pollock’s drip technique, the esteemed art historian Bois believes that the artists could only have a misreading of his art as opposed to being influenced by the art. Yet, twentieth century Western artists and musicians frequently used Japanese traditional culture with little regard to or understanding of its historical context. This indicates how Western modernists approached Japan; though they were enamored of traditional Japanese aesthetics and culture, Western modernists did not necessarily consider their fellow Japanese twentieth century artists and intellectuals to be equals. For many, modernism was something that Japanese copied or mimicked in an amusing or interesting way, and the work that came out of that imitation was something interesting because of and yet perhaps also in spite of its Japanese origins.

By the very late 1960s and into the 70s, thanks to increased economic growth in Japan, loosening of currency controls, and the revaluation of the yen to the dollar, non-classical and non-elite Japanese musicians began to have more opportunities to study and work in New York. Less wealthy musicians flocked to New York to take part in the jazz world and the newly forming “loft jazz” scene.<sup>17</sup> By this time most Japanese families had turntables and musicians heard new jazz on LPs pressed in Japan. Musicians like saxophone player Umezu Kazutoki and percussionist

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Tsuchitori Toru came to New York to find their jazz music idols (Tsuchitori 2015; Umezu 2014). These musicians lived in inexpensive, tenement style cold-water walk up apartments on the Lower East Side, worked at diners and had run-ins with the police late at night.<sup>18</sup> They did not study at formal conservatories or hope to perform at prestigious venues like Carnegie Hall or the newly created Lincoln Center complex. They endured in order to study and work with their idols; they were shocked that musicians like Ornette Coleman and Milford Graves, to whom they had listened over and over again on records, were open and willing to have them play in their bands.<sup>19</sup>

During the same period, Japanese music journalism reached new heights of influence and seriousness which fed, and fed off of, the human interchange with New York. Journalists like *Swing Journal* editor Koyama Kiyoshi wrote about the new loft jazz music coming from lofts in downtown Manhattan that no other publication anywhere in the world covered (Koyama 2008). He became friends with Ornette Coleman and other artists on his yearly trips at this time (Koyama Kiyoshi 2016). Artists read about these musicians and learned of new and exciting music in *Swing Journal* and other publications like *Jazz Hiho*, and came to New York to seek out their idols.<sup>20</sup> They listened to Yui Shoichi and other radio hosts play jazz music and

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<sup>18</sup> Umezu Kazutoki recounts how he would often be stopped when coming home late at night from his black market job working as a busboy. Police officers were suspicious of a non-white man walking home with musical instrument cases all alone. Umezu wonders if they thought he was hiding something in his saxophone case (Umezu 2014).

<sup>19</sup> The primarily black loft jazz scene in downtown Manhattan was very welcoming to young Japanese musicians. While there were instances of white musicians being immersed in the free jazz or loft jazz scenes—Ornette Coleman's bassist David Izenzon being one example—experimental jazz at that point remained primarily black. Umezu wonders if because he was Asian, as opposed to white, he was more welcome as he was seen as outsider, much like black Americans (Umezu 2014).

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed example of how journalism impacted artists' careers in Japan, see my previously published article and translation of a 1969 *Swing Journal* article on Ornette Coleman's Artist House.

interview visiting jazz musicians.<sup>21</sup> They worked on their technique and generally returned to Japan after a few years. These musicians went abroad as young musicians, but often returned in order to establish their careers in their native Japan.

By the late 1970s, thanks to cheaper flights and easier communications, many musicians travelled frequently to New York to perform. A new wave of Japanese musicians taking part in punk, rock, “no wave,” and the various New York downtown experimental arts scenes began to come to New York. Musicians like Ryuichi Sakamoto—who has been commercially successful both in the United States and Japan and collaborates with a wide range of avant-garde musicians, including Ishikawa Ko, with whom he has an soon to be released CD—and underground musicians like saxophonist Shiraishi Tamio began to spend time in both New York and Tokyo and remained immersed in the experimental music scene in both cities.

At the same time, the postwar model of Japanese artists going to New York and being influenced by Western artists began to change in this period. Though Western musicians had long been influenced by traditional Japanese music and aesthetics, “downtown” experimental musicians in the 1980s began to take an active interest in *contemporary* Japanese music and art. Inspired by Japanese pop culture as well as traditional music, some of these artists learned to speak and read Japanese—*shakuhachi* player and reed musician Ned Rothenberg studied the language seriously and spent time in Japan, while musician and producer Jim O’Rourke has lived in

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This 1969 article specifically encouraged reed musician Umezu Kazutoki to visit New York and try to play with his idol (Whatley and Edwards 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Yui Shoichi was the most prolific and well respected radio hosts in Japan throughout the post-war era. He had many shows on a multiple of radio stations where he played a variety of jazz music and interviews many musicians, both Japanese and foreign. He was a meticulous note keeper and his entire archive of hundreds of hours of interviews is located at Keio University and also digitally at Columbia University Music Library (Yui).

Japan since the early 2000s. Many of these musicians collaborated with Japanese musicians in New York as well as in Tokyo. In addition, starting in the late 1970s through to the 1980s, Tokyo began to be a sort of safe haven and a lucrative market for established jazz artists in an era of big spending by Japanese corporations on musical and artistic productions. At the same time, international CD sales, concerts, festivals and record labels created strong fan bases throughout the world. This resulted in even less famous artists being part of international music scenes. Simply put, the music making process in which Japanese musicians could participate became much more collaborative, trans-national, and multi-dimensional. New York based musicians were influenced by a variety of Japanese artists, films, and cultural products, and collaborated with a range of artists. At the same time, there continued to be many Japanese artists who constantly travelled back and forth between New York and Japan.

At this time, new genres of music from Japan, including noise and *onkyo*, began to make their mark on the international music stage. Bands like the Boredoms, who opened for Sonic Youth in the 1990s, became popular in Japan only after their success in the West. Noise music never became anywhere near as popular in Japan as it was in North America, and *onkyo* gained legendary status throughout the Western world (Plourde 2009, 55). Japanese artists began to cultivate multi-continental audiences and support systems, partly as a result of the economic downtown in Japan in the 1990s. Record labels based in North America, such as John Zorn's *Tzadik*, put out records by new Japanese artists of a variety of experimental genres.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Though beyond the scope of this project as hip hop artists rarely directly collaborate with experimental Japanese musicians (Condry 2006), describes how Japanese musicians use hip-hop to

These musicians, and Japanese experimental music, are a kind of vanguard for how regional music can continue to thrive in the globalized twenty-first century. Japanese experimental music, or Japanese twenty-first century culture is not a unique example of the influence of globalization. Rather, Japanese music is a good example of how international circulations of music characterize the current situation of many musicians and musics around world. Thanks to the rise of cheap or free telecommunications and inexpensive flights, there are more Japanese artists performing and working abroad than ever before. Similarly, because of more freedom to travel and the internet, musicians from around the world can collaborate with each other. The internet is key in this new, more syncretic regional music. These new regional music musicians have musical influences that are complex and multilayered. They have international collaborators and take part in international festivals. Experimental Japanese music and regional musics more generally have become part of global circulations of avant-garde art. While Japanese music and experimental music remain important sites for identity creation, at the same time this new expanded Japanese music could not exist without the internet, jet travel and worldwide audiences interested in regional music.

### *Globalization and Music*

Simon Frith has argued that music “defines a space without boundaries... [and] is thus the cultural form best able to cross borders...and to define places” (Frith 1996, 125). Music as both a commodity and a social phenomenon is a potent tool for understanding how culture is impacted by the effects of globalization, international business markets, large-scale migrations, and pervasive mass media (especially the internet and social media). Globally circulating musical genres, as ethnomusicologists have increasingly asserted since the 1990s, show how cross-cultural interactions shape regional cultures and local idioms and are influenced by such idioms in turn. As such, analyses of how globalization has impacted music suggest ways that culture will be created, maintained and shaped in the coming decades.

For much of the twentieth century, folklorists and ethnomusicologists typically believed that media-driven globalization of culture would lead to a “greying out” of folk and regional cultures and traditions, a process that would ultimately result in wholesale destruction of non-Western, non-industrialized societies (Lomax 1968, 4–5). However, the wide range of musical and cultural idioms and genres circulating around the world over the past thirty years has challenged such hypotheses. Rather than universally greying out folk or regional pop music traditions, globalization has allowed some regional musics to become part of a global culture.

At the same time, there is no doubt that globalization and international mass popular culture have influenced regional folk and regional musics. As Louise Meintjes describes, the creation of the new “world music” market allowed previously

minor genres to access international audiences (Meintjes 2003, 27, 177, 198). In order to access these markets however, musicians, record producers and technicians must have a more uniform production quality and sometimes adjust their musical styles in order to suit the (almost entirely Western) world music consumer. The world music genre allows for Western fans to consume non-Western music in a safe, sanitized and standardized manner. At the same time however, I believe that the artists I present in the case studies below do represent a new way of creating regional music in a global context. For these artists, East and West, traditional and non-traditional are no longer important dichotomies. Their careers do not fit within the “world music” framework.

Some ethnomusicologists have focused on individual forms of regional or folk musics that have become popular worldwide or continued to exist despite seemingly massive outside influence. Stokes argues that there are musical, social, and economic reasons that explain why particular forms of seemingly regional and marginal musics become internationally successful (Stokes 2004). Mark Slobin focuses on how “micromusics” could continue to exist despite “hegemonic” cultural influence and increasingly standardized popular music (Slobin 1992). By focusing only on specific—and mostly folk or vernacular—genres that seem to transcend national borders, as opposed to considering new genres that emerge out of globalized musical exchanges however, this approach is too limited to account for many cases of transnational or transcultural musical encounter and exchange. This approach assumes that it is possible to continue to maintain some semblance of regional autonomy in music or stable authenticity and tradition. It discounts ways regional



musics are influenced by worldwide trends in music, a point of critique now widely taken up in the current ethnomusicological literature on global iterations of Western popular music genres.

David Novak has called our attention to the ways global circulation of music in recent decades have resulted in the creation of new forms of music. Novak's book, *Japanoise: music at the edge of circulation*, deals with creation of transnational forms of music—noise music was heavily influenced by Western punk and rock and is often created in collaboration with non-Japan-based musicians (Novak 2013). He also focuses on how US audiences consumed “made in Japan” noise music and then how noise was reimported back into Japan. He argues that it is the circulation of music, audiences and performers that gives rise to new geographically specific yet international genres of music.<sup>23</sup>

In his 1996 article “Music and Identity,” popular music scholar Simon Frith argues for a more complex account of the now widely accepted assertion, beloved of ethnomusicologists, that music plays a role in the creation and maintenance of social and cultural “identity.” He writes that “music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers of the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives” (Frith 1996, 124). His point is that from the communal and embodied experiences we have through music, we create an affective sense of identity that is connected to a broader understanding

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<sup>23</sup> There is a sense in which the continued Western consumption of Japanese noise music is reflective of a broader conception of Japan as a strange, foreign place. That is, the strangeness of the loud, grainy, hard sounds are especially attractive because they come from somewhere strange, Japan. Though Novak does discuss this in his book, he does not connect noise music consumption to consumption of world music. Is Japanoise another world music being consumed? Was it so popular because of its Japanese origins?

of our culture, in particular a subjective sense of who we are that is more powerful because of its embodied and affective bypassing of rational discourse. The point for Frith is not to figure out how a specific piece of music is reflective the people; rather, Frith is interested in how music “produces them [the people], how it creates and constructs an experience. . . that we can only make sense of by *taking on* both a subjective and a collective identity” (Frith 1996, 109). That is, through the ethnographic study of music, we can seek out both the personal subjective identity of someone as well as their broader collective identity. Music is a place for both of these identities to be created and thus is an important way to understand how identities are constructed, shaped and performed.

While my analysis here is significantly influenced by Novak’s conception of circulation, I have also focused (as did Novak in *Japanoise*) on humanistic ethnography in my research in order to understand music as a site of identity and culture construction. I seek to combine ethnographic research with Novak’s conception of circulation in order to better deal with the granular lived experiences of individual musicians. In essence, I am attempting to wed Novak’s theory of circulation with Frith’s discussion of identity and music. I will do through by focusing on how circulations impact the lives and identities of Japanese musicians.

In Novak’s conception of the circulation of music, music is being moved and traded and transferred throughout the world and it is this circulation that allows for new forms of music to be created from these constantly circulating musics. I have pluralized “circulation” within this paper because I believe this pluralization highlights the presence of multiple forms of musical circulation operating today:

there is circulation of music through face-to-face contact and live performances; circulation through migration; circulation of recordings both physical and digital; and digital circulation of music and musical knowledge through videos, blogs, forums and other means. Through this, I hope to highlight the importance of broader technological, political and social changes on music making as well as the significance of face-to-face contact and individuals and their identities in twenty-first century Japanese music.

To be Japanese means to be ethnically Japanese, and though I lived in Japan from the age of two, because I am white, I am not considered to be Japanese. In many ways I do not suit the typical Japanese mold; I grew up with two Western parents, argue with my sister in English and now attend university in New York. At the same time, the only places I feel at home are on the train in Tokyo or waiting to buy groceries on a crowded Friday evening or talking with old family friends in Japanese. The more time that I spend in New York, the more devoted I am to Japanese culture and art. In fact, I was always more interested in kimono and Japanese art, tea ceremony, history than any of my Japanese friends. Yet no one under any definition would consider me Japanese. I am not really welcome to join the Columbia Japan Society or the Asian American Alliance, nor do I feel that those groups and what they espouse are representative of my identity.

Like the artists featured in this thesis, for me, Japanese music is very clearly a way of understanding my relationship to Japan and the rest of the world. Similarly, these musicians make music that is both Japanese and relentlessly syncretic, and take part in global musical scenes. They represent a new way to create cultural identities

within the context of a messy amorphous and ever changing cultural backdrop. They show a new way forward for musical and identity creation.

***Case Study: Traditional Japanese Music and the Global Avant-Garde***

Music played on traditional Japanese instruments presents an interesting case study in how regional genres have changed due to globalization. Starting in the Meiji Period (1868-1912), Western music was taught through the newly created public school system. This emphasis was designed to promote social cohesion, patriotism and modernity through Western influenced national music (Takenaka 2000). Even after World War Two, Western music was taught in schools, while very little traditional Japanese music of any kind of was promoted or encouraged, and it was only in 2015 that Japanese music began to be taught in schools. However, even after more than one hundred years of promotion of Western music over Japanese music by the Japanese government, Japanese traditional instruments continue to be performed. Currently, practitioners of all skill levels learn to play Japanese instruments at schools, in private lessons, and through universities. Instruments like the *shakuhachi* have vibrant communities of players worldwide (Kitamori 2009). Musicians play everything from classics to improvisation and Lady Gaga on their traditional instruments. You can hear music performed on Japanese instruments anywhere from a basement club in Koenji to a concert hall in Poland to a museum in New York.

However, there remains a deep rift between those who take part in the hierarchical *iemoto* system of artistic lineage and those who do not. Japanese traditional arts are organized by schools and the heads of those schools are called 家

元, *iemoto*, literally “origin of head of family” (Cang 2008). Those who follow the typical path to become traditional Japanese musicians join a school and take expensive tests every few years to rise up in the ranks of the school. The higher the rank, the more teaching and performance opportunities the musician has. Though technical prowess is encouraged through this system, experimentation is not. In addition, those who are not prosperous enough to afford the lesson, concert, and test fees; those who begin too late to join the typical stream; or those who choose to play the way they want to are not welcome in the traditional *iemoto* system.<sup>24</sup>

Yet in order to be taken seriously as a Japanese traditional musician, a performer must be part of a school and take part in their showcase events. However, with dwindling career opportunities for traditional Japanese musicians and a lack of young people wanting to devote themselves to the traditional *iemoto* system, the overall trend appears to be that there fewer and fewer people in these schools.<sup>25</sup> There is some evidence that since the 1970s smaller schools have become more flexible in light of the lack of willing full-time students and a more fluid social structure in Japan more generally (Yamada 2017, 15). At the same time, through high schools, universities, and the work of individual practitioners, it has become easier to bypass this system altogether. As long as a performer is not concerned with getting

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<sup>24</sup> As detailed in Kristen Surak’s book, though the *iemoto* system has its roots in medieval Japan, the system changed drastically after the Meiji Period (Surak 2012, sec. Selling Tea). Without a steady source of income from samurai and daimyo, the heads of schools had to find new sources of revenue from wealthy families and industrial magnates. As it stands today, the *iemoto* are almost always men, while the vast majority of the practitioners of Japanese traditional arts are women.

<sup>25</sup> There has yet to be a large scale, multi-disciplinary analysis of contemporary *iemoto* politics and how the structure has weathered the recession years of Japan as well as globalization. However, based on my many interviews both formal and informal with practitioners of various arts including tea ceremony, Noh, *koto*, Japanese dance and flower arranging, there seem to be fewer and fewer serious practitioners who are part of the *iemoto* school system throughout the traditional arts. More research is needed to properly understand this trend, however.

professional titles or being featured on broadcasts of Japanese music on NHK—Japan's national public broadcaster, a young person can now learn traditional technique and modern or experimental practice in any number of situations. In addition, through efforts like the Institute of Medieval Japanese Studies' Japanese Heritage Music Initiative at Columbia University, Japanese instruments can be learned around the world.

New directions in traditional Japanese music, or music played on traditional Japanese instruments will not come from the current *iemoto* hierarchical schools because the schools discourage outward looking experimentation, collaboration and international approaches to music. There are a number of high profile musicians who have chosen to leave or not take part in the *iemoto* system and who have become famous internationally as musicians who play traditional Japanese instruments. These musicians include the *koto* player Yagi Michiyo, *sho* player Ishikawa Ko, *koto* player Miya Masaoka, and a number of *shakuhachi* virtuosos including Ralph Samuelson, Elizabeth Brown, Terry Riley and Ned Rothenberg. These musicians represent a vast array of nationalities, ages, and musical styles united through their utilization of traditional Japanese instruments. Technology, increased economic growth has allowed musicians with a broader understanding of the world to seek out music from other cultures and take it on as their own. At the same time, it has allowed musicians who play regionally specific instruments to go beyond their traditional cannon. These musicians show a new way forward for how traditional instruments will be utilized in the coming decades.

*Yagi Michiyo, Ishikawa Ko and the Fluidity of Japanese Instruments*<sup>26</sup>

Yagi Michiyo (*koto*) and Ishikawa Ko (*sho*) are both part of an emerging group of musicians who play Japanese traditional instruments and yet take part in a variety of musical scenes and genres across the multiple continents. Their instruments, like almost all instruments considered to be traditional Japanese instruments, are originally from China and came over through trade and migration in the sixth and seventh centuries. Their training is considered traditional, though much of the repertoire and training, especially for *koto*, was shaped in the Meiji Period (1868-1912). They perform everything from canonical pieces to jazz to progressive rock to experimental or no-genre improvisation. Though they are by no means typical performers of their instruments, these musicians are notable for fully belonging to their respective musical traditions while also taking part in musical scenes and genres outside of their tradition. By focusing on these two musicians I will highlight how musicians can retain a local musical and cultural identity while creating music that is influenced by and be part of the global avant-garde.

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<sup>26</sup> Throughout the next four case studies, I draw extensively from the interviews I conducted with each musician.

*Yagi Michiyo: Electrified Koto and Free Improvisation*



Yagi Michiyo, Wroclaw, Poland. November 26, 2016.

Yagi Michiyo's musical trajectory highlights how Japanese music making has evolved due to globalization in the past thirty years. Yagi considers herself to be both a traditional *koto* player and an international improvising musician (Yagi 2015, 2016). Her musical identity is rooted in the Japan-centric *koto* world as well as in the global, diffuse and vast network of improvisers who take part in jazz and, new music, and other scenes. Her music reflects the dual nature of her identity; she is just as comfortable playing traditional pieces as she is performing her own compositions based on Western pop or rock music or doing free improvisation. Her collaborators include Japanese *shakuhachi* and *koto* musicians, Nordic drummers, New York sax players, and everyone in between.



Born in Tokoname, Aichi Prefecture, to a *koto* teacher mother, Yagi began learning *koto* at the age of three, but switched to the piano soon after. It was not until she heard a bass *koto* piece on the radio as a high school student that she decided to begin studying *koto* seriously.<sup>27</sup> She became a 弟子, a *deshi* or student of the Sawai School of *koto*, a newer sub school within the Ikuta School of *koto*. The word *deshi* in Japanese is often translated as “student,” but “apprentice” is a closer approximation. Implicit in the term is a set of expectations for behavior. There is a sense of loyalty, an expectation that you will respect your teacher’s work over all others. A *deshi* goes to her teacher’s performances, and sets up and packs up so the teacher can prepare for the show and rest afterwards.

In some cases, the *deshi* is little more than an unpaid servant, living in the teacher’s home, cleaning and cooking, preparing for the teacher’s performances, and rarely practicing his or her own music. In fact, Yagi first came to Tokyo from her hometown to be a live-in *deshi* with the Sawai School’s 家元, *iemoto* and was dismayed to discover that this was what was expected from her. This, combined with a number of formative experiences in her twenties, led her to desire to go beyond the confines of Japanese traditional *koto* music and use the *koto* to its fullest extent.

In 1989 Yagi Michiyo was a visiting scholar at Wesleyan University; it was there that she first experienced creative musical freedom. At Wesleyan, there were weekly concerts where students were expected and encouraged to perform their own compositions. Unlike her experience as a *deshi*, where she had studied for many years and was still expected to perform her teacher’s music, these students—who in

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<sup>27</sup> The bass *koto*, also known as seventeen string *koto*, was invented by Miyagi Michiyo in 1921. It is often used in contemporary classical style pieces.

some cases could hardly play their instruments—were expected to be musically creative. At the same time, she began playing with New York-based improvisers such as John Zorn and began playing non-traditional musical styles associated with the New York downtown music scene. These two experiences led her to quit the Sawai School and begin using the *koto* in international experimental musical contexts.

As an independent performer, Yagi takes full advantage of twenty-first century cross-cultural experimental musical collaborations and has exploited the many possibilities of the flexible *koto* to suit her musical needs. She has collaborated with a guitar maker to electrify her *koto*, using pickups typically used for electric guitars, so that she can play with drums and other instruments that might normally drown out a *koto*. She hits the *koto* with drumsticks and mallets so that it becomes a percussive instrument. By using a bow on her *koto*, she incorporates Western string instrument sounds into her music. She performs frequently with Peter Brotzmann, the German free jazz saxophonist and former Fluxus painter, and Paal Nilssen-Love, the Norwegian drummer, as well as other European experimental or free jazz musicians. She sometimes performs at embassies in Tokyo with visiting folk or regional musicians, and enjoys going on tour and performing with various musicians. She listens to a wide range of non-Japanese rock, jazz, electronic and improvised music. Though she knows many Japanese traditional pieces from her *koto* studies, I have yet to hear her listen to other *koto* players or traditional Japanese music.

At the same time, even as she participates fully in an international experimental music scene, her work and her identity as a performer continue to be rooted in Japanese musical tradition. One of her aims is to increase the number of

people who perform and listen to the *koto*. She encourages many people to study with her even if they are beginners. She proudly states that the only time she left Japan without her *koto* was when she went to Hong Kong on her honeymoon. Other than that, she only travels abroad to perform and thus raise awareness of the *koto*. In addition, given that she is one of a select group of trained *koto* musicians who have chosen to leave a *koto* school, she is sometimes asked to give her opinion on the nature of traditional musical education in Japan. Though she is very polite in public, she does not disguise her feelings; she states that if the *iemoto* system with its expensive fees and rigid structure continues, there will be fewer people able to play the instrument. Without new talent, the creativity and vitality of the field will diminish and the *koto* will become merely a museum piece. Though she never goes as far as to say so, she seems to believe that it is part of her mission to change the landscape of *koto* education and performance.

Thus Yagi's career is both regional—focused on the *koto*, a traditional Japanese instrument, and training students within Japan— and international—she performs with musicians worldwide, and aims to increase appreciation of *koto* worldwide. She situates herself in three distinct yet intimately linked musical worlds—the world of *koto* and traditional Japanese music, the community of Tokyo-based underground and experimental musicians, and the international community of experimental, jazz, new music and improvisation. Yagi is both rooted in her local culture and yet takes part in the global avant-garde.

*Ishikawa Ko: Sho and the Global Avant-Garde*

Ishikawa Ko plays the *sho*, a free-reed mouth harp originally from China, used in *gagaku* Japanese court music. His path to the *sho* and his subsequent career highlight the multi-layered circulatory nature of Japanese experimental music today. His childhood was like that of most post-war children; it had little to do with traditional arts of any kind (Ishikawa 2016). Ishikawa grew up as the son of a businessman in Tokyo. He played the guitar as a teenager and then later studied at Sophia University in Tokyo, where he majored in Philosophy, particularly focused on twentieth century continental philosophy. Ishikawa's life as a young man had very little direct connection to traditional Japanese culture except for the occasional performance during New Year's.

All this changed, however, when he heard a recording of *gagaku* and decided he wanted to study this music. Like many of his Japanese musical peers who decided to study jazz because they heard John Coltrane's music, or Klezmer because they stumbled upon a used record while on a trip, Ishikawa's initial contact with *gagaku*, the genre he ended up studying, was through recordings. He came to it not as a local or a native, but as a cultural outsider. This episode highlights how removed traditional music of various kinds often seem from the average Japanese person's experience. Ishikawa's initial contact with *gagaku* is much like that of a US-born *shakuhachi* musician; he experienced something far removed from his childhood and sought out this new and distant musical genre.

At the time, the only way to study *sho* was through the Imperial Household Agency or through a few not-very-established private schools. As he was no longer a

child, Ishikawa was unable to even audition for the Imperial Household Agency school, so began to study *sho* with Miyata Mayumi. Miyata was among the first musicians to use *sho* outside of the traditional and very hierarchical hidden world of Imperial Court Music.<sup>28</sup> Though it is possible to perform certain *gagaku* compositions as solos (specifically *Choshi*), there is no known traditional solo repertory for the *sho*. As such, performers such as Miyata Mayumi, Ko Ishikawa, and Nakamura Hitomi have composers to create new works, and have collaborated extensively to invent a new music tradition.

Ishikawa and Miyata are both part of Reigakusha, a *gagaku* ensemble founded in 1985 that performs both traditional and contemporary repertoire (“伶楽舎 [Reigakusha]” 2017). As one of the few non-Imperial ensembles, the group is in some ways the face of *gagaku* today. As such, the group performs constantly both domestically and internationally in a wide range of circumstances—they hold workshops, perform with schoolchildren, host concerts in traditional venues and perform in Western classical concert halls. Still, the group is very much rooted in the performance tradition of Western classical music; they most frequently perform in concert halls and they get significant funding from governments and institutes.<sup>29</sup> Though they stretch the boundaries of *gagaku*, they remain entrenched within the institutional confines of Western influenced high art music.

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<sup>28</sup> Until the post-war period, *gagaku* was rarely heard by anyone not directly associated with the imperial family. As such, *gagaku* and its musicians continue to be shrouded in mystery even today. Most *gagaku* musicians still come from families that have been imperial court musicians for many generations. Though similar, this world is distinct from that of the broader *iemoto* phenomenon in traditional arts. More study is needed in order to ascertain how these two distinct hierarchies influenced each other, if they did at all.

<sup>29</sup> For example, Reigakusha frequently perform at Columbia’s Institute of Medieval Japanese Study’s annual Spring concert and has also been sponsored by the Arts Council Tokyo (“伶楽舎第十三回雅楽演奏会 [Reigakusha’s 13th Gagaku Concert]” 2017).

Ishikawa, however, has spent his entire career playing both traditional pieces as well as doing free improvisation and performing contemporary classical pieces. His multi-faceted career is pursued somewhat out of necessity; all musicians who play traditional Japanese instruments must diversify their abilities in order to be able to make a living. As there are so few opportunities for musicians who play traditional Japanese instruments but who are not part of any school or university, musicians must be able and willing to play any number of types of music. Musicians also look abroad for more situations in which they can play. Ishikawa himself feels that performing a wide range of music is important for his artistic practice. He enjoys the challenge of performing new pieces, though he sometimes feels that composers do not take the time to learn about the instrument adequately before composing. For Ishikawa, his study of traditional music complements all of his performances. To him, there is no boundary or differentiation between his more traditional practice, his contemporary classical performance, and his performances of improvisation. The distinction between a classical concert hall and a basement jazz club to him is less important than the similarity of the music itself across these settings.

Through collaboration with a variety of musicians, Ishikawa creates new forms of music that are based in traditional performance yet stretch the boundaries of the *sho*. To him, the *sho* is suited to many forms of music and he adjusts his playing based on whatever type of music he is performing. Ishikawa has long been part of a European music ensemble and has been playing with European jazz stalwarts like sax player Evan Parker since the 1990s. In addition, he frequently collaborates with Joel Ryan, a US-born but long-term Dutch resident musician who creates music on a

laptop computer (increasingly treated as an expressive personal instrument among experimental musicians). Ryan uses live digital signal processing to improvise within an experimental music context. Ishikawa and Ryan listen to each other to create new sounds through mixing sources such as digital samples and bamboo reeds. Ishikawa also performs at experimental and jazz venues like Super Deluxe and Ftarri with Tokyo based musicians.<sup>30</sup> Thus, like Yagi, Ishikawa is part of multiple coexisting scenes across multiple continents.

In some ways the *sho* is uniquely placed to take part in twenty-first century music. Though it has a long history, it has no known solo repertoire and thus does not have a canon that practitioners must either choose to perform or to challenge. It is small, easy to carry, and with its droning sonority it can take part in almost any musical style. Ishikawa capitalizes on this flexibility. Throughout his career, he has travelled constantly and has performed in a wide range of venues. For him, traditional music is just another facet of his career. Through his devotion to tradition yet openness to collaborate and explore, Ishikawa epitomizes how new experimental Japanese music takes place in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>30</sup> Super Deluxe and Ftarri are venues that are fixtures of the jazz, new music and experimental music scenes in Tokyo. Both are commercial clubs that feature a range of music.

*Japanese Music and Circulations: Ikue Mori and Makigami Koichi*

Japanese music continues to remain a salient category even among musicians who do not play traditional Japanese instruments. Since the 1970s, multiple generations of musical genres have been created, influenced, and created in Japan or in connection to Japan. Genres like no-wave, noise, *onkyo* and free improvisation more generally have been created by musicians located in Japan, or by Japanese musicians abroad. Artists like Ikue Mori, John Zorn, Makigami Koichi, Yoshimi, Haino Keiji, Merzbow, Sachiko M, Otomo Yoshihide, and the band Hijokaidan create music that could only have come out of the constant circulations of musical ideas, audiences, recordings and collaborations that have become a fixture of Japanese music in recent decades.

*Ikue Mori: Electronics, Drums and Punk on the Lower East Side*

I meet Ikue Mori, the New York based electronic and laptop musician, at Cafe Mogador in New York's East Village—a hangout for downtown experimental musicians for many years—one November afternoon (Barzel 2015, 28; Mori and Yoshimi 2015). The cafe is a few blocks from the rent controlled five-story walk up apartment Mori has lived in for thirty years and near many experimental music venues—though some have closed and Mori now often goes to Brooklyn to perform as the scene has slowly migrated there. Mori is already seated and chatting with Yoshimi, her frequent co-collaborator and drummer from Osaka, when the waitress



shows me to the table.<sup>31</sup> Mori has suggested we meet there, as she said it would be quiet, but the loud 60s pop background music is very distracting.

Mori is dressed in her usual dark pants and shirt, though this time she is wearing a black and white hand-knit looking sweater on top. Unlike the two previous times I have seen her perform, when her long black hair was covering much of her face, this time her hair is up in bun. Her makeup is minimal. The overall effect is that of an older Japanese woman who no longer needs to concern herself with her style, and so does not.

In contrast, Yoshimi obviously cares about presentation. She has an asymmetrical hair cut with bangs, the long part of which today is in a fantastical twist. She wears a two-piece brown jumpsuit made of wool. She appears almost goat-like in her getup. During the previous night's gig that the duo did at Roulette, Yoshimi came out in a hood, hiding herself from the audience, enhancing the mysterious quality of the performance with her presentation and costume. Mori, as usual, was wearing black, and sat quietly at her laptop and drum set, behaving in an almost anti-performative manner.

Throughout our one and a half hour interview, Mori and Yoshimi switch between answering my music-related questions and talking about personal, stereotypically feminine topics like childbirth, family, children, and food. In addition, they reference Japanese-related topics, like the quality of the Japanese food in New York, and the recent legal action by New York based sushi chefs trying to get

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<sup>31</sup>Both Ikue Morie and Yoshimi have stage names. Ikue Mori always writes her first name first, and family name second even in Japanese. She also uses the *katakana* syllabary for foreign words to write her name: イクエモリ. Similarly, Yoshimi uses just her first name, also with her characters, ヨシミ. Thus I will refer to Ikue Mori by the name order she has chosen, and Yoshimi by her stage name.

permission to make sushi without rubber gloves. They alternate between public, music related topics, and private womanly or Japan related topics with ease.

Ikue Mori's music, career and life are connected to many cultures, scenes and places. Mori is deeply immersed in New York, and particularly its "downtown" scene and music culture. Mori has lived on the city's Lower East Side since 1977 and has been integral first to the no-wave and then the downtown experimental improvisation scenes since then (Rodgers 2010, 73). After first playing in the no-wave band DNA, and performing at venues like CBGB, Mori began to use drum machines and to play with improvising musicians including John Zorn, Ned Rothenberg and others. Now she plays the laptop and is a pioneer in computer music using live signal processing, pre-recorded samples and synthesized sounds. Her career reflects the historic progression of the very regional experimental music scene in New York; she transitioned to improvised music as it became more widespread outside of the jazz tradition in the 1980s. She lives in the East Village because at the time she moved there it was the focus of punk rock and later improvised music. Now she often travels to perform in Brooklyn as increasing rents have meant the scene has migrated.

At the same time, Mori's career and identity remain tied to Japan. She frequently performs with Yoshimi, Makigami Koichi and other Japanese musicians. She shops at Sunrise, the Japanese supermarket at St. Mark's Place, and has strong opinions on where to eat Japanese food in New York. She chose to perform drums again for the first time in many years because she turned sixty, a lucky birthday in Japan which allows for new beginnings. Her mother still lives in Japan and Mori

goes back every year to visit, eat Japanese food, and perform a few gigs. In addition, Mori exemplifies a broader historical trend of Japanese women artists and musicians in particular coming to New York in order to feel less burdened by the patriarchal gender norms of Japanese society. From Yoko Ono and Kusama Yayoi in the 1960s to Ikue Mori and the dancer Ohtake Eiko in the 1970s or electronic musician Uenishi Keiko in the 1990s, the twentieth century was filled with Japanese artists, but particularly female artists, moving to New York in order to create and feel less constrained. Mori's life as an expatriate Japanese, a New Yorker and an avant-garde artist is one way in which to be a Japanese woman.

Ikue Mori's collaborations also reflect her multi-layered identity and musical career. Mori frequently performs with Yoshimi, the drummer for the Osaka-based band Boredoms, which first gained popularity worldwide as the opening band for Sonic Youth in the 1990s. One of the reasons Yoshimi first became a drummer was because she heard Mori on a DNA record. After listening to Mori's harsh yet free sound, Yoshimi decided to become a drummer. Later, John Zorn introduced Yoshimi to Mori, and since then, the two have frequently collaborated. They have performed in Japan, the United States, and at festivals in Europe. They play harsh, experimental music and are unwilling to follow typical Japanese female behavioral codes; they form a kind of anti-feminine Japanese duo. At the same time, Mori also often performs with John Zorn and other fixtures of the very regional New York experimental scene. Mori has long been a part of Zorn's Electric Masada group, which plays Jewish influenced jazz and improvisation (Barzel 2015, 128). In addition

her music has been released by Zorn's *Tzadik* record label. Thus Ikue Mori's collaborations are reflective of her circulatory musical and cultural identities.

What makes Ikue Mori Japanese? What makes her music Japanese? Well, she considers herself to be Japanese just as much as she considers herself to be a New Yorker. Her career is based on constant circulations of music, people, audiences, and recordings. Her career is local and contingent on the ups and downs of the New York experimental music scene yet it is also international. She is both intimately connected to Japan yet has not lived there for forty years. Mori is a pioneer in twenty-first century musical creation.

*Makigami Koichi: Vocal Sounds Around the World*



Makigami Koichi playing the *shakuhachi*. Wrocław, Poland. November 26, 2016.

Makigami Koichi is a vocalist and instrumentalist based in Kanagawa, Japan (Makigami 2016). His music is deeply rooted in twentieth century Japanese music, traditional Japanese music regional folk musics worldwide, and experimental music in the twentieth century. His career is both local and international. He travels frequently and performs at a wide range of venues in a multitude of countries. He, along with the other artists featured in this thesis, epitomizes the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century experimental Japanese musician.

Makigami's music reflects his interest in a broad range of musics. Makigami says he is most interested in working with regional, local and folk musicians, as opposed to world famous jazz or classical acts, and he has sought out minor or local musics throughout his career. Though he is primarily a vocalist, he plays a number of

instruments including: trumpet, *shakuhachi*, theremin, jaw harp and electronics.<sup>32</sup> His music is based on a variety of regional musics yet it refuses categorization or regionalization. His music is made up of the circulations of global musics. It is both folk music and avant-garde music.

Since the late 1970s, when Makigami first discovered improvised vocal music while on tour in England as an actor in a Japanese theatre troupe, Makigami has sought out vocal music traditions from around the world. Makigami most often performs solo or group vocal improvisations and his technique is based both on the twentieth century mostly Western influenced improvisation tradition (an off shoot of jazz exemplified by Derek Bailey, Evan Parker and others) and a variety of traditional types of vocal music. He is a trained Tuvan (Khoomei) throat singer and frequently uses that technique within his improvised pieces. Through this, he has become fluent in Russian and is friends with a number of Tuvan musicians whom he visits in Tuva and brings to Japan on tours. He is also part of the throat singing community within Japan and takes part in concerts and events within that world. In many ways Makigami has become part of the Tuvan musical community and is also part of the growing worldwide popularity of Tuvan music. In fact, the increased appreciation for Tuvan throat singing and subsequent revitalization of the genre both within the Republic of Tuva and worldwide has brought about questions about authenticity, ethnicity and indigenous rights cultural rights (Glenfield 2003, 33). Though Makigami is certainly aware of this discussion about authenticity—Makigami himself says he goes to the villages in order to find better Tuvan singers—

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<sup>32</sup> Makigami sometimes uses analog effects units (pedals) during his performances.

he unashamedly utilizes Tuvan technique in a non-typical and unique manner as part of his improvisation.

Makigami's interest in Japanese music also reflects his desire to learn from local or minor musics while also remaining part of a worldwide community of performers. Makigami's music utilizes some Japanese traditions and yet refuses to remain within the confines of Japanese tradition. He has learnt *shakuhachi* from Nakamura Akikazu, the virtuosic *shakuhachi* musician, but primarily uses extended technique in his many performances. Makigami is also an expert in the little-known Japanese jaw harp tradition and has studied its history through archeology. He has helped to create a new musical tradition based on the resurrected Japanese jaw harp tradition. Makigami's work with jaw harps is also both local and international; he is part of an international community of musicians and hobbyists devoted to protecting their various jaw harp traditions. He sells jaw harps on his website for domestic consumers as a way to try to encourage more people to become jaw harp practitioners (Makigami 2017).

Yet despite Makigami's interest in various regional musics and international experimental music, his identity as a Japanese person is very regional. He still lives with his farmer parents in a small village called Yugawara, in Kanagawa Prefecture and is very involved in various local projects. He swears by the medicines from his local Chinese medicine specialist that he brings on tours to Europe in case a fellow musician gets sick. He is still in a band with friends from his Odawara High School days and keeps in touch with other classmates, very few of who have moved away from the local area. He talks about regional food specialties and cooks the wild boar

that his father hunts in the local mountains. Though he tours the world and travels frequently to learn about new forms of music, Makigami remains a Yugawaran.

Makigami's unwillingness to stick to one musical genre or style while continuing to hold a very regional identity is reflective of the malleability of music and identity in the twenty-first century. Through travel, musical recordings and collaborations, Makigami creates music that simply could not have existed fifty years ago. Thanks to the internet, cheap travel and a willingness to travel abroad, Makigami breaks down musical boundaries and creates new sounds. At the same time, his identity continues to focus around Yugawara and his family. He is both an international musician and a local villager.



Makigami Koichi. Wrocław, Poland. November 26, 2016.



***Enka: A Case Study of Performing Japanese Identity*<sup>33</sup>**

Though until this point I have focused primarily on experimental Japanese music as a case study for how regional music is impacted by circulations, the expanded notion of Japanese music I am arguing for stands true even for the most popular of Japanese musics—*enka*. *Enka* is a post-war popular music featuring some traditional motifs. *Enka* music and experimental Japanese music of all kinds are sites for performing and maintaining Japanese identity through musical creation and consumption. By using *enka* as an example, I hope to demonstrate that Japanese music is a complicated multi-faceted regional music that is based on many circulations. In addition, connecting *enka* musicians to these experimental musicians breaks down boundaries between art music and popular music and subculture and mainstream culture. While these boundaries are prevalent in many cultures, no genre is more inherently valuable than another and these boundaries are often based on presumed cultural significance relating to class and ethnicity, among other things. Regardless of the type, music of all kinds are sites for cultural performance and maintenance and musics of all kinds influence our own identities.

Christine Yano writes that “*enka* is one dimension of Japan’s national self-image”. Though it is not considered to be refined enough to be one of the aspects of Japanese culture that is used to promote Japan abroad, *enka* is constructed as a premodern distinctly Japanese popular music (Fellezs 2012, 334). For *enka* listeners and non-listeners alike, *enka* is thought to touch the heart of something uniquely Japanese (Amazawa 1997, 219). *Enka* is rooted in the nostalgic Japanese

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<sup>33</sup> Throughout this section, I rely heavily on Christine Yano’s book, *Tears of Longing* (Yano 2002). Unless otherwise cited, much of the information on *enka* comes from Yano’s book.

understanding of 故郷, *furusato*, hometown, where an post war increasingly urban working poor looked to for remembrance of a mythic time past—a time when it is thought that Japan was more in touch with its roots (Ivy 1995, 22).

Yet despite the general consensus that *enka* is distinctly Japanese and even premodern, the genre is distinctly modern and Western influenced due to its use of Western musical motifs and instruments. Though *enka* is based on Japanese folk music traditions and Japanese colonial era popular music, the term itself only began to be used in the 1960s as it is today. *Enka* music today has roots in a variety of 民謡, *minyo*, folk music genres and early western influenced popular music that coalesced to form *enka* at the start of the post-war period.<sup>34</sup> Thus the genre is a kind of bricolage, an amalgamation of a wide range of Japanese musical styles and western musical influences. Much of *enka* technique was also influenced by US pop music coming into Japan through Armed Forces Radio and the American Occupation Forces (Yano 2002, 39). From the start, *enka* was an invention, a creation of the postwar period based on old musical traditions and new inventions. Starting in the 1960s, *enka* as a genre began to coalesce and its tropes and techniques became standardized; *enka* began to be produced to sound old and as traditionally Japanese as possible. That is even though it is a new, synthetic created genre, *enka* is self consciously old (Yano 2002, 43).

Just like Japan's postwar history and economic success, *enka's* ties to Japan's recent colonial past are often ignored. Hibari Misora (1937-1989), the “queen” of

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<sup>34</sup> The term *enka* was not used until the early 1960s. There remains much scholarly debate about what exactly *enka* is, what it is influenced by and when it was created. For a detailed examination of this issue, see (Yano 2002, sec. Inventing Enka).

*enka* was a 在日, *zainichi*, Korean Japanese, whose family, like most other Korean Japanese, moved to Japan as colonial subjects during Japan's colonization of Korea (1910-1945) (Yano 2004, 168). However, though she remains a symbol for the *zainichi* community, that fact is little known and or ignored by mainstream Japanese culture (Ryang 2005, 202). What is less easy to ignore however, is the popularity of *enka* in places previously colonized by Japan. *Teuroteu*, is an *enka* derived Korean pop music genre that holds a similar place in Korean cultural understanding as *enka* does in Japan (Pilzer 2012, 123). In his account of Korean comfort women and their relationship to song, Joshua Pilzer describes how a number of Japanese musical genres, but particularly *enka*, continue to be an important part of comfort women's lives and older Koreans more generally (Pilzer 2012, 69, 123). Artists like Kim Yongja have come to represent what it means to be Korean, just as many *enka* artists represent Japaneseness (Yano 2004, 163). In addition, *enka* remains popular in Taiwan and mainland China, and performers like Teresa Teng made careers out of singing *enka* songs in Japanese and *enka* inspired pop in various languages spoken in Taiwan ("テレサテン - 愛人"; "鄧麗君3連霸"). Due to Japan's colonial past, multicultural, multinational and multiethnic performers and audiences are an oft-ignored part of *enka*'s history and continued popularity.

*Enka* was born out of the modern phenomena of industrialization and urbanization. Many of the lyrics of *enka* are consciously nostalgic; *enka* is designed to make you feel 懐かしい, *natsukashi*, a feeling of longing for something gone, of something far away. Lyrics focus on a relatively limited set of topics designed to illicit this feeling: *furusato*, mothers far away, loved ones, loneliness and the

difficulty of life. Though there are happy *enka* tunes, many of them are a kind of “blues”—you feel better by listening to the blues of your life. This sense of longing for the rural is distinctly modern; without the urban there would never been any country music.

*Enka* also makes ample use of western instruments and techniques while continuing to manufacture a sense of Japaneseness. *Enka* often features backing tracks or big bands depending on the size and production value of the performance. The vocal technique is also heavily influenced by post-war US pop music, though depending on the type of *enka*, vocalists may utilize ヲリ, *yuri*, a long established kind of vibrato used in *minyo*, and other types of more traditional Japanese vocal techniques. Yet *enka* continues to be considered as a distinct and special Japanese category of music which is able to represent something about the Japanese soul, 日本人の心, *Nihonjin no kokoro*.

### *Enka and Performing Japaneseness: Jero*<sup>35</sup>

Jero, né Jerome Charles White, Jr., is an *enka* singer whose mixed Japanese and African-American heritage defies cultural expectations about *enka* and Japanese culture more generally (Fellezs 2012, 333). Jero’s grandmother was a GI bride who moved to the US with her husband during the American Occupation. Jero’s identity highlights Japan’s relatively unique position as a colonial power and a defeated colonized subject, albeit for a short time. As a black man, Jero is unique in the notoriously conservative *enka* world. Jero’s behavior also makes him stand out; he

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<sup>35</sup> Unless otherwise cited, much of the biographical information on Jero in this section comes from Kevin Fellezs’s article, “This is Who I Am: Jero, Young, Gifted, Polycultural” (Fellezs 2012).

often wears hip-hop style street wear as opposed to kimono, the more typical garb for an *enka* singer and has previously combined hip-hop style dancing with *enka* (Jero 海雪 *Dance* 2012).

Yet despite his outsider status, Jero has been embraced by the *enka* world, and Japanese society more generally because in some key ways he embodies Japanese culture. Jero is extremely popular and is credited with revitalizing the *enka* genre by bringing new younger listeners to a genre whose audience is rapidly aging (Martin 2008). One of the reasons he has been accepted is because despite the fact that he is foreign born and looks different to many Japanese, his story is an almost a perfect *enka* singer's story. Jero first began to sing *enka* because his Japanese grandmother would sing it to him as a child. Jero grew up with his grandmother talking to him about Japan and singing *enka* with him. It was the love of his grandmother and her love of her homeland Japan that led Jero to initially move to Japan. This story is almost as good a story from *enka* lyrics; there features a homeland far away but not forgotten (the *furusato*), a loved one (in this case the GI that the grandmother left her homeland for), a journey (Jero's journey to Japan) and a beloved grandmother. Jero's tale allows for all *enka* fans and non-fans alike to rally round this multicultural Japanese singer.

Jero's obvious love of Japanese culture and his willingness to conform to social expectations have meant that Jero has been readily accepted. Jero has studied Japanese, seems eager to learn Japanese customs and behavior and has no intention of returning to the United States but rather intends to continue living in Japan. He has trained as an apprentice with traditional *enka* singers. It is possible to view Jero's

acceptance within Japanese culture as primarily due to Jero's willingness to conform to typical modes of Japanese behavior and expectations. Certainly, previous non-Japanese *enka* singers who have had success in Japan, including Teresa Teng, have behaved in typically Japanese fashions when possible. That is, it may be that in order for non-typical Japanese to be accepted within the Japanese music world and in Japan more generally, they have to choose to conform to Japanese expectations of behavior and attitude. They have to try to overcome their non-Japanese handicaps as much as possible.

However, I argue that Jero's personal choice to behave in a typical Japanese manner is just that, a valid personal reflection of his multicultural and Japanese identity. Just like for many Japanese, for Jero, *enka* is a site for displaying, performing and maintaining his Japanese identity. Simon Frith writes that "music constructs our sense of identity ... which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives (Frith 1996, 124). Japanese music, and particularly *enka*, is key in constructing Japanese cultural identity. Through his singing performances, Jero chooses to reflect his Japanese identity and thus performs his Japaneseness. The words construct and perform are not meant to suggest that Jero's relationship to Japan is less authentic than other people's; rather these terms suggest that all people create, perform and construct their various identities through cultural activities and behavior like music. Though many Japanese may be unwilling to accept Jero as a full fledged Japanese person because of his multiracial and multicultural background, Jero himself pushes the boundaries of Japanese identity. Jero's use of typically black cultural motifs like hip-hop clothing and break dancing in combination with *enka*

show Japanese music can be the site of a unique, global and historical understanding of Japaneseness. The idea of Japaneseness is flexible, personal and mediated through various experiences and social situations. Jero's engagement with Japan is just as complex and personal as that of an old woman from Kyoto singing *enka* or a young man from Okinawa who plays the violin.

***Conclusion: Regionalism Through Circulations and New Creation***

Experimental music is just another example of Japan's utilization of other cultures and their technologies. From musical instruments imported from China in the sixth century to the silent films made in Tokyo during the colonial period preceding the outbreak of war with the United States, Japan has always readily incorporated new ideas and technology into its preexisting society. Experimental music is another version of this constant refrain.

Japanese experimental music both highlights how regional music making has adapted in the wake of globalization and also suggests how music and more broadly culture will be shaped, created and consumed in the coming decades. Starting in the 1970s, constant circulations of artists, recordings, influences and audiences created new forms of music making and genres that could not have existed previously. Genres and scenes began to exist across multiple continents and in a variety of locations. Unlike the previous early twentieth century model in which musicians came to the so-called centers of the cultural world—New York, London, Paris—in order to learn and be influenced, this new form of circulations is less hierarchical and more diffuse. Regional musics of various kinds have become more prevalent and

readily accessible worldwide. The boundaries between art music, Western classical music, folk musics from around the world, avant-garde pop music and regional music began to crumble. Thanks to increased access through Internet and cheaper travel, these cross-cultural, intercontinental genres and musical scenes are ever expanding and interconnecting at an increasingly rapid pace.

Rather than “greying out” all folk or regional pop music traditions, cultural and economic globalization has allowed some regional musics to become part of a global circulations of music and musicians. Japanese traditional music is an example of how some regional musics can become part of a global musical culture; *minyo*, *gagaku* and other Japanese musical forms are now part of an international body of “world” musics, widely performed outside of their historical and traditional national and cultural contexts. These constant circulations have resulted in an increase in musicians who play traditional Japanese instruments in non-traditional ways, or utilize Japanese melodies, motifs and tuning in new and surprising ways. Though there was, and in some senses continues to be, fear that globalization and international Westernized mass pop culture will destroy regional and traditional and orally transmitted cultures, Japanese traditional music suggests a way in which traditions can be preserved while also encouraging new forms of artistic creation and experimentation.

Japanese music, music from Japan, music about Japan, music born from Japan, continues to be vibrant, ever changing and ever evolving. Japanese jazz, avant-garde and experimental music, taken together, suggest a pattern for twenty-first century local musical production that may actually reinforce distinctive local scenes



and styles, and allow musicians to take advantage of the flexibility of international consumption and circulations. International consumption of music in the form of CDs, digital downloads, concerts, club dates and festivals allows even lesser known artists to have a strong fan base, even if these fans are scattered all around the world. Musicians routinely collaborate with artists from opposite sides of the earth, whether in person in studio dates or even via Skype or other digital means. They travel abroad to perform at festivals, gigs and club dates. More and more Japanese experimental musicians play both traditional Japanese instruments as well as Western instruments more typically associated with jazz, and divide their time between Japan and New York or Western Europe, building their cultural and social identities across geographic, ethnic, racial and genre lines. This has led to the creation of international musical scenes; experimental musicians are now part of a transglobal, multicontinental avant-garde. This pattern is more than mere consumption of music by international audiences—the creation of Japanese experimental music is fundamentally altered and influenced by international musical production, consumption and creation.

In this globalized world, music, especially regional music, continues to be a site of identity production, construction and performance. As shown by the many artists who make Japanese music featured in this paper, there are many ways to be a Japanese musician. There are those who were born in Japan, choose to live abroad and collaborate with both Japanese musicians as well as those who have moved to Japan or those who play Japanese instruments. Listeners too perform their identity through listening to music—whether it be *enka* shows in Tokyo or a punk concert in

Brooklyn. This identity in turn is shaped through the circulations that have profoundly changed musical creation in the past fifty years. Through the movement of people, recordings, artists, audiences and performances, music and identity are created and shaped.

Japanese experimental music foreshadows how regional culture will be formed, created, consumed and enjoyed in the coming decades. Culture can and will be less markedly Western oriented and less consumer company mediated. Through utilization the internet, cheap travel, international venues and governmental programs, musicians from around the world will be able to collaborate and contribute to international musical dialogues and scenes. The boundary between high art music performed in concert halls and experimental music performed in basement clubs is already fading; within a few decades this forced twentieth century distinction will no longer exist in a meaningful manner.

Many musicians will perform multiple genres and multiple cultures. Taking part in traditional music as well as experimental music will become the norm. While musicians may remain fiercely devoted to their instrument's history, or their genre's geographic, temporal and musical roots, many will be just as able and willing to collaborate with musicians from different vernaculars than their own. New forms of music will be created through these dense interconnected networks based on circulations. Japanese experimental music is born of circulations and so too will the music of the coming decades.

***Postscript: What Does Japanese Mean Anyway?***

I sit in my dorm one fall evening in New York with my *koto* tuned, laptop open, waiting for my teacher to call me for my Skype lesson from Tokyo. Though we are separated by many seas and I see a mere electronic rendering of her on the screen, the lesson begins as any other *koto* lesson does; I bow my head and say *yoroshiku onegaishimasu*—an almost untranslatable and ubiquitous phrase used to ask for favors and support, and to mark the start of many events and classes. In this case, I am expected to show appropriate deference by asking my teacher to take care of me and teach me during our coming lesson. Though I am not in Japan and we are having our lesson over previously unimaginable distances, I am still expected to conform to the expectations set in place and the form of the lesson as it always has been. This precisely is what makes Japanese music just as meaningful and complex as it has ever been; though the lesson and my relationship with my teacher utilizes new forms of technology, the fundamental structure remains deeply connected to its past. Through the performance of Japanese identity by way of musical creation, Japanese musicians continue to create new ways to express Japaneseness. Just as Japanese music is a complex and hard to define category, so too is Japanese identity.

*Appendix: Glossary of Japanese Terms*

Romanization	Kanji (Japanese)	Definition
<i>Biwa</i>	琵琶	Japanese fretted lute often used in storytelling or in <i>gagaku</i> . Originally came to Japan from China in the seventh century.
<i>deshi</i>	弟子	Apprentice, student, assistant
<i>enka</i>	演歌	Post-war popular music genre that uses some traditional Japanese musical motifs.
<i>furusato</i>	故郷、古里	Hometown
<i>Gagaku</i>	雅楽	Japanese imperial court music based primarily on Tang Dynasty Chinese music.
<i>Hogaku</i>	邦楽	An amorphous term that sometimes refers to all forms of Japanese traditional music. Can also specifically refer to music made on <i>shakuhachi</i> , <i>koto</i> and <i>shamisen</i> .
<i>Iemoto</i>	家元	A (often male) head of a school and lineage for a Japanese traditional art form.
<i>Koto</i>	箏、琴	Transverse harp most commonly with thirteen, seventeen or twenty-one strings. Came to Japan from China in the seventh century.
<i>minyo</i>	民謡	Twentieth century term used to designate

		accompanied folk singing genres.
<i>natsukashi</i>	懐かしい	Nostalgia, missing one's home, longing
<i>Shakuhachi</i>	尺八	Bamboo Japanese end-blown flute. Originally from China and introduced to Japan in the sixth century.
<i>shamisen</i>	三味線	Three string plucked instrument derived from the Chinese <i>sanxian</i> .
<i>Sho</i>	笙	Bamboo free reed instrument based on the Chinese <i>sheng</i> . Used in <i>gagaku</i> .
<i>tannitsu minzoku kokka</i>	単一民族国家	Mono-ethnic nation state

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