The Art of Marimba in Tokyo: Emergence in the Twentieth Century

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Faculty of Music

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Abstract

The marimba emerged as a leading voice in contemporary Western art music in the twentieth century. This is due to several key factors: principally the extraordinary contribution composers and performers made to marimba repertoire in Tokyo after 1960. In this paper I will briefly outline the evolution of Western classical music in Japan, from its initial introduction in the latter part of the nineteenth century, to the proliferation of performing arts organizations in the late twentieth century. I will also explore the origins of the xylophone and marimba in Japan and the rise of the marimba through virtuoso performers, competitive instrument manufacturers and (most importantly) leading composers including commissioning practices, funding models and repertoire development. Information to support this paper was gathered in November, 2014 through personal interviews conducted by the author with performers and composers in Tokyo, Japan. These participants include marimbists Keiko Abe, Mutsuko Fujii, Michiko Takahashi, Sumire Yoshihara and composers Norio Fukushi, Jo Kondo, Toshi Ichiyanagi, Tokuhide Niimi, Yasuo Sueyoshi and Katsuhiro Tsubonoh; all of whom were some of the most active contributors to the development of the marimba in Japan in the late twentieth century and whose work is internationally celebrated. Most importantly, connections are identified between these performers, composers, instrument manufacturers, presenting organizations and funding systems that nurtured an environment for these marimba works to be created.
Acknowledgments

Mutsuko Fujii (b.1948) is one of one of the most important figures contributing to the marimba as a performer, commissioner and scholar. She has researched the origins of the xylophone and the marimba in Japan (and continues to do so), has tallied a thorough list of marimba repertoire from its origins in the 1950s to 2004 and has also completed a total document of all marimbas manufactured in Japan to present day. To her I offer my greatest thanks for making this paper possible and my encouragement to continue her work.

I sincerely thank all my interview participants greatly including (in order from my visit in November, 2014) Keiko Abe, Mutsuko Fujii, Sumire Yoshihara (Nov. 12), Michiko Takahashi, Kimiko Shimbo (Nov. 13), Yasunori Yamaguchi and composers Yasuo Sueyoshi (Nov. 14), Tokuhide Niimi, Katsuhiro Tsubonoh (Nov. 15), Jo Kondo, Norio Fukushi (Nov. 16) and Toshi Ichiyanagi (Nov. 17).

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Thanks also to Haruka Fujii for being present at and translating interviews with all the marimbists, her father Akira for taking me and Evan (my 9-year-old son at the time) to wonderful unseen places (especially the timeless experience of Kyoto Buddhism at 5:30am) and especially to my son for accompanying me on my research trip to Tokyo (replete with extraordinary breakfasts). Also so many thanks to my wife Sanya, our daughters Naiya and Ariana, my committee members Dr. Midori Koga and Camille Watts and my advisor Dr. Russell Hartenberger.

Ryan Scott, Toronto
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Introduction

“Good ideas come out of good civilizations, from the most important persons.”

– Keiko Abe, personal interview, Nov. 12, 2014, Tokyo, Japan.

When I entered the Bachelor of Music program at the University of Toronto in 1992, I saw a marimba for the first time. As someone who had played mostly drums and xylophone, I was immediately drawn to the marimba for its sound. With its pianistic rosewood bars, the marimba was a gateway instrument to Western classical music repertoire with which (at the time) I was wholly intrigued though I felt separated, somehow, musically. That said, I liked the way the marimba felt to play, but generally I felt artistically restricted by my choices within existing solo Western marimba repertoire.

As my interest in percussion in general developed, the only works for marimba that truly engaged me seemed to always come from Japan, and as my professional career evolved I had many meaningful experiences performing and recording significant concertos and chamber works featuring the marimba by great Japanese composers. As for the propensity of the marimba in Japan, eventually I asked myself: Why was interest in such an obscure instrument as the marimba so prominent in Japan in the 1960s, particularly since Japanese culture is distinct and far removed from Western conceptualizations, and had limited exposure to Western music until the late nineteenth century?

I have learned that contributing factors included ample funding from private and public resources, virtuoso performers who also commissioned works, competitive instrument manufacturers, and a general familiarity with the xylophone in Japanese culture. The most important point I wish to define, however, is that the greatest post-World-War II, post-avant-garde, post-modern Japanese composers wrote for the marimba and wrote for it repeatedly in the 1960s through to the 1980s; and the many performers who premiered these works were exceptional virtuosos, the like of which had never been witnessed before in classical keyboard percussion.
Many composers from other countries had written for the marimba in the decades prior to 1960s Tokyo, but those works were derivative of classical and popular genres. It was in Japan that the first contemporary art music was written for the marimba, elevating the instrument as a new medium for contemporary expression. Furthermore, most of this repertoire was published and recorded shortly after its premiere and many performers travelled to Europe and North America touring extensively with this repertoire, often winning first place at the most celebrated contemporary music competitions in Europe. Soon thereafter, the marimba was re-imported to the West, reconceived around the globe and integrated into contemporary solo, chamber and orchestral works.

In this paper I define several reasons why the marimba developed so rapidly in Japan: In Chapter One, I trace the development of Western music in Japan, from the Meiji Restoration to performing arts organization in the Avant Garde period of the 1960s; in Chapter Two, I discuss the origins of the marimba in the Americas, the development of the xylophone in Japan and the migration of the marimba in Japan as well as marimba manufacturing in Japan and general funding models provided by private and public broadcasters; in Chapter Three, I discuss the rise of the Japanese marimba virtuosos; in Chapter Four, the process of commissioning and the development of repertoire; and in Chapter Five, the global shift of culture and change in funding models caused by the economic collapse in 1989.

In my conclusions, I discuss this special period of rapid growth of marimba repertoire in Japan, which some consider to be a golden age. I list several key factors to support this claim and several other factors to the contrary. Ultimately, I believe that there was a golden age of the marimba that began in Tokyo in the 1960s and it continues to date. Presently, all percussionists around the world continue to experience a golden age of the marimba as a medium for contemporary art music, first initiated in the 1960s by an incredible period of activity by Japanese marimbists, composers, instrument manufacturers, arts administrators and recording, broadcasting and publishing companies. The worldwide inclusion of the marimba in Western art music compositions is due largely to this exceptional period of marimba creativity in Tokyo spanning the last four decades of the twentieth century.
Chapter 1: Western Music in Japan (1868-1968)

In the century after Japan was introduced to Western music, Japanese composers developed a unique language that was original, captivating and treasured in the global community of contemporary art music. Around the time of the fall of the Edo period and the beginning of the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the first Western music was introduced into post-Edo Japanese culture through Irish, Prussian and French military bandmasters. This was done at the behest of the Meiji government with the intention of reforming the Japanese Army to Western standards. By the mid 1870s, Western music was incorporated into the newly founded public education system with the use of songbooks. Soon thereafter, specialized Western-style music schools emerged, and the formation of orchestras and competitions followed. Amidst this fast-growing Western-focused music scene, the composers who developed were first trained in German aesthetics. Soon, however, the influence of the French aesthetic arose, as did a movement of nationalistic folklorists.

During the decades prior to World War II, Japanese composers debated about how to create art music that is both post-national (global) and local (Japanese). But from the ashes of war, an extraordinary avant-garde movement emerged in Tokyo that for the first time catapulted many Japanese composers to the forefront of twentieth-century contemporary art music. Post-war Japanese composers were inspired by a myriad of local and global influences, including Western music (yōgaku, ocean music), Japanese folk and classical music (hōgaku, homeland music) and Eastern and Western philosophy. After the war, while the film and music recording industries were thriving, international travel and study abroad was wholly encouraged by both Japanese and foreign powers. With an extensive comprehension of Western harmony, some Japanese composers looked to native hōgaku and Eastern philosophy to communicate Japanese concepts of space, time and the tension between sound and silence: ma. They created music that was uniquely Japanese, highly praised internationally and on the cutting edge of contemporary art music in the late twentieth century, choosing elements from both East and West without obligation to either.

1.1 How Western Music came to Japan

At the beginning of the Meiji Restoration, when Japan was a vassal state to China and Western advancements were being fully integrated, Japan’s national defense strategy had been the
samurai’s sword. Only twenty-seven years later in 1895 were the Japanese armed forces trained and equipped on par with Western military standards. As a result of this swift and sweeping military transformation, Japan defeated China over control of Korea in the first Sino-Japanese war, shifting dominance in the East to Japan. In 1900, Japan fought as equals with American, Russian, French, German, Italian, Austro-Hungarian and British soldiers to repress the Boxer Rebellion in China. By 1905, in the Russo-Japanese war, Japan proved its Naval dominance in the Eastern seas during the Battle of Tsushima by sinking thirty-five of thirty-eight Russian vessels in one day. The Japanese victory sent shockwaves throughout the international community: suddenly, Japan was a force with which to be reckoned.¹

It is hard to imagine what it would have been like to live in Tokyo in the mid-nineteenth century, when in the span of a decade or two, gas lanterns lit the city streets throughout the night and tall stone buildings loomed for the first time over wooden temples. Additionally, by Emperor Meiji’s decree, the samurai were phased out by 1873 in favour of a conscripted army, and it became illegal for a former samurai to wear their hair in the traditional topknot hairstyle.² The Westernization of Japan happened so quickly that much unrest, particularly between urban and agrarian populations, led to frequent terrorist attacks and numerous government reprisals. In an effort to quell future strife, the government united and introduced a centralized public education system amidst other economic, political and philosophical reforms. The Education Ordinance of 1872 was instituted so that every child was mandated to attend school for eight years:

In order for each person to make his way in life, husband his wealth wisely, enjoy prosperity in his business, and attain the goal of his life he must develop his character, broaden his knowledge, and cultivate his talents…. [All this, however,] cannot be attained without education. For this reason schools are established … language, writing and arithmetic used in daily affairs of the shizoku [family of a former samurai], officials, farmers, merchants and practitioners of all kinds of arts and crafts … that is, all things that man concerns himself with belong to the domain of learning.³

By 1881, the first book of school songs was included in the public education curriculum. This fledgling attempt at teaching notated Western music to Japanese school children would soon develop into a specialized music school. Amateur and professional orchestras and many other organizations were founded to support the performance and composition of art music. Concert halls were constructed, various associations for composers were launched with national and international competitions. Books on the study of harmony that were written attempted in numerous ways to grapple with a fundamental question in modern Japanese composition: how to write Western music that is uniquely Japanese.

As Luciano Galliano pointed out in her book *Yōgaku – Japanese Music in the Twentieth Century*, it may very well have been an easier transition into an assimilation of the Western musical language had the Edo empire collapsed earlier, perhaps in the time of Mozart and high classicism, when harmony was more systematically and grammatically applied rather than during the hyper-chromaticism of the late Wagnerian romantics. Cultural exchange on a common musical language had been happening in Europe for over 1000 years, and was suddenly imposed on a culture with deeply rooted conceptualizations and traditions vastly different from those in the West. Japanese composers found themselves awash in the revolutionary ideas of late nineteenth-century romanticism, which was based on poetics far removed from Eastern concepts. Internalizing such foreign concepts was all that more difficult. The Japanese adapted quickly, boldly and engaged in a rapid pace of events that resulted, for instance, in Kosaku Yamada (1886-1965) conducting his own works in Carnegie Hall by 1914, his student Yoritsune Matsudaira (1907-2001) winning first prize at the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISM) by 1930, and later in the 1950s, the rise of such internationally celebrated composers as Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996), who (as will be mentioned later) considered Matsudaira as the “grandfather” of Japanese art music.

1.2 The Tokyo Music School

Many Japanese intellects who were sent around the globe in the 1870s by the Japanese government to study foreign methodology, often sent back any apparatus or gadget they could find so it could be copied by Japanese scientists at home.

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5 Ibid., 66.
Concurrently, foreigners mainly from the United States, Germany and France were invited to Japan to assist with the reform at great compensation. In 1875, Shuji Isawa (1851-1917), an aristocratic ministry official, was sent to the Boston Music School to study with Luther Whiting Mason (1828-1896), a leading music educator of his time. Upon his return to Japan in 1879 with Mason,\(^6\) Isawa established the *Ongaku torishirabe-gakari* (Music Investigation Committee), an organization to investigate the implementation of nation-wide Western-influenced music education. This committee transitioned into the *Tokyo Ongaku Gakku* (The Tokyo Music School) in 1887, which is the predecessor to the *Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku* (Tokyo University of Fine Arts, commonly referred to as *Geidai*) founded in 1949. Isawa wished to provide “a synthesis or middle course by blending Eastern and Western music establishing a new kind of music for Japan today.”\(^7\)

Some Japanese scholars were opposed to the inclusion of Western music in Japanese culture, while others were equally opposed to the study of only traditional Japanese music. Regardless, the first Japanese schoolbooks of music were printed incorporating Western notation and included both Western and traditional songs often using the seven-note scale and not the traditional five-note scale. As described in Elizabeth May’s 1963 book, *The Influence of the Meiji Period on Japanese Children’s Music*:

Mason went head to toe with the imperial legislature then and settled the matter of which scale is better and why: This matter of the 7 note western scale clashing with the 5 note Japanese scale was a constant concern. Mason never pressed the issue until challenged by the court musicians to provide reasons why the western scale was better. Mason told them of the seven colours of the solar spectrum, and then asked the physics professor at the university to demonstrate by the spectrum, tuning forks, sirens and other acoustic instruments that the seven steps were most natural. Shortly thereafter, the Imperial council changed the Japanese scale to seven steps by Imperial Edict.\(^8\)

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\(^8\) May, *Influence*, 59.
1.3 German Influence

It is interesting to note that even today, the Japanese consider *Auld Lang Syne* (one of the first songs introduced by Isawa to include the seven-note scale with Japanese poetry for the lyrics) to be an ancient traditional Japanese folk tune, which they call *Hotaru No Hikari* (*Glow of Fireflies*). Although Isawa’s vision was admirable, his attempted realization was naïve. Eventually this simplistic method he had proposed for achieving a synthesis in Japanese and Western music failed, and Japan officially began an unequivocal pursuit of musical excellence in the European tradition with predominantly German educators. The foreign musicians hired by the Tokyo Music School (1880-1924) is listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880-83</td>
<td>Luther Whiting Mason (1818-96)</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883-86</td>
<td>Franz Eckert (1852-1916)</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886-88</td>
<td>Guillaume Sauvlet (1843-?)</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888-94</td>
<td>Rudolf Dittrich (1861-1919)</td>
<td>Austrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898-1909</td>
<td>Raphael von Koeber (1848-1923)</td>
<td>German/Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-1912</td>
<td>August Junker (1871-1944)</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-1904</td>
<td>Noel Peri (1865-1922)</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-05</td>
<td>Anna Laehr (1848-?)</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-09</td>
<td>Hermann Heydrich (1855-?)</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>Charlottle Fleck (1878-?)</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909-12</td>
<td>Rudolf Ernest Reuter (1888-?)</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-21; 1931-36</td>
<td>Heinrich Werkmeister (1883-1936)</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909-24</td>
<td>Hanka Schjelderup Petzold (1862-1937)</td>
<td>Norway/Germany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Most of the early efforts of the Tokyo Music School were directed towards developing performance skills on traditional Western instruments and, subsequently, performing arts organizations and concert committees emerged.\textsuperscript{10} Most of these concerts were for the public and developed into series of regular concerts. As a result, performing musicians improved their skills quickly, and funding to the organizations was increased through ticket sales and private donors. Eventually touring artists such as violinists Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962), Jascha Heifetz (1901-1987) and pianist Artur Rubinstein (1887-1982) were performing in Japanese concert halls with Japanese orchestras.

Examples of Western classical music organizations (1887-1910) were:

- 1887 – Tokyo Music School students performed the Andante from Beethoven’ First Symphony under Dutch conductor Guillaume Sauvlet.

- 1898 – musicians from the Tokyo Music School and the “Imperial Department” founded Meiji Ongakurai (Meiji Music Association) and performed 54 concerts until it disbanded in 1954.

- 1902 – the Wagner Society started at Keiō University in Minato, Tokyo and August Junker conducted the first performance of Schubert’s Unfinished Symphony in Japan. Later in 1908, he would conduct the first Japanese performance of Beethoven’s Eroica Symphony.

- 1905 – Military Bands of the Army and Navy start to give regular concerts in Hibiya Park in Chiyoda City, Tokyo.

- 1907 – The Imperial Music Association was started by Isawa and was directed by Komatsu Kōsuke (1884-1966), and was comprised primarily of instrumentalists who graduated from the Tokyo Music School.

- 1910 – The Tokyo Philharmonic Association directed by Suzuki Yonesirō was founded primarily by private funders and under the Patronage of Heinrich Werckmeister and the British Ambassador. This was the first concert series that was for the public and proved

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\end{itemize}
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so popular that it held regular concerts and included visits by foreign orchestras and foreign solo artists.

1.4 Emerging Composers and Kosaku Yamada

The Tokyo Music School provided an academic platform from which composers emerged. Having been trained in the Western tradition, these composers were now equipped with the tools to explore this new musical language.

Nobuko (Nobu) Koda (1870-1946) was the first academically trained Japanese composer to publish works based on European classical art music standards and, notable for the time, was female. A graduate of the first class of the Tokyo Music School under Isawa and Mason, her most touted pieces were *Violin Sonatas in Eb and Db minor* (1897).

Rentarō Taki (1879-1903) was the first serious Japanese composer of vocal music in the Western style. He studied in both Tokyo and Leipzig and died of tuberculosis at 24. His most famous song was *Koji no tsuki*\(^ {11}\) (1898). In his final years he wrote the first solo piano music in the Japanese repertoire: *Menuetto in B minor* (1900) and *Urami* (Regret, 1903), which is still known to many Japanese today. In fact, like Auld Lang Syne, some of Taki’s music is mistaken for traditional Japanese folk songs, even though it is written using the Western seven-note scale.\(^ {12}\)

Kosaku Yamada (1886-1965) was Japan’s first patriarch in its canon of great composers.\(^ {13}\) After graduating from the Tokyo Music School, he moved to Berlin in 1908 to study with Max Bruch (1838-1920) and Carl Leopold Wolf (1859-1932). There he composed Japan’s first string quartet, *String Quartet No. 1 in F Minor* (1909), first Japanese symphony, *Symphony in F minor, Kachidoki To Heiwa* (Victory to Peace – 1912), and first tone poem in the late Romantic style, *Mandara no Henna* (Flower of the Mandala – 1913). When he returned from Berlin, he established Japan’s first symphony orchestra in 1915, and in 1920 he was closely involved in establishing the first Japanese Opera Company, *Nihon Gakugi Kyokai* (Japanese Music Drama Association). After his first symphony orchestra collapsed, he founded another orchestra in 1924

\(^{11}\) *The Moon on the Abandoned Castle*
\(^{12}\) Burt, *Takemitsu*, 12.
\(^{13}\) Ibid.
that developed into the present day Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai\textsuperscript{14} (NHK) Symphony Orchestra. In 1931 he composed Japan’s first opera, *Ayame*, and later in 1940, *Kurofune* (Black Ships). *Kurofune*, which Yamada began in 1929, refers to Perry’s squadron in Edo bay, and was based loosely on the famous relationship between *Okichi-San*\textsuperscript{15} and an American Consul, which musicologist Eta Harich-Schneider described as “a Puccini opera [presumably *Madama Butterfly*] from the Eastern standpoint.”\textsuperscript{16}

Ultimately, Yamada composed over 1500 works and frequently used Japanese folk and popular tunes, but he merged these smoothly into a European harmonic and rhythmic vocabulary.\textsuperscript{17} The music of Wagner and Strauss influenced the harmonic language and scoring of his large-scale orchestral works, and Alexander Scriabin’s music influenced many of his chamber works. He and Taki established the foundations of a recognizable German school in Japan, and many young composers emerged to follow in these steps, including Ryutarō Hirota (1892-1952), Shinpei Nakahama (1887-1952), Nagayo Moto’ori (1885-1945) and Kiyoshi Nobutoki (1887-1965).

Saburo Moroi (1903-77) was amongst the next generation of Germanic-Japanese composers; he studied in Germany from 1932-34 under Leo Schrattemholz (1872-1955) and Walter Gmeindl (1890-1958). Upon returning to Japan, Moroi introduced Austro-German music through his own highly chromatic, post-romantic compositions like *Symphony No. 2 Op. 16* (1937-38), clearly influenced by these staunch German pedagogues. He also established an analysis school of composers rigorously trained on the “Germanic model,”\textsuperscript{18} including Yoshiro Irino (1921-80), Minao Shibata (1916-96) and his son, Makoto Moroi (b. 1930).

\textsuperscript{14} Japan Broadcasting Corporation
\textsuperscript{15} A courtesan who was forced away from the man she loved to attend the needs of Townsed Harris, the US Consul in Japan (1856-61). When Harris leaves Japan five years later, *Okichi-san* was stigmatized for having had a relationship with a foreigner and she was eventually driven to drink and suicide. A movie starring John Wayne was made about this relationship in 1958: *The Barbarian and the Geisha*
\textsuperscript{17} Galliano, *Yōgaku*, 50
\textsuperscript{18} Burt, *Takemitsu*, 13
1.5 French Influence

Although the Germanic influence was unquestionably strong in early twentieth-century Western art music in Japan, there was an alternative developing that would soon eclipse the Germanic influence. Japanese composers were emboldened with news of the sway of Japanese art on French artists. Claude Debussy (1862-1918) was first exposed to Asiatic music at the 1889 Paris exposition and included an engraving by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) on the cover of his score for his orchestral work, La Mer (1905). Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) and his re-interpretation of woodcuts by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), the writings by the Goncourt brothers, Edmond (1822-96) and Jules (1830-70), on Japanese arts and their similarity to French culture, reached Japan in the early twentieth century. As musicologist Robin Heifetz pointed out, in a very real sense, it was necessary at this stage for “Oriental” art to be exported and re-imported, in order that it might return home with the endorsement — the seal of Western legitimization — that would ensure its acceptance in the post-Meiji intellectual climate.19

Tomojirō Ikenouchi (1906-1991) was the first Japanese composer to study at the Paris Conservatoire. He studied between 1927 and 1932 with Paul Henri Busser (1873-1972) and Lazare Lévy (1882-1964). After returning to Japan, Ikenouchi would become the progenitor of French music and the neo-impressionist aesthetic. Through Ikenouchi’s efforts, the influence of French music eventually became a much more prominent stylistic feature in Japan during this period, surpassing Moroi and his followers’ activities. His students included Saburō Takata (b. 1913), Akio Yashiro (1929-76), Toshiro Mayuzumi (1929-97) and one of Japan’s most celebrated post-war composers Akira Miyoshi (1933-2013). Though the modality based on non-functional harmony of the impressionists was easily adaptable to Japanese music,20 Ikenouchi asserted that Japanese classical music had already reached its apotheosis after evolving for several hundred years, could not possibly be developed any further and, therefore, could have no affiliation with the avant-garde music of the West.21

20 Burt, Takemitsu, 14.
1.6 Nationalism and the “Association of Young Composers”

In the early 1920s when Western Music or yōgaku was becoming firmly entrenched in the ears of Japanese musicians, there arose a movement to renew contact with a national tradition, specifically by reviving hōgaku and the many types of Japanese classical music of the Edo period, including gagakū (ancient ceremonial music), kabuki (popular Japanese drama with music), nō (classical Japanese drama with music) and shōmyō (Japanese Buddhist chant). For instance, the composer and kotoist Michio Miyagi (1894-1956) led a number of classical Japanese instrumentalists (specifically, shakuhachi and biwa players) in an effort to free them from the confines and isolation of the closed music community of Japanese classical arts; collectively they attempted to bridge the gap to Western classical music by introducing “Westernisms” into their music. The goal of this movement was to introduce young musicians to the traditions of Japanese classical music. Regardless, these conjectural efforts proved rather tentative and unsuccessful, since the musicians were not formally educated in the Western tradition, and the outcome of these experiments were void of impact. Consequently, such attempts at influencing internal musical culture were rejected by many Western-trained Japanese composers.

In 1927, several of them organized a group in opposition to this attempted renewal of nationalistic sentiment, and called themselves Promethe. Both the German-trained Saburō Moroi and French-trained Tomojirō Ikenouchi were the driving force behind Promethe; but its primary members were Komei Abe (1911-2006), Shiro Fukai (1907-1959), Roh Ogura (1916-1990), Hara Tarō (1904-88), and the much-revered Kosaku Yamada. Shiro was a modernist who criticized traditional Japanese music and refused the “misguided Japanese mood” promoted by “the regime”. Promethe attracted those who were rejected from more experimental groups who opposed nationalistic tendencies. In the eyes of some observers, the activities of Promethe and its members’ compositional output has been seen as “escapist” and indicative of “cultural denial.”

22 The Koto is a Japanese zither
23 Japanese flute
24 Japanese lute
26 Occasionally this is referred to as Prometeo
27 Burt. Takemitsu, 14.
Another group movement began in 1930 with the formation of the Association of Young Composers (also known as the Progressive Composers’ League), later to become the Japanese branch of the International Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM). The composers of this school rejected the stance of Promethe and wanted to experiment with new ways of bridging the distance between Eastern aesthetics and Western musical language. The founding members were Shūkichi Mitsukuri (1895-1971), Yoritsune Matsudaira and Takemitsu’s only teacher (although briefly) Yasuji Kiyose (1900-1981), himself a student of Yamada. Other members included Akira Ifukube (1914-2006), Kishio Hirao (1907-53) and Fumio Hayasaka (1914-55). Although this group opposed the purely Western sentiments of Promethe, they were not anti-Western by any means. The press referred to these composers as Zaiyaha29 (The Outsiders), as opposed to the mainstream composers of Promethe. The Outsiders tended towards numerous influences: Matsudaira frequently used French impressionistic elements in his music, whereas Ifukebe tended towards folk music (particularly the songs of the Ainu in Hokkaido)30 and Hayasaka towards Japanese art (classical) music.31 Interestingly, many of the organizations developed by Yamada (a member of Promethe) premiered the works of these composers with Yamada at the baton. The quality of the work of these Outsiders owes much to the mainstream composers who provided academic training for the composers and also the performers. Ultimately, however, the work of these folklorists was limited, relatively unsuccessful, and perhaps indicative of the general nationalistic tendencies and anti-Western sentiments emerging in Japan in the time before the war — a sense of desperation and of nationalism at all costs. Regardless, more new music presenters and opportunities for composers emerged during this pre-war period.

Developments in contemporary music associations (1932-1937) are listed, below:

- 1932 - The first music competition to include a composition section was started by the newspaper Mainichi Shinbun.
- 1934 - The New Music League was established in Sapporo on Hokkaido by Ifukube and critic Miura Atsushi. Additionally, Noburo Ito established Shinongakuba (New Music Group) but had only one concert.

29 Galliano, Yōgaku, 72.
30 Burt. Takemitsu, 15.
31 Galliano, Yōgaku, 72.
• 1936 - The NHK started commissioning works and by 1938 obliged that commissioned works were to include a nationalistic sentiment.

• 1937 – Conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic, Felix Weingartner (1863-1942), started a competition for Japanese composers. First prize included a performance by the Vienna Philharmonic.

1.7 Struggling to define a Japanese Musical Language

Japanese composers in the 1930s worked diligently to master Western composition with varying results. The following treatises indicate the search for a new compositional language that was uniquely Japanese:

• In 1934, Shukuchi Mitsukuri published his theory of Japanese harmony. By using an upward and downward series of perfect fifths, he derived two scales and maintained that all Japanese harmony was based on the interval of the fifth.\(^{32}\) The upward series of fifths creates the *ryo* scale used in *gagaku*, and the downward series creates the traditional *miakobushi* scale. He claimed that Western influence had caused the Japanese harmonic structure of fifths to be forgotten and urged Western musicians to contribute to a “renaissance”\(^{33}\) of traditional Japanese harmony.

• In 1936, Klaus Pringsheim (German, 1883-1972) published *Nihon Sakkyokuka no unmeitekina ichimondai* (A crucial problem for Japanese composers), in which he replied to Mitsukuri’s request. He stated that Japanese composers created melodies with great ease but needed to find harmony that provided a “framework and gave creative strength”. He then states that in his own work, *Konzert*, he tried to give a Japanese context. “Today,” he wrote, “the best possible path to follow is the faithful elaboration of a Japanese aesthetic that exploits the rules and syntax of European music,”\(^{34}\) and that “the decline of harmonic logic is not the progress of any kind.”\(^{35}\) Mitsukuri replied that Pringsheim’s *Konzert* is “about as Japanese as Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Capriccio Espagnol* is

\(^{32}\) Galliano, *Yogaku*, 67.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 68.

\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
Spanish,” and that trying to incorporate the Japanese pentatonic scale using a European harmonic syntax is a dubious task.

- In 1940, Tanaka Shōhei (1862-1945) published a treatise entitled, *Nihon wasei no kiso* (Foundations of Japanese Harmony), in which he discussed an ancient Chinese theory; by adding two notes to the pentatonic scale, a heptatonic scale could be constructed with an internal harmonic structure of thirds, similar to the Western scale. Immediately after this was published, composer Fumio Hayasaka (1914-1955) retorted that a new style of music had to be created based on Western music as a starting point, and that it was not necessary to rely on triadic harmony — triads were too “thick” for the Japanese aesthetic of beauty, and more attention needed to be designated towards simplicity and frugality. Additionally, Yoshiō Hasegawa (1907-81), teacher of the acclaimed composer Jo Kondo (b.1947), wrote *Daiwaseigaku kyōtei* (Manual of Harmony, 1951) and *Sakkyokuhōgaku kyōtei* (Manual of Composition, 1949-53). Hasegawa’s premise was to compose transparently in order to recall aspects of simplicity that are fundamental to Japanese aesthetics.

After the war, the nationalistic composers continued to have significant influence on the younger generation, but their works are rarely played today and were not necessarily indicative of the soon-to-come avant-garde music bustling in all art forms and ripe to break through onto the global scene. Regardless, their influence on post-war composers was significant, as attested by Takemitsu in 1988:

> Among these composers I’d particularly like to mention Yoritsune Mastudaira, a man of great, keen aesthetic sensibility. Maitisudaira very consciously and objectively stood back from his own work in Japanese music and struggled hard to avoid the kind of sentimentality that Japanese music often falls into, in order to create a cool, very clear sense of form in his music. It is Maitisudaira who developed a genuine, new musical language, which called on inspiration from ancient Japanese music forms, such as *gagakū*, but re-interpreted these in a modern sensibility in his own personal, authentic style. Other composers, myself included, are what you might call the children or the grandchildren of

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36 Galliano, *Yogaku*, 68.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 25.
Matsudaira used gagakū melodic structures, interlaced with twelve-tone serialism. The result is a gradual accumulation of sound, in which no single instrument is more prominent than another, but simultaneously produce a sharply expressive and unceasing texture. Matsudaira’s rhythmic manipulation of twelve-tone row material is such that the vertical juxtaposition of intervallic relationships creates dissonances that are intended to closely resemble the static character of gagaku densities. This is evident in his Theme and Variations for Piano Orchestra in 1951 and his Two Movements from Bugaku for Chamber Orchestra of 1963.

1.8 Post-war Japan and the Avant-Garde (1950)

In Gary D. Allinson’s book Japan’s Postwar History he begins a chapter called Growth 1955-1974 with the following statement:

“THE ERA OF HIGH-SPEED GROWTH” is the mantra used to characterize the two decades after 1955. It has been repeated so often that it may seem trite, but there is no other way to understand this period. Growth overshadowed everything. It also consumed everyone’s energies and attention. And its consequences reached into every nook and cranny of Japanese society.

From the mid-1950s through the 1960s, Tokyo transformed itself from the capital of a war-torn nation into an international center for arts, culture, and commerce, becoming home to some of the most important art being made at the time. The energy of these artists with their hunger for new elements with which to express themselves, especially after the war, was truly powerful and resulted in a new age and direction for modern music in Japan. As Jo Kondo said:

I think art music, especially new music, was a part of an important representation of the epistemological age, especially right after the second world war, and it was symbolic for

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40 Heifetz, “Synthesis”, 446.


the new intellectual world.\footnote{Jo Kondo, interview with the author, Tokyo, JP, November 14, 2014.}

Suddenly the Japanese composer was unbounded by the chains of the past and free to travel the globe, to soak in modern Western ideals and allow them to saturate traditional Japanese philosophies. As composer Yasuo Sueyoshi explained:

\begin{quote}
The big war separated two eras: before, and after the war, were separate. However, many composers had begun their study since five or ten years before the war, and after the war it re-opened their activity. So we had many various types of composers and many styles of musicians in traditional music and new music also. So some composers studied German music very much, and romantic harmony, but some others studied Messiaen and French music, but not many studied in America. Even at Geidai, some professors were \textit{École de France}, some professors were \textit{École de Berlin}, and they were divided for two decades. But after the war, the two tendencies began to mix. At that time many young musicians and composers wished to study in foreign counties, not Japan. In America, in Paris and in Berlin, so many young musicians left for other countries. That was special to our generation, my generation. I and almost all of my colleagues had the experience to study in overseas countries.\footnote{Yasuo Sueyoshi, interview with the author, Tokyo, JP, November 13, 2014.}
\end{quote}

Although many Japanese composers studied abroad and were influenced by European philosophy, it would be inaccurate to claim that this type of activity was wholly unique to Japan and Japanese artists. Many composers, as Jo Kondo explains below, retained an objective view on Japanese compositional styles that emerged in the post-war climate:

\begin{quote}
It’s very parallel to what happened in Europe. There’s some German sort of music here, French sort of music there. I think it’s again the same all over the world. Wherever you go in the world, is there anything interesting from anywhere? I don’t see any particular trend in Japan. It’s all different ramifications of Western trends.\footnote{Kondo interview, 2014.}
\end{quote}

Regardless, wartime artistic isolation on the Japanese peninsula was over, and the modern world awaited artists from many fields, including radical progressive movements. Thus arose a decade of the avant-garde in Japanese arts; and in art music, several very different organizations formed.
1.8.1 Jikken Kōbō (1951-1957)

Jikken Kōbō (Experimental Workshop) was a “study society” formed by fourteen young artists who staged mixed media events several times a year in Tokyo. Their early post-war mentors included many composers still active from the prewar era including Ifukebe, Kiyose, Matsudaira and Moroi, but the music that inspired these young impressionable and mostly self-taught composers, was from Europe. The composers in this group were Toru Takemitsu, Joji Yuasa (b. 1929) and Toshi Ichiyanagi (b.1933) and all three composers would develop into some of the most influential composers in Japan in the decades to come. The group was encouraged by poet/artist/critic Shūzō Takiguchi (1903-79) who in 1952 wrote:

In order to strike the same tone as world art, above all a firm outlook is needed. It is essential to nurture a spirit of experimentation. The established modern art of Europe underwent an experimental phase before it attained fulfillment. Artists must endeavour to carry through with their experiments, and society must understand that it has to be generous with supporting them … experimentation is not only a phenomenon of the laboratory. Work is work, so artists too must do their work by interacting with society and reality.

At a 1991 retrospective of Takiguchi’s work, Takemitsu and Yuasa paid tribute to his influence. Takemitsu said, “My music would not have been possible without the Jikken Kōbō experience. He [Takiguchi] was truly my spiritual patron” and Yuasa stated “I started my career as a composer in 1952 when I joined Jikken Kōbō, but he [Takiguchi] was its Godfather – our mentor and spiritual leader.”

At the first Jikken Kōbō performance in 1951, a ballet titled, The Joy of Life, (timed to coincide with Picasso’s first retrospective in Tokyo) combined popular pieces by Aaron Copland (1900-90) and Leonard Bernstein (1918-90) with those by Olivier Messiaen (1908-92). These events were often the very first time that modernist works by European composers, including Erik Satie

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47 Havens, Radicals, 58-59.
48 Ibid., 56.
49 Ibid.
(1866-1925) and Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) were performed in Japan. The members would meet regularly at cafés and homes to discuss the ‘high-brow’ avant-garde happening elsewhere in the twentieth century.\(^{50}\) As Yuasa stated:

> We read and discussed Jean-Paul Sartre [1905-80], Herbert Read [1893-1963], and D.T. Suzuki [1870-1966]. We did not wish to be nationalists, but rather cosmopolitans instead. Yet we wanted to know about Japan, and through Suzuki we learned about *zen buddhism*, *nō drama*, Zeami [Motokiyo, a Japanese aesthetician 1363-1443] and [Matsuo] Bashō [Japanese poet 1644-94] … At a time when most older composers were conservative, *Jikken Kōbō* had a strong desire to learn about the West — *Jikken Kōbō* members were exceptional.\(^{51}\)

The group was severely non-political and ultra modernist, preoccupied with form and representation in beauty yet the movement was unflinchingly cerebral\(^{52}\) and driven by ideas of new directions in music. In 1997, Yuasa recalled that the members of the group were fiercely independent and always preoccupied with their individual projects, but were always willing to meet. He also stated that the group never formally disbanded, and set on their own endeavours as members for life. Yuasa also said that initially the group was so interested in and fascinated by European music that they felt little inclination to incorporate Japanese tradition:

> By 1954 we were having many discussions about problems in the arts, always focusing on differences between East and West and how to integrate them. For three years I attempted to express Japanese temporality through twelve-tone technique, then I abandoned it. [Eventually,] I turned to *nō* music, which sounded natural vis-à-vis Western music. From this, I found that essential differences between Japanese and Western Music were their senses of time and space.\(^{53}\)

Traditional Japanese philosophies — such as the sense of time and space, and *ma* (tension between silence and sound) — emerged in the early works of Takemitsu, Yuasa and Ichiyanagi. When Takemitsu used the term *ma* with reference to traditional Japanese music in general, the concept implies for him “the temporally unquantifiable, metaphysical continuum of silence that,

\(^{50}\) Havens, *Radicals*, 55.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 54.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.
in Japanese music, is consciously integrated between the notes played.”54 This so-called silence is “in no ways something void, but rather is filled with the numberless tones or noises of space,”55 and the “notes played”56 function to contrast with and render perceptible this underlying continuum: to “enliven the countless sounds of silence through music,”57 or in Takemitsu’s words, ma o ikasu (enliven the ma).58

1.8.2 The Rise of Toru Takemitsu

Takemitsu, the first Japanese composer to rise to international acclaim, was subsequently a much-revered figure at home. In a 2002 memorial issue of Contemporary Music Review, Jo Kondo wrote:

Needless to say, Takemitsu is among the most important composers in Japanese music history. He was also the first Japanese composer fully recognized in the west, and remained the guiding light for the younger generations of Japanese composers.59

Takemitsu’s Gengaku no tame no rekuiemu (Requiem for Strings, 1957) was well received by audiences and critics alike. The composer’s program notes describe “stream of sounds flowing through people and their world,” and also mentioned that parts of this stream were “produced by chance.”60 As musicologist Alex Ross wrote:

Stravinsky [1882-1971] happened to hear it [Requiem for Strings] during a trip to Japan; radio engineers played it for the great man by accident, and, when they were about to go back to the intended playlist, he asked them not to stop. Stravinsky praised the composer in interviews, and prizes and commissions from Western groups quickly followed.61

54 Burt, Takemitsu, 237.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
60 Havens. Radicals, 64.
By 1960, Takemitsu had written at least twenty-four works for instruments, chamber ensembles, orchestra, tape, broadcast or stage and another thirteen scores for movies. He criticized the rigid serial approach as “dangerous aspects” of twelve-tone technique that was “too mathematical, too geometrical, too intellectual” as he was branching into his more intuitive style of composition based on Japanese gardens and everyday life. Although Takemitsu would continue on his own musical journey, with seemingly accidental recognition from Igor Stravinsky, he was forever cemented into the psyche of the contemporary art music world.

1.8.3 Three-Person society (Sannin no Kai) (1953 – 1962)

Unlike Jikken Kōbō, Yasushi Akutagawa (1925-89), Toshirō Mayuzumi (1929-97) and Ikuma Dan (1924-2001) were the wealthy sons of the artistic elite who joined forces to produce multiple orchestral works. Active in the film industry at its post-war inception, they were more successful than Jikken Kōbō for attracting bigger audiences to their concerts, though the programming was more familiar to the Japanese public and less daring than Jikken Kōbō. The three members agreed to share the cost of hiring the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra to present their works when, typically, new music concerts were programmed for chamber ensembles that were more easily affordable. Their first concert in January 1954 featured works from each of the composers with each of them conducting their own works. The Three-Person Society would present five concerts in total, but their most successful concert was on April 2, 1958 with the premieres of Akutagawa’s Ellōra Symphony, Dan’s Symphonic Suite Journey Through Arabia, and Mayuzumi’s most celebrated work Nehan (Nirvana) Symphony. These works remain among the best known of the early post-war Japanese repertoire.

Mayuzumi was the first Japanese composer to write for prepared piano in 1957 with Pieces for Prepared Piano and Strings. Soon after, he began to use the NHK studios to analyze temple bells and to study traditional Japanese music, particularly shōmyō. Thus, he became very interested not only in the philosophy of Buddhism, but also the large Buddhist temple bell used for religious ceremonies and meditation. Mayuzumi analyzed hundreds of these temple bells and

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63 Havens, Radicals, 67.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 68.
determined their tone quality to be distinct from related Chinese temple bells. He recorded the bells and then analyzed the upper frequencies, or partials, over the fundamental pitch of the bell. He found that when using the given pitch C, for instance, the overtones would occur in ascending order, as follows:

G#, C#, D#, F, A#, D, E, F#, A, B

Most interestingly, C and G (Western tonic and dominant) never appear as overtones above the fundamental frequency.

He then divided the ten partials into two sets of five, each forming a pentatonic scale that, when modified, could be transformed into multiple reformations he used as the base pitch materials for his compositions. His profound work was revered by his peers. As Takemitsu wrote in 1995:

I have no criticism of Mayuzumi’s scientific analysis of the Buddhist gong [Japanese Temple Bowl] and his attempt to reduce it to musical terms. On the contrary I approve. While Mayuzumi’s article has a certain descriptive accuracy about it, there is something in the music that goes beyond the sound of the gong. That something is what I would call true expression, that special element that cannot be explained.66

Mayuzumi remained one of Japan’s foremost experimentalists long after other avant-garde composers began travelling a different path.

Akutagawa travelled extensively throughout Hungary, the Soviet Union, China and India after graduating from the Tokyo Academy of Music in 1947. He stated:

People must fight to improve their circumstances by challenging their natural, social, and political environments. There are many ways for each individual to do this, one by one; there is no single way. It’s absolutely essential for composers and performers to assert themselves according to their own lights.67

Ikuma Dan was best known for his opera Yūzura (Twilight Crane, 1952) based on five-tone melodies. By the time he passed away in 2001, Yūzura had been performed over six hundred

66 Takemitsu, Silence, 23.
67 Havens, Radicals, 69.
times. His style picked up from where Yamada left off and incorporated influences from Russian and Chinese folk music. In 1961 he stated:

> It’s not enough to write Japanese-sounding compositions using Western forms and harmonies. Those who have tried to do so have had no real or lasting success. The purpose of the composer, first of all, must be to write good music, and this we are not likely to have through mere rearrangement of traditional music for Western instruments. Something new, but at the same time fundamentally Japanese, must be created.\(^68\)

Mayuzumi, Hayasaka and especially Dan frequently turned to traditional Asian music in the 1950s for alternatives to their Western training.\(^69\) Until Mayuzumi began to pay attention to hōgaku in the late 1950s, Seiji Chōki (musicologist and professor at the University of Tokyo) argues that “most composers of contemporary music scorned hōgaku because of its nationalistic associations with wartime. Because they were trained in Western music, when they turned to hōgaku in the 1960s, they did so with entirely fresh eyes, causing quite a shock.”\(^70\) Another stimulus for renewed interest in hōgaku came from abroad: the composers John Cage (1912-92), Olivier Messiaen, Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007), and Lou Harrison (1917-2003) showed profound interest in Japanese aesthetics. When Cage, in particular, expressed an interest in hōgaku, Japanese composers began to re-think hōgaku and its potential, as did programmers at NHK.

By 1957, composers from the Jikken Kōbō experimental workshop and from the Three-Person Society joined together with other leaders in contemporary music to form Nijūseiki Ongaku Kenkyūjo (The Twentieth Century Music Institute) to promote all styles of contemporary music with a particular focus on serialism.\(^71\)

Other significant events followed:

- 1955 – The Tokyo Symphony Orchestra began including a Japanese work in every regular subscription program.

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\(^{68}\) Havens, *Radicals* 70.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 69.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 70.
• 1957 – The Japan Philharmonic began to immediately commission new works from Japanese composers.

• 1957 – The Twentieth Century Music Institute launched its annual contemporary music festival in Karuizawa.

1.8.4 The Goat Society (1953)

While the Three-Person Society was becoming established as a well-financed presenting organization, Hikaru Hayashi (1931-2012), Michio Mamiya (b.1929) and Yūzō Toyama (b.1931) wished to create a non-modernist people’s music (minzoku ongaku),72 and thus The Goat Society was born in 1953. As Hayashi explained, the work of the Goat Society, “half socially focused on folk music and half experimentally focused on musical composition, ... [was] mainly attracted to Russian composers and the avant-garde music of Central Europe...and like goats we consumed a lot of paper”.73 The first concert by the Goat Society presented completely uncontroversial works by Mamiya.

Hayashi trained at Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music from 1951-53, but dropped out to make a living in music, including writing works for stage and film. While both he and Mamiya drew on folk rhythms, literature, folklore, and children’s themes in their predominantly vocal compositions, Hayashi has written more than one hundred pieces for orchestra, ensembles and solo instruments, as well as several hundred vocal works and scores for at least 130 films. The composition for which he is most noted is Genbaku Shōkei (Little Landscapes of Hiroshima, 1958-2001).

Mamiya, who trained at Geidai between 1949 and 1952, explained that:

In the early 1950s, I focused entirely on European music, above all Bartók’s works evoking the folk tunes of Hungarian farmers and the Hungarian ballads and folk songs of Zoltán Kodály [1882-1967]. Then starting in 1955, the researcher Uchida Ruriko and I began studying folk songs from all over Japan, with the help of NHK’s extensive archive

72 Havens, Radicals, 166.
73 Ibid.
of folk music in its old Uchisaiwaichō offices, built up partly at the behest of the folklorist Yanagita Kunio [1875-1962].

The oldest recordings in the NHK archive dated only to the 1940s, but:

Because I grew up in Aomori, I knew the tunes from the northeast best. I then researched music all over the country, short of Okinawa, and learned that there were something like four or five thousand folk songs extant in Japan. Some have been lost, especially from rural areas.

Mamiya composed piano accompaniment for five series of songs between 1955 and 1965 using folk themes. The purest he found were work songs and others associated with daily life, especially those with “a great simple roughness.” Though Mamiya’s work was based primarily in folklorist tradition, his approach was innovative, and adaptational rather than preservist, creating new folk rhythms and melodies rather than just replicating existing ones. His work, *Concerto for Eight Kotos and Chamber Orchestra* (1957), scored for eight kotos, two flutes, oboe, bassoon, cello, double bass, four violas, and percussion, predated Takemitsu’s *November Steps* (1967) by ten years. Blending traditional instruments with Western instruments suited Mamiya’s folkloric intuition well, but few other avant-garde composers would follow suit.

### 1.8.5 Group Ongaku (1958)

Numerous other radical composers of the avant-garde emerged as the Group Ongaku was founded in 1958 by Takehisa Kosugi (b. 1938) and Shūkō Mizuno (b. 1934), two young composers from *Geidai*, who experimented in environmental composition in the form of sounds installations, improvisations, and electronic-action events. The group soon expanded to include Cheiko Shiomi (b. 1938), Mikio Tojima (b. 1937), Genichi Tsuge, Yumiko Tanno as well as Yasunao Tone (b. 1935). Kosugi’s electronic sound event for microphone, *Micro 1* (1961) spawned like-minded musicians to put on “anticoncerts” suggestive of the Neo-Dada anti-art movement and the Fluxus movement in New York, which had a pre-existing Japanese

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75 Ibid.  
76 Ibid., 139-140.
connection through Yoko Ono, who was at that time married to Toshi Ichiyanagi. Kosugi saw himself as a sound artist who believed that music developed from performative actions of the performers, and not only in sound: “Even when there is no sound, I believe this is part of the music.”

1.9 John Cage and Cage Shock (1962)

It’s important to note that the Group Ongaku pre-dates John Cage’s 1962 Japan arrival, where he and David Tudor (1926-96) presented seven concerts accompanied by Toshi Ichiyanagi, Yuji Takahashi (b.1938), Kenji Kobayashi, Mayuzumi Toshiro and Yoko Ono (b.1933) that had a profound impact on Japanese composers and the avant-garde arts, generally. Like the “re-importation” of “orientalism” by Debussy and Van Gogh fifty years earlier, the Japanese could see and hear their concepts of shingaku influence some of the most prevalent Western composers of the time. The impact of this visit had such a profound effect on the Japanese public that it was dubbed Kēji shokku (Cage Shock). The concerts included works by George Brecht (1926-2008), Takemitsu, Christian Wolff (b.1934), Cage, Ichiyanagi, Stockhausen and Michael von Biel (b.1937). Cage explained:

From a musical point of view, I think that what we played for them gave them the chance to discover a music that was their own — rather than twelve-tone music. Before our arrival, they had no alternative other than dodecaphony. Neo-classicism was not really accessible to them, because it would have meant a simple return to their classicism. In fact, our music, that is, the music David Tudor played for them, was the only music that could afford them an appreciation analogous to their appreciation of traditional Japanese music, something they couldn’t find in the different modern musics. So we deserve a small part of the credit for the fact that contemporary Japanese music features elements similar, although not identical, to those of ancient Japanese music.

And the feeling from most Japanese composers was mutual, as evidenced by Takemitsu when he

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stated in 1988:

I must express my deep and sincere gratitude to John Cage. The reason for this is that in my own life, in my own development, for a long period I struggled to avoid being “Japanese” to avoid “Japanese” qualities. It was largely through my contact with John Cage that I came to recognize the value of my own tradition. In his own way, John Cage was influenced by Zen through his encounters with the Zen master Daisetsu Suzuki. It doesn’t really matter what came first or who was influenced by whom. What is important in the long run is that it is possible for us to understand each other.79

In his memorial to Cage, Takemitsu said:

From Cage I learned life — or I should say, how to live and the fact that music is not removed from life. This simple, clear fact has been forgotten. Art and life have become separated, and specialists are concerned with the skeletons of methodology. Aesthetics led us to music without any relationship to live sound, mere symbols on paper. John Cage shook the foundations of Western music and, with almost naive clarity, he evoked silence as the mother of sound. Through John Cage, sound gained its freedom. His revolution consisted of overthrowing the hierarchy in art.80

However, in an interview published March 8, 2013, in post (New York’s Museum of Modern Art online magazine) “Notes on Modern and Contemporary Art Around the Globe,” Yasunao Tone, an original member of Group Ongaku claims:

We thought everyone in the music world was a bunch of old fogeys. You know, the phrase “John Cage shock” was hogwash they made up. On the other hand, there was a man named Hewell Tircuit (1931-2010) who wrote a music column for the Japan Times. I think he still lives in Japan. He said what Cage was doing was something that had been developing in Japan for quite a while, and I’m sure he was making a veiled reference to Group Ongaku. So, the whole notion of “John Cage shock” was a fiction! Cage’s music and ideas weren’t

79 Takemitsu, Contemporary, p.199  
80 Takemitsu, Silence, p.137
such a shock—Japanese people accepted them with relative ease. After all, Cage himself said that Japan was the first country to recognize and understand what he was doing.81

1.10 After the Avant-Garde (1960)

The issue of alterity — cultural otherness as a concept, construct and reciprocal perception — came to fruition with Japanese composers in the 1960s. As Takemitsu stated in Confronting Silence:

As one who has dealt with Western music with great respect … I have arrived at a great contradiction, which is unresolvable, and which is even enlarging. I am not a composer who represents Japan, not even a “Japanese” composer. There is an advantage for a Japanese composer who has studied modern Western music — music from a completely different culture. That is, he can view his own Japanese tradition from within but with another’s eyes.82

By then, Takemitsu and his fellow vanguard composers, Ichiyanagi and Yuasa, freely employed Western musical vocabulary to write alternative music that was thoroughly contemporary, possibly even post-Western and anti-modernist, and also grounded in the specific musical culture of their everyday environment. Speaking in 2002, Ichiyanagi explained how this creative process was deliberate and spanned decades of progress in the Japanese art music tradition:

Nearly all composers of contemporary music in Japan since 1950 started by writing Western-style works, partly because Western music dominated musical education and partly because of the general cultural prestige of Europe. Only in the 1960s did we begin to understand the importance of traditional Japanese and Asian arts. We began to look at the East Asian arts through our Western-trained eyes using Western logic and analytical approaches to help identify the concepts behind our indigenous arts. Without Western methods, it would be impossible to find the principles inherent in the East Asian arts,

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82 Takemitsu, Silence, 142-143.
because when you study a traditional instrument or visual medium, you merely imitate the teacher, not question the underlying rules. Traditional teaching uses no words; Western training gives us the words with which to understand East Asian concepts. So one has to go through Western culture to understand East Asia. This was not possible 50 years ago.\textsuperscript{83}

Takemitsu’s \textit{November Steps} is one of the most famous works from Japan in the twentieth century. After its 1967 premiere by Leonard Bernstein with the New York Philharmonic in Carnegie Hall, Seiji Osawa recorded it with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the recording briefly rose to the third best-selling album in the United States. Takemitsu took a very different approach to incorporating \textit{hōgaku} with Western music; he alternated between Western and Japanese instruments without any attempt to integrate them. He stated, “I will keep the ongoing status of my work together, not by resolving the contradictions between the two traditions but by highlighting the contradictions and confronting them.”\textsuperscript{84} Interestingly, Takemitsu used tone colours, timbre, and sound contrasts found in \textit{hōgaku} but did not include Japanese scales, melodies or structural elements, let alone folk or pop music,\textsuperscript{85} and he kept the Eastern instruments largely separated from the Western.

Yuasa would compose seven works for \textit{shakuhachi} and Western instruments between 1967-90. The inclusion of Eastern instruments is not looking backwards, however, but is in fact looking forward from a modernist perspective, as Yuasa explained in 2001:

We composers began using Asian instruments because they opened up alternatives to modern music, not because of some renewed interest in traditionalism. Instruments from Japan, China, and Southeast Asia offer a different approach to how you use your body in producing sound. This bodily discipline is found also in dance and calligraphy. The importance of Asian music to us composers is precisely that there is no unity in the Asian tradition, no single Asian musical value. Modernism began with the Renaissance and terminates in globalism, in which Western instruments and composing methods become uniform, universal norms. Against this tendency, we composers in Asia seek diversity; we seek alternatives to the globalization found in modernism. Various places in Asia such as

\textsuperscript{83} Havens, \textit{Radicals}, 165.
\textsuperscript{84} Takemitsu, \textit{Silence}, 197.
\textsuperscript{85} Havens, \textit{Radicals}, 164.
China and Thailand open up manifold possibilities. This is Asia’s contribution to world music.\textsuperscript{86}

Between 1966 and 1998, Ichiyanagi also implemented similar concepts by writing at least forty-eight works using Japanese instruments and also incorporating a uniquely Japanese sense of space and time, as he stated in 2002:

Europeans see music as the art of time, painting as the art of space. In the traditional East Asian arts, time and space interpenetrate each other. Yet for a time after World War Two, even shakuhachi players developed a Western sense of timing, because music education in the schools was Western. They also felt an inferiority complex toward the West, which is too bad. I’m trying to promote what we didn’t have before [in the 1950s and 1960s]: to bring the idea of space into my music. By this I mean not just physical space – the arrangement of the performers on the stage or the use of strolling musicians – but something more fundamental in context: making each performer freer and more independent. This may have been common in traditional music concerts in the past.\textsuperscript{87}

Composers of this era extended their perspectives beyond time and space to the timbre, gesture, language and breathing found in hōgaku. Rhythms are based on “mental breathing” similar to breath and time in both classical Japanese dance and nō drama.\textsuperscript{88} Yuasa makes it clear that the traditions of the past are not a means of ideological notions or that Asian music provides a way for Japanese composers to circumvent and contradict Western ideals. Instead, Asian music, including hōgaku, is a forward path, beyond the concept of modernism in the twentieth-century that is firmly embodied to the local, tangible environment, from which the Japanese composers emerged. The Japan of the 1960s was just as apt and able to produce contemporary art music as any other region in the world. Yuasa also discovered ways of thought and perception in hōgaku that were not available to him in Western music.

So then I found compensating techniques to express Japanese ideas of time and space. I didn’t need a pentatonic scale or traditional instruments; instead I turned to the structure of


\textsuperscript{87} Havens, \textit{Radicals}, 173.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 269.
Japanese ideas and feelings about time and space. Even using Western instruments and electronic music, I can develop these traditional ideas. *Ma* is best understood as “timing and spacing.” Silence is not static or vacant but has intensity. Spacing is like the constant gap between moving *kendo* swords, called *maai*, or the interval between moving elements in a kinetic sculpture by Alexander Calder [American, 1898-1976].

Commercial art proved lucrative for some of Japan’s best avant-garde painters in the 1960s, as did the film industry for many composers. Takemitsu wrote a total of ninety-three film scores and over half of these in the 1960s. His early works from that decade were more experimental than the sensual, aesthetic, and more serene works which emerged after 1973, influenced by his fascination with Japanese gardens as well as works by Debussy, Ravel, Brahms and Gershwin. Additionally, these productive decades of Takemitsu’s life, the 1960s-80s, mostly coincided with the exploration of *nihonjin-ron*, a core conceptualization of ideas and theories about Japanese cultural uniqueness that informed many kinds of public and private discourse.

### 1.11 Other Presenters

Similar to many other cities across the world, the new music community in Tokyo consisted of a collection of musicians who would perform for many performing arts organizations; often these concerts were special projects funded by the NHK, private corporations or self-produced by the musicians and composers. Although the work of groups like Sound Space Arc and Group *Ongaku* are documented, there is room for further research into the activities of other significant concert presenters, performing arts organizations and producers. When I asked my interview participants about which organizations were active when they were studying at university and later as professionals, they frequently had difficulty recalling the names of the groups, but were able to recall which composers organized and administrated the concerts. For instance, Michiko Takahashi stated that groups like *Jikken Kōbō* and Group *Ongaku* were “the source” and that she rarely attended concerts because “In fact, I was playing in them already. They found me as a player, and they asked me to play in the ensembles.” When I asked her further about specific

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90 Ibid., 185.
91 Takahashi, Michiko. Interview by the Author. Tokyo, JP, Nov. 14, 2014
92 Ibid.
organizations in which she had the opportunity to play, she said, “A variety of groups run by Maki Ishii, Toshiro Mayuzumi, Yoshiro Irino, Toru Takemitsu…pretty much everyone from that generation.” Takahashi’s statement clearly demonstrates the extent of the community-driven direction and administration from so many leading composers and performers that emerged in the age of rapid growth, funded by institutions such as the NHK and private corporations. As Takahashi stated:

I consider the period from 1950 to 2000 to be the golden age of 20th century music in Japan. That’s an era that amazing composers kept arising, and at the beginning, it was most exciting as we explored all new things.

It is not possible to disassociate the importance of both private and public funding to this exceptionally productive time in contemporary Japanese ideology. Particularly the role of the NHK, as I will discuss in more detail in chapter two, and its activity in commissioning, presenting, recording and broadcasting. Much of the funding for public institutions was initially through the American government, but also reinforced by programming at the American Cultural Centre, as composer Katsuhiro Tsubonoh explained to me:

I mostly would go to hear orchestral works with the NHK, and works at the American Cultural Centre - I remember seeing Roger Reynolds and liked him very much.

Importantly, this activity was not a Japan-wide phenomenon. In fact most, if not all, of the activity was originated in Tokyo, as Niimi explains:

In Tokyo we have many concerts for contemporary pieces. This is a very special city. In Nagoya, Osaka or Kyoto, Fukuoka, those are very big cities but they really don’t have concerts for contemporary pieces and no one goes; they are very traditional, classic. So, when I was a student I went to many concerts for contemporary music.

Another significant organization emerged in the 1978, directed and conducted by a remarkably talented composer Yoshio Hachimura (1938-1985), whose marimba works I will discuss later in

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93 Takahashi, Michiko. Interview by the Author. Tokyo, JP, Nov. 14, 2014
94 Ibid.
95 Tsubonoh, Katsuhiro. Interview with the Author. Tokyo, JP, Nov. 15, 2014
96 Niimi, Tokuhide. Interview with the Author. Tokyo, JP, Nov. 12, 2014
chapter four. _Vents d’Orients_ was a collective with Hachimura and other composers (with Sumire Yoshihara as percussionist), as Fukushi explains:

Hachimura created _Vents d’Orients_ in 1978 with several composers and several performers and I was one of the composers, and Hachimura wanted to conduct. When Hachimura was a masters student, I was in the bachelors program; he conducted my music at the university. In fact he would conduct the works of all the famous Japanese composers of the time. That’s why I am still so interested in Hachimura.\(^\text{97}\)

As in many other thriving art scenes around the world, it was shortly after this time that funding began to decrease for these types of presenters, and organizations began to produce smaller projects for smaller audiences; opportunities for both composers and performers changed. The significant shift in international economies in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and a drastic recession in Japan beginning in 1989 affected general funding of contemporary music creation. I will discuss the role of the NHK more in chapter two and in chapter five, shifts in culture and funding models in the late 1980s.

### 1.12 Conclusions

Unlike the Japanese composers of the early twentieth-century, Takemitsu, Ichiyanagi, Yuasa and the generations that followed tapped into _hōgaku_ and traditional concepts of space and sound in a contemporary avant-garde method without succumbing to nationalistic ideologies; they did not collectively share any particular philosophy on incorporating Japanese traditions. Instead, they expressed musical ideas from multiple origins, through a wide and varied palette of techniques, so that the entire body of Japanese contemporary art music is fundamentally Japanese, only in that the composers are all Japanese and highly skilled. The depth and range of influence in their work is both local and global, so that each composer is unique, and a culmination of countless influences. As composer Yasuo Sueyoshi explains:

By 1970, many of these composers who studied overseas returned to Japan to become professors, and they introduced new music to Japan. Also, many new things were introduced to Japan at that time through broadcasting, television, radio both AM and FM,

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\(^{97}\) Fukushi, Norio. Interview with the Author. Tokyo, JP, Nov. 15, 2014
and later records (albums). We also had exposure to many many various documents, so it was very much a new experience to hear and to experience new music. In the middle of the 1970’s, I was already the director of the *Geidai Ongaku* – the society of the contemporary music in Japan JSCM. At that time, we had plenty of styles. Even now, if someone respects a god like John Cage, someone respects Olivier Messiaen, someone else Jean Sibelius or Prokofiev, many various styles are all welcomed. However performing musicians demanded to play, at that time, various styles of music. They wished to broaden their perspectives and felt it was necessary to play some new music, and many styles of new music, especially percussionists.⁹⁸

It could be argued that in coming generations, Takemitsu, through his extraordinary international reach, would define a model for future Japanese composers. The spectrum of vision from the next generation of Japanese composers coupled with ample funding from public and private corporations led to a prodigious period of art music creation in Japan, with a vast array of unique voices from composers like Akira Miyoshi, Minoru Miki (1930-2011), Jo Kondo, Yoshio Hachimura, Maki Ishii (1936-2003) and many others. Perhaps Yuasa spoke best for an entire generation of Japanese composers in the 1960s when he said: I define my own identity as based on Japanese culture while, at the same time, maintaining a global point of view as a human being on this planet.⁹⁹

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⁹⁸ Yasuo Sueyoshi, Interview with the author. Tokyo, JP, November 13, 2014

Chapter 2: Emergence of the Xylophone and Marimba (1804-1987)

The rapid growth of the marimba in Japan is one of the most explosive and evolutionary nationalistic irruptions of any musical instrument in the twentieth-century. The American marimba migrated to Japan in 1950 with Christian missionaries who played simple arrangements of classical repertoire prior to their sermons. Twenty-five years later, the Japanese marimba migrated back to America as a revered medium for the exploration of contemporary ideologies in music. Learned percussionists everywhere know that the Japanese marimba had a profound impact on contemporary marimba repertoire internationally, but few know how or why – in fact, many will mention only one performer, Keiko Abe, and perhaps a piece she wrote or a piece she premiered. But this is a simplistic observation on a much larger development that involved hundreds of people. In this chapter I will discuss many contributing factors as to why the marimba phenomenon emerged in post-war Japan; firstly, the emergence of the marimba in the Americas and the emergence of the xylophone in Japan, the influence of virtuoso Japanese xylophonists, the migration of the marimba to Japan in 1950 and the subsequent competitive manufacturing of marimba instruments.

2.1 The Marimba in the Americas

A marimba or a marimba-like instrument, originated several times throughout the course of human history; from ancient Egypt, the middle ages of Eastern Europe, and South-East Asia. The modern twentieth-century Western xylophone and marimba, both most commonly constructed with rosewood bars, are largely the same thing (from the Greek: xylo-wood, phone-to sound), however the bars are tuned slightly differently so that the xylophone’s first harmonic over the fundamental is an octave and a fifth, whereas the marimba is a double octave – hence the marimba has warmer and less projectile sound. The marimba was first introduced to the Americas via the African slave trade to Central America in the sixteenth-century. The indigenous people of the Guatemalan region took to the instrument quickly and adapted the

100 Rebecca Kite, Keiko Abe, A Virtuosic Life – Her musical career and the concert marimba (Leesburg, VA: GP Percussion, 2007), 131.
design to include a tempered diatonic scale. It was not until 1894 that Sebastián Hurtado, Mariano Valverde, Rosendo Barrios and Corazon Borres built extraordinarily high quality chromatic marimbas. Hurtado’s sons all became virtuosos on these instruments and had remarkable success touring throughout Central America and Mexico as the “Hurtado Brothers Royal Marimba Band”. In 1912, their first American tour began in New Orleans where they were slated to perform concerts for five months, however, the concerts proved so successful that they remained for six years and recorded thirty-three albums for Columbia Records between 1915-16.

During this same time span, John Calhoun Deagan (1853-1934), like Hurtado, had emerged as a talented builder of finely tuned percussion instruments based in Chicago. Born in 1853, he joined the U.S. Navy as a teenager serving on the USS Brooklyn and while stationed in English waters, took shore leave to study at the University of London where a series of lectures by a German physicist Hermann Von Helmholtz (1821-1894) aroused his interest in the science of sound. Deagan was an amateur clarinetist peeved by the lack of quality and poorly tempered nature of the glockenspiel. By 1880, he was creating well-tempered glockenspiels and bells but that proved to be a problem because, at the time, there was no universally accepted centre of pitch. In 1910, he approached the American Federation of Musicians at its annual convention to adopt ‘A=440’ as the standard universal pitch for orchestras and bands, thus settling a question that had long agitated musical circles. Shortly thereafter A at 440 vibrations per second, was accepted by the United States federal government in 1914, the same year that J.C. Deagan Inc. was established in Chicago.

Fuelled by the raging success of the Hurtado brothers and many imitation acts, as well as by families who wished to provide a musical education for their children but could not afford a piano, Deagan’s production of three and four octave xylophones on basic metallic stands (without wheels) increased. Soon the xylophone’s popularity exploded with Vaudeville, Jazz and Ragtime performers including Red Norvo, The Green Brothers (George Hamilton Green and Joe Green), William Dorn, Eddy Rubsam, Sam Herman, Teddy Brown and Harry Breuer. But

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101 Kite, Abe, 131.
102 Many of these recordings can be heard here. Of particular note is the control over roll speed, or tremolo, which is uniformly virtuosic: http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/artists/detail/id/4/
the marimba was still regarded, in general, as a novelty instrument, as an exhibition of performance technique and as a progenitor of Latin exoticism.

As vaudeville died out with the invention of the moving picture, marimba bands were the predominant voice of many silent films including *La Fiesta* (Vitatone, Warner Brothers, 1926) and later *Tropic Holiday* (Paramount, 1938), nominated that year at the Academy Awards for best original score. In February 1929, Pennsylvanian Clair Omar Musser organized and directed an ‘all-girl’ marimba ensemble with twenty-five members, and in the same year, became a chief designer at Deagan. For the 1933-34 World’s Fair titled “A Century of Progress International Exposition”, Musser organized a Marimba Orchestra. Deagan produced one hundred specially made marimbas for the performances, each marked with a plaque on the front with a serial number and the player’s name.104 Musser's next venture The International Marimba Symphony Orchestra, formed in 1935, was destined for an ill-fated European tour. The group's luggage (including twenty tons of marimbas) was impounded in Paris after one hundred marimbists, under Musser's direction, ran out of money for travel costs and accommodation (primarily the cost of shipping the marimbas). The Deagan Company had to wire Musser $10,000 to get all of the marimbas “out of hock”.105 Due to the repertoire presented on these many tours, this orchestra continued to reinforce the stigma that the marimba was best-suited to play arrangements of famous orchestral works – in this case Wagner’s Tannhauser and Bizet’s Carmen. Three members of this marimba orchestra would go on to make significant contributions to the marimba: Ruth Stuber Jeanne and Jack Connors as soloists, and Lawrence L. Lacour, who as I will explain in Chapter 2.4, introduced the marimba to Japan in 1950. Although Musser did little to present the marimba as a serious medium for contemporary art, he composed five etudes and two preludes for the marimba which helped to expand technique on the instrument – these works became very famous among percussionists but were ultimately derivative of piano works from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; similar to works by Chopin, Debussy and Rachmaninoff. Musser also started a successful manufacturing company which still thrives today. He wrote fifty-three works for the marimba and a selection of these etudes proved very popular for decades with American marimbists in the development of

facility and technique. These select works were often quite beautiful and inventive, but would never venture beyond pedagogical works for marimba students and enthusiasts (see Appendix 1).

The first concerto for marimba emerged in the United States in 1940, commissioned by Frédérique Petrides and the “Orhesterette Classique” (a women’s orchestra from New York City with thirty members). Petrides wished to commission a concerto written for each member\(^\text{106}\) including one for the timpanist Ruth Stuber Jeanne. Jeanne had a marimba from her days touring with the Musser Orchestra and asked Petrides for a marimba commission instead. Paul Creston was a revered composer on the New York scene and Petrides soon awarded him the commission. He would create a conservative work in three movements – fast, slow, fast – the first and third movements included dazzling two-mallet technique, and the second slow movement using four-mallet chorale-style writing with tremolo. Although students continue to perform the concerto today, it is highly derivative of popular violin showcase repertoire in the tradition of Paganini and Sarasate. Perhaps appropriately after its premiere, a New York Times critic wrote “The marimba has its limitations as a solo instrument, but Mr. Creston wrote well within them”\(^\text{107}\) (see Appendix 2).

In the 1940s, Jack Connors, the principal percussionist of the St. Louis Symphony travelled multiple times to California with a marimba in tow to convince composer Darius Milhaud (1892-1974) to write a concerto. Connors explained to Milhaud that he wanted to switch back and forth between the marimba and vibraphone in the concerto. Soon, Connors received his wish and Milhaud’s *Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone* was premiered by the St. Louis Symphony with Connors in 1948. This was a significant development for the marimba in the United States because the premiere was with a major U.S. orchestra and was well attended. The work was still highly derivative of existing repertoire concerto repertoire for violin and piano, and the review in the St. Louis dispatch stated “a generous measure of novelty – charming though slight”\(^\text{108}\).

There were many other works that proved popular with US marimbists; namely by composers Alfred Fissinger and Robert Kurka. Although Steve Reich would pursue the marimba as a chamber music instrument in a radical way in the early 1970s, no significant American or


\(^{108}\)Wallace, *Marimba*, 21. (See Kastner, 21.)
European composers pursued the marimba as a solo instrument at that time. In Japan, however, the marimba had achieved status as a legitimate solo instrument by the late 1960s.

2.2 The Marimba in Japan

Non-Western xylophones were first introduced to Japan by way of South-East Asia (1600), northward through Thailand, into China (1620) and finally, with the practice of Shingaku, to Japan around 1800.\(^{109}\) Shortly thereafter, in a \textit{kabuki} play by Tsuruya Namboku (1755-1829) titled \textit{Tenjiku Tokubei kokubanashi} (1804), a boat-shaped xylophone\(^{110}\) was first used by a character portraying a blind mendicant monk, deploiring the shallow ways of wealthy elitists and dispersing sage advice on the masses. The character as well as the instrument proved very popular – so much so, in fact, that the play was repeated regularly and became a staple of the \textit{kabuki} repertoire, and subsequently the boat-shaped xylophone was permanently included in off-stage music (\textit{gesa ongaku}) for \textit{kabuki} theatre.\(^{111}\) In 1853, Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858) of the American navy entered Edo (now Tokyo) Bay and demanded trade with Japan (accompanied by an armada of four armed ships and military with marching bands).\(^{112}\) The Edo period was soon over and the Meiji restoration began – a period of rapid growth when Japan emulated Western economic systems, militaristic practices and general philosophies. In an effort to quell government reprisals and terrorist attacks against agrarian revolution, the Japanese federal government established a nation-wide public education system. Shuji Isawa (1851-1917), with the help of Bostonian Luther Whiting Mason (1828-1896), established the \textit{Shōgakkō shōka-shū} (Primary School Songbook) and incorporated the Western seven-note (diatonic) scale and abandoned the five-note traditional Japanese scale.\(^{113}\) As a tool for teaching this scale to

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \(^{109}\) Mutsuko Fujii “The Development of Music for the Xylophone and Marimba in Japan” PAS Website Fujii Database Vol. 3 Translation: Philip Flavin, Ph.D., 2005, 3.
\item \(^{110}\) The boat shape refers to a curved or concave keyboard construction. The mallets for which were constructed with the baleen, or bristles in whales mouths, stranded together. The mallet itself had a curve “\textit{J}” like handle with mallet “head” formed on the tip of the tail of the \textit{J} – Fujii, Mutsuko. Interview with the Author. Tokyo,JP,Nov.13, 2014.
\item \(^{111}\) Fujii, \textit{Vol. 3}, 2.
\item \(^{112}\) Hane, Perez, \textit{Modern Japan}, 64.
\item \(^{113}\) May, \textit{Influence}, 59 : “This matter of the 7 note western scale clashing with the 5 note Japanese scale was a constant concern. Mason never pressed the issue until challenged by the court musicians to provide reasons why the western scale was better. Mason told them of the seven colours of the solar spectrum, and then asked the physics professor at the university to demonstrate by the spectrum, tuning forks, sirens and other acoustic instruments that
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children, the ministry of education ordered dozens of ‘boat-shaped’ xylophones, much like the modern Orff instruments used in musical education today. These instruments quickly developed into less elaborate, and mass manufactured ‘desk-top’ xylophones (without resonators) on which many young students could express themselves creatively. Soon books would follow on technique complete with etudes, written by Yoshio Hoshide, Suiho Yoshikawa, Kameyoshi Itō, Sadao Iwai, Seiji Hiraoka, Minoru Fukurai and Yoshihisa Mizuno. Although the United States was firmly rooted in European traditions and Western culture, and Japan had only very limited exposure to Western music for a few decades, it is interesting to note that xylophone culture was remarkably similar in both countries in the early twentieth century. By 1920, in both the United States and Japan, the xylophone was used during the silent film era. Although the piano was a preferred instrument to accompany silent film, often theatres either did not have a piano, or were too small to house a piano, and the xylophone being relatively transportable, was an accepted compromise.

Yoichi Hiraoka (1907-1981) was born in Hyogo to an extremely wealthy family that was directly related to the Tokogawa clan that reigned during the Edo period. When Hiraoka was 12, he first encountered a xylophone at the intermission between two films at Konparu-kan, a movie theatre formerly located in Ginza. He soon purchased a 2.5-octave xylophone from Kyōeki shōsha, the present day Nihon Gakki in Ginza. Within a year, he had arranged over thirty pieces for the xylophone on wide range of traditional Japanese and classically Western styles of music. On his first recital, he performed *Mocking Bird Fantasy, The Golden Wedding Jubilee* and *Ziguenerweisen* (the showpiece for violin by Pablo de Sarasate). The recital was well received and soon he released twelve records on the Polydor label. On the recommendation of the director of the New York Philharmonic, Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957), Hiraoka held his first concert abroad at the New York Town Hall in 1936. The day after the recital the New York Times included an extremely positive review of his concert. The next year, he gave a recital in Carnegie Hall in which the New York Philharmonic appeared, and soon after was deemed “King of the Xylophone” by the New York Times. He hosted a morning program on NBC radio until 1942, during which time he made over 4000 broadcasts. With war looming, Hiraoka’s career

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115 Ibid., 10.
in the United States ended and he returned to Japan to act as a pedagogue for, as I will explain in Chapter Three, a select group of emerging percussionists.

Another significant early progenitor of the xylophone (and later the marimba) in Japan was Ei’ichi Asabuki (1909-1993). In 1923, at the age of 13, he heard a recording by American xylophonist William H. Leitz (1900-1973) of the William Tell Overture by Rossini. Like Hiraoka, he first purchased a Japanese made desktop xylophone, with a 2.5-octave range and shortly thereafter, purchased an U.S. made Deagan 4-octave (model 872) xylophone from Chicago. He composed his first work The Beauty from Karuizawa, op. 1 (1929) at the age of 19 and would go on to compose over a hundred more works in his lifetime. In 1951 he was employed by Asahi Broadcasting (ABC in Japan) to perform “Penguin-Time” for a Sunstar toothpaste commercial that was produced by the Shionogi Corporation. His performance was so popular that he was asked to perform a fifteen-minute xylophone solo at 7:15 am every morning, including Sundays, holidays and New Years Day for five years until 1957.\textsuperscript{117} Although the broadcast originated in Osaka, it became so popular that it was soon broadcast nation-wide. Eventually he and his xylophone became regular fixtures in Japanese post-war culture, and by 1953 he had received over one hundred requests for recitals across Japan with national televised performances on NHK.\textsuperscript{118}

At the end of the war, Japan was left in ruins and began to experience a period of unparalleled rapid growth under the auspices of U.S. occupying forces from 1945 to 1952. The entertainment industry was particularly important, and until 1952 had been overseen by Americans, and thus, well funded. Due to the insular nature of the Japanese language and culture, all of the television shows and radio programs had to be homegrown and without importation (still much like today). As a showman with a marketable talent and acumen for business, Asabuki was very successful and soon, some of his students would be as well.

The Japanese federal government included the study of singing and instrumental music in school music classes by enacting basic education and school education laws in 1953. Certain desktop xylophone companies emerged and received contracts with the Ministry of Education, the first of which was the Miyawaka Research Centre at Japan Wood Enterprise LTD. founded by the

\textsuperscript{117} Fujii, \textit{Vol. 3.}, 11.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
managing director of Bridgestone Tires, Miyakawa Takeshi. The minister of education, Okabe Nagakage, presented Miyawaka with a Deagan xylophone in 1947, and asked Miyawaka to increase production adhering to the Deagan specifications. At that time, Deagan xylophones used rosewood from Brazil or Guatemala (often from 400-500 year old trees), but the cost for Miyawaka to ship this wood to Japan made production costs too high. He tested various types of wood found in Japan and determined that Betula schmidtii Regel (of the birch family), produced superior sound.\(^{119}\)

Making xylophones was a booming business – Miyawaka and other manufacturers were asked to create thousands of xylophones a month\(^{120}\) and even then could not keep up with production with the many schoolchildren who wished for one at home as well as in their classrooms. This, in addition to Asabuki’s radio broadcasts, is the primary reason the general Japanese public was familiar with the xylophone repertoire in the decades to come. In Chapter three, I will discuss the phenomenal careers of four marimba virtuosos, Keiko Abe, Michiko Takahashi, Mutsuko Fujii and Sumire Yoshihara, all of whom I interviewed in November, 2014. But prior to a brief overview of their life’s work, I will discuss their relationship to Asabuki and Hiraoka.

### 2.3 Asabuki, Hiraoka and Xylophone Culture in Japan

The influence of Asabuki and Hiraoka in Japanese post-war mainstream media was enormous, but the historical context of the xylophone introduced in the post-Meiji period and then re-introduced in the post-war education systems is equally significant. This is most evident in the impact these events had on the next generation of performers in the 1960s and 1970s. Sumire Yoshihara is the most prolific and versatile freelance percussionist in Tokyo. She has a career spanning five decades, and is still extraordinarily active. Though she never studied with Asabuki or Hiraoka, when I asked her why the marimba is so popular in Japan, she said: “The principal reason that any marimba player exists in Japan is in thanks to Ei’chi Asabuki and Yoichi Hiraoka.”\(^{121}\)

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\(^{119}\) Fujii, *Vol. 3*, 5.

\(^{120}\) Fujii, *Vol. 2*, 2.

\(^{121}\) Sumire Yoshihara, interview with the author, Tokyo, JP, Nov. 12, 2014.
Many marimba players and percussionists had lessons with Asabuki who was the principal pedagogical influence on the general xylophone playing community and served as the first president of the Japan Xylophone Society, but he was perhaps by definition, a businessman first. As Michiko Takahashi explains:

Ei’chi Asabuki was already in the family who owned a really established company, and a really wealthy company. It was family run and he became president of that company and was just playing marimba as a hobby and an educator as a side-business… Asabuki wasn’t an artist who just focused on marimba, it was just part of his big business. I think Asabuki was more an educator and Hiraoka was more an artist, always active. There were always many students around: I, Keiko Abe…my generation did very well, all Asabuki students.122

Most interesting to me, this comes from the one and only long time student of Yoichi Hiraoka. When Hiraoka returned to Japan after his famed career in New York City, he was highly respected and very wealthy, living in the most affluent neighbourhood in Tokyo. As Takahashi explained to me:

[Hiraoka] used to live in the middle of a very expensive and exclusive residential area right in the middle of Roppongi [Tokyo]. The house doesn’t exist anymore, but I used to go there every week.123

Takahashi studied with Asabuki between the ages of ten to thirteen, but after she wished to study with Hiraoka. She explained: “Oh, he was like a superstar! Even from long before I was born.”124 When I asked her why Hiraoka would take only her as a student, she said:

My father went to Yoichi directly, and begged him to take me. Yoichi said “Okay, let’s give two months trial and if she passes then I will teach her.” And I passed. [He would teach me] maybe once a week or more according to his recital schedule. He was very busy, but whenever he was available, he would teach me.125

Takahashi continued to study with Hiraoka for approximately six years:

122 Takahashi interview, 2014.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
…until I was in second year university. After that, my interest switched toward contemporary music and Yoichi Hiraoka did not cover that repertoire, so I went into self-teaching and self-discovery.\textsuperscript{126}

Although Hiraoka took only Takahashi as a private student, he did, at least on occasion, listen to other students. Keiko Abe explains an encounter with Hiraoka that would alter the nature of her playing, and that would have an impact on her career to this day:

Yoichi Hiraoka generally did not take students; he didn’t like to teach. But I kept phoning him and bugging him and he said “Okay, one lesson”. So I played for him \textit{Eine Kleine Nachtmusik} [Mozart]. He had a Deagan xylophone, which he used for his concerts and it had very thick bars for a xylophone, and I played “dum, dum dum” \textit{[makes gestures of tremolos with her hands as if playing the melody from Mozart]} “NO!” [said Hiraoka], and I played “dum dum dum” \textit{[gestures again]} – I tried to move more – and he said “no, no”. I thought “why not, why not?” \textit{[shaking and holding her head]}. And I thought “Maybe, my touch was too soft” \textit{so I played “Bang!” \textit{[gestures hard hit on the xylophone]}} and he said “Okay”. That was the moment that I realized that xylophone and marimba are completely different instruments. That’s when I decided that I needed to invent a technique and approach of playing the marimba softly.\textsuperscript{127}

By 1960 Miyagawa opened The Tokyo \textit{Hatchōbori} Marimba Service Centre, which housed the Lacour Deagan marimbas, and was eventually used by Hiraoka but mainly Asabuki for teaching and rehearsing. Additionally, in 1950 Asabuki founded the Tokyo Xylophone Club, and (as previously mentioned) served as its first president with Hiraoka serving as advisor.\textsuperscript{128} It was in the Miyagawa studio where Asabuki would have an impact on hundreds of xylophone and marimba players for generations to come. Many of the most prominent marimba soloists studied with Asabuki including Keiko Abe who studied there with him between 1953-1955 and played for him on a three-octave (F3-F6) Miyagawa marimba.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{126}Takahashi interview, 2014.
\textsuperscript{127}Keiko Abe, interview with the author, Tokyo, JP, Nov. 12, 2014.
\textsuperscript{128}Fujii, \textit{Vol. 3}, 13.
\textsuperscript{129}Abe interview, 2014.
He already had a lot of students, maybe 20 or so, but that’s part of the Tokyo Xylophone Association, and now that association has over 5000 people in it. But back then, there were fewer people interested.\footnote{Abe interview, 2014.}

Asabuki’s role as an educator is widely known within the Japanese music community. As he initiated the Tokyo Xylophone Association, many members would join and his teaching increased and many of these students were exposed to the marimba in that studio for the first time. As composer Jo Kondo explains:

So many kids were studying xylophone. Not necessarily in elementary school but as a specialist; there were really quite a few xylophone players. Then, I think, from xylophone to marimba, it’s not that big a step. I think that was the background.\footnote{Kondo interview, 2014.}

Sueyoshi explains the first time he saw a marimba and xylophone was in the studio at NHK where Asabuki was playing:

Asabuki’s music was broadcast frequently across Japan to a large audience which became familiar with the xylophone. Asabuki was a popular name and the musical style of the xylophone was already known by most Japanese people. So we had thought the marimba is a big xylophone. So we thought a solo marimba player would play like a grand xylophone.\footnote{Sueyoshi interview 2014.}

Asabuki’s influence on the radio is remembered to this day by all of the subjects I interviewed, and as a pedagogue he had the furthest reach into the next generation of performers. But, to compare Asabuki and Hiraoka is futile: their interests and career trajectories were very different. Whereas Asabuki tended to arrange popular classical music for many students to play in xylophone and marimba orchestras, Hiraoka was a solo artist, renowned for his beautiful touch and phrasing and his very unique “upstroke” style of playing which fascinated percussion pedagogue William G. Street.\footnote{Russell Hartenberger, interview with the author, Toronto, ON, CA, Jan. 13, 2012} What I find most impressive in Hiraoka’s playing is how expressive he is within very controlled tremolo; varying the tremolo speed ever so subtlety to
give the impression of sustain and continuity, much like the human voice. In fact, I believe his xylophone playing was warm and resonant and marimbistic in nature.

2.4 Lawrence L. Lacour introduces the Marimba to Japan

Lawrence L. Lacour, a former member of Musser’s marimba orchestra, travelled to Japan during World War II on a USS supply vessel as a Navy chaplain. At a gathering of all the chaplains in Japan at the Tokyo Red Cross building, Lacour made the acquaintance of Takefuji Tomio, the head of the Nichibei Language School. Takefuji convinced Lacour of the need for a Christian church in Japan, so when Lacour returned to the United States in 1946, he planned to return to Japan in 1950 with a quartet which included harp, trombone and at least two large Deagan ‘King George’ four-octave marimbas (the most expensive marimba in the world at the time). Once the instruments arrived by boat, the greatest challenge was how to transport these instruments throughout Japan. Lacour purchased an automobile and a trailer large enough to cart the instruments that included a kitchenette and sleeping quarters for the musicians. Organized by Takefuji, the Lacour quartet gave 131 concerts to over 480,000 people from Hokkaido to Kyushu and collected more than ¥1,400,000 ($583,000 CDN dollars in 2015) for the church. Lacour was joined by his wife Mildred Lacour, on marimba, who was a former member of the Musser Orchestra. While the musicians performed entertaining works (see Appendix 3), Lawrence would preach sermons about the church of Christianity. It was an unheard of success in missionary activities, and with the strong support of the Christian media they converted 43,000 people over the course of the five-month tour. But the focal point of these concerts was the Deagan ‘King George’ marimbas; extravagant instruments with double-arched frontal pipes in gold and white brass.

At the end of the tour, Lacour sold the marimbas and left them in Japan, but as I discovered from my interviews with Abe and Takahashi, there is some discrepancy about the types of the marimbas brought to Japan from the United States. As I will soon discuss, it is of remarkable importance to point out that both Abe and Takahashi attended the Lacour concerts, as did Mutsuko Fujii’s father. In Fujii’s research, she states that the Lacours brought four Deagan King

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134 There is some discrepancy about the types of marimbas Lacour brought to Japan; I will address this shortly.
George marimbas with them, but Keiko Abe and Michiko Takahashi remember differently. When I spoke with Takahashi, she recalled that all four marimbas were Mussers: “there were two 4 octave C3-C7 model 150, and two 4.3 octave model 250 A3-C7” and she states that her teacher Yusuke Oyake purchased all the instruments:

I think they were all Musser, but my memory may be wrong. So that’s the time that everyone was so surprised in Japan by this type of marimba, and after that everyone was buying the Musser 250, including Geidai where we all went.¹³⁷

Abe agreed that there were four marimbas in total, but she said: “The first I saw was the bass marimba [gestures as though it is very tall]. To my memory, including the bass marimba, there was a total of four marimbas” – keeping in mind that she was only six years old at the time, it is possible that she remembers incorrectly. We know for certain, however, that not all the marimbas were Musser because the NHK purchased at least one of the Deagans and housed it in their studio; as Takahashi explained to me:

The NHK had purchased one of the two instruments for studio recording. One was left at NHK studio and the other was taken privately. I don’t know to whom…every time I went into record TV music, I used the King George Deagan marimba.¹³⁹

Based on this information, I suggest that given both Lawrence and Mildred Lacour’s familiarity with Musser instruments, it is likely that they travelled with two Deagan King George 4 octave marimbas, and two Musser model 250 4.3 octave marimbas (what Abe remembers as bass marimbas); the former being sold to the NHK and a private citizen, most likely the first generation master percussionist Yasuke Oyake, of the NHK Symphony Orchestra.

### 2.5 The Development of the Marimba in Manufacturing in Japan

While performers and composers developed new ideas on the marimba, the demand for better sounding marimbas was paramount, and since the marimba is such a cumbersome instrument to...
dismantle and transport, it was also important to have a well constructed instrument with a sturdy frame that was not too heavy to carry. As the interest in the marimba was increasing exponentially on a national level, marimba manufacturers competed for revenue and pursued business relationships with leading performers to endorse their products. Behind the scenes, these performers often worked in tandem with designers and instrument builders and for the first time in marimba history, instruments were being manufactured in larger sizes – specifically lower in the bass register as composers and performers demanded a broader range. In the low register, the marimba bars become longer, wider, and thinner and the resonator pipes also become wider and longer (often U-shaped). There were, and still are, many philosophies on how to achieve the best sound in the lower register mostly with the goal to bring the fundamental pitch to prominence with a reduction in overtones. The competition to create the best sounding instrument was high, and by the 1970s, business was booming. The key manufacturers were:

1. Miyawaka Marimba in Nasushiobara, Tochigi, Japan
2. Mizuno Marimba in Tajima, Gifu, Japan
3. Yamaha Corporation in Hamamatsu-city, Shizuoka, Japan
4. Saito Gakki Seisakusyo Co. Ltd. in Machida-city, Tokyo, Japan
5. Korogisha Co. Ltd. in Fukui, Japan

Korogisha became a very successful company and rebranded its name for local consumers; in Japan, Korogisha would become Korogi; in Europe, Concorde; and in the United States, Kori Marimbas. In this section of the paper, I will discuss key models created during this period to demonstrate the rapid development in design and range of the marimbas as well as the continuing improvement in materials used to build the instruments (see Appendix 4).

On both of Abe’s first solo recitals in 1967 and 1968, she performed on a Musser four-octave marimba which Abe had purchased with her own funds in 1958 or 1959, and in 1970 as an endorser of the Musser marimba, she became a ‘Musser Artist’. After she performed a concerto by Minoru Miki, her opinion on the Musser marimba began to change:

One day, I played Minoru Miki’s marimba concerto at the Tokyo Concert Hall. Until that concerto, I believed the Musser marimba was the best marimba. Minoru Miki came up to

\textsuperscript{140} Abe interview, 2014.
me right after the concert and said the pianissimo in the upper register didn’t travel to the audience. Also, when playing with maximum force on the instrument, the marimba did not have a sound that was mature enough. Minoru Miki told me that the instrument needed to be developed more.

The next day I called Genichi Kawakami at Yamaha [president 1950-1977, and again 1980-83]. That was the first time I called Yamaha and Mr. Kawakami was the one who picked up the phone. I explained the situation to him, and requested that Yamaha develop a good marimba. I wanted them to be involved in developing the marimba, and the next day I flew to Yamaha headquarters in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka Prefecture. At that time, I was a Musser artist, and the news hit the US right away that I had visited Yamaha.  

In 1971, under the guidance of Abe, Yamaha completed the design of their first professional concert marimba: the four-octave YM-4000 (originally YM-4500) that became Abe’s premiere instrument. Abe explained to me how she decided to develop a marimba in Japan rather than continue her relationship with Musser:

There was a US tour, and I arrived to the Chicago O’Hare airport expecting to meet someone from the Chicago Symphony, but instead, there was the president of the Musser company waiting for me with a limousine. They took me immediately to their factory and begged me to be involved in Musser marimba development. They gave me a red carpet treatment; the royal box seat at the Chicago opera and fancy dinners; they treated me in an amazing way.

And eventually they asked “So how much is Yamaha paying you?” I said “nothing, zero from Yamaha – no money, but I want a company that I can trust and devote myself to”. And then it took nearly ten years of working with Yamaha almost every day to develop the Yamaha marimba with research and experimenting with sound. Yamaha had already created a marimba before I called them. They were making marimbas back then, but after

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141 Abe interview, 2014.
I started being involved they began aiming for a more concert professional goal in mind. After that, my relationship with Musser was over.\textsuperscript{142}

Abe took a risk in some ways by deciding to pursue a relationship with Yamaha and not Musser. Although Yamaha was an established company by Japanese standards, they did not have the international reach that Musser had for promotion, marketing and distribution. As Abe explained to me:

At that time, the three main Musser artists were Lionel Hampton, Gary Burton, and Keiko Abe...every concert I would have to state I am a Musser marimba artist and this would need to be in the programme, but they [Musser] would promote me everywhere in the world with their marketing. So, I didn’t take that offer, and that made me ten years behind to go out in the world, because I had a contract with Yamaha didn’t have that kind of system in place.\textsuperscript{143}

Yamaha was determined to keep Keiko Abe as their premiere artist and immediately began the manufacturing of prototypes, under her guide:

I became acquainted with Kawakami who introduced me to Shigero Suzuki. Mr. Suzuki asked “what are you looking for? What do you want to make? I can make exactly the same thing as Musser, exactly the same quality he is making, what are you looking for?” I wanted exact perfect pitch, I want musical sound when I hit the bars as hard as possible. I don’t want to hear wood, I want to hear musical sound. I want to hear musical sound out of wood. And also, when I play the marimba in pianissimo it still projects into a large concert hall. When I play a concerto with the marimba Yamaha developed, I don’t want the instrument to be covered by the orchestra, the volume needs to come up. I also want a clean and even sound as a piano, not like the folk instrument version of the marimba. So that’s what I requested and now after forty-five years of development, I think we succeeded together.\textsuperscript{144}

By 1973, Yamaha produced the first 4.5-octave instrument extending the range to low F, and by 1980, created a prototype bass extension to low C.\textsuperscript{145} It was in 1977 that Abe first travelled to the

\textsuperscript{142} Abe interview, 2014.  
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{145} Fujii, Vol.2, 10.
United States at the invitation of the Percussive Arts Society. She brought with her a Yamaha Mark 2 4.5 octave 5000 series marimba:

Before I came to the 6000 series, there was a model called the Mark 2. That was an instrument made specially to perform Japanese music with a very hard quality sound. The Mark 2 created a harsh sound and I wanted something with warmer sounds like the next generation 6000. The very first request I had from the beginning, the Mark 2 almost had it. When I went to the United States in 1977 I brought the Mark 2 with me.¹⁴⁶

By 1987, Yamaha created the YM-6000, the first commercially available 5-octave concert marimba, all under the guidance of Abe, and the American, Dutch, French, British and European manufacturers were soon to follow.

Michiko Takahashi was also active in the design and manufacturing of instruments through the Mizuno corporation, owned by marimbist Mizuno Yoshihisa:

I also focused on the development of the instrument itself. In part, I invented the Contrabass marimba, maximizing and exploring the bass range of the marimba. The lowest C was 37.2 HZ, which is the lowest C on the piano. This is from the Mizuno marimba manufacturer. I invested in that company. I came up with money and I paid them to make this instrument. It cost a lot! I gifted it to this school where it is still housed today.¹⁴⁷

Her recording Contrabass Marimba Explosion¹⁴⁸ became in her own words “one of the best selling albums of CBS/Sony at that time.”¹⁴⁹ Takahashi was also interested in exploring the extreme range of the upper marimba and also using other materials like crystal for the bars:

I was also dedicated to invent the piccolo marimba. So at one time I invented a seven-octave marimba – the contrabass all the way up to an octave above the regular C – Mizuno marimba – the inventor, also agreed it was the largest he would ever make. I also invested

¹⁴⁶ Abe interview, 2014.
¹⁴⁷ Takahashi interview, 2014.
¹⁴⁸ CBS/SONY 32DC-5027
¹⁴⁹ Takahashi interview, 2014.
in the crystal marimba, by the Sasaki glass company, a big company that makes crystal
glass. So I helped them develop it, and performed on it some times.\(^{150}\)

Composer Ichiyanagi mentions another interesting development of a new type of marimba. He
wrote The Ballade for Cellomarimba in 2002 for Mutsuko Tanneya. When I asked him about
this piece, he explained:

[Tanneya] used a very special type of marimba that no one else had. It was not a
contrabass marimba. She had a marvelous person, maybe 20 years older than her, an
independent marimba made it; it was very different from other marimbas, the resonators
were made of wood, so the sound is very soft – not the dynamics but the quality. He made
maybe 20 or so, and it was amazing because if you had been to her house, she had eight
different types of marimbas in her living room.\(^{151}\)

Western marimba manufacturers would create five-octave concert grand marimbas to compete
against Yamaha: namely Adams (Holland), Bergerault (France), Marimba One (U.S.), Malletech
(U.S.) and Premiere (U.K.). Additionally, in Japan, Korogi marimbas were expanded and
developed alongside the Yamaha instruments and were endorsed by prominent Japanese
marimbists like Mutsuko Fujii, and later daughters Haruka and Rika.

The relationship between the manufacturer and the performer was integral to this rapid growth of
the marimba in Japan. Working together, the materials required for both the marimba bars and
marimba frames increased in quality over a very short period of time and the range of the
marimba was constantly being expanded; chiefly by instructions given to manufacturers based on
the relationships performers had developed with composers. The quality and range of these
instruments were highly influential on the development of the European and American marimba
manufacturers who based much of their design on instruments created by Yamaha and Korogi.

\(^{150}\) Takahashi interview, 2014
\(^{151}\) Toshi Ichiyanagi, interview with the author, Tokyo, JP, Nov. 17, 2014.
2.6 Conclusions

In chapter two, I have described the foundations upon which xylophone and marimba culture in Japan is based: from the founding of the Japanese Xylophone Association, the migration of the marimba to Japan in 1950, the creation of the Miyagawa Studio, pedagogy by internationally celebrated virtuosoi like Hiraoki and national figures like Asabuki, and the many marimba manufacturers who followed. This is the background for the emergence of the first Japanese marimba virtuosos which I will discuss next in chapter three.
Chapter 3: The Rise of the Virtuoso (1950-75)

In this chapter, I will introduce four of the key marimba players who were the genesis for the rapid growth of marimba repertoire in Japan during the late twentieth century. I have included information on their upbringing and their education (which has been partially addressed in Chapter three in the discussion including pedagogues Asabuki and Hiraoka). I will also discuss what I consider to be their greatest strengths and most noted accomplishments in the contribution of lasting and influential marimba repertoire. Most importantly, I will also discuss a community of many extraordinary musicians and composers who were eager to explore the marimba.

3.1 A Broad Perspective

Keiko Abe is much revered by many in the contemporary and classical music world. Being a woman who had defied all boundaries prescribed by Japan’s traditionally patriarchal society, she inspired generations of young women to play the marimba. This may explain the enthusiasm for the marimba by young Japanese females. (Unlike in the West, few males until recently have specialized on the marimba in Japan.) To many percussionists around the world, Abe represents the Japanese marimba – her identity inseparable from the emergence of the marimba in Japan. But this is not true: the Japanese marimba was the product of hundreds of marimbists and composers working together, a tour-de-force community, as I will now outline. In Japan, between 1965 and 2005, over seven hundred works were written for solo marimba, or solo marimba with accompaniment. In that same period, thirty-three Japanese composers wrote five or more works for the marimba, and of these composers, several are the most celebrated composers of the twentieth century.

In Figure 1 below, I list Keiko Abe’s premiered repertoire (66) and compared it to all other

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Japanese marimba works premiered (658) between 1960 and 2005. In Figure 2, I show a comparison of the number of premieres from leading marimbists 1960-2005. And in Figure 3, I list a comparison of premieres from the five marimbists and all other marimbists active in Japan, 1960-2005:

Figure 1. Keiko Abe premieres compared to others, 1960-2004

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153 These numbers are based on Mutsuko Fujii’s Vol. 3 PAS database, and not Keiko Abe’s list of premieres listed on both her website and in Rebecca Kite’s biography. Abe and Kite list premieres between 1962 to 2005 as 170, however I feel the Fujii list is more objective at 66 (for instance, on the Abe and Kite list, 40 improvisations for children’s cartoons and second and third versions of published improvisations are included as individual premieres).
Figure 2. Leading Japanese marimbist premieres, 1960-2004
Considering there were over seven hundred premieres in Japan during this period and 525 of them were not premiered by the most celebrated performers, it is evident that there were many other performers premiering new works for marimba in Japan who, for various reasons were lesser known to foreign audiences. According to Mutsuko Fujii’s research, active marimba players between 1968 and 2005 were:

- Keiko Abe
- Makoto Aruga
- Shigemitsu Etso
- Minoru Fukai
- Mutsuko Fujii
- Atsuko Hamachi
- Ichiro Hosoya
- Ritsuko Hoshi
- Hiroyuki Iwaki
- Nami Ito
- Akiko Iino
- Namoko Kamiya
- Noriko Kijiya
- Kyoko Kito
- Mayo Kondo
- Hirono Kowabuchi
- Kuhniko Kumori
- Tomoko Kusakari
- Nanae Mimura
- Keiko Miyamoto
- Nachiko Maegane
- Nakoto Nakura
- Kyoko Masaki
- Mariko Okada
- Rie Sato
- Mari Sukama
- Naoko Takada
- Michiko Takahashi
- Itsuko Tanahashi
- Mutsuko Taneya
- Takuo Tamura
- Etsuko Toki
- Tamika Tsuruoko

Figure 3. Japanese marimba premieres, 1960-2004
Of these forty-four marimbists who actively premiered works between 1968 and 2005, there are five who are the most active, and premiered works regularly of higher quality by the most celebrated Japanese composers, many of which became staples of the repertoire – in addition to Abe; Michiko Takahashi, Mutsuko Fujii, Sumire Yoshihara and Mutsuko Tanneya. Also, unlike Abe who played the marimba exclusively, Takahashi, Fujii and Yoshihara were also involved in numerous percussion premieres and performances, and although they were virtuosic marimba players, did not specialize solely on the instrument.

3.2 Keiko Abe (b. 1937)

Keiko Abe is the most celebrated Japanese marimba virtuoso of the twentieth century. It is accurate to refer to her as the pioneer of the modern marimba, and it is perhaps also accurate to state that her bravery, ambition, energy, and ability to memorize instantaneously and retain information are otherworldly.

By 1948 at the age of ten, Abe’s mother purchased a “Daisy” tabletop xylophone from the Miyagawa Corporation so that Abe could practice at home. But in the fall of 1950, when she was in grade seven at the Eiwa Mission school for Christian girls in Yamanashi, she heard the marimba for the first time as she was walking by the chapel. Inside the adjoining church, the Lacour missionary group from Iowa was performing. Abe recalls meeting Mr. Lacour, and the conversation she had with him:

I went to Lacour-san to ask him “does the marimba have a motor inside to make that sound?” And he said “There is no motor, all you need to know is to love thy neighbour”. It was the missionary way, and it was very important. And so he imparted Christian teaching upon me.

As a teenager, Abe studied xylophone with Asabuki and then earned two degrees from Tokyo Gakugei University, studying composition briefly with Shosuke Ariga and Toshio Kashiwagi as well as percussion with Yusuke Oyake and Yukio Imamura (1911-1958), another first generation

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154 Tanneya was also a member of “Group 3 Marimba”, an active commissioner of trio works.
155 Kite, Abe, 17.
156 Abe interview, 2014.
percussionist with the NHK Orchestra. In 1959, she published the first of what would eventually be nearly 100 original works for the marimba, a well-received marimba solo titled *Frogs* (see Appendix 5).

In a similar vein to her teacher Asabuki’s mainstream activities, Abe organized a very successful group, The Xebec Trio, with Noriko Hasegawa and Shizuko Ishikawa whose repertoire consisted of light and popular music. They would release dozens of recordings and perform regularly on radio and television. Although the group received much opportunity for performance and was financially lucrative for the players, Abe disbanded the group in 1966 because she wanted to play serious music on the marimba. Abe stated: “I was not satisfied with this kind of music. I wanted to perform more serious work, and that’s why I started commissioning composers to write marimba pieces.”\(^{157}\) In 1962, she formed the Tokyo Marimba Group with the other two members of The Xebec Trio and friends Takuo Tamura, Yoshihiza Mizuno and Masao Yoshikawa. According to Abe, it was at her urging that the group began performing works by contemporary composers. I will discuss those works in detail in Chapter Four.

In 1964, Hidetoshi Kimura was assigned by Columbia Japan to produce an LP album featuring Abe titled *Marimba Musical Gems*.\(^{158}\) This was his first assignment after serving at Columbia as marketing director for one year. He was promoted to producer because he had a background in music, performing guitar recitals in Keio University where he attained a business degree.\(^{159}\) Kimura was familiar with Abe’s work as a celebrity performing arrangements of popular music, but was surprised to learn that such little repertoire existed that was written specifically for the marimba. Kimura then decided to add new compositions to the recording, including *Frogs* and two new works by Isao Tomita (b. 1932), *Autumn* and *Dancing Glass*. In 1965, Kimura and Abe started dating, and the two were soon married. It was unorthodox at the time for a Japanese woman to continue working after she was married, but Kimura was not only Abe’s partner in marriage, he was her partner in commissioning music. It was Kimura’s idea for Abe to perform a solo recital, and through his connections at Columbia had access to the greatest Japanese composers. As I will discuss further in Chapter Four, often in the wee hours of the morning,

\(^{157}\) Kite, *Abe*, 42.  
\(^{158}\) Columbia, ALS-3012, 1964  
\(^{159}\) Kite, *Abe*, 44
Kimura would return home with composers who wanted to meet Abe and hear her play the marimba. In the middle of the night, Abe would rise from bed, and improvise on the marimba for composers such as Akira Miyoshi, Minoru Miki and Toshimitsu Tanaka.

I believe this is an important part of my philosophy: Good ideas come out of good civilizations, from the most important persons, so they would come over to my house, and we would have good communication. These three years of concert series; this was the time that composers were so interested in the marimba, and to write for the marimba that they would come to my house and stay very late into the night to discuss the possibility and explore what can be accomplished with sound and technique – and they would discuss into the night until 5am frequently talking about the marimba. For three years there was a time of pure composition on the marimba, but after three years, they wrote for marimba to be paid and the commissioning fees began at that time. Then the players started paying a lot of money for new marimba works.

October 4, 1968, in Iino Hall, Tokyo, JP, Abe’s first solo recital, “An Evening of Marimba — In Search of Original Works for the Marimba,” was one of the most influential and important events exploring the marimba and marimba repertoire in the twentieth-century. Not only were several new works for the marimba premiered in one evening by Abe, the first Japanese marimba virtuoso, but unlike the composers writing for the marimba in Europe and North America, these composers, among the most celebrated in Japan at that time, put the marimba in focus for a sophisticated and engaged audience.

Her debut recital program included the following:

- **Dialogue for Marimba and Three Instruments**
  - Takehuni Hirayoshi
- **Divertimento for Marimba and Alto Saxophone**
  - Akira Yuyama
- **Two Movements for Marimba**
  - Toshimitsu Tanaka
- **Time for Marimba**
  - Minoru Miki
- **Torse III**
  - Akira Miyoshi
- **Mattinata**
  - Teruyuki Noda

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161 Abe interview, 2014.
Abe’s concert made a huge impact on percussionists and composers alike. The recital was part of a new music festival and drew a large audience. Critic Yasushi Tagashi in Ongaku Shimbum wrote:

I was amazed by her great and superhuman achievement, that she could perform these complex works from memory, including a piece that did not get finished until two days before the concert. That Abe’s ceaseless effort has inspired and moved these serious composers to write new works, and that she exhibits such virtuosic skill on her instrument, marks a new epoch in the history of the marimba worldwide.\footnote{Kite, Abe, 57.}

In 1969, Abe recorded the music from this recital, and added the concertos by Miki and Miyoshi for the three LP boxed set, Art of Marimba\footnote{Columbia JX-9-11} produced by her husband. As a result, this music migrated quickly throughout Japan and to the West. In 1969 and 1971, Abe performed her second and third recitals to continued acclaim, premiering eleven new masterworks including Marimba-Stück mit Zwei Schlagzeuger by Maki Ishii, Mirage by Yasuo Sueyoshi, Ahania\footnote{originally titled, Holidays for Marimba.} by Yoshio Hachimura and Concerto pour Marimba et Ensemble à Cordes by Akira Miyoshi. These three recitals propelled the marimba for the first time as a medium of contemporary art. No longer was the marimba simply a novelty instrument, it was legitimized to the music community as an instrument equal to any other in the modern orchestra. As composer Teruyuki Noda (b.1940) stated:

I felt that a new period was starting for the marimba. Everyone else thought so too. After Abe’s performance, I recognized that the marimba was equal to other, more traditional instruments in the orchestra.\footnote{Kite, Abe, 61.}

Abe was surprised by the overwhelming interest in her projects. As she explains below, everything changed for the marimba and ultimately Abe’s career as a pioneering artist breaking new ground for the marimba and contemporary music of the day.
This was not a normal classical concert. Nobody expected the marimba to sound like this. It opened everyone’s eyes. And, afterward, everything changed. Younger generations play original pieces, now. But in 1968, this was not the case.¹⁶⁶

In chapter four I will discuss the repertoire and commissioning process for which Abe would remain active to this day both as performer, composer and mentor.

### 3.3 Michiko Takahashi (b.1939)

Like Abe, Michiko Takahashi was enrolled in elementary school when the Lacours visited her school to give a concert: “I was in elementary school at that time. The Lacour group came to my school, I didn’t have to go anywhere, they actually came to me.”¹⁶⁷

I was born during WWII and when I was 2 years old I got a toy xylophone. It was a tabletop xylophone. I lived in Takasaki, in Guma prefecture and my father went on business trips to Tokyo, and he bought the table-top xylophone as a souvenir for me. So since the age of two, my parents were working and I was by myself and just playing the xylophone as a toy.¹⁶⁸

As previously discussed, her father would not only purchase a xylophone for her, but managed to convince the most famous xylophonist in Japan, Yoshio Hiraoka, to take Takahashi as his only student. After that six-year relationship ended, Takahashi remained self-taught until she entered university where she would take snare drum lessons briefly with Yukio Imamura. In the early 1960s, Takahashi felt she had little repertoire to perform, and so began her long career of commissioning new works:

There weren’t any original marimba pieces until 1960, it was all transcription of piano or violin music. So in 1961 Yoshiro Irino’s piece *Music for Vibraphone and Piano*; that was

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¹⁶⁶ Kite, *Abe*, 61.
¹⁶⁷ Takahashi interview, 2014.
¹⁶⁸ Ibid.
the first piece I premiered. That experience made me want to explore the possibilities of
keyboard instruments, so I started commissioning other composers.\footnote{169}{Takahashi interview, 2014.}

Takahashi was quickly identified as an emerging performer and began teaching at Geidai in 1967
(a year before Oyake’s passing), a position she held until 2004. She also started teaching at
Musashino University in 1970, a position she still holds today in 2015.

I believe the most important contribution Takahashi made to marimba repertoire in general
began with her decision to commission abroad. She was the first Japanese marimbist to
commission outside of Japan and in 1972 Dutch composer Ton de Leeuw (1926-1996) wrote
Midare (1972). At the 1973 International Gaudeamus Competition for Performers of
Contemporary Music in Rotterdam, Takahashi won the first prize. As Ton de Leeuw writes in
the program notes: “The jury was unanimous, the public breathless and all the composer's wishes
were fulfilled.”\footnote{170}{“Midare – for Marimba,” Donemus Publications, accessed June 6, 2013,
https://webshop.donemus.com/action/front-sheetmusic/2862/Midare} Whereas Abe’s presence in the US was highly celebrated by percussionists,
Takahashi’s presence in The Netherlands was celebrated equally by composers and performers.

Another significant premiere by Takahashi was Takemitsu’s marimba concerto Gitimalya on
November 22, 1974 with the Rotterdam Philharmonic, conducted by Edo de Waart. In addition
to Takahashi’s incredible career, as a performer, she was a remarkably effective teacher and
many of her students won esteemed prizes in Japan and Europe. She also commissioned Five
Scenes from the Snow Country in 1978 by Hans Werner Henze (1926-2012) and many other
works by noted composers both inside and outside Japan including a concerto that won Japan’s
pre-eminent composition award in 1979 which I will discuss in detail in chapter four.

3.4 Mutsuko Fujii (b. 1948)

I believe it is of great importance to note the direct connections of the Lacours and their marimba
concerts to the most noted Japanese marimba players who emerged only fifteen to twenty years
after the Lacour tour. Abe and Takahashi both heard the marimba for the first time at a Lacour
concert, and it was Mutsuko Fujii’s father Kunihiko Hatakeyama who heard the instrument for
the first time at a Lacour concert. He then purchased a Koss marimba and insisted that Fujii
(who was only six years old) and her older brother start studying it immediately under his acute tutelage.\textsuperscript{171} As Fujii explains:

My father was a trombone player in the army band, but he had bronchitis and at that time it was a deadly thing. He went through a very hard time where he could no longer pursue a career in music. So if he was to teach something to his kids, it would be percussion because it did not involve breathing and something that they could hit, so he decided the marimba would be the best instrument. He knew about Yoichi Hiraoka and went to see his concerts and then he researched the marimba and xylophone; he also investigated the Japanese Xylophone Association and he saw the Lacour performance. To better understand the marimba, he decided that it was important to know more about percussion as well; so he went to Geidai and they had a summer seminar on how to play percussion and he would take me, but it was actually he who was taking the course and learning. He mostly taught himself how to play percussion, and he thought the marimba was the next instrument to become popular. He invented all kinds of scales and warm-ups by himself, and to test if he was doing the right thing or not, he would bring me or my brother, to the National Children’s Music Competition, where we would win all the grand prizes. So I became sort of like a child prodigy on marimba, or what they called a sensational marimba player.\textsuperscript{172}

Fujii had lessons with only her father until the age of 10 when she started studying with Yoshihisa Mizuno (1936-) at the Miyagawa studio every week and soon became his top student.\textsuperscript{173} After studying with Mizuno from ages 10 to 12, she again studied with her father until the age of 14. Both Fujii and her brother Hiroshi Hatakeyama studied with their father who had stringent rules for practice: both would rise at 5am and practice for two hours before school under strict watch. Soon, Fujii started to prepare for a high school audition, and began studies with first generation master percussionist Oyake, and at age 14, was accepted to “The Music High School attached to the Tokyo School of Arts.”\textsuperscript{174} Fujii entered Geidai and continued studies with Oyake until he passed away in her second year, at which time Michiko Takahashi

\textsuperscript{171} Mutsuko Fujii, interview with the author, Tokyo, JP, Nov. 13, 2014.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{173} Fujii interview, 2014.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
became the new teacher; she continued studies with her and the other university teacher, Makoto Aruga. Additionally, Fujii studied privately from the age of 18 with Keiko Abe.

As will be explained in chapter four, Fujii was an avid commissioner of new works for marimba. But unlike Abe, Takahashi or Yoshihara, she would wait to commission works until the composers had proven that they could write well for the instrument, at which point Fujii would take a percentage of her saved earnings and commission new works with her own funds. She is a community-minded musician, bridging divides between various individuals and, at this stage of her life, is a renowned scholar on the Japanese marimba and the Edo Moki, the earliest xylophone to appear in kabuki theatre.

3.5 Sumire Yoshihara (b.1949)

Sumire Yoshihara is possibly the most revered percussionist in all of Japan by composers of her generation. On seemingly every recording of contemporary chamber music recorded since 1970 her name was credited if percussion was included. The first time Yoshihara heard of a xylophone was in kindergarten and she would begin lessons with Shuji Kudo (who was self-taught) for several years:

There was a girl who played the xylophone very well that I knew, so I asked her why she played so well, and it turned out that her father was actually a xylophone teacher. My mother immigrated to Taiwan during the war, but after the war when she returned to Japan, she used to hear Yoichi’s radio show and she really liked the sound of the xylophone to start with. So since my friend’s father was a teacher, and my mother knew of the xylophone and liked it, she thought maybe I can learn it. So I was about 5 years old, and I and my friends all started taking lessons with him.\(^{175}\)

Yoshihara was enrolled in a private school, which according to her, meant that she had to study considerably more than students attending public school, and so she became very occupied studying for exams and tests. In between her schoolwork, however, she continued lessons on the xylophone with Kudo, and when she was ten, she purchased a Saito marimba:

\(^{175}\) Yoshihara interview, 2014.
When I started studying xylophone with Kudo, he had a marimba there, but I only had a xylophone. So I was taking lessons on the marimba, but practicing on the xylophone. I was too little to play the marimba, so I would stand on wood steps that Kudo had built. But when I was ten, my pieces were more advanced and out of range on the xylophone, so I decided it was time to get a marimba.  

When she entered high school, she told the music teacher that she could play the xylophone and marimba, and she was asked to play on a school concert. Yoshihara explained to me how a famous tenor attended the concert and insisted that she become a professional musician:

The school asked me to play one piece, so I performed the piece. Out of the blue, a very famous tenor singer Konichi Suzuki, attended the concert and saw the whole concert. He was really famous at that time and he was directing the faculty of music at that school at the time. He saw my performance, and right after the performance he called me to him, and told me that I should be a musician. I had no idea if I wanted to do that though [laughs]. So I said “no” and kept saying no for a while – that was my first year in elementary school – but for at least two and a half years he kept insisting I should be a musician. It was a vigorous school, but they had special classes that could be added on to the regular curriculum. You could take solfège, ear-training, etc. Mr. Suzuki insisted that I keep taking these classes, so I did. He said, “even if you don’t become a musician, these are good skills to learn”. But now I think, if you don’t do any music, those aren’t useful skills at all! [laughs]  

Suzuki took Yoshihara to a music festival at Geidai where for the first time she heard percussion instruments:

He [Suzuki] was a single man, 28 years old at the time, a popular teacher and he was very insistent that I become a musician, so I thought, ok maybe I’ll consider it. In my third year of junior high school, he took me to a music festival at Geidai, where they did all sorts of activities like percussion ensemble, and other things. But at Geidai the percussion

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176 Yoshihara interview, 2014.
177 Ibid.
ensemble was mainly a marimba ensemble with very few non-pitched instruments. The teacher said if you get into this school, then you can be part of this ensemble.\footnote{Yoshihara interview, 2014.}

This was in 1963, when Yoshihara was fourteen years old. As she recalls, the marimba ensemble was playing all popular music arrangements and though she did not know if they were by Asabuki, she did comment, “I only remember that it sounded fun and everyone was having a good time.”\footnote{Ibid.} Yoshihara told me in great detail about her progress in school and her eventual decision not to pursue marimba exclusively, after witnessing a performance by Yamaguchi (who would eventually become her husband and father of her two children):

Suzuki organized all the teachers for me back at high school. Suzuki told me, your percussion teacher is this person, your solfège teacher, ear training is this person, and so on. Then I wanted to audition for Geidai, so I started learning snare drum from first year in high school. At first I was playing traditional grip, and I really became fascinated with snare drum. I really liked it. From high school I started taking lessons with Yusuke Oyake. He told me to go and see a concert, it was by Yasunori Yamaguchi. That was really shocking for me. So I decided, forget the marimba, I’m going to be a percussionist. I can’t deny the fact that the marimba was the hottest thing, Michiko was there, Keiko Abe, it was like everyone was pursuing the marimba, I also wanted to do something different. After I saw Yasunori perform, I knew what I wanted to do…it was a huge impact for me.\footnote{Ibid.}

On that concert, Yoshihara saw Yamaguchi perform Zyklus by Stockhausen and two other multi-percussion works by Yoshiro Irino and Makoto Moroi: “I was determined to go to university from the first year of high school. And after I saw that concert of Yasunori, I was determined to go into percussion instead of marimba.”\footnote{Ibid.} A few years later, Yoshihara entered Geidai with the intention of studying with Yamaguchi’s teacher Oyake, but as I’ve already discussed, Oyake passed away in 1968, and so she studied for two years with Takahashi who taught during Oyake’s illness in 1967. Yoshihara attended Keiko Abe’s first recital in 1968, but she was already on her own path, and was not intrigued by solo marimba repertoire.

\footnote{Ibid.}
When she first studied with Takahashi, the focus was on snare drum and she studied the Goldberg *Modern School for Snare Drum*. Yoshihara had become obsessed with the snare drum in high school, but after deciding to pursue percussion, decided to take advantage of her exposure to Takahashi’s marimba prowess and focus on the marimba during her two years under her tutelage. Yoshihara explained her experience at *Geidai* to me:

I wanted to get back to the basics of marimba playing so that is what I studied with Michiko. Everyone studied with Michiko because Oyake had passed away – there was no choice but to study with Michiko – but in my third and fourth year Makoto Aruga came in; he was the former percussionist of NHK philharmonic, but he was too busy playing with the orchestra, so he never really came and taught anyone. So whenever someone had a piece that was ready to show him, he would come in and give a lesson. He went to study at Curtis with Saul Goodman [She probably meant at Juilliard], so he was a very American-style percussionist and I learned a lot from him, particularly the American-style snare drum playing. But over two years, there were likely only ten lessons. So I did whatever I wanted to do, there was no teacher telling me what to do.\(^{182}\)

In 1972, while still studying for a Masters degree at *Geidai*, she won First Prize at the Geneva International Music Competition as well as the Prix American and the Grand Prize of the Competition and quickly emerged as an active soloist in Europe and America. As Yoshihara explains, the problem wasn’t finding opportunities for performance; the problem was finding enough repertoire which she felt was worthy of performance:

I had just graduated, quickly won the competition, made a splashy debut, and found myself out of repertoire instantly. There were only a handful of pieces worth playing so my life became a cycle of commissioning and premiering.\(^{183}\)

She would go on to commission influential ground-breaking works from Takemitsu, Juji Takahashi, Michio Kitazume, Fukushi, Ichiyanagi, Kondo and many others, but rarely with a focus on the marimba exclusively:

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\(^{182}\) Yoshihara interview, 2014.

\(^{183}\) Ibid.
I play the marimba within the percussion family; I believe I have a different and wider perspective, a wider view of the marimba. I think that could be the reason why so many composers liked to work with me on the marimba. I don’t believe I have the most technique, or as much as other marimba soloists; I don’t believe I’m as good at the marimba as some other people. But, still the composers liked working with me, I think because I had a wider perspective of the instrument.\textsuperscript{184}

3.6 Conclusions

In Chapter Three, I have discussed many of the contributing factors as to how and why these virtuoso performers emerged; through early exposure to the xylophone, the Lacour concerts, and common influences of pedagogues Asabuki, Hiraoka and Oyake. Now in Chapter Four, I will discuss the evolution of contemporary Japanese music for marimba from a bird’s eye view beginning in 1962 to 1992, by discussing select works and the process which led to their creation.

\textsuperscript{184} Yoshihara interview, 2014.
Chapter Four: Commissioning and the Development of Repertoire (1962-1992)

Many factors contributed to the emergence of the marimba in Tokyo in the late twentieth century, including funding infrastructure from private and public corporations, the general familiarity of the xylophone in Japan, and a booming economy. Several instrument manufacturing companies competed for business, and a generation of composers and performers emerged from a repressive wartime culture, and were now free to pursue any ideology. But there is nothing so important as the relationship between the composer and performer which, as I discussed previously, was fostered and supported generously by the multi-faceted musical activity at the NHK in both music and film recording. In this chapter, I will discuss the commissioning process as recalled by the key performers and composers I interviewed, of seminal marimba repertoire.

The following composers wrote five or more works for solo marimba between 1960 and 2004:

Ei’chi Asabuki  Minoru Miki  Satoshi Ohme  
Masao Endo  Minato Ohiro  Momoka Oya  
Norio Fukushima  Akira Miyoshi  Hitumi Shimoyama  
Toshi Ichiyanagi  Shuko Mizuno  Jiroh Sensuh  
Yoshiro Irii  Sachie Murao  Yasuo Sueyoshi  
Maki Ishii  Kaori Nabeshime  Mayayoshi Sugiura  
Shosi Kaneta  Satori Nakanishe  Hideaki Suzuki  
Yoshio Hachimura  Tokuhide Niimi  Tsuneya Tanabe  
Michio Kitazume  Akira Nishimura  Toshimitsu Tanaka  
Jo Kondo  Nasao Nobuhara  Hiroyuki Yakakawa  
Isao Matsushita  Masami Noda  Takiosha Yoshioka

Some of these composers were the most celebrated across the whole spectrum of Japanese composition in the latter twentieth century. I have selected forty-two of over seven hundred known works which, based on publications, recordings and world-wide recognition, I selected what I believe are the most important works to emerge in Japan during this time. (see Appendix 6) Figure 4, below, illustrates the rapid proliferation of marimba repertoire in Japan through the latter decades of the twentieth century.
4.1 The Role of Public and Private Broadcasting Corporations

Both the NHK and many recording companies contributed greatly to new music commissioning, performance and recording until the late 1980s, and the music community was connected by these public and private organizations. In this section I will discuss these relationships and the subsequent commissioning and recording opportunities that emerged for performers and composers who pursued the marimba.

After WWII, the Japanese entertainment industry was mostly non-existent, and since the Japanese language was rarely spoken outside of Japan, it was not possible to import existing programs or broadcasts. In order to facilitate a revival of Japanese culture and stimulate

\(^{185}\) Fujii, Vol. 3.
communication and influence, both locally and nationally, the initial broadcasting infrastructure received American funding. In 1945, Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration and from the Occupation Forces’ General Headquarters (GHQ) came a radio code of conduct for Japanese broadcasters. By 1950 the “Three Radio Laws,” including the Broadcast Law, were established. The NHK became a special corporation and the prominent means for the media in post-war Japan. However, as a testament to growth with funding of media outlets under occupation forces, there were a total of eighteen commercial broadcasters by 1952. The Broadcast Law ensured both freedom of expression and a commitment to a healthy democracy.  

Eventually much of the concertizing, commissioning and recording of both classical and contemporary music was made possible through NHK, as well as private recording companies such as Columbia, CBS/Sony, King and Victor, and smaller companies such as FONTEC and Camerata. Takemitsu, for instance, through his personal connection with the president of Seibu Holdings Corporation (owner of Seibu Railway and Prince Hotels), was fortunate to receive corporate-funded commissions and concerts.  

Perhaps the most important by-product of all the commissions and recordings funded by these various companies was the fostering of a community of composers and performers all connected by this concertizing activity. Mostly all the musicians with whom I spoke began their careers in a ‘jobbing’ or ‘gigging’ culture: that is to say that they were willing to participate and contribute to any form of music or entertainment, both to make new connections and also as a source of income. Most of this activity began in the late 1950s and early 1960s when a remarkable fellowship of emerging composers and performers first met and worked together. For instance, shortly after Katsuhiro Tsubonoh graduated from Geidai, he was first hired at the NHK as a jazz pianist.  

I graduated and my job was to teach piano, particularly jazz piano. I was hired regularly as the NHK studio pianist as well, and got a lot of work from them and some work as a composer too. That is how I met all the composers and performers in Japan including

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187 Kondo interview, 2014
Takemitsu, Mayazumi, Makoto Moroi and Joji Yuasa. The first time I was hired by the NHK studio, it was not in the electronics or the recording studio, I was actually the pianist on a children’s show. This was how I was able to make money, and I wrote pop music for anime and children’s movies. And at the same time I was writing serious music for great performers…these commissions were all funded by the NHK and occasionally by private companies like Columbia, King, Victor and CBS/Sony.\footnote{188}

Marimbist Keiko Abe also was active in this community, and as a minor celebrity on an NHK television show featuring The Xebec Trio. This successful show featured three young women playing marimbas clad in tasteful white dresses with mostly male studio musicians in the background. It was here that Abe met many types of musicians and arts administrators including her future husband. As an active TV personality, many rising composers were already aware of Abe. As she explained:

I was working in the studio and this is where I met the composers initially. It was through music for television dramas and studio work…and this is where I learned about orchestration. The first time hearing flute with marimba, and knew what this sounds like, I had the idea from going to the studio to record all these pieces written for the TV music at that time.\footnote{189}

By the mid 1960s, the NHK had become a powerful force in Japanese media and dominated much of the activity in contemporary music. Many of these great works for orchestra were not only performed by the NHK orchestra and recorded by the NHK, they were also commissioned by the NHK. Many of the first major opportunities given to emerging composers were through commissioning initiatives established by public broadcasting. Fukushi explained:

My first NHK commission was in 1972. But before that I won the NHK contest, and I won first prize. I think that is why the commission came.\footnote{190}

The NHK provided enormous opportunities for composers to have their works performed, but of more importance, the NHK would record and broadcast their works. Niimi explained:

\footnote{188}{Tsubonoh interview, 2014.}\footnote{189}{Abe interview, 2014.}\footnote{190}{Fukushi interview, 2014.}
NHK made quite a few programs of contemporary music, and in Japan we had a festival for the arts including studios for broadcasting. The NHK would often commission five or six pieces for orchestra, or chamber music. It was quite a big opportunity for composers, a great chance to compose music, especially orchestra music and then have it broadcasted.\footnote{Niimi interview, 2014.}

The willingness of private corporations to support the commissioning and recording of new works increased; often they employed current or former NHK employees. These public broadcasters and recording companies were imperative to the success of the works commissioned and recorded during this potential golden age of the marimba, and there is no better proof of how important this activity was as when it began to cease in the economic recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s. As Niimi stated, “In the 90s the bubble burst…it went downhill, [the NHK and corporations had] less involvement.”\footnote{Ibid.} I will discuss more about the changing economy of Japan in the late 1980s and 1990s in Chapter Five.

### 4.2 The 1960s

The most important and active commissioner of marimba music in the 1960s was Keiko Abe who, by example, initiated a profound response from her colleagues to do the same. Many of the composers in the early 1960s were already familiar with Keiko Abe and the marimba through The Xebec Trio, as well as the xylophone through Asabuki and Hiraoka. Some of these composers had also heard Abe’s first composition, *Frogs* (1958), which was published in 1959 and premiered in 1964. As mentioned in Chapter Three, after Abe left The Xebec Trio to pursue contemporary music, she founded the Tokyo Marimba Group with Masao Yoshikawa and Mizuno Harada. The commissioning process began with funding for the composer coming from the performers:

Akira Miyoshi knew the Tokyo Marimba Group…In total, five of us got together to discuss projects and the possibility of commissioning composers. That was the beginning of the Tokyo Marimba Group. Everyone brought their cash, and put it on the table and discussed who they wanted to commission. So that was the time I really insisted that I wanted Akira Miyoshi to write a piece, and that was *Conversation* (1962). I knew how beautiful his works were from playing in the percussion section a few times of the Japan
Philharmonic; I was playing as an extra. I really wanted to use this project to commission him.\(^{193}\)

*Conversation* is a playfully imaginative piece in five movements that is played regularly in concert programmes throughout the world to this day. Although the Tokyo Marimba Group under Abe’s direction was responsible for this first commission from Akira Miyoshi (and for initiating this rapid development of marimba repertoire), the group concertized only twice before disbanding due to familial and financial concerns of some of the players:

There were only two concerts that we played together as the Tokyo Marimba Group. Especially those who had families to take care of and they couldn’t spend the money. They spent too much money on commissioning together, so it only lasted twice.\(^{194}\)

After this collaborative project with colleagues, Abe decided to pursue solo marimba music, and approached Miyoshi again who wrote *Torse III*; a piece comprised of four short movements of contrast. This work is considerably more technically challenging than *Conversation* and has a less lyrical quality with jagged textures and juxtaposing syncopations.

Abe commissioned and premiered many more solos in the next three years, all of which are staples of current repertoire. These works include the first significant concerto for marimba in the Japanese repertoire by Yamada Mitsuo, titled *Marimba Concerto* (1963) that premiered in 1968 with Abe, The Tokyo Symphony Orchestra and conductor Yuzo Toyama. As I mentioned previously in Chapter Three, other solo works include three of the most famous works ever written for the marimba: Toshimitsu Tanaka’s *Two Movements for Marimba* (1968), Minoru Miki’s *Time for Marimba* (1968) and Maki Ishii’s *Marimba Stuck mit zwei Schlagzeuger* (1969). Tanaka’s first movement has memorable and rhythmically driven motives followed by a serene and captivating second movement, whereas Miki’s *Time* is a one-movement work with a haunting quintuplet ostinato linking many sections of diverse rhythmic contrast frequently spanning all four octaves of the keyboard, as Figure 5 below illustrates.

\(^{193}\) Abe interview, 2014.  
\(^{194}\) Ibid.
Like Miki, Maki Ishii was an absolute master of the marimba and created an entirely new way of playing the instrument. I will explain his hyper-serialistic tendencies later in this chapter. Abe premiered his work, *Marimba Stuck*, in 1969 at the Toshi Centre Hall with percussionists Makoto Aruga and Hidehiko Sato. New techniques were demanded in both pieces, and Abe demonstrated these with ease to very large audiences for her first recital in 1968 in lino Hall.

At this time, Abe’s career was quickly ascending and her new husband, Kimura, assisted her in preparing a solo recital: “In 1968 my husband started to really cooperate with organization.” His role is most evident in the large-scale works that were created for Abe in a relatively short period of time. One year after Abe premiered Miki’s *Time for Marimba*, she premiered his *Concerto for Marimba* (1969) with the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra. The following year, she premiered Akira Miyoshi’s *Concerto pour Marimba et Ensemble a Cordos* (1970) with The

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196 Abe interview, 2014.
Japan Philharmonic Orchestra under conductor Hiroshi Kumagai. It is not only remarkable that these two concerti were written for Abe and the marimba in such a short period of time, but that they were premiered with Japan’s top orchestras and written by leading composers of the day.

### 4.3 The 1970s

The 1970s was a remarkable decade for the marimba in Japan. Many composers, highly influenced by xylophone culture and the virtuosity of Keiko Abe, turned their attention to the marimba through experimenting with sound and supporting each other’s ideas, often working with performers in the process. One of the most memorable conversations from my interviews in Japan was with composer Norio Fukushi when he explained to me how he learned about the marimba in 1971 for his work, *Resonance I*, with Mariko Okada (I had previously assumed he had learned about the marimba through his long-term commissioning relationship with Atsushi Sugahara). I interpreted both enthusiasm and fascination with the marimba, supported by a community of like-minded artists:

> It was Mariko Okada. She was from Shizuoka prefecture, a two-or-three-hour train trip south of Tokyo. She lived in a house at the top of a mountain — it was the only house on the mountain. She could play the marimba any time of the day or night, and she did not have to be concerned about her neighbours as so many of us did in Tokyo. At that time, I would stay at that house, and other composers like Kitazume and Matsunara would be there too; other composers she commissioned.

> We would go there to learn about the marimba, and we would experiment with the instrument. In fact once, very late one night, we experimented with putting rice in the resonators to see if it would affect the sound. We wanted to make sound like the Nabimba,\(^{197}\) so we would experiment with putting paper over the resonators. We would discuss the marimba for hours, so not only would Mariko show us the technique, we would be able to experiment with our own ideas. At that time, the instrument was just a four-octave instrument. The person [Mizuno] who built the marimba was also there. So we

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\(^{197}\) A Deagan made instrument, a variation of the marimba: [http://www.deaganresource.com/nabimba.html](http://www.deaganresource.com/nabimba.html)
would all experiment with ideas. It was there that we convinced him to create a deeper instrument, and so he soon did — a low F marimba, the first he had built. The sound of the low F made an enormous impression on me, I very much liked the sound.\(^{198}\)

Another emerging composer fascinated with the marimba was Katsuhiro Tsubonoh, who received no payment for his work. In fact, funding for all the works for Abe’s pieces on her first two recitals did not come from either Columbia or the NHK: there was no payment for these works. Composers were eager to write for Abe, but in some cases composers were simply eager to write for the marimba. Tsubonoh first heard a marimba at Abe’s debut recital in 1968. His masterpiece, *Meniscus* (1971), premiered on Abe’s second solo recital in 1971 in lino Hall, is often assumed to have been commissioned by Abe, but that was not the case.

RS: And when you wrote *Meniscus* – Did Keiko ask you for the piece, did she commission you?

KT: No, I wrote *Meniscus* because I wanted to write it.

RS: And did you write it with Keiko in mind?

KT: No, I didn’t write it for Keiko.

RS: And why did you want to write for the marimba?

KT: I wanted to compose for the marimba because of the sound, and it opened a world of imagination to me. I didn’t say anything to her. I showed this piece to several percussionists with the hope that they would play it, but each of them told me that only Keiko Abe could play this. Then they told me her phone number, and so I asked her.\(^{199}\)

*Meniscus* is an enigmatic yet extraordinarily demanding work, starting from a single tone and developing into free-flowing melodic content overlaid through both hands simultaneously, as illustrated in Figure 6.

\(^{198}\) Fukushi interview, 2014.
\(^{199}\) Tsubonoh interview, 2014.
This particular style of writing in free time on the marimba was a unique concept. Tsubonoh explained to me the meaning behind the work, and how it is based, at least in part, on the concept of *ma* (the tension between silence and sound):

> I have two purposes in *Meniscus* — to form sound and stop sound. And so I think of it in terms of Japanese *ma*. This piece begins from a single tone and gradually expands. The same can be said of the durations of phrases, beginning with short phrases, then medium and longer. This gradually develops into something free and improvisatory, and so I wrote it as such. So from one sound gradually increasing to free improvisation.  

Tsubonoh was the first composer in Japan to experiment with playing the marimba bar in different places. In both *Meniscus* (1971) and a later work, *Kyoso son tai* (1977) written for Mutsuko Fujii, he experimented with achieving a different sound over the node of the bar, rather than in the regular playing spot.

> In both *Kyoso* and *Meniscus* I indicated to perform on different spots of the marimba bar and with different parts of the mallets. After I did this, many composers began to experiment with alternate techniques such as these.

Tsubonoh also gave enormous consideration to maximizing the potential facility of four mallets on the keyboard, and subsequently broke ground into new territories of technique. The free-form improvisatory feel of *Meniscus* is achieved by exacting interpretation of the complex double-stave notation.

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201 Tsubonoh interview, 2014.
202 Ibid.
I asked Tsubonoh if Abe was able to understand the effect he wished to create when she first saw the score, and he explained how it was actually Sueyoshi who convinced Abe that the piece was worthy of her performance:

The first time I passed the score of *Meniscus* to Keiko Abe, she didn’t say anything; she just asked me to wait for a while so she could look at it. Then she said, “I don’t know how to express the piece,” so after one year she contacted me and said she could play it. During that one year, Keiko Abe asked Yasuo Sueyoshi for advice on how to play it. In fact, I heard that story for the first time just three months ago. Sueyoshi didn’t actually advise Keiko Abe on how to play the piece, but he ensured her that the piece is very good and should be performed.\(^{204}\)

*Meniscus* became a very popular work in the marimba repertoire, particularly as it was one of the works that Abe presented at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in the United States in 1977. Although Abe was often approached by composers and actively pursued commissions from composers whose work she liked, her connection to the composers was

\(^{204}\) Tsubonoh interview, 2014.
increasingly through her husband, who was actively recording large-scale chamber and orchestral works by some of the most celebrated composers of the day.

Again, these first and perhaps most celebrated works in all the marimba repertoire were often composed without funding and solely out of interest for either Abe or the marimba, or some combination of the two. I asked Abe how she chose the composers:

I contacted the composers after doing the long research and who showed real interest in the marimba, and if the composer has a real ability to write for the marimba; I would do long research until I commissioned them.205

As for the development process, Abe allowed the composers to experiment without direction, instruction or supervision. Only after the piece was completed would Abe meet with the composer to discuss performance options.

I would not show the composers techniques that I came up with, but would ask the composer [to] please bring out whatever you feel you can do with this instrument, [to be] as musical as possible. When composers brought their piece to me, at my house, then we would work together at the marimba to develop their ideas [motions with four-mallet technique on marimba]. For the orchestration of the chords, I would discuss the voicing of the chords and maybe move one thing this way or that way.206

Many of these works were technically demanding and nothing of the sort had ever been written like this for the marimba. As a testament to Abe’s remarkable ability, Sueyoshi recounts the story of how Abe received the last few pages of *Mirage* (1971) — a piece he began to write after attending her first recital in 1968 and completed only days before the premiere on her second recital — and was able to play it perfectly at first viewing:

I remember some things about the composition of *Mirage*. It was very difficult to write for me because it was a new experience, a new instrument for me. So I didn’t know how to compose for it, or how it sounds, so I searched for many long days. Approaching the concert date, Abe-san called me on the telephone several times and asked, “Where’s my piece?” After two days I gave her a page, and then a day or two later, another three pages.

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205 Abe interview, 2014.
206 Ibid.
But the final two pages I gave her only two or three days before the concert. I gave it to Abe-san at her studio and she looked [gestures out] at it, “ahh, uh-huh, ahh…” [she said] and slowly walked to the marimba, and placed the music on the stand in front of the marimba. And at once she played it perfectly.207

The last very active passage in Mirage is widely known to be one of the most difficult passages to play on the marimba (see Appendix 7), so when Sueyoshi was asked again to clarify this statement that Abe played it perfectly, he replied:

She read it perfectly, at once. It is her power of instant memory…her power of sight-reading. And she played the previous several pages from memory, the ones I had just given her days before. It was wonderful. I thought she was superhuman.208

Sueyoshi explained the meaning of this spectacularly difficult passage to me, and how it is based on kabuki theatre:

In Mirage, I combined many ideas from kabuki theatre: the final moments with the big dance. Generally in kabuki theatre there is a long bridge, and the program has ended, the big curtain is already down, but one dancer stand on the bridge and the rest of the dancers look at him and he shows a big gesture and faster and faster he is back at the other side of the bridge. It’s a very nice and beautiful way to end the performance. He takes big steps, like samurai and faster and faster, running to the gate. I don’t use five tone scale, or gagaku harmony, but I always think of Japanese rhythmic changes — so that is the ending scene.209

Other marimba players in the early 1970s, perhaps inspired by Abe’s success, began commissioning significant works from leading composers. Mariko Okada commissioned and premiered Shinchero Ikebe’s (b. 1943) Monovalence I – For Marimba (1972). As mentioned in Chapter Three, Michiko Takahashi competed at the Gaudeamus Competition in Utrecht, The Netherlands, in 1973. As a requirement of the competition, Takahashi had to perform two works by Dutch composers:

207 Sueyoshi interview, 2014.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid.
That was a requirement of the Gaudeamus competition. You had two play two pieces by Dutch composers. There were no works for the marimba, at that time, by Dutch composers. I commissioned Ton De Leuww’s *Midare for Marimba* (1973) and also Henk Benning’s work *Toccata for Marimbaphone* (1973), two pieces at the same time. According to the research that I did at that time, these were the very first Dutch marimba works.210

*Midare* is still familiar repertoire to marimbists and is often played on concerts. I asked Takahashi how she came to choose Ton de Leuww for the commission:

I didn’t know anything about composers in Holland. So I went to the library here in this school [Musashino], and looked up information on Dutch composers and I just picked him. I had heard his music. He is a composer who likes Japan, he had been to Japan many times and he had written pieces about Japan as well. I first sent him a cassette tape and explained what I do, what I can do on the marimba. When I went to Holland it was actually to rehearse, and to start reading his piece with him. So I brought my own instrument to Holland. I left that marimba in Holland for twenty years, and used it frequently.211

Remarkably, Takahashi was awarded first prize at this competition and her solo recital was televised throughout Europe. As a result of this broadcast, Takahashi commissioned and premiered one of the most celebrated works for marimba in the repertoire, *Gitimalya* (1974), a marimba concerto by Toru Takemitsu. Takahashi explained how, through a peculiar series of events, this commission happened:

I got the first prize at Gaudeamus, then the next day [after the competition] I received a call from Takemitsu at 10:30 in the morning. I never met him before, of course I knew of him, but I didn’t know him personally. He said he was in England, and he had seen the broadcast of my competition, he saw me win the first prize of this competition playing the marimba for *Midare* by de Leeuw. He was attending a music festival called “Takemitsu Week” in England, and he was missing a percussionist for one of his works, so he asked if I could hop on the plane the next day and fly in and play the piece.

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210 Takahashi interview, 2014.
211 Ibid.
Although I really wanted to hop on the plane, I was the winner of the competition and already had other performance planned in the area, and I had too much going on so I couldn’t do that. So, I had to say no. I felt really bad about it. But I pursued the schedule that was all planned out for me by the competition, and finished the Gaudeamus week. On the last day of the festival, a person from the Rotterdam Philharmonic in Holland was interested in having me perform with the orchestra with Edo De Waart, the artistic director and conductor of the orchestra. They said the repertoire could be anything and so I thought, maybe I could work with Takemitsu, but by that time Takemitsu was already world-famous, and it would not be polite to contact him directly. So I asked the Japanese embassy in Holland. It was a cultural ambassador that I had already met after winning the competition, and it was through that person I contacted Takemitsu. Then Takemitsu said yes right away, and we started working together. The premiere was in 1974 in Rotterdam.\textsuperscript{212}

As a result of Takahashi’s first place win at Gaudeamus, she had been catapulted as the significant progenitor of the marimba in Europe and consequently soon had numerous performance opportunities. For instance, one significant example of her influence was a major opportunity to introduce the marimba to a myriad of composers, performers and new audiences in the same year as her premiere of the Takemitsu concerto:

In 1974 Ton de Leuw invited me to the Holland Festival as a soloist with a concert at the Concertgebouw. I performed a work that was 60 minutes long (\textit{Spatial Music}, 1974). I began the performance in the small hall and [during the performance] gradually moved to the medium hall inside the Concertgebouw, featuring percussion and marimba, in both halls with orchestra. Then at the end in the last ten minutes of the work, I moved right in the middle of the big hall, the spotlight was on one marimba. It was de Leuw’s idea to take over the entire Concertgebouw. The performers and the audience moved from the small hall, then medium and then large. In the small and medium halls I played percussion and marimba with orchestra, but the grand finale in the big hall was just me with the marimba, in the centre with a spotlight for ten minutes, and the audience and performers surrounded me to listen. In fact, he had arranged for everything. There were percussion instruments and marimbas everywhere. It included the Holland Radio Symphony and

\footnote{Takahashi interview, 2014.}
another orchestra. The ending was very powerful: completely silent, and only the marimba under one light. It might be the same now, but at the time this festival would use an entire month in the summertime, the entire month of August was a festival month that contains theatre, dance, many other arts, activities and of course music. This concert was the last event of the festival held on the last day, 11 p.m. to 12 a.m., that was my spot. I was the finale for the whole entire month.213

This was the first time many Europeans heard the sound of the marimba, and they were fortunate to hear it played by an absolute virtuoso. It is at this time that the marimba began to become a standard instrument used by European composers. This activity by Takahashi (and later by Yoshihara) is a significant factor as to why the marimba became so popular in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s and why instrument manufacturers like Adams (NL), Premiere (UK), Bergerault (FR) and Concorde (NL, the European division of Korogi) began to produce quality marimbas in the 1980s. Additionally, Italian composer Luciano Berio wrote extensively for the marimba for the first time214 in 1973 in Linea for two pianos, vibraphone and marimba. The full extent of Takahashi’s influence on European composers deserves further research. Takahashi explained her popularity in Europe:

I really didn’t have that much information on European composers, but when I performed in cities, a lot of local percussionists, marimba players and composers came to see my performances.215

By the mid-1970s, Abe’s commissions had all been published and recorded with the assistance of her husband and with funding from various record companies.216 Subsequently, American marimba enthusiasts were able to purchase these scores and recordings. For instance, Alan Zimmerman, the first Western percussionist to study in Japan with Keiko Abe in 1975, would order the scores sight unseen and wait several weeks for them to arrive by boat from Japan at great cost.217 Abe continued to break new ground for the marimba in Japan and commissioned many composers, including two very different yet strikingly original marimba works of profund

213 Takahashi interview, 2014.
214 Berio had also written for the marimba in Circles (1960), likely after hearing Stockhausen’s Zyklus, but the writing is far more advanced in Linea.
216 Abe interview, 2014.
217 Zimmerman, interview, 2013.
depth — Yoshihisa Taira’s *Convergence I* (1975) and Yoshio Hachimura’s *Ahania I&II* (1971/1976). Taira’s ten-minute work begins with aggressive cells of mostly dodecaphonic notes to be played *Le plus vite possible*; the piece gradually becomes calmer with long still textures of tremolo. Hachimura’s work is one of the most intense and unique works ever written for the marimba, steeped in Japanese philosophical conceptualizations such as *ma*, the tension between silence and sound about which Abe says:

> It’s a very natural existence. When there is a sound, there is a silence before and after it. That is not just whiteness, it’s a quiet sound. *Ma* is the sound of quietness.\(^{218}\)

Hachimura directly indicates the idea of *ma* to the performer in *Ahania* through a somewhat enigmatic statement. One of the principal elements of this piece is the following instruction printed at the bottom of the first page as it appears in the score:

> Throughout this piece, it is necessary to be played without any impression of the “presence of beat.” Play with great dignity, spirit and emotion (the player, according to the sounds which would be produced then, should put the <musical space-time> in the “tension” and “relaxation”\(^{219}\)

By 1977, Keiko Abe toured the United States with these works and influenced many young performers and composers with this uniquely Japanese music. In Japan, the commissioning pool continued to deepen with ensembles and duos. Group 3 Marimba featured top Japanese percussionists playing the marimba including Atsushi Sugahara, Mutsuko Tanneya and Mariko Okada. In 1977, Mariko Okada approached Jo Kondo, who wrote his first work for marimba, *Luster Gave Her the Hat and He and Ben Went On Across the Backyard*. The work was premiered later that year in Toho Seimei Hall in Tokyo. But there was little funding, as Kondo explained:

> I think I received a tiny gesture. I think that’s it. Well, I was young, and they were eager — and so for a young composer, it’s a good opportunity even if it doesn’t pay well, so I simply wrote it.\(^{220}\)

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\(^{218}\) Abe interview, 2014.


\(^{220}\) Kondo interview, 2014.
At this time in his life Kondo was not particularly fascinated with the marimba or its sound. Subsequently, his style of composition for the marimba was less idiomatic than that of his colleagues:

I started my career as a composer in 1970, or maybe two or three years before that. At that time, I thought marimba was a standard percussion instrument, but the steel drum was a very exotic instrument. But the marimba, it was just one of the kitchen items [laughs], so I was naturally used to the marimba. I don’t exactly remember about the instrument because at that time, I was doing my composition in such a way that it could be played on any type of instrument, rather than writing on a specific instrument with idiomatic writing. Rather than doing that, it’s very abstract.  

It was also at this time that Mutsuko Fujii began commissioning for duets that she could play with Tomoko Kusakari. Fujii saved a percentage from her regular income as a freelance musician specifically to commission new works and ensured the composer always received a proper sum for their work. On average the fee she would pay the composer was ¥30,000 Yen (approximately $5000 CDN dollars in 2015), but she found this fee to be difficult to raise on her own, particularly considering the number of composers she would commission over the following year. So she developed a marimba duo repertoire with Kusakari and they split the fee, which lessened the financial burden for them individually, while potentially increasing the number of commissioned works. The first work she commissioned was the masterwork *Etude Concertante pour 2 Marimbas* (1977) by Akira Miyoshi:

I would go to listen to concerts hosted by the Japan Composers’ Association. I would go to every concert, and whenever I heard music that I like – I didn’t know the composers at all, but somehow I would get their contact information, I would just call up and say my name is Mutsuko Fujii and this is what I do and I really like your music. My funding was limited, and it was very expensive to commission, so it was only one shot, so I wanted to make sure that I would get good repertoire so I did the research and if I liked the music I would make sure that it was someone who had already written for the marimba so that the composer knows how to write for the marimba. So they know already how the marimba works, so I would just let them write a piece. In that generation of composers, if one

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221 Kondo interview, 2014.
composer doesn’t know what the marimba is and doesn’t know how to write for it, they simply weren’t that important of a composer. So that tells how sensational and what a strong impact Keiko Abe made.222

Abe continued to write her own music amidst all of her other performing, and in 1978 she published Michi, one of the most performed marimba works of the twentieth century. The unique style of this composition was based on a repeating mallet pattern. Rather than tremolo, this modal ostinato creates the impression of accompaniment with fragmented melodies appearing in the upper voice — as is characteristic of Abe’s music — and based on Japanese folk melodies. (See Figure 8, below.) Evidence of this style of writing appears in several composers’ works prior to 1978, but I believe this style of playing was developed by Abe and not any particular composer. I asked Abe if she had played patterns of that nature on the marimba prior to writing Michi and she said, “Yes, for many years.”223 Therefore, it is feasible that this ostinato technique was demonstrated to composers for some time prior to the publication of Michi.

**Figure 8. Michi (1979), original manuscript by Keiko Abe**

In addition to composing her own music, Abe continued to premiere the works of prominent Japanese composers. Tokuhide Niimi explained to me that his masterwork, For Marimba II (1977), was not actually an Abe commission. Similar to Tsubonoh when he wrote Meniscus,
Niimi simply wanted to write for the marimba because he found the sound to be so compelling. As he explained:

No commission. I went to her, I asked her to play the first performance, but I finished composing the piece just three days before the concert. But still surprisingly, she memorized the entire piece, no paper [score] when she first performed it. Very surprising! Keiko was very powerful and had a broad appeal to many Japanese people and brought Japanese pieces around the world; thanks to her, my piece was performed by Robert van Sice and Wim Konink in the Netherlands. Konink later commissioned a piece from me for string quartet with marimba [Trees in a Dream, for Marimba and String Quartet224 – 1996].225

*For Marimba II* has absolutely one of the most dynamic, challenging and imaginative openings of any piece ever written for the marimba. Cascading chromatic fourths and dyads sweep down the keyboard and collapse with tension between the two hands while several textures happen simultaneously with block chords, tremolos and accelerandos. (see Appendix 8)

While Abe continued to mostly commission Japanese composers, Takahashi kept her connections in Europe, commissioning both Japanese and foreign composers. A piece of particular importance that she premiered in 1978226 (though it was actually written for her in 1973) was *Five Scenes From The Snow Country* by prominent German composer Hans Werner Henze (1926-2012). The piece, in five movements (or scenes), is inspired by a continuous snowfall and is mostly very quiet, particularly the third scene that shifts between *pp* and *pppp*. The work was one of Takahashi’s commissions for the Gaudeamus competition in 1973, but it arrived too late to perform:

It [*Five Scenes*] was also related to Gaudeamus. He [Henze] was the third composer I commissioned for the Gaudeamus requirement. I wanted to premiere his piece and he had said yes and he was going to write it, but he didn’t send me the music until very late. His response was always very scattered… It didn’t come in 1973. I asked him at that time, but

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224 published by: Zen-On Music Co. Ltd.
225 Niimi interview, 2014.
226 Takahashi interview, 2014.
I don’t remember exactly when, I just remember it was so late. He finished it way too late to perform it when I was supposed to.\textsuperscript{227}

After premiering \textit{Five Scenes} in 1978 (published by Schott in 1982), Takahashi commissioned a concerto from Yoriaka Matsudaira (b.1931), son of Yoritsune Matsudaira. It turned out to be one of the defining moments of her career when the work received the Otaka Prize, an annual award which still exists today. The prize was established in the memory of composer and conductor Hisatada Otaka (1911-51), who was devoted to improving the Japanese Symphony Orchestra, predecessor of The NHK Symphony Orchestra:

In Japan, one of the big activities I had — one of the highlights of my career — was in 1979 when I commissioned [from] Yoriaki Matsudaira a piece called \textit{Oscillation}. It won the most prestigious prize for composition in Japan — still now — The Otaka prize. The committee considers every orchestral piece commissioned in one year, and they pick one. As part of the grand prize, I performed this piece for four consecutive nights with the NHK Symphony Orchestra. It was the twenty-eighth Otaka Prize. It is still going now annually, and to this day, this piece is the only marimba concerto to win the prize. In the Japanese music scene, the marimba was becoming a hot instrument of this generation, but it was still in the small category of the percussion world, or the composer’s world. But I think the fact that this marimba concerto won The Otaka Prize, it confirmed that the marimba is a solo instrument to the same level as piano. It legitimized the marimba.\textsuperscript{228}

4.4 The Tokyo Quintet 1973-1983

Keiko Abe developed not only solo repertoire for the marimba, she also commissioned and premiered chamber repertoire featuring the marimba with the Tokyo Quintet, a group she founded and which existed for a decade. For the first time, some of Japan’s greatest composers created chamber music with a focus on the marimba. (See Appendix 8) Core members included Abe (marimba), Makoto Aruga (percussion), Ryu Noguchi (flute), Moto Miyajima (clarinet), and

\textsuperscript{227} Takahashi interview, 2014.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.
Masahiko Tanaka (double-bass). I asked Abe why she decided to pursue activity with the marimba in chamber music:

I was feeling the need to explore the combination of these instruments focusing on the marimba. Like a solo marimba with orchestra, I wanted to explore solo marimba with chamber ensemble. I kept speaking with the principal players of the various sections of the orchestra, and whoever was really excited by this idea; we just got together. Which also led to the strange instrumentation of clarinet, double bass, flute, percussion and marimba.229

With great help of her husband, she chose the repertoire as Artistic Director and administrated all the performances for the ensemble. The idea of starting the ensemble, however, was in fact her husband’s and all of the commissions were funded through Columbia Studios:

The commissions were through Columbia. In the beginning it was just a project that we put together, and my husband really helped to put it together. It was also my husband’s idea to form the Quintet, so he was very cooperative from the beginning.230

Other projects emerged through Columbia Studios and Abe was able to commission many composers to create short works for the quintet to accompany thirty-two television cartoons created and broadcast for children. The following lists composers and the number of works they wrote for this project:

Akihiro Komori (5)
Jo Kondo (1)
Katsuhiko Tsubonoh (2)
Sei-Ichiro Uno (1)
Kenjiro Urata (1)
Shin Kawabe (1)
Matsaharu Kikuchi (3)
Tokuhide Niimi (3)
Shuko Mizuno (1)
Yasuo Sueyoshi (1)
Mitsuaki Mizuyama (1)
Kurodo Mori231 (1)
Kouichi Sugiyama (2)

229 Abe interview, 2014.
230 Ibid.
231 Kurodo Mori was a composer who named himself after his two favourite composers. In Japanese pronunciation Kurodo is Claude as in Debussy, and Mori is Maurice as in Ravel.
Kousei Fujita (1)
Yoshio Mamiya (1)
Akihiro Komori (1)
Norio Fukushi (1)
Seiji Yokoyama (1)
Hiroaki Minami (1)
Nozomi Aoki (1)
Takehuni Hiraoshi (1)
Kazuaki Ogikubo (1)

Often these works would develop into full concert works. Jo Kondo explained that his work for animation titled, *Fushigina Yama no Ojiisan* (1979), was quickly reworked into one of his noted chamber works, *An Elder’s Hocket* (1979):

I was asked to write for a TV cartoon and I wrote it very quickly. Then afterwards, I realized it works as a concert piece, so I gave it a new name, a much shorter name. The original title was the title of the cartoon.

Although all of these works for animation were released on album by Columbia, the album is currently out of print. Through Columbia, many new concert chamber works were created for the Tokyo Quintet, all featuring the marimba as a solo instrument. Furthermore, most of these expanded concert works were recorded and released through Columbia records. In addition to a *Light Classics* recording featuring works by Khachaturian, Debussy, Dvorak and de Sarasate, the quintet released *Contemporary Music of Japan* in 1974. The repertoire for this disc included *Nocturne* by Akira Miyoshi, *Obsession* by Teruyuki Noda, *Pentalpha* by Yoshihisa Taira, *Ripple of the Wind* by Katsuhiro Tsunoboh, *Territory* by Joji Yuasa, and *Synkretismen 1* by Maki Ishii.

Following the example of the Tokyo Quintet, marimbist Takayoshi Yoshioka founded the Pleiades Quintet (1979-2006) and premiered Japanese works for that instrumentation, including several by Akira Miyoshi (all of the members of the Pleiades Quintet were in fact students of the members of the Tokyo Quintet). Despite the success of the ensemble in commissioning some of Japan’s leading composers of the day and the assurance of funding through Columbia records, The Tokyo Quintet never toured outside of Japan because the musicians were working

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232 Kondo interview, 2014.
233 *Tokyo Quintet And Animation: the encounter of pictures and music*, Nippon Columbia GL-7009–7010 (out of print)
234 Columbia GX-7003-7004, 1974
simultaneously in the orchestra, which negated the possibility of touring long distances.\textsuperscript{236} Nonetheless, with the formation of The New York Quintet, founded by marimbist William Moersch, these works were presented to the contemporary music community of New York City only a few years after being premiered in Tokyo. These important works by some of Japan’s most influential composers were quickly disseminated around the globe.

4.5 The 1980s and early 90s

The 1980s was a decade of unsurpassed activity on the marimba and exponential growth of marimba repertoire. By this time Japanese marimba works were being performed throughout North America and Europe, made possible by effective distribution from both publishing and recording corporations, mostly based in Japan where Fujii, Abe, Takahashi and many more were premiering new masterworks for the marimba on a regular basis. Abe turned her attention from the Tokyo Quintet to large-scale works with percussion ensemble featuring marimba solo, and Takemitsu, Ichiyanagi, Ishii, Abe, Nishimura and Miyoshi created lasting masterworks.

In 1980 and 1981, Mutsuko Fujii commissioned two new works by Tsubonoh and the other by Niimi. Tsubonoh’s \textit{Fantom Fire} was premiered by Fujii and Kusakari in Ginza Yamaha Hall in 1980, and Niimi’s \textit{Enlaçage III} was premiered in Ginza Chuo Kaikan Hall in Tokyo in 1981. Again, Fujii paid for the commissions with her own funds, and Tsubonoh composed a call-and-response style of piece, with the intention of creating a sensation of friction.:

\begin{center}
My idea for this piece for two marimbas is to create a friction between the two instruments, perhaps in such a way as to cause heat and then fire. Essentially, this happen through the call and response process.\textsuperscript{237}
\end{center}

The work begins with a mysterious low tremolo, swaying unfettered between the two marimbas; in fact, this intended effect of call-and-response is continuously visible throughout the score. Below in Figure 9, we see an ever-increasing density of the marimbas responding to each other with mostly similar rhythmic cells; additionally, the note indicated as “x” is to be played with the handle of the mallet on the side of the marimba bar, to create another wood texture:\textsuperscript{238}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{236} Abe interview, 2014.
\item \textsuperscript{237} Tsubonoh interview, 2014.
\item \textsuperscript{238} Tsubonoh, Hatsuhiro, “\textit{Fantom Fire}”. The Japan Federation of Composers 8212543, 1980. 7
\end{itemize}
Like *Fantom Fire*, many works that emerged in the 1980s were programmatic, narrative and suggestive of something real or imagined. In 1981, Takemitsu composed a series of works titled *Rain Tree* that was based on a novel by Kenzaburo Oé:

> It has been named the 'rain tree' for its abundant foliage continues to let fall rain drops collected from last night’s shower until well after the following midday. Its hundreds of thousands of tiny leaves — finger like — store up moisture while other trees dry up at once. What an ingenious tree, isn’t it?

Of the myriad of profound contributions to keyboard percussion repertoire from Japan in the late

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240 There is a series of three compositions by Takemitsu on the Rain Tree. Rain Tree Sketch (1982)and Rain Tree Sketch II (1992, in memoriam Olivier Messiaen).

241 from *Atama no ii, Ame no Ki* 1980  Clever Rain Tree.
twentieth century, *Rain Tree* (1981)\(^{242}\) stands alone as a singular masterpiece not only in the whole of international percussion repertoire, but within the larger context of contemporary western art music. It is a keyboard percussion trio\(^{243}\) consisting of vibraphone, two marimbas and a collection of crotales.\(^{244}\) The piece was completed on May 10, 1981, and premiered\(^{245}\) by percussionists Sumire Yoshihara, Yasunori Yamaguchi and Atsushi Sugawara on May 31st at the Seibu theatre in Tokyo. Its textures are profound:\(^{246}\)

My music is like a garden, and I am the gardener. Listening to my music can be compared to walking through a garden and experiencing the changes in light, pattern, and texture.

As pianist and scholar Dr. Tomoko Ishikki writes, “*Rain Tree* is used as a metaphor of water circulating in the cosmos.”\(^{247}\) It begins with a single note on a crotale, like a raindrop, then two and three, and soon a dense labyrinth of intricately woven textures emerge. From beneath this canopy of sound, one strike on the vibraphone surfaces and gradually builds into a gentle cadenza over the crotales and introduces us to Takemitsu’s rich harmonic world based on “Messiaen’s modes of limited transposition in order to construct the pitch collections evocative of cosmic imagery.”\(^{248}\) As the vibraphone fades away, two marimbas enter with a lilting hocket, slowly building to a density of juxtaposing patterns. From these few instruments, groundswells emerge, reminiscent of Debussy’s orchestral masterpiece, *La Mer*, created in part by brilliant counterpoint (see Appendix 10), eventually washing away and transporting the listener to a small and silent place…and still the raindrops fall around us, this time on two marimbas (see Appendix 11). Virtuosic passages then explode in fast moving sections, unisons and climbing passages (see Appendix 12) that sound like gusts of wind and pockets of density like the driving rain falling around us, with light, murmuring thunder — and then a stillness, a peace, the calm (see Appendix 13). The rain has passed, and we are left cleansed and nurtured by these forces of

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\(^{243}\) **Player A:** Marimba (4.0 octave), 3 crotales (F#, Bb, C low octave)

**Player B:** Marimba (4.0 octave), 3 crotales [A (below middle C), Ab, B low octave]

**Player C:** Vibraphone, 11 crotales [B (below middle C), Eb, E, F, F#, G, Ab, A low octave - C#, F, C# high octave]

\(^{244}\) Crotales, or antique cymbals are small metallic tuned discs.

\(^{245}\) The score includes a lighting option so that each performer is illuminated by an overhead spotlight when he or she is playing, and is in darkness in the short rests and longer periods of inactivity.

\(^{246}\) Wolfgang Breyer, “Toru Takemitsu Interview,” *Soundtrack! Magazine*, Dec. 1993

\(^{247}\) Tomoko Ishikki, *Toru Takemitsu’s Cosmic View: The Rain Tree Sketches* (Houston, TX: University of Houston, 2001), 14.

\(^{248}\) Ishikki, 14.
nature so brilliantly translated onto these instruments by this master composer.²⁴⁹

In 1982, Takemitsu wrote another work for keyboard percussion, *Cross-Hatch for Marimba and Vibraphone (or two keyboards)*, a rather brief and repetitive work vaguely reminiscent of the faster passages in *Rain Tree*. Although most interpretations of *Rain Tree* are approximately twelve minutes long, *Cross-Hatch* is only slightly longer than one minute. It was premiered by Sumire Yoshihara and Hiroyuki Iwaki (whom I discuss below) in Karuizawa, near Tokyo.

With the success of *Michi* and several other works to her credit, Keiko Abe wrote many of her most widely acclaimed and most performed works in the early 1980s. In 1982, Abe composed *Variations on Japanese Children’s Songs*, which she premiered later that year in Austria, and in 1984 she composed *Dream of the Cherry Blossoms*, which she premiered in Wurzburg, Germany; both works are modal, but very contrasting in nature. Although much can be derived from the programmatic titles of the pieces that are traditionally narrative, *Variations* is a remarkably intense work with driving stacked fourth dyads: aggressive, passionate, deep and dark in the lower register, and densely notated. *Dream*, however, is a lilting work based on the Japanese folk song, “*Sakura, Sakura*” (Cherry Blossoms, Cherry Blossoms). Although both works are challenging to perform as a marimbist, they are accessible to listeners and in a relatively short, simple rondo form. Both of these works were immediately embraced by American marimbists looking for new and gratifying works for the marimba.

After premiering and championing dozens of extraordinarily challenging works and playing a decade with the Tokyo Quintet, she decided to shift her repertoire commission focus to marimba with percussion ensemble:

> From Miki’s *Marimba Spiritual* in 1983/84, that was the time I started thinking that I want more pieces from a composer who can captivate the audience, and their support. It needed to be more accessible; 1984 was the year Marimba Spiritual was premiered in Amsterdam, then the same year I played PASIC in Michigan, and premiered it there. I just flew over the continents.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ It is of interest to note that Takemitsu dedicated this work to the poet, Kenzaburo Oe, and French percussionist, Sylvio Gualdo, and many incorrectly assume that Gualdo premiered the work. In fact, the dedication to Gualdo was part of an agreement between Gualdo and Takemitsu.

²⁵⁰ Abe interview, 2014.
Miki’s famous work, *Marimba Spiritual*, includes three drumming percussionists who shout and perform in driving rhythmic unisons with many call-and-response moments pitted against the flashy and virtuosic solo marimba. The work is exciting and ritualistic, and is today an international staple of the marimba repertoire. Other noted works which positioned Abe as marimba soloist with percussion ensemble include *Kala for Marimba and Six Percussionists* (1989) by Akira Nishimura, *Rin-Sai for Marimba and Six Percussionists* (1987) by Miyoshi, and Maki Ishii’s formative work, *Concertante for Marimba and Six Percussionists* (1988), discussed below.

The first piece Toshi Ichiyanagi wrote for marimba, *Paganini Personal* (1983), \(^{251}\) commissioned from marimbist and prominent conductor Hiroyuki Iwaki, is one of the most performed pieces in the marimba repertoire. This wonderfully imaginative two-mallet work for marimba with piano based on Paganini’s *Cappricio No. 24* (1805-09) was received so successfully that Ichiyanagi made several other versions of the work, including a version for two pianos, and for marimba with orchestra. Iwaki, a former student of Asabuki, was conductor for a time with the NHK Symphony. According to Ichiyanagi, “[Iwaki] was one of the top three conductors in Japan.”\(^{252}\) Iwaki redefined himself as a marimba player with this work that he performed frequently with his wife (or occasionally Ichiyanagi) on piano:

> He must have played *Paganini Personal* 70 or 80 times because his wife was a pianist, so they played it much. And I played it with him too.\(^{253}\)

Although Iwaki was an accomplished marimbist, his greatest contribution to Japanese contemporary music was as a devoted conductor who served the great composers of the day. Not only did he conduct their works well, Ichiyanagi explains that he was also responsible for commissioning large orchestral works with Orchestra Ensemble Kanizawa:

> He was the best conductor for Japanese composers because he went to Kanazawa — so he would commission and premiere big orchestral works by Japanese composers over 20

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\(^{252}\) Ichiyanagi interview, 2014.

\(^{253}\) Ibid.
years, maybe over 20 people we commissioned. Maki Ishii and I were the first two composers he featured.\textsuperscript{254}

In 1983, one of the most technically advanced serialist works from Maki Ishii was premiered and commissioned by Mutsuko Fujii. *Hiten-Seido II for Marimba Duo (Op. 55)* received its first performance Sagetsu Hall in Tokyo, again with Kusakari as second marimbist. Later in 1987, Fujii premiered *Hiten-Seido III* in Ishibashi Memorial Hall in Tokyo,\textsuperscript{255} and also performed Ishii’s *Concertante*. I mention all these works together because they are remarkably similar in nature, and in the next chapter I will comment more in-depth on the unique nature of Ishii and his distinctive language in his remarkable marimba works.

Ichianagi wrote his second work for marimba, *Portrait of Forest* (1983), which was commissioned by Atsushi Sugahara and premiered in Sagetsu Hall, Tokyo, on September 28\textsuperscript{th} for his solo recital, “Sound of John Cage and Toshi Ichianagi.” *Portrait*, both a peaceful and aggressive work is reminiscent of natural environments, but the internal message was, in fact, politically motivated. It was the first time Ichianagi had written for four-mallet marimba, and his first draft was not well received by Sugahara:

> The first time I wrote the parts, they were too complicated. When I first gave *Portrait of a Forest* to Atsushi, he was upset and so I had to simplify it, so that is when I learned to visualize the mallet movement.\textsuperscript{256}

*Portrait of Forest* was inspired by Ichianagi’s friendship with John Cage and their ventures into the woods to search for mushrooms:

> It was sort of a memorable piece. I spent a lot of time with John Cage and he loved nature. We very often went together to pick mushrooms. But you had to be careful because I think he became ill because of that. He drove me to where he liked to go, and we stopped somewhere in the woods and we were going there to pick mushrooms. And about that time, pollution in Japan was very bad — like China is now. We were very much concerned about our environment. So, together with John Cage, I wouldn’t say it was a

\textsuperscript{254} Ichianagi interview, 2014.
\textsuperscript{255} And, as mentioned previously, tour it to West Germany and Holland.
\textsuperscript{256} Ichianagi interview, 2014.
hobby, but we felt very concerned about nature. In some places in the summer, birds would sing and that was an image in my composition.\textsuperscript{257}

The beginning and ending of \textit{Portrait} is both serene and suggestive, but the middle section is markedly different: aggressive and driving in the lower register with singular harsh accents in the upper register. I asked Ichiyanagi if this section was still reminiscent of picking mushrooms:

TI: That was my attitude against, I’d say, the Japanese government maybe. They didn’t do anything about the environment.

RS: So, your \textit{Portrait of Forest} included the forest \textit{speaking out} against pollution?

TI: Yes very much so.\textsuperscript{258}

![Figure 10. First section excerpt, Portrait of Forest (1983)](image)

Figure 10. First section excerpt, \textit{Portrait of Forest} (1983)\textsuperscript{259}

![Figure 11. Middle excerpt, Portrait of Forest (1983) (Note: quarter note=100)](image)

Figure 11. Middle excerpt, \textit{Portrait of Forest} (1983) (Note: quarter note=100)\textsuperscript{260}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{257} Ichiyanagi interview, 2014.
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{259} Toshi Ichiyanagi, \textit{Portrait of Forest}. Mainz: Schott,1984.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
Ichianagi wrote another work inspired by nature the very next year, a trio for keyboard percussion titled, *Wind Trace* (1984), was originally commissioned by Group 3 Marimba with Mariko Okada, Mutsuko Tanneya and Atsushi Sugahara. The concert for the premiere was arranged by Toru Takemitsu, and since Tanneya was living in Osaka at the time, he chose his favourite percussionists Sumire Yoshihara, Atsushi Sugahara and Yasunori Yamaguchi. With the exception of Sugahara, the original commissioners did not premiere the work. The piece is based on the Japanese concept of multiple seasons:

> It was my intention to write for just one instrument, but there were so many good players at that time, I decided to write for a trio. In Japan, we have many names for subtle differences in the type of wind, or rain — even now we don’t think in terms of Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. We consider there to be twenty-four seasons. In fact to expand on that idea, some people think in terms of seventy-two seasons in a year. This is very interesting because there are many subtle differences. And in that sense, this piece traces the wind over those many seasons. Each of the twenty-four seasons have names, and some are connected to the snow, and some are connected to insects.

Ichianagi did not write again for the marimba until 1990 when he wrote *The Source* for Momoko Kamiya, who commissioned the work. Kamiya, a young player and a family friend, inspired Ichianagi with her youth and energy; and the intensely dense sections of the work were inspired by African percussionist Kakraba Lobi:

> Momoko was quite young when she asked me to write the piece. Her mother and father [were] very good friends with my wife and I, in fact we travel together sometimes. So it was through family that this piece was conceived. She was so young and so I liked to think of the piece as being fresh, youthful and energetic. Then I was doing some concert producing, and I had brought an African percussionist for a concert. He was really amazing — his name was Kakraba Lobi — he was like a one-man band. I heard him first at the meta-music festival in Germany, and I brought him to Tokyo and he played at the

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261 Ichianagi interview, 2014.
262 Ibid.
Musée des Saisons in Karuizawa. His cacophony of sounds amazing and it inspired the density of activity in *The Source*.\(^{263}\)

The title, which refers to ancient philosophy, was also inspired by Lobi’s innovation in creating instruments. When he travelled to Japan from Africa, he would bring only tools and not instruments. Ichiyanagi was inspired by how Lobi was able to create unique instruments from materials he sourced in Japan. I asked Ichiyanagi to what does the title *The Source* refer:

Something ancient, something people can’t really understand now – an ancient way of living, of thinking. It was on my mind because Lobi, when he came from Africa, did not bring many instruments with him – he only brought three tools and made his instruments here and left them here. We invited him here four or five times, and each time he would only bring tools.\(^{264}\)

Other significant works from the 1980s included Yuji Takahashi’s, *While I am Crossing the Bridge* (1984), premiered by Sumire Yoshihara. This work is gentle and meandering and not aggressive or virtuosic like the works Abe pursued. Takahashi wrote a similar work for Mutsuko Tanneya titled, *A Lullaby* (1985), which she premiered in Ongaku no Tomo Hall in Tokyo and later recorded on one of her most celebrated albums, *Marimba Express*.\(^{265}\) Akira Miyoshi wrote *Letters to God* (1985) for Mutsuko Fujii and the Nishirokugou Children’s Chorus. This work is in multiple contrasting movements, at times virtuosic on the marimba, but always filled with childlike wonder and humour.

In 1987, Jo Kondo wrote a much performed and seldom recorded trio for marimbas titled, *A Volcano Mouth* (1987). For the entire duration of this trio, Kondo explores the texture of the quiet marimba tremolo with drifting harmonies and a slight emphasis on the upper voice to create a sort of melody:

At that time, I was very much involved with the tremolo. I found that the sustain sound, especially in the piano (dynamic), the rolling was just so beautiful. And I tried to write

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\(^{263}\) Ichiyanagi interview, 2014.  
\(^{264}\) Ibid.  
\(^{265}\) fontec FOCD-3257
simply using that material without any hitting. That’s how I actually found the marimba and since then, I write more of the tremolo, than hitting it.\textsuperscript{266}

Figure 12. Excerpt, \textit{A Volcano Mouth (1987)}\textsuperscript{267}

Entering the 1990s several other extraordinary works were being premiered by top performers. Some of these works include \textit{Dinosaur Period – for Solo Marimba} (1993) by Makoto Moroi, which was commissioned and premiered by Michiko Takahashi in Hamarikyo Asahi Concert Hall, and Norio Fukushi’s \textit{Anima of a Tree} (1995), which was commissioned and premiered by Atsushi Sugahara.

In addition to the marimba solos Maki Ishii wrote in the 1960s and 1970s, he also wrote several concertos for the marimba between 1988 and 1992. Although many of the works listed so far by other Japanese composers are inspired by a myriad of influences, including traditional Japanese folk melody, French impressionism, unique Japanese conceptualizations such as \textit{ma}, or multiple combinations therein, Ishii combines his thorough German training in serialism with aspects of Japanese \textit{gagaku} ceremonial music.

He is one of the most important and prolific composers for the marimba and had a perfect comprehension for facilitating technique on the instrument (as Mutsuko Fujii will explain, his work was never edited or altered by the performer prior to performance or publication). Often, percussionists are overwhelmed by the complexity of Ishii’s harmonic ingenuity (frequently dismissed incorrectly as chromaticism) and the resultant rapidly changing textures and patterns

\textsuperscript{266} Kondo interview, 2014.
regularly incorporating all five octaves of the marimba at once. To better understand the inner workings of Maki Ishii’s marimba compositions, I provide a detailed analysis in the next section of this paper of some of the micro and macro-components from which these masterpieces are constructed. By exploring Ishii’s musical language and exposing repeating patterns and ideologies, I clearly define the influence of his Germanic serialistic training (evidenced in the manipulation of dodecaphonic harmonic substructures) and his brilliant application of these ideas uniquely transcribed to the marimba keyboard. Ishii had a singular voice in his marimba compositions, and they were unlike any other works that arose from Tokyo in the late twentieth century.

4.6 Maki Ishii’s Marimba

Maki Ishii was the son of Baku Ishii (1886-1962) who was one of Japan’s most celebrated modernist dancers. In the 1910s his father created buyōshi (dance-poem) that was accompanied by music from Japanese composers, such as Kosaku and Ifukebe, as well as Western composers such as Chopin, Debussy and Stravinsky; Maki Ishii was raised in this rich musical environment. Additionally, his father took him on several occasions to performances of gagaku performed by members of the music department of the Imperial Household Agency at the Imperial Palace.268 His early piano training included anthologies by Bayer, Hohmann and Kayser, and his first public performance as pianist was Chopin’s Ballade No. 4, and as conductor, Mozart’s Eine Kleine Nachtmusik. He left for Berlin in 1958 to study free composition with Boris Blacher (1903-75), counterpoint with Ernst Pepping (1901-1981), harmony with Heinz-Friedrich Hartig (1907-69), and perhaps most importantly, twelve-tone composition techniques with Josef Rufer (1893-1985), who was a former student of Shoenberg. He began composing using twelve-tone technique as taught by Rufer, however he immediately adapted the techniques to his own liking, to the subsequent criticism of Rufer.269 Shortly thereafter, he wrote Four Bagatelles for violin and piano Op.3 (1961), which premiered to much acclaim in September in Darmstadt and, on the same day, at the Gaudeamus festival in Utrecht. Musicologist Koji Sano wrote:

268 Maki Ishii, Maki Ishii’s Music (Germany: Ongaku no tomo, 2002), 15.  
269 Ishii, Ishii’s Music, 17.
Although the *Four Bagatelles* are written in essentially pointillist style, the tension emanating from the long notes in the upper register of the violin has a severity which often brings to mind the *ryūteki* flute [of traditional *gagaku* music].

Ishii’s response to this comment confirms his tendencies toward Germanic expression:

Having been raised on Western music and considering myself a disciple of twelve-tone technique, this was something I had not even remotely foreseen…however I might strive to build on this technique in my own manner, I would never be able to extricate myself from Germanic, romantic forms of musical expression.

When Ishii returned to Japan in 1962, he began searching for a more personal style of composition and experimented with serialism, electronic music and *musique concrète*. Four years later he visited the Hōryūji temple in Nara where he first encountered *Shōmyō*, a style of Japanese Buddhist chant that employs the *yo* pentatonic scale with ascending intervals of two, three, two, two and three semitones. Ishii recounted:

They (the Buddhist monks) then began quietly to chant a sutra. The texture gradually increased in density until the whole of the hall was reverberating with the power of the sutra. This continued without variation for several hours… Listening for the first time to something that seemed almost unfathomable in scope and concept, I experienced the shudder that occurs when one is moved to the depths of one’s being.

Ishii began to experiment with introducing Japanese music elements into a Western setting in the late 1960s. The first of these works, *Expressionen for String Orchestra op.10* (1967), incorporated the coexistence of “two heterogenerous temporal structures” set primarily using extended twelve-tone techniques. Concurrently he began to develop a profound interest in percussion instruments. Ishii believed that percussion instruments had never been taken seriously in Western music, mostly due to the Judaic and Christian religions to which it had been so closely related during its development. He stated:

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271 Ibid., 21.  
274 Ibid., 27.
Unconnected with their historical position in Western music, I am especially interested in the intrinsic, elemental power and the richly expressive potential of these instruments. Furthermore, Ishii developed a style of writing for solo percussion instruments that was unrestricted by meter, allowing the solo performer to make decisions about the pacing and timing of the work while the accompanying instruments repeated ostinato figures. When compared to existing Western feature works for the marimba where all passages were constitutionally applied to fixed meter, the concept of the solo voice playing freely, accompanied by chance-like structure (similar to gagaku) was unique:

In terms of compositional technique, there are limits to the originality one can expect to obtain from writing within a regular metrical framework, and such writing runs the risk of falling into the realm of the trite and banal. On the other hand, although the variety of indeterminate rhythms available is obviously infinite, there are limits to what the performer can technically play and to what the listener is capable of perceiving. The way in which such rhythms are used gives a work its life and identity. [These] kind of problems I have attempted to solve for instance in works such as Concertante for Marimba and Six Percussion, op.79.

Concertante for Marimba and Six Percussion was commissioned by Keiko Abe and Les Percussions de Strasbourg to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the percussion ensemble, and received its premiere in 1988 at the Tokyo Summer Music Festival. Interestingly, Hiten-Seido III for Marimba Solo op.75 (1987) was written the previous year and incorporates the entire Concertante marimba solo, however in the Concertante, Ishii adds another lengthy section to the opening (in addition to the six percussionist accompaniment). Harmonically, 012, 016 and variants 0167, 0156 predominate, based on parallel 5ths, 4ths and tri-tone relationships; the textures are virtuosic, lyrical, and primitive (“quad” chords in parallel); and sections with tremolo are all written idiomatically for the instrument. The piece is in three sections that I consider as moderate, lento, and fast. Although everything is strictly notated, the entire solo part

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275 Ishii, Ishii’s Music, 53.
276 i.e., Paul Creston Concertino (1941), Darius Milhaud’s Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra (1947) or Robert Kurka’s Concerto for Marimba (1959).
277 Ishii, Ishii’s Music, 55.
278 Ishii’s Hiten-Seido series of marimba solos (composed for Mutsuko Fujii) draw inspiration from the elegant and vivid images of heaven depicted on the frescoes and the caves of Tun Huang (China), which stem from the Tang Dynasty (618-907).
is played at a pace chosen by the performer. The only strict pulse is in the accompaniment at the very end of the work. Ishii states:

Confrontation and cooperation performed by the marimba and percussion sections transcend the level of the concept which *Concertante* signified in the past... Confrontation between indeterminacy of rhythm and metronomic rhythm, and fusion of metallic sounds of the West and wooden sounds of East Asia serve to clarify the real meaning of confrontation.²⁷⁹

Ishii constructed the *Concertante* as a tour-de-force for the soloist. Although there are many notes and virtuosic passages, much is written idiomatically for the instrument, and each voicing of his melodic and harmonic components are carefully chosen to fit well on the instrument, to be played extremely quickly, and also possible to play accurately. In the following analysis, I will examine more thoroughly the musical language Ishii used and the groundbreaking way he applied it to the marimba.

![Figure 13. Stacked fourths and fifths in Concertante](image)

These stacked perfect fourths and fifths predominate the texture, with some tritone intervals at the very beginning and closer to the end (circled). The predominant harmony throughout is 016

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²⁸⁰ Maki Ishii, *Concertante for Marimba Solo and 6 Percussions* [sic], op.79. Celle: Moeck, 1996.
in three variations: 016, 0167, and 0156. When considering that any given 0167 chord has four 016 groups, and any given 0156 chord has two 016 groups, there are a total of forty-eight 016 groupings in the passage: More specifically, two 016, five 0156 and nine 0167. The pitch material mostly cycles through all twelve tones with some chromatic descent. The passage is challenging on the marimba due to the triple stops and speed required, as marked by “cresc. e accel.,” “molto accento,” and “<very fast>.” Ishii has voiced these harmonies in a brilliant way. Often, speaking pianistically, one hand is on black notes, the other on white notes, and there is only minimal intervallic change in the hands to alter the interval in the two mallets held in each hand, which allows the performer to play very quickly and not get tangled up in multiple repositioning. This primitive sounding rhythmic motive is identified as “quads.”

281 as previously mentioned, I will also identify several others such as “virtuosic”, “tremolo” and “lyric”.
One of the virtuosic passages from the beginning of the piece is isolated in Figure 14, above. Again we see the primary harmonic material is 0167 and 0156, the second of which is transposed up a fifth. Examining the fourth beat of the bar, the ascending thirty-second notes in two 0167 groupings are separated by a major second (G,A). This one moment is very important in the development of marimba composition techniques. Note that in the ascending passage of stacked fourths (1,4,1,4), the left hand (1,2 mallets) remains on the white notes of the marimba, and the right hand (3,4 mallets) remains on the black notes, which permits extraordinary speed for the marimbist as well as accuracy. Here again the internal interval in the hands remain constant.

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This virtuosic passage in Figure 15 above is interspersed with multiple tremolo textures. Starting from the beginning of the measure, there are six chords in tremolo, but with the second, fourth and sixth, the right hand is inverted, and this creates an effect of simultaneous ascension and descension. Looking slightly more closely at the pitches, there are five 0167 chords and one 016 chord which, following the pattern, really should be an 0167, but why does Ishii leave this as an 016 chord, doubling the G sharp and omitting the A? And why in this cycle of twelve notes (some repeated), does he save the G-sharp and D for the last chord only? Perhaps one answer can be found in the next virtuosic flourish where ten of twelve tones are used in a fourteen-note passage with some repeated, most notably the A is repeated three times. Perhaps Ishii was creating a sensation of resolution here, by leaving the A out of the penultimate tremolo chord and repeating it three times in the next passage.

In the next tremolo (the third event in the measure), the pitches of the left hand are repeated in the right hand, creating a warmer sound than the first tremolo passage. The virtuosic pattern illustrated in Figure 16 that follows is an identical transposition of the proceeding passage, with

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284 That is, in the second chord, D#4-A#4 is ascending, rather than A#3-D#4 ascending.
notes one through fourteen transposed up a minor sixth with two extra notes (now with three Es, C-sharps and Fs).

Figure 16. Lyrical passage with stacked 016 in Concertante

This slow-moving, gentle and “floating” section of the piece has repeated notes in the marimba descending by alternating tritone and perfect fourths (mostly), separated by chromatic cluster cells. Of the six cells in this passage, two have identifiable intervalllic relationships. The first and third are the same, as are the fourth, fifth and sixth (the second is similar to these sets, but slightly more dense). The repeated descending notes are constructed as stacked 016; that is to say that any three of these notes in a row create an 016 cell.

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Ishii, Concertante, 1996.
Isolated in Figure 17, above, is perhaps the most unique passage in the entire work: an extended tremolo section in the lowest (fifth) octave of the marimba, accompanied by quiet metallophones in the percussion, including three vibraphones. This section is the most still and pensive in the work and directly precedes the cacophonous, virtuosic and energetic section at the end. The harmony here is clearly different from the rest of the piece; mostly stacked perfect fourths creates a warm diatonic sound in the most resonant range of the marimba. In the very lowest voice, however, there remains a clear 0167 relationship.

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Identified in Figure 18 above is a passage from the very end of the piece where Ishii brings together the various textures and cycles through them using at first a tremolo on the low F-sharp, which will be referred to as a “grounding element” (a component of the music that is clearly identifiable and therefore referential to the alternate activity). This pitch is eventually played a perfect fourth lower on the low C-sharp of the marimba and marked as *fffff*. Also worth noting in the fourth measure of this example, amidst the virtuosic flurry, Ishii has included glissandi between several of the notes, contributing to the absolute tour-de-force as this work has come to be known.

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In Figure 19, the accompanying rhythmic canon from six percussionists is shown with an example of the subsequent material from the solo marimba (on the adjacent page, played together). A remarkable effect is created here, as it is the first time in the work (nearly twenty minutes in) where a repeating rhythm is audible. The percussionists continue to grow in dynamic and tempo, while the marimba soloist is free to play this increasingly virtuosic material over top. It is similar to the technique Ishii used in his early work, Expressionen for String Orchestra op.10 (1967), which incorporated his idea of the coexistence of “two heterogenerous temporal structures.” Ishii used this technique in many orchestral works, where he continues to add layers of energy to create powerful endings to his works.

In South–Fire–Summer Concerto for Multi-Percussion and Orchestra (1992), the marimba solo is only one small section of this massive multi-percussion concerto. A long opening solo

\[^{288}\text{Ishii, Concertante, 1996.}\]
\[^{289}\text{Ishii, Ishii’s Music, 27.}\]
cadenza is followed by orchestration that builds in intensity to the end, incorporating a multi-percussion soundscape and then a blisteringly virtuosic marimba solo and percussion solo (including eighteen drums). As Ishii explained:

In this concerto I have striven after the enormous diversity which is a feature of percussion instruments and especially of the marimba; making transcendental technical demands of the performer, I have pursued areas such as the unique sound world of percussion instruments and the idea of acoustic accumulation, the dynamism of the marimba, and rhythmic transformation in the writing for the drums. I have then pitted the solo percussion part against the orchestra to give expression to a new world of sound. South, fire, and summer – the three elements which constitute the subtitle of this work – and the traditional Japanese scale of ōshiki-chō on which the acoustic material of my work is based are treated in the Kangen Ongi as metonyms for the direction of south. Furthermore, E-flat, D, E, F, and B – the constituent pitches of a motif which plays an important role in the work – are taken from German pitch names which appear in the German and English forms of the subtitle, i.e. süd, feuer, sommer – south, fire, summer.²⁹⁰

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In Figure 4.20, the programmatic pitch material (grounding elements) is identified with a secondary motive that recurs throughout the work. Most noticeable about these passages is the general diatonic tonality of the outer notes (most audible) in relation to the twelve-tone virtuosic flourishes that occur in Figure 15. Heard in the first element of Fig. 4.20 are the pitches assigned to the title of the work within a four-octave E-flat leap, then followed by the secondary motive descending from E-flat a perfect fourth to A-sharp and ascending a whole tone away from the initial pitch. Although the entire solo passage lasts for only a minute, the pitch form motive occurs twelve times, and the secondary motive occurs ten times, as well as numerous other times throughout the entire work.

Figure 21. Excerpt, 012 relationships in *South-Fire-Summer*
In the above Figures 21 and 22 are examples of the many intermittent flourishing virtuosic patterns in the work which seem at first to be non-patterned and simple extensions of chromatic clusters. Taking a closer look, however, we see that many relationships occur within the inner voices, the outer voices and the general twelve-tone structure of the entire passage. In Figure 4.19, twelve 012 relationships are isolated throughout the passage, and in Figure 4.20, similar 016 relationships are isolated, in red the audible outer voicings of 016, and in green, the inner voice relationships of 016. In both figures, almost three complete cycles of twelve tones are identified, with the exception of the middle cycle missing a B-flat.

The marimba works of Maki Ishii are revered globally to this day. Ishii’s Germanic studies of twelve-tone technique clearly influenced his compositional method for much of his life, as demonstrated through charting twelve-tone rows in his music, the transpositions of this material, and the overwhelming propensity towards 012 and 016 forms, but with the very important exception of, for instance, the mostly diatonic bass passage in Concertante.

What is particularly brilliant about Ishii’s writing for the marimba is his daring imagination and almost superhuman expectations of the performer. And what I find most inspiring about his writing is the statement below from Mutsuko Fujii, who privately and behind the scenes, raised

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funds for some of these commissions that were not her own. As mentioned previously, Mutsuko Fujii commissioned both *Hiten Seido II for Two Marimbas*, and *Hiten Seido III for Solo Marimba*. An excerpt of my conversation with Fujii regarding *Hiten-Seido II*:

RS: And after you received his piece, did you work with him on it; did you change much of what he wrote? Or is what we hear now the original version?

MF: No change whatsoever. It was all done and complete in his head and nothing was changed. That is what is so amazing about his work.²⁹³

### 4.7 The Japanese Marimba Abroad

The marimba repertoire that proliferated in Tokyo also rapidly disseminated throughout the United States and Europe. American percussionists had long been performing contemporary art music on percussion instruments and in multiple percussion set-ups, but until the emergence of Abe’s commissioned repertoire, there was no solo marimba music that was suited to perform for a sophisticated audience. American and European percussionists were intrigued by this new repertoire emerging in Japan, partly out of general musical interest, but also because they could play serious music on the marimba and not have to transport dozens of instruments for each piece on their programme. Having already discussed the extraordinary activity that both Takahashi and Yoshihara contributed in Europe through winning major competitions like Gaudeamus and Geneva, and how so much of their activity was often outside of Japan, I will now focus on the touring activity of Abe and Fujii and the re-migration of the marimba to America as a newly founded medium for contemporary art music.

The following is a list of some of the first performances in the United States of Japanese works commissioned and premiered by Abe. All of the American marimbists listed below became some of the most celebrated and influential pedagogues as the leading marimba artists of the twentieth century:

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²⁹³ Fujii interview, 2014.
1973

- Karen Ervin, then a student at the University of Arizona in the Masters Degree in Composition, performed the North-American premiere of *Time for Marimba* by Minoru Miki.
- Michael Rosen, Professor of Percussion at Oberlin, performed the North American premiere of *Torse III* by Miyoshi and *Marimba-Stück* by Ishii at the University of Illinois’s “Day of Percussion” event in September.
- Tom Siwe an active professional in Chicago and then member of the Board of Directors for Percussive Arts Society (PAS), wrote an article for the *Percussive Notes Magazine* on Japanese Percussion Music.

1974

- Gordon Stout, a student at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, performed *Time for Marimba* (and premiered his own composition, *Mexican Dances*).

1975

- Japanese publisher Ongaku No Tomo Sha published *Modern Japanese Marimba Pieces*, a collection including *Time for Marimba, Torse III, Mirage pour Marimba* and *Monovalence I*.
- William Moersch, a student at the University of Michigan (and later founder of The New York Quintet), performed the *Mattinata Quintet* in March.

1976

- Leigh Howard Stevens began concertizing *Time for Marimba* on a regular basis.

David P. Eyler compiled the fifty most played marimba pieces at American colleges between Spring of 1976 and Spring of 1979 and published his findings in *Percussive Notes*. Within a decade, the works premiered by Abe in Tokyo, were the fifth and sixth most played pieces at American college recitals, according to Robert Bridge:

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Michael Rosen arranged two concerts for Abe in 1977 at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in Tennessee, ten college master-classes across the country, a concert in Alice Tully Hall in New York City sponsored by Music from Japan, and a live radio broadcast on WQXR. Her PASIC programs included works by Miki, Tanaka, Sueyoshi, and Miyoshi, among others. The performances were well attended by percussionists from across North America and Europe, including Stout and Robert van Sice, who would go on to study with Abe in Japan and become internationally acclaimed marimbists. After her recital, van Sice said: “It was an epiphany, to say the least. At that time, none of us had ever heard anyone play the marimba at that level before.”

Abe returned to PASIC again in 1981, this time with a five-octave marimba from Yamaha, a Yamaha technician, a driver and a translator. She was deemed the “Queen of the Marimba” and was as equally celebrated at home as she was in the United States. During this tour she met Michael Udow, Professor of Percussion at the University of Michigan, who invited Abe back to PASIC in 1984. She also met Jan Pustjens, the principal percussionist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam, who invited Abe to play a concert with a percussion ensemble as presented by the Royal Concertgebouw and to lead a ten-day international marimba class prior to the concert. One of the students in attendance at the festival was Nebosja Zivkovic, who now one of the most celebrated marimba and percussion players in Europe. Additionally,

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296 Kite. Abe, 87.
297 Ibid.
298 Zimmerman interview, 2013.
Evelyn Glennie, one of today’s most celebrated percussion soloists, would go to study with Abe in Japan in 1986.299

By 1991, of the top fifteen works played in American colleges, four were written by Abe. When the New York Quintet in New York City presented works that Abe’s Tokyo Quintet had premiered in Japan ten years earlier, American composers flocked to hear this music. One of these composers may have been Jacob Druckman, who in 1986 would write Reflections on the Nature of Water, a solo marimba work for Moersch and premiered in 1987, a piece which was described to me as “the first non-Japanese Japanese marimba piece.”300 and is also highly suggestive of French impressionism.

Mutsuko Fujii also toured extensively throughout the United States only two years after Abe’s first tour. On May 2nd, 1979, she made her North American debut in Howard Auditorium at the Louisiana Tech University Department of Music. On the programme she was joined by Toru Miura (euphonium) and Helen Woodridge (piano), and together they performed Sonata a Trois by J. B. Loeillet and Day Dream by Soichi Konagaya (b. 1949). Fujii also performed Two Movements for Marimba by Tanaka and a Keiko Abe arrangement of Czardas (1904) by Vittorio Monti (1868-1922). On the same tour, Fujii performed a markedly different programme on May 6th in the Lewis and Selma Miller Concert Hall in the Duerksen Fine Arts Centre at Wichita State University; on this programme she was also joined by Miura and repeated performances of the Tanaka and Konagaya, but also included Michi by Abe, and was accompanied by saxophonist Fumiyoshi Maezawa to perform the North American premiere of Yuyama’s Divertimento for Marimba and Alto-Saxophone and Piece for Euphonium and Piano, Op.6 by Takuzo Inagaki.


299 Kite, Abe, 90.
300 Haruka Fujii, interview with the author, Toronto, ON, CA, Jun 14, 2013.
4.8 Conclusions

The repertoire created in Tokyo in the 1960s to the end of the century had global influence on marimba repertoire and pedagogy. It was created with the support of significant institutions such as the NHK and Columbia Records, brave virtuosic performers and curious, imaginative composers. This repertoire spread quickly around the globe by means of high quality recordings and publishing. In the Chapter Five I will examine the period of time in which this repertoire was created and discuss the possibility of there being a golden age of the marimba in Tokyo.
Chapter 5: A Golden Age of the Marimba in Japan?

In Chapter Five, I ponder whether or not there was a golden age of the marimba in Japan. I have often heard people refer to 1965 to 1985 as a special era, but I question whether this is true and if those dates are accurate. For instance, Maki Ishii’s principal activity on the marimba was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s; additionally, as suggested by the marimba premieres illustrated in Figure 4, the amount of commissioning activity for the marimba increased in every decade since the 1960s and into the early 2000s. Notably, 129 works premiered in the 1980s and 197 in the 1990s. When I asked Sumire Yoshihara about a golden age of the marimba in Japan between 1965-85, she said:

From 1973, when I became involved yes, but I’m not sure why the cut-off line is ‘85, but I agree that all the masterworks, like Rain Tree, were created within that time period. I’ve never really analyzed that, or categorized that as a golden age; I haven’t really recognized that before, but it’s because I was the person in there, and I never experienced a cut-off line in the middle of my day–to–day performing.  

This dissertation was inspired by my personal conversation with Mutsuko Fujii when, while touring Canada in 2010, she referred to a golden age of the marimba in Japan. She referenced these dates as 1965 to 1985, and so I asked her why:

From my point of view there are only a handful of composers who can write really good music. That’s the time when this handful of composers were gathering and focusing on the marimba; the composers who captured and grabbed people’s hearts with their music; the intensity of it…The war ended in 1945: I believe the composers who had been through and experienced the worst time in Japan in World War II, maybe they didn’t go to war, but they experienced the worst time in Japan. They had the drive and energy in making music.

I also asked why she thought the marimba was so popular in Japan in the 1960s, and why composers seemed so fascinated with the instrument. Fujii replied:

The marimba was a new instrument. We have, as Japanese, a characteristic of our nationality and being Japanese is finding one new thing that we decide is fun and

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301 Yoshihara interview, 2014.
interesting. We have a habit: We tend to really explore and really experiment with the possibilities of one new thing and that’s not only marimba. We find a lot of new things from outside and we take it from outside and we digest it as our thing. And you can see what we did. For instance, *Edo Moki* [earliest Japanese xylophone] — I am doing my next research paper on the small boat-shaped xylophone. We have a habit because Japanese people were isolated, as an island culture and one race. When something new comes to us, something fun and interesting — and one person decides it’s fun and interesting — that thing becomes trendy, hot and a fad. Everyone wants to explore this same thing, everyone had a drive and a dream. One composer decided that the marimba is interesting and writes a piece for it. Keiko Abe is a great player and performs the work. Then all the composers thought, if I write a piece for marimba, maybe she will play it. Everyone wanted to do the commissioning and collaboration with Keiko Abe, and then every other marimbist wanted to work with the composers who became hot at the time. It was the stream of that.303

If there was indeed a golden age of the marimba, then certainly, as Fujii suggests, it was Keiko Abe who initiated the spark that caused that fire. But when Abe was asked if she agreed with the notion of a golden age and if those dates seemed appropriate, she said:

I agree those are the years of the golden age because the energy level and the passion for the creation of new marimba works, there’s nothing like it at that time…That era from ‘65-‘85. That was an age of exploration, both from musicians and from composers…they started experimenting and they started performing more and more. But eventually, for the audience, I started to feel these pieces are too difficult for the regular audience. From Miki’s *Marimba Spiritual* in 1983/84, that was the time I started thinking that I want more pieces from a composer who can captivate the audience, and their support. It needed to be more accessible; [That is why I commissioned] *Kala* by Nishimura [and] *Rin-Sai* by Miyoshi.304

Abe perceived that the musical tastes of her audiences may have been changing away from the challenging, adventurous and experimental works for the marimba in the 1960s and 1970s, to a more visceral and entertaining style of music in the early 1990s. It was also at this time when the

303 Fujii interview, 2014. [N: deleted first initial for consistency]
304 Abe interview, 2014.
entire contemporary music community in Tokyo was beginning to experience funding cutbacks and withdrawals from corporate, private and public sources. Perhaps this in some way influenced Abe’s decision to try to appeal more to a wider audience with her choices in commissioning works that were more entertaining in nature. That said, Abe refers to the golden age repertoire possessively and longingly, as though it is something tangible from long ago:

I felt like the pieces from the golden age, my repertoire, was able to give a huge impact, but it’s not capable of listening to for a long time. The pieces that are being created now [2014] are very easy to listen to. I don’t believe in easy-listening pieces. They are not going to give an impact into imagination.305

Performers who spoke of the golden age often praised composers, but composers who were asked about this same time period of time tended to praise performers, and chiefly Abe. Jo Kondo commented on the legitimization of the marimba caused by the exponential increase of the number of marimbists in the 1970s:

What amazed me is not how the Japanese composers in the 60s and the 70s treated the instrument or found the instrument, but how those players came to be developed, because, as you said, it’s a new instrument.— Why did those players flourish in this way? I think composers write pieces when they are asked by players. So if there are enough number of marimba players, it’s natural for the composer to write for them. I think that’s how the marimba repertoire grew here… That [was the] time the marimba became one of the “proper” instruments.306

Sueyoshi affirms that the marimba grew exponentially in popularity based on Abe’s generation and the generation before hers, as well:

It widened and widened and widened; students of Keiko-san, students of Aruga-san, students of Okata-san widened the activity, so there were many various types of percussion music, and the marimba is a very familiar instrument in Japan.307

305 Abe interview, 2014.
Regardless of the number of marimbists that emerged in the 1970s and onwards in Tokyo, Keiko Abe remains synonymous with the movement as the instigator of new works and inspiration to many young players, many of whom would go on to teach the next generation. As Tsubonoh explains below, the explosion of interest in the marimba after Keiko Abe’s initial contribution to the development of repertoire, and the instrument itself, has yet to repeat itself:

After the premiere of *Meniscus* when Keiko Abe performed, she was so great, after she performed she taught many students. And then the compositions increased. After that era, I haven’t seen any pieces. What happened in that generation was remarkable, and it has yet to repeat itself.\(^{308}\)

Tsubonoh agreed with the timeline of a golden age. Similarly, Tokuhide Niimi explains why he thinks the marimba became so popular in Japan:

Maybe that depends on Keiko Abe. I think in many ways Keiko was a star, but of course Michiko Takahashi was a very powerful marimba player as well. But for me, Keiko Abe was very, very good; she was very big in the music world. She commissioned many composers, and many for the first time writing for marimba — maybe ten or twenty…I think that’s the principal reason why the marimba became so popular in Japan.\(^{309}\)

Norio Fukushi may have the most panoramic perspective of all. He was an active composer during the supposed golden age, but stayed in tune with the activities of all the several generations to follow as professor at *Geidai*, *Toho* and the Tokyo College of Music. He sees the growth of the marimba in Japan to be ever-increasing, unencumbered by the limitations of funding from public or private sources:

I never thought about the activity of the marimba increasing or decreasing, but recently I have sometimes listened to marimba works again, because I think there younger generation of marimbists and percussionists is growing. That’s why the marimba repertoire has recently expanded in Japan.\(^{310}\)

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\(^{308}\) Tsubonoh interview, 2014.

\(^{309}\) Niimi interview, 2014.

\(^{310}\) Fukushi interview, 2014.
Regardless of whether or not there was a golden age of the marimba in Tokyo, one could comment with certainty that there was an economic bubble that allowed both the public and private sector to invest in the arts, including the creation of many premieres of new music. And when this bubble burst in 1989, the ramifications were felt throughout every aspect of Japanese society.

5.1 The Lost Decade and Culture Shift

After World War II, the Japanese government encouraged citizens to save and then enforced rigorous tariff policies. With more money in the bank system more people were able to successfully apply for loans, credit was easier to obtain, and the Japanese yen gradually appreciated against foreign currencies. Subsequently, private and public corporations were better able to invest in the arts. Between 1986 and 1991, real estate and stock prices became hugely inflated and the economy collapsed in 1992. The decade-long recession that ensued became known as “The Lost Decade” (Ushinawareta Jūnen). Some also use this term to describe the period from 1991 to 2010.

The entertainment industry changed rapidly towards the end of the twentieth century. New distribution outlets emerged by means of the internet, and publicly funded broadcasters the world over were changing their programming to reflect more popular entertainment, directing less funding towards contemporary music programming and commissioning:

I think art music, especially new music was a part of an important representation of the epistemological age, especially right after the Second World War; and it was symbolic for the new intellectual world. But now, the function of art in society has changed a lot and as in the field of politics, populism is going up; art, for most people, is either entertainment, or snobbism.

There is no reason for anyone to support snobbism, and much of the entertainment broadcasted by significant distributors was designed to have broad mainstream appeal. This cultural change seems to have, as Kondo said, “no seat for contemporary society in music anymore.”

311 Kondo interview, 2014.
contemporary literature, architecture, fiction and dance was still prominently valued in Western society at the turn of the millennium, contemporary music no longer seemed to have as prominent a voice. I asked Norio Fukushi how the contemporary music activity shifted with the economy:

Now there is nothing. In my generation when I was working with the NHK, there were a lot of studio musicians providing the music for many dramatic television shows, and the studios asked the composers for music, so they had a lot of jobs at that time… There are only a few composers who can get funding for their work. For younger musicians, they perform music written for very few musicians in a very small concert hall with a very small audience. This situation has increased. There is no standard rate of compensation for performers… If performers today want to commission a new work they need to be subsidized by corporations like Suntory or Mitsubushi, or from the government… If players want to find out the names of the jury members they can find them on the internet. What they often find is that there are very few actual artists on the jury, and many members of the company.  

Fukushi’s insinuation is troubling: a company that supports the commissioning of new works potentially insists that musically untrained employees sit on the jury committee alongside esteemed artists with an equal vote; this suggests the bureaucratization and politicization of the commissioning process. To continue this sentiment, Kondo said:

The whole climate of the culture changed. In the 70s and 80s, there was a lot of commissioning of articles from general journals, like the journal of philosophy, or a journal of poems. Composers frequently contributed material to these various journals, but since the late 90s those offers simply stopped: the philosophy magazine simply presents a philosophical subject, and sometimes some culture, sometimes even art, but not music anymore. So new music was no longer a part of this international climate.

Contemporary music received much attention and funding throughout the Western world during the latter part of the twentieth century and so did the contemporary music scene in Tokyo. As the contemporary music community in various centres around the world adapted to massive shifts in

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312 Fukushi interview, 2014.
313 Kondo interview, 2014.
cultural ideology, so to did the community in Japan. NHK, the primary supporter of contemporary music creation, abandoned the Japanese community after the economic bubble burst in the early 1990s, which reduced funding opportunities for both established and emerging composers:

In the 60s when I was very young, it [contemporary music] was basically an underground culture. There was no mass-communication, but it was underground in small spaces where somebody was doing something interesting, and as time passes those become established, and some become grand things, and I think that if things get that grand, sometimes they collapse. So then, we start up from the underground again.\textsuperscript{314}

While contemporary music is thriving internationally today in 2015, funding is far from abundant — or even close to what the global average may have been in the 1960s and 1970s — or that every concert is well attended, but the international contemporary music community has adapted quickly to its abandonment by public broadcasting and major recording labels. Because the contemporary music community is linked globally by online culture, new technologies enable the dissemination of new ideas in sound and music. In that sense, the community may be considered to be an underground society where all can discover, join and contribute.

\textbf{5.2 Summary and Conclusions}

The marimba emerged from Tokyo by the end of the twentieth century as a prominent instrument in contemporary music for the first time due to the adventurous nature of Japanese performers, the resourcefulness and industrious nature of Japanese instrument manufacturers, private recording companies like Columbia working in tandem with the NHK, as well as the business acumen of publishing companies like \textit{Ongaku No Tomo Sha} and Schott Japan that distributed the works internationally soon after they were premiered. The most important contributors to this golden age of the marimba in Japan were the post-war Japanese composers who, for the first time since Western music was introduced to Japan just 100 years earlier, wrote contemporary art music that was both uniquely Japanese — based inherently in philosophical traditions and sensibilities of their own concepts of time and space — and any other influence, both local and

\textsuperscript{314} Kondo interview, 2014.
global. The emergence of the marimba can be attributed to a vast community of people working together: the product of good ideas from important people.

I considered titling this dissertation, “The Golden Age of the Marimba in Japan,” and intended to conclude the writing having clearly defined a finite period of profound activity. As I continued to learn more about the marimba in Japan, however, I had difficulty defining a golden age because such a claim would necessitate a termination or lessening of activity on the marimba in Japan. I’m simply not convinced that happened.

With the economic downturn of the 1990s, the NHK and private corporations no longer financed contemporary art music activity as they had. Additionally, as the post-war composers and performers aged, some reduced their level of activity. Conversely, activity increased with emerging performers and composers, all protégés of the previous generation. With the development of new music technologies and distribution venues such as the internet came websites, podcasts, blogs, and eventually social media. Perhaps this next generation of artists received less funding than in the past, but it would be difficult to say that their activity is less in quantity, quality or value. Certainly, their opportunities are different.

Unlike in the 1960s and early 1970s, by the early 1990s the marimba was no longer a uniquely Japanese phenomenon as the instrument had migrated back to Europe and North America as a legitimate solo, chamber and orchestral instrument. The marimba in Japan, however, remained very popular, and increasing numbers of new students learned it.

As I discussed previously, several compelling reasons define the post-WWII era as the golden age of the marimba in Japan:

- The most celebrated composers in post-war Japan wrote repeatedly for the marimba in the most productive years of their careers.
- The first Japanese virtuoso marimbists emerged from established xylophone pedagogy and actively engaged these composers during the most productive years of their careers.
- Funding from private and public sources was ample during the post-war period until 1989, when the economy collapsed.
- Works created during this time that were recorded, published and distributed internationally exerted global influence on marimba pedagogy and were accepted into the
international body of marimba repertoire.

- By the late 1970s, the marimba had been re-introduced to Europe and North America as an instrument for contemporary art music and was accepted with extraordinary enthusiasm by percussionists and composers everywhere.

Although I believe all these points are true, I cannot claim that there was a golden age of the marimba in Japan because I cannot commit to the idea that this period clearly ended. A significant shift occurred in global entertainment culture due to a paucity of public funding for commissions, concerts and recording, but I believe the contemporary music community is strong today.

Indeed, the following reasons argue that a golden age of the marimba in Japan has continued today, in 2015:

- The marimba in Japan is still prominent, and many works continue to be commissioned for the instrument.
- The marimba, now incorporated into solo, chamber and orchestral music everywhere and not exclusively in Japan as it was in the 1960s and early 1970s, is, therefore, no longer a uniquely Japanese phenomenon.
- In 1996, Keiko Abe and Klaus Tresselt organized the World Marimba Competition and today there are dozens of international marimba competitions.
- Numerous gifted marimba virtuosos are emerging in Japan today, including Rika Fujii, Nanae Mimura, Makoto Nakura, Naoko Takada and Kuniko Kato.
- Numerous gifted composers are emerging in Japan today, including Dai Fujikura, Misato Mochizuki and Hikari Kuyama.

The marimba first emerged in Tokyo as an equal to any instrument in contemporary art music. The repertoire created for Japanese marimba virtuosos continues to inspire and resonate around the world. By the end of the twentieth century, Japanese performers, composers and arts administrators, instrument manufacturers, publishers and recording companies had redefined the marimba: it was no longer simply a novelty instrument, a vehicle for popular entertainment, or just an act of technical acrobatics. The marimba that emerged as a medium for the expression of contemporary art endures. If there was a golden age of the marimba initiated in Tokyo after World War Two, it continues today in good company — with global participation.
Bibliography


Appendix 1. Musser, *Étude Op. 6 No. 9* (1940)

The excerpt, a four-mallet movement with dyads shifting constantly between the accidental and natural marimba bars, is non-lyrical and rhythmically driven.
Appendix 2. Creston, *Concertino for Marimba* (1940)

Excerpt from first movement for two mallets.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Day</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
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<td>Tanzlüsser – March</td>
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<td>Day 4</td>
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<td>Trio</td>
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<td>Day 8</td>
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<td>Moonlight Sonata</td>
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reduce vibration
Appendix 5. Frogs, original Keiko Abe manuscript conceived in late 1950s
Note: increased technical demands in four mallet playing—changing intervals, though primarily tertian—lyrical melodies with harmonic accompaniment.