CU Music Performance Program and the Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies

present

Gagaku Ensemble Winter Concert

Saturday, December 4, 2010

7pm

301 Philosophy Hall

This evening's Concert is presented as part of Columbia's
Gagaku-Hōgaku Classical Japanese Music Study and
Performance Initiative

and with the cooperation of the
Center for Ethnomusicology
and the
Music Performance Program
of
the Department of Music
Columbia University
and the
Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies

For program enrollment and all other inquiries about the
Gagaku initiative, please contact
The Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies
Patricia Slattery (pas2141@columbia.edu)
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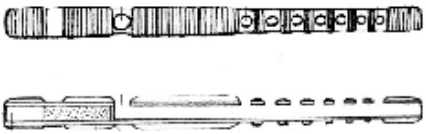
medievaljapan@columbia.edu

An Introduction to Selected *Gagaku* Instruments

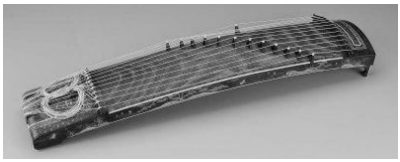


The ***ryūteki***, literally the "dragon flute," originated in the western regions of China and Tibet. In Chinese legend a Tibetan heard a dragon calling as it plunged from the heavens into water below. Trying to reproduce its call, he cut a length of bamboo and blew into it, producing a sound that perfectly resembled the dragon's voice. Unlike flutes of Korean and Japanese origins, which have six fingerholes, the *ryūteki* has seven large fingerholes which make possible, through varied finger positions and breath pressure, two full octaves, with intervening continuances. The instrument is hollowed-out bamboo with a very large bore. Its surface is stripped off and wrapped in thread-like strips of cherry or wisteria bark and then lacquered inside and out. The *ryūteki* is one of three types of flutes employed in *gagaku* ensembles and is the instrument that most often begins a *gagaku* piece.

The ***hichiriki*** is a double-reed vertical bamboo pipe with seven fingerholes on the top, and two for the thumbs on the reverse side. Its origins are unknown, but it was used in Tibet and western regions of ancient China before coming to Japan during the reign of Female Emperor Suiko (592-628). Its popularity during the 10th and 11th centuries in Japan is attested to by its mention in such famous literary works as the *Tale of Genji* by Lady Murasaki, and Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book*. Its name implies both feelings of sadness and trembling, or wavering out of awe, or even fear. It has no capacity for soft, pale tones, and indeed its sharp, piercing sound can strike terror, but its

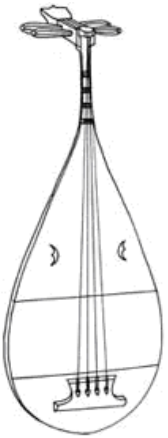
large, loose double reed, which is inserted with a white paper wrap, makes smooth portamento glides one of its characteristics. It has a narrow range of about one octave, and its bore is an inverse cone shape; thus, despite its small size it sounds an octave lower than an oboe, for example.

The ***shō*** is a free-reed, 17-pipe mouth organ, with origins in East and Southeast Asia. It has been found in recent Chinese excavations to date back as early as 433 BCE. Its formal name is *hōshō,* or "phoenix pipe," because it is shaped like a phoenix bird with its wings closed. The *shō* is said to sound like the call of this legendary bird. In ancient China the dragon and the phoenix were viewed as a powerful chimerical pair, each with the ability to transverse from the highest heavens down to our world and back again. The 17 bamboo pipes of the *shō* are of varied lengths, each set with drops of wax into a bowl-shaped wind chamber with mouthpiece. At the lower end of 15 of the pipes are fastened free-reeds made of metal that sound when both exhaling and inhaling so that the instrument is capable of continuous sound. Fingering is complex and can produce single-tone melody one pipe at a time, but can also create multitudinous chord clusters of up to six tones simultaneously. The *shō* must be heated before and during play to prevent moisture interference on the reeds that can affect its pitch and tone.

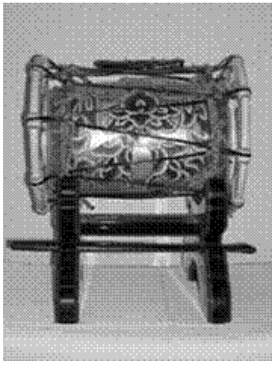


The ***gaku-sō*** is a zither (*koto*) used exclusively for *gagaku* music. Its 13 strings of wound silk supported by movable bridges stretch over a long body of paulownia wood that has two sounding holes on the reverse side. It is plucked with fingernail-like caps on the thumb, index, and

middle fingers of the right hand. The *gaku-sō* is more of a rhythmic percussion instrument than its modern descendents in the *koto* family which carry melodic line.



The ***gaku-biwa*** is a short-necked lute used specifically for classical Japanese *gagaku* music. Various forms of lute are found throughout ancient Asia and Europe with more strings, but the *gaku-biwa* has four strings of wound silk and four raised frets and is struck by a right-handed plectrum to form a kind of percussion-like drone and is also sounded directly on the strings by the fingers of the left hand. It is an instrument that is employed to punctuate and emphasize the spirit or atmosphere of a piece.



The ***kakko***, or double-headed drum, has a small barrel-like body capped on each end by deerskin heads held in place by laces that allow the drum to be suspended horizontally on a wooden stand and struck on each end with sticks in each hand. The entire instrument is elaborately decorated with brightly colored designs.

-Program notes by Barbara Ruch

PROGRAM

Hyōjō no netori

*Etenraku (*Music of the Divine Heavens*)*

*Kashin (*Glorious Day)

Bairo

Taishikichō no netori

Batō

Hyōjō no netori

Japanese *gagaku* music of continental origin (*Tōgaku*) had six modes, one of which is the *hyōjō* mode, the basic tone of which is the key of E. The *netori*, or tuning, is a short, free-rhythm prelude which serves to set the pitch, tone, and melody for all the instruments in a *gagaku* ensemble and exhibits the characteristics of the particular pieces that are to follow it. It also establishes the appropriate atmospheric setting for both the players and the audience. In the *netori*, each of the three wind and two string instruments can be heard clearly. *Hyōjō no netori* here serves as a musical tuning overture for the two orchestral pieces that follow, *Etenraku* and *Bairō*, in their *hyōjō* mode versions.

Etenraku (Music of the Divine Heavens)

Etenraku has been described as "music from the heavens." Possibly its current melody evolved in the Japanese court as late as the 10th or 11th century, but its title, which refers to the "Music of Heaven" or "Music from the Palace on the Moon," could date back at least to the T'ang Dynasty (618-907) in China. The ethereal nature of its melody becomes addictive and it spread widely in Japan beyond the court, attracting lyrics as if it were folk music. For most Japanese today it is probably the most familiar piece from the elite *gagaku* repertory due to the fact that since the end of the 19th century it has become a tradition to play it at weddings and whenever there are special formal celebratory cultural events at schools, temples, and shrines.

Etenraku survives in two other modes, *ōshikichō* in the key of A and *banshikichō* in B, but the *hyōjō* version in the key of E played tonight is by far the most familiar. It may be the only traditional *gagaku* piece known abroad, since it has been transcribed for Western orchestra and performed widely in Europe and America.

Kashin (Glorious Day)

A *rōei* is a vocalized reading in Japanese of phrases from Chinese poetry. *Kashin* is a *rōei* taken from a poem from the Sui Dynasty (518-619). This poetic offering is sung on a variety of celebratory occasions in Japan. A solo voice sings key words and the remaining lines are sung in chorus.

Phrase 1	*Reigetsu*	*kan mu kyoku banzei senshiu raku biou*
Phrase 2	*Kashin reigetsu*	*kan mu kyoku banzei senshiu raku biou*
Phrase 3	*Kan mu kyoku*	*banzei senshiu raku biou*

On this best of months	We rejoice without end, ten thousand years, a thousand autumns
On this best of days in the best of months	We rejoice without end, ten thousand years, a thousand autumns
We rejoice without end	Ten thousand years, a thousand autumns

Bairo

The word *Bairo* is believed to derive from the name of the Indian deity vairocana, later to manifest as Dainichi nyorai, the essence of wisdom and purity and the chief object of worship in Japanese esoteric Shingon Budddhism. This work is said to have been first introduced to Japan in 736 by a pair of monks, Bodhisen (J. Baramon) from India, and Fattriet (J. Buttestu) from the southern part of present day Vietnam. Eight pieces recorded as originating with them, including *Bairo*, remain extant in the *gagaku* repertory today. *Bairo* became an essential part of the sacred musical rituals of the Japanese court and was offered at the dedication ceremony of the Great Buddha of *Tōdaiji* temple in Nara in 752 under the sponsorship of Female Emperor Kōken and her parents, retired Emperor Shōmu and Empress Kōmyō. Indicative of *gagaku* continuity, *Bairo* was performed again in 2006 in that same place to commemorate the 1250th anniversary of Emperor Shōmu's death. This piece evokes a time when Prince Shōtoku (574-622), considered the genius behind the establishment of Buddhism in Japan, was threatened by the Mononobe clan that hoped to suppress Buddhism. After the ritual playing of this music seven times, it is said that, as if from within a sanctified space, there emanated a divine voice (*shamō no koe*) that gave courage and predicted the coming victory of Prince Shōtoku and a secure future for the Buddhist faith.

Taishikichō no netori

Like the *hyōjō no netori* that set the tuning for the first two orchestral pieces in the program, the *taishikichō no netori*, in the key of E, sets the pitch and tonal relationships for the piece that follows, *Batō*.

Batō

The origins of this piece lie in ancient India, from where it was first introduced to the court of *Rinyū* (present-day south-east Vietnam) and from there it traveled to China and Korea. It ultimately was brought to Japan—the only place where it has survived—by an Indian monk from China. The dance by a single dancer that often accompanies it depicts the vengeful search by a son for a wild boar that had killed his father and his joy at successfully finding and killing the beast. In its travels it picked up an alternative interpretation wherein it is said to depict the wild revengeful state of a Chinese consort whose jealousy turned her into a demon.

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