The instructions for preparing this report were that it was to be personal and informal, something along the lines of “confessions of an ethnomusicologist.” I will try to present my paper in that spirit.

My field of research is the art music of a literate high civilization. Therefore, my basic research tools are essentially the same as those of any western-oriented musicologist. A study of general history and a command of language form the first step. A knowledge of sources and previous and present native and foreign researches comes next. Soon problems of paleography, transcription, and analysis arise. All these techniques should lead ideally to some kind of synthesis of musical knowledge.

So far nothing in the methodology seems unusual. The substitution of Japanese for Latin and mnemonics for neumes may be exotic, but it is not particularly different in approach. There are a few comments, however, that can be made about paleography in Japanese music. Due to the emphasis on rote learning and on an extensive guild system, there are a plethora of notation systems. Each instrument uses a separate system, and the various schools of one instrument often develop quite different methods of notation. As indicated above, the primary teaching method is rote. Because of this, many notations are merely mnemonics. The only way to fully use materials written in such scripts is to study personally with each guild. Doing this for each instrument is interesting but time consuming. Doing it for various schools of the same instrument is sometimes politically impractical. Nevertheless, since Japanese music does not exist in scores but only part books or in the memories of performers, some compromise must be made. Fortunately, Japanese musicians often afford to western scholars a wider than normal range of movement among the guilds. I owe much of the progress of my work to the willingness of various traditional-minded Japanese musicians to reveal their notational and other musical secrets to a foreign stranger. My debt to them is great and I gladly acknowledge it publicly at this time.

In transcribing these native scripts, I use western staff notation. In general, I favor continuing its use. It is the most universally understood. Of course, it does impose a western cultural sound in the ear, but this is quickly corrected with diacritical markings, by a prefatory discussion of scales, and by playing a record of the native sounds. I doubt that many would be able to “hear” a scientifically accurate notation of an unfamiliar idiom without the aid of the same record. Why then burden this jargon-loaded world with further unfamiliar paraphernalia when, as Curt Sachs (31) said, the final place of music should ultimately be the human ear.

Actually, the method of transcription reflects the attitude and goal of the transcriber. If minute differences of scale pitches are the important point of one’s research, the cents system and graph paper are the answer. But if living melody activated by rhythm in a dynamic musical form is
one’s concern, then the notation that communicates most efficiently to the widest audience is preferable. My research interest is in the latter, and my transcriptions reflect this. I suspect that they will continue to do so. Five-line notation allows me to illustrate the compositional structure in a score that can be understood quickly by those with whom I wish to communicate. I seek an audience of musicians and so try to speak in their language. If they are interested, they will pick up the special dialect of the music by ear. If they are not, graphs and mathematics won’t help.

The mention of mathematics leads me to the field of statistics in musical analysis. Statistics have proven their value when one is dealing with large numbers of relatively short, simply pieces. Experience with large, multipart art forms has shown me, so far, that statistics are useful primarily to prove scientifically what the musical ear has already discovered. I do not necessarily claim this point as a general fact but rather as a specific personal experience. Dr. Mantle Hood once pointed out that to use traditional analytic methods in music today was analogous to using a magnifying glass instead of a microscope in modern science.\(^1\) The analogy is very good. One should remember, however, that the microscope never told us what makes men great or low, good or bad. I do not intend in the least to disparage the need for an increasingly rigorous application of “modern scientific technique” to music. I do wish to remind us, however, that music is made by humans, and for humans. It is part of the humanities and there are things about music that can better be discovered with human musicality than with IBM machine objectivity.

All that has been said so far relates to my present interests, which are primarily Japanese compositional principles in addition to a concern with possible musical universals. I believe that there are musical universals because the aesthetic problems of art music are essentially the same in all cultures. What differs are the specific musical materials available and the lines of musical logic chosen by each society as it shapes its own compositional principles.

Discovering such principles in Japanese music is hampered by a general lack of a conscious Japanese music theory. The music of the noh drama might seem to be an exception. Detailed explanations of its melody, rhythm, and form can be found in various textbooks,\(^2\) but there is very little information on why a certain thing is done at a certain moment. The performers know very well what they do but spend little time wondering why they do it. One could say the same of many, perhaps most, performers of western music. In the West, however, there is generally a group of musicians separated from its performers. This is made up of composers and theoreticians. In traditional Japanese music, the composer is a performer and the theoreticians hardly exist. Most Japanese scholars interested in music are, in fact, historians or literary experts. It is interesting that when such Japanese researchers do speak about theory, they tend to talk about noh drama or Buddhist chant, both of which have old theoretical treatises in their literature. Thus, such scholars can explain on the basis of historical sources rather than discover through analysis. Japan has yet to produce a clearly analytical, theoretical study in such important traditions as shamisen or koto music.\(^3\) There is rising, however, a younger generation of Japanese scholars which many change this picture. The book, A Study of Japanese Traditional Music by Fumio Koizumi is the first step in that direction.

As things now stand, the western scholar interested in working on basic musical principles in Japanese music must pretty well “go it alone.” Here, the private lessons on specific instruments are seen once more to be very useful. For example, one day in a rote lesson on the puppet theater three-stringed lute (shamisen), I found that my teacher kept changing the intervals of a certain passage. I finally asked him which version was correct and he answered, “It all depends on the

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2 A partial list of such books can be seen Malm (283).

3 Perhaps one should mention an attempt to prove that traditional koto music follows sonata-allegro form. See Ryu.
character on stage.” This was one of my first specific clues to the relation between dramaturgical types and their specific musical characterization. There is nothing about this in Japanese writings, but the performers know about it in specific ways. Many more hours of lessons and theater performances will be required before these specifics can be ferreted out and catalogued. Only then will the generalized basic principles emerge.

This combination of practical experience and scholastic synthesis is the equivalent of fieldwork for such urban art music. It is hardly practical to record informants who are under contract to Nippon Columbia or Nippon Victor. I have, in fact, been able to do a lot of recording thanks to the cooperation of such professional men, but much of the repertoire of the musics I study is available on LP recordings. I am sure that this situation must strike the western musicologist as very novel, but the truth is that there exist many Japanese genres which are well-recorded but little studied. This is generally true for the field of my present interest, which is the theatrical music of the Edo period, particularly the shamisen music of the kabuki and puppet theaters and the so-called off stage, geza music. For me, it is not so much a matter of reconstruction or working with a fading musical museum piece. Rather it is the study of a living tradition with a full complement of professional practitioners and teachers. To this extent, my task is easier than that of most western musicologists. It also puts any scholastic hypotheses I might form to an immediate and brutally honest test, the test of an art as it actually exists.

The existence of these many live traditions brings me to another influence in one’s approaches to Japanese music. It is the simple but important fact that so much is still unknown. Western musicologists worry about lost manuscripts of the masters or the discovery of little-known composers. In Japanese music, we have yet to understand the various major genres much less study the differences between various composers in a given music or between the pieces of a single man. Such differences do exist, but the time has not come when they can be studied. The broader outlines of Japanese music have yet to be filled in.

It comes as a real shock when occasionally I realize that what I do in Japanese music today would be equivalent, if done in western music, to discovering the symphony, opera, the cantata, or sonata-allegro form. This is a terribly exciting and at the same time frightening thought. Almost any subject one approaches in Japanese music is virgin territory. This means that there is a potential for great discovery. There is also the danger that one may misrepresent a basic Japanese music to a western academic world, which has little background with which to recognize error in oriental music research. Our present knowledge of non-western music is still burdened with countless misconceptions fostered by the statements of western and native writers of another era. Even the most correct information has to be treated carefully. I am sure that those of us who have taught music history survey courses to non-music majors know how easily the most sincere efforts to present the true facts can be misunderstood. I still remember the shock of reading a review of my first evangelistic book on Japanese music in which the reviewer used quotes from me to prove that Japanese music was primate and inferior to the European tradition. I suppose all one can do is present the facts and hope that they are understood by the majority of the readers. In Japanese music, one still worries just about what are the facts. As long as the field is so little known, the proper statement of fact remains an especially heavy responsibility. One cannot expect the reader to be able to exercise the kinds of qualifications and extension that are his heritage in western music.

Historical facts are for me primarily the responsibility of Japanese scholars. As I said earlier, these men are usually trained as historians or literary scholars, not musicians. They are competent to deal with period dialects and the myriad abstruse forms of literary Japanese. My duty in history is to attempt to summarize the findings of these scholars, occasionally pointing out inconsistencies or realigning the information they have discovered. It would be imprudent and impudent to do more since I am a musician first
and an orientalist by circumstance of my musical interest.

For the same reason I do not normally concern myself with the social significance of the music I study. I must know its socio-historical matrix, to be sure, but it must be the job of some later musicologist or sociologist to add this important dimension. Borrowing from Professor Alan Merriam’s terminology, I am a “product musicologist.” I must add, however, that I view my “product” as something more than just another artifact in the ethnographic profile of society. I do not equate it with house types, kinship systems, and potsherds. Music is for me a unique and beautiful art form, which has the potential of revealing man’s mind operating at the highest aesthetic level. I don’t honestly know if music will tell us any more about human behavior than a house type or a potsherd, but I do know that music can occasionally transcend the norms of any culture’s behavior pattern and tradition. I think it may tell me more about the wonder of the individual creative artist and it reinforces in me the values and consolation of music as the art form I love.

If I may borrow from yet another famous source, in Charles Seeger’s terms, my interest is in music qua music, in music space time (1951). It is what I was trained for, what interests me, and what I like to do. I do not in the least deny the importance of the relations of music to history or culture, nor do I rank one study above the other in value. Indeed, the discussions of this symposium on methodology in ethnomusicology have shown that teams of anthropologist and musicologists along with a native scholar should do ideal fieldwork. Our pedagogical admonitions have been for an equal training in both fields for future field workers. I think all of us attempt as best we can to fill in some of the methodological gaps in our particular backgrounds. Nevertheless, as a musician, no matter how much anthropology I might absorb, the first things I want to know about music are the tones and where they come from. What happens next in research depends on the results of this primary step. I gladly give the pure historian or anthropologist his due and only ask that he recognize the worth of pure music studies also.

So much for the confessions of this musicologist. I have dropped the prefix “ethno” in the last sentence because I feel the musicology involves first of all, the love of, and secondly, the scientific discipline in the field of music whether that music comes from Mannheim or Manchuria. I hope that these confessions may prove interesting if not very spicy. If they have evoked a few thoughts and conversations, then their purpose has been accomplished.

Sources


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4 This term is derived from a public lecture given by Professor Merriam in the spring of 1962 at the University of Michigan. At that time he spoke of three possible orientations, historical musicology, product musicology, and behavioral musicology. His interest is the latter.
Discussion Following William Malm’s Paper

Merriam: The only difficulty that I think I would see would be the study of music qua music alone. You are going to miss things about music. It seems to me that the important thing about music is not only its sound, but what it does for people and why it does it. It is human behavior.

McAllester: To second what Allen Merriam said, there is meaning and emotion in music. When you say, "I am interested in music, I am interested in notes," it seems to me that you are plainly a product of western European written tradition. Somehow there is a reality in a little mark on a page for you. You somehow forget what the music is for, the fact that people make it, and that they have feelings about it which are tremendously important and affect even the way the notes sound, however they look on the page. Maybe you have a false reality, something that doesn't really exit - a note.

Merriam: Inevitably it is humans who produce music and they produce it for human beings. There is purpose in it. It is to do something for human beings.

Malm: But I don't think that in most music you can understand the purpose unless you understand what is going on in the notes.

Merriam: Fine, I have no quarrel with this, except I think that there is something further. The notes come from people behaving. That's where notes come from. Let me bring up a question to you which occurred to me, and I have no answer for it. Is a piece of music a system? A system is a thing which operates according to laws inherent within itself. An influence or a change in one part of a system automatically makes a change in another part of the system. Is music a system?

Malm: I say yes. As a matter of fact, it is the system which fascinates me much more than the person who produces it.

Powers: And precisely in the way in which you describe it, Allan, you take a particular something which happens towards the beginning of the piece. This is bound to have a purely intra-systemic effect, to use your own word "system" on something that happens later. If they don't relate together, then one could even say that it wasn't the result of human behavior. One of the characteristics of human behavior is that things tend to be done in ways which are apprehendable in more than one context.

Malm: I think the fascination is that human beings do create these fantastic systems. When you first hear them, it can make no sense at all. I know that the first time I heard Kabuki music, I just could not figure out what those crazy people were doing out there. The flute seemed in the wrong key, and everything was wrong. Yet I knew, as a musician, that there had to be a logic behind it. I knew that there had to be a system, and couldn't stand not knowing what it was. So I went down there, and I found out. There is a fantastic system, but the thing that fascinated me is that human beings made it.

Seeger: Look, there is a level on which everything is a system. The behavior is a system up to the point that it produces the music system. The music system goes its way, and it reaches a receiving system. You can look at the receiving system almost independently of the music. You can look at all these systems separately, but you can also look at them together. Why can't we accept both ways to our taste? Personally, I like to see the whole thing joined together. So I find myself sympathetic to both of these quite opposed viewpoints. I want to see them both pushed to their limit. Personally I will put them all together. As I listen to music, I don't listen to a system. I don't listen to human behavior. I am not bothering about my own behavior. My mind is off doing something else. It is trying to join the experience that I am going through, which is supposed to be
communicated from the producer to me, with the cosmos at large, whether the cosmos is a battle, or whether it is a concert, or whether it is neither. I don't have to worry. I am going through an experience which is a musical experience.

Malm: The trouble is that I can think of no one who personally can do both. It takes teamwork. I have a vague feeling that if you try to do both, you end up doing neither very well, because to do them as thoroughly as they need to be done, you have to be an expert.

Seeger: Then we don't do anything very well, but we live. You've got to do everything to the best of your ability.

Garfias: I think David McAllester's *Enemy Way Music* is an excellent example of doing both those things.

Powers: Music is a terribly complicated thing. It is an extraordinarily difficult subject. But it still is easier to deal with a body of music than it is to deal with the way in which a human being's mind works. And as Mr. Seeger puts it, you have a human being at one end, and you have a human being at the other end, and you discover a great deal about the inner workings of both of those human beings by analyzing this relatively simple mode of communication, which is what connects them together.

Seeger: We are going to have trouble in this social role of music, this music as a function of culture, unless we take all of the music in the culture. If you take this Japanese music that Mr. Malm has been studying, it seems to me that if you study it in itself, you might go pretty far without ever bothering about the social significance or the cultural function of it. But it is a very small compartmentalized way of looking at the music of Japan. The music of Japan is very varied. It is a highly diversified culture. It's got its peasant music, and it has this tremendous surge of western music going on. Now if you try to get a survey, an overview, of all of those things, that is almost more than a life time occupation. Then I think you can begin to make the study that Allan is interested in. I don't know if you can do it piecemeal. You have to get the whole music in the whole culture, then that little piece of music in relation to the whole music and the whole culture. Trying to get back to the culture, the social significance of music, through a particular music idiom, I think, is a difficult thing to do.

Merriam: Maybe that is the reason that it is easier for those of us who are anthropologists to speak in these terms, because we are working in Africa where you don't tend to have a very differentiated type of society.

McAllester: I would like to cite Leonard Meyer's book, which deals with matters aestheticians traditionally deal with. His book, *Meaning and Emotion in Music*, seems to me to be one of the few books that are really germane to ethnomusicology. He talks about emotion and meaning in music as the sort of tendency that music sets up. His point is that whatever the music tradition, this tradition does seem to set up expectations in listener's minds by musical conventions that are understood in that culture. Now we are talking about more than just notes; we are talking about expectations in people's minds, and we get enormously excited when we discover what those expectations are.

Seeger: This is part of the universals we are talking about now.

Malm: Absolutely. And I can only find those universals by finding out what the notes are doing. I can read Japanese history until I am blue in the face and that won't give me any idea of what was that universal principal of expectation in the music.

McAllester: You also have to find out how people feel about those notes, though. You would certainly agree to that. You can't just find out what the notes are. I wanted you to say that you hoped, also, to find out more about these expectations in people's minds.

Malm: Absolutely. That is the ultimate fascination to me—the fact that every different culture in the world seems to build these fantastic systems which have the qualities of tension and release, expectation, and so on, and yet they are completely logical, but different systems. That
is what fascinates me in the field of ethnomusicology.

Seeger: But then there is the question of whether all these different expectations, the Japanese expectation, or the American, or the European or something else, don’t really boil down to almost one ultimate expectation. It is a purely mystical proposition. It is a union of the intellect and the emotions that you might get the first time you heard a music. I think Dr. Hood speaks of the time he first heard a Javanese gamelan, and it just so happens that with me it happened the same way. I had never heard it before, and I hit the ceiling. I said that this is the most wonderful stuff I ever heard. Since then I have learned a little bit more about it, but I don’t think I have ever increased my initial impact. There must be something universal in it that I could get because I knew European music.

Malm: Would you agree that, if you are looking for those universals, expectation was a terribly important thing, and also the idea of tension-release in any form was just a general principal which was inviolate in almost every kind of music. I think many of us have come up with those general feelings.

Powers: The only way you will get the patterns of expectations in very complicated music is to do it by working with the music. One of the things you have to learn to do is to recognize mistakes. The only people who can tell you how to do this are the people who are in the culture, and the only way you learn how to do this is to acculturate yourself to that extent. And this process of learning about the culture, as Bill said, is forced on you by the things that come out of the study.

We were talking about methodology and we all seem to be agreed that you have to look at music from both points of view. I think that the point at issue is how much of the one point of view or the other point of view is the efficient approach for a particular music. Do we have the same balance of components, the anthropological and the musical, to find the answers about American-Indian music that we have in studying Japanese music? My guess would be that we don’t. We will get faster answers to Japanese music by attacking the music; we will get faster answers to American Indian music by attacking the culture. I would carry this one step further. Probably the person who is best qualified to get the answers faster in American Indian music is the chap who is oriented anthropologically. On the other hand, the chap who is best qualified to get the most answers fastest in Japanese music is probably a musician.

Merriam: I would say that it depends on what answers you are looking for.

Powers: The problem is you never get all of the answers. We would all agree that ideally we would all like to get them, and this is what keeps us going. There are always more answers around the corner. I am saying that it is more efficient for Bill to study Japanese music than it is for him to study American Indian music, and I would be prepared to guess that it is probably more efficient for the knowledge of humanity for Dave to study American Indian music than it would be for him to study Japanese music.

McAllester: I am not sure that it can be that categorically clear. I am beginning to think that there are musical aspects of Navajo music, simple though it sounds and uninteresting though it sounds to most musical people, that I won’t agree see, because I need more musical sophistication that I have.

Hood: I think this is a crass over-simplification when you say that one with musical sensitivity or musical sophistication should handle Japanese music, and one with anthropological orientation should handle Indian or African music. I think this is nutty.

Powers: I didn’t say should. I said more efficient. Quite a different thing. I am not saying that it isn’t just as difficult for a Navajo to learn to do his music as it is for a Japanese to learn to do his.

Seeger: This is the same opposition that we had yesterday. We have the question of the musicological approach and the anthropological approach, and I ventured the
suggestion that when you put the two together and integrate them, then you have the ethnomusicological approach. What we ought to do at this juncture is to recognize that this is a state to be arrived at in every conference on ethnomusicology.

Powers: We are not talking about the investigator now; we are talking about the culture. We are suggesting that the culture itself, and the relation of the music to the culture, suggests that it would be better to have a certain type of investigator for the beginning steps in that culture, and in the other culture, the whole pattern suggests otherwise. Once Dave McAllester has done all the ethnological dirty work, I suspect we are going to be attracted to that music, because he will be able to tell us what it is in the music that is attractive. But our natural instinct would be otherwise.

Hood: I had heard Balinese male unaccompanied singing before ever getting to Indonesia, and I was not attracted to it. I was terribly absorbed with the idea of gamelan and all its complexities. On my first trip to Bali, I stayed in a Balinese prince's palace, and the common wall of that room was also the temple wall. Every afternoon about four o'clock the priest came in and chanted or sang, so I had two weeks of indoctrination in unaccompanied male Balinese singing. By the time I left, after that first two-week visit to Bali, I decided that this was one of the most sophisticated, one of the most appealing, one of the most elusive, one of the subtlest vocal styles I had ever heard. I would say that it would take every ounce of musicianship and sensitivity to cope with it, yet if I looked at it from back here, I would say let's have an anthropologist, ethnologist, sociologist or linguist in on this job first. I think we need the awareness of both in the fullest measure possible. Maybe ultimately, we will begin to work in teams.

Seeger: The team has to be in one person, although you can't get a perfect balance.

Malm: Is there any place in the world where people are trained sufficiently in both to do a good job on both? How many years of anthropology do I need in order to do an ethnographic profile, learn to work out the kin system, and record and transcribe music?

Merriam: Give me six months.

Malm: If I had an anthropology major (student), I don't think I could give him the music in six months. Is there any place where such training is going on?

Seeger: In ten years we could perfectly well make a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology, 50% in anthropology and 50% in musicology if we wanted to.

Malm: Isn't there that direction in the ethnomusicology training as proceeding now at UCLA?

Hood: The only place that I know where this potential can exist would probably be in some of the new nations of the non-Western world. I think that there is a program getting under way in Ghana which holds this potential. I think it can't be in this country, in the foreseeable future, because the man will take his training in one discipline or another. The trouble is that you have to work on anthropology faculties and music faculties. Schools of music, departments of music, are so encrusted with outgrown and outmoded 19th century modes of operation. It is impossible to graft onto the side of it like a big bulb, which we tried to do in UCLA, a program of training in what we call ethnomusicology and get any real balance. People who take this program, there is no doubt, are under a terrible handicap. They have to do all this old-fashioned kind of curriculum in Western music, they have to get all the anthropology and linguistics they can. They try to get an extra foreign language, if not more than one, whatever they are able to get in. This isn't right, this isn't balanced, and I don't see how we are going to get around it in this country. But I think in new countries, I cited Ghana and I think there are several others, the potential exists.

Merriam: A very exciting thing just happened as of three weeks ago in the Big Ten universities. This is a signing of an agreement among the Big Ten universities whereby, starting next
year for graduate level only, a student at the University of Minnesota can come to Indiana University for one year, pay his fees at Minnesota, hold his fellowship at Minnesota, and get his credit at Minnesota. There is a man who is doing a Ph.D. in anthropology at Minnesota who will be coming to Indiana to study ethnomusicology for one year on this new system. It occurs to me that this is going to be a very exciting kind of thing. I wonder whether this isn’t an educational system that we are going to come to more and more, which may enable me, for example, to send a student that I want to have more education on Javanese music to Mantle Hood, or for Mantle to send a student that he wants to have more of the anthropological approach to me for a year. It seems to be that it is beginning, at least, among the ten big universities.

McAllester: Our M.A. degree in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan has some of this quality. We take someone who is trained either in anthropology or music and give him an M.A. in musicology, adding to what we feel they lack in the other disciplines. I work with the music department. This way of doing it can only be done in a small, very flexible-minded place where we really hand-make the major. We do this with tutorials; we do this by pulling in a relevant course.

Hood: I think we could sit down with a special group, and probably draft a kind of ideal training that would come close to 50-50. But let's be practical a moment. Today people are hired by a department of music or a department of anthropology. There isn't one of our students out anywhere teaching 100% ethnomusicology.

Powers: I would like to add one hopeful note to what Mantle has said. There is growing up rapidly in this country various programs in area studies. At least in certain areas there is a third possibility for a man to get a job.

Hood: But how many of them involve trained in the humanities?

Merriam: There are nineteen major African area programs today in this country, two of which have humanities.