



放送大学

11756804

Preface.

"THE man who hath not music in his soul,
Is fit for treason, stratagems and spoils,"

says one of the greatest of poet-writers. If this be true, the Japanese should be a most mildly innocent people, for music takes part in so very many acts of their life, and they are so intensely fond of melodious sounds. The peasants sing as they harvest the ripend rice; the boatmen sing as their frail craft shoots the rapids; the very street cries of the hawkers are long-drawn musical shouts, sometimes quite melodious, and always with that hidden minor harmony so characteristic of Oriental music in general and Japanese music in particular. Now, according to the opinions of scientists and those who have given the subject close attention, the music of Japan is very closely related to that of Ancient Greece—mother of the wonderfully developed music known to Europe and America at the present day. Therefore, the music of Japan, strange though it may sound to the more cultivated ears of foreigners, is well worthy of study.

In bringing this little book before the public, it is the desire of the publisher to familiarize Japan's Western friends with the musical instruments of this fair land, in the hope of arousing interest in Japanese music.



The "Koto."

THIS is deemed by many people to be the instrument *par excellence* of Japan. It is made of a solid piece of *Kiri* or paulownia. A *Koto* is generally six feet long and eight inches wide, has thirteen strings raised on bridges (*ji*) placed at varying intervals, and is played by the three fingers (viz: the index-finger, the middle-finger and the thumb) of the both hands, the three finger-tips of the right hand being armed with ivory plectrums. There are two kinds of the plectrum known, the thin and longer ones, being called *Ikuta*, while the rather oval ones are known as *Yamada*. The *Ikuta* style only teaches old songs and is patronised by the higher class of society. The *Yamada* style instructs modern as well as gay songs and is popular among people of lesser rank. The *Koto* is sometimes spoken of as "lute" and sometimes as "harp," but there is really no correct English name for it. It goes admirably with other instruments, especially the

Samisen.



The "Samisen."

THE *Samisen*, variously called the "mandoline" or "banjo" of Japan, is the most popular of all instruments, and an exceedingly pleasant companion in a native entertainment. It has three strings only, and is struck with a heavy plectrum of ivory or wood filled with lead. It is the chief instrument of *Geisha* or singing-girls, and lends itself admirably to the accompaniment of songs. Some instruments are made of beautiful woods, such as red sandal-wood (*shitau*) and quince (*kariu*), with a most delicate finish and command high prices. Among many styles of singing practised with *Samisen*, there are in particular the following three: *Gidayū*, *Kiyomoto*, and *Naga-uta*. The weight of the instrument varies with the musical style, the heaviest being employed in *Gidayū*, which closely resemble the operative style, and the lightest in *Naga-uta*. The two musical styles of singing, respectively called *Tomimoto* and *Tobiwazu* had been once popular, but now are going out of fashion.



The "Taiko."

THE *Taiko* or drum is in shape, as a rule, somewhat similar to the familiar keddledrum. It is made entirely of skin and wood. The small *taiko*, such as used by *Geisha* or singing-girls, is generally tied up with strong cord, for the convenience to pack it up when it is necessary to do so; while the big one is fixed with nails. When used as an orchestral instrument, it is played with two heavy sticks and gives a loud sonorous sound. It plays an important rôle in a *go-nin-bayashi* or orchestra of five performers. There are drums of many kinds, from the great drums used in announcing wrestling-boots, ancient war-drums, ceremonial drums resplendent in lacquer and gilt carvings to the smaller fry of street-peddlers and strolling acrobats. Some temple drums are of huge dimensions, and give on being struck a sound that can be heard for a great distance. In fact, each drum has a peculiar different sound.



The "Tsuzumi."

THIS is a species of double-drum, a tenor drum in fact, which is firmly struck with the open hand (right). It is made of the same materials of *Taiko* or drum, that is, of skin and wood. The performer generally plays on two instruments at the same time, one being placed or held on the right shoulder, while the other is kept in the lap. The one, which is held on the shoulder is called *Ko-kawa*, and the other on the lap is known as *Ō-kawa*. The *Tsuzumi* produces an indescribably hollow, half sobbing kind of sound, that goes excellently with the *Samisen* or the *Fute*. Great skill is required to play on the *Tsuzumi* properly. It is generally performed on by young girls, and seems to produce a sweeter sound when struck by their little fingers.



The "Fute."

THE *Fute* is a very popular wind-instrument played by gentlemen, and sometimes by ladies. It is one of the most important instruments in *go-nin-bayashi* or orchestra of five performers. There are a large number of wind-instrument known to the Japanese: some are blown as in the case of foreign flutes; others from one end like a boy-fife. The *Shakuhachi*, with its five ventages, is the most difficult and most sweet sounding. The *Shinō* (sometimes *Ōteki*) is generally played by *Geishas* or singing-girls and goes wonderfully well with the *Samisen*. Then there is the *Shō*, or reed-organ, played by inhaling and expiring the breath. This instrument is used principally at solemn festivals or in funerals. There is a short flute known as the *Hichi-riki*, also played on such occasions. The *Fute* has six or seven ventages with a scale quite different from that of foreign flutes.



The "Gekkin" and the "Kokyu," etc.

THE *Gekkin* or "full-moon guitar" is not unlike the mandoline. It has four strings over frets, and tuned in pairs, a fifth apart. This is played with a tortoise-shell-plectrum. For viols, violins, etc., the Japanese have the *Kokyu*, a violin shaped like the *Samisen*, only smaller, and held on the lap. It is played with a bow. Then there is the *Nigen-kin*, or two-stringed fiddle. It is played exactly like a *Koto*, except only the fingertip of the right thumb being armed with an ivory plectrum. The *Biwa* is the lute of Japan, something like the mandola in general appearance, only larger. This is the favourite instrument of *Benten*, the Goddess of beauty and mercy. The *Satsuma Biwa* is employed mainly in reciting the stirring tales of the *Heike-monogatari*, one of the oldest and most romantic semi-historic warrior-tales of ancient times. There is also the *Mokkin*, now very rarely seen. This is played by means of striking with two tiny hammers of bamboo.



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明治三十八年
十月五日
發行
今身
八日

印刷
人
芝區
本町
六丁目
六番
地
酒井
寅吉

秋山愛三郎

著者兼發行人

東京市芝區
櫻田本町所
秋山書地

