

Title

Other Musics: What's in Play?

Name

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The title I've given this essay stresses the essentially social nature of our engagement in music, but inherent in my use of the term "Other" are both the gradations fundamental to our perceptions of human otherness, and the inexorable entanglement of "self-" and "other-directedness" in making music. Accordingly, I'll begin with a discussion of who are the various Others involved in musical acts and experiences (hereafter "musicking"; Small 1998), what kinds of intersubjective relations are in play between those creating music and those experiencing it, and what benefits these relations can yield, including intended or unintended ones through loops of reciprocity. I'll then describe examples of musicking, with Web links, and consider both the relations and (outward- and inward-directed) "benefits" in terms of actual sounds and actions that give rise to them. Finally, I'll discuss the other edge of the musical blade that penetrates human consciousness and society: music as a vehicle for Othering, stereotyping, demonising and oppressing. In the understanding that musicking always holds potential to enrich the lives of listeners, subject to circumstance, I'll consider the awkward fact that such deliberate wielding of music as a tool for exclusion yields distinct benefits for those who are in "our" groups, rather than those cast as "them."

Who makes music, and who plays it?

All humans have the capacity to sing, make sonic patterns using their bodies and material objects as sound sources, move physically in response to patterned sounds made by other humans, and enjoy simply listening to "music."¹ In English and most European languages, cognates of "to make music" are reserved for the first two of those four activities, while cognates of "to play music" are used for the second only, almost always for situations in which objects regarded as musical instruments are sounded, or music "playback" media (LP or CDs "players," Web players, or streaming services, among others) are used. We all make music as children, and most of us do so as adolescents, even if (in Western society and likewise in modern-day Japan) many of us stop before or not long after reaching adulthood. Although dancing and listening are generally not semantic referents of "making music," they are emphatically included in Christopher Small's formulation of "musicking," which has been broadly (if not universally) accepted in music research since around the turn of the century. More recently,

the late Richard Taruskin (2020) asserted a listening-centred and communally-oriented epistemology of Western musical traditions in repeatedly stressing that “the work” or its notated form is ultimately not as important as the practices around it, so that every composition is constantly re-made and re-lived by performers, audiences, and listeners.

Ethnography-based studies by ethnomusicologists have provided ample evidence that in many cultures individuals are not recognised as creators of distinct items or “pieces” of music with which their names continue to be associated. Even for European society, there are hardly any known composers from before the 15th century, while unknown audiences for compositions and consumers of commercially available musical “commodities” hardly existed until the 18th century. For the purposes of this essay, I am going to limit discussion to the terms of a Western—more specifically a literate Western musical paradigm—that has been for the most part stable in meaning since the 18th century: composers, performers and audiences (or listeners, who may physically respond to music in diverse ways).

Composers *create* musical “works.” Performers create sonic realisations of those works, making music on the basis of composers’ instructions in varying degrees of detail. Audience and listeners experience the music that is being or has been created by others. That crude tripartite division of course conceals intermediate states and activities, perhaps most importantly these three: Firstly, in many genres performers fill out or creatively “realise” a musical work in response to parameters set down by the composer and the performance tradition; they have done so to varying degrees in different historical circumstances. Classical repertoire performers obtain relatively little information about tempo and dynamics from Urtext edition notations or original scores of works composed before the mid-18th century, so must either learn to devise their own or rely on the suggestions of editors with various kinds of expertise; jazz players often have nothing more than a composed “head” tune and a harmonic sequence from which to build their performances; and for players of rock and some other styles of popular music, notation may be minimal or even non-existent. Secondly, in the last of those cases, the concept of a “composer” has limited validity, as the norm in many bands is for any member to come up with a particular riff, chord sequence, rhythmic pattern or melody that initiates a collective process of working out a new song or piece. Thirdly, in certain genres and styles within genres, performers in effect “compose” in real time through improvising according to conventions of style and performance practice. If captured or aurally inscribed in recordings, those improvisations can be received as newly made unique works.²

Who is music made for?

In English, the prepositions that follow verbs for musicking suggest relationships among those producing music and those experiencing (consuming) it: we make or play music for or with other people; we play music to listeners; we listen and dance to music. All those are active relationships, whereas if we merely hear music (without listening to it), the passivity of the action requires no preposition to denote a vector for subjective or intersubjective experience.

Who do composers make music for?

When someone composes a piece of music or song, they may or may not hold any particular listeners or performers in mind. The specificity of intended “recipients” ranges from cases of music offered to an individual (as a dedication, a gift, or the fulfillment of a request or commission by a performer or public entity), to music made for a limited cohort, whose performance may be circumscribed by cultural protocols or ritual secrecy, to music that a composer can be certain will be played for and heard by “strangers” in his/her own society and perhaps even across diverse societies and cultures.

The degree to which recipients—both performers and listeners—are unknown has varied with musical genres, but at least until the advent of digitally shareable (especially Web-based) music files, the ears of strangers were reached via familiar contexts and through known modes and means such as concert stages, “live” venues, and analog recordings of performance made audible (and sometimes visible) via more-or-less familiar routes on radio and television, and in what we used to call “record shops” and other settings and spaces where selected recordings were played.³

Yet are most creators of music in twenty-first century societies concerned about who hears their compositions? The image of composers and songwriters as autonomous artists driven by creative genius and inspiration to freely express themselves has been pervasive and remarkably resilient for nearly two centuries. It should not be dispensed with lightly, for it is so often “in play” in the minds of young people as they begin to work out tunes and songs on instruments and with their voices. However, for any of them who persist to the extent of trying to become professionals (for which the most common criterion is societal recognition as artists worthy of remuneration that will enable them to continue), there inevitably is a broadening of concern; they must take into account the conditions for their music’s reception. In other words, when the musical products of creative efforts are presented as aesthetic commodities in the marketplace or the entertainment industry, the extent of consumer demand for such products is a basic factor determining the viability of professional activity. While those who compose music may do so primarily out of their own inner needs and for personal satisfaction, they will be able to sustain themselves on the basis of musical creation only if they find societal contexts for sufficient recognition and remuneration—through recording sales, royalties, performance engagements, commissions, or even academic appointments, which became a common form of employment for modern “classical” (concert or “art music”) composers around seventy years ago. In short, when music is commodified, there must always be a sufficient number of others who want composers and songwriters to continue to make their music.

In the 2020s, technology affords musical creation of professional-level quality and quantity by composers who have little or no idea who will hear their work. Moreover, those individuals can afford to be unconcerned about the matter, for their art is entirely outside any marketplace and can be recorded or “realised” in sound files, then uploaded to web services such as Soundcloud for little more than the cost of the electricity used to run a PC.⁴ Anyone browsing those sites can listen for free for as long as they wish. As to the question of who such music is created for, doubtless many composers and songwriters are simply indifferent. On the other hand, there are those who welcome the written feedback from anonymous or pseudonymic “strangers” that such websites enable. I know of no better example than my friend since undergraduate days, John Carroll, a Sydney

composer who (today, on August 1st 2023) has uploaded 1,488 works, over 1,300 of which are sonic realisations from Finale scores⁵ of his prolific, almost daily compositional output since 2018.⁶ When I characterised him as an artist who “lets go of” his music for all and sundry—for an almost wholly unknown audience—to enjoy, John agreed, while adding that “it is an ongoing testimony as well, so that anyone interested can have a look at my creations” (email of Feb 7th 2023). He told me that he knew or was in contact with only a handful of his followers on Soundcloud (who currently number around 200), but looked forward to their comments and the possibility of responding in turn.

Different factors are in play when a composer (say, a solo singer-songwriter) or group of composers (say, a band in which several members collaborate to create new songs or pieces) is making music—his/her/their own music—in front of an audience. Regardless of whether the composer is acquainted with a single person in that audience, he/she/they have a responsibility toward the audience that I will call a “duty of care.” The music being experienced by the listeners is in its entirety a creation of the composer-performers in action, so it is up to them to guide the listeners through their music, much as a storyteller exercises constant care to lead an audience into and through a tale. If the narrative “thread” of the music breaks, the musicians’ skills as both composers and performers will be called into question.

Who do performers make music for?

In the musical economies of modern societies, performers overwhelmingly outnumber creators among music professionals. Who do performers make music for? As with composers, the first answer must be that they do it for themselves. Even without the evidence from decades of music psychology and education studies that show the tangible and quantifiable physiological and mental health benefits of music, anyone who has acquired even a modicum of skill in singing or in playing an instrument knows how good it can feel, and that one of the best ways to calm down, lower anxiety, relieve stress or regulate one’s mood is simply to sing or play. Who cares if anyone is listening?

I believe that in fact, most of us care. Let me give a personal lived example: Dwelling in the spatial and acoustic privation of Japanese urban accommodation for over a decade now, I’ve had to exercise a considerable degree of care about when I play my instruments, and how loudly. Throughout this time, but especially during the Covid 19 years under another kind of privation—a painful but necessary embargo on making music in person with others—I’ve often found myself unable to comply with the standard protocols of Tokyo life. I gradually developed the habit of leaving a window or door slightly open as I play. And more recently, since taking up the Irish tin whistle last year, I’ve been practising tunes while sitting in the car at red lights, again with the window slightly down (though not within sight or earshot of any police boxes!) Why such delinquent behaviour ... ? In the back of my mind, there’s always a hope that someone will hear me playing, direct their attention by listening to the sounds, and find enjoyment in that unexpected musical experience.

Most performers play or sing with other performers, in duos, trios, quartets, bands, ensembles and choral groups of all sorts. Instrumental and vocal performance practices call not only for sustained aural attention to

the sounds being made by others in the group, but in most genres and traditions also a degree of visual cueing with the eyes, facial expressions and bodily gestures. (A notable exception to that, *noh* 能 performance practice, will be discussed below.) Though usually unspoken, there is a strong sense of reciprocity—of making music both with and *for* others.

Above all, people perform for audiences and listeners. While professional musicians do so for (among others) the most elemental of reasons—to be paid and fed—relations between musicians and those around them are almost never bluntly economic. Priority must be given to the non-material effects—the *affective* yield—of the sounds performers produce. After all, most musicking is not done by professionals; most of us play and sing for other people not because they will reward or remunerate us, but because of what (ideally) happens among people during musicking: Performers and non-performers alike are *affected* by the music, and in sharing or at least acknowledging their affective responses (even if only in the vigour and length of audience applause, in classical music settings, or in texted thanks and “feedback” to a performer on social media), they engage in reciprocation of emotion and energy, which is one of the motive forces of performance.

Who benefits from musicking, and how?

Musicking is perhaps the quintessential manifestation of what Nakajima Takeshi identified as the inseparability of *rita* (利他, altruism) and *riko* (利己, self-centredness), using the metaphor of a Mobius strip to express how neither exists nor occurs without the other (2021:210). In other words, when we make music, we are motivated by inexorably entangled dual needs and desires to benefit ourselves in some of the ways I’ve already described—in other words “self-directedness”—and to give others pleasure and move them affectively and often physically—in other words “other-directedness.” These two Janus faces of human nature in intersubjective experience are fundamental drivers of musical activity.

There are, of course, many other driving forces. Let me declare first off that in this section I’m not going to discuss the above-mentioned financial and market benefit incentives for musicking. They sustain not only individual musicians (and therefore are essential for music as a professional undertaking) but also entire national and international industries and sub-industries. I’m tempted to claim they have little to do with *rita* except in the case of “benefit concerts” from which the income is donated to a humanitarian cause to improve people’s lives. Nonetheless, I’m prepared to acknowledge that the profit motive is often far less dominant than at first appearance. For instance, a decade of paying attention to music played in the various Japanese *konbini* (コンビニ, convenience store) chains, supplemented with a little research on the corporate websites of Lawson, Family Mart and so on, suggests a range of factors and motives—not all of them venal—behind these firms’ approaches to selecting, providing and regulating the music that is constant and inescapable for customers and staff in their stores.⁷

Are there any reciprocal benefits from my guitar or penny whistle playing being heard by neighbours here on the fringes of Tokyo? Happily, there’ve been no admonitions to stop yet, which means no one in my building has lodged a complaint, but nor has any fellow resident ever mentioned the live music they must sometimes hear

sleeping out of my flat, which can be traced to me because my occasional singing is in English and there are no other native speaker-singers living in the building. If someone I said hello to in the corridor or carpark actually took a moment to speak up about the music they've experienced, I would feel a kind of satisfaction—as if the sounds I'd made were still metaphorically resonating in the minds of others and coming back to me, long after their physical resonance had ended. Until such time, however, there are only potential intersubjective benefits from my musicking “alone” at home. As for tin whistle-playing at red lights, I'm unlikely to get feedback from other drivers sitting in traffic, though who knows, one day, a motor cyclist sitting nearby might venture to say something ...

Elaborating further on intentionality and the “other-directedness” of music in public space, “resonance” has recently been proposed as the basis for a music- and sound-based socio-cultural metaphor for the generation and reinforcement of sociality through musicking. Taking the acoustic phenomenon of resonance (and resonation, the condition of resonating) as a point of departure, Marié Abe (2018) translated the word *hibiki* 響き as resonance(s) because of the Japanese term's range of meanings and usages in reference to affective experience and various relations and connections in space and across time. She identified multi-faceted benefits of *chindonya* (チンドン屋 ensemble) street performances in the production of dynamic public and sonic spaces (however temporary) for sociality, and facilitation of social connectedness through “social, historical, political and affective resonances” of *chindonya* music and its performance conventions (2018: xxi). She argued for “how profoundly these entrepreneurial street performers cared about the sentiments of those their sounds reached” (102), but by the same token, it seems the benefits of the live *chindonya* performances documented were manifested primarily as simultaneously physical, physiological and emotional responses to listening in particular places and spaces—in other words as multi-valent resonance(s) of the music.

The intentionality and “imaginative empathy” of *chindonya* players are far from ubiquitous among professional musicians. While most of us may indeed hold in the back of our minds a hope that someone is listening, one cannot assume all musicians embrace making music for others, nor experience live musicking as a kind of shared play among performers and listeners. Some composers and/or performers have been renowned for demonstrations of their indifference to the preferences and responses of others denoted by the term “audience.”⁸ In the classical music sphere, there is Glenn Gould's infamous remark: “I detest audiences. Not in their individual components but *en masse*... I think they are a force of evil. It seems to me rule of mob law.” In late twentieth-century jazz, there were several such figures: Miles Davis would sometimes turn his back to the audience, and his band's sometime keyboard player, Chick Corea, admitted his own “blindness” to the experiences of listeners during the first decade of his career:

The concept of communication with an audience became a big thing for me at the time. The reason I was using that concept so much at that point in my life—in 1968, 1969 or so—was because it was a discovery for me. I grew up kind of only thinking how much fun it was to tinkle on the piano and not noticing that what I did had an effect on others. I did not even think about a relationship to an audience, really, until way later. (De Haan 1994).

Such aloofness is a disposition of the individual, but also stems from practices within a given genre—in this case 1950s and 1960s jazz beyond the mainstream, which had left behind the latter styles' imperative that performance provide impetus for dancing. Since the 2010s, as a leading American composer-improviser-performer, John Zorn has advocated the ongoing appropriateness of the avant-garde jazz “tradition” of aloofness from audience, on the grounds that it enables him (and by implication all his band members) to focus fully on the work of rendering and interpreting compositions:

Everybody gets something different and everybody experiences it in a different way. As far as the audience is concerned, I have nothing to do with them whatsoever when we're performing ... I'm concerned with the music itself. (Quoted in Ihnen 2014)

In classical solo or concerto performances, particular instruments (for example violin, flute, or guitar) enable the soloist to stand or sit facing the audience, hence affording facial or gestural expression as supplementary communication in response to elements of compositions played. Conventionally, however, the stage exists as an inviolable space where instrumental performers (as distinct from singers) need make little or no attempt to “connect” with listeners. Similarly, in most music theatre or drama genres, there are conventions of a schism between the physical space of performance wherein a narrative within “another world” is presented, and that of the audience situated in “this world.” While musicians and singers may in fact believe themselves to be acting for the benefit of those situated outside the overtly or tacitly acknowledged limits of the performance space, the very genres they perform in may disallow modes of direct visual communication with audience. In some cases sheer physical constraints may even prevent performers from having any kind of visual or interpersonal contact with audience members: The organist in a church or cathedral sits facing at 90 or 180 degrees away from the congregation or audience, and in some cases plays in a kind of ante-chamber to the main space.⁹

In popular music styles, generally speaking, quite the opposite is true. Especially for singers, the ability to build “connection” with an audience reinforces the illusion of a one-to-one narrative intimacy that is fundamental to the work of singer-songwriters and some other popular genres. In extreme cases, singers—occasionally even major stars in the music industry—have been willing to break the boundary between performance and audience spaces by giving over the stage to lucky fans positioned close enough to experience dancing and singing “with” their idols.¹⁰

Victor Turner's adaptation of Buber's term *communitas* is helpful for understanding some ways in which performers and listeners alike benefit from musicking. Turner framed *communitas* as “intersubjective reflexivity, where each one is the true mirror of all” (1969; 1992, as cited in Edith Turner 2012: 219). Experienced primarily during liminal activities, especially rituals, celebrations, (sports) games and public performances of music, drama and film, *communitas* involves shared affective experiences that are temporary but intense, often in association with a “stripping away of all those social impediments which would otherwise divide and distinguish members of a group” (Cohen 1985, 55). When performance of music is primarily other-oriented and in the participatory mode that Thomas Turino characterised as in polar opposition to the presentational mode primarily fostered in capitalist society (2008), *communitas* arises in association with a state of “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi

1975, 1990) as a shared experience of received energy:

Flow is a crucial part of the power of music ... Focus must be exercised precisely and with determination, going impossibly on with the work, never mind what.

Finally, before one realizes it, something ‘clicks,’ and suddenly there is no more focus, there is only flow. The two are merged. ... Everything works, the flow has momentum and will continue as long as we give ourselves to it. ...

The performers and listeners breathe as one entity—the collective energy can flow through the entire crowd.

(a drummer quoted in Turner 2012: 205-06; my italics)

Finally, in that same 2008 book that has since found ever greater weight and presence in ethnomusicological theory and practice, Turino proposed that we root our understanding of the shared meanings usually denoted by “culture” in the societal units of the cultural (or identity) cohort and formation, respectively. By those unit terms, he meant groups of people within a society whose shared practices (including music and dance) arise from particular sets of internalised dispositions and habits, cohorts being groups with sets or constellations of similar habits in “parts of the self,” while formations involve larger, pervasive sets held in common by most individuals across an entire society or “nation” (111-114). The benefits of musicking are potentially highest—or to put it another way, the affective impact of music is potentially strongest—for those who share socially constituted habits, most commonly in the context of identity cohorts, but also in broader formations under specific circumstances (for example, in times of war, as will be discussed below).

Where’s *rita* in these performances?

Let’s listen to and watch some music in performance, and for each of the following seven examples, think about the intersubjective relations that arise therein, and some intended and unintended resultant benefits. That set of concerns may enable us to see each of these moments of musicking in terms of Nakajima’s proposed concept of the continuum between and coevalness of *rita* and *riko*.

1. “Irish tin whistle”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T99KBCPsHIQ>

Clearly, the two performers are friends who share a love of tunes for the *feadóóg stáin* or Irish tin whistle (also called the penny whistle), here played by Jerry Conroy. In this case, the tune is a reel,¹¹ but rather than attempt a dance the man on the left, the late Frank McCabe, plays “air percussion,” with the pack of cigs he holds in one hand becoming an imagined *bodhrán* (bass) frame drum while the other hand holds an imagined *cipín* (or in English, a “tipper”) stick to beat out the dance rhythms. We can’t tell whether he’s ever in fact played

a *bodhrán*, but his hand motions appear to set up and maintain a steady solid pulse that the whistle player doubtless is aware of. In other words, though one of the pair makes no sounds at all, his physical movements are a visual stimulus of direct benefit to his friend's performance, imparting encouragement and a kind of "energy" to blow harder or play faster and to carry the tune into the upper register of the instrument, where the tone is brightest and the idiomatic embellishments most conspicuous. The June 30th 2010 video file shows us no one else in frame, so we (are intended to?) conclude that the only "audience" for this performance was the person holding the camera, whom Jerry briefly addresses after he finishes playing, and that the recording was made with intent to capture either a single, one-off moment of musicking or a manner of playing together that the two men occasionally or frequently engaged in. Presumably, the men had agreed to making the recording, and to its subsequent uploading on YouTube. If there is self-interest to be found in this, beyond the inherent pleasure of playing together, perhaps it is only in the desire to memorialise their friendship and musicking.

2. Kurds celebrating Nowruz in Saitama

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UwuDqhbsF6LZq7Wopipe4Wlbo1w4FfwQ/view>

I am lucky enough to live about 30 minutes' drive away from the large Akigase Park 秋ヶ瀬公園 near the Arakawa River in central Saitama Prefecture. On a warm weekend in late March 2019, I drove there with my son Claudio to enjoy a "stroll" around the park. Soon after setting out from the car park, I was astonished to hear Middle Eastern music being played quite loudly on a sound system, so I turned Claudio's wheelchair toward the sound source and pushed steadily on until we came to a large open area of grass where—impossibly!—hundreds of people were celebrating, many of them dancing, with most of the women dressed in garments that I thought were Turkish. It was the Spring Equinox, *o-higan* お彼岸 for most Japanese, but the day of Nowruz/Newroz, that is, the New Year for most people in Western Asia. I was told that for Japan's largest concentration of Kurdish migrant workers and their families in central Saitama, this spot in Akigase Park had become the site of their annual all-day gathering and musicking.¹² It seems all the music was played from recordings—at least while my son and I were there I saw no live singing or instrumental performance (and nor have I seen any in uploaded videos of subsequent Nowruz celebrations held in March 2023 after a 4-year hiatus due to Covid 19). Nonetheless the dancing involved at least 20 percent of all the people there, and a much larger portion of the women. There were almost no Japanese to be seen; I had to look long and hard to spot one Japanese woman dancing together with Kurdish friends, then a handful of others buying Middle Eastern lunch foods and cups of pomegranate juice. While this was not a case of deliberate wielding of music as a tool for exclusion—I could see no sign of efforts to keep others from joining in—clearly this was an intra-community Kurdish event whose objectives were oriented around not a cohort of practitioners and fans of Kurdish music or dance, but rather the cultural or identity formation "Kurds," in this case all and any Kurds who resided in the Tokyo region. Given that context, from a host society viewpoint, and indeed my own perspective, the spectacle was emphatically one of "Other music" (and dance), but for the performers themselves Japan and Japanese culture—the very fulcrum of their perceived Otherness in daily life—disappeared for a time as they wrapped themselves in the comfort of being surrounded by their own kind, and enveloped in their own sounds.

3. “LIVE: Japan holds state funeral for ex-PM Shinzo Abe”

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=abe+funeral+live&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:c8db9b2a,vid:6w125VHvcHI>

I was taken aback by the sheer amount of music played during Abe Shinzo’s lengthy and controversial state funeral held in the Budokan arena on September 27th 2022.¹³ Less surprising was the fact that all of that music was played with great skill by the foremost music corps (音楽隊) of the divisions for land, air, and maritime defense within the military body whose official English title is the Japan Self-Defense Force (自衛隊). Given the central importance of *gungakutai* (軍楽隊, military bands) in the histories of the modernisation of both musical and military cultures in Meiji Period Japan, there was a logic in the decision for such a band to provide several hours of music in the ceremonial farewell to a man who did more than any other post-War conservative Prime Minister to increase funding for and expand the actual scope of deployment of Japan’s military (that is, the Self-Defence Forces). It was the final segment of the event (from 3hr 28m 47s to the end in the recording mounted on YouTube) that most caught my ear, when an excerpt from the slow movement of Dvorak’s Ninth Symphony was played as those attending the funeral were given a chance to say their final farewells to the deceased politician. Though Dvorak composed the melody for orchestra, it is familiar to most Japanese as 『遠き山に日は落ちて (家路)』, a song commonly learned in primary school and included in Education Ministry-certified collections of *shouka* (唱歌, songs for school children). Significantly, it is also well known as the song “Goin’ Home” (家路 or ゴーイングホーム), a rendering of the Dvorak tune with English lyrics penned in 1922, and with various sets of Japanese lyrics composed by literary figures, beginning with Miyazawa Kenji in 1924. Finally, it is a melody played at innumerable public (and some private) facilities to signal the approach of closing time. My reading of the choice of this music for the end of the funeral, then, is that (beyond signalling the close of the nearly 3.5-hour event!) Abe was being valorised as a paternal defender of the homeland—in Turino’s terms, the identity formation of the Japanese national “family”—and of course, the supposedly unique home culture and values so beloved of leading figures in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), while Japanese participants and viewer-listeners were being infantilized through elicitation of their explicit or subliminal memories of singing the Dvorak tune together as children. Ironically, while the LDP governing party’s unilateral Cabinet decision to hold the funeral on such a scale and at massive public expense was an act shot through with hubris, self-satisfaction and self-interest, it was likely also intended as a way of comforting and calming “the people” after the assassination of a major political figure for the first time since 1960. Nearly a year on from the event, the potential benefits of that act have yet to become apparent.

4. “Biwa melodies and recitation to placate the Heike spirits resound in Okakura Tenshin’s beloved Rokkakudou”

「岡倉天心の愛した六角堂に響く平家の鎮魂の語りと琵琶の調べ」

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBHipcV91ZU>

This clip is of a performance of *heike* (sometimes still called *heikyoku*, a term commonly used until the late 20th century), which is musical rendition with *biwa* (琵琶) accompaniment of episodes from *Heike Monogatari*

(The Tale of the Heike). The musician, Arao Tsutomu (荒尾努), was trained in a style of singing *heike* developed in the 20th century and disseminated by a feted linguist and literature scholar, the late Kindaichi Haruhiko. Musically, this rendition cannot be considered representative of the hallowed medieval “epic” recitation tradition developed among blind biwa singers (琵琶法師), and the quality of Arao’s vocal performance is rather uneven with respect to consistency of pitch. Nonetheless, I include this example for two reasons: Firstly, this is a historical music genre that in part had origin in the ancient religious practice of *chinkon-barai* (鎮魂祓い), ritual placation of souls of the dead. Secondly, several features of the video suggest that this performance was also offered as an expression of compassion for the many thousands of people of that region killed by the March 11th, 2011 earthquake and subsequent tsunami: The recording itself was made at a temple on the coast of Miyagi Prefecture that had been severely damaged in March 2011, but repaired after just two years; the fact that the title given the video includes the expression ‘recitation to placate the *Heike* spirits’ (*Heike no chinkon no katari* 平家の鎮魂の語り); the YouTube mounting of the recording on March 12th 2013; and, the way the videographer positioned the camera so as to show the constant movement of waves immediately outside the performance space. The well-known “Nasu no Yoichi” episode describes a feat of arms on the shoreline during an early evening lull in the fighting between the Heike/Taira and Genji/Minamoto forces at Yashima (on Shikoku). Praise for the dead is imbued in this performance tradition, as a means of placating or calming unquiet spirits. Originally, moreover, there was an element of reciprocity inherent in *chinkon-barai* ritual performance: If satisfied with the accounts of their great deeds (and perhaps the quality of the musical narrative performance), those who had died would refrain from causing trouble as ghosts. Hence, by pacifying spirits, the ritual performance could impart benefits to both the dead and the living.

5. “*Kawachi ondo* [sung by] Hisanoya” 河内音頭、久乃家
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1smfgmCHUo8>

Regional forms of mid-summer Obon festival music, *bon-odori* 盆踊り and the *ondo* 音頭 “ballad” singing traditions with which the “Bon dancing” has developed, are particularly rich in Kansai. In what was the pre-modern province of Kawachi, now a large southern swathe of the Osaka metropolis centred on Yao-shi 八尾市, festival music performed outdoors in the sauna-like conditions of mid-August is dominated by *Kawachi ondo*. This tradition has been strong enough in the postwar era (in part due to the incorporation in performance of electric guitars since the mid-1950s) for it to remain a viable singing profession, with star performers who still release commercial recordings, some of them exploratory ventures such as Kawachiya Kikusuimaru (河内家菊水丸)’s 1990s recordings of hybrid reggae-styled ballads.¹⁴ Notwithstanding the presence of such professionals (in this case a singer of the Hisanoya-kai 久乃家会 lineage, and Kikusuimaru himself playing the drum, as indicated in sub-titling at 10”) on the *yagura* “drum-tower” stage, an Obon season outdoor *Kawachi-ondo* performance is emphatically participatory in two senses: It is assumed many or perhaps even most of those gathered in the temple yard will join the circle dance (as they are exhorted to do several times in the lyrics of the opening song), and that they will also join their voices in singing refrains of nonsense syllables. Typical refrains exist in several variants, but one of the most commonly sung can be rendered “*sorya yoi, dokkoi sa, sa no yoi ya san sa!*”. (Those

syllables can be clearly heard from the ca.1 minute 50 seconds mark in this recording.) Despite the dreadful heat and humidity, the performance hardly involves presentational displays of skill by players or even the singer; its psychological and even physical benefits are communally oriented.¹⁵

6. “Ataka (安宅) Noh”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPK96ossG_k&t=4380s

Gravitas and formality attach to “classical” traditions of music and music-theatre, such that in many cultures, they are performed with conventions that circumscribe expression of emotional experience on the part of the performers, and as often as not listeners, too. *Noh* (能) drama is renowned for remarkable characteristics of its performance practice, including an apparent prohibition against musicians looking directly or even obliquely at either one another or singers in the on-stage chorus (*jiutai*), even while performing unrehearsed segments in which rhythmic relations among instruments and voices are of astonishing complexity. The principles and dynamics behind such perplexing rhythmic coordination have been touched on by many scholars, but perhaps only Fujita Takanori (2019) has achieved lucid accounts and analyses based on decades of learning and performance as an amateur practitioner. The video link above is for a full performance of the play “Ataka” by Kita School professionals, but a short segment from 1’13”01 to 1’14” 05 is key for Fujita’s exposition of the real-time unfolding of the fabric of choral chant and percussion parts in terms of a metrical frame or “rhythm type” (in this case called *hira-nori*) and relations among *hayashi* instrumental performers that I will call symbiotic. In using this term, I imply that each of the drummers is utterly reliant upon the skill, the attentiveness and the willing flexibility (especially with regard to tempo) of the other, for in the absence of any visual or gestural interaction, only such a depth of interrelation enables them to hold the performance together. That is because the drummers must draw out and abbreviate multiple percussion patterns (including *kake-goe* drum calls) whose theoretical form is within an 8-beat metrical frame, to fit with treatment of chanted syllables in fixed lines of poetry by chorus singers who pay no attention to—indeed “are ignorant of” (Fujita 2019: 223)—beat numbers.¹⁶

The point I make here is that a condition of a kind of *rita* exists among the performers, indeed must exist for them to carry the play forward despite historically-generated but still widely imposed limitations on the explanation to singers of formal principles (such as the beat structure), and conventions of practice that minimise rehearsal and forbid visual cueing in performance.

7. “Bayraktar—Ukrainian War Song”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3FGWPMjl6M>

Like the Abe funeral music, this song and performance are addressed to and intended to comfort and encourage an assumed national cultural formation—in this case the Ukrainian nation in its time of direst need. The background to the song and its dissemination was Ukraine’s successful deployment of Turkish-made Bayraktar combat drones or “unmanned combat aerial vehicles” over the years of Russia’s occupation of the

Crimea region, then in the initial military response to the invasion in February 2022. Therefore this is not simply a “war song”; the circumstances of its composition and recording make it both a song of resistance to invasion and a propaganda item. Its composer, Taras Borovok, stated that his goal in writing the song at the request of a friend in the Armed Forces of Ukraine was to “influence people, keep morale high and reduce Russian influence” (as quoted in Weichert 2023). To that end, both the performance and the lyrics use humour at the expense of the Russian leadership, the Russian people, and even the Russian soldiers who have died; the song “mocks Vladimir Putin, the Russian army and even the country’s famous cabbage soup, *shchi*.” Borovok said he writes songs that can be appealing and understandable to anyone: “I try to balance between making them funny but not completely like a comedy ... To make it work, I need to get people not to panic but believe that we can win.” (ibid.) It is now far and away the most widely played (and sung) song of the ongoing war.

Othering music

The last of those seven examples involves music that is pressed into the service of “Othering” and exclusion; it shows musicking that enforces firm boundaries around units of community. As the song arises from and responds to war, the most extreme of circumstances in which two or more groups of humans are pitted against each other, Othering is taken as a given in the form of a priori stereotyping and demonisation of the enemy, whose humanity and dignity as individual humans are disallowed. In such musicking, the Mobius strip of *rita* and *riko* seems to be broken. And yet, the performance, singing and hearing of such music can have powerful “positive” effects; the psychological benefits—raising spirits, giving impetus to action in moments of extremity—for those who are members of the same identity formation as the musicians are grimly tangible. The song about drone bombings encourages Ukrainians to bravely fight on, and conversely no one can doubt that Russian forces and those who support them have been fortifying their courage to continue dying and suffering in the struggle by singing songs that demonise the independent Ukrainians and their Western supporters.

Finally, like an icy blade in our hearts, we can feel the chilling “benefits” of music in the service of military and ethnic or “racial” conflict when we consider the contents and the cover imagery of the following 1868 publication held in the US Library of Congress:



Source: <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200000725/>
 (See further <https://exhibits.library.jhu.edu/omeka-s/s/white-supremacist-music/item/3005>)

This collection of musical notation was published in Tennessee three years after the Confederacy's defeat in the Civil War and the subsequent emancipation of millions of enslaved African Americans. "Communal" Klu Klux Klan dancing presumably comforted members in their distress at the dismantlement of a Southern society and way of life built upon slavery, and moreover confirmed their sense of righteous solidarity with others who felt a kindred bigotry and at times murderous repugnance toward black people.

Why is it possible for music (or musicking, including dancing) itself to be enslaved to hatred? In his last publication, Taruskin asserted that "musicality and expressive performance are inherently conservative, because they seek, and promote *Gemeinschaft*—community[community values], social solidarity" (2020: 324 and 336). There may be nothing inherently good (nor bad) about community and solidarity, except from a biological or evolutionary standpoint, such that humans are far more likely to survive and flourish in groups than alone. We offer benefits to ourselves and those around us when we make music, but those who benefit most are fellow members of our habit-based cultural cohorts and cultural formations—and it seems a great many of us can experience feelings of solidarity (a form of reciprocal well-being among group members) all the more intensely if musicking involves Othering of people who are members of neither group. That awkward fact has been evidenced again and again in some of the most common historical uses of music.

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What's in play is not to be taken lightly. As an innately social act, musicking affects people other than the composer(s), and the musician(s) and dancer(s), at times and over time, often in huge numbers. Understanding just how people are affected by acts and experiences of music is inseparable from an understanding of how music generates meaning, facilitates communicative experience, imparts and also elicits well-being. For both of those, intersubjective relations among composers, musicians, listeners and people sung about (even historical and fictional characters) are fundamental, as is the shaping of those relations within the frameworks of cultural or identity cohorts and formations. Performers and non-performers alike are affected by the music in real time as it is produced—as it comes into fleeting sonic existence then vanishes—in forms and patterns whose relations, internal (within a work or a song) and external (within a tradition or a genre), trigger both physiological and psychological reactions that we experience as a unity. It is as if emotions and energy are shared and tossed around "from" the music "to" the musicians, then on to every receptive individual present in a performance space. Like children with a ball, in musicking, perhaps our primary role is to keep feelings, receptivity and heightened attention in play.

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¹ I exclude the algorithmic generation by AI of sonic works that mimic musical styles. In my view the latter are 'music-like' sonic objects, but not music, which is a product of human creative practice and activity that affects listeners in ways largely dependent on an awareness that other humans have made the music.

² John Coltrane and Jimi Hendrix are among the renowned improvisers whose recordings have been selectively transcribed then circulated as fixed pieces, in both legitimate and illegitimate media.

³ At this stage in the essay, I will not complicate this further by discussing the different modes of experience and attentiveness involved in hearing music while watching films or performances of music-theatre traditions such as opera (with apologies to Wagner devotees), and Broadway musicals.

⁴ The cost of having unlimited upload capacity on an individual account has varied, but has been between 100 and 200 hundred US dollars per year.

⁵ Finale is one of the most commonly used music notation software programs, now available in Version 27. It has been under ongoing development since 1988.

⁶ <https://soundcloud.com/john-carroll-581706169> , with a separate summary explanation and list of recordings

at <https://john-carroll-poems.com/soundcloud-recordings/>

⁷ See, for example, ローソン CS ほっとステーション 放送内容 (2022/11/8 ~ 2022/11/14) | ローソン研究所 (lawson.co.jp).

⁸ Beethoven was at times oblivious of performers, too, as in his attributed remarks to players in a string quartet who said his *Grosse Fugue* could not be played: “This wasn’t written for you! It was meant for a later age!” To the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzig, who complained that one of his string quartets was too difficult to play, his retort was: “Do you think I have in mind your damn fiddle when the Muse speaks to me?” <https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2020/12/music-for-all-time-reflections-beethoven-250-birthday.html>

⁹ Here is an example from the chapel at Merton College, Oxford: <https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/event/organ-recital-108>

¹⁰ Here is an example of such a singer and band leader who apparently had enjoyed doing just that for much of his career, and wasn’t going to stop at age 74: <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=iggy+pop+sydney+opera+house+2021&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:4874315f,vid:nRaSLXR7K3o>

¹¹ In the Comments made on this video, at least three different candidates for the identity of the tune are offered!

¹² The Japanese government has been extremely reluctant to recognise Kurds as asylum seekers or refugees (難民), nor grant them visa status that acknowledges that they are immigrant workers who are unlikely to return to their countries of origin.

¹³ The controversy concerned the well-documented opposition to use of public funds for such an event on the part of approximately 60 percent of people surveyed in September 2022 opinion polls.

¹⁴ Kikusuiamaru came to national attention with a 1991 reggae-style narrative song “Kaakin Ondo (カーキン音頭)”. In 1997, he recorded an album titled 『ボブ・マーリー物語 ’97』 (English title “Ondo Story of Reggae King”).

¹⁵ That being said, the details of melodic embellishment techniques and modal “seasonings” applied to phrases of the traditional *ondo* tune by individual singers are of great interest to listeners well familiar with the style.

¹⁶ The extent of this “ignorance” varies according to the amateur or professional status of the singers; in the latter case performers have knowledge of the 8-beat framework but wilfully ignore it when singing. The actual lines chanted by the chorus at that point in “Ataka” are as follows:

怪しめらるな面面と、 [Ayashimeraru na menmen to “Don’t be suspicious!”

弁慶に諫められて、 Benkei ni isamerarete Benkei reprimands them.

この山陰の一宿りに kono yamakage no hito yadori ni “We must stay a night in these mountain shadows ...”]