

International Journal of Creativity in Music Education

Special Issue: Gagaku and Creative Music



Vol.
12
August 2025

- Looking at Gagaku and Creative Music from Different Perspectives
- Reports on Gagaku Music Lessons
- Exploring the Charms of Gagaku

Chief Editor

Yukiko Tsubonou

Institute of Creativity in Music Education, Executive Director

Editorial Board

Patricia Shehan Campbell	University of Washington
Tadahiko Imada	Hirosaki University
Hiromichi Mito	Meiji Gakuin University
Tadahiro Murao	Aichi University of Education, Professor emeritus
Mayumi Oie	Tokyo Woman's Christian University
Ramon P. Santos	National Artist for Music, University of the Philippines, Professor emeritus
Ai-Girl Tan	Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
Hiroshi Yasuda	Former Professor, Nara University of Education
Robert Walker	University of New England
Jackie Wiggins	Oakland University
Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes	University of Shizuoka

Editorial Collaborators

Tsutomu Haruna

Kevin Hinshaw

About Cover Photo

The photo is a scene from the premiere of "The Wind Tells." Participants in the background improvise on percussion instruments with two Gagaku performers at ICME's workshop, "Gagaku and Creative Music" in August 2024.

About Contributions

Detailed submission guidelines and Peer-review Rules can be found at

<https://www.icme.jp/en/contributions/>

International Journal of Creativity in Music Education vol. 12

ISSN 2435-6220

Published by the Institute of Creativity in Music Education

151-0071 1-26-2 Honmachi Shibuya-ku Tokyo, Japan

<https://www.icme.jp/en/>

© Institute of Creativity in Music Education

Published August 2025

International Journal of Creativity in Music Education, vol.12

Special Issue: Gagaku and Creative Music

Table of Contents

Preface	Yukiko Tsubonou ······ 5
 “Looking at Gagaku and Creative Music from Different Perspectives”	
1. Creative Music Making in a Japanese Junior High School	
	Takashi Wada ······ 7
2. The History of Gagaku in Japan in Relation to Ancient Japanese literature	
	Mayumi Oie ······ 33
3. A Gagaku Performer’s Proposal for Creative Music Making: Adapting Gagaku’s Musical Structure and Characteristics	
	Hitomi Nakamura ······ 57
 “Reports on Gagaku Music Lessons”	
4. Report 1 of a Music Lesson in Junior High School	
	Shiho Kanemoto and Hiroshi Suga ······ 65
5. Report 2 of a Music Lesson in Junior High School	
	Naomi Nakamura and Sahomi Honda ······ 90
6. Report 3 a of Music Lesson in Junior High School	
	Yuki Imai ······ 112
 “Exploring the Charms of Gagaku”	
7. <i>The Wind Tells: A Piece Using Gagaku Instruments</i>	
	Yasunoshin Morita ······ 138

Audio and Visual Materials

International Journal of Creativity in Music Education vol.12

“Reports on Gagaku Music Lessons”

4. Report 1 of a Music Lesson in Junior High School

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AubD6dWTr0>

5. Report 2 of a Music Lesson in Junior High School

<https://youtu.be/8exBajT0R78>

6. Report 3 a of Music Lesson in Junior High School

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5u5gX3u5ay4>

“Exploring the Charms of Gagaku”

7. *The Wind Tells: A Piece Using Gagaku Instruments*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLSmq2ZqvPI>

Group presentation with musicians

<https://youtu.be/fGvzGT6WyPo>

Group presentation with musicians

<https://youtu.be/FdcJBWF4hXg>

Joint presentation by two groups of children with musicians

<https://youtu.be/b5gMwPG2KSY>

Joint presentation by two groups of children with musicians

<https://youtu.be/XbUgifj6X44>

Preface

In 2024, four researchers in music education launched a new project named *The Junior High School Creative Music Project*, aimed at promoting creative music activities in junior high schools.

The participating researchers were:

- Sahomi Honda (Chiba University)
- Yiroshi Suga (University of Miyazaki)
- Takasi Wada (Tokyo College of Music)
- Yukiko Tsubonou (Art Center, the University of Tokyo)

The first seminar was held in the summer of 2024, with the theme *Improvisation in Jazz and Gagaku*. On the first day, we enjoyed jazz improvisation sessions with professional jazz musicians. On the second day, we explored Gagaku, traditional Japanese court music, with three Gagaku Musicians. One of them, Hiromi Nakamura, contributed an article about the workshop in this volume.

Gagaku is considered one of the oldest art forms in the world, a history dating back to the Nara period (710-794). It was more formally established in the Heian period (794-1185) around the 10th century and has been passed down to the present day. With influences from ancient Japanese music and dance, the art form was adapted from Chinese and Korean traditions and uniquely shaped into the Gagaku style which has been performed in the Imperial Palace and Shinto Shrines.

In Japan, Music has been a compulsory subject in primary and junior high schools for nearly 80 years, and Gagaku has always been included in the national curriculum and music textbooks. For Example, *Etenraku*, one of the representative pieces of Gagaku, is commonly used as teaching material for music appreciation. However, students often feel no sense of familiarity with it.

In this context, our choice of the theme *Gagaku and Improvisation* for this issue has several

musical and pedagogical implications:

1. It incorporates the use of the pentatonic mode, *ritsu*.
2. Through the TAS model, students can directly experience the sounds of real Gagaku instruments.
3. The musical Structure of Gagaku is relatively simple, making it accessible for students to understand and use in improvisation.

In July 2024, three junior high school music teachers conducted classroom lessons based on the concepts introduced in our project. In October of the same year, these teachers and I presented a report titled *Gagaku and Improvisation* at the Japan Music Education Society (JMES) conference. During the presentation, I spoke about the significance of creating and improvising with Gagaku as a way to broaden the scope of music education in schools. Each teacher shared their classroom experiences with Gagaku-based lessons, which were notably diverse in approach and reflected the individual characteristics of their teaching styles.

Additionally, Japanese contemporary composer Yasunoshin Morita composed a piece titled *The Wind Tells* for our group's teacher-focused event in 2022. The work was performed by two Gagaku musicians (Hichiriki and Genkan) and included an improvisational element where participants used triangles. Following this event, one of the participants, a primary school teacher, incorporated the piece into her own class lesson. The score for *The Wind Tells* is included in this volume.

I would be honored if you consider incorporating this piece into your own primary or junior high school music lessons.

Acknowledgement

This volume was supported by Mayekawa Foundation 2024 Grant Number 4.

Yukiko Tsubonou

Chief Editor of the International Journal of Creativity in Music Education

Director of the Institute of Creativity in Music Education (ICME)

Creative Music Making in a Japanese Junior High School

Takashi Wada

Tokyo College Of Music Tokyo, Japan

Author Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Takashi Wada, Professor of Tokyo College of Music, 1-9-1 Kamimeguro, Meguro-ku, Tokyo, 153-8622, Japan.

Introduction

In Japan, the *Courses of Study* (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017 and 2018) define the content to be studied in music classes at junior high and high schools. The content of instruction on melody creation was presented in the 1947 draft and has continued to be included to the present day. In addition, the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Instructional Plans* state that “the content of instruction should not be biased toward specific activities” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017, pp. 95, and 2018, pp. 55).

However, in junior high and high schools, instructional emphasis tends to be placed on learning activities in the area of singing, while learning activities in the area of creative writing are not being carried out enthusiastically and actively. Various reasons for this may contribute to this imbalance, but it is undeniable that the approach to teaching has become skewed.

This report discusses the significance of creative music activities in junior high and high schools and examines the various issues that emerge from the current state of these activities.

Significance of creative music activities in junior high and high schools

The significance of creative music activities in junior and senior high schools is manifold. The following are some specific examples:

Fostering Creativity

The imagery evoked by the lyrics and musical character of the commonly used piece *Natsu no Omoide* tends to be quite limited. However, when students are encouraged to compose a piece of music on a theme such as “a summer evening,” using their imagination freely, the scenes they envision will vary greatly depending on their past experiences. As they develop these ideas into actual music, their imaginations expand even further. This freedom of thought is precisely what leads to the cultivation of creativity, which is one of the most important aims of music education.

Understanding the Function of Musical Elements

Today, there is a strong emphasis on understanding the function of musical elements and how to devise means of expression. In actual singing and instrumental music activities, devising means of expression appropriate for a piece of music involves only three elements: changes in speed and intensity, vocalization, and tone. It is therefore difficult for students to understand the function of each element. In contrast, creative music allows students to manipulate tone, rhythm, melody, speed, intensity, repetition/variation, form, and texture as

actual sounds and music. This creative engagement allows students to grasp the function of these elements with a real sense of reality.

Sense of accomplishment and fulfillment

Creating music independently brings students great joy. No matter how short the piece or monotonous the melody or rhythm, the satisfaction of completing their own work is significant. This sense of accomplishment and fulfillment encourages them to repeat the experience and becomes the driving force for the next activity. If students are motivated to write a better piece the next time, it will foster a positive attitude toward learning.

Freedom from stave notation

Currently, junior high school students have limited reading and notation skills, due to the lack of specialized instruction. This results in difficulties in teaching in the limited time available. As a result, many students have difficulty in singing and instrumental activities using the staff. The same applies to creative composition writing. However, creative music can be created in a variety of ways without the use of the staff, making it an effective approach for students who struggle with notation and reading music.

Students who have found difficulty with music classes themselves may become more motivated to participate in the classes through creative music activities.

Developing Thinking Skills

In addition to the method of freely improvising sounds and assembling them sensitively to complete a piece, students are asked to create a piece by specifying several usable sounds and rhythms. Considering the developmental stages of junior high school and high school students, many students find it interesting to create songs by fulfilling specified conditions. In addition to improvising sounds and rhythms and selecting sounds and rhythms sensitively in these activities, students must also consider the connections between the preceding and succeeding sounds and rhythms. For longer pieces, they must think about the structure of the entire piece. In this way, creative music activities lead to the development of musical thinking skills.

Relation by Subject

The integration of expression and appreciation has long been recommended. Naturally, students gain a deeper understanding of a subject by relating it to other subjects rather than taught in isolation. In particular, linking expression and appreciation in creative writing is highly beneficial. Below are some specific examples:

1 Related cases of instrumental and creative music

In instrumental activities, the use of traditional Japanese instruments is required. Many schools include activities such as playing the song *Sakura Sakura* on the koto. As a follow up, possible topics for further lessons include composing melodies using the *Hira-Joshi* (平調子)

mode (see Figure 1), creating preludes and postludes for *Sakura Sakura*, or composing a second part for the song.

A key learning objective in this topic is for students to grasp the characteristics of Hira-Joshi.

While the features of Hira-Joshi can be relatively easy to grasp by examining its scale, it is surprisingly difficult to express these characteristics within the actual music flow. Even if students create a piece using the notes of Hira-Joshi, such as in figure 2, the result does not fully reflect the nature of the mode and might more resemble a piece in A minor. To ensure the piece truly reflects the characteristics of Hira-Joshi, students can be guided to use more semitones or limit the tonic note. This will help them compose music that more authentically captures the essence of Hira-Joshi. Through activities that allow students to connect the sounds directly, they can gradually internalize what makes Hira-Joshi distinct.

Figure 1

Example melody using Hira-Joshi mode

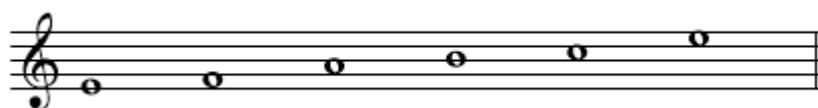
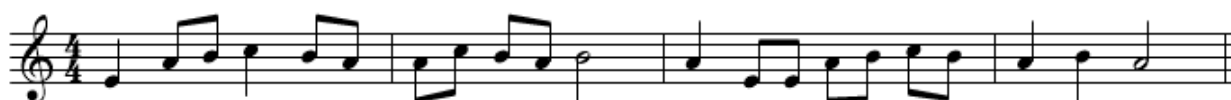


Figure 2

Example of a melody using notes of Hira-Joshi that doesn't the nature of the mode



2 Related cases of appreciation and creative music

Music that uses shifting rhythms and melodies can be found throughout the world. For example, Balinese traditional performing arts such as *kecak* and *gamelan*, West African drum ensembles, fugues, and canons are included in junior and senior high school textbooks.

Creating a melody by shifting the pitch of the music is very difficult, but rhythm patterns are more accessible. As shown in figure 3, students can easily create rhythms and experience the effect of shifting the pitch of the music. Playing the pattern in Figure 3 on congas of different pitches produces compelling music, reminiscent of African drum music.

Figure 3

Sample rhythm pattern



In this way, creative composition writing is an important activity that supports a deeper exploration of instrumental music and musical appreciation. It can be considered a central activity in each field of music. However, creative activities in junior high schools and

high schools are often not conducted enthusiastically and actively. The following section discusses the current situation regarding creative activities.

Questionnaire administration and discussion of the results

A questionnaire was distributed to 128 second-year college students with the aim of learning about their creative activities at junior high school and high school. The following results were obtained. Since a number of years has passed since they graduated from junior high school, the accuracy of their responses may be limited; however, the results provide an approximate idea of the trends. (In the case of high school, students who did not choose art or who were in a specialized in a “music” program were excluded.)

Result

Junior High School:

1st Grade

- Did: 26 students (20%)
- Did not do: 97 students (76%)
- Forgot: 5 students (4%)

2nd grade

- Did: 34 students (26%)
- Did not do: 83 students (65%)

- Forgot: 11 students (9%)

3rd grade

- Did: 39 students (30%)
- Did not do: 74 students (58%)
- Forgot: 15 students (12%)

High school (Music Elective Students):

1st grade (n= 113)

- Did: 37 students (33%)
- Did not do: 76 students (67%)

2nd grade (n= 108)

- Did: 24 students (22%)
- Did not do: 82 students (76%)
- Forgot: 2 students (2%)

3rd grade

- Did: 30 students (29%)
- Did not do: 72 students (71%)

Considerations

In junior high school, approximately 60% of the students answered that they had not engaged in creative activities. However, the number of students who answered that they had done so increased as the school year progressed, which was an unexpected result.

In high school, about 70% of students answered that they had not done creative activities (“did not do”). This result shows that more students answered “no” in the case of high school compared to junior high school.

These findings suggest that creative activities are not actively pursued in junior high and high schools. Possible reasons for this trend will be discussed in a later section.

For reference, we also surveyed the content of activities, as shown below.

Activities

Junior High School:

1st Grade

- Rhythm creation: 22 students
- 4-bar rhythm creation: 1 student
- Short melody creation: 1 student
- Composition of melody with 2 notes (C and E): 1 student
- Arrangement: 1 student

2nd grade

- Rhythm creation: 21 students

- Melody creation: 5 students
- Rhythm ensemble: 1 student
- Melody creation using Japanese instrument (*koto*): 1 student
- Variation creation: 1 student
- Melody based on chord progression: 1 student

3rd grade

- Rhythm creation: 16 students
- Melody creation using Okinawan pentatonic scale: 1 student
- Melody creation: 17 students
- Rhythm ensemble: 1 student
- Melodies based on harmonic progressions: 2 students
- Choral music creation: 1 student
- Sound logo creation: 1 student
- Cup music: 1 student

High School:

1st Grade

Rhythm creation: 9 students

Body rhythm creation: 2 students

Variation creation: 2 students

Handclap rhythm creation: 1 student

Short melody compositions: 1 student

Melody composition in the Okinawan pentatonic scale: 1 student

Composition of melody in a 5-note scale: 1 student

Arrangement: 1 student

Composition of 2-part melody: 1 student

Composition of a 3-part melody: 1 student

Accompaniment to the melody: 1 student

Composition of a prelude to *Sakura* on koto: 1 student

Composition by a garage band: 1 student

Creating background music: 1 student

Creating a melody following chord progression: 1 student

Improvising: 1 student

Making music with handmade instruments: 1 student

2nd grade

Arrangement: 8 students

Short melody creation: 6 students

Accompaniment to melody: 2 students

Rhythm creation: 2 students

Melody creation using Japanese instruments: 2 students

Chorus creation: 1 student

Composition: 1 student

Melody creation in sonata form: 1 student

3rd grade

Arrangement: 14 students

Melody according to a chord progression: 8 students

Melody creation: 4 students

Instrumental composition: 1 student

Free composition: 1 student

Jazz improvisation: 1 student

Composition in fugue form: 1 student

Analysis of Activity content

Rhythm composition was widely the most common activity in junior high school, followed by short melody composition. It is notable that the third-grade activities include choral composition, sound logo creation, and cup music. These activities are not included in

the two textbooks used by the students, reflecting the creativity and ingenuity of the instructors.

At the high school level, there was a noticeable increase in melody creation and the content was more diverse than in junior high school. In particular, several respondents reported engaging in arranging music arrangement, which is likely due to the instructional content that included secondary melody creation, adding chords to melodies, arranging music, and creating variations.

Additionally, activities like improvisation, jazz improvisation, sonata form, and fugue form were also reported. Many schools that offer third-year art music have specialized departments, so students have a lot of musical experience and specialized knowledge, which makes these activities possible.

Consideration of reasons why creative activities are not implemented willingly

We consider why creative activities are not being pursued more enthusiastically in junior high and high schools. The following discussion is based on the results of a 2015 survey of approximately 216 junior high school music teachers in Tokyo.

Number of hours spent on creative music activities

Grade	1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade
Lesson hours per year	45 hours	35 hours	35 hours
0 hours	20%	27%	43%
1-2 hours	50%	50%	38%
3-4 hours	20%	17%	13%
5-6 hours	6%	4%	3%
7-8 hours	1%	1%	0.6%
More than 9 hours	0%	0%	0%

Although the number of respondents who indicated “0 hours” was relatively small compared to the student responses, it is reasonable to assume that non-respondents among the approximately 400 teachers would have had a higher non-participation rate.

In addition, 99 teachers gave reasons for not doing creative writing. The reasons were as follows (multiple responses allowed):

- Lack of time to prepare teaching materials for creative writing: 99 teachers
- Lack of confidence in teaching creative writing: 15 teachers

- Do not know how to teach creative writing: 11 teachers
- Difficulty in teaching textbook examples: 7 teachers
- Not having studied creative writing instruction at university: 7 teachers
- Students who have not studied Western music theory cannot compose music: 2 teachers
- Other reasons: 6 teachers

All respondents answered that they did not have time to prepare for creative writing.

Ideally, annual teaching plans should include time for preparation. Some teachers reported that students who have not studied Western music theory cannot compose music; however, the *Courses of Study* do not specify that students should engage in creative activities based on Western music. This suggests a lack of proper understanding of the curriculum goals.

Furthermore, some respondents answered that they had not learned how to teach creative composition during university or did not know how to teach it. This suggests that some music teachers lack the confidence, ability, knowledge, and experience to teach creative composition, and as a result, may have less time to spend on creative activities. Although the results of this survey are from 2015 and the situation may have improved, these findings reveal a major issue that needs to be urgently addressed by many universities and other institutions involved in teacher training.

In order to promote creative activities in the classroom, it is necessary not only to improve the knowledge and skills of music teachers, but also to have a deeper understanding of the significance and objective of creative activities in music education.

Private Proposals for Problem Solving

The issues of the lack of creative activities are not only from the teachers themselves but also from the textbooks and the guidance and examples provided in the *Courses of Study*.

Suggested improvements to the Guidelines of the *Course of Study*

The current *Courses of Study* for junior high school music indicate the following instructional content for the first year:

“(A) Characteristics of the way sounds are connected

(B) Characteristics of phonemes and compositional features such as overlapping, repetition, change, and object of sound” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017, pp. 48).

Although this content focuses primarily on comprehension, (A) suggests teaching melody creation while (B) implies music-making through creative composition. In particular, (B) includes many examples of group-based creative activities based on free ideas.

In the *High School Curriculum Arts Music I*, the guidelines state:

“(a) The skill of creating music by utilizing techniques such as repetition, variation, and contrast.

(b) The skill of composing melodies and creating music by adding secondary melodies or harmonies to the composed melody.

(c) The skill of modifying the function of musical elements to create variations and arrangements” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2018, pp. 39).

Compared to the junior high school version, the high school version is more concrete and easier to understand.

One notable issue is that neither of the instructional guidelines include content related to improvisation. While there is a reference to "experimenting with how sounds connect while playing spontaneously," (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017, pp. 114) this does not equate to improvisational performance. Improvisation is extremely important in creative musical activities.

Through continual engagement in improvisational activities, students can develop a freer and more creative approach to musical expression, unbound by specific scales or rhythms. This can lead to fostering a love for music and nurture their musical sensibility.

Although there are challenges—particularly in terms of assessment and technical skills—future curriculum revisions would benefit from the explicit inclusion of content

related to improvisation as a component of the curriculum guidelines. Without such inclusion, it is unlikely improvisational activities will be included in textbooks.

Issues Regarding the Examples Presented in Textbooks

Teachers with little experience in teaching creative activities often heavily rely on examples from textbooks, using them as a reference or following them exactly as written. To access current textbook support for creative music-making, this study compiled the contents of textbooks for junior and senior high schools used during the 2024 school year. The names of publishers are not listed, and for senior high schools, only *Music I* and *Music II* textbooks used in the regular courses were analyzed.

In the junior high school textbooks reviewed, both publishers use a double-page spread, with a total of eight examples from publisher A and six examples from publisher B. These examples focus on melodic and rhythmic compositions that are relatively easy to perform and are appropriate for the initial stage of compositions. However, many of the compositional activities are overly open-ended and do not provide clear instructions, which may result in students creating sound effects that are appropriate for a particular situation.

To address this, it would be beneficial for textbook publishers to devote more pages to each case study, provide easy-to-understand instruction, and include opportunities that allow

for improvisational performance. This would not only enhance students' creativity but also lead to clearer and improved instruction for teachers.

In high schools, various types of textbooks are available, and even books from the same publisher differ in their own unique content. The content is more advanced, including activities such as adding secondary melodies, harmonizing melodies, and creating variations or arrangements. As a result, the examples presented are more varied and the instructional topics go beyond what is covered in junior high school textbooks. However, many of these pages lack detailed steps or reference examples, making it necessary for teachers to provide clear and accurate instructions so that students can successfully engage with the material. This issue applies to all textbooks. A clearer and more user-friendly layout would make the content easier to use. If the content is too difficult for the teacher to teach, students may find it difficult to engage, even if they want to try it. On the other hand, if the content is too rigid, where following the steps immediately leads to a finished product by following steps, it will not foster creative music-making.

Textbooks should ideally include examples with clear instruction that concurrently allow students to fully utilize their creativity. Furthermore, it would also be helpful to include new examples—even if they are improvisational ones—that offer students more opportunities to explore and express themselves more freely.

Improvement in the classroom

Given the limited class time available for the four subject areas, the time allocated to creative activities is naturally restricted. For example, one creative activity is conducted per semester and each activity lasts two hours, this would only total six hours per year. However, simply conducting creative activities separately for each subject may not be sufficient for students to develop the necessary skills for creating music.

Many schools begin music classes with vocal warm-ups. Even short practice sessions, if done consistently over a long period, can help students develop a naturally resonant voice. Similarly, consistent engagement in creative activities can also be very effective. For example, having students imitate the teacher's impromptu handclapping rhythms, replicate melodies on recorders, or engage in impromptu rhythm exchanges with classmates can significantly contribute to the creative process.

Connecting content across grade levels is also important. For instance, in the first semester of the first year, students could create a short rhythm (about four measures). In the second semester, they could write lyrics to fit that rhythm and compose a melody that aligns with the natural stress of the words. Then in the third semester, students could build on the rhythm they created in the first semester by layering or shifting it in groups, creating a rhythm ensemble piece. In this case, linking with listening activities could also enhance the learning

experience. By developing the four-measure rhythm created in the first semester, lessons can be carried out more efficiently.

By implementing continuous creative activities and considering the connections and continuity between topics across levels, it is crucial to design a three-year teaching plan that aligns with the development of the students' musical abilities.

Enhancement of Training Sessions for Improving Teacher Instructional Skills

Improving and developing teachers' instructional skills requires the implementation of training workshops. Although creative workshops are conducted for music teachers in various districts several times a year, many teachers still have limited understanding and experience in teaching composition. Introducing a few basic examples and offering practical exercises on instructional methods has proven effective in reducing teachers' anxiety about teaching composition. This suggests that creative workshops are an effective way to enhance teachers' instructional abilities. Therefore, there should also be emphasis on providing basic composition training for teachers who feel apprehensive about teaching it.

Additionally, training in assessment for creative activities is necessary. Many teachers face challenges in setting appropriate assessment criteria and evaluation standards. In particular, when it comes to assessing individual contributions in group activities, there is a need to research how to assess creative works in general.

Challenges in Teacher Training

In teacher training programs at various universities, curricula include understanding the content of the teaching guidelines, understanding teaching methods for each subject area, learning how to write lesson plans, and conducting mock lessons. These are also classes on teaching methods for creative activities. However, it is crucial to provide sufficient instruction at this stage. A basic understanding of the teaching guidelines or reviewing textbook examples alone is not enough to prepare teachers to effectively teach composition to junior or senior high school students.

At our college, out of the 15 class sessions in a semester, approximately 3 hours are dedicated to teaching composition, including 2 hours of direct instruction and additional time for preparation. Classes begin with exercises for teaching sight-reading using rhythm cards, followed by rhythm composition, melody composition, and melody creation based on chord progressions, all supported by practical teaching activities. Moving forward, the curriculum will incorporate examples of improvisational performance, with an emphasis on how enjoyable improvisation can be for students.

Conclusion

In the summer of 2023, The Junior and Senior High School Composition Project was launched by Tsubono, Honda, Suga, and Wada. In December, a composition workshop based on *Shyuteika* by Akimatsu was held. The following August included presentations on Creative Gagaku, Gagaku practice, and jazz improvisation exercises.

The aim of this project, as described in this paper, is to clarify why composition activities are not being carried out enthusiastically in junior and senior high schools, and to identify and address the challenges surrounding this issue. To achieve this, in addition to the workshops already being conducted, it is essential to hold foundational composition workshops specifically designed for teachers who feel hesitant about teaching composition. These workshops should be held in person during long school breaks, allowing teachers to experience the enjoyment and educational significance of music creation.

References

- Ministry of education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2008). *Course of study commentary in junior high school: the music volume*. Tokyo: Kyouiku-geijyutsu-shya.
- Ministry of education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2009). *Course of study commentary in high school: the art volume*. Tokyo: Kyouiku-tosho.
- Niimi, T. Wada, T. et al.(2021a) *Musical textbook for seventh grade*. Tokyo: Kyoiku-Shuppan-shya.
- Niimi, T. Wada, T.et al.(2021b) *Musical textbook for eight grade*. Tokyo: Kyoiku-Shuppan-shya.

Niimi, T. Wada, T.et al.(2021c) *Musical textbook for ninth grade* . Tokyo: Kyoiku-Shuppan-shya.

Ohara, K. Iinuma, N.et al.(2021a) *Musical textbook for seventh grade* . Tokyo: Kyouiku-geijyutsu-shya.

Ohara, K. Iinuma, N.et al. (2021b) *Musical textbook for eight grade* . Tokyo: Kyouiku-geijyutsu-shya.

Ohara, K. Iinuma, N.et al(2021c) *Musical textbook for ninth grade* . Tokyo: Kyouiku-geijyutsu-shya.

Ohara, K. Kuwahara, M.et al.(2022a) *MOUSA1 Musical textbook for high school* . Tokyo: Kyouiku-geijyutsu-shya.

Ohara, K. Kuwahara, M.et al.(2022b) *MOUSA2 Musical textbook for high school* . Tokyo: Kyouiku-geijyutsu-shya.

Ohara, K. Kubota, K.et al.(2022a) *Musical textbook1 for high school* . Tokyo: Kyouiku-geijyutsu-shya.

Ohara, K. Kubota, K.et al.(2022b) *Musical textbook2 for high school* . Tokyo: Kyouiku-geijyutsu-shya.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. (2017). *Courses of study for junior high school: Music*. MEXT. <https://www.mext.go.jp/en/>

Niimi, T. Aizawa, N.et al.(2021a) *Tutti plus Musical textbook1 for high school* . Tokyo: Kyoiku-Shuppan-shya.

Niimi, T. Aizawa, N.et al.(2021b) *Tutti plus Musical textbook2 for high school* . Tokyo: Kyoiku-Shuppan-shya.

Yamashita, K. Itou, Y.et al.(2021a) *On!1 Musical textbook1 for high school* . Tokyo: Onkagu-no-tomo-shya.

Yamashita, K. Itou, Y. et al. (2021a) *On!2 Musical textbook1 for high school* . Tokyo: Onkagu-no-tomo-shya.

Wada, T. Shinizu, H. (2019) *Let's get started! Enjoy the sound Case Studies in Musical Creation*. Tokyo: Zenon-gakufu-shuppan-shya.

Tsukada, K. (2016) *The true nature of African music*. Tokyo: Onkagu-no-tomo-shya.

Minagawa, K. (1998) *Enjoy the gamelan*. Tokyo: Onkagu-no-tomo-shya.

The history of Gagaku in Japan in relation to ancient Japanese literature

Mayumi Oie

Tokyo Woman's Christian University, Japan

Author Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mayumi Oie,
Professor of Tokyo Woman's Christian University, Suginami-ku, Zempuku-ji, Tokyo 167-
8585, Japan. Contact: oe@lab.twcu.ac.jp

The history of Gagaku in Japan

Gagaku is a form of Japanese classical music with a history of over 1,200 years. In ancient times, envoys and students from the Korean Peninsula and mainland China came to Japan and introduced the instruments, music, and dances that make up Gagaku. Ancient Japanese dances and songs composed in the Heian period (794-1185) were added to the Gagaku repertoire and have been handed down to the present day.

It was not until around 701, when Japan's first full-fledged law, the *Taihō Ritsuryō*, was enacted, that music began to be developed as court music. The *Taihō Ritsuryō* established the Ministry of Justice, which had jurisdiction over family registers and rituals, and assigned musicians and poets to this ministry, who were responsible for the music of ceremonies held at court.

Twenty ceremonies have been held annually in the Imperial Household. For example, Gagaku music is performed at court events during the *Niiname* Festival in November annually, when people pray for a bountiful harvest and national peace. In 2019, the *Oname* Festival, which was the first *Niiname* Festival after the accession of the new emperor, drew much attention.

The formation of Gagaku in Japan

The Imperial Household Agency Music Department's "The Orthodoxy of Gagaku"

(Koshitsu, 2025) states the following:

Gagaku is the oldest classical music in Japan, which reached its peak around the 10th century (Heian period). Gagaku has been composed of a) ancient songs and dances which are originally unique to Japan, and of b) instruments and music and dances imported from the ancient Asian continent since the 5th century, and of c) songs newly created under the influence of these instruments and dances,

The first music introduced to Japan was the *Sankan Gak* (Three Kingdoms Music : 三韓楽), dances and songs from the Korean peninsula of Baekje (ancient Korean kingdom; 18BCE-660CE : 百濟) , Silla (新羅) , and Goguryeo (高句麗) (Koryo : 高麗). The earliest record of this music in Japan was found in *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters : 古事記), which states that the king of Silla sent 80 musicians to express his condolences on the occasion of the death of Emperor Jomei (舒明) in 453. In the 12th year of Emperor Temmu (天武) , in 683, the Three Kingdoms Music of Koryo, Baekje, and Silla was performed in Asuka. At first, Sanhan Gak retained the characteristics of each country on the Korean peninsula, but these

characteristics gradually faded away, and by the Heian period, it was consolidated as Korean dance music in contrast to *Tangak* (Tang-era Chinese music: 唐樂), the music of mainland China, and later lumped together into *Koryogak* (高麗樂). The Koryogak eventually came to include the music dances of *Balhaegak* (渤海樂), and its regulations were established in the mid-Heian period. There is a record of a performance of Balhaegak at Todaiji Temple in December 749.

On the other hand, *Tangak*, music from mainland China, was brought to Japan through the dispatch of Japanese envoys to the Tang Dynasty (遣唐使), which lasted about 200 years from the first half of the 7th century. Although it is called Tangak, its actual content includes music dances of Persian and Indian origin, as well as music of Vietnamese origin, such as *Lin Yuan Gak* (林邑樂), reflecting the fact that Chang'an (長安), the capital of the Tang Dynasty (唐の都), was an international city at that time (pp. 21-22) [author's translation].

Thus, Gagaku is by no means uniquely original and genuine Japanese. Gagaku is the general term for the fusion of music and dance introduced through the mainland China and the Korean peninsula, with ancient Japanese song and dance.

Sometimes, fusion seems to have been a typical characteristic of Japanese culture. In 794, the capital city in Japan was moved from Nara to Kyoto, and the Tang Dynasty envoys were soon abolished. Foreign cultures and systems that had been actively embraced until then were integrated into ancient Japanese ones and transformed into Japanese style. Not only literature, art, and architecture were transformed to trace Japanese traditions, but also Gagaku, the ancient Japanese court music, was rearranged and Japanese Gagaku was established. This was the arrival of native culture to Japan.

At the same time, Gagaku, which had been primarily ceremonial music until the Nara period (710-794), became the liberal arts and pastime of Heian aristocrats. Playing musical instruments was a part of the aristocrats' culture and everyday pleasure. *Kangen* (管絃), the Gagaku orchestra, became more familiar not only at court ceremonies, but also at annual events, life rituals, and seasonal festivals. As the term *Shiika Kangen* (poetry and orchestral music : 詩歌管絃) implies, *Kangen*, along with Chinese poetry and *waka* (和歌), became an essential pastime for aristocrats and a great source of entertainment for them, since spending time with such liberal arts was one of their jobs.

Gagaku, thus established as a courtly art form, suffered a devastating decline during the Ohnin War (応仁の乱), but was restored by the protection of Emperor O-gimachi (正親町), Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the Tokugawa shoguns, and others.

After the Meiji Restoration, the Emperor Meiji moved from Kyoto to Tokyo, and in order for musicians to perform in Tokyo, the Gagaku Bureau was established within the Grand Council of State (雅楽局) in 1871, replacing the *Sanpo-gakusho* (三方楽所) and *Momijiyama* (紅葉山), which had been in charge of Gagaku until then. This was the forerunner of the current Imperial Household Agency's Ceremonial Music Department (Shikibu Shokugakubu : 式部職楽部). As a result, the music and performance techniques that had been handed down uniquely and independently were integrated, and the collection of scores called *Meiji-sen-teifu* (明治撰定譜) was compiled. *biwa*, *koto*, and *utamono*, which had been handed down by the Saionji, Yotsuji, and Ayanokoji families and other court nobles until the end of the modern period, were also transferred to the Gagaku Bureau, with the exception of waka poem recitals.

Types of Gagaku

Gagaku has no conductor and begins and ends quietly (Nihongagakukai, 2025 April). There are three types of Gagaku: a) *Kangen* (管絃), which is played mainly on instruments alone; b) *Bugaku* (舞楽), which consists of music and dance; and c) *Kayou* (歌謡), which consists of vocal pieces (*Saibara*: 催馬楽, *Rouei*: 朗詠, and *Kokufu-ka*: 国風歌) accompanied by Gagaku instruments.

a) Kangen is a form of Gagaku performance that began as an element of aristocratic culture and is usually performed by a group of 16 players, two on stringed instruments and three on wind instruments. Currently, there are three types of instruments used for Kangen: *fukimono* (wind instruments : 吹き物), *hikimono* (string instruments : 弾き物), and *uchimono* (percussion instruments : 打ち物) (see Table 1). The composition of the Kangen is similar to that of a Western orchestra. In the case of Kangen, it is played on *kangaku*, which has six tones (scales): *iyue*, *hyoujo*, *sang*, *hwangchong*, *banbong*, and *taisoku*. Each tone has a short prelude called *ondori*, which is used to set the mood of the piece by skillfully incorporating the tone's scale. In the *ondori*, the lead player of each instrument (*ondo*) performs a short piece of music in the order of *shou*, *hichiriki*, *ryuteki*, *kakko*, *biwa*, and *koto*.

As for b) Bugaku, there are two types: traditional Japanese dances and dances introduced from abroad.

Table 1*The components of Kangen*

	types of instruments	instruments name	role of instruments	呼び名
Kangen (wind and string instrument)	"Fukimono" (wind instruments)	sho (笙)	chords	three winds
		hichiriki (篳篥)	lead	
		ryuteki (龍笛)	melody	
	"Hikimono" (string instruments)	biwa (琵琶)	pulse	both strings
		koto (箏)	pulse	
	"Uchimono" (percussion instruments)	kakko (羯鼓)	pulse	three percussions
		taiko (太鼓)	pulse	
		shoko (鉦鼓)	pulse	

Names and characteristics of Gagaku instruments

The names and characteristics of Gagaku instruments are described below.

Shou (笙) . Shou has a soft, pipe-organ-like tone that creates the unique mood of gagaku music. It consists of 17 bamboo tubes inserted into a reed, which vibrates to produce the sound. To play the shou, the musician must produce chords of 5-6 notes. The shou is the only Gagaku instrument that plays chords. It produces the same sound whether, blown or inhaled, a feature not found in other instruments.

Hichiriki (篳篥) The hichiriki is a vertical flute that plays the main melody of Gagaku music and can be played smoothly, as if a person were singing. The technique to play hichiriki so that the notes are smoothly connected to each other is called *enbai* (塩梅) . It is

an important instrument used to accompany ancient Japanese songs, such as “Kagura-uta”

(神楽歌) and “Azuma-asobi” (東遊) . It is a small, lacquered bamboo vertical flute measuring 18.5 cm in length, but its timbre is surprisingly loud. It has seven holes on the front and two on the back and has a range of only one octave. To play it, the performer must blow strongly, so it cannot be sustained for long in a single breath. The hichiriki breaks off its melody quickly to allow for breathing. It is an original technique unique to Gagaku. The hichiriki originated in Sassanid Persia (present-day Iran), and it belongs to the same double-reed instrument family as the oboe and bassoon. The instrument introduced to Europe became the oboe, and the instrument introduced to the East via the Silk Road became the hichiriki.

Ryuteki (龍笛) The ryuteki of “dragon flute” is said to represent the cry of a dragon soaring in the sky. It is a transverse flute with a wide range of sound and is played in a way that adds color to the melody. It is used in Gagaku, especially in the common *Tangak* ensemble, as well as in *Saibara* and *Rouei*. It is played in concert with the shou, which represents heaven; ryuteki, which represents sky; and hichiriki, which represents the earth—to portray the universe. In addition to ryuteki, there are also *komabue* (高麗笛) and the *kagura-bue* (神楽笛). Each of these flutes has a different pitch, varying by two major degrees, so they are used differently depending on the piece to be played. All flutes are made of bamboo, have six or seven holes, and share the same structure.

Biwa (琵琶) . Biwa is one of the stringed instruments and is called *raku-biwa* (楽琵琶) to distinguish it from the later *heike-biwa* (平家琵琶) and *satsuma-biwa* (薩摩琵琶) . In Gagaku, biwa plays the role of clarifying rhythm through chords and single notes. It is not used for Bugaku. The standard size of biwa is 1.06 meters. Like the hichiriki, it was brought to China from Persia via the Silk Road and \ imported to Japan during the Nara period. The biwa, with its four strings and four frets (pillars), shares the same origin as the lute, which came to Europe from Persia. Later, the lute evolved into the mandolin and guitar.

Koto (箏) The koto, like the biwa, is a rhythmic instrument played by repeating three performance patterns. The koto is also called *raku-sou* (楽箏) because it differs from the koto of the Yamada and Ikuta schools seen today. The construction of the instrument is nearly identical to today's koto, though its corners are angular and the strings are thicker. The origin of this instrument dates back to the Qin Dynasty (秦) in China. Like the Yamada and Ikuta koto, it has 13 strings.

Wagon (和琴) The *wagon* is the oldest musical instrument in Japan and is mentioned in the *Kojiki* (*Records of Ancient Matters* : 古事記). It is used only in the *Kokufu Uta-Mai* (国風歌舞) , performed during court rituals. The wagon is considered the most prestigious of the Gagaku instruments and is mainly played by the chief musician of the Imperial Household Agency's music department. In the *Nihon shoki* (*Chronicles of Japan* : 日本書紀), it is written that in the 7th year of Emperor Ingyo's reign, “In the new room, the

Emperor and servants held a party. The Emperor himself played the koto, and the Empress stood up and danced.” In ancient times, only persons of high rank were allowed to play the wagon. Even today, it is mainly played by the head of the Imperial Household Agency’s music department.

Percussion: Taiko (太鼓) , Kakko (鞀鼓) , and Shouko (鉦鼓) There are three types of percussion instruments in gagaku: *taiko*, *kakko*, and *shouko*. Since there is no conductor in Gagaku, the *kakko* signals the beginning and end of a performance and sets the tempo of the piece. The *shouko* is the only metal percussion instrument in Gagaku. It is a plate-shaped metal gong with a diameter of 15 cm and is struck with two mallets. The *o-daiko* (大太鼓) is located behind the high stage and is played in pairs on the left and right sides of the stage.

Characteristics of Gagaku

The characteristics of Gagaku are consolidated into three points as follows:

1. As described above, there is no conductor in Gagaku. Instead of a conductor, the *kakko* player signals the beginning and end of the performance and is responsible for the tempo.
2. Gagaku begins and ends quietly. A piece always begins with the playing of a *shou*. Several players do not start simultaneously, as in Western music. Similarly, at the end of a piece, the

instruments do not stop playing all together, and the sequence in which they stop playing is fixed.

3. The structure of a Gagaku piece is *jo* (序), *ha* (破), and *kyu* (急). The first movement, *jo* has a very slow tempo, the second movement, *ha* is a little faster, and the third movement, *kyu* is the fastest. This is a sense of rhythm unique to Japanese music.

Bugaku

Bugaku is a dance accompanied by Gagaku music. There are two main types of Bugaku: one originating from mainland China and the Korean peninsula, and the other comprising traditional Japanese song and dance. Bugaku was perfected in the Heian period and became the form we know today.

Unlike Kangen, Bugaku is composed of only wind and percussion instruments. The same piece of music is played differently when performed with Bugaku and Kangen. In the case of Bugaku, the tempo is fast and rhythmical to facilitate dancing, whereas in Kangen, the tempo is slower.

There are two types of Bugaku: *Kokufu Uta-Mai*, which has existed in Japan since ancient times, and *sahou-no-mai* (Left-side dance) and *uhou-no-mai* (Right-side dance), which are of foreign origin. The Kokufu Uta-Mai is danced to the accompaniment of songs. These songs and dances were performed in various parts of the Japanese archipelago before the arrival of

Continental music and dance, and they were commonly used in rituals and banquets. Some pieces were composed based on stories containing Japanese myths and legends. Bugaku is one of the most significant dances in Gagaku, and is still performed at ceremonies and festivals of the imperial family and shrines. The foreign Left-side dance is accompanied by Tangak (Chinese lineage), while the Right-side dance is accompanied by *Koryogak* (Korean peninsula lineage).

The Left-side dance and the Right-side dance. The colors of the costume, the musical instruments, and the order of the dances differ on the left and right sides of the stage (see Table 2). The overcoat, or upper garment (*kasane-shouzoku*), is red for the Left-side dance and green (light yellowish green) for the Right-side dances. The organization of the instruments also differs. The instruments used in the Left-side dance include traditional Chinese instruments such as the shou, hichiriki, ryuteki, kakko, taiko, and shouko. The Right-side dance is accompanied by Komagaku, which consists of the hichiriki, komabue, three percussions, the taiko, and the shouko. Simply put, if the shou (an ancient Japanese mouth organ) is included, it is the Left-side dance. The Left and Right-sides, which are similar in appearance, are combined to form the first dance, which is officially called *Tsugai-Mai* (番舞) .

Table 2

Instruments and left/right dance

	left dance (Tougaku : 唐楽)	right dance (Koryogaku : 高麗楽)
	sho (笙)	—
wind instruments	hichiriki (篳篥) ryuteki (龍笛)	hichiriki (篳篥) komabue (高麗笛)
percussion instruments	kakko (鞀鼓) taiko (太鼓) shoko (鉦鼓)	sannno-ko (三の鼓) taiko (太鼓) shoko (鉦鼓)

Kokufu Uta-Mai. Kokufu Uta-Mai are songs and dances that have been performed in Japan since ancient times and are now closely associated with specific ceremonies and events. For example, the *Okagura* (御神楽) ceremony, which is the most important rituals in the imperial household today, is based on a legend in which Amaterasu no Mikoto (the Shinto goddess of the sun) sang when she went into hiding at *Amano-Iwato* (heaven's door), "Kume-uta" (久米歌) and "Kume-Mai" (久米舞) originated when Emperor Jinmu, the first Emperor of Japan, composed a song to praise his subordinate generals and soldiers during his conquest of the Yamato (Nara) region. The song was originally composed to express appreciation for the hardships endured by the generals and soldiers under his command.

The music—although there are only a few pieces—and dance based on the myths and legends described in the *Kojiki* (古事記) and *Nihon shoki* (日本書紀) are still performed mainly by the ceremonial music department of the Imperial Household Agency. The songs are

accompanied by *wagon* (Japanese harp), *kagura-bue* (flutes), and *shoaku-byoshi* (scepter clappers). The *hichiriki*, a foreign instrument, is also used.

Gagaku's rhythm and musical temperament. Gagaku has its own tonal temperament, which differs from that of Western music. Tone meter refers to the system concerning the pitch of notes and the scale structure. Like Western music, Gagaku divides an octave into 12 semitones. However, whereas Western music, for example piano music, is based on equal temperament—dividing an octave into 12 equal parts—Gagaku does not divide an octave uniformly into 12 parts. Instead, it uses principal note-to-frequency ratios: 3:2 for the fifth degree, 4:3 for the fourth degree, and 2:1 for the eighth degree.

In Gagaku, music and melody are referred to as tones, of which there are six. Among these, the *hira* tone, the *ohshiki* tone, and the *bansho* tone belong to the *ritsu-Senpou* style (律旋法) . The *ritsu-Senpoi* style is a Japanese seven-tone Gagaku scale (corresponding to re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do) and is similar to the Dorian mode. The *ritsu-Senpou* style includes *Etenraku* (越天楽) and "Kimigayo" (君が代) .

Gagaku in classical Japanese literature at temples, shrines and festivals.

Numerous references to Gagaku appear in classical Japanese literature. For example, in *The Pillow Book* (枕草子) , a masterpiece by Sei Shonagon, the pseudonym of a female

author of the Heian period, it is written that the author disliked the sound of the hichiriki when played by someone unskilled.

In *Heike Monogatari* (平家物語), a military chronicle detailing the rise and fall of the Heike clan in the Kamakura period (1185-1333), the tragic love story of Taira Shigehira, who was taken prisoner in the Battle of Ichinotani, and Sente no Mae, who was sent to him, is described. At a banquet held to console Shigehira, Sente-no-Mae played “Goshoraku” (五常楽) on her biwa, and Shigehira accompanied her on the flute. He made a pun, saying, "This is a posthumous pleasure for me now”.

Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji*, written in the mid-Heian period, also describes Gagaku ensembles and dances of the time. Seventeen gagaku dance pieces appear in *The Tale of Genji*, showing that gagaku was an indispensable part of upper-class life. Thirteen of these pieces are still in use today.

A particularly memorable scene is the *Seigaiha* (blue ocean waves) dance depicted in the chapter "Momijiga" (Autumn Leaves), the seventh book in the series. In this memorable scene, the hero, Hikaru Genji, and his cousin, To-no-Chujo, who is both his best friend and romantic rival, perform a dance. It is written that Hikaru Genji looked “frighteningly beautiful” as he danced the Seigaiha at the *Momiji-ga* during the 50th birthday celebration of Ichi-no-In, held at the Suzakuin Temple during the season of autumn foliage. Amidst the

fluttering leaves, the beauty of the graceful costume—with its multiple layers of embroidered waves and plovers—was described as breathtaking.

In the next section, some scenes in which Gagaku appears in classical literature, as well as its presence in temples and shrines, will be introduced.

The Tale of Genji – Azumaasobi - Kamo Shrine (Kyoto)

In the second volume of *Wakana* of *The Tale of Genji*, the song and dance "Azumaasobi," a fusion of Eastern customs and court culture, is introduced (Ikuta, 2009). In a scene where Hikaru Genji visits Sumiyoshi Shrine in Osaka, accompanied by a large number of dancers and *baijyu* (musicians : 陪従), he remarks that "the familiar sounds of Azumauta are more nostalgic and exciting than the Gagaku of Koma or Toudo" (Satake, Ohsone, Kubota, Nakano, Togawa, Nobuhiro, Hino, Uchiyama, Ibi, and Ohta, 1993). The *Aoi Matsuri* festival in Kyoto retains the flavor of these dynastic *Azumaasobi* festivals. At the *Shatoh-nogi* ceremony held on May 15 at Kamo Shrine, the bright and light melody of "Azumaasobi" begins with a horse being led around the shrine. *Suruga-Mai* (*Suruga* dance) and *Motomego-Mai* (*Motomego* dance) are performed in the middle of "Azumaasobi".

Konjaku Monogatari Shu: Butterflies (胡蝶) - Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine (Kyoto)

The *Konjaku Monogatari-shuu*, a collection of anecdotes from the late Heian period, includes a story of the origins of Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine in Kyoto and the *Hosho-e* (放生会), a Buddhist memorial service for the killing of fish, birds, and other animals. One passage notes: "The priests dress themselves in hideous ceremonial attire (omission) and love the music of the Tang (唐) and Koryo (高麗) dynasties". This indicates that Gagaku music was performed at the end of the Heian period. Today, the festival continues as the Iwashimizu Festival (September 15). After the release of fish into the river during the Hosho-e ceremony, four child dancers wearing butterfly wings on their backs perform the Butterfly dance on the bridge. The design of the wings differs for each performing group. As the wings flutter and sway with the dancers' movements, they give the impression of butterflies dancing and playing with each other. The scene evokes the elegant atmosphere of a classical royal picture scroll. In this performance, one child flies around the stage in a large circle, allowing the audience to feel the harmony of a spring breeze blowing through the air.

An anecdote about *kochou* (butterfly) is preserved in the *Kyokunsho*, which is a work of Gagaku written in the Kamakura period (Komano, 2007). On his deathbed, Masuga Shonin, a high priest of the mid-Heian period, requests an *ahuri* (a harness used to avoid mud), put it on his back, and suddenly began to dance, saying, "kochou". He told his disciples that he remembered how envious he had been of the dancing of another small children when

he was young, and that he had performed the dance to express his lingering attachment to the world.

***The Pillow Book* – Batoh and Rakuson - Kasuga Taisha Shrine (Nara, Japan)**

In *The Pillow Book*, Sei Shonagon wrote of *Batou* (拔頭) : "the way the hair is swept up and the look in the eyes is weird, but the music is very interesting." She also mentions *Rakuson* (落蹲) : "two dancers kneel down and dance together." In this performance, the dancers wear dragon masks and hold chisels. Rakuson, also called "Twin Dragon Dance," portrays two dragons leaping and dancing joyously.

In both *The Tale of Genji* and other Heian period books, *Nasori* (納曾利) referred to a dance performed solo. Today, Nasori is performed by two dancers, while the solo version is called Rakuson. Nasori, a dance that was introduced from Goguryeo (高句麗) during the Nara period, was especially popular in the Heian court. The name Nasori is thought to be of ancient Korean origin. The two dancers wore ornate costumes with blue masks and blue fur trim. The dance portrays two dragons, one male and one female, dancing and playing in the sky. It is also known as *Rakuson* (crouching down) due to the posture of the dancers midway through the dance. In *The Pillow Book*, Sei Shonagon, in particular, wrote of her admiration for the crouching posture, noting its elegance. Among the many dances in gagaku, most are performed by one or four dancers. There are only three dances for two dancers, including

"Rakuson". The highlight of these dances is the symmetrical movements that fill the entire stage.

***Kyokunsho* (教訓抄) - *Bairo* (陪臚) - Toshodaiji Temple, Nara, Japan**

In *Kyokunsho* (Komano, 2007) , one of three major Japanese music books, it is written that "April 8 is *Joro-kai* at Toshodai-ji Temple, where this piece is danced," and notes that monks served as both dancers and drummers. *Joro-kyo* has been popular at temples since the Nara period. It is a four-person dance in which the dancers ascend the platform carrying halberds and shields, and then draw their swords, displaying bravery. Today, it is performed during the *Bonnenkai* (May 19), commonly known as *Uchiwa-maki*.

Order of learning Gagaku

When learning Gagaku, the first piece to be learned is *Etenraku* (越天樂) , followed by *Gojyoraku - no - Kyuu* (五常樂急) , and finally *Bairo* (陪臚). These three pieces are learned first by all Gagaku groups. The first reason for this progression is that each of these three pieces contain the basic beat patterns of Gagaku.

Etenraku is a fast four-beat structure, the *Gojyoraku - no - Kyu* a fast eight-beat pattern, and *Bairo* is a fast tempo with no specified beat pattern. The fast four-beat structure is generally characterized by a lighter second half, whereas the fast eight-beat style carries a

heavier sound. The fast four-beat style has a unique that combines two beat and four-beat divisions, changing the perceived tempo and how the score is interpreted.

A second reason for beginning with *Etenraku* is its relatively easy structure for beginners. It employs a flat main tone that is the approximate pitch of E in Western music. In contrast, the remaining five of the six tones are more difficult.

The third reason relates to spirituality. *Etenraku* is a piece originally dedicated to the gods and Buddha, and those who perform it are expected to become reverent worshippers who deliver music dedicated to the gods.

Gojyoraku - no - Kyuu was composed to express the five human constants “*jin* (仁 : benevolence), *gi* (義 : righteousness), *rei* (礼 : propriety), *chi* (智 : wisdom), and *shin* (信 : faith)” in five tones. Jin represents the desire to serve others; righteousness, the will to act justly; *rei*, is the practice of courtesy, such as expressing gratitude and greeting others; wisdom, the the pursuit of deepening one's culture and knowledge; and faith, the belief in gods, Buddha, and others. It is believed that playing this piece with an awareness of the five virtues fosters a moral sense.

The word "bairo" is derived from the Sanskrit word *Vairocana*, and it is recorded in *the Nihon Shoki* that the piece was introduced to Japan in 736 by two monks: the Indian priest Balaramon and Butsutetsu of present-day Vietnam. The original name of *Bairo* was *Birushanabutsu*, referring to the Great Buddha of Nara at Todaiji Temple. Since ancient times, *Bairo* has been performed as a prayer for victory in battle. It is said that Prince Shotoku

played this piece to defeat Mononobe no Moriya's army. Minamoto no Hachimantarou Yoshiie, chieftain of the Minamoto clan, was also said to have played this piece every time he went into battle—always succeeding in battle if he heard *Bairo* repeated seven times. By the end of the Heian period, *Noh* theater (能) had yet to emerge, and the only performing art form for the upper class was Gagaku. As such, both the Minamoto and Taira clans performed Gagaku.

References

- Ikuta, K. (2009). Gagaku and Genji monogatari: Special issue, Gakushuin University extension course, record of Genji monogatari millennium memorial symposium. *The bulletin of Gakushuin University Shigakukan*, 15, 5-27. (Japanese)
- Iwashimizu Hachimangu Shrine. (2025, April). *Iwashimizu Hachimangu Shrine*.
<https://iwashimizu.or.jp/> (Japanese)
- Kasugataisha Shrine. (2025, April). *Kasugataisha Shrine*.
https://www.kasugataisha.or.jp/en/about_en/
- Komano, T. (2007). *Kyokunsho*. Gendai Shincho Shinsya. (a literature of Gagaku written in Kamakura period: Japanese)

Koshitsu Henshubu. (2025). *Kunaicho Gakubu Gagaku no Seito*. Fusosha. (Imperial family

editors. *The Imperial Household Agency Music Department “The Orthodoxy of*

Gagaku” Japanese) (Oie, Trans.). (Original work published 2008).

Nihongagakugai. (2025, April). *Nihongagakukai*. (*The Japan Gagaku Society*)

<https://www.nihongagakukai.gr.jp/en/index.html>

Shimogamo Jinja Shrine. (2025, April). *Shimogamo Jinja Shrine*.

<https://www.shimogamo-jinja.or.jp/en/about>

Satake, A., Ohsone, S., Kubota, J., Nakano, M., Togawa, S., Nobuhiro, S., Hino, R.,

Uchiyama, M., Ibi, T., and Ohta, N. (1993). *Shin Nihon Koten-bungaku Taikei, 19,*

Genji Monogatari. Iwanami Shoten. (Japanese)

Sei Shonagon, Kawazoe, F., & Tsushima, T. (2024). *Shintei Makura no shoshi Jou & Ge*

Gendaigoyaku -tsuki. Kadokawa Sofia Bunko. (Japanese)

Takeishi, A. (2016a). *Konjaku Monogatarishu, Honcho Sezokuhen, Jou, Zen Gendaigoyaku*.

Koudansya Gakujubunko, 2372.

Takeishi, A. (2016b). *Konjaku Monogatarishu, Honcho Sezokuhen, Ge, Zen Gendaigoyaku*.

Koudansya Gakujubunko, 2373.

Toshodaiji Temple. (2025, April). *Toshodaiji Temple*.

<https://toshodaiji.jp/english/index.html>

A Gagaku Performer's Proposal for Creative Music Making: Adapting Gagaku's Musical Structure and Characteristics

Hitomi Nakamura

Part-time Lecturer at the Kunitachi College of Music,
Director of the Gagaku performance group Reigakusha,
Director of the general incorporated association Gagaku Association

A Gagaku Performer's Proposal for Creative Music Making: Adapting Gagaku's Musical Structure and Characteristics

Gagaku is a form of traditional Japanese music that has been handed down for more than 1,000 years. Most of its repertoire either originated in China and other countries or was composed in Japan during the Heian period (794~end of the 12th century). However, very few pieces have been composed since then suggesting a stagnation of creative activity in Gagaku over the past 1,000 years.¹ Among the few composers in modern times, Shiba Sukeyasu (1935-2019) stands out for his compositions that follow the classical Gagaku style.²

Since the 1970s, composers with Western musical backgrounds have actively incorporated Gagaku elements into creating contemporary works. Toru Takemitsu's use of Gagaku instruments in his piece "In an Autumn Garden" (1979) is a noteworthy example of this trend. Additionally, other composers who do not use Gagaku instruments have been influenced by the unique sense of time and musicality of Gagaku.

In children's musical creation activities, elements of Gagaku can contribute greatly to broadening the scope of their creativity. However, differences in Gagaku and Western music present a challenge for those accustomed to Western music to fully grasp some of the unique characteristics of Gagaku. This study first analyzes the musical structure of Gagaku, highlighting how wind and string instruments play heterophonic melodies while percussions instruments play cyclic rhythmic patterns, played in half-shifted style. Moreover, the study points to the persistence and repetition as musical characteristics inherent in Gagaku. Finally, I propose ideas for creative endeavors that utilize the unique structure and musical characteristics of Gagaku.

Musical Structure and Characteristics of Gagaku (*Kangen*)

Gagaku encompasses several genres, but this paper will focus on *Kangen*, which is an instrumental ensemble that does not include dancing. As noted by Nakamura (2015)³, a characteristic of Gagaku (*Kangen*) orchestration is that wind instruments (*shou*, *hichiriki*, *ryuteki*)

¹ From the early modern period to the present day, "Fuzoku-uta" of "Yuki" and "Suki" are composed for the Daijosai ceremony when a new emperor ascends to the throne. In addition, for the 2,600th anniversary of the founding of Japan in 1940, new Bugaku dance pieces "Yukyu" and "Showaraku," and Miko Kagura dance piece "Urayasu no Mai" were composed and Choreographed by Tadatomo Ono.

² A catalogue of Sukeyasu Shiba's works can be found in Terauchi (2017, p. 232).

³ Nakamura (2015) p.11. Terauchi (2011) also provides a detailed analysis of the structure of *Etenraku*.

and string instruments (*biwa*, *koto*⁴) play melodies in heterophony, while percussions (*kakko*, *taiko*, *shoko*) periodically repeat the same rhythmic pattern.

In Kangen, the wind instruments and stringed instruments play a melody in heterophony, while the percussion instruments repeat a rhythmic pattern periodically. Although the rhythm and melody occur simultaneously, they are not synchronized because the rhythmic pattern of the percussion begins in the middle of the melody.

(1) Periodic rhythm of percussion instruments

The three percussions (*kakko*, *taiko*, and *shoko*) repeat a specific rhythmic pattern. In the case of the Gagaku piece *Etenraku* the rhythmic pattern consists of four measures, with a strong strike of the drums at the end of the pattern. This is similar to the gong of the Indonesian gamelan, which is struck at the end of a rhythmic pattern. This cyclical rhythmic pattern shifts to a different rhythmic pattern called *kuwaebyoshi* at specific points later in the piece, and the number of notes struck on the *taiko* and *kakko* increases.

Percussion instruments often repeat specific rhythmic patterns in genres other music, where the melody is often synchronized with the percussion rhythm. In Gagaku, the melody does not coincide with the percussion rhythm. Rather, the beginning of the melody and the beginning of the rhythmic pattern are misaligned, and the percussion instruments repeat the rhythmic pattern regardless of the melody. Although the last beat of the percussion pattern is important in the percussion rhythm, it is not particularly important in the melody since it occurs in the middle of the melodic phrase. In this sense, the phrases of the melody and percussion rhythmic patterns are not organically connected, which may contribute to the perception of Gagaku as difficult to grasp.⁵

(2) Heterophony of wind and string instruments

In Kangen, the wind and string instruments play the same basic melody in a heterophony, with each instrument utilizing its own unique technique. The basic melody is written in the upper part of the score at the beginning of *Etenraku* in [Figure 1].

⁴ The *biwa* used in Gagaku is called *gaku-biwa*, and the *koto* used in Gagaku is also called *gakusou*, but here we will write them as *biwa* and *koto*.

⁵ Kikuko Masumoto explains that the reason for not matching the division of phrases with the division of rhythmic cycles is that "paragraphs are not added in places where common sense would dictate, but are deliberately shifted," which is an intention seen everywhere in Gagaku, and suggests that there may have been "a strong thought about a musical act or melody line that continues without interruption, always switching from one to the next." (Masumoto 2000, pp. 237-238)

Figure 1

Score 1 for Etenraku

The first line of “Etenraku”

The score is written for nine parts. The 'Basic Melody' is on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The 'Sho' part is on a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp, featuring chords. The 'Hichiriki' and 'Ryuteki' parts are on staves with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp, featuring melodic lines with Japanese text below them. The 'Koto' part is on a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp, featuring arpeggiated patterns. The 'Biwa' part is on a staff with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp, featuring arpeggiated patterns. The 'Kakko', 'Taiko', and 'Shoko' parts are on staves with a 4/4 time signature, featuring rhythmic notation with dots and lines. A bracket at the bottom of these three parts is labeled 'rhythm pattern of percussions'.

[score 1]

Each instrument plays a distinct role in the shaping of the piece. The shou produces chords (*aitake*) with the lowest note as the basic melody. In contrast, the biwa performs arpeggios where the top note represents the basic melody. The koto often alternates between rhythmic *shizugaki* arpeggios and *kozume* single notes, with the bottom note of the shizugaki and kozume representing the basic melody. Meanwhile, the hichiriki and ryuteki contribute more freely decorative melodic lines, sewn in above and below the basic melody notes.

The basic melody is often played very slowly, with each note extended by four beats. However, some musicologists suggest that Gagaku may have been played faster in the past, and that playing the basic melody at four times the speed reveals a delightful melody.

Nowadays, it is played very slowly, so hichiriki and the ryuteki players utilize the unique techniques of their instruments—such as the portamento technique of the hichiriki, called *embai*, and the ryuteki's capacity of moving lightly up and down in a wide range of notes to “color” the basic melody. These embellishments of melodies may have been improvised by musicians who sought out variations of the basic melody, and whose techniques have been passed down to musicians today.

(3) Persistence and repetition of wind and string melodies

The melodies played by wind and string instruments are characterized by their persistence and repetition. A notable aspect of persistence is that the shou player blows and sucks continuously, sustaining the sound without taking a breath until the end of a piece. Additionally, two of the six chords (A and B) played by the shou continue to sound like a drone throughout the piece, whereas the hichiriki and the ryuteki have a one-beat or half-beat interval between breaths but maintain a constant volume from the beginning to the end of the piece.

On the other hand, the sound of the koto and biwa, both plucked stringed instruments, is not sustained. However, the biwa always plays an arpeggio on the first beat of each measure, while the koto repeats a series sound patterns called *shizugaki* and *kozume*. This type of repetition is a characteristic of Gagaku. For the biwa, the open strings function as a drone in the arpeggios throughout the piece, with all notes except for the highest melody note on open strings.

In Gagaku, there are no changes in intensity, and the ensemble plays in unison, except at the beginning and end of the piece. The tempo gradually quickens throughout the piece, and after the *kuwaebyoshi*, the number of strokes increases, giving it an increased sense of energy. However, the changes are so gradual that they may go unnoticed.

When analyzing the structure of Gagaku, we find forms such as compound binary form (ABCB) and ternary form (ABA), which create a sense of unity through repetition. However, the forms in Gagaku never develop motivic melodies unlike in Western music.⁶

Additionally, as Masumoto describes the entire ensemble shifts so that paragraphs and divisions are not clearly defined, which enhances the sense of continuity⁷.

In summary, Gagaku is a highly continuous and repetitive form of music with minimal change. This may explain why people fall asleep when listening to Gagaku. Nonetheless, Gagaku was not intended to appeal to listener's emotions nor entertain them. It has traditionally been used in ceremonies, dedicated to gods and Buddhas, and as such, it does not require any superficial changes.

How to use Gagaku in musical creation

How can Gagaku, with its structure and characteristics, be incorporated into the creation of music?

⁶ Masumoto (2000) pp. 236-237

⁷ Masumoto (1968) pp.373~389

(1) Use of heterophonic structure

One approach is to create music in which multiple instruments play heterophonic melodies. A slow basic melody can be established, with each note extending about two or four beats. Melodies or chords can then be added using techniques suited to each instrument to decorate the basic melody. This conveys an image of a ryuteki or hichichiriki playing a decorative melody to the basic melody, or a shou playing a chord. It is similar to gamelan music, where the *balungan* (skeletal melody) is played while other instruments add embellishments.

In the Summer Workshop 2024⁸, participants experimented with improvisation using recorders, ukuleles, keyboard harmonicas, and other instruments while following the basic melody framework played by the shou. While the chords of the shou created a Gagaku atmosphere, listening to the notes of the basic melody was a challenge, making it difficult to add decorative melodies. If the basic melody had been played as a single note on a different instrument, adding embellishments may have been easier. Additionally, including a steady beat or having a conductor could support basic melody player and the ornamental melody player in synchronizing their respective parts.

This method allows only one person to attach a decorative melody to the basic melody, or several people to play different decorative melodies simultaneously. Introducing some bold variations that deviate from the basic melody can result in a richer, varied piece of music. If an instrument that is both pitched and rhythmic, such as the koto or biwa, is exchanged, they can be used to create a specific rhythmic pattern with pitches. By repeating the rhythmic pattern while changing the pitch of the central note according to the basic melody, players of the instruments can participate in heterophony.

(2) Use periodic rhythms on percussion instruments.

Another approach is to compose several percussion rhythmic patterns consisting of four measures and play them simultaneously with a melody. While it may be easier to start playing the melody and the percussion rhythm patterns simultaneously, the continuous continuity that is unique to Gagaku may be perceived by offsetting the beginning of the melody and percussion. Experiencing how the melody and rhythm sound under this unique characteristic of Gagaku may produce new results.

(3) Try to create music that sounds like Gagaku.

The methods above are inspired by the musical structure of Gagaku, which can be adapted

⁸ hosted by ICME and the Junior and Senior High School Music Creation Project on August 16, 2024

to other instruments and tempos to create original music. However, if the goal is to create music that sounds like Gagaku, a few points should be considered.

First, defining a scale is a bit complicated in Gagaku. One example is in the piece *Etenraku* in *hyojo* mode in which the theoretical scale (E #F G A B #C D E) is used for biwa, koto and shou; However, in the scale of *Etenraku* for the hichiriki, the scale (E F A B C E) differs. This discrepancy occurs because notes other than the tonic (E), subdominant (A), and dominant (B) are often lowered by a semitone or whole tone when performed on the hichiriki and ryuteki, whose pitch can be easily changed by changing the embouchure or covering half of the finger holes. These instruments are thought to have evolved to use a scale that includes semitones, often used in early modern Japanese music (Shiba, 1990, pp. 174-176).

For those accustomed to Western music, hearing notes that differ in semitones, such as F and F# or C and C#, may be unsettling. Therefore, one approach may be to select one of these scales to compose music. Alternatively, an interesting challenge would be to fix the tonic (E), subdominant (A), and dominant (B) while using the other notes flexibly.

As for tempo, a relaxed rate of ♩ =40-50 and a 4/4 time signature will sound Gagaku-like. In Gagaku ensembles, there is no conductor; musicians listen to each other to harmonize their sounds. A subtle extension of the beat may occur to wait for a late performer, a distinct characteristic of Gagaku.

In terms of playing techniques, Gagaku wind instruments do not use tonguing. Instead, when sustaining the same pitch, accents are commonly placed every two beats. Additionally, techniques for breathing in at the start and cutting off sounds are unique. Studying recordings and imitating these characteristics will contribute to achieving authentic Gagaku-like music.

Songs called *Shoga* are another way to learn Gagaku without using musical instruments. Singing *Shoga* while tapping beats on your knees allows learners to physically experience the movement of Gagaku sounds. Moreover, practicing *Shoga* in this way will enhance the perception of Gagaku sounds when applying them in music creation.⁹

Gagaku may be challenging to grasp due to its unique sound and structure, but engaging in creative activities that utilize the structure and characteristics of Gagaku can lead to a deeper understanding. By applying these approaches, students will broaden their range of ideas when creating their own music and appreciate the cultural background of Gagaku.

⁹ The accompanying DVD of *Nihon'ongaku no kyoiku to kenkyu wo tunagukai* (2019) include video of Gagaku performers singing *Shoga* of *Etenraku*.

References

- Nakamura, Hitomi (2015). *Gagaku~The World's Oldest Orchestration~* In Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments (Ed.), *General Guide to Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments* (p.11). Hamamatsu City
- Masumoto, Kikuko (1968). *Gagaku – Dento-ongaku heno atarashi approach*. Ongaku no tomosha
- Masumoto, Kikuko (2000). *Gagaku Nyumon*. Ongakunotomosha
- Nihon'ongaku no kyoiku to kenkyu wo tsunagukai (Eds.) (2019). *Shoga de Manabu Nihon Ongaku*. Ongakunotomosha
- Shiba, Sukeyasu. (1990). On the transcription of "Kakucho / Sōrōkodatsu". In Toshiro Kido (Ed.), *Gagaku* (Japanese Music Series). Ongaku no Tomo Sha.
- Terauchi, Naoko (2011). *Surface and Deep Structure in the Togaku Ensemble of Japanese Court Music*. In M.Tenzer & J. Roeder (Eds.), *Analytical and Cross-Cultural Studies in World Music* (pp. 19–55). Oxford University Press
- Terauchi, Naoko (2017). *Reiringakuyu – Shiba Sukeyasu to gagaku no gendai*. Artes Publishing

Report 1 of Music Lesson in Junior High School

Shiho Kanemoto

Miyazaki Municipal Oyodo Junior High School

Hiroshi Suga

University of Miyazaki

Abstract

This study explores the integration of music appreciation and creative music-making for first-year junior high school students. While Gagaku is commonly introduced in music appreciation lessons in Japan, it rarely involves creative activities that deepen students' engagement. To address this gap, a lesson plan was developed that combines appreciation and creation, using *Etenraku* as the central teaching material.

The lesson plan adopts a step-by-step approach, beginning with music appreciation to familiarize students with the timbre, rhythm, and melody of Gagaku. Students then engage in creative activities by reproducing Gagaku-like music substituting classroom instruments for traditional instruments, enabling them to explore its unique characteristics. Finally, they reflect on the experience through reappraisal to deepen their understanding.

By bridging appreciation and creation, the lessons encourage students to engage collaboratively and develop creative listening for the aesthetic beauty of Gagaku.

Introduction: Stance of the Lessons

Gagaku is commonly introduced as a subject for musical appreciation in Japanese junior high schools. The unique timbre of instruments and the distinctive melodies in Gagaku captivate students, encouraging active engagement with the music. Through music

appreciation lessons, students are guided to recognize the aesthetic value of Gagaku by focusing on its characteristic sounds, heterophonic melodies, and the rhythmic patterns of *the uchi mono*, percussion instruments.

In music education, it is pedagogically significant to establish topics that bridge the domains of music appreciation and music-making, as such approaches deepen students' understanding and engagement in both activities. While this integrative approach is frequently observed in elementary school music textbooks, its application in junior high school, particularly with respect to Gagaku, remains limited. In current practices, students are often encouraged to engage with Gagaku through experiential activities, such as producing sounds substituting classroom instruments for traditional Gagaku instruments or replicating Gagaku rhythms through clapping or desk-drumming. However, lessons that comprehensively integrate music appreciation and music-making in the context of Gagaku are still rare.

In this study, I proposed and evaluated a lesson plan for Gagaku that integrates music appreciation with creative music-making activities. The objective is to enable students to develop a deeper appreciation of the aesthetic beauty of Gagaku while gaining an understanding of its unique characteristics. Additionally, the lessons aim to help students discover the beauty and value of Gagaku.

Lesson Plan Concept for the Topic

Basic lesson policy

This study adopts a step-by-step approach to developing creative music-making, with music appreciation serving as the foundation of the lessons. As part of this process, students perform *Etenraku*, a piece from the Gagaku repertoire, using substituting classroom instruments for traditional Gagaku instruments. While this activity may seem to fall within the domain of instrumental music education, its primary objective is not to enhance ensemble performance skills or to explore creative methods for realizing individual musical ideas and intentions. Instead, the focus is placed on two key goals.

The first goal is to enable students to closely observe and appreciate the distinctive characteristics of Gagaku by reproducing it using live sounds from classroom instruments.

The second goal is to familiarize students with the methods of playing these classroom instruments before engaging in creative activities. This structured approach is intended to facilitate a smoother transition into creative music-making activities.

The Picture of Students

The target participants for this study were first-year junior high school students. This selection was based on two considerations. First, Gagaku is included in the music curriculum for first-year students as outlined in their textbooks. Second, students could easily bring their

own keyboard harmonicas and soprano recorders, which they had previously used in elementary school. To ensure the availability of necessary instruments, the lessons were conducted beginning in late May, approximately one month after the students entered junior high school. However, at this stage, students were not yet accustomed to the teaching style employed in these lessons. Furthermore, interpersonal relationships within the class had not yet fully developed, as groups of students had come from different elementary schools.

Prior to the commencement of this topic, the students had not received any formal lessons in music appreciation at the junior high school level. However, they had participated in creative music-making activities, which involved improvising rhythmic patterns within four beats. These activities were conducted in a relay format, where students chanted their first or last names sequentially without the use of musical notation.

Study Plan

The overall structure of the course for this topic was designed to follow the sequence Appreciation → Creation → Appreciation. This approach was intended to deepen students' critical thinking and engagement in music appreciation.

1 Objective

Knowledge for Creative Music Making

To understand the characteristics of combined sound sources in relation to the image one wishes to express.

Knowledge for Appreciation

To understand the relationship between the musical mood of Gagaku music and musical structure.

Skills for Creation

To acquire skills such as selecting and combining sounds in response to the theme and condition, enabling the creation of expressive melodies and music with ingenuity.

Abilities to Think, Make Judgements and Express Oneself

To Perceive timbre, rhythm, and melody while recognizing the characteristics and atmosphere the create, and to consider the connection between what was perceived and what is sensed.

Motivation to Learn and Humanity

To develop an interest in the musical mood created by the tones of Gagaku instruments, the heterophonic melody, the repetition of rhythms, and the overlapping music notes and melodies. Additionally, to engage in learning activities for appreciation both independently and collaboratively while enjoying musical activities, nurturing an attitude of familiarity towards music.

2 Target teaching materials

- Gagaku piece *Etenraku* and students' compositions

3 Viewpoint of teaching materials

Understanding (musical) characteristics

- Timbre: Japanese traditional instruments, including *ryuteki*, *hichiriki*, *shou*, *gakusou*, *gakubiwa*, *kakko*, *shouko*, and *gakutaiko*.
- Rhythm: Rhythm pattern, including *katarai*, *mororai*
- Melody: Heterophonic variation, *sure*.

4 Value as a teaching material

Etenraku is a Gagaku piece performed with traditional string and wind instruments, and students often hear it in their daily lives.

The melody of *Etenraku* is composed using the Japanese *ritsu* scale. The overlapping of adjacent notes and the heterophonic variations in the melody create a uniquely Japanese resonance. By using repetition of percussion rhythms as a marker, the music can be clearly segmented, making it easy to use as a learning material for expression and appreciation.

The instruments and costumes of Gagaku have been passed down since the Heian period, allowing students to appreciate the beauty of Japan's traditional culture not only through the sound of the music but also through its visual elements.

5 Expected Competencies

Students are expected to develop a deep appreciation of the beauty of Gagaku based on an understanding of its musical characteristics, and to discover its value in their own way.

6 Lesson plan

1st phase (3 hours)

Aim : To perceive the atmospheric qualities of *Etenraku* and understand its relationship with timbre, melody, and rhythm.

Teacher's Approach	Students' Activities
<p>1. Record the main musical elements—timbre, rhythm, and melody—on the board, based on the students' statements. This provides a framework for students to focus on and reference while listening to the music (see Figure 4).</p>	<p>Engage in the following activities to explore the characteristics of Gagaku through listening to <i>Etenraku</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and reflect on the unique qualities of Gagaku while listening to <i>Etenraku</i>, documenting their observations and impressions. • Present findings and insights based on their listening experience. • Analyze timbre and melody as key elements contributing to the distinctive atmosphere of Gagaku.
<p>2. Provide an explanation of the historical background of Gagaku and play a DVD to illustrate key aspects of Gagaku.</p>	<p>Acquire a general understanding of the historical and cultural context of Gagaku.</p>
<p>3. Review the content written on the board during the previous class to help students focus not only on the names and appearances of the instruments but also on their timbre, rhythm, and melody</p>	<p>Watch a video of the performance of <i>Etenraku</i> and focus on perceiving and identifying the timbre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe and understand the timbre and playing styles of Gagaku instruments.
<p>4. Display the music score while playing the video of the piece (see Figure 1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the names of the instruments featured in Gagaku.

5. Guide students to focus on the rhythm of the wind instruments (ryuteki and hichiriki) and the pitches of the heterophonic melody (<i>sure</i>)	Perceive and identify the characteristic rhythms and melodies used in <i>Etenraku</i> .
6. Draw the graphic score so that students can focus on the variation of rhythm (katarai, mororai, and sei) of kakko.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observe and learn the timing of the beginning, the pitches, the rhythms of heterophonic variation (<i>sure</i>), as well as the constituent tones of the main melody. • Analyze and understand the rhythm played by the small drum (kakko).

2nd Phase (4 hours)

Aim: To consider the relationship between what is perceived and what is sensed when composing a melody, focusing on timbre, rhythm, and melody while sensing the music's characteristics and atmosphere arising from those workings.

Teacher's Approach	Students' Activities
1. Distribute a worksheet to facilitate a smooth transition into the creative activity (see Figure 2).*3)*5)	Create and enjoy composing the main melody for ryuteki and hichiriki, learning the notation methods and developing a vision for their creative activity.
2. Assign soprano recorders and the keyboard harmonicas as instruments for the activity. *5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select instruments for their composition. • Place a whole note in each bar as a foundation of the melody.
3. Assign three notes from the ritsu scale (e.g., E/F/A or B/D/E) for students to use in creating a four-bar melody in 4/4 time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the series of whole notes into a

4. Introduce three rhythmic patterns commonly used in <i>Etenraku</i> and guide students in incorporating them into their compositions.	<p>four-bar melody by inventing rhythm and pitch progressions.</p> <p>Present original melody to classmates.</p>
5. Select four melodies created by students from all classes to use as materials for further activities.	
6. Provide classroom instruments with timbres similar to those used in Gagaku, selecting from familiar instruments or those available at school.	<p>Understand the characteristics of Gagaku by performing <i>Etenraku</i> with classroom instruments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure students know how to play their chosen instruments and understand the method of notation. • Listen to the music again while reading the music score, reinforcing comprehension. • Perform the first four bars of <i>Etenraku</i> as an ensemble after students select their instruments.
7. Form groups of seven to eight students for the activity. If a group lacks members, assign one student to play both gakutaiko and kakko.	
8. Display a graphical score of <i>Etenraku</i> on the board and explain its structure to the students.	
9. Guide students to perform the melody by gradually adding each assigned instrument one by one.	
10. Instruct students to practice playing or miming the motions of their assigned instruments without producing sound while other instruments are playing.	
• Ensure that students are familiar with playing techniques and the graphical score.	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help students analyze the rhythmic and melodic characteristics of each instrument.*4) 	
<p>11. Facilitate discussions among students using the jigsaw method, deepening their understanding and encouraging critical thinking.</p>	
<p>12. Convert students' insights into graphical scores and other accessible formats as guidelines for their creative activity. (Figure 3) *2)</p>	<p>Listen to the music again while reading the score.</p> <p>Reflect on how each instrument represents a Gagaku-like quality and consider how they contribute to the overall sound.</p>
<p>13. Display the characteristics of the instruments on the blackboard using cards, or attach them to worksheets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that students can easily refer to these guidelines throughout the activity (see Figure. 3). 	<p>Compose a Gagaku-like melody for the instrument they are assigned to play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individually create a melody for their own instrument. • Pair up with peers playing the same instrument and revise their melodies through discussion. • Rehearse their ensemble performance as a group. • Revise their melodies collectively to create a Gagaku-like atmosphere. • Perform their group composition in front
<p>14. Keep a metronome running during the activity to help students maintain melodies in time with the beat.</p>	

	of their classmates.
15. Prepare various drumsticks and handbells with different pitches, allowing students to choose the ones that suit their needs.	<p>Reflect on performances and discuss ideas for making the music sound more like Gagaku.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share key points for improvement by evaluating peer performances and listening to <i>Etenraku</i> again.
16. Instruct students to write the revision of the melody in red on their score for clarity. *3)	<p>Collaborate as a group to revise their music and enhance its Gagaku-like qualities.</p> <p>Explain the improvements they made and present their revised ensemble performance in front of their classmates.</p>

3rd Phase (1 hour)

Aim: Reflect on the entire learning process and develop an appreciation for the goodness and beauty of *Etenraku*.

Teacher's Approach	Students' Activities
1. Instruct students to write down the characteristics and unique qualities of Gagaku they have discovered, encouraging them to refer to their notes and worksheets for support.	<p>Reflect on their performance presentation and listen to <i>Etenraku</i> again to deepen their appreciation of the qualities of Gagaku.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share observations about which aspects of each group's music conveyed Gagaku-like qualities. • Discuss what could be improved to enhance Gagaku-like sound of their

	<p>compositions while reviewing the video recording of the presentation and their notes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to <i>Etenraku</i> once more and reflect on the entire learning process. • Write in their notebooks about the goodness and beauty of Gagaku they discovered during the activity.
--	---

Figure 1

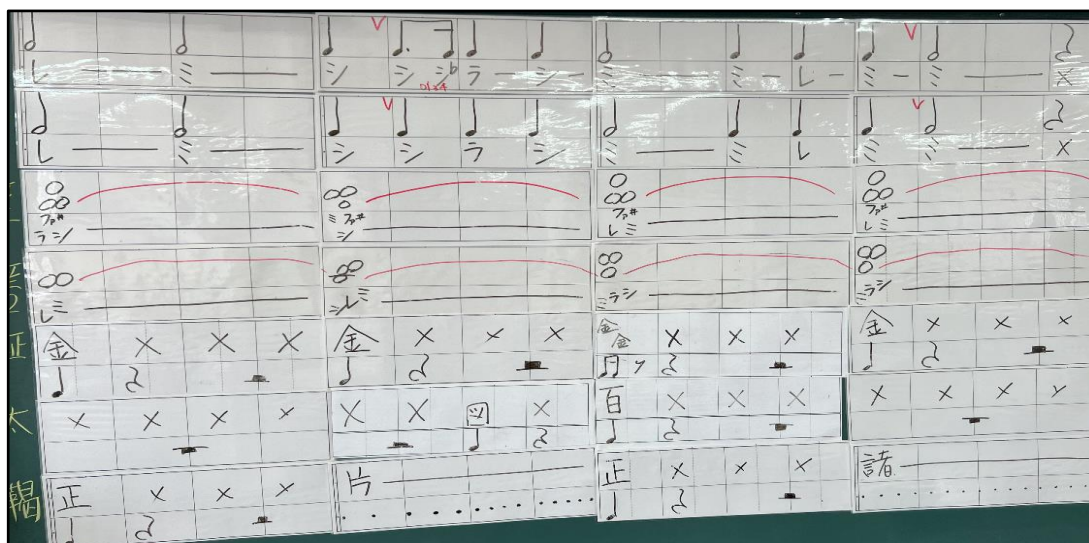


Figure 2

Worksheet for Composing Main Melody

ア 全音符の旋律

① 全音符()で、<A:ミ、ファ、ラ>又は<B:ラ、シ、レ>の音を 1小節に1個ずつ入れる。

リ															
4															
4															
音															

② リコーダーか鍵盤ハーモニカで音を出して確認しながら決める。→ 伝え合い

イ リズムを決めて主旋律

① 条件の3つのリズムを各小節のリズムとして選ぶ。A~Cを必ず1回は使う。(同じリズムを2回使ってもよい)

② 各小節①の音をスタートにしてリズムに合わせて音を決めて入れていく。音を弾きながら試して決める。
(①と同じ条件の音)

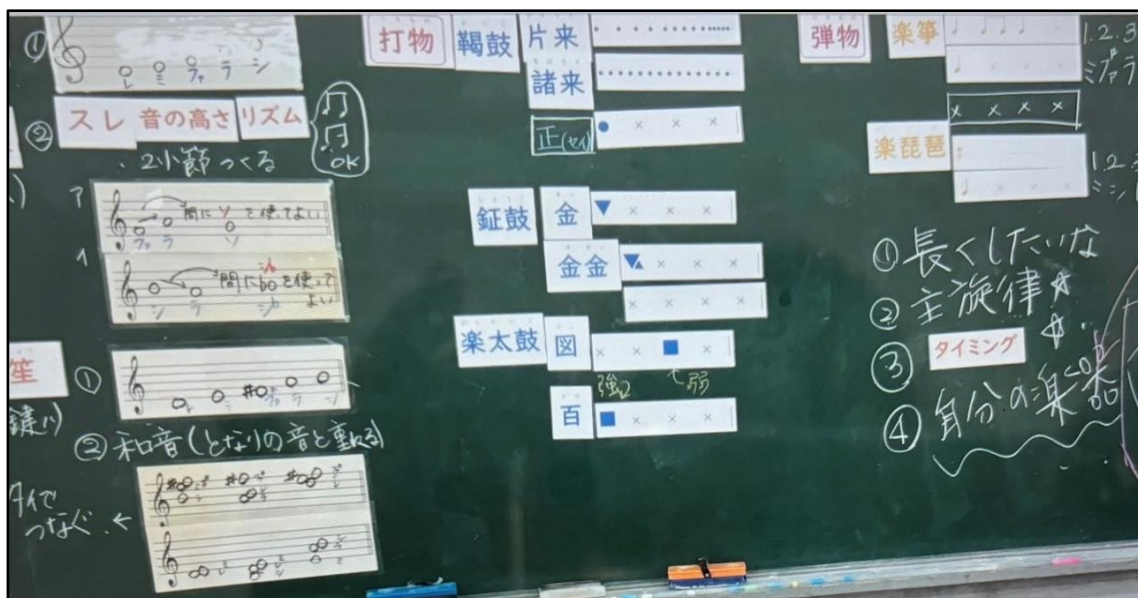
リ															
4															
4															
音															

③ 最終確認をして自分の作品を練習する → 伝え合い

ウ 班で主旋律を決めて記入する。→ これが班の主旋律となる。

リ															
4															
4															
音															

Figure 3



- At the end of the third lesson, as the class transitioned into creative activities, the following five challenges were identified:
- 1) How can students be supported in understanding the characteristics of instruments other than ryuteki, hichiriki, and kakko?
 - 2) How can the Gagaku-like characteristics of each instrument, as discovered by the students, be effectively translated into guidelines that serve as practical clues for creating music?
 - 3) What methods should be employed to guide students in notating their compositions during the creative music-making process?
 - 4) What measures should be taken if students' performance skills are insufficient for playing

the instruments used in creative music-making activities?

- 5) What strategies are necessary to efficiently manage and conduct the class within the limited time available?

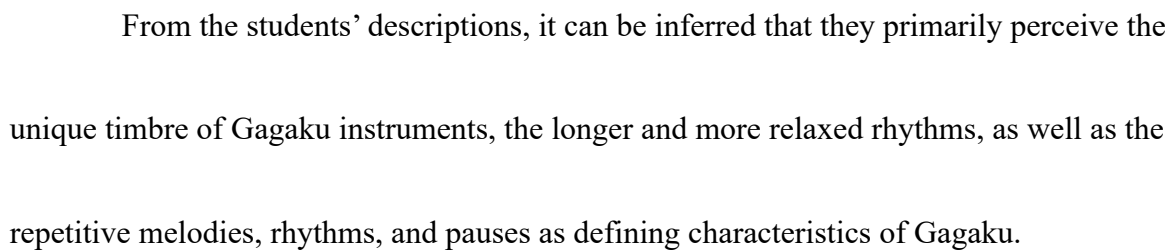
To facilitate a smooth transition into creative music-making, it was deemed essential to incorporate activities that address these challenges. As a result, the fourth and fifth lessons were allocated as preparation phases specifically designed to tackle these issues. In the proposed learning plan, the sections labeled *1) to *5) correspond directly to the five challenges outlined above.

Report of Actual Lessons

The series of lessons was conducted for first-year junior high school students between late May and early July 2024.

Figure 4 illustrates the board notes documenting the Gagaku-like characteristics observed and perceived by the students during the first lesson.


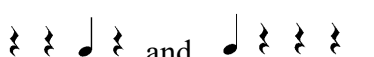
Gagaku-like Characteristics Noticed and Sensed by the Students in the First Lesson.




- 1) The constituent notes of their melodies and the rhythmic patterns frequently appearing within them.
- 2) Heterophonic variations in the melody through changes in rhythmic and tonal progression.
- 3) The constituent notes of the long-duration chords played by shou.

- 4) The repetition and pauses in the rhythms played by kakko, *shouko*, and gakutaiko.
- 5) The glissandos, rhythm patterns, and pauses played by gakubiwa.
- 6) The arpeggios and rhythm patterns of gakusou.

Based on these findings of the students, the guidelines for the creative music-making for each instrument were established as follows:

- 1) **Ryuteki and hichiriki (Main Melody):** Use the rhythmic patterns provided in Score 2 to compose the main melody for these instruments.
- 2) **Ryuteki and hichiriki (Sure):** Create a heterophonic melody (*sure*) using the notes D, E, F, A, and B. Note G may be used as a passing or embellishing tone when transitioning from F to A, and B-flat may be used when transitioning from B to A.
- 3) **Shou (Chords):** Compose chords for shou by selecting two or three adjacent notes from D, E, F-sharp, and B.
- 4) **Shouko (Rhythm Pattern):** Develop a rhythmic pattern for shouko using

- 5) **Gakutaiko (Rhythm Pattern):** Create a rhythmic pattern for gakutaiko using


- 6) **Kakko (Rhythm Pattern):** Construct rhythm patterns based on the traditional katarai, mororai, and sei patterns.
- 7) **Gakusou (Melody):** Compose a melody for gakusou using notes E, F sharp, A, B, C, E, following the specified rhythmic pattern .
- 8) **Gakubiwa (Arpeggio):** Create an arpeggio for gakubiwa using notes E, B, and D.

Following the group performance presentations conducted during the sixth and seventh lessons, students were asked to respond to the question: "What kinds of ideas or efforts could make the music sound more like Gagaku?" Their responses are summarized as follows:

- The main melody is not prominent enough and should be played louder.
- Gakusou and gakubiwa should have a more distinct presence in the overall sound.
- Uchimono is too loud.
- The timing of the *einsatz* (entry cues) and the coordination between melodies are not properly aligned.

These remarks suggest that the students were striving to achieve a sense of "Gagaku-

ness" by focusing not only on the individual melodies but also on the balance and roles among multiple performers.

After listening to *Etenraku* once more, the students provided remarks on the following characteristics, which were identified as valuable feedback for further improvement.

- The changes in dynamics resemble the ebb and flow of waves.
- The performance duration is significantly longer than that of the students' own compositions.
- Not all performers play simultaneously; there are sections where only a few performers are active.
- There are also moments of silence where no instruments are being played.

Based on these observations, the students made adjustments to the timbre and playing techniques of their instruments. Additionally, they worked on refining the overall musical texture of their group performances.

A new guideline was introduced to extend the performance duration by imitating the structure of *Etenraku*. This was achieved by repeating the existing four-measure melody

rather than introducing new melodic material.

During the eighth lesson, students listened to *Etenraku* once again as part of a reflection on their learning process. They were asked to write about the beauty of Gagaku that they had discovered and appreciated. Among their observations, particular attention was given to the timbre, rhythm, and the overlapping of melodies, as detailed below:

- I think the beauty of Gagaku lies in the calm and soothing timbre played by the gakubiwa and gakusou.
- The beauty of Gagaku lies in the distinctly Japanese atmosphere created by the timbres of instruments like gakubiwa and gakusou. I think the resonance of shou's chords enhances it.
- The timbres of the gakubiwa and gakusou harmonize well with the tempo of Gagaku. The shou and shoko create a mystical atmosphere that reminds me of Japanese shrines and temples.
- I thought the beauty of Gagaku lies in how the percussion and string instruments enhance the charm of the ryuteki and hichiriki. Modern music feels like each instrument is trying to stand out, but in Gagaku, the overlapping sounds—even when they are slightly out of sync—create a unique beauty.

- When you listen to each instrument individually, it might sound strange. However, each instrument has its own role, and when their sounds overlap or come together as one, they create a deeper resonance.
- I felt that the beauty of Gagaku lies in how it still sounds like Gagaku even when the melodies are slightly out of sync, as I noticed during the group performance presentation. Also, I thought one of the beauties of Gagaku is that when each instrument can be clearly heard, it makes me feel like I'm at a Japanese shrine or witnessing a ritual.

When comparing these observations to the descriptions written during the initial music appreciation lesson, it becomes evident that the students have developed a deeper understanding of musical elements. They are now able to connect multiple elements and articulate their observations with greater specificity. Their descriptions go beyond the individual characteristics of timbre, rhythm, and melody, addressing how these elements interact. Furthermore, they relate these interactions to the unique beauty of Gagaku that they have discovered.

Through the process of trial and error in their creative activities, the students were able to explore and reflect on what constitutes "Gagaku-ness." Similar to their experiences during music appreciation, this process allowed them to perceive and engage with music on a

deeper level. As a result, they discovered new aspects of Gagaku's charm based on their own creativity and values. For instance, recognizing the melodic misalignments that occurred in their own performances as a positive and unique characteristic of Gagaku demonstrates a deeper appreciation and the discovery of new value in Gagaku.

Paynter (1992) states the following in his book *Music and Structure*.

This is where we need the skill of creative listening; and one of the best ways of acquiring it is through first-hand experience of asking the questions and taking the decisions which produce music — both in performance and in composition (p.20).

In this series of lessons, students listened to *Etenraku* to gather insights for creating Gagaku-like music. During this process, they posed the question, "How can we make it sound more like Gagaku?" To address this inquiry, students engaged in repeated listening, experimented with sounds improvisationally, and exchanged ideas with their peers. This approach can be characterized as a form of creative listening, where students discovered their own values and meanings. Unlike conventional listening lessons, which often focus on passive reception and explanations, this method emphasized active exploration and personal interpretation.

Conclusion

This series of lessons demonstrated that connecting music appreciation with creative music-making in an experiential manner is effective in fostering students' ability to appreciate the beauty of music. However, the lack of instrumental performance skills and notation abilities presented challenges, hindering the smooth execution of creative activities. To address these issues, it is essential to develop students' foundational music skills through a variety of activities in regular lessons. Achieving this aim requires instructors to possess a broad knowledge base and a wealth of creative ideas, enabling them to offer flexible and adaptive guidance.

Additionally, the lessons revealed a deficiency in ensemble skills, such as listening to others, synchronizing timing, and evaluating performances within the group. Developing these ensemble skills should be prioritized to enhance collaborative music-making experiences.

The creative activities required students to play multiple instruments simultaneously in a small classroom. As a result, the sound often became muddled, making it difficult for students to clearly distinguish their own contributions. This auditory challenge may have impeded their ability to engage in creative thinking effectively.

Etenraku has long been featured in textbooks as a representative piece of Gagaku.

However, there appear to be few, if any, music classes on Gagaku that incorporate pieces other than *Etenraku*. Introducing other Gagaku compositions, which possess distinct qualities and unique charm, could serve as valuable teaching materials. Doing so may broaden students' perspectives on music and deepen their understanding of the diverse characteristics of Gagaku.

This was the first attempt to design music lessons that integrated the appreciation of Gagaku with the creation of Gagaku-inspired music. This approach holds significant potential and provides a valuable foundation for further exploration of activities and teaching materials aimed at conveying the beauty and uniqueness of diverse musical traditions to students.

Video of Kanemoto's Lesson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AubD6dWTr0>

References

- Monbukagakusho (2019). Junior High School Curriculum Guidelines. [中学校学習指導要領](Suga, Trans.)
- Paynter, J. (1992). *Sound and structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Simazaki, A., & Kato, F. (1999). *Japanese music and world music for music class* [授業のための日本の音楽・世界の音楽]. Tokyo: Ongakunotomo-sha.

Report 2 of a Music Lesson in Junior High School

A Proposal for Creative Melody-making Lessons Based on Etenraku in Junior High

Schools:

Melody Creation Using the Web Application Katokatone

Sahomi Honda and Naomi Nakamura

Chiba University, Chiba, Japan

Chiba City Tsuga Junior High School, Chiba, Japan

Author note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Sahomi Honda, Professor of Chiba University, Faculty of Education. Yayoi-cho 1-33, Inage-ku, Chiba-city, Chiba 263-8522, Japan. Contact: honda@faculty.chiba-u.jp

Introduction

Creativity is one of the most important skills to cultivate in children in the modern age. It is listed as the first of the 10 abilities identified in the 21st Century Skills framework proposed by the Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills Project¹ (Griffin et al., 2014). Creativity is considered both a thinking skill and a crucial component of cognitive development that should be nurtured (Griffin et al., 2014, p. 48).

Yukiko Tsubonou has long emphasized the importance of creativity in music education, conducting numerous classes on various projects and publishing the results. For example, in the series “Let’s Become Familiar with World Musics” (1991–1994) in the junior high and high school editions of *Kyoiku Ongaku* [Music for Education] magazine, she proposed several lessons in which students actively engaged in various musical traditions from around the world through creative music-making activities, assisted by music specialists. Subsequently, she introduced the TAS model for creative music lessons, which involves collaboration among three key groups: teachers, advisers (music education researchers or composers), and supporters (musicians) (Tsubonou et al., 2019).

In collaboration with music teachers from elementary and junior high schools, Honda proposed Gagaku lesson plans focusing on hands-on learning activities (Honda 1995, 2020). Later, Honda (2023) introduced a lesson plan that incorporated Gagaku melody creation in elementary schools. To help children become familiar with and appreciate the music of

Gagaku, the lesson was designed to involve improvising melodies using Gagaku scales and composing melodies with basic rhythmic patterns, thereby deepening their understanding of the musical genre. Building on these prior experiences, we developed and proposed a lesson plan for melody creation in junior high schools, which was subsequently implemented and evaluated.

Method

Basic lesson plan concept

The theme of this lesson is “Let’s become familiar with the traditional Japanese music Gagaku and enjoy its charms.” The teaching material used was the Gagaku piece *Etenraku* in *hyoujou* mode.

The objective of this lesson is to familiarize students with Gagaku and help them appreciate its essence and beauty by listening to the sounds of the instruments, experiencing *kuchi shouga*, the mnemonic notation system for traditional Japanese instruments, and considering the relationship between *kuchi shouga* and the melody of *Etenraku*. Additionally, based on what they have learned from their appreciation of Gagaku, students will reflect on the commonalities and unique characteristics of various musical expressions. Ultimately, they will create their own melodies that incorporate the essence of Gagaku, that is, “Gagaku-ness”, to deepen their understanding of this traditional music. The study examined changes in

students' awareness in junior high schools by integrating both music appreciation and creative activities.

The teaching plan was designed for a total of four hours. The first two hours focused primarily on appreciation. During this phase, students became familiar with the sound of *Etenraku* and appreciated its beauty by learning about the characteristics of the instruments used in the Gagaku piece, listening attentively to tone and timbre, and analyzing the relationship between the melody of *Etenraku* and the oral chants of *kuchi shouga*. Furthermore, by comparing orchestral performances of *Etenraku*, students identified “Gagaku-like” qualities and applied these concepts to their own compositions.

The remaining two hours were dedicated primarily to composition, utilizing an ICT web application to create melodies that incorporated the stylistic features of *Etenraku* in *hyoujou* mode. In the Katokatone web application, the chord patterns representing the part of *shou*, a hand-held bamboo pipe organ, and rhythm patterns representing the part of *gakusou*, which form the foundational elements of the music², are pre-programmed. Figure 1 illustrates the chord patterns for *shou* and rhythm patterns for *gakusou*, as notated using PrintMusic software.

Figure 1

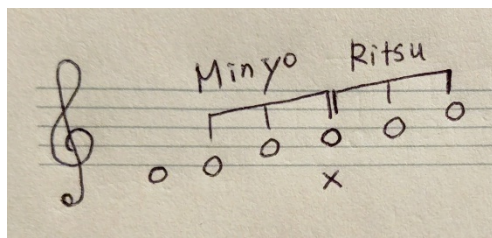
Chord patterns for shou and rhythm patterns for gakusou

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Snare Drum' and shows a rhythm pattern in 4/4 time. The bottom staff is labeled 'Organ' and shows chord patterns in 4/4 time. The organ part consists of three measures, each with a chord in the right hand and a single note in the left hand. The chords are G major, C major, and F major. The rhythm pattern for the snare drum is: Measure 1: quarter note G, quarter note A, quarter note B, quarter note C; Measure 2: quarter note D, quarter note E, quarter note F, quarter note G; Measure 3: quarter note A, quarter note B, quarter note C, quarter note D.

The scale used in this study was “re-mi-so-la-si-re,” as shown in Figure 2. This scale is derived from the *imayou* scale for *Etenraku*, a common teaching material for sixth graders in elementary schools. According to the tetrachord theory proposed by Fumio Koizumi (1927-1983), a Japanese musicologist, this scale comprises the “mi-so-la” tetrachord³ (*min'yō* tetrachord) and the “la-si-re” tetrachord (*ritsu* tetrachord), connected by the “la” note. The “la” note serves as both the final and central note. This sequence of notes is located near the center of the keyboard, making the range neither too high nor too low. Additionally, it is easy to play on a soprano recorder or keyboard harmonica. Moreover, the absence of sharp or flat notes makes the scale manageable for students, which is why it was selected for this study.

Figure 2

The scale derived from the imayou scale for Etenraku



Students pre-condition

The participants in this study were 101 second-year students (57 boys and 44 girls) from a public junior high school in Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture. The students showed a strong interest in musical activities and demonstrated the ability to participate calmly in various tasks. Among the respondents, 86% expressed a positive attitude toward music, stating that they “like (are interested in)” or “rather like (are interested in)” music classes. Although students exhibited varying levels of musical experience, most were generally enthusiastic about music lessons.

Instructional plan

The instructional plans are devised for four classes. Classes 1 and 2 are designed to assist the students in 1.) understanding the distinctive characteristics of the instruments used in Gagaku, specifically through the piece *Etenraku* in hyoujou mode, 2.) identifying the

commonalities and differences in musical expression, 3.) reflecting on what constitutes the Gagaku-like quality, and 4.) listening to the piece as a whole, appreciating its essence and beauty.

The tables below show the instructional plans for classes 1 and 2.

Study contents ・ Main study activities	Teachers' approach ・ Students' goals
<p>1st class</p> <p>1. Listen to <i>Etenraku</i> and present how you feel about it.</p> <p>2. Understand the historical background and performance style of <i>Etenraku</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the textbook and learn about Gagaku. <p>3. Listen to the tones of the instruments used in <i>Etenraku</i> and understand their characteristics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the names of the eight musical instruments and appreciate their structures and tonal characteristics through visual materials. • Summarize the structure and tonal characteristics of the instruments on a worksheet and share finding with the class. 	<p>1. Have the students freely express their images and various opinions about the music.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students share their impressions based on music they experience in their daily lives. <p>2. Present pictures and other images to help students understand the historical and cultural influences on the music.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students gain an interest in the life of the nobles in the <i>Heian</i> period and <i>Gagaku</i> music. <p>3. Organize the instruments into three categories: blown, struck, and played. Have students focus on the structure of each instrument, the principles of sound production, and the tones of the instruments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage deeper understanding by commenting on and asking questions about students' presentations. • The students use a worksheet to summarize what they notice and feel about the structure and tones of the eight instruments used in <i>Etenraku</i>.
2nd class	

<p>1. Review the previous class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to the first line of <i>Etenraku</i> and share how you feel about the music. <p>2. Understand the beats and pauses of the piece through experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing <i>kuchi shouga</i> for the <i>Hichiriki</i>, a vertical flute, and experience the beat and pause while feeling the characteristics of the melody. • Sing <i>kuchi shouga</i> to the sound source. <p>3. Compare and listen to <i>Etenraku</i> performed by an orchestra and <i>Etenraku</i> performed in the traditional style, think about what Gagaku-like means, and share opinions with classmates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By comparing and listening to the different instruments used in each version of the piece, students consider and share the similarities and differences in musical expression. <p>4. Listen to the entire piece and summarize thoughts on the essence and beauty of <i>Etenraku</i>.</p>	<p>1. Give students an overview for the main class by referring to the worksheet from the previous class and reviewing it.</p> <p>2. Sing <i>kuchi shouga</i> and experience the “beats” and “pauses,” even those that exist in slow-tempo music.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through singing <i>kuchi shouga</i>, students perceive the characteristics of “beats,” “pauses,” and changes in tone. <p>3. Use a DVD to compare the differences in instruments used in both the orchestral version of <i>Etenraku</i> and the traditional version. Give attention to the structure of the instruments, the principle of sound production, and the characteristics of tone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students notice the commonalities and uniqueness of musical expressions by comparing the two versions. <p>4. Students share their ideas and deepen their understanding of <i>Etenraku</i> through discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students consider the beauty of <i>Etenraku</i> and reflect on what makes it Gagaku-like.
---	---

Classes 3 and 4 mainly focus on creative music making and aim to use the musical characteristics of the Gagaku pieces *Etenraku* and *Etenraku* in the imayou scale as reference points for students to compose Gagaku-like melodies by exploring the relationships between sounds and tones. They will reflect on the commonalities and unique elements of musical

expression and develop ideas and intentions for creating music as a cohesive artistic

expression.

The instructional plans for classes 3 and 4 are shown below.

Study contents ・ Main study activities	Teachers' approach ・ Students' goals ◇Evaluation Criteria
<p>3rd class</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the study of appreciation of <i>Gagaku</i> up to the previous classes and confirm the “character of <i>Gagaku</i>.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・ Share “Gagaku-ness” with the class. 2. Know the learning goal of this class. 3. Create a melody with <i>Gagaku</i>-like characteristics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・ Compose the melody for the <i>Hichiriki</i> and <i>Ryuteki</i>, a transverse flute, parts. ・ Create a melody based on the chords and rhythms input to the <i>Katokatone</i> application. 4. Listen to each other's melodies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・ The group listens to the melody they created. ・ The class communicates with each other about the quality of the melody they heard and how they felt about it. 5. Fill in the reflection worksheet. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organize and display the opinions expressed in the previous class and summarize new opinions and ideas from the students to realize the objectives of this class. 3. Have students identify the melody by improvising and experimenting with the <i>Katokatone</i> application. Offer insights and suggestions that support their creative expression. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・ Using the musical characteristics of <i>Etenraku</i> and <i>Etenraku</i> in the <i>imayou</i> scale as a resource, the students create melodies that are <i>Gagaku</i>-like by experimenting with the connections between the notes and the timbre of the music. 4. Have students present the <i>Gagaku</i>-like qualities that caught their attention and have them communicate and share the qualities of each other's melodies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・ The students recognize the “Gagaku-ness” and ingenuity of their classmates' melodies. <p>◇The students understand the characteristics of</p>

	the music of <i>Etenraku</i> and the connection between the sounds in relation to the images they want to express and develop thoughts and intentions about how to create music as a creative expression.
<p>4th class</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review the previous class lesson. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm the students' understanding of "Gagaku-ness." Review the melodies students have created. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have each student review their melody by analyzing the qualities of their peers' melodies and applying the findings to their original melodies. Students present their melodies to their peers again and discuss the qualities of each melody. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize the innovations made in creating the melody. Think about the musical qualities and differences of each melody and communicate them. Fill in the study summary worksheet. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize the ideas of "Gagaku-ness" and display the Katokatone application screen to give the students an idea of what to expect in the class. Students analyze the melodies of their peers after listening to each other's melodies and melodies shared with the class, then apply their findings to their original compositions. Have students think about the Gagaku-like qualities they focused on, what they tried to devise when creating the melody, and what the differences are between each other's melodies. Also, have them share the qualities of each melody by communicating with each other.

Classroom practice

Implementation of classes

In July 2024, Mrs. Naomi Nakamura taught a class to three second-year students at a public junior high school in Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture. Honda observed the third session of this four-hour class.

Students' ideas on Gagaku characteristics

The first two sessions primarily focused on music appreciation, aiming to help students understand the structural and tonal characteristics of the instruments used in the Gagaku piece *Etenraku*. In the second session, students practiced singing *kuchi shouga* for the *Hichiriki* and experienced the distinctive beats and pauses that characterize Gagaku. By comparing and appreciating an orchestral version of *Etenraku* with a traditional version, students were encouraged to identify the shared and unique elements of musical expression and reflect the essence of Gagaku.

Figures 3 and 4 display the slides used during the classes. Through this appreciation activity, students' interpretations of Gagaku-like qualities were organized and presented (see Figure 3). Ideas relevant to melody creation were derived from interpretations and organized into "ideas for creating melodies," representing the considerations and conditions necessary for composition (see Figure 4).

Figure 3

Students' opinions on "Gagaku-ness" (from in-class slides)

What is "Gagaku-ness?"

There is a "pause." → Perform with the same breath and timing.

There is no conductor. ← *Kakko* 鞆鼓 is the role of the conductor.

Not aligned → "misaligned"

Gentle tempo
Longer extension of sound (uninterrupted)
The sound is high and clear.
The instruments are specific to the period.
Hichiriki 篳篥: hard sound, high pitched, unique tone
Shou 笙: Chords, sounding all the time, dissonant notes
Breathing

Figure 4

Ideas for melody creation elicited from students' opinions (from in-class slides)

Ideas for melody creation → conscious “Gagaku-ness” (issues and conditions for creation)
Creating a pause
Creating a gap
Gentle tempo
Longer extension of notes (uninterrupted)
Use high notes
To devise the tone of the instruments
Use the sound of dissonant notes
Use close (adjacent) sounds
Focus on the sound of “la” ← <i>Etenraku imayou</i> as a hint

Although it is difficult to express pauses or mid-performance timing disjunctions (*zure*) using a web application, these concepts are still included here. One student said, “I tried to think of ways to express ‘pauses’ on a tablet.”

During the first half of the third class, students worked individually to create their own melodies. After approximately 15 minutes, they formed small groups to share their melodies. The students exchanged opinions, listened attentively, and spontaneously applauded the pieces they found interesting.

In the fourth class, students reviewed their melodies created in the third class, shared them with their peers, exchanged feedback, and revised their compositions. At the end of the fourth class, the students listened to *Etenraku*. Returning to the appreciation activity after creating their own melodies appeared to deepen students' understanding and connection to the piece.

Katokatone setting and examples of students' pieces

Students used the web application Katokatone, which provided the basic tone of the instrument (see Figure 5). In Part 1 (orange area), the tone was set to "saxophone," and only the first five notes (mi-so-la-shi-re) were programmed as a guide melody. Students were informed that they could either delete these notes or keep them. Many opted to delete them and freely create their own melodies.

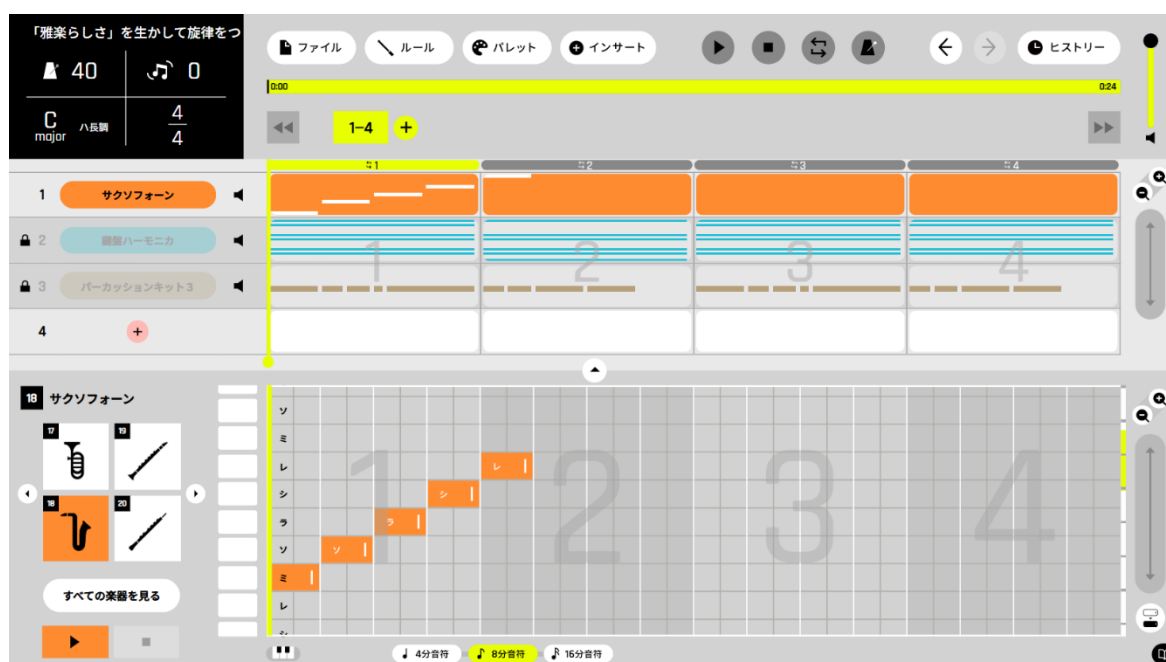
In Part 2 (light blue area), chords corresponding to shou were pre-programmed and could not be deleted or modified. In Part 3 (gray area), the rhythm for gakusou was pre-

programmed with a sound similar to *kakko*, a small double-headed drum. This rhythm was also fixed and could not be modified by the students.

Part 4 (pink area) was available for students who completed the tasks early or wanted to do additional work.

Figure 5

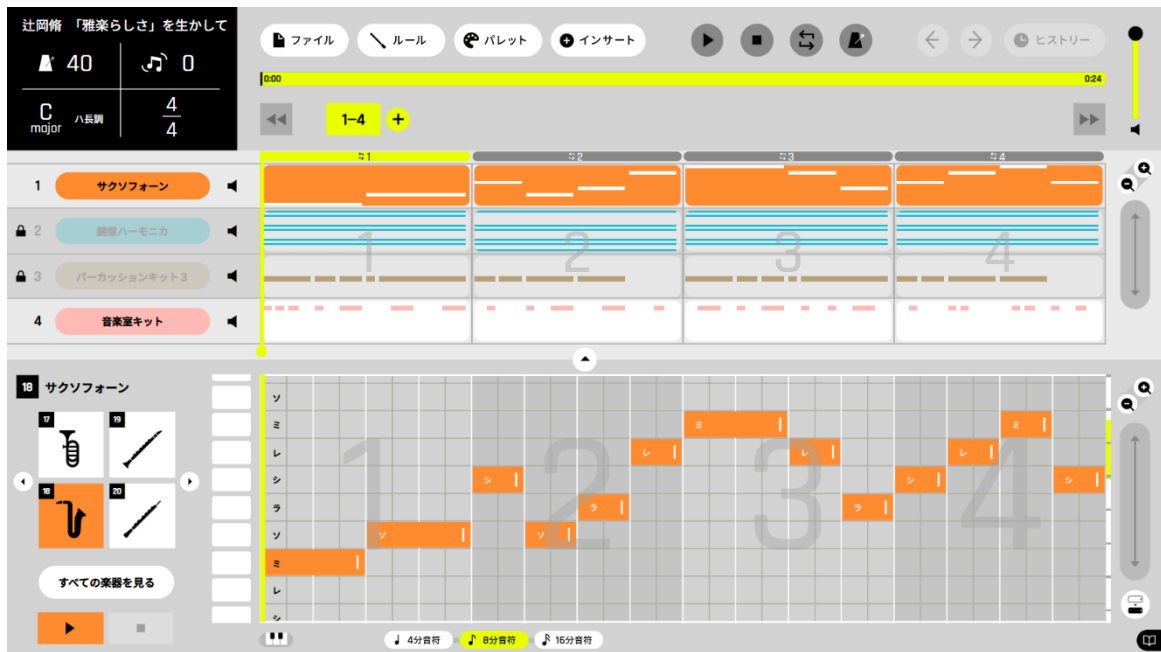
Initial settings for Katokatone



Figures 6 and 7 are two examples of students' pieces.

Figure 6

First example of a student's piece

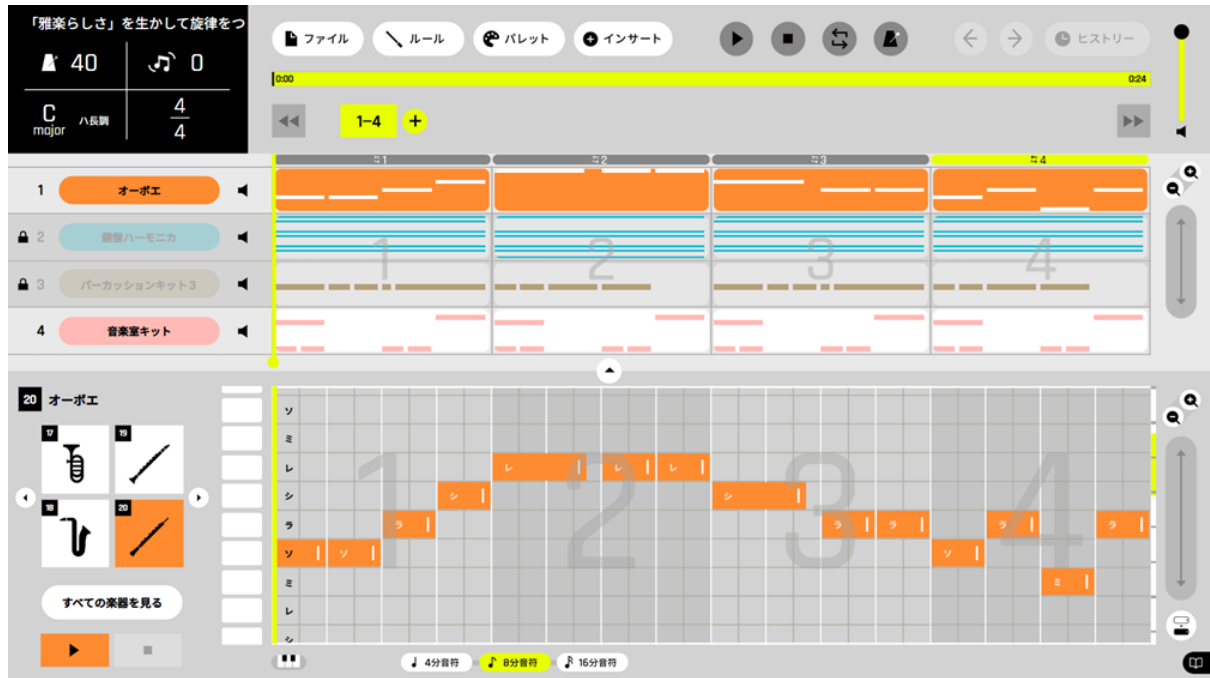


This student incorporated Gagaku-like characteristics into the melody by using several techniques:

- 1) Composed the melody so that the notes flowed smoothly rather than being distinct
- 2) Maintaining a natural tonal progression, and avoiding discomfort, by minimizing fluctuation in pitch between successive notes
- 3) Adding a triangular sound in Part 4 to evoke the sound of the *shoukou*, an ornamental percussive instrument, thereby enhancing the piece' s texture with decorative elements (see Figure 6).

Figure 7

Second example of a student's piece



The Gagaku-like qualities that the other student incorporated into his creation were as follows:

- 1) connecting extended sounds as much as possible
- 2) narrowing the note range
- 3) adding percussion instruments in Part 4 to simulate a Gagaku-like atmosphere—
substituting the gakudaiko with a bass drum, and the shoukou with a bell.

Notably, this student also replaced the saxophone sound in Part 1 with an oboe, another reed instrument (see Figure 7).

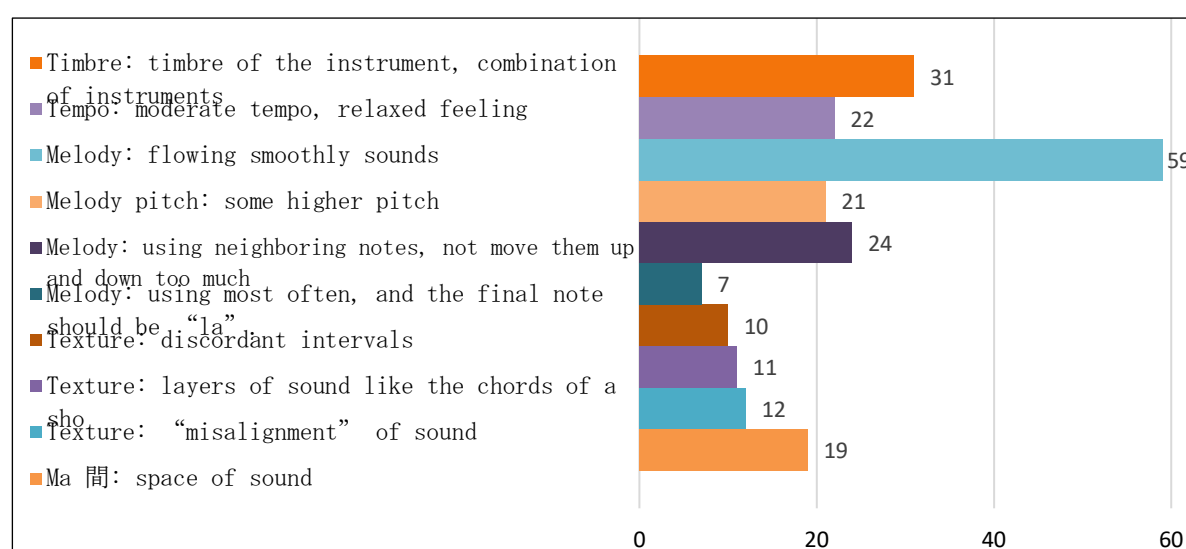
Figure 8 summarizes the students' responses to the prompt, "What "Gagaku-like" characteristics did the students incorporate into their melodies?". A total of 59 students indicated that they aimed "to extend, connect, and break up the notes." Others "considered the tone of the instrument." Some retained the saxophone based on this consideration, while

others selected the oboe—as in the third and fourth examples—or chose instruments such as the recorder or shakuhachi to mimic the ryuteki melody. The students also included “the way the notes are connected,” “using adjacent notes,” and “being careful not to move the notes up and down too much” into their responses.

Many students experimented with expressing pauses and gaps. During the class discussion, it was noted that certain characteristics of Gagaku such as breathing, pauses, and gaps in performance timing are challenging to replicate with information and communication technology (ICT). However, by singing the kuchi shouga for the hichiriki during the appreciation activity, students developed a more authentic understanding of these characteristics which cannot be easily expressed with ICT tools.

Figure 8

What Gagaku-like characteristics were utilized to create the melody?



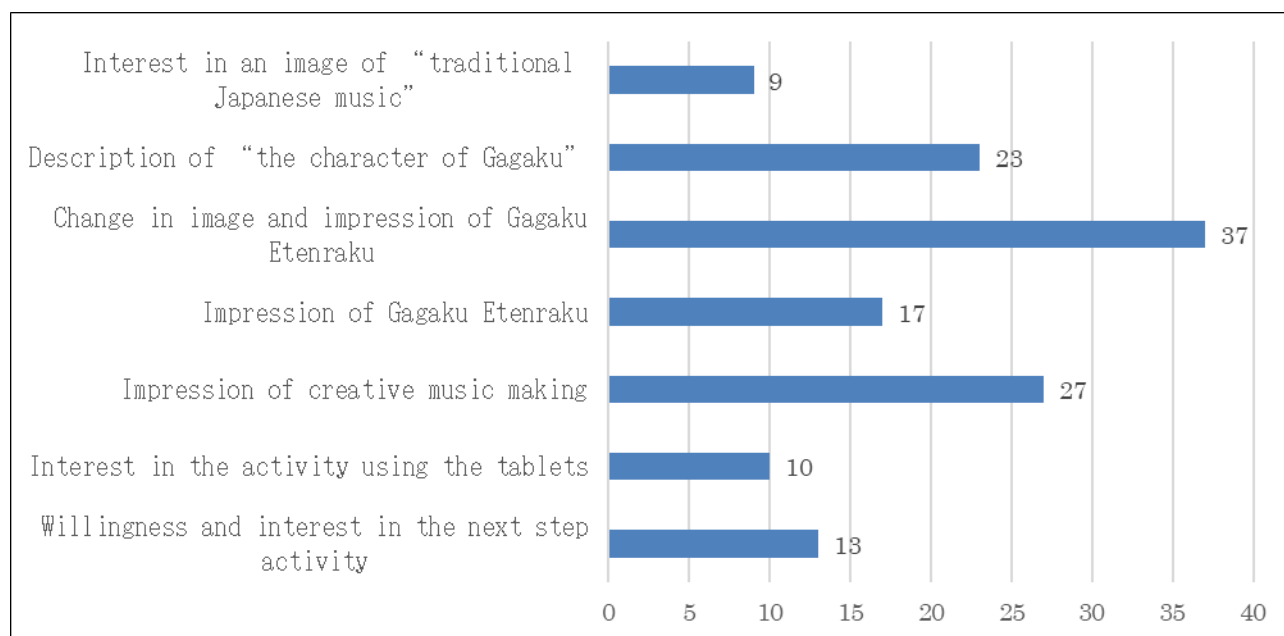
Students' reflection statements

Finally, students' reflections were categorized into seven major groups (see Figure 9):

1. Interest in an image of “traditional Japanese music”
2. Description of “the character of Gagaku”
3. Change in image and impression of Gagaku *Etenraku*
4. Impression of Gagaku *Etenraku*
5. Impression of creative music making
6. Interest in the activity using the tablets
7. Willingness and interest in the next step activity

Figure 9

Students' reflection statements



Many students described significant changes in their perceptions and impressions of *Etenraku* before and after participating in the classes. One student stated: “My image of Gagaku and Japanese music has changed a lot. I feel more familiar and interested than before the study. I want to know other Japanese music.” Others said: “I came to like *Etenraku* through the class,” and “I became familiar with Gagaku through this class.” These responses reflected the intended goal of encouraging students to take part in planning their own learning experiences.

Other students commented: “I thought it was complicated and difficult, but when I listed the ‘Gagaku-like’ characteristics, I found it surprisingly simple and interesting,” “When I first heard it, I heard the sounds of the instruments in pieces and felt that the sound was somewhat solitary, but after learning it, I felt the goodness in it,” “Before learning Gagaku, I thought it was just old music, but after learning it, I thought the sounds were clear and it was a delicate music in which pauses and breathing were important,” and “I felt that I was able to learn more about Gagaku by not only listening to it but also creating it by myself.” These reflections suggest the classes shifted students from passive appreciation to active participation through creation, fostering a more comprehensive engagement with Gagaku.

Conclusion

The results of this study can be summarized as follows. First, by engaging with Gagaku through both appreciation and the creation of original pieces, students were able to identify key characteristics of Gagaku and demonstrated a strong interest in incorporating these elements into their own compositions. Second, many students carefully considered how to integrate *Gagaku*'s distinctive musical features into their melodies. Third, the use of familiar ICT tools during creative activities helped students develop a stronger interest and sense of connection with Gagaku. Fourth, during the appreciation session, students practiced *kuchi shouga* for *hichiriki* and became more aware of beats and pauses. This practice helped them better understand specific characteristics of Gagaku—such as breath control, pauses, and gaps—that are difficult to replicate through ICT.

Many students commented that their image of Gagaku and Japanese music had changed significantly, with remarks such as, “My image of Gagaku and Japanese music has changed a lot,” and “I want to know about other Japanese music, too.” These responses support the study's aim of fostering student-centered learning. Future research will focus on the development of teaching materials, drawing on relevant findings from other studies to improve instructional practice.

Annotations

1. The 10 skills are: (1) creativity and innovation, (2) critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making, (3) learning how to learn (metacognition), (4) Communication, (5) collaboration (teamwork), (6) information literacy, (7) ICT literacy, (8) being a good citizen locally and globally (citizenship), (9) life and career development, and (10) personal and social responsibility (including intercultural understanding and adaptability) (Griffin et al. 2014, p. 46).
- 2) The sustained sound of shou in Gagaku, constant rhythmic patterns of gakusou , repeated rhythmic patterns of *uchimono* (percussion instruments), and so on, can be considered a kind of drone. Tsubonou, et al. (2009) highlighted the importance of listening to the sound movement within a sustained drone as an essential supporting element of music (p. 73).
- 3) Tetrachord means perfect fourth musical interval (Koizumi 1958).

Video of Nakamura's Lesson

<https://youtu.be/8exBajT0R78>

References

Griffin, Patrick, McGaw, Barry, et al. eds. Translated by Miyake, Nahomi, et al. (2014).

Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills. Kyoto: Kitaoji Shobo Co.

- Honda, Sahomi. (1995). A Study on the Contents of Gagaku Etenraku as Teaching Materials: A Lesson Concept Focusing on the Shoga and the Rhythmic Structure of Percussion. *The Journal of Music Education Research*, Vol. 2, pp. 3-24.
- Honda, Sahomi. (2020). Class Practice Focusing on Uchimono (Percussion) of Etenraku. In Honda, S. ed. *How to Teach Japanese Music in School*. Tokyo: Kaisei Shuppan, pp. 74-75.
- Honda, Sahomi. (2023). Proposal and Verification of a Lesson Plan for Active Learning of Japanese Music: A Practical Case Study of a Music-Making Classroom Lesson Using Gagaku Etenraku as a Teaching Material. *Bulletin of the Faculty of Education, Chiba University*, Vol. 71, pp. 91-97.
- Koizumi, Fumio. (1958). *Study of Japanese Traditional Music 1: Min'yo Research Methods and Basic Structure of the Min'yo Scale*. Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomo Sha.
- Tanaka, Takako. ed. (2023). *Active and Fun Learning World Musics: A Collection of Teaching Material Units (Music Instructional Book)*. Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomo Sha.
- Tsubonou, Katsuhiro, Tsubonou, Yukiko. et al. (2009). *Ideas for Creating Appreciation Classes: He~so~nano! The Mechanism of Music*. Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomo Sha.
- Tsubonou, Yukiko. et al. (2019). Music Education Linking School and Society II: Constructing a Collaborative Classroom Framework. *Japanese Journal of Music Education Research*, Vol. 48, No. 2, pp. 57-64.

Report 3 of a Music Lesson in Junior High School

A Practical Report on Creative Music Lessons Based on Gagaku at a Junior High

School:

Creative Activities Emphasizing Improvisation and Ensemble Performance

Imai Yuki

Shibuya Honmachi Gakuen Junior High School, Tokyo, Japan

Abstract

This study explores integrating creative composition and improvisation into Gagaku lessons in a Japanese junior high school. Traditionally taught through appreciation, the approach involves rhythmic foundations, substitute instruments, and ensemble performances. In the final lesson, a professional Gagaku musician provided guidance. Student reflections revealed a deeper appreciation for Gagaku's rhythmic flow, melodic characteristics, and ensemble structure, allowing for greater accessibility while maintaining educational effectiveness. This study suggests that creative composition and performance can complement traditional music appreciation lessons, fostering analytical and intuitive engagement with Gagaku. The findings support the potential for broader adoption of creative Gagaku-based activities in music education.

Keywords: Gagaku, Gagaku-like music, Gagaku musician, Gagaku instruments

A Practical Report on Creative Music Lessons Based on Gagaku at a Junior High

School:

Creative Activities Emphasizing Improvisation and Ensemble Performance

In Japanese junior high schools, Gagaku is typically used as teaching material for music appreciation, with the repertoire largely limited to *Etenraku*. By listening to *Etenraku*,

students can grasp the unique timbre, rhythmic flow, melody, and texture of Gagaku, allowing them to appreciate the piece as a whole.

For enhanced understanding, various activities are often incorporated, such as singing *kuchi shouga* (songs that express instrument sound and are used to teach instruments) or performing sections of the piece using Gagaku instruments or alternative instruments. These activities enable students to experience the distinctive rhythmic flow and melodic characteristics of Gagaku.

However, creative activities involving Gagaku remain relatively uncommon.

Concept of the Creative Lesson Based on Gagaku

Basic Principles of the Lesson

In this practice, the lesson was titled "Creating and Performing Gagaku-like Music on a Foundation," with the *hayayohyoushi* beat as the foundation. The hayayohyoushi beat is a fundamental rhythmic pattern in Gagaku *uchimono* (percussions), also used in *Etenraku*.

Based on the idea that the foundation defines the atmosphere and cycle of the music, students first learned to play the hayayohyoushi beat and understand its characteristics. Instead of using traditional Gagaku instruments, alternative instruments were used: *shimetaiko* as a substitute for *kakko* (a type of small drum), *nagadodaiko* for *gakutaiko* (a type of large drum), and a *kane* for *shouko* (a type of small gong) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Gagaku instruments and their alternative instruments¹⁾

Gagaku Instruments	Kakko 	Gakutaiko 	Shoko 
Alternative Instruments	Shimedaiko 	Nagadodaiko 	Kane 

Once students became able to perform the foundation (hayayohyoushi beat), they played their own Gagaku-like melodies over it. For creating melodies, alto recorder and *koto* were used. While alto recorder has the advantage of expressing the characteristic breath control of Gagaku *fukimono* (wind instruments), it also has the drawback of requiring complex fingerings.

Subsequently, while the *koto* is technically easier to play, it was not originally used as a melody instrument in Gagaku. In Gagaku, *fukimono* are used as a melody instrument.

By using both alto recorder and *koto*, these limitations could complement each other.

Through this class, I expected that students would gain a deeper understanding of Gagaku than when they learned Gagaku only through appreciation. I also hoped that students would become attached to Gagaku and be able to talk about its characteristics and charms. To achieve these objectives, the following key elements were emphasized in the lesson design:

1. Ensuring that students could discover and rediscover the essence of Gagaku-like music on their own.
2. Making the activity technically feasible so that all students could create and perform within the lesson time.
3. Encouraging spontaneous music-making rather than writing compositions beforehand.
4. Providing an ensemble experience that reflects the feel of Gagaku.
5. Allowing all students to express their ideas through sound and music in the ensemble.

To achieve point (1), the lesson was structured as a continuous interplay between music-making and appreciation. Instead of giving direct instructions on “how to compose,” the lesson proceeded by sharing students' discoveries.

For points (2) and (3), students created melodies while hayayohyoushi beat was being played in the background. The range of notes available for the alto recorder was predefined, and ample time was provided for individual experimentation.

To achieve points (4) and (1), the final activity was a full-class ensemble, with the structure of the performance determined by students' ideas. Instead of selecting specific students' melodies, all students except those playing percussion were able to perform their own composed melodies within the ensemble.

Target Students

The target students were third grade (the top grade) junior high school students.

This selection was based on the following criteria:

1. Students who have already completed the music appreciation of *Etenraku*.
2. Students who have experience with various creative activities.
3. Students who are familiar with playing musical instruments.

To elaborate on points (2) and (3), since these are third-year students, they have already gained experience in instrumental performance and creative activities since their first year of junior high school.

In terms of creative activities, they have had multiple experiences of creating music upon a foundation. A foundation refers to the base and chords, *Jiuchi* (base rhythm in Japanese taiko music), and *Ji* (base accompaniment patterns in koto music). The reason why I often created

music upon a foundation is that it defines the mood and cycle of music, helping students create music more easily.

The students each own an alto recorder, which they have used in various activities, such as playing instrumental music, creating melodies, and using alternative instruments such as *shinobue*. Shinobue has certain playing techniques, such as *yubimawashi* (finger movements) and *Yubiuchi* (finger tapping), that are similar to techniques used in Gagaku.

We have enough kotos for two or three students to use one each. Students have had experiences of playing and creating music on koto, and also of playing Japanese drums in *Matsuribayashi* (a kind of Japanese traditional festival music).

Lesson Plan (4 Lessons)

The first three lessons are to be conducted solely by the author, while the fourth is to be in collaboration with the Gagaku performer, Hitomi Nakamura.

Creating and Performing Gagaku-like Music with Hayayohyoushi beat as the foundation

Objectives

- To help students gain a deeper understanding of Gagaku.
- To help students develop an attachment to Gagaku.
- To enable students to create and perform Gagaku-like music.

- To help students articulate the characteristics and appeal of Gagaku—more than when they learned Gagaku only through appreciation.

Target teaching materials

- *Etenraku*

Viewpoint of teaching materials

- Understanding musical characteristics:
 - Timbre(instruments)
 - Rhythmic flow
 - Melody
 - Texture

Value as teaching material

Students will be able to easily create Gagaku-like music with the experience of learning *Etenraku* in appreciation classes.

Expected Competencies

Students will gain a deep experiential understanding of the characteristics of Gagaku and will be able to develop the ability to create and perform music that makes the most of its characteristics.

Lesson plan

The lesson plan is organized in table 1 below.

Table 1

Lesson plan for Gagaku-like music featuring hayayohyoushi beat

Teacher's approach	Student Activities
1. Let's capture the groove and sound of Gagaku!	<p>-Play the hayayohyoushi beat (see Figure 2.).</p> <p>-Play the koto tuned to the <i>ritsu</i> scale freely and capture the atmosphere of the <i>ritsu</i> scale.</p> <p>-Verbalize the “Gagaku-ness” captured up to this point.</p>
2. Let's make a Gagaku-like melody on the hayayohyoushi beat!	-Share with the class the characteristics of the hayayohyoushi beat captured in the previous lesson.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To identify that the characteristics of the hayayohyoushi beat are grasped, play the hayayohyoushi beat to the soundtrack of <i>Etenraku</i>. -Try to play the <i>kuwaebyoushi</i> beat (see Figure 3.) used in the second half of <i>Etenraku</i> and identify its features. -Listen to <i>Etenraku</i> and recapture the characteristics of the melody. -Improvise melodies on the koto and alto recorder to the hayayohyoushi and kuwaebyoushi beats. -Verbalize the “Gagaku-ness” captured up to this point.
3. Let's play a Gagaku-like ensemble!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Share the characteristics of the Gagaku melody captured in the previous lesson. -Summarize the class's ideas about the flow of the ensemble performance. -Perform in an ensemble with the flow they have decided.
4. Let's create a Gagaku-like ensemble with a Gagaku player!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Present the results of the first three lessons to the Gagaku player and obtain her advice.

	<p>-Listen to a live performance of Gagaku instruments played.</p> <p>-Summarize their ideas about the flow of the ensemble performance.</p> <p>-Perform together with the Gagaku player, following the finalized flow.</p>
--	---

Figure 2

Hayayohyoushi beat

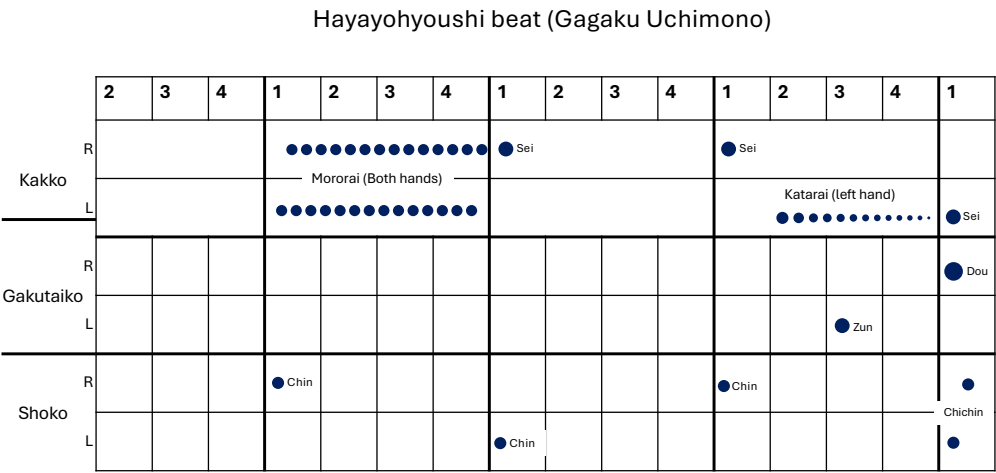


Figure 3

Kuwaebiyoushi beat

Kuwaebyoushi beat (Gagaku Uchimono)

	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1
Kakko																
R																
L																
Gakutaiko																
R																
L																
Shoko																
R																
L																

Lesson Implementation

The lesson was conducted in July 2024 for two classes of third-year students at a junior high school in Shibuya Ward. From the first to the third lesson, the lesson was taught solely by Imai, and in the fourth lesson, the lesson was conducted in collaboration with Gagaku performer Hitomi Nakamura.

Students' Understanding of Gagaku Characteristics

In the first lesson, students were able to perform the hayayohyoushi beat using substitute instruments. Through this learning activity, the students identified characteristics of Gagaku (see Table 2).

Table 2

Implementation of the first lesson

Aspects Related to the Overall Atmosphere

- Calm, relaxed, natural feeling, balance between stillness and movement, intensity that leans toward calmness.
- Gagaku has a unique way of pausing, and unlike the kind of music I usually listen to, it has a beat but a unique atmosphere.
- There is a clear distinction between moments of sinking (silence or quiet) and rising (loud sounds, multiple instruments coming together), like waves.
- Even though there is a set rhythm, it feels random in some ways.

Aspects Related to the Structure of the Music

- Each instrument does not do much individually, but when combined, they complete the piece.
- Different instruments have different rhythms. Though they might seem disconnected at first, they come together to create a balanced sound. There is a contrast between where each instrument asserts its sound, and where it blends in more subtly.
- There are pauses in the percussion section, making it challenging to maintain rhythm with each individual instrument. However, when viewed as a whole, the percussion section creates a mysteriously cohesive rhythm. The resonance of drums and harmonies of the wind instruments emerge distinctively.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By maintaining precise rhythm, the rich timbres of each instrument become more distinct. The timing effectively highlights the unique qualities of each instrument, such as allowing the drum's resonance to linger.
<p>What Was Noticed During Performance & What Was Focused on in the Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing the dynamics of the strikes brings out more of the Gagaku feel. • For the <i>katarai</i> (drumming technique) part, I made the sound gradually quieter. • The sound of the shouko drastically changes the atmosphere.

In the second and third lessons, students created Gagaku-like melodies to the hayayohyoushi and kuwaebyoushi beats. Through this learning activity, the Gagaku-like qualities perceived by the students are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Implementation of the second and third lessons

<p>Melodic and Musical Characteristics</p>

- The melodies of Gagaku are generally slow, with minimal pitch variation, creating a gentle rise and fall in a wave-like pattern.
- The wave-like motion is essential; when notes rise and fall smoothly, it enhances the authenticity of the music.
- The music begins slowly, eventually building up, transitioning from lower to higher notes.
- The volume changes in conjunction with the melody, progressing in steps, without any breaks in the sound.
- The sound rarely breaks. The beginning of each note is smooth, not sharp, creating a sliding feeling.

Things Noticed and Considered During Performance

- Gradual changes in volume should be applied to all instruments.
- For the alto recorder, I adjusted the volume of the breath and extended notes, mainly focusing on the note "mi" while progressing stepwise.
- As long as the dynamics are carefully considered, a melody can be created with the alto recorder.

- For the koto, each note was plucked individually, then further pressed for added nuance.
- The koto's press-and-release technique should be used to create the right balance and feel.

Through this process, the students not only experienced the overall atmosphere of Gagaku but also gained an analytical understanding of its distinctive characteristics. It is also clear that they made efforts to express the “Gagaku-ness” they had perceived through trial and error, attempting to communicate it through sound.

In the third lesson, the ideas proposed by the students are written in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Musical lessons proposed by the students in the third lesson

<p>Idea 1.</p> <p>Start with the sound (“chichin”) of the shouko → one round of the hayayohyoushi beat → in the second round, all alto recorders join in → in the third round, all kotos join in → drums play louder with a “Zun” sound → change to the <i>kuwaebyoushi</i> beat</p>
<p>Idea 2.</p> <p>Start with an alto recorder solo, mimicking the opening of <i>Etenraku</i> → the uchimono enters → other alto recorders join in → kotos join in → change to the <i>kuwaebyoushi</i> beat following the lead of the kakko.</p>

Idea 1 emphasizes the importance of entering in time with the hayayohyoushi beat, while Idea 2 follows the style of *Etenraku*. Both ideas only set the general flow, but the students were able to perform the ensemble naturally. This suggests that, based on their experience listening to *Etenraku*, the students had developed an internalized image of the flow of Gagaku.

However, after the third lesson, I noticed the following issues:

- Since the students had already played the hayayohyoushi and kuwaebyoushi beats, they understood the cycles. Therefore, the teacher assumed it would be natural for

them to perform a melody over these beats. However, playing a melody on top of the hayayohyoushi and kuwaebyoushi beats turned out to be surprisingly difficult. It seemed easier for the students to perform when they weren't consciously trying too hard to stay on the beat.

- I began to wonder: if the teacher gave an instruction like, “Align the melody with the peaks of the hayayohyoushi or kuwaebyoushi, such as in the sounds ‘*Sei + Dou + Chichin* or *Sei + Chin,*’” would the students find it easier to match their melodies to the rhythm?

After consulting with the Gagaku musician, I received the following suggestions (see Figure 4):

- Play the tonic note (*E*) on the large peak of the hayayohyoushi cycle for the sound interval “*Sei + Dou + Chichin,*” then extend the tonic note until the smaller peak: “*Sei + Chin.*”
- ○For other intervals, move freely around the tonic note.

With this approach, it would be possible to clearly align the hayayohyoushi cycle with the tonic note (*E*) and create a melody that respects the tonic.

Figure 4

Advice from the Gagaku musician



After the fourth lesson, a survey was conducted to understand students' feelings and comprehension of Gagaku. The survey included the following questions:

1. What was the most memorable aspect of the lesson?
2. What kinds of creative approaches did you take to achieve Gagaku-like performance and music-making?

As seen in the following responses, many students provided detailed descriptions of their observations and creative efforts.

Table 5

Student insights of Gagaku after the fourth lesson

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Even though each instrument had different types of sounds and timing, when played together, they formed a beautiful piece of music. I found this experience very interesting.• I listened carefully to the sound of the kakko and adjusted my timing accordingly.• Since the alto recorder took on the role of the <i>hichiriki</i> (an instrument similar to an oboe with a double reed), I moved my fingers slowly to create subtle nuances, slightly sliding them over the holes to change the pitch smoothly. |
|---|

- When playing the koto, rather than focusing on creating a melody, I played in a way that followed the rhythm of the uchimono.
- When playing the gakutaiko, instead of simply striking it in a bouncing manner, I hit it in a way that created a resonant, spreading sound.
- In the final ensemble, as players gradually dropped out, we could hear the lingering resonance of the sounds. The wind and string instruments also expressed subtle nuances and strong reverberations, making it feel like we were immersed in the world of Gagaku. It was an enjoyable experience.

The insights and creative efforts appear to have been cultivated by the end of the third lesson, as reflected in Table 2 and Table 3. However, the significant impact of having a Gagaku musician participate in the fourth lesson is evident in the following student responses.

Table 6

Influences of the Gagaku performer on the students

On the performance of the Gagaku musician:

- The most memorable moment was hearing the sound of the *shou* (mouth organ with free reeds) live for the first time. The sound of the shou felt like light shining directly through, making my back straighten. It left a strong impression on me.
- I was shocked when I heard the sound of the shou live for the first time. Even though I thought it sounded beautiful in the video, hearing it in person was a hundred times more beautiful than I had imagined. The sound itself was soft and enveloping, and I felt that the harmony of the shou made the entire piece feel gentle and soft.
- I also heard the sound of the hichiriki for the first time. I felt that the hichiriki's sound adds stimulation to the piece. As soon as it entered, the piece became livelier, and I thought that the overall atmosphere was largely shaped by the hichiriki. I felt that *enbai* (a technique for smoothly changing the pitch of a note) of the hichiriki was the most Gagaku-like sound.
- When I heard the live sound, I was struck by thoughts like, "The sound is louder than I expected," and "The sound doesn't break anywhere." I realized how important it is to listen live to form an impression of Gagaku.

On the experience of playing in an ensemble with Gagaku musicians:

- The experience of playing Gagaku together with everyone—the lively and unique presence of alto recorders, the powerful uchimono, and the beautiful, atmospheric shou performance by the Gagaku musician—left a strong impression on me.
- Just hearing the sound of the shou join made me feel that we were getting much closer to Gagaku. The sound, which had been somewhat scattered before, was enveloped by the shou's tone, allowing us to create a more Gagaku-like sound.
- Listening to the shou live, I felt that the presence of wind instruments brought a sense of unity to the performance. I also felt the reassurance of being led along.

On the insights gained through instruction from the Gagaku musician and improvements in performance:

- I blew with all my might, trying to produce a sound as loud as the hichiriki. As Ms. Nakamura mentioned, rather than cutting the sound into small pieces, it's better to sustain each note, so I made the notes longer. I also tried gradually changing the sound.
- As Ms. Nakamura said, slowing down the percussion increased the freedom of the hichiriki and the koto, which enhanced the Gagaku-like feel. This insight left a lasting impression on me.
- When playing the kakko, I tried to align my breath with that of my friends as much as possible. I also paid attention to the advice Ms. Nakamura gave me, such as making the first note louder and being mindful of the rhythm when playing.

As shown in Table 5 and Table 6, the students developed a deep appreciation for Gagaku, gained an understanding of its defining characteristics, and were able to verbalize them clearly. This was made possible by their dual engagement with Gagaku through both appreciation and creation, and by participating in class with a Gagaku performer.

Conclusion

This practice made it clear that Gagaku can be related not only to appreciation but also creative activities. Engaging students in creative expression deepened their attachment to and understanding of Gagaku. Additionally, using substitute instruments proved effective for learning, and since the activities could be completed in four lessons, I gained confidence that Gagaku-based creative activities can be continued in the future.

However, several challenges emerged. One difficulty was in constructing music based on the hayayohoushi beat. Other challenges included:

1. Difficulties in using the koto for melodic creation.
2. Questions about whether it is truly Gagaku-like for students to perform melodies individually within an ensemble.

These issues are examined below:

1. Although the hayayohyoushi beat characterizes the flow of Gagaku's rhythm, it includes frequent silence intervals, making it difficult to use as a foundation for creating melodies.
2. In Gagaku, koto is not originally a melodic instrument; rather, it is used to perform decorative interjections, such as *ainote* (interrupting phrases). One of the student's responses in the questionnaire stated, "When playing the koto, rather than focusing on creating a melody, I played in a way that followed the rhythm of uchimono" (see Table 5). This likely reflects the influence of listening to *Etenraku* during the appreciation activity.
3. Gagaku compositions feature clear, fixed melodies, and there is no improvisation or free intertwining of various melodies. One student survey response noted, "The sound, which had been somewhat scattered before, was enveloped by the shou's tone, allowing us to create a more Gagaku-like sound" (see Table 6). This suggests an awareness of the defined melody in *Etenraku*.

The *yatara* beat is easier to follow due to having less frequent silent intervals. In the exit procession music of *Bugaku*, the melody is performed in a style closer to free improvisation. Furthermore, in the performance of *Bugaku*, string instruments such as the koto are not traditionally used. Therefore, students don't have to be restricted to playing koto in the

traditional performance style using ainote. They are given the freedom to choose instruments they find easier to play, such as the alto recorder or the koto.

This approach opens the door to introducing other Gagaku pieces besides *Etenraku*, which will expand the students' understanding of the world of Gagaku.

When conducting the next Gagaku-based creative class, I plan to adopt some of the insights outlined in Table 6, implement them into the lesson plan, and compare the results with current practice. Through repeated implementations like this, I hope to create opportunities for the widespread adoption of Gagaku-based creative activities in music education settings.

Notes

1. Illustrations are reprinted from the following

website: <https://graphic.nobody.jp/illustrations/information.html>

Video of Imai's Lesson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5u5gX3u5ay4>

References

Shimazaki, A., & Kato, F. (1999). 授業のための日本の音楽・世界の音楽 [Japanese and World Music for Classes]. Ongaku no Tomo-sha.

The Wind Tells: A Piece Using Gagaku Instruments

Yasnoshin Morita

The Wind Tells..., composed by Yasnoshin Morita, is a music education piece designed for two gagaku musicians and a group of students. The piece features the clear melody of the *hichiriki* and the solemn, dispersed chords of the *ruan*, accompanied by a triangle performance of the students. The *ruan* player also plays a small bell during the piece. Students improvise on the triangle while surrounding the two professional musicians. The performance lasts approximately seven minutes.

1. About the Gagaku instruments in the piece:

- Hichiriki: A double-reed wind instrument commonly used in gagaku. It produces a deep tonal resonance that resembles the human voice.
- Ruan: A four-stringed, fretted instrument of Chinese origin featuring a round, flat wooden body similar to a banjo. It is played with a plectrum to produce chordal sounds. An ancient version of this instrument from the 7th century is preserved in the Shosoin Repository in Nara prefecture, Japan.

2. Performance procedure

- (i) The hichiriki and ruan players are seated at the center of the performance space, with the students arranged in a circle around them (see Figure 1).
- (ii) After the performance begin, the students start playing their hand-held triangles when the ruan player rings the bell (see green frame in Figure 2). Students are encouraged to imagine the wind and interpret it on the triangle. The manner of expression is left entirely to the students.
- (iii) When the hichiriki plays a distinctive phrase that signals the end of the performance, the students should stop playing (see the red frame in Figure 2).
- (iv) Instructors should explain the performance procedures in advance and ensure students memorize the cue sounds before the activity.

3. video link for the performance by Gagaku musician and music teachers :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLSmq2ZqvPI>

4. The full score (arranged version) is available at :

<https://www.arrangeme.com/title/1198951>

5. Four videos of improvisation by elementary school children and professional musicians.

5-1 Group presentation with musicians

<https://youtu.be/fGvzGT6WyPo>

A group that improvised on percussion instruments using repetition. It is interesting to note that they intentionally changed the rhythm patterns.

5-2 Group presentation with musicians

<https://youtu.be/FdcJBWF4hXg>

As each child improvises freely, a series of movements emerges, and changes occur with each repetition.

5-3 Joint presentation by two groups of children with musicians

<https://youtu.be/b5gMwPG2KSY>

There are noticeable changes in the rhythm played by the groups using repetition.

The students also exchange percussion instruments. There are obvious differences in this presentation, such as an increase in the number of percussion instruments played and the use of a freer rhythm.

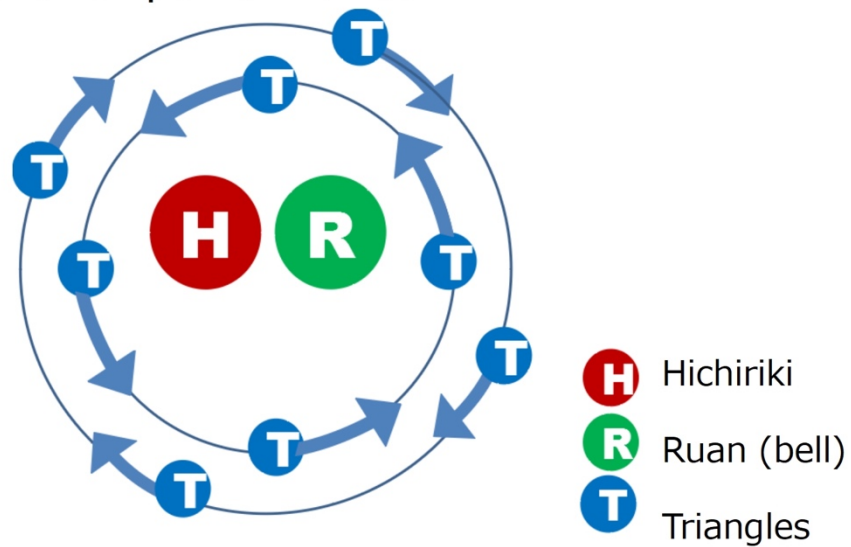
5-4 Joint presentation by two groups of children with musicians

<https://youtu.be/XbUgijf6X44>

While valuing tone color, they become able to improvise vividly with each repetition.

It is clear that they are becoming more confident in their hands as they reach for their instruments.

[Fig.1] Positions for performance



[Fig.2] Cues for start and stop

H Hichiriki

R Ruan

T Triangles (students)

mid. speed \rightarrow fast **G**

tr

f *p*

mf

START

STOP

sound of triangles

The musical score for the Hichiriki, Ruan, and Triangles (students) is shown. The Hichiriki part is in a key of G major and features a trill (tr) and a crescendo from *f* to *p*. The Ruan part is in a key of G major and features a *mf* dynamic. The Triangles (students) part is in a key of G major and features a *mf* dynamic. The score includes cues for start and stop, with a green box highlighting the start cue and a red box highlighting the stop cue. A red arrow points from the stop cue in the Triangles part to the stop cue in the Hichiriki part.

風は語りかけます

The wind tells ...

Yasunoshin MORITA

Tempo: ♩ = 72

Hichiriki
p *fp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Ruan

Triangles

H.
p *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *f*

R.

H.
p *f* *pp*

R.
 0 0 2

Trs.
mf *mf* START

Trs.
 10

A
H.
 13 *mp* *p* *mf* *p*

Trs.

H.
 16 *f* *p* *mp*

R.
 0 2 1

Trs.

19

H. *p* *fp* *mf* *p*

R. *f*

Trs.

22

H. *f* *fp* *mf* *p*

R.

Trs.

25

H. *f* *p* *mf* *p* *fp* *f* *mp* *p* *f*

R.

Trs.

28

H. *mp* *f* *p* *mf* *p* *f*

R.

Trs.

middle speed \longrightarrow fast
tr ---

B

31

H.

R.

Trs.

STOP

mf

p

0

0

6

34

H.

R.

Trs.

mf

p

mf

p

0

0

2

2

3

37

H.

R.

Trs.

mf

p

mf

p

mf

START

C

40

H.

R.

Trs.

mp

pp

f

pp

very slow

slow

fast

tr

3