

Musical Practice and Reception in Silent Movie Theaters in Tokyo: Intermission Music and Accompaniment Music

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Abstract: Movie theaters in the silent era had the feature of concert halls. Especially in Japan, from the late 1910s to the 1920s, they were central places where ordinary people heard Western music. Though it is an important case for Japanese receptive study of Western music, how film audiences received it had scarcely been investigated. This study, focusing on some first premiere theaters in Tokyo, tries to show their reception of Western music. First, three sections consider the audiences' columns in the pamphlets issued by one of the main movie theaters, the Teikokukan in Asakusa. They show that audiences were so interested in Western music frequently played as intermission music, that, when the same music was used for film accompaniment, it sometimes gained audiences' attention more than the film itself. Until 1927, however, musical medleys had gradually gained popularity as a new form of intermission music. The popularity was based on each tune's associative images which the audience had formed through their repetitive use in film accompaniment. The peculiar associations formed in the movie theaters gave birth to a unique musical practice.

Keywords: film music, movie theater, silent film, Japanese film, Western music

Introduction

In the silent film era, movie theaters across the world were a site for the practice and reception of music. As Kathlyn Kalinak wrote, “[d]ifferent practices for production and reception of musical accompaniment developed around the world,” especially in the early days.¹ Even then, however, there was a tendency for domestic movies to be projected with indigenous music while foreign Western films were usually accompanied by Western music. In the early twentieth century, movie theaters that projected foreign movies became a unique place where Western music was played and heard by ordinary people worldwide. In this study, I examine the Japanese experience of Western music in the movie theater and the kind of musical practice and reception that formed in Japan.

First, we consider several articles that refer to the Japanese audiences' knowledge of Western music. Popular Japanese novelist, Kikuchi Kan, wrote in an essay in 1920, “if you want to see movies, you should go to Asakusa.” According to Kikuchi, “you would feel much better

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¹ Kathlyn Kalinak. "Performance Practices and Music in Early Cinema outside Hollywood," in David Neumeyer ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 612.

in seeing a movie in Asakusa than seeing it in other districts.” Asakusa was a popular traditional entertainment district in Tokyo, but “the spectators in Asakusa are the most progressive.” Although their behaviors tend to be “brash,” they “love novel things” so much that “they give a big round of applause even when they see just intertitles in English.” Further, Kikuchi wrote, “They know a lot of [Western] music that is played during the intermission and the screenings.”² Interestingly, he described the audience in Asakusa as “progressive” because of their knowledge of Western music.

The musical magazine *Ongakukai*, in 1915, also referred to the movie spectators’ knowledge of music: “The music of the movie theaters like the Kanda Kinkikan and the Asakusa Teikokukan are prominently superior as these theaters attract people with a profound knowledge of music. The audiences made critiques such as “the march played in that movie was inappropriate” and “this music is more desirable in that movie.” The spectators encouraged the musicians to improve their music.³ The movie spectators, especially those in foreign film theaters like the Kinkikan and the Teikokukan, seemed to be interested in Western music. If contemporary Japanese people want to listen to Western music, they could play records or go to the Hibiya Park Sunday Concerts, where the Japanese military band plays music with Western instruments. However, foreign film theaters were also precious musical halls where melophiles could always enjoy Western music.⁴

Moreover, movie theaters also attracted people who did not usually listen to music. Movie theaters, at that time, offered an experience to their spectators who were generally not interested in Western music. The movie director Inagaki Hiroshi wrote that he became a fan of Asakusa Opera by listening to intermission music like excerpts from *Carmen* in movie theaters.⁵ These theaters functioned as a cultural apparatus for the popular reception of Western music in Japan.

Previous studies have shown that movie theaters play an important role in the receptive history of Western music in Japan. Hosokawa Shuhei wrote a section named “The Cinema Palace as a Concert Hall” when he sketched the history of film music in Japan.⁶ Kurata Yoshihiro wrote in his book on the cultural history of recording in Japan, “You must not forget that the intermission music in film theaters was one of the reasons more Japanese people interested in Western music.”⁷ Further, some books have also documented the names of several musicians who worked in movie theaters and the tunes that were played there.⁸ These studies indicated that movie theaters frequently offered a chance for people to hear Western music and became an

² Kikuchi Kan. “Yo no Asakusa-kan,” *Kikuchi kan zenshu*, vol. 14, Tokyo: Chuokoron Sha, 1938, 385. The novelists at that time seemed to go to movie theaters frequently. As for the novelist Shiga Naoya, See Kida Sho, *Shiga Naoya eiga ni iku: Edison kara Ozu Yasujiro made mita otoko*, Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Shuppan, 2015.

³ Shikosei. “Katsudoshashin no ongaku,” *Ongakukai*, February 1915, 21.

⁴ As for the gentrification of movie theaters in Japan and the transformation of movie spectatorship, See Ueda Manabu, *Nihon eiga sosoki no kogyo to kankyaku: Tokyo to Kyoto wo chushin ni*, Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 2012.

⁵ Inagaki Hiroshi, *Nihon eiga no wakaki hibi*, Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1983: 228. Judging from his remarks, the time he mentioned here is around 1922-1923.

⁶ Hosokawa Shuhei, “Sketches of Silent Film Sound in Japan Theatrical Functions of Ballyhoo, Orchestras and Kabuki Ensembles”, Daisuke Miyao ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Cinema*, Oxford University Press, 2014. 294-297.

⁷ Kurata Yoshihiro. *Nihon recodo bunkashi*, Iwanami shoten, 2006, 127.

⁸ See for example Omori Seitaro, *Nihon no yogaku*. vol 1, Tokyo: Shinmon Shuppan, 1986: 117, 131.

important place for music experience. However, they did not demonstrate how and why movie theaters could perform the function of promoting Western music in Japan.

In this study, I examine the relationship between the music of movie theaters and its reception by Japanese spectators through the analysis of their contributions in movie theater programs. These contributors' columns were published weekly and freely distributed in many Japanese movie theaters. In particular, I focus on the programs issued in the "first premiere theaters"⁹ of foreign film in Tokyo, a city that housed more than 100 movie theaters in those days. First, I study the programs of the Teikokukan in Asakusa because they were one of the pioneers of the contributors' columns, which are also relatively well preserved today. Further, I examine the high interest and enthusiasm of the spectators at the Teikokukan during that time. Subsequently, I focus on the two aspects of the audience's arguments on the modernization of the culture of cinema and movie theaters. Finally, I examine how the practice was followed by theaters that projected Japanese cinema in the 1920s, focusing on theaters such as the Denkikan and the Shochikukan in Asakusa and the Nikkatsukan in Kanda. In this study, I examine the relationship between music and its reception in the Japanese movie theaters of the silent era to demonstrate how the Japanese audience received Western music and formed their musical memory in movie theaters.

1. Enthusiasm for Western music: Intermission Music

In Japan during the 1910s–1920s, most foreign films were first premiered in Asakusa, one of the central movie avenues.¹⁰ Cinema fans frequented movie theaters in Asakusa to watch the latest movies. In a single day, they watched various films at several theaters until late at night.¹¹ Movie theaters at Asakusa competed to capture these audiences in various ways. One of the prominent theaters in Asakusa, the Teikokukan (established in 1910), attracted young cinema-goers through exclusive shows of foreign (usually American) films in the late 1910s and the early 1920s. The Teikokukan had an exclusive contract with Universal Pictures and screened the latest Bluebird movies, which were produced by the Bluebird Photoplays and distributed by Universal Pictures. These were extremely popular among young Japanese audiences at the time. In addition to the movies, the Teikokukan attracted audiences through the enhancement of the movie theater

⁹ During those times, few prints for each film were imported to Japan. Therefore, those prints premiered in the theaters in Asakusa, and the box-office at Asakusa was considered an indicator of the film's popularity in other places. See Aaron Gerow, "One Print in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Film Industry and Culture in 1910s Japan," *Early Cinema in Asia*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press: 40-156.

¹⁰ Asakusa was central to the movie industry in Japan; however, it had also been an entertainment district for a long time and was assumed to be a bad place. An editor of the leading movie magazine *Kinema junpo* wrote about his strong dislike in a preface. Although he said that people need to go to Asakusa because the imported movie theaters in Asakusa were superior to those in other districts, he also wrote about "how horrible" it was to go to a place like Asakusa. Nonetheless, he praised some of the other theaters in Tokyo, such as the Ginza Komparukan and the Akasaka Aoikan and argued that the premiere theaters should be placed in downtowns like Ginza and Akasaka. See "Setsuen: Gaikoku eiga josetsukan shinai shugo wo sakebu," *Kinema junpo* 6 (September 1919): 1. As history suggests, the central place of entertainment made a transition from Asakusa through Ginza to Shinjuku. See Yoshimi Shunya, *Toshi no Dramaturgy*, Tokyo: Kawade shobo, 2008.

¹¹ Shishi Bunroku. *Chinchin densha*, Tokyo: Kawade Shobo, 2006: 155.

program, *Daiichi Shinbun* (*A.I. News* in English), and the use of contributors' columns. Spectators' contributions to the programs are said to have started at the Teikokukan in 1916. Shortly, the practice was adopted by foreign film theaters across Japan as a tool of communication between the audience and the theater.¹² The audience commented on various topics that ranged from the films they saw in the previous week to their favorite actors/actresses, benshis (Japanese live narrator for silent films), and music. The topics in the programs varied across theaters; however, one of the topics frequently posted in the *Daiichi Shinbun* was music.¹³

Among the various aspects of music, a major topic was intermission music. The audience often wrote about the joys of hearing this music: "We are really pleased to hear *Carmen*,"¹⁴ and "The *William Tell* played this week was brilliant."¹⁵ Sometimes, they also requested specific music: "We are eager to hear the music of operetta."¹⁶ There were also comments like, "Thank you for the intermission music, *Chocolate Soldier*. I would like you to play *Les Cloches de Corneville* next week."¹⁷ Such active audience requests remind us of the song request practice that would be adopted by radio in later years.

In the *Daiichi Shinbun*, there were also requests for specific musical practices: "How about playing *Teikoku[kan] March* before the screening starts?"¹⁸ Here, the contributor seems to request the theater to compose an opening piece specifically for the Teikokukan. Interestingly, the movie theater Komparukan was known for composing *Komparu March*, an opening piece that was specific to the theater. The Komparukan was located in Ginza, an upscale and modern shopping area in Tokyo. It was also known as a sophisticated cinema hall with an accomplished orchestra, the Hatano Orchestra, conducted by Hatano Fukutaro. The Komparukan screened Universal Pictures films, including Bluebird movies, a week after they were screened at the Teikokukan. Many movie-goers went to both the Teikokukan and the Komparukan. If they liked the film at the Teikokukan, they went to the Komparukan to see it again. Therefore, the contributor's appeal to compose a *Teikoku March* suggests that the audience tried to bring some of the practices of the Komparukan to their favorite theater.¹⁹

However, the question remains as to why the audiences so enjoyed Western music in movie theaters across Japan. A possible reason is that Western music was *modern* music to the

¹² *Kinema Record* (May 1916: 200) reported that the Teikokukan started to issue the *Daiichi Shinbun* as "the organ publication of a movie theater." The photograph on the page suggests the first issue was published on March 18, 1916, although the early issues do not survive today. As for the movie theater program, see Kondo Kazuto, *Eiga to kankyaku no media ron*, Tokyo: Seikyusha, 2020.

¹³ The style of the movie theater programs was not uniform. Some had contributor columns and others did not. While the program of the Asakusa Denkikan, the oldest movie theater in Japan and one of the leading imported theaters in Asakusa, had column space, few spectators wrote to them about music.

¹⁴ *Daiichi Shinbun*, January 18, 1919.

¹⁵ *Daiichi Shinbun*, February 21, 1920.

¹⁶ *Daiichi Shinbun*, January 11, 1919.

¹⁷ *Daiichi Shinbun*, May 3, 1919.

¹⁸ *Daiichi Shinbun*, May 24, 1919.

¹⁹ Takeizumi Heisaku described the difference between the pieces played at the Asakusa Teikokukan and the Ginza Komparukan as the accompaniment music for the movie *Shinya no hito*. See Takeizumi Heisaku, "Renzoku katsugeki banso ko," *Eiga shiryō*, October 1, 1969. As for Hatano Orchestra, see also Takeishi Midori, "Hatano Orchestra no jittai to kouseki," *Ochanomizu ongaku ron shu*, 2006: 363-373.

audience.²⁰ One spectator wrote, “I hate [Japanese traditional music of] *shamisen*, and prefer Western music. I visit Teikoku[kan] to see a Bluebird [film] and hear the voice of Ikoma [Raiyu, a star benshi], and admire the great musical mood.”²¹ A critic from the movie magazine, *Kinema Record*, wrote that the young audiences who studied at modern schools were the people who enjoyed Western music like *Waves of the Danube*.²² This can be considered true as some readers sent the following comments to the contemporary magazine: “We are young. Rather than the bewildering fast sword scenes [of Japanese period films], accompanied with [traditional] *hyoshigi* and *taiko* percussions, we would like to see the love stories of South Europe with passionate moods or [American] Bluebird films with their soft mood and quiet and dream-like music.”²³ These comments suggest that Western music was considered the music of the new generation in Japan that was moving towards modernization. Theaters like the Teikokukan tried to appeal to the young audience by updating their musical repertoire. In 1919, the Teikokukan announced that they had reformed the music department and had started importing new music from New York.²⁴ Endo Saburo, the music director of the Teikokukan, also asked spectators to contribute their comments to the magazines and the programs or visit the music department at their theater if they had music requests.²⁵

2. Cinematic Culture and Audience Comments

The audience made contributions due to their enthusiasm for Western music as modern music. However, there was another reason for their keen interest. Western music was assumed to be closely related to the modernization of the Japanese culture of cinema, which was evident in this particular request for music in the *Daiichi Shinbun*: “Please place the intermission music between a drama movie and an action movie in a program.” The contributor asserted, “during the musical performance,” they were “annoyed by the voices of the vendors of cheap sweets and the chattering by other audience members.”²⁶ Those days, the exhibition programs comprised several movies that included shorts and features, and the entire program was repeated twice or thrice a day. The intermission music was played between the programs; therefore, when a new audience entered the auditorium, they chattered and made noises. Even the Teikokukan, a theater

²⁰ The increased interest in intermission music is confirmed by the fact that the movie magazine *Kinema junpo*, during its early days, had published commentaries on some repertoire of the intermission music, although each of its issues in those days had only four pages. Further, the commentaries were merely brief synopses of opera, whose overture was played frequently.

²¹ *Daiichi Shinbun*, July 13, 1918

²² Nakano Kajin, “Katsudo shashin to ongaku VIII,” *Kinema Record*, February 1917: 64.

²³ “Dokusha jiyu rondon,” *Katsudo Zasshi*, October 1919: 159.

²⁴ *Daiichi Shinbun*, April 19, 1919. Movie theaters in the United States also sought a method for cultural upliftment through music. For example, W. Stephane Bush of *Moving Picture World* went to Western Europe to inspect the practice of music there. See James Buhler and Catrin Watts, “The *Moving Picture World*, W. Stephen Bush and the American Reception of European Cinema Practices, 1907-1913,” Claus Tieber and Anna K. Windisch, *The Sounds of Silent Films*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014, 103-22. As for the musical performance practice of Western Europe, see the articles in *The Sounds of Silent Films*, and regarding the sound and musical practices in the United States, see Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

²⁵ *Daiichi Shinbun*, December 7, 1918.

²⁶ *Daiichi Shinbun* July 19, 1919.

that tried to reform its music department and appeal to the audience with musical performances, did not consider the elimination of disturbance during the presentation of their musical performances. This may have been because, in the early 1910s, music was played to entertain the audiences in the hall and attract the people on the road into the theater.²⁷ However, from the latter half of the 1910s, the audience in the Teikokukan began to listen to the music more carefully, separating the music from the exhibition and commercial customs. The aforementioned contribution was acknowledged after a month when a comment stated the theater's decision to play the intermission music between the sub-featuring movie and the featuring movie [within a program]."²⁸

The emergence of such attentive listening was paralleled by the reformation movement—the Pure Film Movement—in Japan, which emphasized the importance of moving images over that of benshis. A benshi's performance was so popular in the silent film era that they had supremacy over the films for which they narrated. Some benshis even changed the story of the film during their narration. Therefore, in the Pure Film Movement, which started around 1917, young moviemakers and critics argued that the benshi's narration must become more “sophisticated” so that it speaks modestly regarding what the moving images narrate.²⁹ The reformation of the benshi was requested for various reasons, and some critics even asserted that the benshi must be removed from the movie theaters. Although the dismissal of the benshi was not realized until the end of the silent era, one of the main benshi performances was abandoned during the movement—*maesetsu*—an introductory talk about the film that offered an opportunity to attract the spectators' attention and help the benshi hold an unchallenged position as a performer. However, it was gradually considered to be an impurity in the cinematic experience. It is believed that the abolition of *maesetsu* was initiated around 1917 by Fujinami Mumei and Tokugawa Musei, leading “advanced” benshis at the Aoikan at Akasaka, a downtown in Tokyo. According to the film historian Misono Kyohei, the abolition spread from the Aoikan in Akasaka, through the Usgigomekan in Ushigome and the Komparukan in Ginza, to theaters in Asakusa.³⁰ According to the *Daiichi Shinbun*, a contributor to the Asakusa Teikokukan also demanded “to abandon *maesetsu*.”³¹ Some practices in central theaters in downtown Tokyo seemed to gain spectators' discoveries with their praise and be adopted in the theater in Asakusa by the spectators' approaches.

There was also an argument regarding music playing in connection with the benshi's narration. Some spectators required accompaniment music during *the benshi's* narration. The movie magazine, *Kinema junpo*, reported that there was usually no accompaniment music in the last feature film in the daily program in ordinary theaters. However, at the Aoikan in Akasaka,

²⁷ This seems to be a vestige of the practice that began in the early 1910s. See Ueda, *Nihon eiga sosoki no kogyo to kankyaku*: 119-127.

²⁸ *Daiichi Shinbun* August 9, 1919.

²⁹ Kitada Akihiro, *Imi eno aragai: Mediation no bunka seijigaku*, Tokyo: Serika Shobo, 2004: 238-275.

³⁰ Misono Kyohei. *Katsuben jidai*, Iwanami Shoten, 1990, 82. For the relationship of the Pure Film Movement and benshis, see Aaron Gerow. *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2010, 133-173.

³¹ *Daiichi Shinbun*, Sept 21, 1918.

“soft accompaniment music was calmly played to the projected scenes during the narration.”³² Again, such a report recommended the practice to downtown Akasaka and tried to introduce the practice of the first-class theaters of downtown areas into the popular district of Asakusa. An audience at the Asakusa Teikokukan also requested, “Please play music during some scenes in *The Price of a Good Time* even if the benshi was explaining.”³³ This request seems to have been acknowledged by the Asakusa Teikokukan, as was made evident by a contributor one month later: “I am pleased to hear music during the explanation of *The Chalice of Sorrow*. I hope the musicians will play music in human dramas during such instances from now on.”³⁴ During the reformation movement that transferred the central interest from the benshi to the moving images, the audiences took a greater interest in the way the music accompanied the movie.

Certainly, many contributors wrote about their admiration for the movies or their favorite actors rather than films as works of art.³⁵ However, with the spread of the idea to see films as works of art that is independent of the eloquent narration by the benshi, the sound practices of films and accompaniment music were recognized as film enhancers. Nevertheless, the interest in accompaniment music sometimes became severe, as some spectators expected it to be played in a manner that was beyond its role as an enhancer.

3. Interest in Musical Accompaniment around 1920

The reformation of the Japanese movie culture in the late 1910s encouraged the spectators’ interest in musical accompaniment. Two movie magazines that promoted reformation (*Kinema Record* and *Kinema junpo*) featured film music in 1916 and 1919, respectively, and discussed the ideal accompaniment. The discourse on *Daiichi Shinbun* reflects this kind of contemporary discussion.

The spectators’ interest in accompaniment music did not stem only from the pursuit of an ideal film accompaniment. A good example of this is the popularity votes held by *Daiichi Shinbun* as a plan for communication between the theater and the spectators. They usually collected votes about favorite actors. However, in July 1918, they appealed to the spectators to vote for their favorite music at the Teikokukan:

Popularity contest of music played by the Teikokukan musical department

Genres: 1. Intermission music, 2. Tragedy music, 3. Action music, 4. Landscape music

Deadline: July 31

Publication of results: August 10

Note: Vote for your favorite music for each genre. Regardless of whether the music is

³² “Katsudoshashin to ongaku,” *Kinema Record* 40 (October 1916): 462.

³³ *Daiichi Shinbun*, Feb 8, 1919.

³⁴ *Daiichi Shinbun*, March 29, 1919.

³⁵ Itakura Fumiaki described the movement as a “struggle for supremacy between movie exhibitor and moviemaker” and indicated that the spread of the movement had started to create in film spectators the concept of *work of art*. Itakura Fumiaki, “‘Kyugeki’ kara ‘Jidaigeki’ e,” Iwamoto Kenji ed. *Jidaigeki Densetsu*, Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2005.

Japanese or Western, we are going to play the most popular music. For the first 100 arrivals, admission tickets for the special seats at the Teikokukan will be presented as a prize for the winner of each genre.³⁶

This announcement refers to “Intermission music” and the music that accompanied the three typical scenes in the movies: “Tragedy music,” “Action music,” and “Landscape music.” Usually, spectators did not know the name of the accompaniment music played during the screening as the names were not shown. However, the results of the contest, published a month later, suggest that the most popular accompaniment music pieces were part of the common repertoire often played as intermission music: *Dublin Bay* and *Carmen* for intermission (138 votes), *William Tell* Overture for action (54 votes), *The Blue Danube* for landscape (116 votes), and *Faust* by Gounod (71 votes) and *The Bohemian Girl* by Balfe for tragedy (63 votes).³⁷ These pieces were played both during intermission and as accompaniment and became familiar tunes for the audience. Several comments sent to *Daiichi Shinbun* also suggest that these music pieces actually accompanied films: “Thank you for *The Bohemian Girl* for [the movie] *The Night Shadows*,”³⁸ and “I am grateful for the *Danube* during the scene of *The Heart of Humanity* where John drifted on a boat in the lake like a floating leaf under the lucent moon.”³⁹

The contributions in *Daiichi Shinbun* also suggest that there were requests for the selection of accompaniment music. A spectator, who heard of the plan for the Bluebird movies retrospective, wrote, “Please play *The Bohemian Girl* in *The Greater Law* and *Maritana* and *William Tell* in *Little Miss Nobody*.”⁴⁰ In 1923, when the affiliation of the Teikokukan changed from Universal Pictures to Shochiku Kinema, music director Shimada Harutaka wrote that more audience had been accustomed to hearing “novel repertoire for intermission music” as well as familiar tunes. Occasionally, he saw “ardent audiences” who made “professional critiques and requests,” although he could not keep up with all the requests. “Some spectators eagerly requested for a specific musical repertoire, but I am extremely sorry for not fulfilling all the wishes for several reasons. I cannot play the requested ‘sailor’s song’ as it does not suit the movie scheduled for next week.”⁴¹ The last sentence is astonishing as it highlights that some spectators requested music without caring for the film scenes. Although the modernization movement expected accompaniment music to support film as central to the movie culture, the growing interest in music pushed it beyond its role as accompaniment. The comment cited above (“Thank you for

³⁶ *Daiichi Shinbun*, July 12, 1918.

³⁷ *Daiichi Shinbun*, August 17, 1918. The number of votes for the favorite music was not many when compared with the popularity contest for actors (the count was more than 500 votes for the most favorite actor, and more than 3000 votes in total). However, the contest attracted the attention of the spectators, and the result was announced a week later, contrary to the initial plan because a large number of votes was unexpected. Interestingly, in the next month, *Daiichi Shinbun* (August 31, 1918) announced that “the popularity vote contest was planned to know the musical taste of spectators, and [they] will not play the selected accompaniment music during the films perform simply because they had won.” Some spectators seemed to have requested them to do so.

³⁸ *Daiichi Shinbun*, August 24, 1918.

³⁹ *Daiichi Shinbun*, September 20, 1919.

⁴⁰ *Daiichi Shinbun*, April 12, 1919.

⁴¹ Shimada Harutaka, “Saikin ichijirushiku shimpo shita katsudo josetsukan no choshu,” *Katsudo Gaho* 7.6 (June 1923): 40.

The Bohemian Girl for *The Night Shadows*”) might be an expression of gratitude for the theater playing the requested piece. For these spectators, the experience in the movie theaters may have been equated with their attending a music concert accompanied by movies.

Additionally, musicians sometimes granted the spectators’ excessive wishes for accompaniment. In 1923, the critic Ota Kocho praised the music department of the cinema hall Shinjuku Musashinokan and criticized the music of other theaters, including the Asakusa Teikokukan:

Many musicians are absorbed in meeting the spectators’ wishes to play popular musical repertoires and egocentrically pleased to be applauded. However, the musicians here [in the Musashinokan] do not forget their role in supporting movies and play the music quietly and modestly. Therefore, we must praise their attitudes. I am disgusted with the attitude of the musicians in some theaters like the Teikokukan, who played [the popular tune] *Love in Idleness* recklessly and tried to meet the spectators’ wish rather than harmonize music and cinema.”⁴²

There are two noteworthy remarks in this comment. First, according to Ota, Shimada did not play music “quietly and modestly” and was “egocentrically pleased to be applauded.” Music directors like Shimada, who performed in popular theaters, tried to meet the spectators’ requests through the selection of the repertoire and the extravagant style of performance.

Ota’s comment also documents the audience’s attitude with the word “applauded.” Contemporary articles indicate that spectators in theaters applauded several times during the screening. In 1922, Tanaka Junichiro, a leading Japanese film historian, reported some of the instances in which the spectators applauded frequently: before the screening (to urge the theatre to quickly start the film); when musicians and benshi entered the hall; during the opening credits, especially when they saw their favorite actor’s name; when the stars appeared on the screen; if the scene was beautiful; during thrilling scenes; at the climax. Their behavior seemed to be inherited from their viewing of kabuki theater and other popular stage theaters. Additionally, Tanaka reported that he heard applauding most frequently at the Asakusa Nihonkan and for Endo Saburo, the former music director of the Teikokukan.⁴³ It was also reported in a contemporary article that the musicians at the Nihonkan scamp their work because “the spectators always please when they listened to popular tunes.”⁴⁴ This contrasted with the practice at the Ginza Komparukan, where Tanaka heard no applauding. The practices of contributors discussed thus far can be categorized within the two extremities of the practices of the Nihonkan and the Komparukan that Tanaka mentioned. Around 1920, the spectators in the foreign movie theaters,

⁴² Gappyo dojin, “Musashino ongakudan gappyo,” *Katsudo gaho*, 7.7 (July 1923): 67.

⁴³ Tanaka Junichiro, “Eiga josetsukan ni okeru hakushu no iroiro,” *Katsudo Kurabu* 5.9 (September 1922): 59. Tanaka described the noisy auditorium so as to suggest readers to see films quietly. However, it was not put into practice. Until the 1930s, when sound films had been established, the theaters were noisy. Itakura Fumiaki, “Eigakan ni okeru kankyaku no saho: rekishitekina jyuyo kenkyu no tameno jyoron,” Itakura Fumiaki et al. ed. *Nihon eiga wa ikite iru*, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2010: 227-49.

⁴⁴ Sato Yasuo, “Kaku ongakudan bekkenki,” *Katsudo gaho*, 7.6 (June 1923): 35.

on the one hand, began to internalize the norm of viewing films as a work of art, independent of the benshi's performance. They also directed their attention to the accompanying music as if it was separate from the experience of the films.⁴⁵

What will then be the relationship between the musical practice and reception in movie theaters? Unfortunately, after the mid-1920s, when the affiliation of the Teikokukan changed from Universal Pictures to Shochiku Kinema, the contributors' columns in movie theater programs gradually ceased, and the voices of the spectators started to disappear. Regarding the work of musicians, however, interesting cases can be found in the relationship between intermission and accompaniment music. In the following section, we will investigate the intermission music in the theaters of Shochiku that showed Japanese movies and had a unique practice concerning the audience.

4. Continuity of Intermission Music and Musical Accompaniment: Practices in theaters dedicated to Japanese cinema in the 1920s

The Japanese film production and distribution company Shochiku Kinema was founded in 1920 by Shochiku, the biggest kabuki production company, which promoted the Pure Film Movement and musical accompaniment with Western music. Shochiku Kinema garnered considerable attention when it premiered its first movies at the Kabukiza in 1920 with a thirty-piece Western orchestra and invited a leading Japanese composer, Yamada Kosaku, as the guest conductor for the premiere event. It later expanded its power in Tokyo and brought many movie theaters under its wings. The Teikokukan affiliated with Shochiku in 1921, and its orchestra doubled in size to 20. The Teikokukan program was renamed *Shochiku News* and printed the names of the twenty orchestra members and the director, Shimada Harutaka.⁴⁶ Moreover, Shochiku brought Western music to movie theaters for Japanese films which had traditional Japanese music as accompaniment and where intermission music had not been played at all.

In 1922, Shochiku opened the Shochikukan as a premiere theater dedicated to the films produced by Shochiku and began to change its accompaniment music to match the style of the foreign films through the use of Western music.⁴⁷ The manager of the Shochikukan, Tsuzumi

⁴⁵ The ambivalence could be seen in various situations in the Pure Film Movement. Tanaka Junichiro indicated that even a snobbish spectator who argued against benshi could not understand imported movies without benshi's voices that translated the foreign words on the intertitle. See Tanaka, "Eiga josetsukan ni okeru hakushu no iroiro," 60.

⁴⁶ *Daiichi Shinbun*, June 17, 1921.

⁴⁷ To be more precise, the musical repertoire in imported film theaters had included Japanese music earlier. In 1916, the movie magazine *Kinema Record* reported that "intermission music is heard in every theater [these days]," and "in the Aoikan, the repertoire weekly alternates between Western music and Japanese music; however, in the Komparukan, both kinds of music are played in a week." ("Katsudoshashin to ongaku 8," *Kinema Record*, August 1916, 337). Further, a Teikokukan contributor "asked [them to play] Japanese music sometimes." (*Daiichi Shinbun*, October 25, 1925) One and a half months later, the Japanese tune *Echigo jishi* was played during the intermission at the Teikokukan, and that elicited loud applause. One spectator wrote, "*Echigo jishi* was a familiar tune for us, and we really appreciated that it was played as intermission music. [...] It would be better to play those ordinary tunes rather than unintelligible new music." (*Daiichi Shinbun*, December 6, 1919.) However, another spectator wrote, "it was a matter of regret" that Japanese music rather than Western music "attracted the biggest applause since the establishment of the Teikokukan." (*Daiichi Shinbun*, December 20, 1919.)

Tomojiro, wrote in 1923 that the accompaniment of Japanese films with Western music was initially criticized for “ignoring the nature of the people in Asakusa.”⁴⁸ In 1923, Sato Yasuo, a critic, remarked that “even if they played sophisticated music [in the Shochikukan], most of the spectators could not appreciate it,” and it would be better to select “popular and uplifting [Western] music” or “Japanese tunes like *Echigo jishi* or *Tsurukame* as had been played the other day.”⁴⁹ However, Tsuzumi reported that Western music in Japanese movie theaters was being rapidly accepted, even expanding to theaters in rural districts. Thus, in the early 1920s, Western music became popular in the theaters of Japanese movies, and spectators like Inagaki Hiroshi began to listen to Western music, as noted in the introduction.

The Shochiku also started unique intermission music in Japanese film theaters around 1927. It began to make medley pieces that achieved popularity. Playwright Kondo Keiichi reported that he heard the new intermission music, *Kanraku wo oute* (*Following pleasure*, premiered on July 15, 1927), in the Asakusa Denkikan (Shochiku’s premiere theater at that time):

The popular tunes that the director, Shimada, collected and arranged are tasteful and ideal for our popular musical enjoyment. The new [medley] music, *Kanraku wo oute*, merely contains famous tunes such as *Carmen*, *Yashi no ha shigereru*, *Rokudan*, *Echigo jishi*, *Showa bushi*, and *Love in Idleness*, but they are well arranged. When I see that each tune is appreciated by thousands of spectators who are thoroughly pleased, [I feel that] music should be like this [...] Although [the traditional nagauta song] *Dojoji* is good, I am expecting Japanese Jazz to be born. I saw the audience who were fascinated with Shimada’s arrangement of popular songs and thought that Japanese Jazz might be born in this kind of music.⁵⁰

The practice of making a medley for intermission music, which Kondo had indicated as the sign of the birth of “Japanese Jazz,” spread widely to other movie theaters. Tanaka Toyooki, the music director of Shochiku’s rival movie production company, Nikkatu, called this a fashion of “arrangement” and made several medleys for the Kanda Nikkatsukan, Nikkatsu’s premier theater. According to Tanaka, “this kind of medley pieces were welcomed by the ordinary people like movie spectators,” even though “these pieces are easy to make as the melodies were almost ready-made,” and all one must do is “add some harmony and elaborate the connections.”⁵¹ Tanaka himself did not comment on the pieces positively. However, his arrangements are noteworthy as they demonstrate a new stage of the development in the relationship between the practice of music

⁴⁸ Tsuzumi Tomojiro, “Shochiku kinema no genjo to hofu,” *Katsudo gaho*, January 1923: 36.

⁴⁹ Sato, “Kaku ongakudan bekkenki.” 36. According to a newspaper from 1921, spectators at the Teikokukan enjoyed listening to music for approximately seven to eight minutes. However, when the performance lasted more than ten minutes, they started to applaud in order for the theatre to quickly begin screening. (“Kyukeichu no sogaku mondai,” *Asahi Shinbun*, April 9, 1921.)

⁵⁰ Kondo Keiichi, “Utsuriyuku obon’: Denkikan,” *Eiga jidai*, September 2.9 (September 1927): 9. One of the earliest medley pieces was *Haru no tsuioku* arranged by Shimada Harutaka, which premiered in the Asakusa Denkikan on April 15, 1927. Shimada started to make something similar to medley music in the early 1920s but created a musical narrative around 1927.

⁵¹ Tanaka Toyooki “Gaku wa ku no tane: Eiga onagaku isseki wa,” *Eiga jidai* 3.7 (July 1928): 47.

and its reception in Japanese movie theaters.

An investigation of the movie theater program of the Kanda Nikkatsukan, *Kanda Shuho*, suggests that Tanaka made several medley pieces with brief but unique musical narratives. The musical scenario of the early piece, *Nazo no toranku (Mysterious trunk)*, was simple: a music director came to his movie theater, picked up some pieces of music from his trunk, and played them one by one.⁵² However, the piece that premiered a week later, *Fantaji: Natsukashi no merode (Fantasy: Nostalgic Melodies)*, was combined with standard pieces of accompaniment music and described as an “arrangement that depicts a reel of film in the imagination” and “is supposed to be heard and interpreted by the listener.”⁵³ Additionally, the piece that premiered the next month, *Isokyoku Kanda Jocho (Kanda sentiment)*, depicted the musical soundscape of Kanda—the path that starts from the students’ quarter through the Kanda Myojin shrine to the Kanda Nikkatsukan was described using the tunes of student songs, shrine festival music, accompaniment music, etc.⁵⁴ Tanaka also made several medleys such as *Uchiiri koshin kyoku (Raid March)*, *Ueno bansho (Ueno Vesper Bell)*, and *Kuraimakkusu Kokyokyoku (Climax Symphony)*, and some were published as scores and recordings.⁵⁵ Shimada’s *Kanraku wo oute* also had a simple scenario that traced the beginning of a new morning, people boarding a train and arriving at Kaminarimon, a famous gate in Sensoji temple in Asakusa, people walking on Nakamise shopping street to the temple and entering through another gate, and an old lady giving beans to doves in the temple’s precincts.⁵⁶

As Tanaka mentioned, the compositions were simple. However, notably, they were heard with the backdrop of musical memories that had been accumulated by the experience of accompaniment music that played in films. A contributor of *Daiichi Shinbun* wrote in 1920, “I heard *The Bohemian Girl* for the first time in a while and remembered Miss. Violet Mersereau. Hearing the excerpt of the solitary sound at the beginning of *William Tell* Overture, I cannot help but recall the scene of Mr. Harry Carey riding on a horse at the national border in the mountains.”⁵⁷ Another writer remarked on Japanese traditional music in a movie magazine. He listed several Japanese tunes played in the Kanda Nikkatsukan that reminded the writer of some specific scenes of movies: “The festive melody of [the Japanese nagauta music] *Genroku hanami odori* curiously reminds me of actor Yamamoto Kaichi and the climax scene during the Tarainoto Castle in *Okubo Hikozaemon*.”⁵⁸ These comments suggest that the spectators began to relate the music with their memories reminding them of the scene the tune accompanied. A contributor to the *Komparukan* wrote this explicitly, “Music brings a past movie in front of me again. Hearing Drigo’s *Serenade*, the first scene of the beautiful movie *Broken Blossoms* began to be quietly projected in my mind.”⁵⁹ The medley music that prevailed around 1927 could be heard by

⁵² *Kanda Shuho*. September 1, 1927.

⁵³ *Kanda Shuho*. September 15, 1927.

⁵⁴ *Kanda Shuho*, October 7, 1927.

⁵⁵ Some of the recordings are now digitized and accessible on the database *Rekion*, the Historical Recordings Collection in the partner libraries of the National Diet Library, Japan.

⁵⁶ *Shochiku News*, July 15, 1927.

⁵⁷ *Daiichi Shinbun*, July 10, 1920.

⁵⁸ Yamane Kenichi “Banso yawa,” *Nikkatsu*, December 1927, 72-73.

⁵⁹ *Komparu Shuho*, November 10, 1922.

spectators as if they were seeing a movie in their minds. Thus, film spectators in the 1920s had sometimes listened to accompaniment music very carefully as if it were accompanied by motion pictures. However, in the latter half of the 1920s, intermission music became more familiar due to its association with cinematic memory, playing in the minds of people like a movie without visuals. The music culture of silent movie theaters had developed with the interaction between music and image and between theaters and spectators.

Conclusion

This study considers how Western music was played and heard in silent movie theaters in Tokyo from the late 1910s to the 1920s. Though the examination of the audiences' comments contributed to movie theater programs, we demonstrated the changing relationship between intermission and accompaniment music during the modernization movement. In the early twentieth century, Western music was foreign to the Japanese people; however, in the late 1910s, with the popularization of films with Western music in movie theaters, Japanese audiences became accustomed to Western music and developed a "film-musical memory," which enabled them to enjoy intermission music that stirred the memory of films watched before.

This study limited the scope of the investigation to the case in the silent film theaters, especially premiere ones, in Tokyo. This aided in a more specific examination; however, it is subject to further discussion. For example, the relationship between Asakusa and other districts in Tokyo or outside Tokyo ought to be more geopolitically examined. It must also be noted that the intermission program changed with the advent of sound films, from live musical performances to recorded music or live staging of a revue. Then, the investigation of how the relationship between the intermission program and movies changed accordingly would be required. Moreover, it is important to study how these instances differed among countries. Comparative studies would shed light on the variety and uniqueness of the music culture that developed in film theaters where various kinds of music including folk, popular, and art music, and foreign and indigenous music were played to accompany films in movie theaters across the world.