

25rd Annual (2013) Koizumi Fumio Prize
PRIZE LECTURE (English translation)
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Ethnomusicology in the Post-Industrial Age Robert Garfias

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Good evening. After that magnificent introduction by professor TSUGE Gen'ichi it might be best not to say anything further at all. I fear the good first impression made by his introduction may disappear. Truthfully, today being here to receive this prize is indeed a very profound honor. In my long life of many happy moments, this Koizumi Prize is an honor without comparison. I could not even imagine it.

I must beg your forgiveness for my very bad Japanese. Although I try my best to express beautiful thoughts, none the less, my Japanese is very poor. I speak nine languages but I am very bad in all of them. I can imagine my ideas in good Japanese but I fear it does not come out so. But in any case I shall do my best.



I have a connection with Koizumi Fumio. Tsuge san, myself and Koizumi were all of the same generation of scholars. In this photograph with Koizumi, I was so very young, I find it hard to believe, although in my mind I think of myself as that same person. But I do really believe that Koizumi and I were of the same generation of scholars.

Ethnomusicology is a relatively new discipline. It has its origins in Europe just before World War II. The first generation of ethnomusicologists depended much on reading and on secondary sources. In those days recordings were very scarce. They listened to those recordings and wrote articles based on their understanding of them. The second

generation of ethnomusicologists began by actually sitting down and learning to play the musics they were studying. Most of them began as composers or as performing musicians. Therefore their primary goal was to understand the performance and structure of the music they were studying and therefore carried out first hand research.

Precisely at the time I went to Japan to study *Gagaku* in 1958, Koizumi was in India studying himself. We were each engaged in similar studies at the same time. Thus, when he returned to Japan, we quickly connected. Our thinking was the same and our goals were the same.

There are so many things I would like to talk about. Thus far, I have studied in many countries and studied many cultures. Although I have studied in many places, I find that my understanding is still shallow, but I cannot do any more about this displeasure.

I wondered what I might talk about with all of you today. I decided to take a broad view of the condition of ethnomusicology today. For one, most people in the US and in Europe, I do not know how it is in Japan, believe that ethnomusicologists hate Western Classical music. This is not true at all. Ethnomusicologists do not dislike Western music. In fact, I personally decry the fact that in our American university education system most students are not given adequate opportunity to become familiar with the tradition of Western music. They may be learning about literature and history but they are missing exposure to the Mozart and Beethoven quartets, for example, as well as other important composers of Western music. They have not heard this music and that is regrettable. I think it is much better in Japan, but in American and Europe the level of general music education is quite low and that is a pity. As a scholar looking at the issue broadly, studying either ethnomusicology or Western music is fine.

As scholars studying music, we approach the subject from the global perspective.

Another point, Popular music in America and Europe are virtually the same, but now popular music in Japan and Korea, J-Pop and K-pop, as well as new Chinese popular music have also become the same. With no particular distinguishing value. They are musically all the same and only the song text are different. I am not saying that this is good or bad.

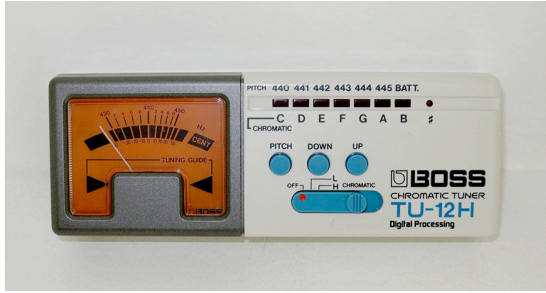
I think that if gradually, roses were to decline in numbers, if at last there were only one rose left, there would soon be none. The lack of diversity in music as in biology is a great danger to be avoided.

For example, the second generation of ethnomusicologists attempted to study music at first hand. For example consider this example of Kulintang music from the Philippines, which I recorded long ago in Mindanao. If you listen carefully and your ear is good, you can write the performance down in Western notation. What you will have then is a description of one single performance, however without any understanding of the structure of the music. Unless one actually learns to play this music one could not know that the music is made up of short melodic phrases that are strung together into groups and can be connected into longer segments by the play at the time of the performances. Thus they might begin with phrase A and then go to B and then either to C or to repeat A and B and eventually move through a number of sets of connected short phrases, repeating or shortening at will until reaching the final closing phrase for the piece. It is impossible to understand this structure only by listening. One must play the music and thereby learn the rules of structure. The structure then appears almost like a map of directions with which the player can move in various directions. By transcribing into notation only one performance you can have no idea of the real structure of the music nor of what the player is thinking and this can only be gained by learning to play the music.



Technology has had an effect on the discipline. Early studies in ethnomusicology concentrated on measuring of music scales, carefully and scientifically. Since tuning systems are arbitrary and exist in great variety and number throughout the world, ethnomusicologists in the early years began noting different tuning systems. This required, first some way of measuring the pitches and then calculating the interval size between them. At first a monochord was used, a single string first tuned with the

tuning fork, and then with numbers along its side indicating various pitch frequencies. Today however, we can



make use of a small apparatus the beginners use to tune their guitars, or violins This runs on a battery and can easily be carried into the field. This is a great aid to the study of musical scales even though this was not the original purpose of the gadget, it made doing this work in the field much easier.

Likewise, recordings have from the beginning been very important to the study of ethnomusicology. The world has changed and technology has changed and improved the way we

live. Developments in technology and media dissemination have helped the dissemination of popular music while traditional musics are left to survive as best they can. But highly technological means of distribution encourages less variety and while we cannot imagine that we will come to have only one newspaper in the world and for all of us sing only one popular song, nevertheless, efficient technologies tend to reduce the number of options.

Another important issue is the changing system of teaching and transmitting music. Most places in the world generally transmitted the performance method of music by the system known in India as the *Gurukula* method. In Japan, the *Shisho-deshi* teaching method. One teacher and one student taught slowly over a long period of time, an ideal way of transmitting a large body of traditional knowledge. Although this method was not used absolutely everywhere, it was very generally the music was taught in most traditional cultures of the world. This old method is everywhere in the world quickly disappearing. Japan is rather an exception in that it does continue in the teach of the *koto* and *shamisen* traditions. This is good in that the teacher concentrates on teaching only one or a few students at once. But recently almost everywhere this has changed and now many traditional musics are taught in large groups and in universities and conservatories. No longer one to one, but in larger groups. This is true in today in Burma, in Korea, even on the island of Bali, music is being taught in large groups and in schools. Of course



having many people learn the music is a good thing.

Even in the United States today, Jazz is being taught in universities. I began music as a Jazz musician and therefore find this very strange. Jazz was always learned by ear and by playing with other musicians and thus learning to improvise. Now the students play very well, but only read the improvisations

of other and do little improvising themselves. So many people may be able to hear the music, but the old method of performance is lost. Last month in Mexico they have begun a conservatory of Mariachi music, even though this music was always learned in context until now. So what had always been learned one teacher one pupil has now been systematized and learned from reading and method rather than by ones ears. Theory and notation do not make music improved. The music is heard and appreciated through hearing rather than reading. Many subtleties and

secrets of music are lost by the new teaching method.

To take another example, these days we have magnificent recording equipment available to us. But in the early days of ethnomusicology when so much wonderful music was still being played everywhere, one had carry large and cumbersome recording equipment to the field and then also brought large heavy generators to provide electricity. Wonderful clear recordings can be easily made now even with small recorders that fit in the palm of your hand. Even so before World War II some wonderful recordings were made with the old equipment, performances that today can no longer be replicated because of the impact of technology on traditional performance. Here is an old recording of a North Indian *Thumri* song by Abdul Karim Khan. Although there are newer recordings of *thumri*, few can compare with the grace and elegance of these older performance.



In Korea today no one can improvise *Kayagum Sanjo* any longer and everyone plays one of two or three now notated and memorized versions but as recently as 1966 when I was in Korea there were still several people who still improvised *Sanjo*. I do find this regrettable. (ex-photo-won-ok-hwa)

Today in the United States and in Europe the condition of ethnomusicology is rather difficult. Ethnomusicology is primarily found begin taught in schools of music. This means that ethnomusicology is being taught in schools that define music as Western Classical music. But Western music is only one among many. It is as though, geologists decided that Mt Fuji is the most perfect mountain/volcano and that there fore there was no need to look anywhere else for the study of the earth. Geology could be defined just by studying Japan. No need to study anything else. If we are to approach the study of music objectively and scientifically it must be done from a global perspective and we must do it quickly because so many of the world's traditions are disappearing even though we are not made aware of it.

Many years ago in 1966, I visited the Irish Folklore Commission in Dublin, Ireland and spoke with the then director, Seamus Delargy. Delargy said to me, "The house of Ireland is on fire,... and I am just trying to save some of the furniture." Disappearing music traditions are somewhat like tropical fish. We enjoy the colors and their movement. We like having them near us, but if we should forget to feed them, they do not cry out or make any sound. They simply die and lost to the surface. Once they die they can never be brought back to life. Some people may find that it is convenient and much less trouble to make use of computer generated tropical fish.. But can the electronic fish really compare with living fish? As with the traditions of music, we may find that mass media distributed music satisfies our immediate needs, however we must treasure, support and preserve all those older living music traditions that today are in danger of fading away.



Each generation before us, carefully preserved the best of what it had in order to pass it on to the next generation. This is culture. In our time we had changed and added much to our culture, but it is our responsibility to those who came before us to value and care for what has been passed down to us.