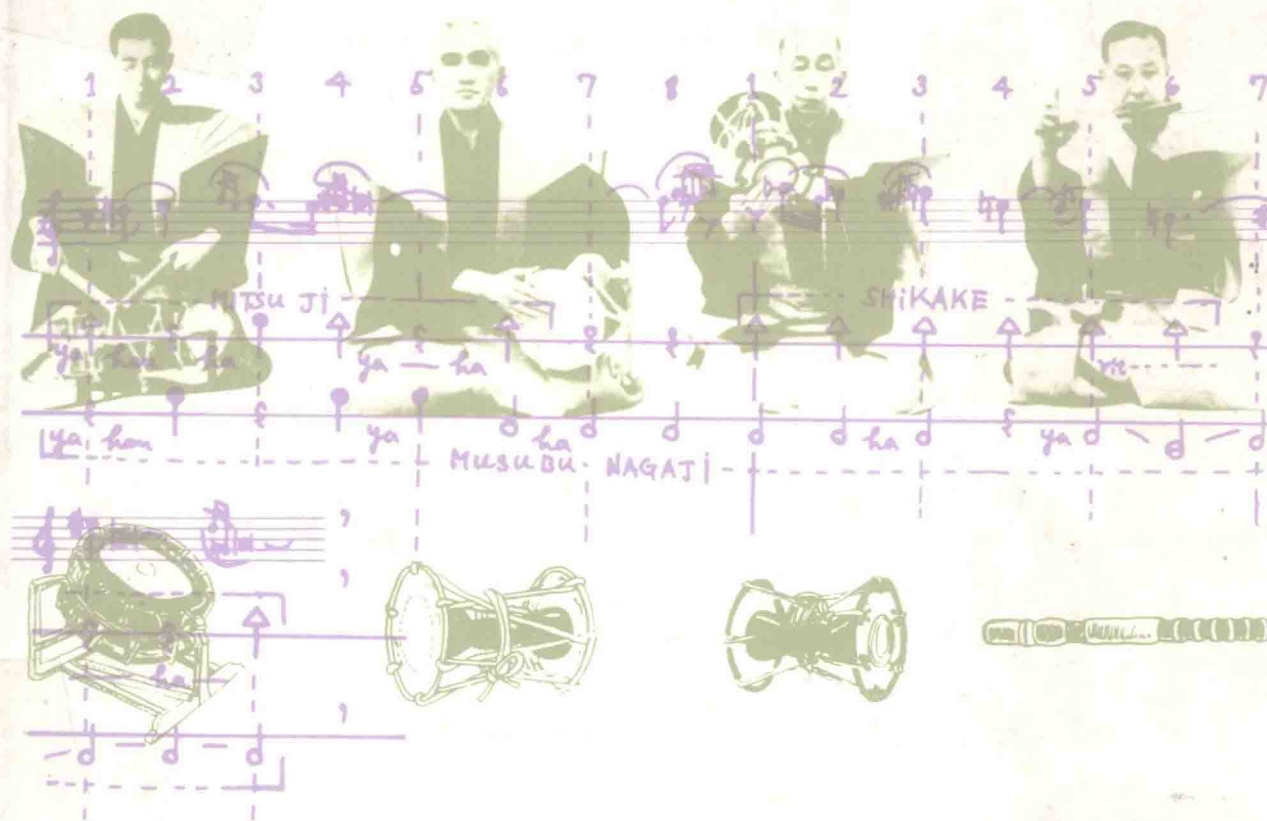


THE MUSICAL STRUCTURE OF NÔ

Akira TAMBA



Tokai University Press

THE MUSICAL STRUCTURE OF NÔ

Akira TAMBA

Translated from the French by Patricia Matoré

TOKAI UNIVERSITY PRESS, TOKYO

Akira Tamba was awarded the 12th annual Japan Translation Culture Prize for the year 1975. Tokyo, Japan.

Akira Tamba
LA STRUCTURE MUSICALE DU NÔ
©Editions KLINCKSIECK Paris, 1974

Copyright ©1981 for the English edition by
TOKAI UNIVERSITY PRESS, by arrangement
through ORION PRESS, Tokyo.
Printed in Japan
JBC: (3073-0608)-5110

Book binding design by G. Michiyoshi

*Tokai University Press
Shinjuku Tokai Building
3-27-4 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo, 160 Japan*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	5
Introduction	9
 I. General problems	
I. 1. Definition of Nô.....	15
I. 2. Historical aspect.....	16
I. 3. Staging of Nô	18
I. 4. Categories of Nô	20
I. 5. Structure of a Nô play	21
I. 6. Nô performers	27
 II. Vocal part	
II. 1. Vocal emission in Nô.....	33
II. 1. a. <i>Diapason of the Nô song</i>	34
II. 1. b. <i>Comparison of the vocal emission in Nô with that of the Occident</i>	36
II. 1. c. <i>Comparison of the vocal technique in Nô with that in Occidental song technique</i>	37
II. 1. d. <i>Origin of the particularity of Nô vocal technique</i>	39
II. 1. e. <i>Differences in the strong voice and the soft voice</i>	42
II. 2. Pronunciation in Nô.....	44
II. 3. Tonal system in the song and the process of its evolution....	49
II. 3. a. <i>Soft voice</i>	49
II. 3. b. <i>Strong voice</i>	57
II. 4. Melody cells in the Nô song	63
II. 4. a. <i>Soft voice</i>	63
II. 4. b. <i>Strong voice</i>	73
II. 5. Rhythm in the Nô song.....	77
II. 6. Signs in the Nô score.....	105
II. 7. Classification of the Nô songs	134
 III. Instrumental organology	
III. 1. Range of the instruments	146
III. 2. Nô-kan (Nô flute)	147
III. 2. a. <i>Fabrication of the Nô flute</i>	148
III. 2. b. <i>Importance of the small sleeve inserted in the flute</i>	148
III. 2. c. <i>Timbre of the Nô-kan</i>	151
III. 2. d. <i>The field of liberty of pitch</i>	152

TABLE OF CONTENTS

III. 2. e. Sonographic analysis of the melody cell of the Nô flute. . .	153
III. 2. f. Playing the instrument	154
III. 2. g. Traditional notation for the flute.	154
III. 2. h. Indication of rhythm	157
III. 3. Ko-tsuzumi (Shoulder drum)	160
III. 3. a. Manufacture.	160
III. 3. b. Playing the instrument.	160
III. 4. O-tsuzumi (Side drum)	162
III. 4. a. Manufacture.	162
III. 4. b. Playing the instrument.	162
III. 5. Taiko (Drum played with sticks).	163
III. 5. a. Manufacture.	163
III. 5. b. Playing the instrument.	164
III. 6. Vocal interjections (Kakegoe).	165
 IV. Instrumental part	
IV. 1. Melody cell of the flute.	171
IV. 2. Rhythm cell of the drum.	172
IV. 2. a. Rhythm cell of the shoulder drum (Ko-tsuzumi).	172
IV. 2. b. Rhythm cell of the side drum (O-tsuzumi).	173
IV. 2. c. Rhythm cell of the drum played with sticks (Taiko)	175
IV. 3. Juxtaposition of the cells.	175
IV. 3. a. Juxtaposition of melody cells of the flute	175
IV. 3. b. Juxtaposition of the rhythm cells of the drums	180
IV. 4. Superimposition of rhythm cells of the drums.	183
IV. 4. a. Superimposition of rhythm cells of the Ko-tsuzumi and the O-tsuzumi.	185
IV. 4. b. Superimposition of rhythm cells of the three drums.	186
IV. 4. c. Superimposition of rhythm cells of the drums, the flute and the voice	188
IV. 5. Classification of instrumental pieces	196
 V. Rhythm and tempo in the music of Nô	
V. 1. Rhythm in Nô.	207
V. 2. Musical tempo in Nô.	215
 VI. Supplementary chapters	
VI. 1. The influence of Zen in the music of Nô	225
VI. 2. Musical structure in Nô and the Gestalt theory.	230
Conclusion	232
Bibliography and discography for the Nô.	233
Alphabetical index	239

Table of corresponding terms: French, English and Japanese

French	English	Japanese
Grave	Grave	Ge
Médium	Medium	Chû
Aigu	Acute	Jô
Kuri-aigu	Kuri-acute	Kan-guri
médium-flotté	medium-rising	chû-uki
aigu-floté	acute-rising	jô-uki
aigu-appuyé	acute-falling	jô-no-osae
médium-appuyé	medium-falling	chû-no-osae
médium-petit-flotté	medium-slightly-rising	chû no shô uki
secouement-flottant	shaking-rising	furi-uki
véritable descente	veritable descent	hon-otoshi
descente-intermédiaire	intermediary-descent	chû-otoshi
retenu	retention	fukumi
mawashi au Médium	mawashi on Medium	chû-mawashi
pénétration ou entrée	penetration or Entry	iri
heurtement	collision	atari
bondissement	bound	hane
flottement-bondissant	rising with a bound	uki-hane
balancement	balancing	yuri
distribution ordinaire	ordinary distribution	hira-nori
distribution moyenne	medium distribution	chû-nori
distribution large	wide distribution	ô-nori
chant fort	strong voice	tsuyo-gin
chant doux	soft voice	yowa-gin
tambour à battes	drum played with sticks	taiko
tambour de hanche	side drum	ô-tsuzumi
tambour d'épaule	shoulder drum	ko-tsuzumi
superposition contrôlée	controlled superposition	hyôshi-ai
superposition- non-contrôlée	uncontrolled- superposition	hyôshi-fuai
rythmique	rhythmic	nori-byôshi
non-rythmique	non-rhythmic	sashi-byôshi

Preface to the English edition

For technical reasons it has not been possible to recompose all the illustrative figures in this work. But we have added a table of corresponding terms (French, English, Japanese) which will aid the reader in understanding those French terms not translated.

We wish to express our appreciation here to Patricia Matoré who accepted the delicate task of translating this text, as well as to Georges Matoré who helped us with his suggestions.

We also thank Mr. W. Yamada and Mr. C. Kato of Tokai University Press and particularly Professor Norio Matsumae, who has solved all the difficulties raised by the publication of this English edition. Finally we wish to thank also the Musiphone Company which supported this publication.

FOREWORD

Among the numerous studies already published on the subject of Nô, in Japan as well as in several Occidental countries, most have dealt with the historic, literary, or theatrical aspect of this traditional Japanese dramatic art and have neglected an important element of Nô: the musical composition. Certain Japanese specialists have been interested in the various problems posed by the music of Nô; but their research has been limited for the most part to several specific points; and to our knowledge no scientific study has been undertaken on the subject as a whole. It was to satisfy this lack that we set ourselves to the research whose result is this present work.

After an examination of all the documents that we were able to assemble, that we have read or listened to, we are convinced that the music of Nô complies with rigidly fixed rules that remain for us to determine, to formulate. But how? The work of our predecessors has alerted us to the insufficiencies of traditional analytic methods and has demonstrated the necessity for perfecting a precise terminology. We have tried to alleviate these difficulties by taking advantage of all the new means and apparatus that the science of acoustics has put at our disposition: the sonograph and the logarithmic recorder have enabled us to identify several consistent esthetic principles—if not laws—of musical structure. Why have these musical phenomena eluded all analysis for so long? For two major reasons it seems to us. The first is a result of the oral and secret nature of the transmission of this dramatic art form. The second stems from the fluctuating characteristic of the elements that make up the music of Nô. To overcome these difficulties, we made recordings of various actors passing through Paris; then we asked musicians who were Nô specialists to verify the results obtained in our analyses. There remained yet a final obstacle: adopting a system of transcription which would allow the Western access to a musical concept entirely unknown to him. In the end, if we have chosen the Western classical notation, it is because it seemed to best meet this objective, despite its inability to transcribe fluctuating pitches, rhythms and *tempi*. Contrary to what a Western musician might imagine, the absence of fixed musical elements in Nô does not indicate an archaic stage. The music of *Gagaku* (1), which preceded Nô, presents pitches determined by their rapport with the diapason, a measured rhythm and a fixed system of harmonics (2), justifying a comparison with traditional Occidental music which is based on these three

1. *Gagaku* is an instrumental group composed of about ten musicians which dates from the 7th century.

2. The harmony of *Gagaku* is based on superimposed fifths placed in octaves and modified by the fingering of the instruments.

main precepts.

The evolution from the musical system of *Gagaku* to that of *Nô* represents a curious analogy with what is developing today in the West where contemporary composers are seeking a new means of expression that no longer rests on these three principles of traditional Occidental music; it is thus, for example, that in electro-acoustical music the pitch is not necessarily fixed nor are the notes making up the scale. Also the rhythm is not perforce measured as it is in classical Western music or in *Gagaku*.

But if contemporary musicians have renounced the rules of classic composition, they have not yet found a satisfactory system replacing it to structure their works. The Musicians of *Nô*, on the other hand, having renounced the three basic precepts of *Gagaku*, succeeded in developing a complex musical system calling upon new principles of rhythm, tempo and structure. Hence one understands the interest aroused by the study of this music today; in furnishing an example of a coherent musical system that does not rely on the three imposed principles of traditional music, still considered today by many as maxims of musical expression, *Nô* proposes an alternative to contemporary composers and encourages them in their research by offering proof that the traditional, fixed system is not the only one possible.

The objective of this present study being to extract the essential principles of the music of *Nô*, we have not taken into consideration those problems arising from the divergent traditions existing from one school to another: for example, the vocal melody cells of the five schools of voice or the rhythm cells of the four schools of *Kotsuzumi* (shoulder drum), and certain other problems. It is to be hoped that subsequent studies will be undertaken to fill in these gaps.

I wish here to thank those who have helped me bring this work to fruition. My gratitude goes first of all to my Thesis Director, M. Jacques Chailley, without whose benevolence and valuable counsel this study could not have been achieved; to M. Etienne Souriau, Director of Research at the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, who generously allowed me to profit from his vast knowledge in finding answers to several problems arising in the esthetic domain of *Nô* and to my *Maitre*, Olivier Messiaen who guided and encouraged my research. I owe a special debt of gratitude to the *Groupe d'Acoustique Musicale* of the *Faculté des Sciences* and particularly to E. Leipp who put at my disposal his knowledge as well as apparatus to study the acoustical problems posed by the instruments of *Nô*; and to his assistant Michèle Castellengo who accorded me without limitation her talent and her time in the publication of a G. A. M. bulletin consecrated to the music of the *Nô*. I also thank Pierre Schaeffer, Director of the Research Service of the *Office de la Radio-Télévision Française* who aided my work considerably in furnishing the possibility and the means for recording numerous audio materials. M. Kanze, H. Kanze and especially C. Hashioka and many other *Nô* musi-

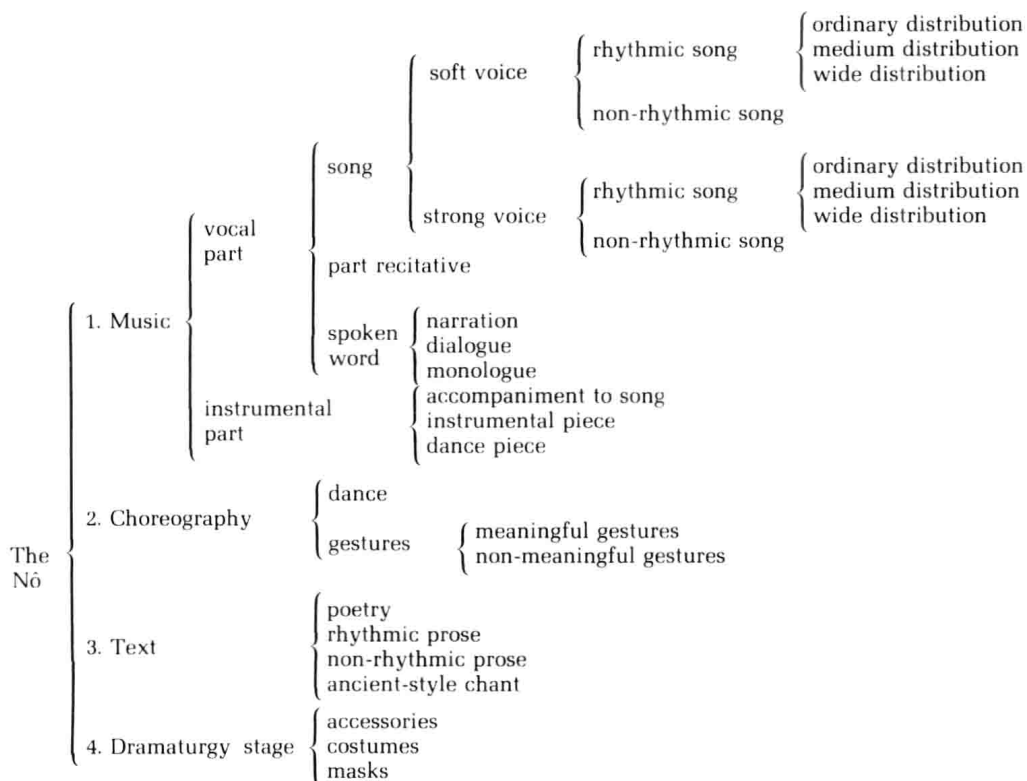
Foreword

cians, whose science and experience have contributed to this work, find here my very warm thanks, as well as Paul Demiéville and Bernard Frank whose extensive knowledge and kindness have always supported my efforts. To Arimasa Mori and Irène Tamba-Mecz who accepted the thankless task of reading and correcting the text, goes my profound gratitude, as well as to my friend Kazuhiko Sano who procured all the necessary documents for this work, which could not have been possible without the generous aid of my father, to whom goes my most affectionate appreciation.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional Japanese dramatic art of the Nô is composed of four principal elements: music, choreography, text and dramaturgy. These elements can be diagrammed in the following manner:

The Nô Diagrammed



In order to understand the originality of the music of Nô, it is necessary to examine the differences existing between the musical system of this art and that of Occidental music. These two musical conceptions diverge at six principal points:

1) *Absence of the idea of a fixed note*

In the music of Nô, the sounds in the high range are constantly fluctuating and this fluctuation is considered as a musical technique. On

the contrary, in the West such fluctuation is considered as a grave error in technique.

2) *Absence of harmony*

The music of Nô ignores the idea of reposing harmony such as the superimposed thirds and fifths in classic Occidental music. Rather it is the arbitrary superimposition of melody cells of the flute and the voice which determines the structure of a piece.

3) *Absence of measured rhythm*

The musical rhythm of Nô is not based on an arithmetical pattern as in traditional Occidental music. Rather it varies according to the emotional importance or according to the intensity of the emission, thus manifesting a much greater flexibility and spontaneity without being subject to the regular beat of Occidental musical composition.

4) *Characteristic of the vocal technique*

As a result of conditions and multiple factors esthetic, social, linguistic, musical, physiological or metaphysical, the vocal technique of Nô is characterized by the pharyngeal voice (voice produced by the pharynx). This vocal emission, obtained at the price of long research, aims at giving an impression of profound and somber calm. The Occidental technique utilizes the resonance of the sinuses to reinforce the power and clarity of the voice. In Nô, the high *vibrato* is more or less wide and irregular, whereas in the Occidental technique it remains almost constant varying no more than a half-tone.

5) *System of composition*

The structure of Nô results from a system of composition by cells. The juxtaposition and superimposition of these segments, or cells, assure the structure of each piece, all the sounds being inscribed in a cell rigidly defined. Whereas in Occidental music, with the exception of contemporary, experimental music, all sounds and rhythms are determined by the composer in an analytical fashion, the structure of Nô reposes on a musical concept which is synthetic.

6) *Transcription and adaptation*

In order to transcribe the notation of a melody, we have wherever possible retained the traditional notation of the vocal score of Nô. Where a translation was necessary, we have tried to be as faithful as possible to the Japanese appellation. We have simplified the explanatory notation by using either the capital letter of the translated term or the initial followed by a specific sign as abbreviations. For example, (G) for *Grave*; (a.r.) for *acute-rising*; (k.a.) for *Kuri-acute*.

In addition, in order to read Japanese characters, we have adopted Hepburn's system of alphabetic transcription.

Introduction

Following is a list of Japanese phonemes transcribed according to this system.

a	i	u	e	o					
ka	ki	ku	ke	ko	ga	gi	gu	ge	go
sa	shi	su	se	so	za	zi	zu	ze	zo
ta	chi	tsu	te	to	da	(ji)	(zu)	de	do
na	ni	nu	ne	no					
ha	hi	hu	he	ho					
(pa)	(pi)	(pu)	(pe)	(po)	ba	bi	bu	be	bo
ma	mi	mu	me	mo					
ya	(i)	yu	(e)	yo					
ra	ri	ru	re	ro					
wa	(i)	(u)	(e)	wo					
n(m)									
kyā	/	kyū	/	kyō	gyā	/	gyū	/	gyō
shā	/	shū	/	shō	ja	/	ju	/	jo
chā	/	chū	/	chō	(ja)	/	(ju)	/	(jo)
nyā	/	nyū	/	nyō					
myā	/	myū	/	myō					
hyā	/	hyū	/	hyō					
/	/	(pyū)	/	(pyō)	byā	/	byū	/	byō

The sound (u) is pronounced like the English (oo), and the sound (e) like the English (ā). (H) is always aspirate.

I. GENERAL PROBLEMS

