

The Composition Program at Tokyo Academy of Music in the Early 1930s:

A Survey of Primary Sources

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The composition program at Tokyo Academy of Music was established by the Ordinance of the Ministry of Education (No. 13, 1931), and was timely when one considers the increasing demand of official, nationalized programs as such at the time. Since then, the department of composition has been playing a significant role in the Japanese music scenes, but its curriculum has thus far not been sufficiently scrutinized. This study takes a closer look at the opening era of the composition program by examining primary sources that would reveal the aims and scope of the program.

In 1932, students to major in composition were accepted to the academy for the first time. In its early years, two or three students entered each year. Professors of the course were Nobutoki Kiyoshi, Katayama Eitarō, Shimofusa Kan'ichi, and Gō Taijirō. Two other, Hosokawa Midori and Hashimoto Qunihiko, had just returned to Japan from studying abroad. The German composer Klaus Pringsheim also taught in the academy. Students often wrote music for Japanese poems and used the Japanese traditional scales, but the program was fundamentally based on music theories that the professors studied in their student years in Vienna or Germany. Some used foreign textbooks in composition translated by themselves, while the rest gave lectures based on their original theories.

This study investigates the program's curriculum, as well as the nature of course examinations. The author examined very closely historical documents (notes, reports, etc.) pertaining to the program, which are housed at the University Archive Center of Tokyo University of the Arts. This research sheds light on the contents of the lessons carried out in the department, one of the books used by the students preparing for the entrance exam for the composition department, and the theory of harmony that the students followed to learn the composition.