

Cosmopolitan Elite or Precariat? Network-based Making of Professional Careers of Japanese Musicians in the European World of Classical Music

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Introduction

We all realize that talent, as essentialists would argue, is not the only factor that matters in the careers of artists (or, more specifically, musicians). Musicians with a background in classical musical education fall into a category that combines technique, skills, competences, discipline and equally art, free spirit, artistic intuition, and more (Heinich 2000). The profession is egoistic and narcissistic. We may further complement this image with the Talcott Parsons' statement on the musical milieu, which the sociologist depicts as conservative, hermetic, exclusive and hierarchized. We nonetheless would like to imagine that any barriers that would hinder one's career as a musician can be overcome with an adequate command of musical language and technique. By virtue of music being a universal language, a status owed to musical notation as well as largely French and Italian terminology, we tend to believe that this environment encourages cultural exchanges and that it is open to all musicians, regardless of social, cultural or personal characteristics, whether it be language, education, nationality, race, religion or value system, etc., provided that s/he has an excellent command of the musical instrument (technique, expression, interpretation, aesthetical taste or sense of music, etc.). This representation is often accompanied by the myth of the cosmopolitan artist, a figure who constantly crosses national boundaries, arts, regulations, etc., whose talent and genius, an idea that has been discussed at length by Lehman and Elias among others (Elias 2006, Lehman 2002), are universal rather than particular, and as such strongly linked to the local cultural environment in which the artist originates.

That being the case, it is not surprising that the number of classical musicians with East Asian origins, who arrive in Europe to continue their artistic careers as soloists or orchestra members in the birthplace of the classical music tradition has been steadily increasing. This fact is reflected even in the statistics of participants in the International Chopin Piano Competition.

Preliminaries for its 17th edition were outnumbered by representatives from the aforementioned countries: 15 participants from China and 12 from Japan. On the one hand, transnational labor mobility, especially among artists seems to be an obvious factor (Lehman 2002, Wagner 2011a, 2011b), inscribed in the specificity of the profession especially in the era of globalization, often characterized by various structural or institutional arrangements, economic as well as demographic conditions, which invite and/or hinder free “pilgrimages” across continents and exchanges of knowledge, information through advanced platforms of communication. On the other hand, we know that the international environment and the influx of an immigrant labor force often generate socio-cultural conflicts.

The situation of multinational professional groups on the international labor market, such as managerial staff, researchers and so-called blue collar workers, has been scientifically examined and described (Hofstede 2000, Piekut 2010). Nonetheless, the number of works tackling the problem of multi-nationality among artists in this “global village” seem notably scarce (Wagner 2011a). Likely for the aforementioned reason, namely a tacitly accepted assumption that talent and good command of the artistic language (i.e., musical notation) can erase or overcome all structural differences. Yet, Howard Becker argues that the world of art is very much inclusive, in a sense that it privileges only those who have already found their place within its structure and maintain good relations with a certain group of people. These groups are very often predicated upon a shared language, education, system of values, habits and other structures that shape social life in a given country. When a Japanese falls into such a group, they have to learn from scratch how to be a French or Polish musician. In other words, they must undergo a secondary socialization.

The main objective of this paper is to examine the professional trajectories of Japanese musicians in the European market of classical music, particularly in France and Poland, to see whether the classical musician’s profession can be regarded as transnational, to reconstruct the process of becoming a “transnational” musician or a “transnational professional” (Wagner 2011a). I will analyze the dynamics of the process of adapting oneself as a professional trained and socialized in one cultural environment, here represented by Japanese culture, to the conditions, expectations and requirements associated with this profession in a different milieu of classical music, which in my paper refers to the French and Polish social worlds of classical music. This problem can be approached from various analytical angles. However, for the purpose of this article, I will focus on the concept of the *Art World*, as coined by Howard Becker, which will be explained further in the text. In particular, the following analysis will take a closer look at the role played by active networking as well as the quality of its “synapses,” or interpersonal relations, and the part they play in the career-making process in the milieu of classical musicians.

The reason I focus particularly on Japanese musicians is that, on account of their origins, they might be perceived as an extreme case, to borrow a term from Everett Hughes (Hughes 1971) on the European market of classical music. It is because of their cultural and educational background (different musical and aesthetic tradition), their almost homogenous physical appearance and names (from the Western point of view) that are even hard to spell out or memorize, and a haunting reputation for being technically excellent performers who nonetheless lack an elaborate sense of interpretation, that they clearly stand out from their colleagues. Moreover, Japanese people come from a country where no tradition of classical music in the Western sense has been developed.

Japanese classical musicians and the sociology of creative professions

The sociology of artistic/creative professions is a rapidly growing area of sociological studies, particularly in Western Europe and the United States. Researchers often examine various professional groups from a variety of theoretical angles. For example, French and American sociologists often focus on the characteristics of individual careers of musicians representing different specialties: orchestra musicians (Faulkner 1983, Gilmore 1987, Lehmann 2002), jazz musicians (Becker 1964). Other works depict larger groups of artists seeking for common patterns in artistic careers (Abbott, Hrycak 1990). Sociologists ask questions about to what extent a position of classical musician on the labor market place them among contemporary precariat (Coulangeon 1999) or how gender structures or determines the professional trajectory of men and women in the world of jazz music (Buscatto 2003).

The subject of the artistic world has also been tackled in the humanities in Poland. These works take various forms, ranging from general accounts of artist communities (Golka 1995) to the analysis of specific issues such as the study of ethos among actors (Kozek, Kubisa 2011), career-coupling or the master-student relationship in the world of solo violinists (Wagner 2006, 2011a), the social construction of the ‘profession’ among poets (Ślęzak 2009), or the conversion of identity among students of the art of acting (Hernik 2007). To my knowledge, no scientific works have been devoted to the analysis of migrant artists in Poland, even though cultural aspects of cooperation in a certain multicultural professional environments such as, for example among managerial staff or the so-called blue collar workers, have been scientifically explored and described (Piekut 2010). Apart from extensive studies conducted in the artistic field (especially classical musicians) by Izabela Wagner, researchers in this domain rarely tackle the issue of multiple environments of socialization, or distinct ethos of the musical profession and the positive and negative effects this presence may have: “positive” for creating possibilities, or “negative” by

generating persistent obstacles in the career-making process.

As I have already mentioned, the main objective motivating the research that gave rise to this article was to examine professional trajectories and structural/institutional determinants/conditions, which underlie the professional careers of Europe-based classical musicians of Japanese origins. It was based on explorations carried out in the milieu of classical music in Poland and France. These two countries differ in terms of the number of migrants and political attitude towards minorities, which is intrinsic to the scale of the migration and is expressed through institutional regulations, such as various types of legal acts that define the status of migrants in each country. I shall argue that, unlike France, Poland is still rather exclusionist insofar as migrants are concerned, and thus quite difficult on non-Poles who seek to live, work and integrate there. A comparative analysis aimed at enhancement of the accuracy of conclusions by rendering the specifics of certain target environment discernable. As Howard Becker claims, “Placing two or more such cases side by side lets you see how the same phenomena – same forms of collective activity, the same processes – take different forms in different places, what those depend on, and how their results differ.” (Becker 2008, xii). Thus, juxtaposing two different artistic milieus allows me to grasp their particular characteristics as well as common hindrances/opportunities each milieu offers, to identify their impact on the career-making process and, based on that, draw more general conclusions on the situation of Japanese classical musicians in the European labor market. “General” in the sense that the existence and actual influence of these points of intersection will be verifiable for all artists, regardless of the country of migration. But, in this essay, I will not place emphasis on these international discrepancies unless necessary, since it requires elaborate explanations that will be presented in my doctoral thesis, and does not affect the main argument, which is focused on the role of various types of interpersonal relations in the career-making process.

Methodology

Given the premise that one’s professional trajectory is made up of a set of indiscernible details, acquaintances or events, and that unveiling them through analysis enables the researcher to reconstruct and better understand the situation of the artist in an artistic environment, interviews and observation are the most appropriate methods to gain access to such information. With this in mind, this essay is based on the outcome of approximately 30 semi-structured interviews with Japanese classical musicians based in Poland and France, whom I call PROPER RESPONDENTS: Japanese classical musicians born and educated in Japan. Over 10 semi-structured interviews and conversations were carried out with INFORMERS, “experts” or “independent experts” (Rosenblum 1987). The latter group of respondents is composed of people closely related to the fieldwork

through their profession, who have expertise in the field of classical music and the so-called market of classical music: conductors, sound engineers, composers, managers in the classical music industry, professors, as well as Polish orchestra members, etc. Respondents were selected purposely rather than randomly and selection criteria included characteristics such as nationality, origins, profession, professional experience in Europe and/or professional linkages with the fieldwork (classical music milieu) using the snowball method (meeting potential respondents through other respondents).

Interviews were conducted either in the respondents' mother tongue, being Japanese (in the case of the musicians), or Polish/French (in the case of the experts). Since Japanese is not the researcher's mother tongue, when it came to the formulation of the hypotheses and results of the preliminary survey, there were several challenges stemming from linguistic issues, such as the adequacy of questions, in terms of proper interpretation and/or equal mutual understanding of the intentions behind the interviewing process; correct understanding of responses; and the relevance of the data acquired or the validity of future conclusions, etc. This problem can be partly resolved either through conversations with people from the artist's environment (experts) or people who originate from the same culture and whose professional activity is related to the world of the art of classical music or written materials (i.e., interviews with other artists or critics, as well as essays and books either written by them or about them, etc.).

Furthermore, the author has also conducted observations (some of them participant observations (while working as a Japanese-Polish interpreter) during rehearsals and international musical projects, concerts and other performances or piano lessons (summer master classes at the Chopin University of Music). Placing my interpreting work into this methodological context sheds light on matters of communication, which are crucial in the career-making process, especially if we define it through interpersonal relations in a sense that a given career depends largely on successful communication/relations with certain people at a specific moment in time (or moment in one's career) (Kowalczyk 2014).

Background

The main hypothesis verified in my doctoral research has been formulated after the preliminary insight into the fieldwork according to the recommendations of the grounded theory (Glaser, Strauss 1967), arguing that the environment of classical music, as proved in the case of Japanese artists, is not free of structurally or culturally determined discriminatory barriers (non-substantial), which may hinder or trigger the musicians' professional success in the artistic labor

market. The issue of the professional path of musicians active in the world of classical music can be problematized on three interrelated levels:

1. macro and/or transnational: circulation
2. mezzo and/or national/actual artistic milieu;
3. micro and/or individual.

Firstly, I shall briefly present each of them and then focus only on the second one, which concerns the role of networking in the career-making process.

The first level is related to the process of transnational circulation in quest of opportunities in foreign labor markets. The Japanese (most of them already artistically formed, mature performers) leave their country to settle down as musicians in a European country. The paradox has it that if the vector of this circulation leads from Japan to Poland, then through “world system” theory (Wallerstein 2004) we may observe the phenomenon of “migration” as leading from the core to the periphery. This paradox can be resolved by modifying the variable upon which the above mentioned classification is made and replacing the GDP and the level of technological advancement with national cultural capital. The latter indicates the tradition of classical music and the whole system/infrastructure (structures and institutions) of education, promotion, research or maintenance, created around a given national threshold, which in Poland means the music by Frederic Chopin. This context constitutes the first stage of analysis focused on the role of the so-called cultural structures¹(Giddens 1984) and the role they play in organizing the world order, where a career-making process takes place.

The second level—which is the most important for the purposes of this paper—concerns the national and/or artistic milieu, a given working environment for classical musicians, or an *Art World* of classical music, to use the term coined by Howard Becker (Becker 1982). Becker starts his deliberations by assuming that no artwork is produced individually, but it is rather an effect of collective group activity involving people of different specialties. This sphere of cooperating networks, which are formed for the purpose of artistic creation is called *Art World* – a basic unit of analysis in Becker’s theory. Every *Art World* is made up of network of interpersonal relationships, the quality of which has an almost deterministic impact upon the professional developments and careers of people such as artists, regardless of the particular artistic domain. In the same way, the production of music in the art world of classical music, “like all human activity, involves the

joint activity of a number, often a large number of people. Through their cooperation the art work we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be. The work always shows sign of that cooperation. The forms of cooperation may be ephemeral, but often become more or less routine, producing patterns of collective activity” (Becker 1982). My analysis of interpersonal relations, which I regard as a crucial factor in the career-making process, will focus especially on the structural/institutional aspect of these networks of cooperation in which Japanese musicians are involved. Other useful aspects of this theory will be evoked in the course of the core analysis.

Finally, the third level of analysis is still more minute, focusing on the individual aspects of the career-making process. These issues concern subjective facets of the problem (rather than objective ones, as distinguished by Hughes), such as individual decisions related to the identity of Japanese musician (the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept) and family matters, cultural distance, ability or inability to adapt oneself to a new environment, etc. On one hand, the core of such a relational professional self/identity work is constituted by a set of cultural determinants like behavioral patterns, beliefs, habits and the like (social determinism); yet these are subject to constant negotiation and change (social constructivism).

Career as a chain of interpersonal relations

One does not become a professional musician only by deepening or tightening their relation to a given instrument in the course of arduous practices. In the above mentioned paradigm of symbolic interaction in the sociology of work, which stresses the importance of human interaction/-relation in creation, modification and sustainment of social phenomena and their social meaning, the very notion of *career-ing* is intrinsic to *network-ing*. In other words, theorists of creative professions (Hughes 1958, Becker 1982, Strauss 1967) define *career* through a set of stages coming one after another, of which an artist’s professional trajectory is composed (Hughes 1958, Strauss 1967). These stages can be differentiated from one another in terms of the quality of interactions which a person gets into with so-called significant others, whose appearance at a certain time triggers or prompts turning points in their career.

This is true at the very beginning of a musician’s career, and first incentives to start music lessons are provided by relatives, most often a mother who either has a passion for classical music (sometimes an unfulfilled dream about her own career in music) or is a musician herself – most often a pianist, among the cases of my interlocutors. Thus all of my respondents started their journey with the instrument at the very early age of 3 or 4 years, and their mothers were their first

piano instructors.

How I started the piano? My mother is a pianist and I started when I was 3 or 2 and half years old. I did not start the piano because I particularly wanted to, but apparently I had perfect pitch. When I was 2 and half years old, my mother realized that I had perfect pitch and started to teach me piano. When I was 4, I went to teacher X to continue lessons.

After a year or two of instruction at home, a young musician starts the process of an actual formation in the musical field, which means private lessons or entering a music school. Whichever the case, this is the moment in which a young Japanese musician is socialized to the role of disciple in a master-disciple relations.

These musicians leave Japan as already mature, formed musicians. The above mentioned relation (socialization to master-disciple relation) determines the way in which Japanese built their interpersonal relations in their careers to follow, then pervading and significantly affecting the European part of this trajectory, in particular. This problem is too complex to be fully elaborated within this paper, but I shall briefly outline key aspects of this relation and its particularity, which is constituted mainly by a highly hierarchical formula that traces back to a form of education unique to Japan's traditional arts and crafts.

The professional trajectory of artists pursuing their artistic careers in the field of traditional Japanese arts and crafts such as *nô*, *kabuki* or *bunraku* theater, *ikebana*, *sadô* (tea ceremony), martial arts or *kaiga* (Japanese paintings) is institutionalized partly on the basis of various religious, ethical-philosophical ideas and practices enrooted in Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism as well as Zen (Buddhism). The master-disciple relation is defined within the system of five bonds, according to which an individual is assigned to a particular place on the ladder of social order. Knowing one's place and role means being aware of one's duties in relation to others as they arise from it, and is important in a sense that it guarantees social harmony – a central concept in Confucianism. The top position in the echelon of social relations belongs to the ruler and the ruled, and the second to the father and son. These two categories in particular shall be taken into consideration when examining the issue of the relationship between master (Jap. *sensei*²) and disciple (Jap. *deshi*), in the world of art generally, but especially in the context of Japanese culture.

This relation constitutes a core element of the *iemoto*³, a hereditary system that dates back to the Heian period (794-1185), when practices already existed for transferring orthodox

knowledge about specific skills within a line of a family from father to son. However, its mature form and the most distinguishing features of the *iemoto* institution as we recognize it today developed in the eighteenth century (Ikegami 2005, p. 165). A literal translation of the term *iemoto* would give a combination of words meaning literally the house (*ie*) of origins (*moto*), that is, a familial environment where certain art/skills of creation have been developed. This hierarchically organized institution for the study and practice of traditional arts and crafts is strongly associated with feudalism, paternalistic kinships of subordination, and relationships of power as well as control over the way some unique competences are disseminated and used both by and within society at large. Moreover, the authority of the great master, who stands at top of the pyramid, guarantees his position and stable income, since he is the one to certify the competency of his disciples and the local teachers who have practiced under his supervision. The master also determines the standards as well as the criteria of artistic accomplishment (Ikegami 2005, p. 165), and retains exclusive rights to reject any deviations from the set norms. The *iemoto* system was adopted in most traditional arts, where it is still present today, and as such has been transplanted and influenced the shape of the Japanese system of education in general, be it in school, in art education or in classical music education.

In the case of my respondents, it means firstly an almost blind, unconditional submission to the authority of the master (*Japanese students are taught to obey professors. (...) Japanese culture is a culture of not expressing oneself in a loud voice in front of other people*) a good sense of observation, a capacity to imitate, which in reality is to guarantee the success. And name – here the name of the professor or the brand of the music institution (e. g. university) – means a great deal in Japan, but this is also true for the world market of soloist musicians in general (Wagner 2015).

Now, what is distinctive about the professional trajectory of my respondents is that, as already mentioned above, they leave Japan as mature musicians (around the age of 19-22): *I went to study abroad when I finished my studies in Japan. (...) The teacher invited me: come to study in Poland (France) when you have your master's. or I came to France when I was 22.* Having been socialized within the Japanese education system to play the role of the submissive student who hardly ever contradicts/enters into discussions with her/his professor, rarely expresses her/his opinion, and who is not used to letting emotions take possession of her/his body when they encounter various obstacles, this is something the musician must overcome when building up their relations in their new working environment in Europe.

During rehearsals (with a quartet composed of French musicians) I always had to say

something, express my opinion about the interpretation of the piece we were playing, even though I didn't have anything particular to say. I had to learn that.

In most cases, crucial encounters (“crucial” in that they would be career-shaping) are already initiated in Japan. For many years, famous piano instructors, renowned Western virtuosos have been invited to Japan to perform and give lessons. That is how the relation starts, then these professors invite Japanese students to come to Poland to study either as regular students or for a short period of time. In most cases, scholarships are awarded by the Japanese Society of Music. This encounter also predetermines the choice of country to which the Japanese student will go in order to master her/his musical competences, to broaden her/his knowledge. The second important factor affecting the selection of country is the nationality of the composer whose music is the object of study. Once in Europe, the student may take the opportunity to form other bonds or get into other networks, a process that certainly works as a springboard for the musician’s future international career. Last but not least, the nexus of professional acquaintances may be useful when one plans to continue their career abroad.

Besides, according to practices and conventions in the domain of traditional Japanese arts, artistic perfection can be acquired through corporeal imitation rather than critical reinterpretation. Hearing from my respondents – INFORMERS – i.e., those who had experience working with Japanese musicians – that Japanese students tend to “copy” his or her professors, I was immediately reminded of a son imitating his father on the *nô* stage. Consequently, usually before young Japanese pianists have the chance to reveal their talent, they need to get rid of this *label*, that of being a skillful technician yet a poor interpreter and a mediocre performer.

Japanese pianists have good technique and study hard, but their capabilities of expression are poor. (...) Western people have a strong sense of individuality and are quicker to learn. It can be a talent or physical ability. (...) Western people have far stronger muscles.

What is interesting about the labeling phenomenon is that the Japanese incorporate this opinion without demur, in a way similar to the marijuana smokers depicted by Howard Becker in *Outsiders*, who explains that a social deviant is not an inherently deviant individual, but rather become such because they have been so labeled. “(...) social groups create deviance by making rules whose infraction creates deviance, and by applying those roles to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by other of rules and sanctions to an ‘offender.’ The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behavior is behavior

that people so label.” The Japanese themselves believe and reiterate the idea that any successful Japanese performer must necessarily owe their success to some non-Japanese feature or features in their personality: individuality, nonconformism, insubordination, free spirit, and so on.

Be that as it may, it is possible to identify other sources for this infamous reputation that haunts Japanese musicians: the fact that the European world of classical music is highly exclusive on one hand, and the practice of classical music as *okeikogoto* on the other. Upon arrival in Europe (France or Poland), Japanese musicians have to come to terms with two major traits of the local milieu of classical music: professional conventions (Becker 2008, p. 40) and stereotypical notions of the Japanese musician. The former defines the personal and musical framework of musicianship as practiced in European countries, while the latter expresses the rather critical opinions that circulate around the world of European classical music about the ‘Japanese musician’ as a product of the Japanese system of socialization to this profession. I shall argue that deprecating professional competences of Japanese musicians by representatives of the European milieu of classical music may be interpreted as a denigration of the Asian (here Japanese) educational environment, where these skills have been acquired. At the same time, this act is a manifestation of protection of the European/Western tradition that is being appropriated by the East, as if the milieu of European classical musicians stood for Western cultural values. It is in this sense that I shall perceive this environment as highly exclusive. This critical discourse is formulated in a way that is difficult to refute.

A closer look at the construction of this criticism allows us to understand its likely unintended craftiness, which renders difficult any kind of polemical response. The core line of the argument arises from the statement that holds Japanese musicians to be talented technicians who nonetheless lack musical imagination, taste, emotional reflection and the like. The former part of the discourse is quite easy to define and evaluate in classical music, which is considered to be art, composed with mathematical precision and in accordance with rational rules. Furthermore, as Becker reminds us, until rather recently, it was compliance to these rules that constituted a point of departure for any assessment of performance in this world: “Classical ballet and the virtuoso playing of the concert instrumentalists also furnish examples: in both, there have been long periods in which criticism dealt in some large part with whether any mistakes had been made, whether the performer had been faster or surer than others, and other craft concerns. (Becker 2008, p. 878)” It is conceivable that following these standards, the Japanese would have to be included into the pantheon of music mastery. Yet this is not the case.

The latter of these associations, which determines the virtuosity of the performer, namely

interpretative sense, is a criterion relatively hard to pinpoint; it seems closer to subjective reception than objective appraisal. At the same time, producing convincing arguments to contradict claims about mediocre, colorless performance is a challenging task. Emotions, or the emotional side of playing, safeguards the European tradition of classical music. Additionally, “emotion” is what audiences primarily seek out in performance, and if listeners are insufficiently knowledgeable in matters of classical music, emotionality makes up the entirety of their aesthetic experience. Emotions are easier to sell than technical mastery, and in addition to that this fact may be used as an argument to protect the ‘European bazaar of classical music’ from newcomers from the East. The reasoning that I have just proposed is only a possible explanation of the ubiquitous critique of Japanese musicians. Still, I have to stress that it is not my intention to wholly negate this criticism. Rather, my aim is to highlight the complexity of the problem.

Secondly, the significance of high technical mastery in the Japanese system of classical music education may be regarded as a feature intrinsic to the traditional Japanese arts, denoted also as the repertoire of *okeikogoto*, into which it was included. Many of my respondents admit that piano is learnt as a part of *okeikogoto*, by which they mean ‘a woman’s education’. Yet, the Japanese dictionary unveils a broader sense of the term. The *okeikogoto* notion derives from the word *keiko*, meaning: firstly studying past things and secondly studying and practicing martial arts or artistic accomplishments (such as singing and dancing). On the one hand, it is in the sense of a master-disciple ritual-like training that the word *okeikogoto* is inscribed in Japanese philosophic-aesthetical thought. Keister explains that “this method of training by imitative formula serves individual purposes of self-cultivation for amateurs and career development for professionals, while also serving the institutional purposes of maintaining the artistic ‘way’ of a given school” (Keister 2008, p. 240). On the other hand, *(o)keikogoto* designates “skills that have been acquired through training, starting from traditional Japanese arts (tea ceremony, flower arrangement or Japanese traditional dance) up to more modern artistic techniques such as the piano, violin or ballet” (sic) (Kōjien, p. 857). What needs to be emphasized here is that one Japanese concept embraces Japanese and Western musical arts. In this way, we may assume that teaching methods from the Japanese traditional arts have been transplanted to a certain degree into the field of classical music training.

Now, a social norm concerning the suppression of one’s emotions is one thing, and leaving one’s emotions aside in the performance of classical music seems to be another. Providing that classical music is practiced in Japan according to principles similar to traditional Japanese arts, one can imagine that the artistic space of performance would be subordinated to rules and meaningful patterns (*kata*) to such an extent that there would be no room for personal feelings or reflections. Artistic perfection in the domain of traditional Japanese arts cannot be acquired through any means except corporeal imitation – not critical (re)interpretation. Artists must know

and observe the ‘right’ ways of doing things, which becomes the basis for the assessment of their craft – to use Becker’s term – by critics, other artists or audiences (Becker 2008, p. 272). This model of the tyranny of artistic rules used to be in force in Europe as well, but it has been to some extent supplemented by a model that incorporates emotional and interpretative skill. Becker would describe this process as constant transformation, oscillating between art and crafts. Whenever rules are questioned and deliberately replaced by individual ideas, then constraints of the craft relieve opening space for artistic imagination and this has been the case of public interpretation of classical music in the West. However, in Japan, the model has not been revised, for it was taken over by the great tradition of Japanese arts and, as such, has been practiced to this day according to the same stiff regulations. In this sense, it can be assumed that artistic skills (including those related to classical music training) are mastered in the course of education within the Japanese academic system above all as a craft.

The notion that the ‘mechanistic’ aspect of Japanese performance could be overcome by early immersion in European conventions leads to the belief that the brunt of the criticism is not aimed at the Japanese people per se, but at the Japanese system of education, the world of Asian conventions, which is definitionally incompatible with western ones. Failing to understand convention leads to miscommunication and makes cooperation difficult.

The language barrier does not facilitate the process of acculturation or socialization in a new working environment either, but only reinforces stereotypical image of Japanese musician, which become the source of critique and negative attitude of foreign professors of music towards Japanese musicians. The impossibility to communicate remarks to the student is nothing rare in the world of classical music and frequently interpreters act as a go-between the professors and the students (Wagner 2015). This is not the problem. The problem emerges in a situation, where a professor unable to properly transfer his/her comments in a spoken language, makes the student understand the idea in mind by actually playing the piece. The student who attempts at faithful imitation of the play, is “lost in translation,” in a sense that this person automatically falls into the aforementioned category of performers who are skilled technically yet lack musical imagination.

And contact with professors matters.

I could go abroad and study under various professors owing to their connections. They invited me to come and study with them or introduced me to their friends. (...) They contacted them, organized trial lessons and, if the professor liked the way I played, I could continue lessons.⁴

According to my respondents, professors are often the first to initiate public performances

and concerts, and in effect introduce young musicians to the professional world of classical music. Their opinions and recommendations have the power to hinder or advance a musician's career, a phenomenon described by Izabela Wagner as *career coupling*, whereby generally speaking a student's success enhances translates into professor's position on this market and vice versa (Wagner 2008). Such initiation into a given musical milieu is all the more important if we consider the severe, cut-throat competition among musicians stemming from an oversaturated market and the limited possibilities of finding a stable position in an orchestra for instance, not to mention a soloist career, which did not even emerge in any of the interviews I conducted—even as a distant aspiration or a dream.

The predominance of the role of networking in the career-making process, over and above even musical technique or talent, which I would define here as the ability to interpret a given piece of music in an original way so as to please audiences of a dissimilar background, can be observed in both the French and Polish musical milieux. Although I shall argue that the smaller the market is in terms of employment possibilities (as is the case of Poland, for example) the more decisive the role of high-quality acquaintances. In France, contrary to Poland, the number of open competitions for a post in an orchestra is large enough to accept candidates from foreign countries. The Polish market is relatively small and saturated, therefore the prevailing tendency to favor Poles in such competitions is not so surprising.

It's incredibly difficult to make a living with music. And it's not about the talent, or technique of playing the piano. What one needs is luck and connections. I was lucky, because my husband works in a local orchestra. (...) And the chef of the orchestra invited me to come and work with them. By chance, there was an opening in the orchestra. You have to be lucky, to get that chance, that there is an open competition right at the moment when you are looking for a job and you have to be even luckier to get it.

(...) Nobody will employ a Japanese musician from Japan. There are too many unemployed Polish musicians after all.

Marriage is one of the networks that can have positive or/and negative sides with respect to musicians' careers, depending on the profession of the spouse. I have already said that Japanese musicians are mature by the time they arrive in Europe, yet these are young people, who are ready to start a family. Conjugal contracts solve many formal problems such as: stay permits, working visas, etc. With a visa, a musician has more time to search for a job. On the other hand, marrying a musician or someone else with abundant resources and contacts in the musical environment may

open doors (in the form of more concerts, recordings, lessons and so on) or close them, hindering any progress, or worse yet forcing the musician to entirely abandon their career. When a musician has kids, she will have less or no time to practice, progressively taking up the role of housewife, perhaps occasionally going to concerts or transferring her musical ambitions onto her children). If over 90% of my respondents have lived in Poland for a considerable period of time, it is because of their family situation (i.e., marriage). In such cases, only a few of the respondents have been able to continue their professional careers, and this is mainly because of the position their spouses occupy within the Polish musical milieu. While in France, I also met a number of professional musicians, who first competed for and obtained stable positions (in orchestras, for example), then later married.

The situation of unmarried Japanese musicians in Poland who have not obtained permanent employment appears to be the most difficult and perhaps precarious of all. Needless to say, permanent positions and conjugal contracts solve a wide array of visa and income-related issues. However, as already mentioned, while the former guarantees staying in the music business and continuing one's professional path, the latter in many cases proves to be a hindrance in terms of career, especially when the spouse has no meaningful connection to the world of classical music. Here, a networking can be based on friendships with musicians from the local milieu of classical music. These relations are tied still when studying as a foreign student at the university and maintained thereafter, guaranteeing small jobs or professional activity, which must be proven when applying for an artistic visa in Poland. In this way Poland-based Japanese musicians become members of small music groups, performing during seasonal festivals or at local cultural centers and the like. According to my respondents, the French market offers many more opportunities. A musician who is a skillful manager can rent a hall and perform for a local audience as well as friends and family members at a reasonable cost. In France, there also exists a system of scholarship for artists (*intermittent de spectacle*), which provides them with financial support during the years in which they do not work as they are, for example, preparing a new performance.⁵

Embeddedness in local musical milieux results in much more than collective performing. One of the artists has built a career by being involved in the popularization of the scientific music research of his/her former professor. S/he advocates and propagates the mentioned work internationally, but primarily in Japan. Such activity includes interviews, public meetings, creating occasions for concerts, and—most importantly—generating further encounters within the international community, which helps the pianist stay connected in the art world of classical music and at the same time opens the door to the next stage in their professional career.

Professional transition/returning back to Japan

International “career-triggering” factors related to professional trajectories among Japanese musicians (especially solo pianists) can be roughly divided in two types: (A) the first corresponds with a sort of Weberian ideal type, that is to say the career of a piano prodigy, whose “talent” leaves no doubts, opens all doors, and provides an efficient method for helping the musician to climb to the top of the pantheon, even outside of the community and without its support. Also, professional activity in this career type is made up mostly of concerts, recordings, interviews or—at a later stage—master classes. The Art World paradigm gives no illusions about the probability of this option. Meanwhile (B) the second extreme of the career line stands for the reflection of this ideal in a metaphoric false mirror. This is nothing more than what I have discussed thus far, namely the case of musicians whose professional path has been secured primarily through a chain of interpersonal connections (or a sort of cultural capital). The data from my research suggests that the former type is dominant in the art world of classical music. Rarely can Japanese artists in Poland or even in France make her/his living using her/his music abilities in an artistic way (playing an instrument, giving concerts or lessons, recording music, etc.), as Weberian ideal type of career would have it. Japanese musicians in precarious situations are frequently forced to sacrifice their careers in music in favor of everyday life, which leads to a transgression or professional transition, often into teaching music (theory, not piano), teaching language, working in an office or becoming a housewife, etc. At some point, some of them come back to Japan, either to continue their careers as private piano teachers or establish and run their own music schools or occasionally give concerts to students. Sufficiently large number of students as well as their relatives and acquaintances assures an audience of a sufficient size. In Japan, any musician who wants to give a private concert must rent a large hall and guarantee that all tickets will be sold. If they are not, it is the musician’s responsibility to shoulder the cost of the unoccupied seats.

Still others take up a new profession, which cannot be reconciled with an ongoing career in music, because 8-hour shifts and long commutes leave no time for practice. Without sufficient time to practice one loses her/his skills. Among those who decide to return to Japan, there are a number of Japanese musicians based in Europe who, upon succeeding in this highly competitive market, voluntarily return to Japan, where the success they enjoyed in Europe effectively opens many doors in Japan. As contemporary Japanese artist Murakami Takashi claims: to be a successful artist in Japan, particularly in the Western field of art, or classical music in this case, one should win over the international Western audience, satisfying their aesthetic needs, and have her/his name appear in the European press, etc.

Conclusion

The transnational artistic milieu (related to classical music) is regulated by the cultural structures of a given country, and it requires that the newcomer Japanese adapt themselves to these structures (e.g., particular professional ethos among musicians). Artistic environments and the world of classical musicians are not free of antagonisms, which emerge against cultural/structural/institutional backgrounds. Classical musicians socialized in the Japanese education system are subject to discrimination on the grounds of cultural/structural/institutional differences. Good musical technique and proper understanding of musical language are required, but insufficient conditions to become an artist capable of competing in the international classical music market. There is a large number of criteria which determine the success (or possibility of making a life by exercising one's studied profession). Japanese musicians may experience problems related to identity, adaptation (adaptability to a new working environment, the ability to self-promote, linguistic competency or lack thereof, etc.) and acceptance in a new working environment, which relates to their Japanese origins (the non-European environment in which they received their primary socialization and musical education). Among them, an efficient network of interpersonal relations of good quality (with teachers, entrepreneurs, musicians and institutions, etc.) is an important and determining factor in the achievement of professional success within the scene of classical music. One good encounter with an influential professor, for instance, who can introduce a musician to a local orchestra and give this musician opportunities to form other relationships and thus to continue her/his professional path outside Japan (*career coupling*, Izabela Wagner). If all these encounters make up the crucial moments of one's career it is because the objective barriers mentioned above are fundamentally human in origin—and, as such, it is only through equally human means that these barriers can be surpassed or overcome. Contrary to the notion that talent opens all the doors, especially in the globalized reality in which we live, the world of art is very much inclusive, as Howard Becker argued, in a sense that it privileges only those who have already found their place inside its structure and maintain good relations with a certain group of people. The more influential and powerful this group happens to be the more successful the musician becomes in this world. Otherwise, Japanese musicians face potentially insurmountable obstacles as they search for permanent employment in the musical profession (cosmopolitan elite), ultimately leaving them in a precarious position.

Notes

1. By structural/institutional conditions, which I prefer to the unique notion of “culture,” the “wideish” range of which reduces its explanatory power, I refer to a conjunction of objectified factors delimiting on the one hand and rendering human action possible on the other (duality of structure) (Giddens 1984). These are recognized in sociology also as institutions: relatively stable elements constituting social order (e.g., family, tradition of classical music, system of values, etc.), regulated and legally sanctioned forms of activities, including formal organizations with specific functions (music education, regulations concerning national and international labor markets, immigration law, nationality, language, etc.), widely used ways of solving problems of cooperation and coexistence (work ethic in a given musical environment, master-pupil relations, cultural and social capital [Bourdieu], etc.).
2. For the purposes of this paper, the term “sensei” is defined in a broader sense than its initial meaning, that of a teacher. Here, it also indicates a network of institutions which predefine conditions and determine one’s professional path in the world of art (e.g. *Nitten* in the *kaiga* field of Japanese paintings).
3. For further information on the *iemoto* system, see Francis L.K. Hsu, *Iemoto: The Heart of Japan*, New York: Schenkman, 1975.
4. When discussing this section of the interview with Izabela Wagner, who supervises my doctoral thesis, she suggested that a professor never lets a good student go to a competitor. Introducing students to other teachers can mean that the professor in question longer wants to invest her/his time. This has been confirmed by one of my respondents, who commented: *Gifted students are given lessons even for free.*
5. Participation of foreigners in this system is not impossible, but quite limited and conditioned.

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コスモポリタンエリートか、プレカリアートか？

— 欧州のクラシック音楽界で活躍する日本人音楽家のネットワークとキャリア

ベアタ・コヴァルチック

本論文は、欧州のクラシック音楽界で活躍する日本人音楽家に焦点を当て、彼らの人的ネットワーク構築と職業上のキャリアの関連性について論じることを目的とするものである。当研究は主に、個人取材と演奏家の活動（コンサート、マスタークラス、夏の短期コース、リハーサル、音楽録音など）に関する資料を用いながら、ポーランドとフランスのクラシック音楽界で活動する日本人音楽家のキャリアを比較することを目指す。しかし、本論文ではポーランドの事例のみに絞って、テーマを展開する。本研究の根拠となっているデータは、ポーランド在住の23人の日本音楽家に対して筆者が行ったインタビュー記録（音声記録）である。

本論文は芸術上労働社会学（Sociology of Artistic Profession）、とりわけ人間関係の役割を強調する象徴的相互作用主義（Symbolic Interactionism）の視点から検討する。その理由は、クラシック音楽家のキャリアにおいては「高価値、有効な人間関係」が他の職業と比較にならない程、重要であるためである。調査の際出会った日本人（とりわけポーランドとフランスで活躍する日本人音楽家）は全員が成熟した音楽家であり、欧州（ポーランドかフランス）での留学経験と仕事の経験を持ち、その知識を持った視点から移民の音楽家の職業上のキャリアが成り立つ段階、又は過程を描く。そして、その過程の文化的な背景、教育制度に由来し、将来のキャリアを揺さぶる要因を指摘する。

本論文ではまず、音楽家のキャリアが人生の進路と同時に展開していくということについて、「楽器は人生を揺さぶる」という観点から検討する。次に、論理的な背景を紹介してから、本格的な分析に入ります。特に日本とポーランドにおける師弟関係の特質と文化的な背景に着目しながら、個人的な人間関係と音楽家としての公的キャリアがどのような要素によって関連付けられているのか、またどのような段階を経て形成されているのかを論じる。