

Japanese Composers in GRM before 1970 – What did they bring to the Japanese Contemporary Music?

Mikako Mizuno

Nagoya City University, Japan
mikakom@sda.nagoya-cu.ac.jp

Abstract

This presentation focused on two Japanese composers who created pieces of electroacoustic music in Europe before 1970. Their pieces have not introduced in Japan until they came back to Japan. Even though the first Japanese *musique concrète* had been created in 1953 and the NHK studio for electronic music inaugurated in 1955 was one of the first electroacoustic music studios in the world, the two composers had started their work of electroacoustic music in foreign countries and their creating method were much different from that of Japanese studio.

The two are Akira Tamba and Makoto Shinohara, both of whom are still actively composing. Tamba worked in GRM (Paris) and Shinohara worked in Studio Voor Elektronische Muziek (Utrecht). This time my presentation is based on GRM archive research which provided several new information concerning the history of Japanese electroacoustic music the sources (sound and text). Comparison the GRM sources with those of Japanese historical text clarified and some alternative phases of the history of Japanese electroacoustic music.'

In GRM Tamba had created *Neuf pièces*, *Interlude*, *Morphogrammes 0* and others for television and film in 1964 and 1965.

Three works of Tamba are found in GRM sources. The pieces are not known in Japan. I certified their sounds in cooperation of GRM. *Enrichissement Sono Drama* and *Le Nô Mus. Orient. Plac 30* are thought to be the radio programs. *Synergies* was created with François-Bernard Mâche for the *concert collectif*. Shinohara had created one piece in GRM with some cups and bowls, but no information about the piece is found in GRM. The direct interviews with the composers also testified the atmosphere how they accepted electroacoustic.

International cooperation to compare such kind of sources in different countries is now necessary for historical research of electroacoustic music.

Introduction

Even though the first Japanese *musique concrète* had been created in 1953 and the NHK studio for electronic music inaugurated in 1955 was one of the first electroacoustic music studios in the world, two Japanese composers had started their work in the field of electroacoustic music in the foreign countries and their creating method were much different from that in Japanese studios. This paper concerns the two composers who started

electroacoustic music in Europe Akira Tamba and Makoto Shinohara. Both are still now actively composing.

Akira Tamba 丹波明, born in 1932 in Yokohama in a celebrated family, left Japan in 1960 to study Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris. He also studied and worked in GRM from 1964 to 1966, to create several electroacoustic musics. Makoto Shinohara 篠原真, born in 1931, went to Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris after he had heard some Japanese *musique concrète* produced in NHK electronic studio. Shinohara met Pierre Schaeffer in GRM and studied there as an apprentice in 1959. Shinohara worked with Gilbert Amy, Iannis Xenakis, François-Bernard Mâche and Luc Ferrari. He completed the work, *Etude*, with the sounds of his personal kitchen utensils. Next year he confessed to Schaeffer to leave GRM to go to German, because he did not like the conservative atmosphere of the Conservatoire. He decided to study in Darmstadt summer intensive course of the contemporary music. This is the well-known description of the two composers' early careers.

But now, after fifty years from that day, their days in Paris and the influence of the two pioneers of *musique concrète* are to be reevaluated. What the two composers experienced in GRM? How were they influential in the history of Japanese electroacoustic music?

Some preliminary researches I did in 2012 in GRM show that their pieces could be considered in a more sophisticated framework if we take both French materials and Japanese ones into consideration.

In order to concentrate on comparison of the historical materials concerning the two countries, I will focus on Akira Tamba.

1. I will start with the general description of Tamba's bio and the crossroads in his life.
2. After that I arrange the working process of 1960's based on some books and his comments as well as on some original materials, which will show a few obsolete things.
3. I try to think about the origin of the intersection of Japanese time concept and that of Europe in Tamba's pieces.

Tamba's activities: in his biography and in the historical description of Japanese contemporary music

Akira Tamba, born in Yokohama in 1932, left Japan in 1960 in order to study Paris Conservatoire de Musique after he had graduated from Tokyo University of Arts and Music (Tokyo Geidai) where Tamba had studied with Tomojiro Ikenouchi 池内友次郎. One of his classmates in Tokyo Geidai was Hiroaki Minami 南弘明 (born in 1934, in Yamaguchi), who later founded JSEM (Japanese Society of Electronic Music) in 1992.

Because Minami had been affected by German *elektronische Musik*, his pupils like Akira Senjyu 千住明, Tatsuhiko Nishioka 西岡龍彦, and other younger generations started their electroacoustic music with synthesized sounds. Actually Minami stayed in Freiburg Hochschule from 1961 to 1964 and studied with Wolfgang Vortner. But Minami's pieces of electroacoustic music pieces were created before and after his stay in German.

As for Tamba, being affected by French style *musique concrète*, and his musical concepts have not had direct successors inside Japan. After studying with Messiaen and Tony Aubin, Tamba got the Premier Prix in composition and started to work in GRM as a part of Service

de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française. He worked there from 1964 to 67 and studied the theory and practice of *musique concrète*. In 1963, he got the prize of Lily Boulanger.

At that time, GRM, founded in 1958, was in the enthusiastic atmosphere after the collective concerts of 1961 and 1962, and Schaeffer's *Traité des objets musicaux* was just published (in 1966).

Tamba in Paris was not only interested in the avant-garde composition but also keenly affected by the traditional Japanese music and aesthetics. Actually the title of his doctoral thesis in Sorbonne University was *The Structure of Noh Music* (1971), and one of his important publication in Japanese concerns *Jyo, Ha, Kyu* 序破急 of *Noh* structure, which also testifies his interest in Japanese aesthetics.

Since 1967 Akira Tamba sought a double life, composer and musicologist at CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) and served as a chief researcher since 1998. When his brother became a famous movie star, Tetsuo Tamba 丹波哲郎, Akira Tamba extended his activities as a composer through Europe. In 1979 Radio France organized a concert of Akira Tamba, and ten of his pieces were performed in Holland Festival of contemporary music.

His list of publications includes *Imagination and Creation* (1972) and *Japanese Music Theory and Aesthetics, from the 8th century to the 19th century* (1984) as well as *Aesthetics of Jyo, Ha, Kyu* (2004) which I mentioned. His compositions are internationally known: *flute sonata* (1958), *Mandala for piano and orchestra* (1982), *Héliode for electric guitar and orchestra* (1988), the series of 'interference' for Japanese traditional instruments (1980-). This type of general biography shows Tamba's strong interest in Japanese traditional culture, but it doesn't give any information how he got interested even though his first compositions before 1962 had been under the influence of European classical style and harmony.

In an interview in 2014, Tamba himself explains his experience in his Conservatoire period. He was influenced, at first, by Messiaen, and next by Schaeffer. Messiaen recommended that one analyzes the non-European music to find out general rules, and Tamba arrived at his original theory for composition through synthesis of *Noh*-music and European contemporary music. Messiaen told Tamba to research *Noh*-music because the compositional transition from serial music to indeterminacy could be understood as same as the change from *Gagaku* to *Noh*. And Tamba thought, as he told, that indeterminacy is common to Schaeffer's *musique concrète* and to Japanese traditional music. Messiaen's mystic time concept was added to the aesthetic of the Japanese time, and that was led to Tamba's musical time which characterized his structural thinking about *musique concrète*.

It will be useful to refer to the description by the composer about the mixture of the West and the East. Tamba explained by himself in a letter to me.

I tried to make *synthèse*. This is the attitude Messiaen taught to me. It was accumulation method of the sound in *musique concrète* like harmonic layers. And I found my own rule of psychophysics 精神物理学 based on Gustav Theodor Fechner.

$$S = K \times \log_2 \times R + R$$

(S: increase of stimulus, K =fixed number, R: amount of current stimuli)

Applying this formula to calculate the amount of sound stimuli (loudness, number of the sounds, speed), I can completely sublimate the European classical structure as the themes and the developments. I make a musical piece by disposing and accumulating the 'cellules', which are the smallest composites (micro-structure). The process can be represented by the

mathematical formula I mentioned, and that is also the principle of *Jyo, Ha, Kyu* of *Noh*-theatre.¹

The terminology *cellule* apparently came from Schaeffer's *Solfège de l'objet sonore*. We remember the article of Schaeffer, *Esquisse d'un solfège concret* (1952), in which Schaeffer had presented six phases of valorization of *sofège* of sounds: monophony, group, *cellule*, notes complex, gross notes and structure.

Thus Messiaen's concept of time is combined to the time structure of *Noh, Jyo, Ha, Kyu*, mediated by Schaeffer's *sofège* theory. In 1980's the combination of two cultures are in appeared in the composition series of 'Interference' for the Japanese instruments for *Hogaku Yonin no Kai* (邦楽四人の会, group of four instrumentalists of Japanese traditional music).

So we can conclude that the idea of combining the Western and the Eastern both in the phase of sound materials and in the phase of time structure has been the essential framework for Tamba since the early days of the life in Paris.

But how is the mixture in the musical pieces?

What is the direct moment (reason) of mixture of the style?

And what can be testified in the musical pieces about the accumulation of the two cultures?

These are more musicological problems concerning the relationship between *musique concrète* and Japanese time aesthetics of *Noh*-theatre. Can we have more musicological methods such as musical analysis or musical materials? This is also a common problem for early electroacoustic music. My point is the materials kept inside GRM may signify the original form of the musical augmentation of plural cultures in Tamba's early ideas that combines the Western and the Eastern. This may show the primitive form of Tamba's lifelong tendency to Japanese originality.

Let's return to concentrate on the early pieces during Tamba's days in Paris.

Tamba's sono-drama in obscurity

Tamba had started his composition under the influence of French music like Debussy. The three sonatas (*Flute sonata* 1958, *Piano sonata* 1959 and *Violin sonata* 1961) and the *Concerto for flute and string orchestra* (1962) have classical structure of Western metric time. The former two had been composed in Tokyo, and the third sonata and the concerto was created in Paris. His list of composition during his days in GRM includes only three pieces:

- *Cinq mélodies de Manjyo* (1961-65);
- *Deux poèmes de Baudelaire, musique concrète* (1964-66);
- *Deux poèmes de Baudelaire pour voix et orchestre* (1966).

It seems like *Deux poèmes* is the only one piece of *musique concrète* created by Tamba in GRM.

But he worked out more pieces and the piece after GRM period shows absolutely clear accumulation of European form on the Japanese elements. This suggests the transition from European style to Japanese aesthetics occurred in GRM.

Again I take Tamba's description.

¹ A hand-written letter to the author, 1996.

The year 1968 was the turning point for me as well as for all other Parisians. Before 1968, my piece had referred only to the personal world, and after 1968 my music was socialized. The representative piece of the revolutionary spirit just composed in 1969 was *Tathatâ* for string quartet and potentiometer, which is my first famous live-electronic piece, and which can be performed without potentiometer.

This piece was based on *cellule*, that is, micro-structure, including long glissando, noise, long trill, controlled indeterminacy and *Kakegoe* 掛け声, which means ‘voice of cry’ and symbolizes in Buddhism, emotion of *triste*, hidden life, potential emotion and qualia of agony.²

In a recent program note for this piece, Tamba wrote:

This piece is composed of two parts, either of that starts with the voice of cry, *Kakegoe*, and the strings. In the first part a long glissando accelerando with *Kakegoe* appear. In the second part pizzicato and *Kakegoe* appeared in the European metric of six-eight times. The two parts are composed of definitely different structure of time. The first part is based on the concept of flowing ‘time of nature’ and the second part is constructed on the artificial ‘time of meter’.

My turning point of the year 1968 was centered how to insert the <time of nature> into the European music that keeps only the ‘time of meter’.³

The insertion, or interference in the later term of Tamba, of ‘time of nature’ into the ‘time of meter’ could be found before *Tathatâ*. Remembering that in the period between the three classical sonatas and *Tathatâ* Tamba concentrated on *musique concrète*, his hidden pieces during GRM may give us important hints to think the origin of his mixed style. Actually Tamba’s early electroacoustic music includes both European instruments and *Noh* elements as sound materials. Perhaps we can see in the works in GRM, his changing process from the European culture to *Noh*, especially from material sound mixture of the two cultures to the deeper intersection in the level of aesthetic time concept. I said, ‘perhaps’, because Tamba’s early electroacoustic music is only partially known today. Even the composer himself doesn’t have the sound recording of the pieces.

In the summer of 2012, thanks to the kindness of the researchers in GRM, I can see the original GRM cards concerning the Japanese composers and I can get some sound copies of the pieces. Here I would like to report something about Tamba.

Akira Tamba in GRM’s materials

These five are matched to the five GRM tape numbers. Not all the five pieces are electroacoustic music.

①	<i>Sonate pour piano</i>	LUR2018
②	<i>Enrich. Sono-Drama</i>	LUR1932
③	<i>Le Nô Mus. Orient. Plac 30</i>	LUR2138
④	<i>Complexe Simple</i>	SUR672
⑤	<i>Mâche/Tamba Synergies</i>	LUR2092

² Lecture by Akira Tamba in Yokoyama Quartiers Musicaux, 19 November 2011.

³ Program note of *Tathatâ*, concert on 19 November 2011.

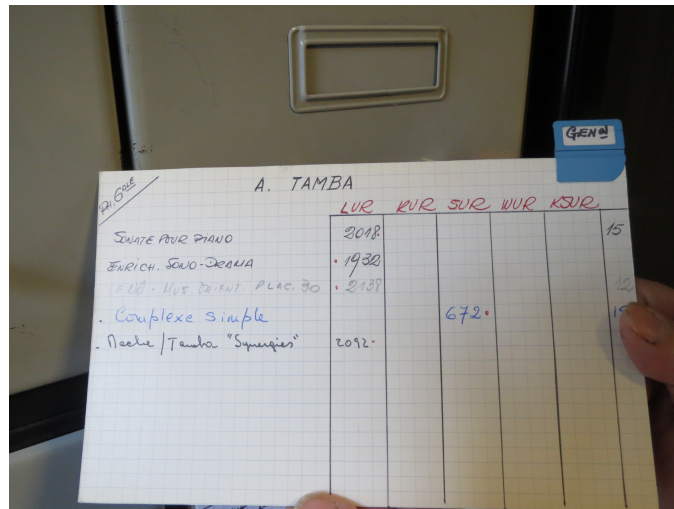


Figure 1: One card in GRM about Tamba shows five pieces created in GRM by Tamba

Le Nô Mus. is supposed to be the recording of an introductory broadcast concerning *Noh-music*. *Sonate pour piano* and *Complexe Simple* are instrumental pieces.

The interesting item is *Mâche/Tamba Synergies* on LUR2092. This is supposed to be a collective piece by Mâche assisted with Tamba. The important catalogue *Repertoire acousmatique* and the minute report by François-Bernard Mâche give us information about the ‘concert collectif’.

Another information, which can’t be found in the card of Tamba, is found in *Repertoire acousmatique*. It includes four pieces: *Goya* (1966), *L’inconnue d’Orly* (1966), *Interlude* (1964) and *Neuf pièces* (1964).

As we know in Japan, Tamba created five pieces of music for films.

Title	Duration	Genre	Venue	Date
<i>Neuf pièces</i>	9 min	Music for the film	Created in GRM	1964
<i>Interlude</i>	5min20	Music for TV	Created in GRM	1964
<i>Morphogrammes 0</i>	4min30	Music for the film	Created in GRM	1965
<i>Goya</i>	3 min	Music for the film	Created in GRM	1966
<i>L’inconnue d’Orly</i>	10 min	Music for the film	Created in GRM	1966

Until this point, I have referred three resources I found in GRM:

1. Tamba’s card indicated in GRM box;
2. *Concert collectif* information in the book *Repertoire acousmatique*, slightly different from the information in the report by Mâche;
3. Tamba’s information in *Repertoire acousmatique*.

Comparing those with the information we got in Japan, I reach the facts:

- Music for the film *Morphogrammes 0* has no information in GRM;
- *Enrich.Sono-Drama* has information only in GRM.

Thanks to the kind collaboration of GRM researchers, I can check the sound copies.

Enrich.Sono-Drama seems the preliminary material collection because the structure of the sound disposition is too simple and primitive. But it is interesting that Tamba set ‘alternately’

fixed the sound of Europe and that of Japan. It disposes *Noh* sound and the sound of European strings in parallel without accumulation. For example, it places the violin pizzicato sounds just after Tsuzumi percussive sounds. The melody played by a wind instrument is presented on the rhythm of combined sounds of Japanese and European percussions. It seems like some experiments of some sets of sounds compared with each other. It can be analytically compared with Tamba's completed pieces like *Deux poèmes* and *Etude*.

As my conclusion I indicate the situation of Tamba's resources in GRM.

The materials concerning Tamba are in various levels of openness:

1. digitized, easy to access and request;
2. all or some information can be read on the cards or paper hand-writing/typewriter;
3. no visible information.

Conclusion

The reciprocal interpenetration between *Noh-music* and the *musique concrète* can be heard in the pieces of 1960's. But the list of his composition during 1960's lacks of his *Sono-drama*. His works and his working experience in GRM strongly affected on his instrumental music as well as on his *musique concrète*. In *Sono-drama*, the sounds of Japanese traditional music are placed side by side with those of European instruments, which make a line of rhythmical time. This type of hearing for *musique concrète* is well known as Schaefferian *sofège*, but it is not familiar to the Japanese composers who created electroacoustic pieces in Japan before 1965. When Tamba explained Schaeffer's concept in his book *Imagination and Creation* Japanese composers and musicologists encountered new theory and framework of electroacoustic music.

The period 1960-65, when Tamba worked in GRM, is considered as the time after the first invention of Japanese electroacoustic music and as the time before the first computer music. The uniqueness of Tamba's electroacoustic music can be clearer by comparing the French materials with those of Japan.