

THOMAS R. H. HAVENS

Artist and Patron in Postwar Japan

*Dance, Music, Theater, and the Visual
Arts, 1955-1980*



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Dance, Music, Theater, and
the Visual Arts, 1955-1980

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Frontispiece: Akiko Kanda in *Barbara*, premiere June 1980, Tokyo.
KISHIN SHINOYAMA

CONTENTS

A NOTE OF THANKS	vii
1 ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE	3
The Compass of Middle-class Culture	6
The Artist in Postwar Society	14
Patrons and Audiences	21
2 A POVERTY OF PATRONS	28
Past Forms of Private Patronage	28
Business, Bureaucracy, and the Arts	31
Foundations, Companies, and Taxes	33
Museums and Exhibitions	38
Corporations and Orchestras	47
Theater and Dance	51
3 ARTS AND THE STATE	57
A National Policy for Culture	58
The Costs of Culture	61
Vitalizing Traditions	65
Familiar Innovations	70
4 ARTS TO THE PEOPLE	80
The Arts Out-of-Town	80
Modern Houses for Contemporary Arts	90
Arts Over the Air and Overseas	94
Public Money and Official Culture	100
5 THE VISUAL ARTS: SHOW AND SELL	105
Modernism and Postmodernism	106
Nitten: "A Symbol of Japan"	112
Marketing Art	118
Glamorous Art Shows and Their Entrepreneurs	129
6 THEATER: PLAYING SAFE	144
Realism and Its Limits	145
Houses and Audience Associations	150

CONTENTS

Enterprising Companies	158
Plays for Profit	168
7 MUSIC: CULTIVATED CLIENTELES	181
Fusions and Crossovers	182
Paying to Play	187
Music and Ideology	195
Making Musical Ends Meet	202
8 DANCE: CONTEMPORARY CLASSICS	216
Classics and Postmoderns	217
Honoring the Headmaster	227
From Studio to Stage	232
9 THE VERTICAL MOSAIC	244
BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES	253
SOURCES CITED	293
INDEX	311

A NOTE OF THANKS

FRESH from a twenty-four-hour flight on a piston-engine DC-6 from Los Angeles, with stops at Honolulu and Wake Island, I arrived for my first immersion in Japanese society ten days after the tumultuous demonstrations against the Japan-U.S. security treaty quieted down in June 1960. My earliest encounter with the Japanese arts came the next Tuesday morning when I met my first class of conversational English students, a sleepy-eyed group of young geisha at the Hasegawa Tea-house in Tokyo's Akasaka district. What has happened to the arts and Japanese society in the two decades since that memorable summer job is the main focus of this book, and it seems in order to express my thanks to the Princeton Club of Japan and the Ōsawa family for making my first visit so rewarding.

In preparing this introduction to the postwar social history of the arts in Japan, I have benefited from the kind help of many friends. I am especially indebted to Kawahara Hiroshi for generous hospitality during 1980-1981 when I was a visiting fellow at Waseda University. The following persons in Japan also kindly aided my studies: Akimoto Ritsuo, Isamu and Kazuko Amemiya, William Crocker, Vanessa Geiger, Gyōten Tomoo, the late Kenneth E. Heim, Ishibashi Fusako, and Tasaka Hiroshi.

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Much of the information in this volume is based on interviews, mainly conducted during 1980-1981, with persons who are well informed about the arts in Japan. Without exception the individuals listed among the sources at the back of the

A NOTE OF THANKS

book answered my questions with candor and courtesy, and I am grateful to them all for their cheerful cooperation in mapping an uncharted topic. I am especially indebted to Adachi Kenji, Hara Toshio, Honda Shingo, Inumaru Tadashi, Akiko Kanda, Dennis and Keiko Keene, Walter Nichols, Nobumoto Yasusada, Ōkawa Takeo, Donald Richie, Amaury Saint-Gilles, Tachikawa Ruriko, Tsuji Yutaka, Yano Tomomitsu, Yokoyama Tadashi, and Yoshii Chōzō.

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The editors of *Dance Research Journal* have given permission to reprint parts of my article, "Rebellion and Expression in Contemporary Japanese Dance," *Dance as Cultural Heritage: Selected Papers from the ADG/CORD Conference 1978*, *CORD Dance Research Annual XIV*, New York, Congress on Research in Dance, 1982.

Funds from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Japan Foundation, and the History Gift Fund established by an anonymous alumna of Connecticut College speeded my studies, and I am grateful to each of these sources for generous assistance.

Finally, I acknowledge the indulgence of readers in accepting a few stylistic conventions. Japanese surnames precede personal names, except in citations of most Western-language publications by Japanese authors and except for the names of a few Japanese artists, such as Seiji Ozawa, who have become well known abroad. Discursive notes appear at the foot of the page; bibliographic notes are gathered following the last chapter. Japanese-language titles of organizations mentioned in the text are listed in the index. Terms commonly employed in writing about the arts, such as "traditional," "modern,"

A NOTE OF THANKS

or “serious” (as in “serious music”), are used as conventions despite their lack of precision. For converting yen to U.S. dollars, one dollar is reckoned as 360 yen during 1945-1971, 300 yen during 1972-1976, 250 yen in 1977, 220 yen during 1978-1979, and 200 yen in 1980. Whenever possible, changes across time in expenditures on the arts are expressed as percentage changes in yen terms, to eliminate the effects of differing currency conversion rates. In principle, all information is current as of the 1980-1981 arts season and the Japanese fiscal year 1980, ending March 31, 1981.

Shimotakaido, June 1981

ARTIST AND PATRON IN
POSTWAR JAPAN



Umehara Ryūzaburō, Japan's richest painter,
attends a Ginza gallery opening in February 1980
at age 93. YOSHII GALLERIES

CHAPTER I

Art for Society's Sake

"THESE are nonsense pictures," shouted a young Tokyo artist late one afternoon in November 1980. "They are worthless junk!" With a meter-long pipe, Yamashita Kaname systematically slashed thirty-seven works by Umehara Ryūzaburō and other leading Japanese painters at the Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art; he managed to rip three million dollars' worth of oils and watercolors before he was stopped. "I want to become a famous artist," he told the security officers who seized him. "Umehara's paintings are nothing but coloring-book drawings." Why did people consider the twenty-three Umeharas he had just gashed so valuable, the attacker wondered, when his own impressionist works that had once won him a prize in Osaka were shunned in Tokyo?

The criminal pleaded guilty the next January, and curators assured the court that the damage would be repaired.¹ This Cromwellian episode raised questions about art in contemporary Japanese life that were seldom discussed during the comfortable 1960s and 1970s: Is there an accredited view of culture, maintained by an establishment of arts officials, in or out of government? What value does society place on the artist's work: the expression of beauty, the interpretation of timeless human emotions, and criticism of the surroundings? How—and how well—do the Japanese support and reward their artists?

Now so well as one might expect, according to Seiji Ozawa, the most internationally recognized Japanese artist of the 1970s: "one of the defects of Japanese society is that ordinary citizens do not feel proud of the arts and contribute to them."² It is true that individuals rarely make gifts directly to art institutions in Japan, nor do foundations or corporations take up

ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

much of the slack. During the seventies the national government increased its appropriations to modern performing-arts groups, but by the end of the decade the subsidies for fresh works still amounted to just \$5.7 million.³ As of 1980 the official Agency for Cultural Affairs devoted 40 percent of its total budget of \$200.12 million to the arts as a whole; most of the rest was used for historical preservation, protecting important cultural assets, and related programs. Prefectural and municipal bodies each made proportionately smaller provisions for the arts.

These modest but hardly insignificant figures offer only a hint of the true scope and variety of the arts in Japan today. Although direct patronage in the form of subsidies is still underdeveloped, market support for nearly every genre is very substantial. Serious music, dance, theater, and the visual arts in Japan are overwhelmingly commercial: they are mostly financed by income earned from ticket sales, advertising, recording, radio and television, the sale of products and services, and revenues from professional instruction.^a This is equally true for the traditional performing arts, which are just as marketable as the modern genres introduced from Europe during the past century. And it is also true for the more popular forms of art.

For perhaps as long as any other nation, Japan has had a thriving popular culture. Even in so prosperous and media-saturated a society as contemporary Japan, higher culture and popular culture have not become indistinguishable; there is much vitality and satisfaction in each. Whether the nonprofit, higher-culture sector is still elitist, as it once was, seems doubtful. If elitist means achieving excellence and populist means providing access, to borrow the formula of Livingston L. Biddle, Jr., the postwar Japanese arts have almost certainly become both.⁴ Now that 90 percent of the population considers

^a Dick Netzer estimates that 85 percent of the arts sector in the United States is commercially financed. Netzer, *The Subsidized Muse: Public Support of the Arts in the United States*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 12.

itself middle class, a huge audience exists for the arts in the broadest sense—popular and higher, live and recorded, verbal and nonverbal, literary as well as plastic and performed arts. Cultural life in the form of attendance or participation in an art activity has grown more diversified and more widely diffused throughout the country during the past thirty years than at any time in Japan's history.

The pages that follow offer an introduction to the social history of the arts in postwar Japan, mainly painting, sculpture, print making, and the live performing arts, both traditional and modern. The focus is on the relatively narrow non-profit portion of the total industry where the greatest risks, both of innovation and revival, are taken in the name of art. A great deal of interesting art lies outside this focus, but the genres treated here are useful prisms for refracting the modern experience of the arts in Japanese culture as a whole.

The aim is to show how and why the Japanese have supported the arts, especially those that are the most commercially precarious, during the period from the mid-1950s to 1980. The mid-fifties seem a useful starting point for several reasons. The economy regained its prewar level of output in 1955 and began to grow, almost without pause, at an average rate in real terms of 11 percent a year until the world oil crisis in 1973. (From 1973 to 1980 Japan continued to outperform the other main industrial economies.) The first all-new stage for modern drama, the Haiyūza, opened in Tokyo in April 1954 and initiated a new phase in Western-style theater in Japan. The contemporary era in dance dates precisely from Martha Graham's visit to Japan in November 1955, and the following year was the first major exhibit that presented Japanese artists side by side with their counterparts from abroad. The mid-1950s also mark the beginnings of the postwar arts establishment, an informal but very tangible system that has rewarded those who succeed by its rules but frustrated others, such as the painting slasher Yamashita.

This inquiry into the social nature of art is not meant to be an essay in art criticism, although interpretive remarks are

ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

sprinkled here and there. In thinking about art and life in contemporary Japan, it is worth remembering W. H. Auden's observation that the historian of society can say why Shakespeare's poetry is different from Browning's but not why it is better. Without seeking esthetic judgments, readers of history are invited to consider the place of art in postwar Japan, confident that they can "look for social meaning without soiling the face of beauty."⁵

THE COMPASS OF MIDDLE-CLASS CULTURE

If the philosopher Suzanne Langer is correct that "all art is the creation of perceptible forms expressive of human feelings,"⁶ astonishingly diverse forms of expression, reflecting people's esthetic and emotional needs at various levels of taste, have appeared in Japan since World War Two. Statistics are scarce, but there is no doubt that the arts sector in the widest sense has generally flourished, although not uniformly for each of its components, during the past three decades.

The visual and performing arts as gainful occupations underwent a considerable transformation after the mid-1950s. Today there are about 30,000 professional visual artists in Japan, double the number in 1955,^b and there are another 170,000 amateurs who produce art objects for exhibition.⁷ Only a few hundred artists, at best, make a living exclusively from selling their works. Nearly all those who are considered professionals have side jobs in teaching, commercial design, advertising, or the other commercial mass media. About 1,000 sculptors currently turn out works for sale, of whom Iino Kiichi, president of the Contemporary Sculpture Center in Tokyo, considers only thirty "true professionals."⁸ Many thousands of persons produce prints, but only 500 or 600 of them regard print making as their main occupation.⁹ Perhaps

^b The figure excludes 40,000 class A architects (1973). See Noboru Kawazoe, *Contemporary Japanese Architecture*, trans. by David Griffith, Tokyo, Kokusai Kōryū Kikin, 2nd ed., 1973, p. 15; Robin Boyd, *New Directions in Japanese Architecture*, New York, George Braziller, 1968, p. 31.

2,500 professionals create calligraphy and another 3,500 work at crafts. Many people in Japan, as elsewhere, use more than one medium, but most of the country's visual artists are painters—more than 20,000 of them classed as professionals—who produce for a domestic art market estimated in 1980 at \$750 million.^c About half of them paint in the modern Western style, with oils and other contemporary materials, and the other half work in the Japanese style, mainly using watercolors but also ink.¹⁰ But the distinction between Western and Japanese styles has become one basically of artistic factions since World War Two. In theme and technique the two are often indistinguishable, and between them Japan has been producing more paintings than any other country for at least twenty years.¹¹

Not even dealers are sure how many persons buy and sell art for a living in Japan, but a good guess is that there are about 1,500 art galleries in Tokyo and 2,000 in the whole country. Something like four-fifths of them are exclusively for rent, without stock on consignment or by commission, where artists can hold shows of their own and hope to catch the attention of critics as well as customers.^d At least two-thirds of the galleries opened in the 1970s when the Japanese art market soared. Nine of every ten works sold during that decade were produced by Japanese artists.¹²

Corporate and individual collectors accounted for most of the purchases, since Japan in 1980 still had relatively few

^c The estimate of Segi Shin'ichi, president, Joint Art Research Institute, Tokyo. This figure represents the annual volume of retail sales of oils, watercolors, graphics, sculpture, calligraphy, and other media by Japanese artists in the Tokyo market, where nearly all the high-price art in Japan is sold. Segi estimates that the value of foreign art sold in Tokyo in 1980 was another \$250 million. Very little contemporary Japanese art is exported. Segi interview, December 9, 1980.

^d The figures include commercial establishments handling works of art, excluding curios and ordinary folk-crafts, from all eras and parts of the world. The overwhelming number of nonrental galleries deal in contemporary Japanese paintings. Segi interview, December 9, 1980; Setsu Iwao interview, December 15, 1980; Watanuki Fujio interview, November 7, 1980; Yokota Shigeru interview, December 15, 1980; Yoshii Chōzō interview, October 14, 1980.

ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

public or private art museums—especially for contemporary works. In that year there were 313 art museums of all types, almost double the number in 1967, but more than two-thirds were privately operated and usually had small collections. Only two institutions as of 1980 had holdings greater than 10,000 items, the Tokyo National Museum and the Tenri Sankōkan. Total attendance at art museums in 1974 was just under 10 million, and another 30 million visited general, scientific, and historical museums.^c There is little doubt that the numbers who went to see standing exhibits at art museums grew somewhat during the seventies,¹³ but special shows at department stores and public exhibit halls continued to attract the largest crowds, as they had in the 1950s and 1960s, especially when the theme was European art of the past century.

National census figures show that theater and dance have expanded side by side with the visual arts. Between 1955 and 1975 the combined number of actors, actresses, and dancers increased by two-thirds to 37,400—even though live drama lost 40 percent of its audience. Presumably employment as television actors and actresses, especially in advertisements, more than covered the dropoff, since there are still many more professional actors and actresses than dancers even today.¹⁴

Commercial theater since the war has been dominated by two large entertainment corporations, each of which also produces movies and supplies talent to radio and television. The larger of the two in aggregate revenues, Tōhō, has specialized in modern plays and musicals since the late sixties, leaving kabuki and its derivatives to Shōchiku. Thanks to Shōchiku's support, with help also from the national theater after 1966,

^c In 1972 there were 1,821 museums of art, science, and history in the United States (Japan in 1975 had 328 in these categories). Total U.S. attendance at art museums in 1978 was estimated at 175 million. Gideon Chagy, *The New Patrons of the Arts*, New York, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1972, p. 52; Karl E. Meyer, *The Art Museum: Power, Money, Ethics*, New York, William Morrow and Company, 1979, p. 59; *Time*, December 31, 1979, p. 50; Japan, Office of the Prime Minister, Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Handbook of Japan 1980*, Tokyo, Bureau of Statistics, 1980, p. 131; Sōrifu Tōkeikyoku, *Nihon tōkei nenkan*, Tokyo, Sōrifu Tōkeikyoku, 1980, p. 614.

kabuki is once again solvent for the first time in forty years. Its success allowed *Shōchiku* to outearn *Tōhō* from the live stage in the late 1970s. Commercial theater audiences began to grow again after 1975, and *Ōkōchi Takeshi*, manager of *Tōhō's* Imperial Theater in downtown Tokyo, estimated in 1980 that paid admissions in the capital were approaching 8 million.^f The figure for the country as a whole is at least twice this size.

Among traditional genres, *bunraku* puppet theater had the most parlous existence after the war. When *Shōchiku* could no longer prop it up, the government and NHK, the public broadcasting corporation, began subsidizing *bunraku's* revival together with the city and prefecture of Osaka. Today almost 100 performers belong to the *bunraku* association, which presents two-week programs four times a year in Tokyo, and the same in Osaka, to a total audience of about 150,000. Performances of *nō* theater that are open to the public attract roughly the same numbers. *Kabuki*, by contrast, has about 350 actors, all but fifty of them under direct or indirect contract to *Shōchiku*. *Kabuki* plays ten months a year at the *Kabukiza* theater in Tokyo, eight at the national theater, and shorter engagements elsewhere in Tokyo as well as in Nagoya, Kyoto, and Osaka before 1.5 million customers.¹⁵ Its modern offshoot, *shinpa*, is likewise viable because of *Shōchiku's* entrepreneurship. Founded in 1887 and already considered a traditional art today, *shinpa* has about sixty-five actors and normally operates six months a year at the newly rebuilt *Shinbashi Enbujō* theater in Tokyo.¹⁶

For all its hand-crafted inefficiency, live theater is still the artistic core of drama, and in Japan the modern theatrical movement known as *shingeki* is the artistic core of live theater. *Shingeki*, which began in the first decade of this century, presents nonmusical plays, whether by Japanese or foreign play-

^f The estimate includes commercial plays, musicals, *kabuki*, and revues. *Ōkōchi Takeshi* interview, November 19, 1980; Takeshi Okochi, "The Theatrical Situation in Tokyo and the Imperial Theatre," conference paper for International Box Office Managers Conference, Atlanta, January 1981, p. 6.

ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

wrights, done in the manner of the modern Western stage. In practice all European and American drama short of the contemporary avant-garde, including Euripides and Shakespeare, is considered shingeki. With strong support from organized labor, shingeki grew robust after the war and drew large audiences to its realistic productions throughout the fifties. After being whipped by factionalism, commercialism, television, and new underground troupes in the 1960s, Japan's modern theater sought out fresh audiences in the seventies and today attracts more than 2 million customers nationwide.^g Virtually all its plays are staged not by performers chosen through auditions but by permanent production companies, which perform for set engagements because theater space is tight and Japanese promoters shirk the indefiniteness of an open-ended run.¹⁷ Although many avant-garde or underground productions are of the highest artistic significance in the Japanese theater world, the combined attendance at all such performances probably does not exceed 100,000 per year.^h

Even slimmer audiences turn out for concerts of contemporary music, most of them offering works by the two or three dozen most active Japanese composers. Altogether perhaps 150 persons compose art-music in Japan today, nearly all of it in the current international idiom, but many of them write for traditional Japanese instruments as well. Tokyo is unquestionably the music capital of the country, with hundreds of concerts and recitals each month in contemporary,

^g Shingeki companies put on straight plays that might appear on or Off-Broadway, mainly the latter. Okōchi estimates that 6.6 million persons see shingeki, musicals, and commercial dramas each year in Tokyo. About 120 of the country's 135 shingeki groups are based in the Tokyo region, even though 70 percent of the audience for shingeki is now found on the road. In 1979-1980 Broadway alone drew 8.3 million during its first forty-six weeks. Okochi, "Theatrical Situation," p. 6; *New York Times*, May 11, 1980.

^h Kara Jūrō estimates the attendance for his well-known Red Tent Situation Theater (Jōkyō Gekijō) troupe at 15,000-20,000 per year. Satoh Makoto, leader of Theater 68/71 (also known as the Black Tent), reportedly puts the population of avant-garde theatergoers at 9,000 nationwide. Kara interview, November 10, 1980; David Goodman, "Satoh Makoto and Japanese Underground Theater," seminar paper, Japan-United States Educational Commission, Tokyo, January 30, 1981.

classical Western, and traditional Japanese music. Iwaki Hiroyuki, lifetime conductor of the NHK orchestra, thinks that "Tokyo is probably the world's biggest music city."¹⁸ The 1975 census showed that 45 percent of the country's 65,600 professional musicians were clustered in the Tokyo region. Most of the increase in the national total (triple the 1955 figure) came about because 30,000 additional women became professional musicians during 1960-1975: by the mid-seventies one-third of all musicians were women between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine. Another 20,000 persons, many of them women, teach music in elementary and secondary schools.¹⁹

Tokyo is the home of eight full-scale symphony orchestras playing regular seasons for subscribers, but the number is misleading because the country as a whole supports only fifteen orchestras that can be considered professional. There are another forty off-campus amateur orchestral groups.¹ The Tokyo orchestras average three performances a week and go on the road regularly to build audiences throughout the country. Koshimura Sadanao, manager of the Japan Orchestra Association, puts the annual audience for the nation's professional orchestras at 3 million,²⁰ about what it was in 1970 but now more geographically spread out.

Japanese instrumentalists, especially string players, perform with major orchestras and chamber groups around the world. By one estimate, 400 Japanese musicians are currently employed in Europe and another 100 in the United States.²¹ On the other hand, the number of foreign performers visiting Japan for brief engagements reached the remarkable sum of 20,000 in 1980, triple the number a decade earlier and a major worry to domestic musicians and their unions. Although many of them are jazz combos from neighboring Asian countries

¹ In 1975 the United States had more than ninety professional and 1,300 amateur orchestras of all types. See Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, *The Arts, Economics and Politics: Four National Perspectives*, New York, Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, 1975, p. 65; Chagy, *New Patrons*, p. 48.

ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

playing small-town cabarets, one performance of classical Western music out of every five is now given by foreign musicians—who typically draw larger crowds, for more than twice the ticket price, than their Japanese counterparts.²²

“The national audience for opera is gradually increasing,” according to Kawachi Shōzō, the executive director of Japan’s largest opera company, Nikikai. He estimates that the country’s eleven main opera groups draw 100,000 persons to their performances each year, and other more informal companies and chamber operas have their own smaller audiences. Since Nikikai was formed in 1953, there has been a larger increase in the annual number of performances than in the national pool of opera-goers, which is about 10,000 for domestic performances and three times that number when a famous company visits from abroad.²³

But orchestral, instrumental, and vocal performances of classical Western music provide a living for only a small minority of the country’s professional musicians—perhaps 2,000 at most. Thousands more are employed playing popular music, both contemporary and premodern, both foreign and Japanese, and a few of them have become television and recording stars. Doubtless the single most important source of income for musicians is teaching, whether as one of the 15,000 who give lessons for the giant Yamaha and Kawai piano companies or as a home-studio instructor in traditional Japanese singing.²⁴ No one seems sure how many people study music in Japan, but in 1976 a majority of all elementary and junior high-school students reported they were taking after-hour lessons in one art form or another. The best estimate is that about 1.5 million people (many of them school-age children) are now studying piano and another 500,000 the violin.²⁵ Each year more than 350,000 pianos and 40,000 violins are manufactured in Japan, and by 1979 nearly one household in six had a piano (almost two-thirds had stereos, on which to play the products of the nation’s billion-dollar-a-year record industry).²⁶

Hardest of all to determine is how many persons are study-

ing traditional Japanese music. In 1977, a typical year, there were just 215 public concerts in Tokyo of traditional instrumental music (samisen, koto, shakuhachi) or singing (kouta, hauta, nagauta). But most hōgaku, as traditional music is known, is played for private audiences, and no one knows their size. Thanks to amateur patronage from businessmen, kouta ballads are the most popular genre among pupils of hōgaku, with perhaps 600,000 to 700,000 students nationwide. Koto, with approximately half a million, is now slightly larger than samisen, and another 250,000 to 300,000 pupils are thought to be learning nagauta (long epic songs).²⁷ Nō is mainly studied by women for its elegant dance technique, but considerably more than 100,000 businessmen are taking lessons in nō chanting. Other traditional styles have correspondingly smaller followings. The total number who pay to study all forms of music in Japan is now greater than ever before, but it probably does not match the 6 million who are learning floral art (another 2.3 million are currently studying tea ceremony).¹

No art form in postwar Japan has relied more greatly on teaching, or grown more vigorously as a result, than dance—so much so that Japan is now second only to the United States in numbers of professional dancers. In 1980 total audiences at public concerts, which represent only a fraction of the overall attendance, were about the same as those in America in 1965 (roughly 1 million). Altogether there are about 2,000 professional ballet artists, 4,000 professional contemporary dancers, and 50,000 or more licensed teacher/performers of classical Japanese dance. All three genres, like traditional Japanese music, folk dancing, and nō drama, hold far more private recitals than public performances. The latter happen mainly in the big cities, but the total number who see ballet, contemporary dance, and classical Japanese dance each year is very much greater if private events are included.²⁸

¹ These are 1979 estimates, probably conservative ones since tea and flower schools customarily understate their memberships and revenues for tax purposes. *Statistical Handbook of Japan* 1980, p. 137.

ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

Money to support the public concerts comes mostly from the profits of teaching dance to more than 700,000 pupils in ballet, 800,000 in contemporary dance, and 1 million in classical Japanese dance (*nō*, which includes dances of its own, also has well over a million students). The total dance population has nearly doubled in the past fifteen years. There are four main schools of classical dance, but teaching is so lucrative that more than 200 other artists have established themselves independently as heads of competing schools, nearly half of them in the past ten years. There are more than a dozen major studios in both ballet and contemporary dance, but in the same way as classical Japanese dance most of the instruction takes place in the teacher's home or neighborhood studio.²⁹ Like learning to play the piano or the koto, Japan's new middle-class families have come to consider studying dance an excellent way to cultivate refinement in their children—particularly their daughters, who form the great majority of pupils taking private lessons in every art form except kouta and perhaps nagauta, the favorites of many businessmen.

THE ARTIST IN POSTWAR SOCIETY

The arts have blossomed to this degree since the mid-1950s because they serve the social system, not just the artist's need for expression. They have flowered in a cultural climate buffeted by two paradoxical elements. One is the explosive diversification of artistic modes in Japan after a decade and a half of relative cultural homogeneity, 1937-1952. The other is the notable standardization of taste and leisure that took place as more and more Japanese thronged the cities, underwent uniform schooling, bought TVs and mass-market publications, and aspired to the accepted symbols of middle-class life—including the arts. Hand in hand with this “streamlining” of cultural life, as George Orwell once put it in another context, has come the Japanese government's policy of diffusing what it calls “outstanding works of higher culture” to all corners of the country.

Diversity and dissemination are praiseworthy goals, in the view of most Japanese artists, but each has inherent hazards. Diversifying since the war has often been equated with adopting the latest artistic fad from abroad, sometimes at the risk of abandoning indigenous expressions or, more simply, embracing mediocrity. And spreading any chosen set of art forms to a public already growing more standard in habits and preferences naturally alarms those who fear the uncritical absorption of an establishment view of culture. Diversity in the arts and uniformity in the social matrix are scarcely unique to either Japan or the postwar era, but they carry great cultural weight among a people already homogeneous who for more than a century have often leapt at the chance to diversify if it meant adopting new movements and styles from the West.

Without exception every major genre in the modern visual and performing arts possessed a multiformity in 1980 that hardly existed in Japan twenty-five or thirty years earlier. The reason was much more than just a matter of how much activity a wealthier public could support. The new variety of both creative works and revivals, starting in the mid-fifties, was partly a national response to wartime austerity and postwar rehabilitation.^k But more importantly, nearly all the expressions of beauty and of sentiment that brightened the Japanese artistic landscape after the mid-fifties took place in terrain suddenly exposed, after a long period of darkness, to the

^k A minority of critics in Japan, citing censorship early in the American occupation and restrictions on labor toward the end, believe the military authorities enforced an antidemocratic cultural policy during 1945-1952. The boom of interest in American popular culture since the mid-1950s, in one view, is a sign of "American imperialist cultural aggression" that has caused the "deterioration" of Japanese culture. Yamashita Fumio, *Atarashii sei-ji to bunka*, Tokyo, Shin Nihon Shuppansha, 1975, p. 17. See Hidaka Rokurō, "Sengo bunka undōshi no susume," *Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi geppō*, 25, May 1977, p. 5; H. Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture: A Short History*, New York, Praeger Publishers, expanded ed., 1977, pp. 235-236. Roland Palsson points out the meagerness of mass culture but also a reduced fear of state manipulation of the arts in most countries after 1945. Palsson, "Cultural Policy for an Open Society," in Stephen A. Greyser, ed., *Cultural Policy and Arts Administration*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Summer School Institute in Arts Administration, Harvard University Press, 1973, pp. 6-30.

ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

sunlight and the storms of art movements from abroad. Japanese painters, playwrights, composers, and choreographers were stirred by the same movements that stimulated their colleagues overseas, especially existentialism, the imbroglio over socialist realism, and the postmodern rejection of modernism that led to a brief marriage of the avant-garde visual and stage arts,¹ notably in performance art.³⁰ No less than artists elsewhere, the Japanese offered disparate answers to each of these worldwide currents, whether by turning to superrealism in prints and design or to its antithesis, nativist romanticism, in architecture, the underground theater, and progressive ballet. Most of all, Japanese artists during the past quarter-century have grappled ingeniously with the question of national identity in the most international age in Japanese history.^m Even traditional Japanese music and classical dance have experimented with contemporary compositions in response to the remarkable public preoccupation, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, with what it means to be Japanese. Diversification, in brief, has meant more than a simple adaptation of foreign techniques or trends.

Standardized pastimes, on the other hand, attracted larger and larger numbers of new followers and raised questions about how the new artistic variety could expect to survive.

¹ Elements of Buddhist thought found in the plays of Mishima Yukio, Abe Kōbō, and others cannot mask their strongly existential nature. The same is true of the novels of Abe and Ōe Kenzaburō. Much Japanese contemporary dance, in which the movement rejects canons of truth and exercises free choice, is consonant with postwar existentialism. Few if any foreign artists have received more adulation than Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir during their visit to Japan in the autumn of 1966. On socialist realism, cf. the many international literary meetings held in Tokyo in the 1950s and 1960s, the artistic contacts with China after 1957, and the ruckus over a convention attended by members of the Japanese P.E.N. Club in Seoul in June 1970. See *Zusetsu Nihon bunkashi taikai*, XIII, *gendai*, Tokyo, Shōgakusan, 1968, pp. 264-268; Asahi Shinbunsha, *Asahi nenkan* 1967, Tokyo, Asahi Shinbunsha, 1967, p. 717; *Asahi nenkan* 1971, p. 691.

^m Landmarks of the debate included the security-treaty crisis of 1960, the Olympiad and the Chinese nuclear-bomb tests in 1964, the Meiji centennial in 1968, and the Japan Inc. discussions of the 1970s. See *Asahi nenkan* 1966, pp. 636-637, for a summary of views on the meaning of the postwar era.

Along with higher earnings came more free hours, especially for people employed in the urban economy. Family spending on reading, music, art lessons, and the like was nearly five times higher in 1978 than in 1965, prompting the government to claim in a white paper on leisure that the "Japanese engage in cultural activities" in their spare time, "not merely seeking release" like their counterparts in Western Europe.³¹ For men, according to statistics published by the prime minister's office in 1980, the favorite cultural activities are listening to music, seeing movies, and playing musical instruments. Women prefer flower arranging, listening to music, watching films, playing instruments, and tea ceremony.³² Using different categories, the Leisure Development Center estimated in 1980 that photography was roughly twice as popular among adults as painting, drawing, or writing prose or Chinese-style poetry, and three times as popular as writing haiku or waka verse. The leisure center calculates that virtually the same numbers of persons attend art shows as serious Western music concerts and that modern theater and kabuki are each about two-thirds as popular as art shows and concerts.³³

As in the United States, education is more useful even than income or place of residence in predicting who will take part in the arts. The education ministry has estimated that college-educated citizens are nearly 60 percent more likely to participate than high-school graduates.³⁴ Seeking various artistic outlets is now routine among well-educated families, but it is less certain that other new middle-class households escape the cultural uniformity of television and comics during their leisure time. In short, there is a growing impulse toward standard cultural expression in Japan today, but not necessarily a standardization of cultural product.

Japan by 1980 had virtually completed the democratization of access to culture that began when heavy industry grew and the cities swelled during the first quarter of this century.³⁵ Once the province of the privileged, the arts are now available to nearly everyone, often at bargain prices. The automatic prestige they used to accord their practitioners is diminished,

ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

but extra payments will assure the would-be pupil a teacher or school with more cachet. As with education after 1945, broader public participation in the arts has prompted people to find clever ways to reinforce status, by assigning higher value to certain institutions, studios, and individuals than others—preserving hierarchy and assuring equality of entree but not of attainment. The difference with arts activity, compared with education, is that pure merit is less often recognized, whereas money and length of study are correspondingly more rewarded.

The ability to confer status is only one aspect of the growing popularity of art. Getting involved with the arts helps people escape routines or fill out blank spaces, as for mothers with older children. It provides a chance to test one's identity and to fix one's values, particularly in a society where religion has lost much of its reality. The great concert halls and cultural centers built around the country during the 1970s have become the temples and shrines of the late twentieth century. Someone who performs in them, Tachikawa Ruriko of Star Dancers Ballet, predicts that "the Japanese people will more and more start seeking art and assisting it as they realize material prosperity isn't fully satisfying."³⁶ In this vein, what William P. Malm says about Japanese music is appropriate for all the arts:

Japanese arts are often characterized as being able to achieve a maximum effect with a minimum of material. It is in this way that one skillful performance of one shakuhachi piece may be able to move a listener as much in five minutes as does a Mahler symphony in an hour. We must not evaluate the last thirty years of music in Japan in terms of data; it must be judged in terms of value. Every layer of music in Japan, from popular through the traditional classical, is viable and often it is beautiful. It would seem that a sensitive and musically flexible Japanese can have the best of all musical worlds in Japan today.³⁷

This laudable aspiration is tempered by at least three important enigmas facing artists in present-day Japan. One is that despite all their education and participation in the arts, Japanese audiences are still dazzled by blockbuster events from abroad. Nineteen seventy-four was "the year of the spectacle," a good illustration of how crowds will turn out for famous stars. The visitors that year included the Munich opera, Maria Callas, the Greek national theater, the national French contemporary ballet, Martha Graham, the New York Philharmonic led by both Bernstein and Boulez, and the runaway celebrity of the year, *Mona Lisa*. Western culture, as the *Asahi nenkan* noted limply, "seems to have unlimited appeal." The interest continued right through 1980, when foreign art shows reached an all-time high and gave no sign of abating thereafter.

Yet however cosmopolitan city life has become, and whatever the attraction of exotic art objects,³⁸ a survey taken in 1980 disclosed that 64 percent of Japanese had no wish to associate with foreigners.ⁿ The ambivalence about foreign contact is a paradox Japanese artists have had to confront throughout the postwar period. Audiences welcome Japanese artists who have had professional experience abroad, but only up to a point; the painter or musician who emulates foreign models too closely is apt to draw criticism for abandoning native culture. For their part, many artists feel slighted when the public adulates overseas visitors and ignores Japan's own performers.

A second impasse for many artists is the problem of artistic individuality in a newly democratized country of tightly knit

ⁿ Total foreign visitors to Japan were 366,649 persons in 1965, 811,672 in 1975, and 1,290,000 in 1980. As of 1980, about 4 million Japanese travel abroad each year. *Nihon tōkei nenkan*, 1980, p. 275; *Japan Times*, March 10, 1981. Amano Ryōichi, executive, *Mainichi* newspapers and long-term resident of Great Britain, cautions against making too much of the poll on foreign contacts. He notes that most Japanese "are interested in Western material culture, not interpersonal contact. . . . The language barrier is the most difficult bar. Japanese feel embarrassed not to be able to communicate with foreigners, so some are shy and say they'd prefer not to associate with them." Amano interview, December 22, 1980.

ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

social groups. If everyone has an equal chance, some ask, why does social standardization so often seem to snuff out one's access to an audience? Alienation from accepted social standards and preferences is by no means unique to Japan or to the postwar era, but in the 1970s it produced a new "age of introversion" reminiscent of the autobiographical novel-writing two generations earlier.³⁹ Artists, like other professionals in Japan, are very conscious that they lack the automatic status conferred by belonging to a governmental or corporate bureaucracy. A number of them believe that big business and the state have monopolized wealth, power, and social standing, leaving artists very little space in a tightly contested social order and damping criticism in the bargain. Many would agree with the writer Michishita Kyōko that the arts "are usually regarded more as entertainments than as serious critiques of society,"⁴⁰ a diversion for escaping the important business of governing and making money. Artists everywhere risk being mistaken as mere entertainers, but it is understandable that the great centralization of money and authority in postwar Tokyo seems menacing to many of them because of its capacity to blunt their flair, and perhaps even the individuality of their art. However democratic the society has become, stepping out of line still invites censure.

A third problem for postwar artists is their endemic preoccupation with technique at the cost of expression, especially in modern genres. The art scholar and critic Etō Shun likens contemporary Japanese painters to musicians who win international contests "because of their technical competence in classical routines." But painters and musicians often "lack a feeling, an idealistic appreciation for the spirit of the works." No doubt the engagement with technique is partly the product of caution toward the outside world. Hase Takao, managing director of the NHK orchestra, says that "Japan mastered the techniques of Western music in a hurry but is still far behind Europe in its spirit." The film maker Kurosawa Akira concurs: "it may look as if Japan is very wealthy to the outside world,

and this may be true in a material sense. But it's not true in a spiritual sense."⁴¹

To risk the embarrassment of flawed technique or a memory lapse onstage is apparently far more fearsome to many performers than failing to capture the mood or passion of the work itself.^o Still it is well not to press the attack too hard, since Japan a century ago discovered the fallacy of distinguishing sharply between technique and value. Although no art form is a truly international language, few concert-goers would deny that interpretations of Grieg or Graham by top Japanese performers are based on more than technical mastery alone.

PATRONS AND AUDIENCES

Until very recently, Japanese artists have enjoyed only modest patronage from government agencies, private corporations, or wealthy individuals. They have had to rely on market support from audiences and pupils by organizing particularistic ties with specific consumers. The principal features of patronage since the war have been the systematic cultivation of selected clienteles by arts leaders in each genre and the recent enormous increase in subsidies from the state.

A key problem for postwar artists has been the lack of a true public for their works. Every art form, traditional or modern, visual or stage, depends on private audiences to a degree unimagined in Western Europe or North America. Haryū Ichirō, an essayist on art and literature, believes that the idea of "the public" was closely identified with the Japanese state between 1890 and 1945 and that since the war Japan has had little sense of the public interest, only a set of separate private ones.⁴² Relatives and friends of the performers commonly make

^o The contemporary dancer Kei Takei, based in New York, criticizes Japanese dancers for "attempting to go very much the technical route," and the conductor Iwaki Hiroyuki notes that most Japanese speak of "performing," not "playing," their musical instruments. Takei, quoted in Cynthia Lyle, *Dancers on Dancing*, New York, Drake Publishers, Inc., 1977, p. 155; Iwaki, *Iwaki ongaku kyōshitsu*, Tokyo, Kōbunsha, 1977, pp. 10, 89.

ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

up 90 percent of the turnout for opera, dance, and music concerts in both the premodern and modern styles. Most who attend one-person exhibitions are somehow connected with the artist whose work is on display. Many theater troupes force their actors and actresses to sell tickets to family or friends. Foreign artists who are anxious to appear in Japan are sometimes deceived by the large numbers studying their métier, unaware that these pupils will usually attend a performance only if their own teacher or someone else with whom they have a tangible link is on the program.⁴³

The custom of painting or performing for private audiences stems from the distinctive headmaster (*iemoto*) system of the traditional Japanese arts. A headmaster is the leader of a fictive kin group, patterned after the premodern family, that forms around a teacher in the traditional arts and certain other pastimes. Normally an artist performs only before others trained in the same school of instruction. Today the system prevails in *nô* theater, *kyôgen*, traditional Japanese music, and classical Japanese dance, as well as crafts and skills like tea ceremony, flower arranging, incense sniffing, martial techniques, sumo wrestling, and even certain new religious organizations. *Bunraku* has stage names but no headmaster system; *kabuki* does not use the term and has no amateur students, but as a hierarchical method of controlling the art through heritable roles "in actuality it is a kind of *iemoto*."⁴⁴

In the Tokugawa period there was a strong headmaster system in scholarship and painting, remnants of which can still be found in university professorships and teacher-pupil relationships in Japanese-style painting. The open-submission artists' associations, with their networks of members throughout the country, function socially if not economically like a headmaster system. Even more informal versions include the circles of pupils who gather around teachers in piano, violin, ballet, and contemporary dance; the modern theater company also bears a resemblance to the headmaster method of perpetuating an explicit artistic approach.⁴⁵

In the traditional arts, the system transmits a pattern of

performance that includes both techniques and the intangible nuances of the particular school. Pupils imitate both the teacher's general bearing and specific way of executing the art, and they are forbidden to express their own interpretations until they themselves become authorized teachers. In the most extreme form, the artistic pattern is a secret not to be revealed to outsiders, although the publishing industry and television have made most of the technical feats available to anyone who is interested. But learning an art requires more than developing the skills themselves. It fosters a way of life involving unspoken understandings among the initiated, and the headmaster system best imparts the collective mood and spirit. This method maintains a premodern emphasis on the act of singing or dancing rather than the contemporary focus on the work of art itself.

Each school of interpretation has amateur students who support it economically and supply the next generation of teachers. In previous centuries pupils apprenticed themselves to teachers and became virtual members of the family, and even today a strong superior-subordinate relationship reminiscent of the feudal bond between lord and follower continues to prevail for as long as the pupil studies the art. Students are obliged to perpetuate the teacher's approach and may not switch to another school or even another instructor in the same one. For their part, teachers reward their pupils' loyalty by patronizing them.

The result is that authority is an even more important attribute than skill. The pupil who studies classical Japanese dance for six or seven years, almost regardless of talent, can be expected to take a stage name (*natori*) for a fee of \$5,000 or more and enjoy the right to teach.⁴⁶ Tea schools confer tea names, and other arts grant licenses and certificates at regular intervals, not necessarily to recognize artistic achievement but to reward longevity with symbols of membership in the group. Only persons with stage names in classical Japanese dance have the right to change scripts or alter the choreography, but even so the headmaster always retains the right to expel any-