



Nagauta: The Heart of Kabuki Music

William P. Malm

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This study of Japanese music explore Nagauta or literally "long song"—the delicate and complex music that accompanies kabuki theater—in great detail.

The Kabuki theater of Japan has achieved a growing reputation as one of the world's most brilliant achievements in the field of theater. And the number of studies made on the subject in the West has been considerable. Yet, in spite of the fact that so much of the unique brilliance of the kabuki stage depends on the character of its music, the manner in which it is used, and its integral connection with the development of the dramatic impact of the plays, very little has been written on this phase of the genre.

Of particular interest are the attempts to explore the various approaches to form music in the vast repertoire of this living art music. The playing techniques of the instruments are explained, and the relations of each instrument's music to the vocal line and to the overall design is shown.

The analysis is accompanied by two compete transcription of nagauta in Western notation. These transcriptions are the first complete scores of nagauta ever printed. Additional musical examples, bibliography, discography, and glossary-index add value to the text.

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