

World Religions in Greater Indianapolis Teaching Module

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Humanities Discipline: Music Appreciation (HUMA 118)

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World Religion: Buddhism

Teaching Module Title: Buddhist Music

- Note: This module is intended as one lesson in a multi-lesson, auto-instructional unit on Religion & Music. The unit is one of several Term Assignment options; others include Concert Report, Term Paper, and Global Perspectives.

Teaching Module Goals:

1. The student will acquire familiarity with universal principles of form in instrumental music and their manifestation in the music of the Japanese gagaku tradition and the togaku orchestra.
2. The student will hear important features of music for the Japanese togaku orchestra in its performance of music for Buddhist contemplation and compare them with features of Classical orchestral music.
3. The student will acquire familiarity with throat singing and its use in the chanting of Tibetan Buddhist monks.
4. The student will demonstrate an understanding of how a Buddhist worldview is expressed in John Cage's, *4'33"*.

Assigned Readings and/or Websites:

HUMA 118 Music Appreciation required textbooks:

- Joseph Kerman and Gary Tomlinson, *Listen*, 8e
 - pp196-198 (Global Perspectives: "Musical Form: Two Case Studies from Asia")
 - [Etenraku](#) (Lit. "Music of Divinity")
 - <https://ilg.wwnorton.com/kerman8/107-japanese>
 - Click on this live link or copy and paste <https://ilg.wwnorton.com/kerman8/107-japanese>
 - Go to "Chapter 14 – "Other Classical Genres"
 - Requires access code for Norton website
 - [Gagaku: Etenraku](#) [YouTube - alternate media]
 - pp44-48 (Chapter 6: "The Middle Ages")
 - [Anonymous \(c. ninth century\), Plainchant antiphon, "In paradisum"](#)
 - pp57-58 (Global Perspectives: "Sacred Chant")
 - [Qur'anic recitation, "Ya sin"](#) [Note: This link must be updated for each course.]
- Oxford Music Online (Must sign in with Campus Connect login)
 - [Cage, John \(Milton\)](#)
 - *YouTube:* [John Cage's 4'33"](#)
 - *YouTube:* [John Cage about silence](#)

Other books / websites:

- [Throat-singing \(Encyclopedia Britannica\)](#)
- *YouTube:* [Tibetan monks throat-singing – Specialized form of chanting](#)

Study Questions and/or Discussions Prompts for Students:

To answer questions 1-11 below, read the pages in Kerman and listen to *Etenraku*.

1. **Multiple choice:** *Etenraku* opens with the following instruments:
 - a. ryuteki, kakko, and tsuridaiko. [CORRECT]
 - b. biwa and sho.
 - c. gakuso and biwa.
 - d. gakuso and sho.
2. **Multiple choice:** The form of *Etenraku* is characterized in three ways. One way is:
 - a. the use of fugal entries for contrast.
 - b. an ordered repetition of three different phrases that make up the melody. [CORRECT]
 - c. sections of homophony alternating with monophony.
 - d. changes in meter.
3. **Multiple choice:** An important formal feature of *Etenraku*, as well as of much of traditional Japanese music, is:
 - a. the use of fugal entries for contrast.
 - b. changes in meter.
 - c. a slowing of the tempo as the performance proceeds.
 - d. an increase of the tempo as the performance proceeds. [CORRECT]
4. **Multiple choice:** Unlike much European Baroque music, *Etenraku* avoids:
 - a. a clearer marking of the meter as the performance proceeds.
 - b. a quickening of the beat.
 - c. virtuosic playing. [CORRECT]
 - d. repeating phrases.
5. **Multiple choice:** Japan's traditional music for the court's ceremony and ritual is called gagaku, from Chinese characters that mean:
 - a. "king's music."
 - b. "royal music."
 - c. "religious music."
 - d. "elegant music." [CORRECT]
6. **Multiple choice:** Unlike European orchestras, all gagaku orchestras are dominated by:
 - a. strings.
 - b. percussion.
 - c. woodwinds. [CORRECT]
 - d. brass.
7. **Essay:** Discuss the establishment of the court orchestra in Japan and its influences.
ANSWER: Refer to p196.
8. **Essay:** What makes Japanese togaku orchestras different from European orchestras in terms of the instruments used?
ANSWER: Refer to p197.
9. **Essay:** Describe the tone color and function of the following instruments: ryuteki, sho, tsuridaiko, and gakuso.
ANSWER: Refer to pp197-198.
10. **Essay:** Briefly discuss the three characteristics of gagaku music that are heard in *Etenraku*.
ANSWER: Refer to p198.
11. **Essay:** Describe how the mood of *Etenraku* relates to the meaning of its name.
ANSWER: Refer to p198.

To answer questions 12-14 below, read [Throat-singing \(Encyclopedia Britannica\)](#) and listen to *YouTube: Tibetan monks throat-singing – Specialized form of chanting*.

12. **Fill-in-the-Blank:** Throat-singing is also called [overtone-singing].
13. **Fill-in-the-Blank:** A form of throat-singing is used by Tibetan Buddhist monks of the Dge-lugs-pa sect during [ritual] performances.
14. **Essay:** Compare this type of religious chant to the chants of the two traditions below. How is it the same? How is it different?
 - Plainchant (Christian)—pp44-48 (Chapter 6: “The Middle Ages”)
 - [Anonymous \(c. ninth century\), Plainchant antiphon, “In paradisum”](#)
 - Qur’anic recitation (Islam)—pp57-58 (Global Perspectives: “Sacred Chant”)
 - [Qur’anic recitation, “Ya sin”](#) [Note: This link must be updated for each course.]

To answer question 15 below, read [Cage, John \(Milton\)](#) and watch *YouTube: John Cage's 4'33"* and *YouTube: John Cage about silence*. Read also this more detailed account of how Cage’s religious/philosophical interests affected his composing.

*It was in these last years of the 1940s that Cage also started to develop an aesthetic of silence. His interests in Asian aesthetics moved from India to Japan, from Hindu theories to the culture of Zen Buddhism, as exemplified by the haiku master Bashō or the Ryoanji stone garden in Kyoto. Cage began to cultivate an aesthetic and spiritual silence in both his life and work. He took to heart the purpose of music as expressed by his friend Gita Sarabhai: “to quiet and sober the mind, thus making it susceptible to divine influences.” His goal became not just to evoke stillness, but to practice it, allowing his work to be as empty and flat as the raked sand of Ryoanji. In 1950 this line of thought resulted in the seminal “Lecture on Nothing” (published in *Silence: Lectures and Writings*), delivered to The Artists’ Club in New York. “I have nothing to say and I am saying it and that is poetry as I need it” was Cage’s succinct formulation of his new aesthetic. In the lecture, Cage associates this silence with the use of time-based structures; the division of the whole duration into parts exists and has integrity whether or not the composer “says anything” inside the structure. Completely static or uneventful music could fill up the duration structures – or even no music at all. Cage realized this at least as early as 1948, when he outlined his plan for a piece consisting of four-and-a-half minutes of silence, to be called “Silent Prayer.”*

This new approach to silence, his exposure to Zen texts and Japanese culture, the stimulation of his new associates and the musical vision of the Sonatas and Interludes propelled Cage into a period of tremendous creativity and production. In 1950 he completed his String Quartet in Four Parts begun while in Europe, which translated the sonic imagery of the prepared piano to the medium of string quartet. Just as each key of the prepared piano triggered a fixed, complex sonority, so in the quartet Cage worked with a limited set of sonorities (which he called a “gamut”) that were scored for each player in an unchanging way. These fixed sonorities also produce a succession of harmonies that neutralize any sense of progression, resulting in a static, aimless, “silent” harmony.

Excerpted from *Grove Music Online*: “Cage, John”; section 3. New aesthetics, silence.

15. **Essay:** How is a Buddhist worldview expressed in Cage’s most famous work, 4’33”?