

Reconsidering the Power of Music : Recovery Concerts and Songs after the 2011 Japan Earthquake

メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2021-05-06 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: 中村, 美亜 メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://doi.org/10.15021/00009764

Reconsidering the Power of Music: Recovery Concerts and Songs after the 2011 Japan Earthquake

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1. Introduction

The concept of ‘the power of music’ received remarkable attention in the aftermath of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. Although music was not a primary concern amidst the post-quake chaos, once the recovery efforts began, considerable attention was paid to musical topics. For instance, Japan’s public television station, NHK, ran a news story about a local high school chorus singing a piece called ‘Asu to iu Hi ga’ (‘Tomorrow is Sure to Come’) at an evacuation centre in which the evacuees were shown crying as they listened.¹⁾ Another news programme featured evacuees being soothed by an autistic boy’s piano playing.²⁾ Many reports were made of famous and not so famous musicians visiting the disaster areas and performing charity concerts all over the world.

Given the atmosphere, the phrase ‘the power of music’ (*ongaku no chikara* in Japanese) became a trendy keyword. The original Japanese is equivocal in meaning: it can imply the intrinsic power of music that affects people, but it also suggests musical activities’ transformative effect. Both meanings conveniently invoke music’s potential without saying what it actually is. Frequent use of the phrase inevitably invited some criticism. Music scholars and critics have been more or less reluctant to mention music’s power.³⁾ However, the abovementioned examples seem to testify that music has some ability to affect people’s hearts.

The present study aimed to investigate the post-earthquake musical activities and discuss how they empowered disaster victims. I will first introduce the study’s methodology and examine previous studies on disaster and music. I will then provide an overview of the post-earthquake musical activities and discuss a recovery concert project and recovery songs. My contention here is that the effect of music should be examined with particular attention to the relational dynamics among the different groups of people who were divided by the disaster, for example, between those who live in the disaster area and those who do not, or between those who lost their houses and those who did not.

The study of music and minorities has often been undertaken with the assumption that minorities are inherent and music has specific meanings in minority cultures. However, theoretically speaking, a minority is a cultural construct (e.g., Butler 1990,

1993), and music forms its meaning performatively (e.g., DeNora 2000; Turino 2008). Therefore, this chapter highlights the changing nature of minority–majority relations and the performative nature of musical meaning. The present study alone will not provide an innovative view of the power of music, but it will suggest how music as social mediation can empower a minority and illuminate the way musical activities can affect a minority–majority situation.⁴⁾

2. Literature Review and Method

Around the turn of the twenty-first century, new types of music studies developed. Ethnomusicology and the sociology of music, partly stimulated by new cognitive studies of music, music therapy, and arts management, have shown more interest in the practical applications of music. In his recent article, ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice (2014: 191) states that ‘in the last fifteen years or so’, ethnomusicologists have ‘embraced a new set of themes concerning the relationship of music to the social, political, economic, and ecological crises facing so many people in today’s world, a set of themes that constitutes a new form of ethnomusicology in times (and places) of trouble’. The sociology of music has also highlighted a new set of concerns, along with the development of cultural sociology (DeNora 2013). ‘Music in everyday life’ and ‘conflict and transformation’ are two topics that are discussed.⁵⁾

‘Disaster and music’ is also an emerging field of study. Zania Kish (2009), for instance, discusses the epistemological and political roles played by hip hop music after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005. She writes that while politicians and the media repeatedly described Katrina as an unprecedented disaster in the U.S., post-Katrina hip hop ‘proposed new frameworks for understanding what was happening’, voicing ‘concern for those whose representation as refugees in their own land silenced them and devalued their lives’ (Kish 2009: 688–689). Meanwhile, Jennifer Fraser (2013) introduces the music videos produced after the 2009 West Sumatra Earthquake and discusses artistic and cultural ways of grieving through audio-visual expressions. Shelley Brunt (2010), on the other hand, investigates the musical responses to New Zealand’s 2011 earthquake, focusing on four issues: official policy on funding musical responses, community strategies to raise money through music, amateur songs about life in post-earthquake Christchurch, and musical collaborations between industry, communities, and professional musicians.

Taken together, these studies suggest that whereas certain cultural and regional differences exist in the use of music, music played in the disaster area is now simultaneously accessible via the Internet to people who do not live in the area, and vice versa. Music thus mediates people in different situations. Given this fact, the current study draws attention to the multidimensionality of musical representation, considering music to be a form of social mediation (DeNora 2000, 2003; Hennion 2003).

In investigating musical activities after the 2011 Japan earthquake, I first consulted websites to ascertain what activities took place. To identify chronological trends, however, I found newspaper articles to be more informative. Numerous books and study

reports published in the few years immediately after the earthquake were also helpful in obtaining detailed information about the reported activities. As a complement to these, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork; primary research, participant observation, and in-depth interviews have also been undertaken in the course of this study.⁶⁾

3. A Post-Earthquake Overview

The Great Japan Earthquake struck on 11 March 2011. With a magnitude of 9.0, it is the most powerful earthquake that has been recorded since scientific measurements were implemented in Japan. The Tohoku region (the northeast region of Japan's Honshu Island) was severely damaged. The subsequent tsunami brought catastrophic damage to the coastal area. As of 1 September 2014, 19,074 people have been officially recorded as casualties, and 2,633 are still missing (Fire and Disaster Management 2014). The earthquake and tsunami were traumatic enough, but even worse, they triggered a nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant complex; 14,000 residents around the plant were evacuated, many of whom are unable to return home. Furthermore, problems with the aging society in Tohoku significantly hindered the region's recovery (Numazaki 2012).

As previously mentioned, to obtain an overall picture of the musical situation after the earthquake, newspaper articles were examined.⁷⁾ Almost all the music-related information pertaining to the disaster area concerned the cancellation of concerts for a month, whereas vast numbers of charity concerts and music-oriented fundraising events began in other places. Approximately one month later, mourning-themed concerts were occasionally held in relatively less damaged portions of the disaster area.⁸⁾ Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra's 'recovery concert' (*fukkō konsāto* in Japanese) was an exceptionally early attempt to resume musical activities in the disaster area. Their first chamber concert entitled *Requiescat and Hope* was held at a temple in Sendai City on March 26, only two weeks after the earthquake.⁹⁾ The orchestra then founded the Center for Recovery Through the Power of Music, Tohoku (CRPM) as an intermediate organization for developing their recovery concerts.

As evidenced by the CRPM's name, 'the power of music' became a popular phrase after the earthquake. Figure 1 shows the annual frequency of the phrase's appearance in Japan's three major national newspapers, namely *Asahi*, *Yomiuri*, and *Mainichi*, from 1985 to 2013.

The figure indicates a gradual increase from around 1994 and then an abrupt spike in 2011. Since the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake occurred in January 1995, it appears that the two earthquakes had some influence on the phrase's use. However, closer examination shows that the words 'power' and 'music' were connected in a rather ad hoc manner with no single meaning around the time of the 1995 earthquake. In the latter half of the 1990s, the phrase took on the specific meaning that music intrinsically contains some supernatural power.¹⁰⁾

Aside from 'the power of music', another frequently appearing phrase is 'to embed one's feelings in music' (in Japanese, *omoi wo komeru*), for instance, 'I will embed my

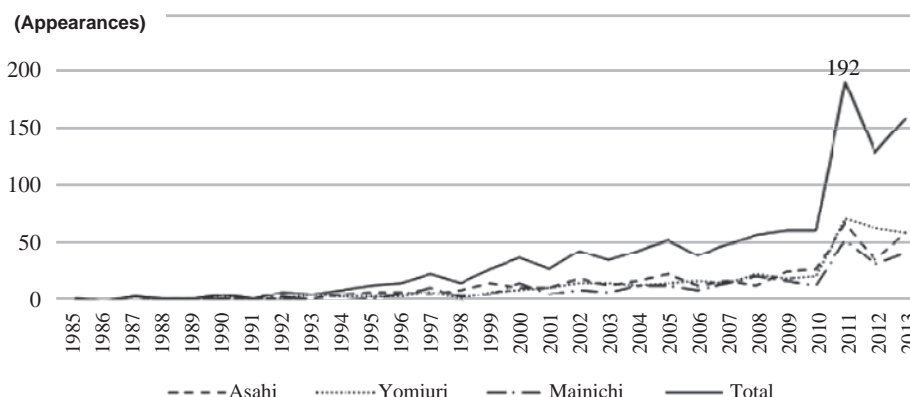


Figure 1 The annual frequency of the appearance of the phrase ‘the power of music’.

prayer in this music’ or ‘I would like to embed my reconstruction hopes in my musical performance’. Such expressions were extremely common when people played music after the earthquake. This may present an interesting contrast to Brunt’s report (2010, cited above) on the New Zealand earthquake, during the aftermath of which music was used for a rather rational, pragmatic purpose. Japan’s use of music tends to be more emotional and somewhat religious.

After the earthquake, some musical pieces were played more frequently than others. The most popular were ‘Ue wo Muite Aruko’ (‘Let’s Walk Looking Up’, which is known in English as ‘Sukiyaki Song’), ‘Anpanman’s March’ (a popular cartoon theme song), and Bach’s ‘Air’ (from his Orchestral Suite No. 3, also known as ‘Air on the G-string’), among others. The first two songs have forward-looking lyrics, while Bach’s ‘Air’ has a meditative quality—two characteristics that seem suitable for the situation in different senses.

Another striking feature was the massive production of ‘recovery songs’. A choral piece called ‘Shiawase Hakoberu Youni’ (‘Bring Happiness to the World’), which was composed after the 1995 Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, was the first recovery song acknowledged in Japan. Figure 2 shows the annual frequency of the appearance of the phrase ‘recovery song’ in the three aforementioned major newspapers between 1985 and 2013. An abrupt increase is evident following the 2011 earthquake.

As is observable, although musical performances were halted in the earthquake’s immediate aftermath, they gradually assumed a substantial role in the recovery process. Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra’s recovery concert project and issues pertaining to recovery songs will be discussed further in the subsequent sections.

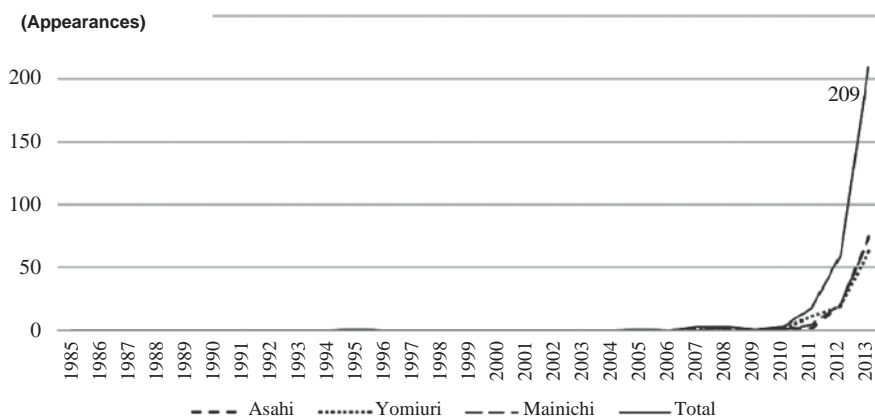


Figure 2 The annual frequency of the appearance of the term 'recovery song' in national Japanese newspapers.

4. The Recovery Concert Project

The Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra is a professional orchestra for Western classical music. Founded in 1973, it is based in Sendai, the largest city in the Tohoku region.¹¹⁾ Although the city of Sendai was severely damaged (in particular, the coastal area was completely washed away by the tsunami), the orchestra members and their instruments were lucky to survive unhurt. As discussed above, this orchestra resumed its activities two weeks after the earthquake. CRPM director and former executive director of the Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra Osawa Takao said, 'As I recall then, I might have been the person who most wanted to listen to music. My decision was not objective at all, but I just felt that we should play music. The orchestra should not miss the timing.'¹²⁾

After the earthquake, most planned musical performances were cancelled and voluntary restraint was tacitly agreed. However, Osawa viewed this as a mistake, and he ordered the orchestra to find a venue and create a special programme for their recovery concert. He also thought that it would be media reports that would determine the concert's legitimacy, so he sent out press releases and asked major music journalists to attend. The result was a great success. The audience was deeply moved, and many attendees burst into tears. No one complained about the concert, and the media responded favourably, demonstrating music's power to affect the afflicted.

Following the event's success, Osawa immediately founded the CRPM to raise money for recovery concerts. The CRPM's website reads: 'The purpose of the series of recovery concerts is to console the souls of disaster victims, to heal people who have been deprived of their family members, relatives or their livelihood and to shine a light of hope for the restoration of the devastated region.'¹³⁾ This project has developed extensively, offering an astonishing number of recovery concerts in various forms: 201 concerts in 2011, 55 in 2012, 66 in 2013, and 90 in 2014.¹⁴⁾

Each recovery concert is performed by a small ensemble, which usually consists of members of the Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra but sometimes also includes other performers. The concert venues are evacuee centres, schools, temporary housing, hospitals, and other sites, and each one lasts approximately one hour, beginning with Bach's 'Air' and ending with the famous Japanese song 'Furusato' ('Hometown'). Bach's 'Air' is an expression of mourning, while 'Furusato' expresses a heartfelt wish for the affected towns' recovery. The concerts always include traditional Japanese school songs and/or popular songs, so that the audience can sing along. The recovery song 'Hana wa Saku' ('Flowers Will Bloom') would later become a popular piece.

Before each concert, the concert organisers make careful advance arrangements, creating an atmosphere in which the audience will not feel intimidated. During a concert, one of the performers acts as a host/hostess, coaxing the audience members, who are not necessarily accustomed to attending concerts, to enjoy the music. Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra violist and experienced hostess Mitomo Kazue remembers that in the first few months, audiences often told her after a concert that the performances had moved them to tears for the first time.¹⁵⁾ It is striking that great numbers of witnesses, both performers and listeners, have seen audience members shedding tears at musical performances since the earthquake.¹⁶⁾

These episodes led the media to remark that music has power. However, considering that the same music would not have moved audiences so dramatically on an ordinary occasion, the question must be asked: why were people so moved at those concerts? A scientist's response may refer to the fragility of human receptivity in the aftermath of a disaster and to the fact that people's emotional thresholds are lowered.¹⁷⁾ While this may be true, further explanation seems necessary.

As I proceeded with the interviews, three interrelated factors appeared. First, immediately after the earthquake, the electricity was completely out for several days in the disaster area, and even after it came back, the sound environment was rather uncanny. Under such a circumstance, musical performance offered a special opportunity to listen to something comforting. Oshio Satomi, musicologist at the Miyagi University of Education, said, 'We are so used to hearing background music and even the motor sounds of electronic products. We always hear something in our everyday lives. But after the earthquake, the city became totally quiet without electricity. It was really strange.'¹⁸⁾

Second, the evacuees were extremely tense, given that they had no private space or private time. Hence, soothing music provided a fictive time and space that allowed them to relax their bodies and minds, and possibly reflect on past occasions when they had listened to the same or a similar piece. Recovery concert organiser Ito Miya said, 'When we encounter a devastated reality, we set up a barrier and defend ourselves so that we do not have to get hurt. As we listen to music, particularly certain kinds of melody in classical music and traditional Japanese school songs, the barrier disappears, and we become unleashed and burst into tears.'¹⁹⁾

Third, the afflicted people were in dire need of nonverbal comfort. Ito also said, 'The recovery songs composed after the earthquake would not work well because they emphasise words. Whereas the well-known melody becomes a vessel to release our

feelings, the verbal meaning does not sink inside.²⁰⁾ Imagine a situation in which the people sitting around you may have lost their loved ones, houses, and jobs; it would be difficult to talk to them. Furthermore, since the degree of earthquake damage varied from person to person, something that might be acceptable to say to certain people may not be well-received by others. Aono Yuji, chief of the administration division at the Sendai Cultural Foundation, said, 'Words are strong and can be cruel. After the earthquake, people were so sensitive that they hardly wanted to listen to anything. Even a song could have hurt them. Soothing music without lyrics may have been an exception.'²¹⁾

In sum, taken all together, the uncanny sound environment, the tense physical conditions, and the need for nonverbal communication created a situation in which the music made the audience cry and opened their minds. In this way, music served as a catalyst for relieving the afflicted people's tense bodies and bottled feelings during the first few months after the earthquake. However, as we will see, the role of music changed over time.

5. Recovery Songs

After the earthquake, a great number of recovery songs were produced, and it was as though a new musical genre had been formed. A website lists 53 songs and seven CD albums, most by famous artists and popular entertainers.²²⁾ Although it was said that these artists and entertainers embedded their feelings in the songs, it remains vague in exactly what way the recovery songs helped the afflicted people cope. In fact, more than a few artists and entertainers seem to have taken advantage of the sales opportunities.²³⁾

Even in cases where the songs were created with good intentions, they did not always work well for the afflicted people. The song 'I Love You & I Need You, Fukushima' is a good example. It was written and sung by Inawashirokos, a rock group consisting of four members from Fukushima. This song dares to express love for Fukushima, despite its stigma due to the nuclear accident; the lyrics include frequent repetitions of 'I love you Fukushima' and 'I need you Fukushima'. The song was played frequently in Fukushima, supposedly as encouragement for the local residents. Although it was effective among Inawashirokos's fans, it did not work well for others. For example, a college student from Fukushima told me that his father hated the song. Since local television stations played the song's music video in place of commercials whenever they could not secure sponsorship for their programmes, his father had to listen to 'I love you Fukushima' every day.²⁴⁾ Eventually, he tired of it and simply felt disgusted.

Although most recovery songs had a limited effect, a few received positive feedback and gained widespread popularity. One such example is the previously mentioned chorus piece 'Asu to iu Hi ga' ('Tomorrow Is Sure To Come'). The Hachiken Junior High School Chorus, which is one of the most accomplished school chorus groups in Sendai, was supposed to participate in a chorus contest on 19 March 2011. However, when it was cancelled due to the earthquake, the students instead offered a concert at their own school, which was serving as a temporary evacuation centre at the time. It had only been a few days since the disaster struck, and the evacuees at the centre were having an

extremely difficult time adjusting. The students chose 'Asu to iu Hi ga' from their repertoire for the occasion. The piece was written by a composer from the area, but having been completed prior to the earthquake, it was by no means a recovery song. Rather, it is a typical school chorus piece, with plain melodies, a familiar harmony, and positive, uplifting lyrics. The refrain reads: 'How wonderful we are living! How wonderful we do our best! Tomorrow is sure to come. Believe in our future happiness.' The students sang the lyrics wholeheartedly in front of the evacuee audience, some of whom shook and cried.

This scene happened to be broadcasted on a nationwide news show on NHK, and viewers outside of the disaster area were also moved and inspired. Subsequently, more than a few producers and organisation managers asked the chorus to sing in their concerts. The chorus gradually became famous, receiving a steady stream of invitations from various places. Their talent even developed into a larger cooperative project called 'Sing All Japan', which donated all the profits from their CD sales to charity. Although 'Asu to iu Hi ga' was not originally a recovery song, it was appropriated as a medium for linking the disaster area with the non-affected areas, both emotionally and economically.

Another example is 'Hana wa Saku' ('Flowers Will Bloom'). It was originally a theme song for a television series on NHK featuring the 2012 Tohoku Earthquake, but it attained almost instant popularity and was soon being sung all across the country, given NHK's status as the nation's largest, most influential mass media outlet. NHK's well-executed project strategy was another reason for its success. First, they commissioned a famous playwright and composer who was born in the disaster area to write the song. They then introduced it with a music video in which famous musicians, entertainers, and athletes who have strong connections to the disaster areas took turns singing in a 'We Are the World' style performance.

Incidentally, making music videos in the 'We Are the World' style became a post-earthquake trend. The first such attempt was made in a television commercial for Suntory, one of the largest brewing and distilling companies in Japan. At a time when regular television commercials were still taboo, Suntory made one showing 'Ue wo Muite Aruko' ('Sukiyaki Song') being gently sung by several famous people in turn. This commercial was well-received during the mourning period. Inawashirokos's 'I Love You & I Need You, Fukushima' also adopted this style: in its music video, ordinary persons from places other than Fukushima appear in turn, singing the title lyrics, but their voices can barely be heard over the singing group's members, possibly giving viewers the impression that the former are singing rather casually. In contrast, in NHK's 'Hana wa Saku', all the guest singers perform their parts individually and with deep feeling.

The One Million People's 'Hana wa Saku' Project is another Internet-based NHK undertaking. Audience members were asked to create music videos performing the piece in their own unique ways and post them on the NHK website.²⁵⁾ Participants from Japan and all over the rest of the world responded with their original videos. Meanwhile, NHK kept televising various versions of the song played by amateur musicians. In this way, 'Hana wa Saku' functioned as an effective tool for reminding the people in non-disaster

areas that the aftermath of the earthquake was not yet over, hence recovery efforts needed to be maintained.

Interestingly, 'Hana wa Saku' gained enormous popularity in the disaster area as well. In fact, in October 2013, a 'Hana wa Saku' chorus was formed in Sendai for the sole purpose of singing that song. This idea stemmed from Sendai Philharmonic's recovery concerts. When the concerts started in 2011, the atmosphere was sombre. Even when the audience sang along, the concerts' ambience remained rather solemn. However, after two years had passed, audiences expressed a desire to sing along more. Concert organiser Ito Miya said, 'Listening to music has an effect of healing and empowering, but I have seen many times at the concerts that when people participate in singing, a give-and-take of energy begins, and their faces become really lively. ... In my opinion, people feel alive when they sing.'²⁶⁾ In response to the audience's requests, the chorus was formed with the specific aim of singing 'Hana wa Saku' in concert with the Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra.

Once recruitment for the chorus began, approximately 30 people presented themselves. Among them was Mrs. Kawana, who found a flier and joined the group with her husband. Although her husband sang in a chorus in high school and then in college, she had never been a chorus member herself. 'I wanted to sing because I did not have a chance to give vent to my feelings', she said.²⁷⁾ Having moved from the coastal city Ishinomaki, the couple had a hard time adjusting to their new life in Sendai. Although the City of Sendai provided a private apartment and paid the couple's rent, they felt lonely and isolated from other evacuees. They wanted to talk with fellow evacuees but had no idea where they were. Mrs. Kawana said, 'We lived in a tiny apartment in the city. I had never lived in such a small place, so close to the neighbours. I was very sensitive about not making noise. But it was really hard to keep quiet. So, I really wanted to sing. Then, I found an ad for the "Hana wa Saku" Chorus.'²⁸⁾ Since membership in the chorus was restricted to people over 60 who had lost their homes to the tsunami and were still living in temporary housing, the couple found their fellows there and felt connected.

The chorus' rehearsals were well-planned. Since physical inactivity is a common problem for temporary housing residents, the members take time to warm up by moving their bodies and making smiling faces under a physical instructor's direction. The warm-up is of course meant primarily for their singing, but the exercising and purposeful smiling also served to maintain their physical and mental health. Mrs. Kawana said, 'It is really refreshing to sing aloud. Also, it is good for mental health. ... Actually, "Hana wa Saku" is difficult to sing. But as I practise, I have been able to make a high-pitched voice, which gives me pleasure in my life. It has become a motivation to stay alive. So singing has helped me a lot.'²⁹⁾ While its rhythm is fairly simple, 'Hana wa Saku' has a vocal range of an octave plus a minor sixth (from an A to an F²), with many leaps and arpeggios. It is certainly challenging for beginners to sing. However, the chorus' members report that the process of working to become a better singer made them feel alive.

Ito Miya adds to the reason 'Hana wa Saku' captured the hearts of the elders in Tohoku:

The older people and the conservative NHK are a good match; that is one thing. But what is more important is that 'Hana wa Saku' is a song for reflecting on one's life and passing on to the next generation. Some people even think that the lyrics were written through the eyes of the dead. Because many of the older people feel that they are sorry to have survived while promising young people lost their lives, the lyric perhaps genuinely touches their heart.³⁰⁾

'Hana wa Saku' seems to afford the earthquake survivors a chance to express their inner feelings. The first 'Hana wa Saku' concert was held in April 2014 with great success. A second concert followed in October 2014, as the chorus expanded its song repertoire.

While many recovery songs were less effective in empowering the afflicted people, 'Hana wa Saku' gained exceptional popularity, both in the disaster area and in places that did not suffer damage. The key to success seems to have been that the whole project was tactically managed to prevent the song from being attributed to a specific artist; instead, it remained in the public domain.

6. Conclusion

After the 2011 Great Japan Earthquake, the phrase 'the power of music' was used in conjunction with almost all musical activities devoted to the disaster victims. The present study has attempted to convey additional nuances of the activities and articulate how music can mediate among groups of people occupying different positions in post-earthquake society. Due to space constraints, the examples introduced here are limited, but I hope that they have illustrated in what respects music can contribute to disaster recovery and how music empowers people.

In the earthquake's immediate aftermath, certain kinds of music helped the afflicted people relax their tense bodies and unleash their suppressed feelings. In particular, familiar meditative music without words was effective. As time passed, however, music came to function as a medium for social interaction, as seen in the cases of 'Asu to iu Hi ga' and 'Hana wa Saku'. Furthermore, it should be noted that music also assumed a role in connecting people living in the disaster area with those living in other places. The recovery songs, both the successful and the unsuccessful ones, have shown that a piece of music takes on different meanings, touching people in different situations. In the age of globalisation and information and communication technologies, music exists for everyone, everywhere, rather than just for the people who are in close proximity to where it is being produced.

In this respect, it would be wise to heed Mitomo Kazue's warning. Having played in and hosted at numerous recovery concerts in different locations, she said: 'Music easily upsets people, particularly the afflicted people who have been severely weakened.... Being forced to listen is really cruel for the audience, that is, crueller than we can imagine. I believe music is necessary for the wounded people, but we have to be aware that it is a double-edged sword.'³¹⁾ Her remark led me to recall a comment she made to the audience at a concert when she asked them to sing together: 'We are playing famous

songs that probably everyone knows. You can find the lyrics in the programme in your hand. If you like, you are welcome to sing along. But there are many ways to enjoy the music. You can also listen to the music silently if you prefer. Please choose whichever you like.’³²⁾

Scholarship on music and minorities has traditionally focused on music’s role in terms of maintaining and developing a collective identity. However, the present study suggests that music as social mediation is distinctly capable of amplifying empathy. Therefore, designing music and its context to allow both minorities and majorities to find empathy together may be an important approach to restructuring the conventional minority–majority relationship. In the end, the power of music is dependent on human capabilities: what music is played and how it is contextualised will determine whether its potential is fully realised.

Acknowledgments

A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the International Council for Traditional Music Study Group on Music and Minorities meeting in Osaka on 23 July 2014. I am grateful to those who have given me valuable feedback. I would also like to thank Shelley Brunt, who has generously provided information about previous studies on disaster and music. I further express my warm thanks to Sinbori Kanno, Tada Yoko, and Ishigami Yomei for their assistance with data collection and fieldwork. Last but not least, I am very thankful to the persons whom I met in Tohoku. This study was supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP25580023.

Notes

- 1) More details will be discussed below.
- 2) He was first asked to play music while people practiced radio gymnastic exercises because he was the only person at the centre who could play the music by ear. Since then, he has begun to play the piano. The details can be found in Hashimoto (2012).
- 3) Examples of such reluctance can be found in the quarterly magazine for music and culture *Artes* (a special issue, ‘3.11 and Music’). Musicologist Okada Akeo mentions in the discussion, ‘I can’t help but hold some distrust of comforting and encouraging arts...’ (*Artes* 2011, 67), while music critic Sasaki Atsushi writes, ‘There is no need for music, like all other forms of the arts, to be of help for something specific. This does not mean that music should be of no help for anything... The indispensability of music rather exists in such groundlessness and nonsense’ (102). Composer and pianist Takahashi Yuji expresses his reluctance to use the term power more directly as: ‘It is a kind of power, but I don’t want to use the word “power”. It is rather something opposite: ease, or relief, and no power relationship’ (117). Furthermore, music scholar Masuda Satoshi (2012) begins his article on artwork in the time of the earthquake disaster with: ‘Needless to say, music is of no direct help in a catastrophic situation.’
- 4) I previously investigated two musical activities among sexual minorities in urban settings, both

of which were aimed at community empowerment and social transformation between minority and majority groups (Nakamura 2014a). The study revealed the key factors that empowered the participants at these events to be musical ‘retelling’ and collaborative memory work, which produce a new, shareable meta-narrative. The present article is a sequel to the study of musical mediation, and it further pursues how musical activities can affect people and transform a minority–majority situation.

- 5) DeNora’s (2000) is the most influential study of music in everyday life. For studies of conflict and transformation, see Urbain (2008) and Bergh and Sloboda (2010).
- 6) For the participant observations, I attended the following events: Festival Fukushima at Shiki no Sato in Fukushima on 15 August 2011, Kasane Gasane no Omoi No. 2 at Mediatheque in Sendai on 16–18 August 2013, The ‘Teawase’ Bodily Expression Workshop in Higashi-Matsuyama and Ishinomaki on 22–24 December 2013, a ‘Hana wa Saku’ Chorus rehearsal on 26 September 2014, and a recovery concert held by the Center for Recovery through the Power of Music, Tohoku, on 28 September 2014.
- 7) The online databases of two national newspapers (*Asahi* and *Yomiuri*) and one regional newspaper (*Kahoku-Shinpo*) were examined. For details, see Nakamura (2014b). Oshio (2013) examined the *Kahoku-Shinpo* newspaper in greater detail.
- 8) Oshio (2013) reports that the Japan Self-Defense Forces’ musical bands also gave concerts as a part of disaster relief missions from late March to July (vol.1: 34–40).
- 9) *Kahoku-Shinpo*, 24 March 2011.
- 10) This was particularly evident in the context of music therapy and musical activities involving persons with disabilities. In this period, the following usages also appeared: ‘No drunk driving through the power of music’, ‘Crime control with the power of music’, and ‘Stop emergency scams by means of the power of music’. In these examples, it is not really necessary to say the phrase ‘power of music’; simply saying ‘with music’ or ‘by means of music’ should have been enough, but there must have been some atmosphere that made people want to include the word ‘power’. This suggests that there was some change in the way music was being viewed in the late 1990s in Japan. Possible reasons are still under investigation.
- 11) The following description is mainly based on my original research but also draws on Kudo (2013).
- 12) Interview conducted at the CRPM office in Sendai on 27 September 2014.
- 13) See the CRPM’s website at <http://ongaku-fukko-tohoku.jp/en/> (accessed: 11 December 2014)
- 14) The numbers were based on the records available at the CRPM’s website. (<http://ongaku-fukko-tohoku.jp/archives>, accessed: 30 April 2014) The subscription concerts and the chorus activities, also listed on the website, are excluded.
- 15) Interview at Higashi-Nakata Civic Center in Sendai on 28 September 2014.
- 16) In addition to the abovementioned example, I have also heard from a well-established violinist who performed two months after the earthquake in Ishinomaki and Rikuzentakada, two cities that were severely damaged by the tsunami. The interviewee reported that the audience started crying, which was a magical experience that he had never experienced before. (Personal conversation in Tokyo on 14 July 2011)
- 17) A response to my preliminary report on the earthquake and music at a study group on music and emotion at RIKEN, Institute of Physical and Chemical Research in Saitama on 27

September 2013.

- 18) Personal conversation in Sendai on 27 September 2014.
- 19) Interview at Takasago Civic Center in Sendai on 26 September 2014.
- 20) Interview at Takasago Civic Center in Sendai on 26 September 2014.
- 21) Interview at Sendai Cultural Foundation in Sendai on 26 September 2014.
- 22) 'Ātisuto Tachi Kara no Fukko-shien-songu, Matome' (A Collection of Recovery Songs by Artists): <http://matome.naver.jp/odai/2130150399064084501> (accessed: 11 December 2014) All were released as recovery songs after the earthquake although some were written prior to that and were originally intended for different occasions. Among them, three songs were sung by artists in the disaster area. One includes chorus participation from members living in the disaster area.
- 23) Distrust of recovery songs was reported (e.g., Oshio 2013: Vol.2, 27).
- 24) Shared in my class on music and the earthquake at Chukyo University in Nagoya on 6 August 2014.
- 25) For details of this project, see: <http://www.nhk.or.jp/ashita/hanaboshu/> (accessed: 11 December 2014)
- 26) Interview on 26 September 2014 in Sendai.
- 27) Conversation during a rehearsal break on 26 September 2014.
- 28) Conversation during a rehearsal break on 26 September 2014.
- 29) Conversation during a rehearsal break on 26 September 2014.
- 30) Interview on 26 September 2014 in Sendai.
- 31) Interview at Higashi-Nakata Civic Center in Sendai on 28 September 2014.
- 32) Recovery concert at Higashi-Nakata Civic Center in Sendai on 28 September 2014.

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