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Each entry concludes with details of provenance and bibliographical references (helpfully including page numbers). Instruments deemed particularly noteworthy may be represented by as many as seven photographs, showing details of labels, scrolls, rosettes, and other unusual or interesting decorations. Additional historical images are often included: record books detailing sales and repairs; old advertisements for instruments by the same luthier; historical engravings and woodcuts of players using related instruments; photographs of performers playing the actual instrument, etc. This book offers virtually all that the specialist could hope for. And yet one need not be a scholar to understand and appreciate the charms of the collection—the details provided act almost as a biography, a colorful narrative about each instrument and its place in history.

This volume was a long time in the making. According to the prefatory notes, Wells started work on the project during her tenure as curator at the RCM from 1964 to 2005, completing it only in her retirement. The attention to detail and painstaking care evident in this publication are a testament to her dedication and expertise. Measurements, descriptions, and paragraphs on construction and alterations were provided by co-editor Christopher Nobbs.

This is truly a Rolls-Royce of catalogs—organologists, performers, luthiers, and instrument enthusiasts will all appreciate its loveliness and thoroughness. The heavy-stock, glossy paper allows good realization of the photographs, and the soft covers are thick enough to provide durable support. The price seems remarkably reasonable, given the book's sumptuous quality. For anyone who enjoys studying or looking at instruments, this book is a treasure trove, and one that will likely be appreciated even after its contents are available electronically.

JOËLLE MORTON
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Henry Johnson. *The Koto: A Traditional Instrument in Contemporary Japan*. Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2004. 200 pp.: 7 full-page color plates, 73 color photographs, 3 black-and-white photographs, 6 line drawings, 19 tables, 18 musical exx. ISBN: 90-74822-63-0. \$101.00 (cloth).

Henry Johnson's *The Koto: A Traditional Instrument in Contemporary Japan* will appeal to a wide spectrum of musical instrument specialists and to generalists interested in Japanese music and culture. Lavishly illustrated

and abundantly annotated, this book is an object of beauty as well as a scholarly resource. The color photos (by the author himself) and the full-page color plates are magnificent; the endnotes are expansive, providing much essential information; and the bibliography is extensive—listing over three hundred works. Two helpful appendixes (though not labeled as such) provide a chronology of Japanese historical eras (p. 175) and a “Selected Character List,” giving relevant terms in both Latin and Japanese characters (pp. 176–82).

This book is fruit of its author’s ethnographic and historical research, the former carried out in Japan among players and makers of koto, the latter in both England and Japan. An ethnomusicologist, Johnson approaches the instrument as material culture, imbued with multivalent meanings. In addition to having learned to play the koto, Johnson brings to his study both iconographical and literary evidence, as well as extant exemplars of koto (historical and modern), and he links the instrument’s forms, functions, sounds, meanings, and performance traditions to Japanese society as a whole.

After an Introduction featuring a preview of the book’s contents, Johnson’s first chapter, “The Setting,” provides a brief cultural history of the instrument, a tale that will be amplified in each succeeding chapter. Though the koto originated in China, becoming established in Japan by the eighth century, it is understood today as a Japanese “traditional” instrument, i.e., one that predates Western musical influences. As such, the koto evokes—both visually and sonically—an idealized Japanese past. Its social contexts encompass the ancient court ensemble associated with Shinto rites (*gagaku*), secular entertainment by blind male professionals and sighted female amateurs, and most recently—from the 1990s—children in public schools.

In chapter two, “Instrument Names and Types,” Johnson delineates variants of the koto’s nomenclature and structural details, placing these in historical perspective. While the technical aspects covered in this chapter make it one of the most valuable parts of the book for collectors and museum curators, for others the challenges may be daunting. First are linguistic challenges, including the fact that names (“koto,” for example) can refer to both generic and specific instrument types. Second are difficulties in understanding the metaphoric terminology for component parts of the koto (“tongue” and “lips,” for example), which Johnson does not define until the following chapter. Third is Johnson’s adopting of the cultural viewpoint by which koto taxonomy is based on musical

genres, social contexts, playing techniques, and types of surface decoration, rather than on morphological differences. Although twentieth-century modifications such as synthetic strings and bridges are accepted, and instruments of larger and smaller size than usual are now in use, “the fundamental form of the instrument has remained unaltered since its introduction to Japan” (p. 49).

Chapter three focuses on the everyday type of koto (*yamadagoto*), detailing the “Manufacture and Component Parts” of the instrument. Informative diagrams, tables, and photographs abound, illustrating not only the present-day process of making a koto but also the symbolism encoded in the instrument’s shape and decoration. Johnson’s connecting of the Japanese concept of “wrapping” to the instrument’s layers of meaning is instructive. Tables of “Qualities and Grades” of koto list the features considered by Johnson’s koto-making informants when labeling their instruments along a continuum from lowest to highest, in terms of aesthetic as well as monetary value (pp. 81–87).

In chapter four, “Performance Traditions,” Johnson further expands the historical record he has been unfolding throughout the book: here he examines “the social, cultural and geographic distribution of the *koto* in Japan, and the social systems that are characteristic of the internal structure of everyday performance traditions” (p. 90). As explained in his introduction (pp. 12–13), Johnson learned from exponents of several traditions, in order to pursue a comparative approach. By contrast, koto players in Japan normally belong to a single tradition, usually for life, working within “a social frame that is given priority in self-identification, rather than one’s personal attributes”—a phenomenon that Johnson calls “groupism” (p. 95). Thus, koto players perform with fellow members of a tradition, all of them having learned its set repertoire within a *iemoto* (a school headed by a grand master) or *iemoto*-like system (p. 103) and being subject to licensure: proof, by examination, of one’s level of attainment within that tradition. Only rarely would someone appear as a koto soloist.

Chapter five, “Performance,” deals with “cultural meanings that are embodied in the performance event” (p. 16), such as performance spaces, players’ posture and dress protocols, tunings, ornamentation techniques, uses of recorded koto music to lend atmosphere, and, finally, genres and styles of composition in present-day koto repertoire, along with mention of some composers. Most interesting to this reviewer are the samples (and their transcriptions) of historical and modern notation systems, including excerpts from several compositions (pp. 117–57).

In his introduction, Johnson presents himself as a non-Japanese researcher offering interpretation of the koto based on his admiration for, and experiences with, the instrument in the context of Japanese culture. He admits to having adopted some Japanese ways of thinking and acting during the course of his studies (p. 17). I sense this in his book: the spacious layout of text and illustrations, for example, echoes Japanese aesthetics. Johnson's historical exegesis of the koto proceeds in a way that I found too repetitive until I recognized its structure as analogous to a traditional Japanese musical genre in which thematic elements appear in a series of variations called *danmono*. In this light, Johnson's first five chapters could be seen as variations on the Introduction, with chapter six, "Conclusions," providing the quick ending. Henry Johnson is to be congratulated for successfully—and artfully—representing the koto in its historical and present-day cultural contexts.

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André Millard, editor. *The Electric Guitar: A History of an American Icon*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. x, 226 pp.: 13 color photographs, 35 black-and-white photographs, 2 line drawings. ISBN: 0-8018-7862-4. \$45.00 (paper).

The electric guitar has almost certainly been the most significant development in musical instruments during the last one hundred years. From fairly small-scale beginnings, it has attained iconic status both as a musical instrument and, more broadly, as a shorthand signifier for rock and roll, itself shorthand for the popular culture and, more particularly, the youth culture of the second half of the twentieth century. Because of this, the electric guitar's significance, perhaps uniquely among musical instruments, has been as much social as musical or organological—maybe even more so. These intertwining technical, historical, and sociological aspects of the electric guitar are collectively examined in *The Electric Guitar: A History of an American Icon*, a compilation of essays derived from "Electrified, Amplified and Deified: The Electric Guitar, its Makers and Players," a museum exhibit and symposium held in 1996 at the Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation, based at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Editor André Millard's aim is "to gently take the reader into all the territory colonised by the electric guitar and its sound without lingering long enough in one place to spoil the ride" (p. 15), which makes the