NODAME CANTABILE: A JAPANESE TELEVISION DRAMA AND ITS PROMOTION OF WESTERN ART MUSIC IN ASIA

Yu-Ting Tung

A Thesis

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Committee:

David Harnish, Advisor

Robert Fallon
ABSTRACT

David Harnish, Advisor

The fictional Japanese TV drama series, *Nodame Cantabile* (のだめカンタービレ), based on the lives of Western art music performance majors in a Japanese music conservatory, has successfully reached out and appealed to the Japanese common audience since it was first aired in Japan in October, 2006. It has also attracted an international following, been aired in various Asian countries (including Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia), and found mass audiences beyond national boundaries. Why is a TV drama depicting such a specific group (i.e. music majors) able to cater to a mass audience in Japan and even to millions of viewers beyond Japan? In this thesis, I will argue that *Nodame Cantabile* not only has the typical prerequisites to be a successful Japanese TV drama, it also enchants its spectators by employing a unique, almost unprecedented approach—using Western art music as the thematic music and main soundtrack—which results in a whimsical, sensational, cross-cultural success. By contrast, most music in similar drama series uses Japanese pop music and electronic music. I will decode how this drama attracts mass audiences by interpreting/elucidating it from different perspectives, including: 1) how it portrays/reflects the Japanese music conservatory culture; 2) how it reflects the long-term popularity of certain Western art music compositions in/among Japanese music consumers; and, most interestingly; 3) how this drama further changes the perception of mass audiences, especially fans in Taiwan, about Western art music, and serves to increase the popularity of this music in Asian countries.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank to my dear family in Taiwan, especially Mom. Without your spiritual and material support, I would not have made this far. I know deeply that you wish me nothing but happiness and I will always keep that in mind. I also want to express my gratitude to Dr. David Harnish, who has been working with me since I started this degree and helped me so much to complete this thesis. I am especially grateful for your patience on my English writing and your encouragement on this research subject. Dr. Robert Fallon and Dr. Jeremy Wallach thank you for all the advice and inspiring ideas; my mind was wide-opened after meeting with you.

I also want to thank my dear friends Jane and Katherine. You have treated me warmly and sincerely as if part of your family in the past several years, and I am greatly indebted to you. You have listened to my worries and complaints on numerous nights and have given me the courage to go on when I had self-doubts. You made me feel that I am smart and brave enough to really carry on some of my academic tasks. Thank you so much.

Last but not least, I want to thank you my dear companion, Travis, for everything you have done for me during the period of writing. It is you who have tried to take care of everything else and make me feel secure and hassle-free. It is also you who thinks I still will be your smart cookie, no matter if I would finish this thesis or not. I appreciate your love and devotion greatly.

You all make this thesis possible, and complete.
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PROLOGUE

交響情人夢，找回學音樂的心。

*It was just William’s nickname on my MSN messenger’s offline contact list.*

My friend, William Chien, met me in an after-concert social setting in Taiwan about six years ago. Throughout years of friendship, he finished a Masters’ degree in saxophone performance at Boston Conservatory, went back to Taiwan, and developed a renowned reputation in saxophone teaching and performing. He seemed to embrace a big-city, fast-paced lifestyle, whereas I have been working on my two Masters’ degrees in a small Midwestern town, Bowling Green, OH, thousands of miles away. I no longer receive his weekly online updates, and put my hope of corresponding with him again on the small pop-up window of MSN messenger. If the tiny red personage icon switches to green, this means he is using the service and I might have chance to catch up with him and some of the miscellaneous things happening in Taiwan. Sadly, the little red icon never turns green while I am online. However, his offline nickname intrigues me: “*Nodame Cantabile* [helps me] rediscover the aspiration of learning music.” The fragmented, statement-like sentence appears as a riddle to me; what does it mean exactly?

The riddle was solved incidentally by a package sent to me from Taiwan. My beloved sister often sends me some necessities from home and this particular package contained a couple of VCDs titled *Nodame Cantabile*. The answer had been revealed, and, upon watching a few episodes, the television series *Nodame Cantabile* quickly became one of my numerous, cherished Japanese TV dramas.

Though I still do not know what kind of life William is living today, his statement about *Nodame* is still there. I feel that I have gripped a corner of his emotions, that he
also loves the drama *Nodame Cantabile* just as I do. We are bonded once again, this time as fans of a Japanese television drama series.
INTRODUCTION

The fictional Japanese TV drama series, *Nodame Cantabile* (のだめカンタービレ), based on the lives of Western art music performance majors in a Japanese music conservatory, has successfully reached out and appealed to the Japanese common audience since it was first aired in Japan in October, 2006. It has also attracted an international following, been aired in various Asian countries (including Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia), and found mass audiences beyond national boundaries. Why is a TV drama depicting such a specific group (i.e. music majors) able to cater to a mass audience in Japan and even to millions of viewers beyond Japan? In this thesis, I will argue that *Nodame Cantabile* not only has the typical prerequisites to be a successful Japanese TV drama, it also enchants its spectators by employing a unique, almost unprecedented approach—using Western art music as the thematic music and main soundtrack—which results in a whimsical, sensational, cross-cultural success. By contrast, most music in similar drama series uses Japanese pop music and electronic music. I will decode how this drama attracts mass audiences by interpreting/elucidating it from different perspectives, including: 1) how it portrays/reflects the Japanese music conservatory culture; 2) how it reflects the long-term popularity of certain Western art music compositions in/among Japanese music consumers; and, most interestingly; 3) how this drama further changes the perception of mass audiences, especially fans in Taiwan, about Western art music, and serves to increase the popularity of this music in Asian countries.
Thesis Overview

This thesis is divided into four chapters. In Chapter One, I discuss *Nodame Cantabile* itself as a drama, including its background development, plot, characters, and most importantly, its music. I elucidate how the music is arranged in general and in each episode, how it is used, where it originates, and how it is related to the plot. Furthermore, this chapter analyzes the functions and the meanings of the music and draws upon Wagnerian leitmotif concepts to interpret Hattori Takayuki’s arrangement of various music compositions in this drama.

Chapter Two provides an observation of the Japanese conservatory culture portrayed in this drama. The fictional campus, Momogaoka College of Music, may serve as a window for both non-Japanese and Japanese without art music training to understand Japanese conservatory culture. My investigation begins with the physical settings, such as the school’s layout, proceeds to student and faculty dress/appearance, and then shifts toward more abstract realms, including the relationships (especially power structures) between faculty and students and their specific views of Western art music.

Chapter Three presents Asian audience members’ receptions of *Nodame Cantabile*, especially focusing on Taiwanese. First, I describe the so-called “Nodame Phenomenon,” which reveals the drama’s impact on its viewers’ lives. Second, I analyze the factors that make *Nodame Cantabile* specifically and tremendously popular in Taiwan through investigating local receptions and exploring why *Nodame Cantabile*, as an imported drama, is able to popularize Western art music. I believe that *Nodame Cantabile* impacts how the public perceives Western art music and, in turn, enhances the general
interest in this music. The response of the music industry has also played a role in sustaining consumer interest both in the music and drama.

The final chapter provides a conclusion that summarizes my findings and articulates why this drama is successful not only in Japan but in other Asian countries (especially Taiwan), and posits why Western art music has been a major factor contributing to *Nodame Cantabile*’s success.

**The Methodology**

I cannot recall exactly when I started watching Japanese drama series. It might have begun with *Tokyo Love Story* sometime during my junior high school days. I was hooked. Since that time, watching Japanese dramas has been part of my life, and these dramas accompanied me not only as I grew up and my family watched as after-dinnertime entertainment, but also through stressful periods such as preparations for high school and college entrance examinations. Especially during my teenaged years, I was perplexed about my affections toward others and had some heartbreaking experiences with boys. I somehow was able to seek comfort from watching Japanese dramas and then would regain hope for future potential romantic relationships. Once I thought that this watching habit was just a temporary addiction and that I would discard it after confronting the reality of life and embracing adulthood, just as a butterfly eventually abandons her cocoon.

I was dead wrong.

After coming to the United States to pursue two Master’s degrees, I have tried to survive various cultural dilemmas and academic demands. I have found that the
enormous stress draws me even closer to this viewing habit. In general, I crave Japanese dramas the most when I approach exam weeks or other stressful times, and my drama consumption might range from watching several episodes or up to one or two entire series during study breaks. I have come to realize that watching Japanese dramas is not in the past tense; instead, it is an ongoing process. It is nostalgic for me.

I consider myself a cultural insider in this research. While I am neither Japanese nor a fluent Japanese speaker, I have been watching/investigating various Japanese dramas constantly for more than fifteen years and am able to recount several important canons. Benefiting from the technology of television transmission and global circulation, millions of people around the world are just like me and enjoy being fans of Japanese dramas. Neither ethnicity nor physical confinement to a given geographical realm necessarily bars one from sharing part of the same cultural identity. Therefore, for a Taiwanese like me, watching Japanese dramas fervently in the United States becomes common, creates nostalgia, bolsters self-identification, and forms a bond with a generalized East Asian culture.

The plot and setting of *Nodame Cantabile* revolves around Western art music. In addition to being a sort of insider to Japanese dramas, I may be considered an insider of institutions of art music. During the years completing my Master’s degree in saxophone performance, I observed and participated in the culture of performance majors in the music building. As a current ethnomusicology graduate student, I have been trained to acquaint myself with music composers, cultures, and canons. Thus, in the process of researching and writing, my personal experiences have allowed me to reflect upon the
music culture portrayed in *Nodame Cantabile* and discover nuances and subtleties along the course.

One of the immense difficulties of conducting this research has been an inaccessibility to the fieldsite. Ethnomusicologists usually stay in a physical field for an extensive period of time and embark on their fieldwork by employing a variety of methods, such as participant observation, conducting interviews, and so forth, to collect data. However, the years of experience watching Japanese dramas has acquainted me with the culture of Japanese dramas, and the easy accessibility to *Nodame Cantabile* online – I watch the streaming videos of *Nodame Cantabile* (English subtitled) on crunchyroll.com¹ – has allowed me to observe and participate in the activity of watching it repeatedly. Thus, although not physically present in Japan or Taiwan, and thus unable to experience the TV broadcast as its original audience did, I was still able to access and watch the drama and participate in this phenomenon via the internet, a mode of viewing that is increasingly common among Japanese and Taiwanese audiences. Regarding interviews, it was unfeasible for me to visit the field, but the field itself was much different from that of a traditional ethnography. I wondered how I could know people’s reception of *Nodame Cantabile* if I could not discuss it with them.

Fortunately, I soon realized that the fieldsite for this research is not geographically bound because the viewers of *Nodame Cantabile*, and more specifically their opinions, are present on the internet, constituting a virtual field. This field is mainly comprised of all of the discussion forums on the websites and individual blogs that are

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¹ In the Prologue, I mentioned the VCDs of *Nodame Cantabile* that my little sister sent to me from Taiwan. Unfortunately, I have since lost these discs.
associated with *Nodame Cantabile*. People from different corners of the world publish their comments and opinions on these media and constantly interact with each other. Thus, I was able to investigate the issues and conduct a type of virtual fieldwork. Below I describe several website forums most beneficial to my research.

First is the official website of the drama *Nodame Cantabile*, established by Fuji TV. This website provides information about the story, the staff and cast, the latest activities for *Nodame* fans, and so forth. It also offers fans opportunities to write and read comments on its forum. It is noteworthy to mention the special design of the forum. Every forum user is encouraged to specify his/her gender, age, and occupation and this information is presented anonymously on the board. Second is the official website of Videoland Japan (Taiwan). While this site does not provide an individual cyberspace solely to present detailed information about this drama, it does provide a discussion forum.² People can ask questions about *Nodame Cantabile* on the forum and anyone may respond to them. This forum is completely anonymous and only indicates the nicknames of forum users.

Besides online discussion forums and blogs, E-newspapers and online streaming videos (such as YouTube and news clips) have also been primary sources. These two sources account miscellaneous news, concerts, and campaigns relevant to the drama and indicate how the public has responded to and received it. All of these internet sources compensate for the disadvantage of my not being present in the physical field and give

² I did find one link to a Taiwanese individual website for *Nodame Cantabile* in August, 2008. However, the links on the site were void and it was no longer a working website. I guess that the web master of Videoland Japan took down the information since this drama aired a while ago. The website’s frame was almost identical to Fuji TV’s, except that the language was Chinese.
me a fairly comprehensive overview about the development of the public’s reception of the drama since 2006.

**Literature Review**

This thesis involves a wide range of subjects and issues, including Asian popular culture, media studies, conservatory culture, music perception, and so forth. The nature of this research compelled me to seek sources from different disciplines.


However, the most valuable insights concerning the studies of Japanese TV dramas are discovered in Iwabuchi (2004), a compilation with several pertinent individual essays. Lee (2004), MacLachlan and Chua (2004), and Siriyuvasak (2004) in Iwabuchi elucidate how Japanese TV dramas influence Asian local pop cultures, impact Asian viewers, and, especially, how they mold the identity of Asian youth. Lee (2004) in Iwabuchi presents research on how Taiwanese youth perceive Japanese idol dramas; this work, in particular, provides a theoretical base from which to interpret *Nodame*
Cantabile’s influence on Taiwanese audiences. Straubhaar (1997) in Sreberny-Mohammadi provides insights on the factors that assure a successful media transmission among different cultural and geographic realms. These works explain the media transmission, in this case Japanese TV dramas, that occurs between Taiwan and Japan.

Nettl (1995) and Kingsbury (2001) investigate cultures in conservatories and Midwestern schools of music at universities in America and provide fairly recent accounts of American conservatory cultural systems and American musicians’ perceptions of Western art music. These two ethnomusicological studies offer some theoretical bases to interpret the culture of the music conservatory portrayed in Nodame Cantabile and the ways that Japanese musicians perceive Western art music.

The material for this thesis is drawn from the literature and websites cited above, my own repeated viewings and observations as a partial insider to Japanese TV dramas, and my experiences as a Taiwanese fan familiar with conservatory culture and connected to the drama as an East Asian culture member. My studies in ethnomusicology hopefully allow me to have some distance from the subject and to better analyze and contextualize Nodame Cantabile and its importance and reception within Japan and other areas of Asia.
CHAPTER I.
NODAME CANTABILE AS A MUSIC-SAVVY JAPANESE DRAMA

The Background Development

Nodame Cantabile, an ongoing manga (Japanese graphic comic book) by Tomoko Ninomiya, has been published in Japan by Kodansha Limited in the woman’s comic magazine Kiss since 2001 and collected in twenty-one tankobon (paperback) volumes to August 2008.³ Del Rey Manga acquired the license and publishes the series in North America. This series received the 2004 Kodansha Manga Award for the young-women category of manga and sold about 15 millions copies by the end of 2006.

According to Tomoko Ninomiya, the character Nodame (nickname for Noda Megumi) is named after and sketched from a real person, who has a similar personality as the character: a musician who likes to read manga and dislikes cleaning the house. The real Noda Megumi, who is a fan of Ninomiya’s manga, sent photos to Ninomiya that inspired her to create the scene where Nodame plays the piano in her landfill-like, trash-everywhere room. During the course of drawing the manga series, Ninomiya continued to phone Noda Megumi to get new ideas for the developing plot.⁴ The real Noda was a piano major in college and now runs a piano studio in Okawa, Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan. She also uses the username のだめ (Nodame) to post comments on the bulletin board of Ninomiya’s official website. Because of the contributions of Noda Megumi, Ninomiya expresses special gratitude to Noda in every tankobon of Nodame Cantabile.⁵

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³ Manga, a Japanese term referring to comic books in the American sense, typically make their public debut in phone-book-sized weekly or monthly anthology manga magazines. After a single series is finished in the magazine, the publisher may reprint it in a paperback-sized volume called tankobon.
⁴ http://74x.magnetic-rose.net/2006/12/15/will-the-real-noda-megumi-please-stand-up/ accessed 09/17/08.
Due to the popularity of the *manga*, the first nine volumes of *Nodame Cantabile* were adapted as a television drama series named after the *manga*. This TV drama series was produced by Fuji TV and first broadcast in Japan on the Fuji Network System (FNS) at 9 p.m. on Monday evenings from October 16 to December 25, 2006.\(^6\) Directed by Takeuchi Hideki, Kawamura Yasuhiro and Tanimura Masaki,\(^7\) eleven episodes of *Nodame Cantabile* were aired and established an average viewership rating as high as 18.79% in the Kanto area, which encompasses the Greater Tokyo Area, including Gunma, Tochigi, Ibaraki, Saitama, Tokyo, Chiba, and Kanagawa.\(^8\) *Nodame Cantabile* went on to win many awards at the Japanese 51st Television Drama Academy Awards, including Best Drama, Best Actress, Best Director, Best Musical Arrangement, and Best Opening. Meanwhile, after being aired in Korea, it won awards for Best Miniseries, Best Director, and Best Music in the 2nd Seoul Drama Awards in 2007. The media companies Videoland Japan in Taiwan, Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) in Hong Kong, and 8th dimension (8TV) in Malaysia bought the rights to air *Nodame Cantabile* on their own channels, respectively, on July 23, 2007, August 12, 2007, and January 6, 2008.\(^9\) In Taiwan, *Nodame Cantabile* has an additional Chinese translation, 交響情人夢 (*Symphony Lovers’ Dream*), for marketing convenience and easy viewer recognition.

The success of *Nodame Cantabile* has promoted the careers of its leading actor, Hiroshi Tamaki (28), and actress, Juri Ueno (22). Tamaki emerged in Japan’s entertainment industry as a model and actor in the late 1990s. After co-starring with

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\(^6\) The dramas aired on Monday evenings at nine are the so-called prime-time dramas and usually receive high viewership ratings.

\(^7\) According to the production credits of the live-action *Nodame Cantabile*’s official website, Etou Rin is the screenwriter while Wakamatsu Hiroki and Shimizu Kazuyuki are producers of this drama.


Satoshi Tsumabuki, Akifumi Miura, Koen Kondo, and Takatoshi Kaneko as the five main characters in the movie *Waterboys* in 2001, Tamaki gained greater publicity. However, he was always assigned supporting actor roles in various TV drama series and movies until he took the leading role as Shinichi Chiaki in *Nodame Cantabile*. The popularity of *Nodame Cantabile* has brought Tamaki’s career to another level. He was awarded Best Newcomer at Japan’s Elan Dor Awards (エルランドール賞) in 2007. He won commercial endorsements as spokesman for such Japanese companies as Mister Donut (ongoing), CloreetICE gum (2008), and NEC electronics and cell phones (2008), and has acted in various television commercials. Tamaki also has starred in several drama series and movies since *Nodame Cantabile* and took the lead actor’s role in the drama series, *The Fantastic Deer-Man*, in 2008, which won him the Best Actor award from the 11th Nikkan Sports Drama Grand Prix.

Unlike Tamaki, Juri Ueno had been honored with awards before *Nodame Cantabile*. Her representative work included the movie *Swing Girls* (2004), which won her the Best Newcomer award of three media bodies: the 28th Japan Academic Awards, the 59th Everyday Movie Sponichi Grand Prix, and the Yokohama Film Festival. In *Swing Girls*, Ueno acted as a high school girl, Tomoko, who was a saxophone player in a school’s jazz band. She contributed her own saxophone performance in the film and her musical abilities seem to have been a significant factor in winning her the role of Nodame. For her efforts in *Nodame Cantabile*, Ueno won the Best Actress award from the 51st Television Drama Academy Awards and the Best Newcomer of Japan’s Elan Dor Awards in 2007. She has since garnered other awards. In 2008, she was named Best Supporting Actress at both the 12th Nikkan Sports Drama Grand Prix and the 57th
Television Drama Academy Awards for her work in the TV drama series, *Last Friends*. For both actors, *Nodame Cantabile* provided a springboard to prove their acting abilities and promote their careers and popularity.

**The Plot, Characters, and Setting**

*Nodame Cantabile* takes place in the living quarters and classrooms of a fictional Tokyo music conservatory in the early 21st century, that is, contemporary with its original television audience. There are many characters and several orchestras featured in the series. Below are two tables for readers to refer to both for this chapter and throughout this thesis. Table 1 provides names of the primary characters, their major instrument, and their position in the drama; Table 2 provides brief descriptions of the music ensembles.

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>Megumi Noda (Nodame)</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>The main actress; a junior piano major at Momogaoka College of Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinichi Chiaki (Chiaki)</td>
<td>Piano; Conducting</td>
<td>The main actor; a senior piano major of Momogaoka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryutaro Mine (Mine)</td>
<td>Violin</td>
<td>A senior violin major of Momogaoka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masumi Okuyama (Masumi)</td>
<td>Percussion (Timpani mainly)</td>
<td>A senior percussion major of Momogaoka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saiko Tagaya (Saiko)</td>
<td>Voice (Soprano)</td>
<td>A senior voice major of Momogaoka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiyora Miki (Kiyora)</td>
<td>Violin</td>
<td>A senior violin major of Momogaoka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasunori Kuroki (Kuroki)</td>
<td>Oboe</td>
<td>A oboe student outside of</td>
</tr>
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Momogaoka Toru Kikuchi Cello A cello student outside of Momogaoka
Franz von Stresemann (Stresemann; Milch) Conducting An internationally well-known conductor; a guest conducting professor of Momogaoka
Kozo Eto (Eto) Piano A piano professor of Momogaoka
Hajime Tanioka Piano A piano professor of Momogaoka

Table 2. Important Music Ensembles Shown in Nodame Cantabile

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Brief Descriptions</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Stresemann/Special Orchestra (The S Oke)¹⁰</td>
<td>Originally founded by Stresemann, consisting of the so-called “laggards” of Momogaoka. Stresemann assigns Chiaki as coach. Members change name from “Stresemann” to “Special” Orchestra (S Oke).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The A Orchestra (The A Oke)</td>
<td>The regular orchestra of Momogaoka, consisting of the best musicians in school; coached by Stresemann.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rising-Star Orchestra (The R-S Oke)</td>
<td>Co-founded by Kiyora, Chiaki, Kuroki, and Kikuchi, comprised of excellent students from different music schools in Japan. This orchestra is not associated with Momogaoka. Chiaki is presiding conductor until he leaves to study abroad in Europe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁰ The term oke is an abbreviation for orchestra in Japanese. The same use of the word can be found in the term “karaoke,” meaning “empty orchestra.”

¹¹ In the drama, there is no explanation for what “A” stands for; “A” might imply the orchestra is a grade A orchestra.
Nodame Cantabile is a romantic drama and comedy centered on two main protagonists, Megumi Noda and Shinichi Chiaki; several of their colleagues and teachers at Momogaoka College of Music are supporting characters. The TV series changed some details of the plot from the original manga, yet kept most of the characterization intact. Megumi Noda, or “Nodame” is a piano student at Momogaoka College of Music. She runs into Shinichi Chiaki, who is drunk and asleep in front of her own door, and then realizes that she and Chiaki are schoolmates. She takes Chiaki into her messy apartment and performs Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 8, op. 13, “Pathetique.” Chiaki is awakened by Nodame’s interesting interpretation of “Pathetique” and is soon scared away by the incredible mess of her room. From that point on, Nodame has fallen for Chiaki and tries every opportunity to catch his attention and follow by his side. On the other hand, Chiaki just regards Nodame as a weird fan and a junior classmate. Chiaki does not have romantic feelings for Nodame until a very late stage of the story.

After Chiaki meets Nodame, he goes through different challenges and music learning opportunities, such as coaching the S Orchestra, playing Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 2 with the A Orchestra, conducting the Rising-Star Orchestra, and so on. These experiences give Chiaki a firm foundation to become a future conductor. Nodame similarly comes to realize where her true aspiration lies. After the debut of the R-S Orchestra, coached by Chiaki, Nodame realizes she should help Chiaki achieve his dream of studying abroad; thus, she hypnotizes Chiaki to cure him of his fear of flying, which he

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12 For example, in the original manga, Nodame meets Chiaki when they are sophomore and junior, respectively, but in the TV drama version they are junior and senior when they first meet. Another difference is that the TV version replaces Beethoven’s “Eroica” Symphony (used in the manga) with his Symphony No.7 as S Oke’s debut composition. Compared to the TV drama, I would say that the anime production of Nodame Cantabile, which was produced later, is more faithful to the original manga.
developed after an emergency landing in a plane when he was twelve and prevented him from going abroad.

Nodame soon decides to participate in the Maradona national piano competition, aiming at the award of the first prize: a scholarship for studying abroad (with Chiaki). By the time she decides to compete, the event is only a few weeks away. Nodame then moves in with her teacher, Eto, and his wife, and endures intense daily training for the competition. She passes the first three rounds, yet fails on the final round. Nevertheless, Chiaki is impressed by Nodame’s improvement and marvelous performances on the stage, and asks her if she would study abroad in Europe with him. Nodame, however, is overwhelmed by the humiliation of defeat and a recalling of a childhood trauma, and declines his offer. She goes back to her parents’ home disappointed. Meanwhile, Chiaki hurries to wrap up his business in Japan, including conducting the R-S Orchestra for the Christmas concert, so that he can arrive in Europe in time for a conducting competition. He thinks he can forget about Nodame and just concentrate on his own matters, but he is unable to do so. He ends up searching for Nodame in her hometown, attempting to again persuade her to study abroad with him. Coincidentally, Nodame receives Eto’s message that one of the judges from the Maradona competition has recommended her to study at the Paris Conservatory. At the end of the story, Nodame is accepted by the Conservatory and will be going to study abroad with Chiaki in Paris. Chiaki then finally discovers his feelings for Nodame and decides to face them boldly and honestly.

The series involves numerous characters. Megumi Noda (Nodame), born to a fisherman’s family, is twenty-one years old and a junior piano major at Momogaoka College of Music. Since her father is just a fisherman, Nodame has little financial support
from her family. Although she has a very limited budget to manage, she still purchases her favorite mangas and cartoon dolls. Sometimes her utilities are shut off because she cannot pay for them. Her music talent is discovered by her neighbor, a music college student, at a young age and then Nodame is sent to a local private piano studio to receive lessons. She astonishes others by advancing to play Chopin’s etudes at such a tender age and this prodigious talent also impresses her teacher, who instructs her even more strictly due to his high expectation. One day, during a lesson, Nodame’s teacher slaps her and this incident puts an end to Nodame’s early music education. From that time on, she resists sight-reading, score-reading, strict instructions, and the rigid routine of piano practice. Although Nodame is loath to read music, she has an excellent ear to memorize and play the music after hearing it just once. Her musicality shines through her sloppy, yet improvisatory performing, and catches Chiaki’s eyes and ears.

Shinichi Chiaki is twenty-two years old and a senior piano major at Nodame’s school. Although he is a major in piano performance, his secret aspiration is to become a conductor. Unlike Nodame’s background, he comes from a wealthy, well-educated family and has inherited music talent from his famous-pianist father. Chiaki stays several years in Prague as a child with his parents, where he meets his mentor, Sebastiano Viera, and develops his love for conducting. At the age of twelve, after his parents file for divorce, Chiaki goes back to Japan with his mother. The return flight to Japan turns out to be the most traumatic experience in his life. He encounters an emergency landing while arriving in Japan and consequentially develops flight phobia and is no longer able to fly. His flight phobia, along with his experience of nearly drowning (the drama does not provide details of this experience) prevents Chiaki from going to Europe again via any
possible transportation. To Shinichi Chiaki, an arrogant yet extremely talented musician who firmly believes that studying in Europe is the only way to master the essence of Western art music, being trapped in Japan is devastating. Under this circumstance, Chiaki incidentally hears Nodame’s piano-playing in the hallway of the music building, and, after Nodame unexpectedly takes him home, Chiaki discovers that she lives next door. Chiaki then becomes interested in Nodame’s musicality. During the course of being friends with Nodame, Chiaki gradually restores his enthusiasm for music learning and makes the initial move to establish his conducting career. He starts to notice that there are different kinds of talented musicians in Japan, such as Nodame and the members of the S Oke, and he gradually learns and matures with them en route to becoming a better musician.

Ryutaro Mine is a senior violin student. His father owns a Chinese restaurant, *Uraken*, behind the campus. Mine used to praise rock rather than classical music, but he changes his preference after performing Beethoven’s violin sonata “Spring” with Chiaki in his re-taken proficiency exam. Later on, he becomes really close friends with Chiaki, Nodame, and Masumi, and often spends time with them at his father’s restaurant. Mine is the concertmaster of the S Orchestra conducted by Chiaki, and also participates in the R-S Orchestra. He dates Kiyora Miki, who is the concertmaster of the R-S Orchestra.

Masumi Okuyama is a claustrophobic senior timpanist who overflows with femininity. He comes from a rural area of Japan and has difficulty adjusting to Tokyo’s narrow spaces and city pace. One time during Masumi’s first year in college, Chiaki saved him from tripping down the stairs. From that moment on, Masumi develops a crush on Chiaki. At first Masumi dislikes Nodame, since she always follows Chiaki; he even
plays pranks on her. Gradually, Masumi starts getting along with Nodame and becomes friends with Mine and Chiaki. Masumi is a skilled percussionist, possessing the title “Queen of Percussion” on campus, and plays in both the S Orchestra and R-S Orchestra.

Franz von Stresemann (nicknamed Milch) is an internationally known conductor. It is said that he has conducted several prestigious orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic and Vienna Philharmonic. Stresemann accepts the request of Momogaoka’s president and comes to reside in this school as a guest-conducting professor. His initial reason to come to Japan is his special love affections for Momogaoka’s board chairwoman, yet after he meets Nodame and Chiaki, he really sets his mind to helping them bring out their potential. Although Stresemann’s music talent is highly reputed, he is not dignified in private life and is shown as perverted, demanding, and fond of women in nightclubs, especially the club, *One More Kiss*. He once prevents Chiaki from transferring to the conducting major simply because Chiaki is the pupil of his European rival, Vieira, though eventually he changes his mind after seeing Chiaki conduct the S Orchestra. Stresemann recruits laggards (yet with potential) on campus and founds the Special Orchestra (the S Oke); Chiaki coaches and debuts as conductor with the S Oke. Stresemann also coaches the A Orchestra (the A Oke), which consists of the best musicians of the school.

Saiko Tagaya, a senior voice major, is a daughter of a famous instrument manufacturer. She is Chiaki’s former girlfriend and cares for Chiaki even after they have broken up. Saiko wishes to win back Chiaki, but her hope is dashed after realizing the special bond between Nodame and Chiaki. Later on, she helps the R-S Orchestra secure their debut and maintains a close relationship with Chiaki’s mother. Saiko has a
wonderful, skilled voice yet has difficulty expressing music more boldly with emotion and passion, a trait that echoes how she deals with her love for Chiaki.

Kiyora Miki is a senior violin major of Momogaoka and concertmaster of the A Orchestra. She earlier studied in Vienna for a short amount of time and received private tutoring from the former concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic, Kai Dowin (a minor character in the series). After returning back from Vienna, she invites Chiaki to co-initiate the R-S Orchestra together and later becomes concertmaster of this orchestra. Takahashi Noriyuki replaces her as concertmaster in the R-S Oke when she decides to study abroad again. She begins to date Mine.

Sakura Saku is a double bass student of Momogaoka recruited into the S Oke. Since her father’s business is in trouble, she and her mother need to work part-time in order to fund her tuition and support the family. Sakura is too busy with her part-time jobs to practice regularly, so she often has difficulties keeping up with the double bass section in the S Oke. After a visit to Sakura’s home, Chiaki realizes that Sakura’s father secretly retains an amazing collection of legendary violins, and he persuades Sakura’s father to sell them all. After the violins are sold, Sakura’s family becomes wealthy again and she is able to keep pursuing her music education. Later on, Sakura also participates in the R-S Oke.

Kozo Eto is a piano professor at Momogaoka College of Music, and he is called the “Harisen teacher” because he always carries a harisen (張り扇), a Japanese paper fan used as a slapping stick, with him as a tool to instruct his students (see Figure 1). It is said that Professor Eto only teaches “promising” students and always pushes them very hard. He used to be Chiaki’s teacher; however, he dropped Chiaki after Chiaki boldly rebelled
against his advice. He later becomes interested in Nodame’s talent after accidently hearing Nodame and Chiaki play Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 2 together. He utilizes his authority to become Nodame’s teacher and is eager to transform Nodame into one of his top students. At first, Nodame is reluctant to be his student because his strictness is reminiscent of her childhood trauma. Yet she starts to accept Eto after Chiaki teaches Eto how to cater to Nodame—by giving her free lunches and the Purigotota cartoon characters she loves. Eto even gives up on using his harisen for Nodame. He coaches Nodame while she prepares for a piano competition, and establishes the connection between Nodame and her future professor at the Paris Conservatory.

Hajime Tanioka is another piano professor of Momogaoka and formerly Nodame’s teacher. His teaching style is rather relaxed and he allows his students to express themselves more freely in contrast to Eto’s style. After Eto drops Chiaki, Tanioka takes him as his student and assigns a Mozart piano sonata for two pianos to Chiaki and Nodame. Tanioka later allows Eto to take Nodame as his student. Since Tanioka’s teaching style is more easy-going, flexible and less hands-on, some say that he specializes in teaching laggards.
Yasunori Kuroki is an excellent oboe student who plays in the R-S Oke. He falls for Nodame at first sight because she was acting properly and sweetly in accordance with his fantasy of a wonderful housewife. However, this crush subsides when he realizes Nodame’s affections for Chiaki. While heartbroken, Kuroki loses in a national music competition, yet he soon recovers and performs an impressive Mozart oboe concerto in the debut of the R-S Oke.

Toru Kikuchi is a cello player and one of the founders of the R-S orchestra along with Chiaki, Kiyora, and Kuroki. He studied in Boston before joining the R-S Orchestra. He is portrayed as a playboy, dating three ladies simultaneously; therefore, he deals with women problems constantly.

The Construction of Music in Nodame Cantabile

Since the plot of Nodame Cantabile is based on the lives of classical musicians, Western art music is a central part of the drama. In order to assure the quality and consistency of the music in the drama, the Nodame Orchestra, derived from the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, was responsible for performing all of the art music in the Nodame soundtrack. On average, each episode runs approximately 46-47 minutes without commercials, except for the first and last episodes, which run about ten minutes longer than the others. Before engaging in a further discussion on the musical structure of Nodame Cantabile, I will demonstrate the way that different music compositions are arranged in an episode by displaying the music list of Nodame Cantabile’s 8th episode in Table 3.
Table 3. Music List of *Nodame Cantabile’s* 8th Episode; Approximate Running Time: 47 min. 4 sec.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer/Composition</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scene Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. J.S. Bach: Fugue g-moll BWV 578</td>
<td>ca. 39 sec.</td>
<td>Flashback to the details of the emergency landing in Chiaki’s childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Takayuki: Chiaki’s Feelings (Original composition)</td>
<td>ca. 90 sec.</td>
<td>It seems that everyone in R-S Oke is not that serious about this orchestra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Handel: Water Music Suite No.2 in D major, II. Alla Hornpipe</td>
<td>ca. 35 sec.</td>
<td>Chiaki’s mom calls and tells him that she talked with Milch in Europe…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No.2, mvt.1</td>
<td>ca. 16 sec.</td>
<td>Milch wants to tell Chiaki that no matter how far they are apart, they are connected by music…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Brahms: Symphony No.1, mvt.4</td>
<td>ca. 33 sec.</td>
<td>Chiaki is studying how to conduct this piece…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Massenet: Thais Meditation</td>
<td>ca. 15 sec.</td>
<td>Kuroki is expressing how wonderful Nodame is in his mind…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Rimsky-Korsakov: Flight of the Bumblebee</td>
<td>ca. 73 sec.</td>
<td>Masumi reveals the real side of Nodame…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Noda: Fart Exercise No.3 (Original composition)</td>
<td>ca. 25 sec.</td>
<td>In Nodame’s Lesson: Nodame is rehearsing this piece with Prof. Eto…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Sibelius: Finlandia</td>
<td>ca. 79 sec.</td>
<td>Prof. Eto asks Nodame to sight-read 10 pieces by the next lesson…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Dvorak: Slavonic Dances Op.72, II.</td>
<td>ca. 83 sec.</td>
<td>Prof. Eto recommends Nodame for the piano competition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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13 The real Megumi Noda cooperated with Tomoko Ninomiya to create the *manga Nodame Cantabile*. She used to be a piano major and is now a piano teacher. See the section, The Background Development. Fart Exercise No.3 is a real piano composition, composed by Megumi Noda; it is filled with lyrics and accompanied with physical movements. The purpose of the song is to help kindergarteners develop musical sense through imitating fart movements.
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Takayuki: Energetic Students (Original composition)</td>
<td>ca. 17 sec.</td>
<td>Nodame tries to take care of Chiaki; preparing bath for him, feeding him, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Takayuki: Nodame’s Feelings (Original composition)</td>
<td>ca. 34 sec.</td>
<td>Nodame looks around the messy room, realizing that Chiaki has been working hard. She starts to think about her attitude about music…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Rachmaninoff: Symphony No.2, mvt.3</td>
<td>ca. 21 sec.</td>
<td>Nodame tries to get eels for Chiaki… Kuroki realizes that Nodame likes Chiaki…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Khachaturian: Gayane “Sabre Dance”</td>
<td>ca. 15 sec.</td>
<td>Nodame is fighting for on-sale eels with a lot of housewives…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Rodrigo: Aranjuez Concerto, mvt.2</td>
<td>ca. 44 sec.</td>
<td>Nodame is expressing her love for Chiaki…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Beethoven: Symphony No. 7, mvt.1</td>
<td>ca. 27 sec.</td>
<td>The opening with sponsor’s names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Massenet: Thais Meditation</td>
<td>ca. 11 sec.</td>
<td>Kuroki is thinking about Nodame so much that he lets his reeds soak too long…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Brahms: Hungarian Dance No.5</td>
<td>ca. 117 sec.</td>
<td>The result of the national competition…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Fauré: Pelleas et Melisande, III. Sicilienne</td>
<td>ca. 72 sec.</td>
<td>Kiyora can’t believe that she only got 2nd place; she feels she can’t face her teacher and the R-S Oke…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Brahms: Symphony No.1, mvt.4</td>
<td>ca. 22 sec.</td>
<td>Performed in a rehearsal…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Mendelssohn: Symphony No.4 “Italian”, mvt.1</td>
<td>ca. 50 sec.</td>
<td>Sakuma shows the advertisement for R-S Oke…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Mozart: Symphony No. 25, mvt.1</td>
<td>ca. 19 sec.</td>
<td>Chiaki dreams about the details of the emergency landing…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. J.S. Bach: St. Matthew Passion BWV.244, “Wir setzen uns mit Tranen neider”</td>
<td>ca. 5 sec.</td>
<td>Chiaki grasps Nodame…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Duration</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Mussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition, No. 9 “The Hut on Hen’s Legs”</td>
<td>ca. 41 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Brahms: Symphony No.1, mvt.1</td>
<td>ca. 40 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Takayuki: Energetic Students (Original composition)</td>
<td>ca. 25 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Takayuki: Nodame’s Feelings (Original composition)</td>
<td>ca. 130 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Ravel: Bolero</td>
<td>ca. 182 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Mozart: Oboe Concerto, mvt.1 &amp; mvt.3</td>
<td>ca. 66 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Takayuki: Energetic Students (Original composition)</td>
<td>ca. 18 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Sibelius: The Karelia Suite Op.11, mvt.3 “Alla Marcia”</td>
<td>ca. 30 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Brahms: Symphony No.1, mvt.1 &amp; mvt.4</td>
<td>ca. 216 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Saint-Saens: “Aquarium” from Le Carnaval des Animaux</td>
<td>ca. 63 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>J.S. Bach: St. Matthew Passion BWV.244, “Wir setzen uns mit Tranen neider”</td>
<td>ca. 65 sec.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the table above, one 47-min. episode contains approximately 36 minutes of music with about 30 minutes belonging to Western art music, which weighs approximately 83% of the total length of accompanying music. I chose this episode as an example because it is representative of the use of music in the series and because it serves as a vital turning point of the plot: the cause of Chiaki’s flight phobia is revealed and subsequently is cured through Nodame’s hypnosis. With the process of suspension towards resolution, the main characters of *Nodame Cantabile* expose their emotions and thoughts to the extent that these intensify the fabric of the plot and lead to another phase. Therefore, this episode encompasses a wide variety of music compositions accompanying all sorts of emotions and scenarios. Episode Eight also represents the typical musical layout of an episode throughout the series.

Every episode of *Nodame Cantabile* is framed with Beethoven’s Symphony No.7 mvt. 1 (no. 16 in Table 1) as opening music and Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue (no.36) as closing music. In general, *Nodame Cantabile* follows the convention of Japanese idol dramas in that it plays the opening music about ten minutes after the episode starts and the first commercial follows after this music. The closing music is always placed at the
end of the drama. The functions of the opening and closing music may be varied. From a structural perspective, the opening music, which appears after about ten minutes that serve as a transition from the previous episode to this one, signals that the main body of the episode is about to begin, and the closing music wraps up the episode, giving a sense of “the end.” From a commercial perspective, this structure provides an opportunity for producers to display the sponsors and credits.

Hattori Takayuki, who is a renowned Japanese commercial composer, edited all of the Western art music used in *Nodame Cantabile* and also composed several original music pieces specifically for this drama. After finishing his study at the Paris Conservatory, Takayuki returned to Japan in 1988 and has been actively engaged in composing music for movies, musicals, games, *anime*, TV dramas, pop singers and so on. His portfolio of TV drama music includes *Hero* (2001) and *Kareinuru ichizoku* (華麗なる一族, 2007) as recent representatives.\(^\text{14}\)

I was curious how Takayuki’s classical music educational background may have influenced the way he produced and edited *Nodame Cantabile*’s soundtrack, so that I attempted to initiate contact with him via the email address provided on his official website. However, the group Takayuki belongs to—Face Music Publisher—did not reply, and thus an interview with the composer became infeasible.\(^\text{15}\)


\(^{15}\) I have found only one email address associated with Hattori Takayuki, [araki@face-music.co.jp](mailto:araki@face-music.co.jp), which is authorized by Face Music Publisher.
Leitmotifs and Their Unique Functions in *Nodame Cantabile*

By investigating the way in which Takayuki relates Western art music to various fragments of the plot, his methodology, like that of many film and television composers, is clearly reminiscent of the Wagnerian concept of leitmotif. In fact, Takayuki employed similar devices in the drama series *Hero*, to depict the leading character, Kuryu Kohei. The usage of leitmotif in Western art music was not invented by Wagner and it can be traced back at least to Mozart.¹⁶ Nineteenth- or early twentieth-century Hollywood composers, according to Royal Brown, frequently composed their music in a Wagnerian leitmotif fashion.¹⁷ Leitmotif is usually associated with a musical motive “which is connected in the composer’s imagination with a certain idea or figure, and which serves to evoke the same idea in the mind of the hearer.”¹⁸ Thus, a leitmotif could represent tangible substances, such as a specific character and place, or something abstract, like an idea or an atmosphere, and it usually reoccurs throughout a dramatic setting.

It is apparent that *Nodame Cantabile* does not use a musical continuum like that of “Die Meistersinger” or “Tristan und Isolde.” Instead of being presented as a thematic or harmonic element within a complete composition, the idea of leitmotif is embodied in a quoted, pre-existing music composition in this drama. While it is unknown if Takayuki specifically had leitmotif ideas in mind while editing and arranging various art music compositions for *Nodame Cantabile*, nonetheless the music portrays the characteristics of leitmotifs. I will categorize the art music compositions used in *Nodame Cantabile* in terms of their relations to specific figures, places, traits, and atmospheres.

Leitmotif as a specific situation

Chiaki encountered an emergency landing while returning to Japan from Prague at age twelve, and flying has since been his biggest fear because the idea of flying became associated with that terrifying experience. To convey this emotion, an excerpt from the “Dies Irae” of Verdi’s Requiem always accompanies the flashbacks to that emergency landing or any of Chiaki’s thoughts about flying. For example, in Episode One, when Saiko asks Chiaki why he has not considered studying abroad, the “Dies Irae” appears, reinforcing the horror image in Chiaki’s memory about the landing. Another example is when Sakuma asks Chiaki the same question, Chiaki begins trembling with the sound of the same excerpt, and this time the visual image of the emergency landing is not present except in the mind of the listener. “Dies Irae” means “Day of Wrath,” which is usually associated with fear and death; such an attribute precisely embodies Chiaki’s fear for flying.

Leitmotif as a specific place

Nodame Cantabile unfolds with the splendid scenery of Prague and an excerpt of approximately the first two minutes from the “Polka” of Dvorak’s Czech Suite; afterwards, this music is used to symbolize Chiaki’s idea of Europe. It is very likely that Takayuki adopted the Czech Suite for its literal relation to Prague. However, the Czech Suite eventually represents Europe as a whole instead of just one city. The same excerpt emerges on several occasions since Chiaki’s longing for Europe is a persistent theme in Nodame Cantabile. For example, when Mine asks Chiaki “what are you going to do by...
studying in Japan,” the “Polka” theme appears and implies that Chiaki is actually longing to go to Europe, instead of staying in Japan.

**Leitmotif as a specific atmosphere**

Several music excerpts describe different kinds of atmosphere and recur throughout the drama. For example, Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Flight of the Bumblebee” is applied to depict hectic, chaotic situations. This piece is associated with and appears in the scene where Stresemann invites a group of the S-Oke members to participate with him in a *gokon*, a Japanese group blind date. When he detects the apathy of the group, Stresemann baits them by saying that “whoever comes to *gokon* can go on a date with Chiaki.” This promise works like wonder and people immediately flock to Stresemann with great eagerness and excitement. Since *Nodame Cantabile* is also a comedy, this kind of scene appears frequently to provide a sort of comic relief. The same piece portrays Chiaki’s madness when he discovers about 40 messages on his answering machine from Masumi and tries to skip all of the messages by pressing the delete key rapidly. “Flight of the Bumblebee’s” rapid ascending and descending chromatic passages match this scene vividly and also delight the moment. Khachaturian’s “Sabre Dance” is sometimes also used to portray these kinds of chaotic yet funny moments.

To evoke another mood, Tchaikovsky’s “Dance of the Sugar Fairy” from *The Nutcracker* represents a moment that is playful, naughty, sneaky, full of conspiracy, and even surreal. The excerpt is played when Stresemann seduces Nodame to come to his hotel with an invitation to dine in the sushi restaurant therein. Because of Nodame’s innocence and love of food, she begins to follow Stresemann, but changes her mind for
an even greater temptation—staying one night with Chiaki on his bed—an offer made by Chiaki. Rather than intending a sexual advance, Stresemann most likely wanted to play a trick on Chiaki and see his response. The music is played again when Nodame carries a fainted Stresemann to see Chiaki coaching the S Oke; Stresemann touches Nodame’s breasts while being carried and is punched by Nodame.

Finally, Takayuki uses Saint-Saens’s “Aquarium” from Le Carnaval des Animaux to represent a mysterious atmosphere. This composition is comprised of strings without doublebass along with two pianos, flute, and glass harmonica. The flute plays the melody, the strings are in the background, and the piano plays rapid, glissando-like runs. The glissando-like runs are played in the high register of the piano and doubled on the glass harmonica, creating a distinct, innovative timbre for the listeners. The music appears during a rehearsal of the S Orchestra; Chiaki is about to lose consciousness and fall to the ground but is saved by Mine in time. Since why Chiaki passes out is unknown, or rather, only vaguely explained, Saint-Saens’ music portrays feelings of uncertainty and mystery. The same excerpt also emerges when Nodame is hypnotizing Chiaki.

In addition, Takayuki’s original composition, “Energetic Students” (元気な学生), portrays some moments of happiness, excitement, and silliness enacted on several occasions by Momogaoka’s students. This electroacoustic composition replicates whistle, violins and drums. The synthesized whistle creates a cheerful, animated mood and the drums add upbeat rhythms. Two scenes in which “Energetic Students” appears are 1) when Mine proudly and merrily shows Chiaki the special-orchestra T-shirts he has ordered for everyone, and 2) when Nodame grills dried fish, which is supposed to represent Nodame’s “good wife lunch box” for Chiaki, in a piano practice room. In order
to make a fresh lunch box for Chiaki, Nodame determines to make it right on campus. Grilling a smelly dried fish in a practice room is definitely a silly act (and probably not allowed), yet this serves as unique humor in this drama. Some other music excerpts depicting a similar atmosphere include Meacham’s “American Patrol,” the first movement of Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 1, and Mozart’s *Overture of The Marriage of Figaro*.

**Leitmotif as a specific character: Takayuki’s “Nodame’s Feelings” (のため心情)**

Being the lead role in *Nodame Cantabile*, the character Nodame has her own motive when she reveals true, deep feelings and comprehends the significance of various matters and events. The motive music composed by Takayuki is titled “Nodame’s Feelings,” which features a violin playing the melody while a piano and marimba play the accompaniment (see Figure 2). The timbre of marimba, along with the simple texture of the main theme, seems to imply a sense of childishness and innocence that reflect Nodame’s image. During a scene when Nodame asks the oboist Kuroki about his definition of being an accomplished musician, Kuroki’s answer makes her ponder her future; the music excerpt accompanies Nodame’s emotion throughout this scene.

![Figure 2: Excerpt of the Violin Melody from “Nodame’s Feelings.” My Transcription.](image-url)
Chiaki—Takayuki’s “Chiaki’s Comprehension” (千秋の解かった心情)

Similar to Nodame’s motive music, “Chiaki’s Comprehension” is played every time Chiaki understands some hardship or significant challenges he or his friends confront. Unlike “Nodame’s Feelings,” which employs three different instruments, this composition is written for piano solo, and the melodic line of Chiaki’s motive is more lyrical and sentimental than Nodame’s motive. In one episode, Nodame points out that, since they will all study abroad eventually, the members of R-S Oke seem to treat their orchestra halfheartedly. To Chiaki, the R-S Oke at that time is all he has in his musical life in Japan; thus, Nodame’s observation generates bitterness and disappointment, and this situation is accompanied by this music. Figure 3 is a partial transcription of the melody of “Chiaki’s Comprehension.”

![Figure 3: Excerpt from “Chiaki’s Comprehension.” My Transcription.]

Noriyuki Takahashi—Takayuki’s “My Alma Mater” (わが母校)

In Nodame Cantabile, Takahashi is a violinist who used to study in Paris and won 3rd place in the Buffon International Violin Competition. Takahashi is so impressed by the splendid performance (and handsome men in tuxedos) of the R-S Orchestra that he
wants to join. When this character appears for the first time, he is peeking though the window of the R-S Orchestra’s rehearsal hall, accompanied by “My Alma Mater,” composed by Hattori Takayuki. When he shows up a second time in front of Chiaki and asks for permission to join the orchestra, the tune is played again. It is apparent that this tune represents Takahashi and is present when he takes a prominent role in a scene.

“My Alma Mater” is not a MIDI composition; it consists of a trio, two guitars and clarinet. The piece unfolds with persistent, steady strokes of arpeggios on one guitar, which serve as a drone. Later, the second guitar enters and plays the main melody while the drone persists. Meanwhile, the clarinet embellishes in the background and then takes over, playing a variation of the melody. There is no information on why the tune is titled “My Alma Mater”; it seems irrelevant to what has been revealed in the story and to both the scene and Takahashi’s educational background. However, the troubadour-like tune somehow portrays Takahashi’s impression: a musician who has been traveling around the world and performing.

**Professor Eto—Sibelius’s *Finlandia***

Although Eto appeared in the very beginning of the drama, his role becomes prominent only when he becomes Nodame’s teacher. When Eto holds a lesson with Nodame for the first time, his appearance is accompanied with the introduction of Sibelius’ Symphonic poem *Finlandica*. The introduction is comprised of a punching/staccato, weighty brass chorus followed by rolling beats of the timpani, which together create a foreboding, upsetting atmosphere. Takayuki might utilize this fragment...

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to single out the threatening, almost oppressive part of Eto’s personality. On other occasions, such as when Eto demands that Nodame sight-read ten pieces for one lesson and reproaches her when he (incorrectly) believes she considers bribing the judges of the Maradona competition, the introduction of *Finlandia* reoccurs.²⁰

**Franz Stresemann—Prokofiev’s “The Montagues and Capulets” from *Romeo and Juliet* Suites**

Stresemann is doubtless the foremost supporting character in *Nodame Cantabile* and he appears often, especially before Episode Six. When he first appears on the Momogaoka campus, Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet* accompanies him as he sneaks around and takes photos of some students. From that moment on, the music reoccurs approximately ten times, always associated with Stresemann. The excerpt shown in the drama consists of the main theme of “the Montagues and Capulets” (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4: Piano Arrangement of the Theme](Www.scribd.com), accessed Sep. 15, 2008.

The timpani and brass emphasize the chord at the downbeat while the strings echo at the upbeat. Meanwhile, the violins sound the melody and the brass fanfare enters later. The heavy chords and the thumping bowing of the violins depict an oppressive image and

²⁰Nodame is worried about whether the judges of Maradona competition have been bribed and Eto misunderstands her intent, believing that she would like to bribe the judges.
the dissonance implies awkwardness. Although this music displays Stresemann’s anger and grudges in most scenes, it surely represents the presence of the maestro himself. Thus, at a scene of the reunion of Chiaki and Stresemann, the music is sung, announcing Stresemann’s grand reappearance.

Echoes of Takayuki’s Successful Approach

By employing a wide range of music as motives in Nodame Cantabile, Takayuki successfully relates music to different theatrical elements and characters and delivers these ideas to the viewers. According to the opinions on the accessed discussion forums and blogs, most viewers strongly agree that the music used in Nodame Cantabile enlightens the atmosphere, sharpens the personalities of characters, and enhances the plot.

Two bloggers account their opinions concerning this point as follows (my translations):

Nodame Cantabile’s accompanying music is the best I have ever heard (as compared to other TV drama series). It is full of classical music. I didn’t care for classical music that much, but I am all about it after watching Nodame Cantabile. Classical music is so great! The producers did such a good job to match the music with the plot. At so many times I can’t help but burst into laughter once the music starts playing…the music matches scenarios so well, so appropriately!! [Nodame Cantabile] also has so many music excerpts which are well-known to the public. Although these are only clips, I almost can recognize where all of them are drawn from. 21

…Nodame Cantabile skillfully blends classical music into different aspects of the plot and further overthrows the stereotype of classical music—difficult, hard to understand, and boring. For example, when Chiaki first walks into Nodame’s room and sees piles of trash and clutter, he can’t stand it. So he forces Nodame to clean up the room with him. The accompanying music used here is Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Flight of the Bumblebee.” The busy-sounding scales match the scenario that Chiaki is hastily busy in cleaning and organizing in the room. I can’t help but have an understanding smile. [Nodame Cantabile] uses such an alternative way to introduce classical music to the public, which makes anime, 21 http://diary.blog.yam.com/wodskydream/article/5983122 accessed 09/17/08.
Japanese-TV-drama lovers, and non-classical music lovers fall in love with classical music unprecedentedly.\textsuperscript{22}

According to these comments, Takayuki’s skillful music arrangement of Western art music successfully boosts the popularity of \textit{Nodame Cantabile} and promotes Western art music among viewers. It may be the very first time in history that Western art music so perfectly marries a Japanese TV drama.

\textsuperscript{22} \url{http://life.fhl.net/Music/july2007/0_1.htm} accessed 09/17/08.
CHAPTER II.
THE JAPANESE MUSIC CONSERVATORY PORTRAYED IN NODAME CANTABILE

Filmed Locations

Since Nodame Cantabile deals with art music majors in Japan, it provides the viewers an opportunity to further understand Japanese college musicians’ lives and their music ecology. In this chapter, I undertake an ethnomusicological perspective to observe and further interpret the culture of the music conservatory portrayed in Nodame Cantabile and hopefully I am able to provide some insights, especially to Western musicians, who are trained in and experience a rather different academia.

If passing by the stone engraved with the words “Momogaoka College of Music,” one would walk on the concrete path and be greeted by beautiful shady trees. The scenery ahead unfolds into a spacious plaza, which is divided into several landscapes, surrounded by three main buildings. Although the design of the plaza has a modern touch, the buildings appear mediocre. The central building includes offices for professors of performance departments and practice rooms. There is a huge bulletin board situated in front of one of these buildings, featuring all manner of assorted announcements. Students often gather around the board to check out the latest information. On the plaza, there are several tables, a huge globe-shaped contemporary statue, and scattered chairs and benches. Students either congregate around the tables, practice their instruments, or sing freely in public. Inside the building, the practice rooms for instrumentalists are rather small and the hallway in between practice rooms is narrow. Thus, people either standing or sitting in the hallway is a common scene. The piano rooms seem to have more space
and appear less crowded. And, here is the place where Chiaki first hears Nodame’s music.

Besides regular private lessons, the faculty’s pedagogical methods are applied in studio classes; voice faculty periodically hold studio classes in the auditorium. During the spring semester, the periodic concert of the school’s orchestra takes place in the auditorium while the Momogaoka Music Festival is held during the fall semester. Students usually look forward to the Momogaoka Music Festival with great excitement, because there are more activities than just performances by the A Orchestra. Different student organizations operate their own booths and provide/sell street snacks, fun games, and small-scale music presentations. The Momogaoka Music Festival, like the periodic performances in the spring, is open to the public and creates an opportunity to promote the school’s image. In other words, the Festival is not just the A Orchestra’s stage; rather, it is everyone’s stage. And, during a Momogaoka Music Festival, Nodame is enthralled by Chiaki’s splendid playing of Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 2 and thus realizes her hidden ambition to perform with an orchestra on stage; this is a pivotal moment in the series.

**Costumes**

Chiaki, the leading male character in *Nodame Cantabile*, almost always wears a well-tailored white button shirt and black trousers; occasionally, he wears a white button shirt with thin vertical strips and khaki trousers. In colder weather, he wears a dark-color suit on top of his white button shirt and/or some sort of plain-color V-cut sweater over the
shirt. He is always associated with a very simple, elegant academic look and the white button shirt has been his staple outfit (see Figure 5).

![Figure 5: Chiaki in White Button Shirt and Black Trousers, with Nodame.](Www.crunchyroll.com), accessed Sep. 19, 2008.

Okochi Mamoru, a conducting major, always emulates what Chiaki wears and often appears in similar white button shirt and black trousers; however, he is considered a bad copycat. Most of the male faculty wear similar formal outfits such as dress shirts, trousers and suits, yet, interestingly, none of them wears whites like Chiaki. No one else in the drama wears white shirts; thus, it seems that the shirt represents the unique “prince” image of Chiaki. His outfits make him stand out from the university students and reinforce Chiaki’s character: an impressive young man who consistently draws people’s attention. Chiaki’s formal attire also endows him with a sense of maturity, reflecting his supposedly more adult mentality.

Most of the male conservatory students wear less formal attire, such as T-shirts, jeans, hoodies, and so on, displaying a more casual style. They also employ more color palates than Chiaki: green, blue, yellow, grey and so on. Two other male characters – Mine and Masumi – stand out among the mass of students of Momogaoka. Mine is fond of rock music until he later cleaves to classical music; therefore, his appearance always
has a touch of rock persona. Masumi often wears bold-print shirts and colorful pants and is identifiable by his Afro hair style (see Figure 6). These two characters have distinctive personalities and their appearance symbolizes their differences from the others.

![Figure 6: (left) Masumi & (right) Mine.](Www.crunchyroll.com), accessed Sep. 19, 2008.

The female faculty of Momogaoka also prefer formal attire, such as dark suits and A-line skirts, and few show individual tastes. Female students mostly wear unrevealing, modest outfits; skirts are common. They usually have natural looks of makeup and utilize accessories, such as jewelry, belts, and shawls. T-shirts and shorts are apparently too casual. Nodame’s outfits reflect some of these traits; however, her look is somewhat juvenile. She usually wears one-piece dresses and flats and knows little about makeup. Sometimes she wears thick stockings to cover her legs. In short, her outfits lack mature femininity and imply her innocence and carefree personality.

**Entertainment**

In Episode Two, the foreign faculty member Stresemann asks the members of S Oke to attend a “gokon” with him. At first, some members think Stresemann must have
confused *gokon* with a welcome party, then realize that he means what he said. *Gokon* refers to a unique kind of group blind-date party in Japanese culture. In *gokon*, there are usually one male and one female group that do not know each other except for the hosts, and they drink and eat together. In order to make conversations flow and lessen the alienation among strangers, a variety of games are involved. For example, the *gokon* participants might play the *Oosama* (king) game. Everyone needs to draw numbered straws, and the designated “king” calls out two numbers on the straws and dares the owners of the numbers to do whatever he demands.\(^{23}\) Since the participants need space to accommodate their group-size and activities, ordinary coffee shops (喫茶店) are inappropriate; instead, inexpensive restaurants, *izakaya* (居酒屋), become popular for such get-togethers. An *izakaya* is also popular for a casual after-work drink.\(^{24}\) In *Nodame Cantabile*, one can see the S Oke members appear mellow with drinks and parties, chatting freely in an *izakaya* while doing *gokon*.

There is another environment, lounge bars, portrayed in the drama for socializing purposes. When the Rising Star Orchestra is founded, its members host a welcome party in a fancy, contemporary lounge bar. This setting features a variety of drinks and food and a relaxing atmosphere for chatting, and it impresses its customers with an expensive look. The Rising Star members seem to identify themselves with a more mature and metropolitan image; they choose a lounge bar to exemplify their tastes.


The Authority of Professors

Eto Kozo, a piano professor at Momogaoka College of Music, always carries a harisen with him. Eto is famous for his strict style of teaching and he seems to teach only the top students. He often instructs his students by striking them physically with the harisen. This is portrayed in the first episode when Eto slaps Chiaki with the harisen because Chiaki is playing Beethoven’s piano sonata “Moonlight” halfheartedly. Eto also hit Nodame with his harisen during their very first lesson. According to Eto, striking students with the harisen is “the form of his love” and he does not feel that it is inappropriate at all.25

Besides his harisen, Professor Eto displays his power when he requests Nodame to leave Professor Tanioka and become his student. Eto’s request is more like a demand; since Eto has more authority in school, Tanioka cannot refuse. Nodame does not know that her teacher has been changed, and her consent is not required in this situation. Apparently, this is a powerplay and the student is the one on the bottom. Although Tanioka later says that he notices some improvements in Nodame and thinks that Eto was a good fit to further advance Nodame’s learning, changing a student’s teacher without informing her suggests the excessive authority of teachers not only in this series but also in the Japanese music conservatory. Nodame apparently does not approve of the change. When she realizes what has happened, she strives to avoid Eto and often skips lessons. Nevertheless, she does not seek to appeal the decision and protests it only passively, as

25 According to Eto, his former piano graduates feel grateful to his harisen because it pushes them forward to the real world. It seems that Chiaki and Nodame are the only two who show obvious resistance to his harisen, which is the symbol of his strict teaching.
The hierarchy of the music academy is sustained.\textsuperscript{26} The faculty are on top, and students accept this with little resistance.

A similar powerplay also happens between Stresemann and Chiaki when Chiaki requests to transfer to the conducting department. Stresemann refuses him assertively to his face because he holds a grudge towards Chiaki’s former mentor, Vieira. Stresemann further proclaims that he has the authority to demand anything he wants in the school. This is another example showing both the superior power faculty hold over students and the hierarchy within the faculty.

\textbf{The Manufactured Sound?}

\textit{Nodame Cantabile} might also touch on an important issue of music education in Japan. While Japanese music education creates numerous musicians who develop excellent skills, the students have a reputation for lacking individual personality and creativity when it comes to expressing their music.\textsuperscript{27} The board chairman of Momogaoka makes such a comment in an episode while watching one of the rehearsals of the best student orchestra on campus, the A Orchestra: “Hmm…somehow there’s something lacking…Every year, they always do the same thing, don’t you think so? Even though they have achieved such a high level…” It is true that the A Orchestra has achieved a high level of performance ability, yet what they lack might be musical expression.

\textsuperscript{26} In fact, the option of appealing decisions made by the professors is never present in the drama. This act might be too provocative for such a romantic comedy as it might distract the audience from the main theme. I personally wonder, though, if appealing is ever an option in Japanese music conservatories; during my college days in Taiwan, such an option was never available. We can say that in general Asian students acknowledge the authority of teachers and obey it, trying to avoid conflicts between these two different classes.

\textsuperscript{27} http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9806E2D71239F936A25756C0A960958260&sec=&sp

n=&pagewanted=2 accessed 09/23/08.
Perhaps to contrast, later on in the story the A Oke’s counterpart, the S Orchestra, appears, featuring musicians who possess less mechanical technique yet express their music boldly and personally. This group eventually improves its ensemble technique and playing skills, and receives praise from every corner of the campus.

This tension between technique and expression often appears in scenes of individual training and performance. The singer Saiko Tagaya, for example, receives such a critique from her teacher during one of her lessons: “Stop, Tagaya-san, don’t break the lines in such small parts. Please express more insecure feeling…You have a very beautiful voice, but…it’s as if you can’t get through something. If you plan to continue to graduate school and to sing, you have to get through this wall.” Chiaki also comments on Saiko’s performance in the annual campus festival: “But one thing still did not come through. Though you have technique, your acting ability is lacking. Whatever you sing, it’s always one pattern and that becomes boring. If you let out your malicious character more, perhaps the song you sang in the festival would also have some more breadth?”

According to these comments, Saiko could be another example of a musician who has technical skills but knows little about how to express the music.

In Japanese music conservatories, the mechanical performances of students may be attributed to their teachers’ pedagogic approaches. Some educators instruct their students in a formulaic, rather than an inspirational, way. Take Professor Eto, for example. As mentioned above, he drops Chiaki after a fierce disagreement between them. While arguing, Chiaki criticizes Eto’s educational method: “Stop it, Jiji!28 Shouting and

28 Jiji is a derogatory term in Japanese referring to elderly men.
yelling like a loan-shark demanding borrowed money! What elite specialist ‘Eto-juku’? Repeating [teaching] ‘forte, forte, confuoco’ like some dumb people…All your students play the piano the same way! Disgusting! If you admit my talent, don’t teach redundant things.” Professor Eto only teaches grade A students. If his pedagogical methods are as Chiaki contends, most of the top pianists at Momogaoka College of Music would likely be confined to formulaic performances unless they have superior talent, like Chiaki and Nodame.

Stresemann: How a Gaijin (foreigner) is Portrayed in this Drama

The character Franz Stresemann is the only foreigner (played by a Japanese actor) who weighs significantly in the plot. He is a world-renowned German conductor who visits Momogaoka College of Music as a guest professor for one year. He is portrayed as somewhat of a pervert. For example, he harasses female students during the gokon, visits high-end nightclubs looking for women in Ginza, collects revealing pictures of students as souvenirs, and so on. However, no one seriously protests his inappropriate behavior, as if this personality flaw has been overlooked.

Stresemann is also granted great authority. He is able to found his own orchestra, i.e. the Special Orchestra of Stresemann (the S Oke), and pick its members without consulting the rest of the faculty or holding a public audition. He frequently skips rehearsals with the S Oke and shortens the rehearsal time in order to date women in

29 Juku is a honorific term in Japanese referring to reputed teachers.
30 Besides Stresemann, the other foreigners are Kai Dowin, who is the former concertmaster of Berlin Philharmonic and the mentor of Kiyora Miki, and Professor Auclair, who is the judge in the piano competition and faculty of Paris Conservatory. Foreigners play these two characters whereas a Japanese actor plays Stresemann.
nightclubs. In one concert, Stresemann asks one of his conducting students to conduct the A Oke for him at the last minute, which causes the failure of the performance. It seems that Stresemann really can do whatever he wants without any consequence and somehow possesses more authority than the rest of the faculty at Momogaoka College of Music.

**Western-centric/Euro-centric?**

From the very beginning of the series, Chiaki asks himself a fundamental question – “What am I still doing in Japan? Why am I still here?” – and this establishes a basic ideological tone for this drama. Chiaki wants to go to Europe because he believes that only in Europe can he learn the essence of Western art music and eventually be successful in the music world. At one point when it appears hopeless for him to study abroad, he almost quits pursuing music.

The value of “Europe” and the concept that European music is superior persist throughout the drama, and several supporting characters’ statements re-enforce these ideas. Chiaki’s former girlfriend, Saiko, for instance, states: “If you can’t study abroad, it’s useless.” Sakuma, the classical music critic (along with his friend, an editor of a classical-music magazine), questions why Chiaki decides not to study abroad to instead stay in Japan (not knowing of Chiaki’s flight phobia). To Sakuma and his friend, someone as talented as Chiaki staying in Japan to pursue advanced music education must be a “moron.” Most members of the R-S Orchestra, who are considered the best musicians in this drama, either studied abroad or hope to do so as they see this as necessary to be active on the world stage. Even Nodame eventually changes her dream career from a kindergarten teacher to a professional performer, and decides to go to
France for advanced study. There is a clear message in the drama that studying abroad (especially in Europe) is the only way to achieve a higher standard and career in classical music; thus, studying in Japan becomes a second-class choice.

Stresemann’s unusual authority mentioned in a previous paragraph provides a further example of Euro-centrism. As a guest professor, the level of Stresemann’s power is bizarre. His opinion can even outweigh the formal faculty of Momogaoko. However, Stresemann is not just an ordinary guest professor, he is also a maestro from the revered European land, the heartland of the classical music world. Thus, any outrageous behaviors of the maestro could be forgiven and his every desire should be fulfilled. Nettl argues that the interpretation of the culture of Western art music in the contemporary world can be analogous to a kind of religious system.\(^3\) In this light, Stresemann seems like an angel descending from heaven, and thus Chiaki, along with the entire Momogaoko academy, strives to worship him and nobody dares to stand in his way. For Chiaki, Stresemann was once the only hope to keep him in touch with the divine Europe, and Stresemann actually contributes to curing Chiaki’s flight phobia since he gives Nodame the pocket watch that is used to hypnotize Chiaki. The angel’s relic may, after all, retain its magical power to heal a common mortal, as Stresemann’s watch helps open the door for Chiaki to study abroad and fulfill his dream.

In addition to Stresemann, Nodame might be another character apotheosized in some sense. Nettl states that Mozart holds a special position in Western art music culture, especially among American and European academic music lovers. He argues that if a pantheon ruled the music academia, Mozart would be on top of all deities. Nettl also

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draws upon Kingsbury’s theory to interpret the significant distinction between Mozart and the rest of the deceased composers; Mozart was a genius and had the so-called “gift,” which is “from above, not something you can acquire.” Such a concept is associated with the divine and it apotheosizes Mozart, setting him apart from the others. Nettl elaborates on Mozart’s genius: “Mozart could compose without trying…his music came full-blown into his mind and had only to be written down. He could hear a piece of music and play it back unerringly by ear, and he was a superb improviser.”

If we compare the musicality of Nodame with Mozart’s, we find some striking similarities. From the very beginning of the drama, Nodame shows her ability to memorize music by ear and to skillfully improvise. In one episode, she is shown playing Beethoven’s “Pathetique” freely, and probably without having studied the score. Later, she plays the piano transcription of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7 on piano impromptu, based only on the experience of having heard the S Oke’s rehearsals. There is no note-jotting or sketching-on-the-paper involved during the composing process. It seems that the music just “came full-blown” into Nodame’s mind and then she just simply played it out.

The best example of Nodame’s similarity to Mozart is her Petrushka in the Maradona piano competition. She didn’t have enough time to either study the score or practice the fingerings before the final round of the competition. She learned the music solely by listening to a recording of Petrushka repeatedly and was able to play it almost completely in the competition. She also learned Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 2

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32 Ibid, 22.
33 Nodame is not able to play Petrushka unerringly because she heard a partial melody of a Japanese song “Today’s Cuisine” during the process of constructing/memorizing Petrushka in her mind. Thus, she played
merely by hearing Chiaki’s performance; afterwards, she was able to play the solo part, following along Chiaki’s piano accompaniment. Rachmaninoff’s No. 2 is a full-fledged, three-movement concerto and its length is approximately thirty minutes. Although Nodame played some additional notes, she was able to present the piece’s general outline. This is definitely an amazing ability, worthy to compare with Mozart. Like Mozart, Nodame was also a child prodigy who manifested her talent at a very young age.

Although Nodame was recognized as an amazing talent who “needs to be sent abroad [to study music] right away,” after the undisclosed trauma her talent seemed to retreat until rediscovered by Chiaki. Eto realizes her talent when he finds her playing Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 2 in a practice room with Chiaki. Consequently, she is recommended for the Maradona composition, and, based on that performance, Professor Auclair recommends her for the Paris Conservatory. Could we say that Nodame’s true talent did not exist in her first three years in college? Or, was it a matter of recognizing her talent? Kingsbury testifies:

…to the fact that talent is manifested in countless ways—in music, sports, scholarship, flower arranging, and so forth—and to the fact that these various manifestations of talent are understood less as internally contradictory than as reciprocally confirming the validity and reality of each other. [italics added] 34

He states that the source of the “validity” of talent usually comes from authoritative figures, such as professors, music critics, and people who have been acknowledged as talented. One needs to be granted, endowed, or bestowed the credentials of talent by these figures and then he/she is considered talented. Thus, the emergence of talent is associated

with power relations.\textsuperscript{35} If Nodame were not considered to be a talented musician by Chiaki, Eto, and Auclair, she would not have been able to climb up to the top of the conservatory world, the Paris Conservatory.

One other incident suggests Nodame’s “divinity.” She is the one who cures Chiaki’s flight phobia by using Stresemann’s pocket watch. Chiaki had just completed a variety of hypnotherapy sessions conducted by renowned therapists; none, however, managed to cure him. Yet, Nodame succeeded without training. The outcome seems magical. Nodame even states, “I need to leave since God is calling me,” to Chiaki before he wakes up from the hypnosis. The clear reference to God is an intriguing touch and implies a mysterious association with the divine.

If Nodame represents some sort of Mozart’s trait, Chiaki might represent Beethoven, perhaps paralleling Nettl’s dualism of Mozart and Beethoven. Nettl argues that the contrast of Mozart and Beethoven may be the central paradigm of musical thought in the art music world of American Midwestern universities.\textsuperscript{36} Nettl states that if Mozart possessed genius, the light and sweetness, then Beethoven represented labor, the heavy, and salt. Unlike Mozart, contemporary music lovers acknowledge that Beethoven generated his music by laboring exceedingly. His music is complex, symbolizing the fruit of intellectual struggles. Beethoven did have talent, yet rather than Mozart’s genius, the supreme form of talent, he needed to work hard to achieve excellence. In \textit{Nodame Cantabile}, Chiaki has a marvelous talent to start with, yet he also has labored and received intense music training since age five or six. He is portrayed as a hard worker, always studying scores and being faithful to the interpretation of the composer. He is

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, 76-79.

constantly concerned with how to improve his conducting ability and endures several trials. Thus, the musical styles and abilities of Chiaki and Nodame demonstrate a similar contrast to the one postulated by Nettl between Beethoven and Mozart.

The Canons

_Nodame Cantabile_ is set on the stage of college music students’ lives; therefore, it depicts an assorted repertoire that is performed by several instrumentalists and vocalists. Table 4 demonstrates this repertoire.

**Table 4. The Repertoire of Musicians in Nodame Cantabile (In Order of Appearance in the Drama)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>Repertoire</th>
<th>Occasions of Performances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiaki (piano)</td>
<td>Beethoven: Piano Sonata “Moonlight”</td>
<td>During a lesson with Professor Eto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodame (piano)</td>
<td>Beethoven: Piano Sonata “Pathetique”</td>
<td>In a practice room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodame and Chiaki (piano)</td>
<td>Mozart: Sonata for 2 pianos in D Major</td>
<td>During a lesson with Professor Tanioka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saiko (vocal)</td>
<td>Mozart: “Vengeance of Hell stirs within my heart” from <em>The Magic Flute</em></td>
<td>Probably in a studio class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakamura (violin)</td>
<td>Monti: Czardas</td>
<td>In a re-examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine (violin)</td>
<td>Beethoven: Violin Sonata No.5, “Spring” Op.24, mvt.1</td>
<td>In a re-examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The S Orchestra</td>
<td>Beethoven: Symphony No.7 in E Major, Op.92</td>
<td>In a periodic performance by the Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The A Orchestra</td>
<td>Beethoven: Symphony No.9 in D Minor “Choral”</td>
<td>In a periodic performance by the Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiaki and the A Orchestra</td>
<td>Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No.2, Op.18</td>
<td>In Momogaoka Music Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performer/Ensemble</td>
<td>Composition/Work</td>
<td>Event/Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodame and the S Orchestra</td>
<td>Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue[^37]</td>
<td>In Momogaoka Music Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saiko (vocal)</td>
<td>Mozart: <em>Cosi fan tutte</em> k.588: Act I Scene 2: Aria-Smanie implacabili (Dorabella)</td>
<td>During a studio class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous Tanioka student (piano)</td>
<td>Chopin: Fantaisie-Impromptu Op. 66</td>
<td>During a lesson with Tanioka[^38]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiyora (violin)</td>
<td>Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto in E Minor, Op.64, mvt.1 (the entrance of the first theme, solo)</td>
<td>During a break of the R-S Orchestra’s rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodame (piano)</td>
<td>Noda Megumi: Fart Exercises[^39]</td>
<td>During a lesson with Eto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuroki and The R-S Orchestra (oboe concerto)</td>
<td>Mozart: Oboe Concerto in C Major, K. 314</td>
<td>In the debut concert by the R-S Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The R-S Orchestra</td>
<td>Brahms: Symphony No. 1</td>
<td>In the debut concert by the R-S Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodame (piano)</td>
<td>Schubert: Piano Sonata No. 16</td>
<td>In the first round of the Maradona piano competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodame (piano)</td>
<td>Chopin: Etude Op. 10, No. 4</td>
<td>In the second round of the Maradona piano competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsuboi (one of Eto’s senior students) (piano)</td>
<td>Beethoven: Piano Sonata No. 23, “Appassionata”</td>
<td>In the second round of the Maradona competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodame (piano)</td>
<td>Debussy: L’Isle Joyeuse</td>
<td>In the second round of the Maradona competition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^37]: This is an arrangement for pianica and orchestra in big-band style. Nodame and her piano-major friends play the pianica.

[^38]: The scenario is built on Nodame running to Tanioka’s office while he is having a lesson with one of his students, who is playing this piece.

[^39]: A real piano composition, composed by Megumi Noda, which is filled with lyrics and accompanied with physical movements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist/Group</th>
<th>Work/Composition</th>
<th>Performance Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Takahashi (violin)</td>
<td>Saint-Saens: Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso (the capriccioso part, solo)</td>
<td>In an informal audition for the R-S Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakate (piano)</td>
<td>Liszt: Mephisto Waltz No. 1, S. 514</td>
<td>In the final round of the Maradona competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segawa (piano)</td>
<td>Brahms: The Variations on a theme of Paganini</td>
<td>In the final round of the Maradona competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodame (piano)</td>
<td>Schumann: Piano Sonata No. 2</td>
<td>In the final round of the Maradona competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodame (piano)</td>
<td>Stravinsky: Petrushka “Russian Dance”</td>
<td>In the final round of the Maradona competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiyora and the R-S Orchestra (violin concerto)</td>
<td>Sarasate: Carmen Fantasy</td>
<td>In the Christmas concert by the R-S Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The R-S Orchestra</td>
<td>Beethoven: Symphony No.7 in E Major, Op.92</td>
<td>In the Christmas concert by the R-S Orchestra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the table, *Nodame Cantabile* showcases repertoire only for piano, violin, oboe, soprano, and orchestra, which suggests that these divisions could be more visible and dominant in Japanese conservatories. Besides the primary composers Beethoven and Mozart, most others are romantic composers, including Mendelssohn, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Chopin, Saint-Saens, Monti and Sarasate. The rest are twentieth-century composers, such as Debussy, Stravinsky, Rachmaninoff, Gershwin, and Noda.\(^40\) If we investigate the repertoire further, the music is always tonal.

Stravinsky’s *Petrushka* belongs to his Russian period; though it is frequently chromatic, it is still largely tonal. Rachmaninoff as a whole represents Russian late romanticism; while he is categorized as a twentieth-century composer, his work represents the spirit of romanticism. Thus, the Japanese conservatory, as depicted in the drama, favors romantic

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\(^40\) Since Noda’s composition, Fart Exercises, is only invented for the purpose of the plot, I will not discuss it further in this section.
music (Beethoven is also often classified as romantic). There is no composer from the Second Viennese School on the list, and, similarly no atonal or serial compositions present. Contemporary compositions are entirely absent. Nor is Bach or any pre-classical music heard. The repertoire shown in *Nodame Cantabile* might illustrate the real-life preference of Japanese conservatories.

**Sexual Undertone**

Having younger cast and characters than most other Japanese TV series, *Nodame Cantabile* probably has a younger viewing audience who, in turn, may be especially interested in the series’s romantic liaisons. *Nodame Cantabile* presents sexual relationships exceedingly subtly. Even the leading man and woman do not date in the series, though the generic expectation is that they will become a couple. Three other examples show the series’s undertone of sexual tensions. I have already discussed Stresemann’s obsession with women and how he asks his students to attend a group blind date. Second, when Nodame is in the process of preparing for the Maradona Piano Competition, she moves to her teacher Eto’s apartment and receives intense, constant lessons until the end of the competition. If one investigates the plot, Eto has been requiring this kind of sleep-over training throughout his teaching career. This generates a question of distance between professors and students, especially between differing genders, and what would be proper in Japanese conservatory culture.

In this case, Nodame moves in with a family, Eto and his wife, and is taken care of by Eto’s wife, who makes Nodame meals so that she is able to fully concentrate on practicing. Nodame ideally can practice anytime of day in Eto’s piano room, where a CD
player is situated. She also has her own bedroom. The awkwardness of an opposite-gender, teacher-student living arrangement underneath the same roof seems to be toned down slightly with the presence of the wife. No romantic or sexual interaction is suggested or intended. However, rather than a typical American situation – where professors are discreet about interpersonal distance, may keep the studio door open while meeting students, and avoid physical contact while teaching a private lesson – Japanese professors allow their students to stay in the most intimate place a person could have: their home.

This particular teacher-student intimate relationship might own its origin to Japanese apprenticeship in learning traditional instruments. Chikuzan Takahashi, a virtuoso Japanese shamisen (three-string lute) player, recalled his apprenticeship with his mentor, Jujiro Toda, in his autobiography. Takahashi recounted that he slept “where [Toda’s] family ate their meals every day” and was taken along begging for food and money during his approximate two-year apprenticeship (ca. 1924-1926). According to Takahashi, it was common for an apprentice to live with his mentor around the 1920s. It is possible that this construct of Japanese traditional mentor-apprentice relationships in music-learning still influences the modern-day relationship between music teachers and students. This may provide a legitimate reason why Professor Eto is able to keep students staying in his home for additional training.

The final example of a quiet sexual tension emerges from Masumi’s crush on Chiaki. Masumi, the timpanist, is physically a man, yet acts and appears extremely

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41 Nodame practices a couple of times during late night. On one occasion, she practices a Schumann sonata and is heard by Eto who is heading home at that time. Since there appears to be no soundproof window or wall in Eto’s piano room, Nodame might not be able to practice after 11pm.

During his first year at Momokaoka College of Music, he wore a thin, pink hair band with a flower pinned to his head (see Figure 7). He also made himself a splendid duchess dress to wear in the S Oke’s costume concert. Furthermore, people always call him “the Queen of Percussion” and refer him as “Masumi-chan”; in Japanese, the term “-chan” is applied to young females. Thus, Masumi’s feminine identity is recognized both by himself and his friends. Masumi has an affectionate crush on Chiaki throughout his college days. Yet, despite his feminine identity and affections for Chiaki, he neither dates other men nor shows interest in other guys. Masumi’s sexual orientation is never addressed; it is not a concern to any of the characters in the drama and is never an issue in any episode.

Although Momogaoka College of Music is fictional, it showcases a variety of aspects existing in Japanese music conservatories. It especially displays how the faculty interact with the students and the power and sexual relations in between. It also reveals how Japanese musicians perceive Western art music and their Western-centric valuation of art music. While class issues are apparent, gender tension seems to be overlooked on
most occasions or be presented in a rather subtle manner; these both tend to reflect the
traditional Japanese social order.
CHAPTER III.
THE NODAME PHENOMENON

After Nodame Cantabile was aired in Japan at the end of 2006, the fervent response of Japanese audiences was demonstrated not just through the huge viewership ratings, but also by a renewed interest in and demand for Western art music. Tickets for a periodic performance of the New Japan Philharmonic sold out almost right away after the opening,\(^4\) and a ring tone – an excerpt from Beethoven’s symphony No. 7, mvt. 1 – also performed by New Japan Philharmonic, was being downloaded twenty times more often than before. Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, from which the Nodame Orchestra was assembled, sold about 1900 seats out of a 2000-seat hall for their performance in February, 2008, far surpassing their normal attendance. No wonder that Japanese music critics and newspapers hailed Nodame Cantabile as stimulating the stagnant market of Western classical music in Japan and even called this drama a “savior (救世主)” of the market. Thus, the term “Nodame Phenomenon (のだめ現象)” emerged.\(^4\) In Japan, the soundtrack of Nodame Cantabile sold more than 400,000 albums and the drama allegedly increased the numbers of college music majors.\(^4\)

The success of the live-action drama series inspired the production of the Nodame Cantabile anime series, which was aired in 2007. This series was also well received, so much so that a second anime series premiered in October 2008. After the official Nodame Cantabile website received about 10,000 messages from its viewers petitioning the producers to film a live-action sequel, Fuji TV decided to shoot two special episodes in

\(^4\) It was not a Nodame-themed concert.
Paris in July, 2007, derived from the plot of the manga beginning from volume nine. The two special episodes were first aired in Japan in January 2008, generating viewership ratings as high as 20% of all viewers; these episodes were aired in Taiwan in July 2008, on Videoland Japan’s channel. Video game manufactures reacted to the popularity of Nodame Cantabile and released at least two games based on it. One game was engineered for the Nintendo DS system and released in Spring, 2007; the other was a game called “Nodame Cantabile: Dream Orchestra” released for the Nintendo Wii console. Miscellaneous affiliated products of Nodame Cantabile were also launched, such as the piano tote bag used in the drama (see Figure 8), a variety of daily articles featuring the mongoose image used for Nodame’s costume in the S Oke’s costume concert (see Figure 9), and so on. All of these products have been popular in Japan and throughout much of East Asia. In addition, several renditions of piano transcriptions of compositions used in Nodame Cantabile circulated the market. These piano arrangements simplified the techniques and harmonies of the original compositions, allowing the general public, especially beginners on piano access to play the music that they have come to love.

Figure 8: Nodame’s Piano Tote Bag. Thechicshop.wordpress.com, accessed Sep. 20,

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Below I discuss the reactions to *Nodame Cantabile* in a few East Asian countries, focusing particularly on Taiwan. My findings show why *Nodame’s* success is unique, unprecedented and thus worth studying; none of the previous Japanese TV series has stimulated such a great amount of music products and events, and the fervor of *Nodame Cantabile* spreads beyond Japan. After presenting reactions from different areas, I will suggest several reasons why this drama received such popularity.

**Hong Kong’s Reaction**

Hong Kong’s reaction to *Nodame Cantabile* has been somewhat similar to Taiwan’s. After the drama aired in Hong Kong in August 2007, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra (HKPO) received many requests to schedule a concert featuring the Western art music appearing in the drama. Thus, HKPO presented the concert “The Music World of *Nodame Cantabile*” on November 9 and 10, 2007. Due to the popularity of the program, HKPO added a matinee on November 9th. This series of concerts consisted of the first and fourth movements of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7, “Spring”
from Beethoven’s Violin Sonata No.5, the first movement of Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No.2, the Finale of Brahms’ Symphony No. 1, Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue,” and Bach’s “Air on the G String.” When Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) was advertising for Nodame Cantabile, they chose a different strategy than that used in Japan or Taiwan: they engaged a real classical-musician celebrity to promote the drama. TVB invited Yun Di Li, a world-renowned pianist, to make a TV commercial to advertise the series. In the commercial, Yun Di Li has a stylish haircut similar to Chiaki’s, wears a white shirt, and plays Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue.” TVB attempted to attract music-lovers and laymen simultaneously by using Yun Di Li as a spokesman.48

Taiwan’s Reaction

“While the Japanese drama was being broadcast in Taiwan, many fans and supporters phoned the Taiwan Philharmonic [Orchestra] asking the orchestra to perform the classical music used in the drama,” stated Derek Wu, manager of Taipei Philharmonic Orchestra.49 In response, the Taipei Philharmonic Orchestra (TPO) performed a concert titled “The Evening of Nodame Cantabile” in the Taiwanese National Concert Hall on August 26, 2007 (see Figure 10). The total number of tickets sold and the rapid time in selling out – 2,000 tickets were sold in three days – established new records in Taiwan. In order to accommodate more people, the concert was broadcast in the plaza of the hall for another several hundred fans. United Daily News, one of the top four newspapers in Taiwan, remarked in a column that, “Although there were only several hundred in the

plaza, many people were listening to Western classical music for the very first time; their attendance was inspired by their fascination over *Nodame Cantabile.*”

![Figure 10: Poster for the Concert “The Evening of Nodame Cantabile” (the Couple, Though not Chiaki and Nodame, Suggests a Modern Romantic Comedy.) Tsponodame.pixnet.net/blog, accessed Sep. 19, 2008.](image)

Several new developments helped to market this concert: 1) using the official website of the orchestra as a main advertising tool; 2) interacting with internet fans, who voted for the title and repertoire for the concert; and 3) posting several listening guides and synopses of Western art music on the TPO blog. The repertoire performed that evening included the William Tell Overture by Rossini, Piano Concerto No. 2 by Rachmaninoff and Symphony No. 7 by Beethoven. Another noteworthy development at this event was that the performers and audience members dressed up as characters from *Nodame Cantabile.* For example, the timpani player wore a super-curly wig, mimicking Masumi, the timpanist who has a crush on Chiaki in the drama. Many of the young

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female audience members in the concert wore one-piece dresses, high boots, and piano tote bags, emulating Nodame’s image. Some fans even customized their own S-Oke (the Special Orchestra in the drama) T-shirts and wore them to the concert while carrying super-sized photos of Chiaki. The musicians also emulated the tricks played by the S Oke—spinning the cellos, lifting up the violins and the flutes over their heads, standing up to play the wind instruments—during the performance.51 Interestingly, TPO’s conductor, Tien-chi Lin, later declared that he regarded Nodame Cantabile as a positive force to overcome the “bottleneck” of recent Western classical-music developments in Taiwan; this echoed Japanese music critics’ comments on the stagnant Western art music market in Japan. Lin also advocated that the government should cultivate greater numbers of future musicians through providing abundant educational opportunities.52

The marketing success of Nodame Cantabile did not stop with this concert. Many performance groups, ranging from professional to amateur, became involved as well. Shien-Ta Su, the concertmaster of Taipei Philharmonic Orchestra, gave a concert featuring some of the compositions from Nodame Cantabile. Shien-Ta Su, a renowned violinist who received Diplome superieur de Concertist de violon et Musique de chamber from L’Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris and previously also the concertmaster of L’Ecole’s orchestra, is now the chairman of the music department of the Taipei National University of Arts.53 Being a professional musician and reputable music professor, Su embraced the popularity of Nodame Cantabile, attempting to make Western

53 The music department of Taipei National University ranks as one of the five best music departments in Taiwan.
art music palatable and easy to access. In addition to Su, Eric Chen (whose motto is “Piano Prince”), a piano professor at the Taipei Municipal University of Education, presented the piano recital “Falling in Love with Nodame Cantabile” in March, 2008 (see figure 11). In June of that year, Chen, along with soprano Cinderella Liao, flutist I-Ting Chen and the Evergreen Symphony Orchestra, presented “Falling in Love with Nodame Cantabile: the Orchestra Chapter” in National Concert Hall.

Figure 11: Poster of “Falling in Love with Nodame Cantabile.” Yukosss.pixnet.net/blog, accessed Sep. 19, 2008.

Amateur performing groups have also been involved with the Nodame Phenomenon. One example is the Taipei Civic Symphony Band (T.C.S.B.). This group presented “Classic Cantabile! —2008 T.C.S.B. Spring Concert” in February, 2008, and “Classic Cantabile! —2008 T.C.S.B Autumn Concert” in October, 2008 (see Figure 12).

For the spring concert, T.C.S.B. played a medley from *Nodame Cantabile*, mixing Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, Rachmaninoff’s *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 7*, Beethoven’s *Piano Sonata No. 8*, and Mozart’s *Oboe Concerto*. The medley employed a special method of arrangement, not only putting fragments of different pieces together but also incorporating melodic and rhythmic elements from one piece into the others. For example, when T.C.S.B. played a theme from Rachmaninoff’s *Piano Concerto No. 2*, one could hear a fragment of a thematic motive from “Rhapsody in Blue” played in the background by the trumpet section. In addition to these many performances, some regional and national music competitions featuring *Nodame Cantabile* compositions were organized. One of these was the 2nd TSMC Youth Piano Competition, held in May, 2008, that provided a list of several *Nodame Cantabile* piano compositions for the contestants.

Figure 12: Poster of “2008 T.C.S.B Autumn Concert” Including Images of Chiaki and Nodame (center above/below), Mine (left) and Kiyora (right) to Advertise this Concert. [Www.tcsb.tw](http://Www.tcsb.tw), accessed Sep. 10, 2008.

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57 [http://blog.pixnet.net/wispa/post/5309749](http://blog.pixnet.net/wispa/post/5309749) accessed 08/16/08.
In addition to influencing the market for music performances, *Nodame Cantabile* has profoundly impacted the record market in Taiwan. As of August 2007, at least six different albums relevant to this drama had been released in Taiwan. Sony BMG released two albums, one of which was *OST*, the soundtrack of *Nodame Cantabile*, including the original pieces composed by Takayuki Hattori. The other was *Orchestra de Nodame Live*, including twenty-five fragments of different Western art music compositions that appeared in the drama, played by Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (TMSO). In addition to the professional tracks, this album included Nodame’s version of Beethoven sonatas, Nodame and Chiaki’s version of a Mozart sonata for two pianos, Mine’s version of a Beethoven violin sonata, and so on, as they appeared in the drama. Universal Record released the album *Nodame Cantabile*, compiling music pieces recorded by Karajan, Abbado, Argerich, and others. Other record companies, such as EMI, DECCA, and Rock Record, also released albums collecting compositions from *Nodame Cantabile*.

**Why is it Popular in Taiwan?**

Unlike the young people in People’s Republic of China, who dwell on the cross of the Taiwan Strait, Taiwanese youth are inclined to identify themselves with their Japanese counterparts. There is a subculture group called *ha-ri zhu* (哈日族), a Chinese term created around 1998 by the Taiwanese media.\(^6\) *Ha-ri zhu* emulates Japanese culture and lifestyle, frequently in contact with and consuming Japanese popular culture. *Ha-ri* (to desire Japan) fans cast their eyes over a wide range of subjects, from the newest pop

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songs, TV dramas, fashionable gadgets, even to the hottest dietary items. No area of culture is excluded from the ha-ri list. The keen Japanese cultural identification of many Taiwanese people might be attributable to the influence of the Japanese colonization between 1895 and 1945, yet the recent trend is a result of how Japanese popular culture had been widely spread via the ubiquity of the mass media, especially over the last decade.\(^6\) Taiwanese radio stations are in lockstep with Japan’s latest pop songs and Videoland Japan (縫来日本台), a nationwide cable TV network in Taiwan, has been broadcasting various sorts of Japanese TV programs including talk shows, news, reality shows, series dramas, and so forth since 1992. In 1998, over eighty percent of Taiwanese families received cable television,\(^6\) and the percentage is likely much higher today. According to the most recent TV schedule, Videoland Japan airs nine different programs everyday on average.\(^6\) Besides cable television, free-to-air nationwide television such as Chinese Television System has been broadcasting Japanese anime such as *Doraemon* around dinnertime for years.\(^6\) Japanese images and sounds are both easy to access and a part of everyday life in Taiwan. This background of Japanese influence acquaints Taiwanese with *Nodame Cantabile*, which was the most popular TV series drama of Japan in 2006.

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\(^6\) My little brother has been watching *Doraemon* on this specific channel since he was in kindergarten. He stopped about two years ago when he was about to graduate from high school. We have been fighting for the dominion of the remote control around dinnertime for years.
The Right Formula

Japanese idol dramas usually follow a formula to ensure their popularity. Thai scholar and activist, Ubonrat Siriyuvasak, argues that the formula generally encompasses a happy ending, the road to overcome the intense trials of life, how the hero or heroine is able to determine his/her own destiny, a love triangle or a romance sub-plot, good production quality, the swift pace of the narrative, and so on.\(^6\)

After investigating the plot and the narrative structure of *Nodame Cantabile*, I noticed that this drama utilizes the formula fairly carefully and successfully. For example, the love triangle of Chiaki, Saiko, and Nodame is apparent throughout the entire series (yet is not stressed heavily), and Nodame (the heroine) is constantly being challenged to “face her music seriously”; eventually, she changes her aspiration from being a kindergarten teacher to becoming a professional piano performer (finding her own destiny) after taking on a piano competition (the obstacle). On the other hand, although Chiaki has determined to become a conductor in the very beginning of the series, he needs to overcome the fact that he was not able to study abroad (considered essential to becoming an elite artist in the series). Thus, he starts experiencing a series of events to help him figure out the meaning of staying in Japan and to discover who he really is as a musician. And finally, he overcomes his flight phobia (his constraint), which allows him to study in Europe (hero overcoming all of the obstacles and finding his destiny). In the end, Chiaki invites Nodame to go with him to Europe to study music (the happy ending). Within its plot, *Nodame Cantabile* grasps all of the important elements necessary for

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being a successful Japanese idol drama. Audiences can either imagine themselves as the hero, Chiaki, or as the heroine, Nodame. Fans can also identify themselves with several supporting characters that fulfill the same journeys as the main characters, i.e. overcoming obstacles and finding their destiny.

Taiwanese viewers seem to especially appreciate Nodame’s high production quality and the fast pace of the narrative as compared to most of the Taiwanese idol dramas (and some family dramas).66 Here are some comments, conveying this view, posted on the discussion forum of the official website of Videoland Japan:

…I think the advantages of Japanese dramas are that they usually have a very concisely-constructed plot and they don’t last forever and ever.67 The difference (between a Taiwanese drama and a Japanese one) may be due to the cultural differences!! I still like Japanese drama better because it doesn’t make me tired and sometimes it’s inspiring. However, Taiwanese drama is…Um, it’s just my own opinion!! [italics added]

It’s not that I don’t support Taiwanese drama, yet every time when I compare a Taiwanese idol drama with a Japanese one, the result is just one word: embarrassing! Japanese drama is so detail-oriented; no matter speaking of music or costumes, it is designed with so much thought and effort. On the contrary, (Taiwanese dramas) always use the same kind of cast and the same set of costumes. It might be due to the reason that Taiwanese actors/actresses need to prepare their own costumes so that it’s hard to compare with Japanese and Koreans. So many young Taiwanese actors and actresses are acting so badly as if all they can do is to recite the script in the drama…68

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66 Most of Japanese idol dramas only contain 10-13 episodes per series. Each episode usually lasts for one hour on average, which includes commercial time.
67 Taiwanese idol dramas usually have more episodes per series than their Japanese counterparts. For example, the Taiwanese idol drama Meteor Garden (2001) contains 19 episodes and its sequel Meteor Garden II (2002) has 31 episodes. The average airtime for each episode is about one hour, including commercial time. Meteor Garden, which is based on a Japanese manga, is believed to be the pioneer of Taiwanese idol drama and enjoyed tremendous popularity in Taiwan and in some other Asian countries.
68 My translations. These comments are drawn from a series of discussion on “How about a Taiwanese version of Nodame Cantabile?” on the official website of Videoland Japan. One poster proposed to make a Taiwanese drama based on Nodame Cantabile and evoked about 20 objections to this idea.
These comments show that many Taiwanese viewers prefer Japanese dramas for their thoughtful arrangements on details, such as music and costumes, and also for the actors’ greater skill. In *Nodame Cantabile*, in additional to actors’ acting skills, their portrayal of music skills is also crucial. Uno, who plays Nodame, and Tamaki, who plays Chiaki both received substantial music training for this drama. According to an interview with Uno and Tamaki, Uno mentioned that she took piano lessons with a private tutor before shooting the drama and studied throughout the shooting period. She practiced piano diligently during her leisure time and listened to classical pieces repeatedly. Tamaki needed to learn how to conduct, play the violin, and play the piano, so he took lessons for these three different music fields. One can see several scenes in the drama displaying Chiaki’s full-body conducting shot, which proves that Tamaki developed the conducting credentials to carry this role. Although stand-ins are still used in several scenes, Uno and Tamaki were required to demonstrate optimum skill in accurately portraying musicians. Their efforts make the roles of Nodame and Chiaki extraordinarily convincing, and audiences in many countries have appreciated their work.

Taiwanese viewers contributing to websites clearly desire to see more substance in the content rather than just that of formulaic romantic dramas and love scenes. *Nodame Cantabile* fulfills this wish. Here is a comment explaining this point:

This is just my own opinion. The wonderful parts of this drama are about the powerful symphonic music and the huge cast of the orchestra performers and *Nodame Cantabile* does it just right! It makes it so funny yet maintains the substance in the plot. When it comes to the protagonists, Nodame is played by Ueno Juri (上野樹里), who looks silly and clumsy yet shows her charm and amazing skills in the piano competition. So, selecting a good cast is also important...And I believe everybody knows the characteristics of a Taiwanese

drama, which usually emphasize the “love” part, so even though they try to be faithful to the original plot [of Nodame Cantabile], the final outcome would still become like a soap opera. As a whole, I still think the Japanese version of Nodame Cantabile would be better [than a Taiwanese version]. (My translations.)

**Rika vs. Nodame**

*Nodame Cantabile* enchants her Taiwanese viewers with all of the elements mentioned above. However, I believe *Nodame Cantabile* not only inherits and reproduces the existing formula but also adds some twists to distinguish itself from competitors. I would like to propose that the well-received character Nodame stands for a reaction to the stereotypical image of “how a Japanese woman ought to be” presented in previous Japanese idol dramas, and actually opens a door for new character settings of a heroine in forthcoming Japanese idol dramas.

A watershed in the history of Japanese idol dramas is *Tokyo Love Story* (1991). The dramas produced between the late 1980s and *Tokyo Love Story* are referred to as “trendy dramas” whereas those produced after *Tokyo Love Story* are usually called “post-trendy dramas.” As Toru, the producer of *Tokyo Love Story*, states, post-trendy dramas are “new in package because of their popular cast but in a way classical because of their narratives of love affairs and human relationships, leading to the name ‘pure love drama.’” Toru analyzes the two characteristics that an ideal heroine in a drama should possess: to stand on her own feet instead of relying on men and to “bear her solitude and not ask men for help.” Indeed, the heroine Akana Rika in *Tokyo Love Story* is an independent working-woman who is always well-dressed and knows what she wants. The

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71 Ibid, 72.
72 Ibid, 73.
character Rika seems to have been a model to follow for creating a classic heroine in the post-trendy dramas. Thus, the following heroines – Hayama Minami in *Long Vacation* (1996), Jinno Sakurako in *Yamatonadesiko* (やまとなでしこ, 2000), Asaoka Kyoko in *Love Revolution* (2001), Kimoto Mika in *Tokyo Wankei* (2004), and Noda Naoko in *Anego* (2005) – are more or less molded by the character, Rika. All of them are independent working ladies and most of them have admirable professions. For example, Sakurako is a flight attendant, Mika is an editor for a reputed publisher, Kyoko is a surgeon, and Naoko is a senior manager of the business department of a company. They usually dress themselves suitably for their work environments and then change to fashionable outfits to hang out with friends or enjoy a date after work. Their living environments are usually neat and organized, showing their womanly virtue. All of these attributes reflect the influences of the prototype, Rika: a contemporary woman who is attractive, sufficient for her own needs, and does not look for a man to come to her aid.

Nodame is not associated with the images of women above. She usually wears plain and somewhat juvenile attire, which does not conform to the public opinion of fashion. She is definitely not an organizer and lacks the so-called womanly virtue in a conventional sense. She normally takes a shower only once every four days and accumulates dirty laundry, trash, and food leftovers in her room. Moreover, Nodame does not easily find her way in the world and is not afraid to ask Chiaki for help. Chiaki makes meals for her, instructs her piano playing, allows her to use his bathroom to take a bath, and so forth. Apparently, Nodame does not have the kind of mentality possessed by the previous drama heroines, who “bear … solitude and (don’t) ask men for help.” Since Rika in *Tokyo Love Story* in 1991, the image of the heroine has changed and one can see
it in a variety of drama productions. However, I argue that the character Nodame may shatter the image of Rika completely and suggest a possible new model, where it might not be shameful for women to be dependent upon or to ask help from their men, similar to the post-feminist phenomenon. They do not need to fence in all of their emotions, sorrows, and weaknesses; they do not need to measure themselves up to the stereotypical womanly virtue, which is sometimes guarded with exhaustion. They can express their affections more freely. In short, they can be more carefree, just like Nodame, and still pursue their dreams.

After *Nodame Cantabile* was aired in 2006, a Japanese drama series named *Light of Hotaru* (ホタルノヒカリ) was broadcast in July, 2007. The heroine, Amemiya Hotaru, is an office lady working at an advertisement company. She wears suitable outfits for work, yet once she returns home from work she changes into gym outfits, puts on samurai hair, and gorges on beer. Her house is messy and all sorts of items are scattered around. She even sometimes falls asleep underneath a pile of newspapers. This series was well received in Japan and broadcast in Hong Kong in January 2008, and in Taiwan in July 2008. Some female audience members felt that the character Hotaru represented their lives as busy working-women.73 Hotaru is like Nodame; both are inclined to have a carefree attitude toward life and still be able to win the hearts of their men. A decade ago, it might have been impossible to portray leading heroines like Nodame and Hotaru on the small screen. However, today this type of heroine is becoming more common and receives warm responses from its viewers. This phenomenon might reflect the changes of

women’s roles in Japanese, or even in Asian societies as people desire to see characters on screen with whom they can identify. Nodame may have brought forth a more realistic image of women in Japanese/Asian media that will become a new model.

The Audio Tourist Gaze: Drama Through the Music

In the past, several travel agencies have launched tour packages for Taiwanese featuring some of the remarkable scenery and landmarks that serve as settings in hit Japanese idol dramas. These tour packages allow viewers of Japanese drama to realize their fantasies by visiting the real location. According to Ming-tsung Lee, this shows “the willingness of the audience-traveler (almost a pilgrim) to identify with TV drama characters.” These tourists visit specific places (usually landmarks) located in Tokyo or other cities that hold special meanings for the protagonists in Japanese TV dramas, and many imagine themselves as the main characters, pondering or replicating what the characters have done in the drama. Thus, O-Daiba and Rainbow Bridge in Love Generation (1997), Sena’s apartment in Long Vacation (1996), the third telephone booth at Tokyo’s Inokashira Park in Aishite iru to itte kure (1995), and Tokyo Tower in Love Revolution (2001) not only symbolize the magical place that embodies the protagonists’ love but also provide a medium for the audience members to project themselves therein.

In Nodame Cantabile, however, such a medium is missing and the cityscape and landscape do not have the same level of importance. The first time that Chiaki sees Nodame, for example, is when Nodame is playing the adagio of Beethoven’s piano

sonata “Pathetique” in a practice room. The shot focuses on Nodame’s gesture and facial expressions, instead of any landmark or scenery; in this case, no one would identify the precise practice room (nothing is particular about it) and it is not stressed in the shot. Capturing the emotion of a scene seems to be more important in this drama. For example, the first time that Chiaki feels connected to Nodame musically, they are playing Mozart’s Sonata for Two Pianos K.448 together; the audience only sees the pianos and their moving bodies.

Throughout the entire drama, there is no visual or physical location/symbol that holds special meanings for Nodame and Chiaki. Therefore, I would like to propose that the medium is not absent; rather the conventional visual-landmark symbol is replaced by an audio symbol—the Western art music—in this drama. The reoccurring Western art music becomes a vehicle for viewers to fantasize about and to identify themselves with the characters. One such fan writes her feelings on the forum of Videoland Japan after watching Nodame Cantabile: “I’ve been learning the piano for decades, yet haven’t been very into it. However, after watching the drama, I feel happiness and love while playing Beethoven and Mozart.” (My translation.)

I furthermore believe that Nodame viewers experience a virtual tour through listening to the soundtrack of Nodame Cantabile, which is just as potent for recalling or romancing the drama as landmarks or settings are for those who take tour packages to Japan. The record company attaches the descriptions of scenes to every soundtrack so that the audience knows what happens while a specific piece is being played. This allows a Nodame viewer to recall the plot and fantasize about the visual scene, to fulfill the desire to “identify themselves with the TV characters.” In addition to purchasing
compact discs, Taiwanese viewers can also experience the virtual tour while attending
*Nodame*-themed concerts, such as the concert performed by Taipei Philharmonic
Orchestra on August 26, 2007. During this particular TPO’s performance, musicians on
stage and some of the audience members dressed as several characters from the drama
(as mentioned earlier in this chapter). Thus, a *Nodame* viewer’s tourist glaze is fortified
by sensory experiences in both visual and aural ways.

**“Manga-ized” *Nodame Cantabile***

The cover of the original soundtrack album of *Nodame Cantabile* released by
SONY features a rather exaggerated, comical picture of Chiaki slapping Nodame with
music scores (see Figure 13). Chiaki’s mouth is open wide and his facial expression
implies his anger whereas Nodame seems to fly out with an unfortunate face. This picture
was also used to advertise the drama while it was aired in Hong Kong.

![Figure 13: Cover of the Original Soundtrack Album Released by Sony. Mannenyuki.wordpress.com, accessed Sep. 20, 2008.](image)

Paralleling this picture, several scenes in the drama feature exaggerated acting.
For example, Chiaki slaps Nodame when she seems to interfere in his decision about
transferring to the conducting department. She is carried by the force of Chiaki’s slap and
flies until she hits a rock, yet is not injured. A scene near the beginning of the drama
shows Professor Eto slapping Chaiki away from the piano bench. These scenes may seem like pure displays of violence, yet, for Japanese, or, more precisely, for Japanese drama viewers, they are just extensions of Japanese *manga* and the aim is to provide some sort of comic relief. Below are some comments on *Nodame Cantabile*’s exaggerated acting from the forum of Videoland Japan’s website (my translations):

This Japanese TV drama [*Nodame Cantabile*] is a classic that keeps its fidelity to the original *manga*. I think it is great that they strove to represent the effect of punching, slapping, and tossing people around [which is shown in manga *Nodame Cantabile*]. And I think it is the reason why *Nodame Cantabile* distinguishes itself from other Japanese TV dramas. To be honest, if *Nodame Cantabile* is just a plain elegant *manga* depicting classical music, few people would watch it. Why can’t a Japanese TV drama be KUSO? Why does it need to be so serious?... Actually the author was going to make this *manga* as a serious classical-music *manga*, yet it turned out to be so funny (*But I would rather she makes it funny!* [italics added]… This is just drama & *manga* and it is not necessary to take it so seriously! It is purely funny! If the punching-people parts are taken out, *Nodame Cantabile* would lose some of its credits.

…Those violent shots are just the effect of the comic-book style. I have been watching *Nodame Cantabile* so many times and I’ve never thought those shots are too over. Rather, they stress on how interestingly Nodame and Chiaki get along with each other. If you look closely to the context, you would know that Chiaki doesn’t abuse Nodame that badly. It is just like when we try to express “I can’t believe it” or “exaggeration,” we would say “fall down.” Anyway, (the exaggerating violent scene) is just a way of expressing. We really don’t need to think too much about it.

When I saw that Chiaki was slapped by Eto and flew out, I was so agitated and lamented: Finally I found the essence of funny comic books [in a Japanese drama]!

These comments demonstrate that some drama-viewers evaluate the violent acts as just an alternative method of expression, a *manga* style of acting, over all an extreme way to magnify and deliver humor. Such tolerance toward the violent scenes in *Nodame

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*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuso* accessed 10/15/08. According to Wikipedia, *Kuso* derives from the Japanese term “*kuso*ge,” literally meaning “shitty games.” Since most of *kuso*ge are often unintentionally funny, Taiwanese appropriate this term and utilize it for referring to anything hilarious or outrageous funny.
*Cantabile* might also imply that Taiwanese viewers agree on the social order connoted in the scenes: Men (Chiaki) over women (Nodame); teacher/superior (Eto) over students (Chiaki). The fact that Taiwanese viewers are able to recognize and identify with the unique Japanese *manga*-style humor suggests that Taiwan and Japan might belong to the same “geo-cultural market” and share so-called “cultural proximity” when it comes to television transmission. According to transnational media scholar, Straubhaar, geo-cultural markets are usually unified by language, history, ethnicity, and culture in several senses: shared identity, gestures and non-verbal communication; what is considered funny or serious or even sacred; clothing styles; living patterns; and climate influences and other relationships with the environment. These different aspects of culture construct cultural proximity.\(^7\)\(^6\) Iwabuchi further elucidates that the most significant concept concerning cultural proximity is not about “ontological cultural similarities between producer and audience, but rather *an awareness of this similarity and its association as something pleasurable* [italics added].”\(^7\)\(^7\)

According to Iwabuchi’s concept, one can recognize this trait from Taiwanese *Nodame*-viewers through the wall posts on the official website of Videoland Japan. Most of the wall posts indicate that these *manga* styles of acting are considered funny and most importantly, enjoyable, and are even praised as manifestations of the actors’ greater skills. Sharing the same cultural proximity is one of the reasons why *Nodame Cantabile* is popular in Taiwan and in some other Asian counties. Viewers outside of this proximity might have different reactions. For example, I once showed some of these violent

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moments to an American friend. He could not endure the violent scenes and, as a result, was so perplexed about why the drama was worth viewing. If Taiwanese generally had these same concerns about *Nodame Cantabile*, the series would not have enjoyed such popularity and would have likely failed in Taiwan.

In addition to the funny, comic-book style of acting, *Nodame Cantabile* also attempts to capture almost every detail of the *manga* and strives to transform it into realistic images, an endeavor that doubtless adds another level of humor and completes the drama’s ultimate *manga*-like appeal. For example, in a scene of housecleaning in Nodame’s apartment, we may discover several details that have been “*manga-ized*”: the fungus rice, the old laundry where mushrooms grow, the charcoaled mackerel with mayonnaise garnish, and so forth. Please compare the similarities between the drama and the *manga* in Figure 14. The character Nodame, played by Ueno Juri, provides the best examples of the *manga*-ism of *Nodame Cantabile*. Every detail—ranging from her outfits, hairstyles, and accessories to the way she makes her facial expressions, body language, and ways of speaking—aims to be as close to the *manga* as possible. Even the nonsense, foolish noises uttered by Nodame in the *manga*, such as “Gyaboooh,” “Kyaaah,” and so forth, are performed by Ueno in the series. Animated subjects, such as animated hearts and arrows, sometimes appear in the drama with live action figures and this attribute also fortifies Nodame’s *manga-*ized feel (see Figure 15). The highly *manga-*ized *Nodame Cantabile* brings its audiences irresistible laughter.
Figure 14: Fungus Rice (left) and Old Laundry (right) in the *Manga* Above; Fungus Rice and Old Laundry in the Drama, Below. (upper) [www.onemanga.com](http://www.onemanga.com), accessed Oct. 15, 2008; (bottom) [www.crunchyroll.com](http://www.crunchyroll.com), accessed Oct. 15, 2008.

Figure 15: Animated Heart, with Nodame. [www.crunchyroll.com](http://www.crunchyroll.com), accessed Oct. 20, 2008.
The comic-book humor of *Nodame Cantabile* seems to have created an inviting atmosphere to introduce Western art music to its audiences, especially to those unacquainted with it. Let us review part of a viewer’s comment mentioned previously:

And I think it is the reason why *Nodame Cantabile* distinguishes itself from other Japanese TV dramas. To be honest, if *Nodame Cantabile* is just a plain elegant *manga* depicting classical music, few people would watch it. Why can’t a Japanese TV drama be KUSO? Why does it need to be so serious?...Actually the author was going to make this *manga* as a serious classical-music *manga*, yet it turned out to be so funny (*But I would rather she makes it funny!*...)[italics added]

There are two ideas from this comment worth contemplating. One is the statement that if *Nodame Cantabile* were just a plain, elegant, classical-music *manga*, it would not be so popular. The other is that the writer expresses a preference for reading a funny *manga* over a serious one. This suggests that for general viewers who do not identify themselves as classical-music lovers, *Nodame Cantabile*’s comic elements are important attractions and act as mediators in enabling these viewers to further appreciate the Western art music in the drama. Thus, as compared to most other Japanese TV dramas, *Nodame Cantabile*’s *manga*-ized style, along with its presentation of art music, serves as unique otherness to win the audience’s hearts. Three more opinions from various individual blogs (my translations) exemplify these points:

Yesterday, after finishing the final episode of *Nodame Cantabile*, I felt very reluctant [to finish it] because it accompanied me for four days while I was sick and brought me so much fun and laughter…I love the excellent quality of *Nodame Cantabile*’s] production, its characters with exaggerating acts and distinctive personalities…In the first place when my husband recommended that I watch this drama, I was uninterested because of its Chinese translation: *Symphonic Lover’s Dream*. First, I am not a fan of symphonic music; in fact, I usually don’t listen to it, or I should say, with my knowledge, I can’t understand it…

I haven’t laughed so much for the sake of watching a Japanese drama. I felt kind of sad when it was over. I spent three days in a row finishing eleven episodes…In fact, I know nothing about classical music. I went to a recital in the National Music Hall with my cousin and fell asleep during it. The reason I went was just to finish an assignment in junior high school. How can I develop any ability of music appreciation based on it? However, after finishing *Nodame Cantabile*, I start to feel that classical music still has its charm. I realize that not every composition is as shocking sounding as Beethoven’s No. 9 or is like a lullaby that always puts me to sleep. If I listen to music carefully, I can comprehend the meanings, even a story, behind every note.

After watching the drama, I can’t help but fall in love with this hilarious funny comedy and it subsequently evokes my interest in classical music…I have started listening to classical music since I watched the drama. I especially try to look for the music shown in the drama and listen to it. When I listen to classical music, I feel as if the atmosphere of my room changes suddenly, with more elegance. The old me would fall asleep while listening to classical music. But *Nodame Cantabile* allows me to understand the profundity and the charm of classical music…

All three of these bloggers mention their alienation from classical music at some point, but they all confess their fondness for *Nodame Cantabile*, especially the fact that it is extremely funny. The second and third bloggers further indicate that *Nodame Cantabile* helps them rekindle a love for classical music, and that, after viewing, they feel they can better comprehend Western art music. The comments seem to imply that they might not have watched the drama without the successful humor since they did not care for classical music in the first place. The quotes also suggest that *Nodame Cantabile*, as a funny, relaxing agent, helps lessen the intimidating image of Western art music and makes it more accessible. Furthermore, *Nodame Cantabile* sometimes shows the crazy or commonplace sides of musicians, allowing general viewers to realize that musicians are ordinary people who have their own weakness and attributes, just like the viewers

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themselves. With this perception, general viewers can more easily identify with the characters and lower their guard to accept Western art music.

**Nodame Cantabile and Performance Experience in Taiwan**

Western art music has been part of everyday life and central to the school music curriculum in Taiwan. Wai-chung Ho’s research on Taiwan’s music education indicates that various institutions have been promoting Western art music. For example, the Philharmonic Radio Taipei has been dedicated to broadcasting classical music since 1995 and the radio station is well recognized by the public and has been honored with several significant cultural awards. Many Taiwanese musicians, such as Hu Nai-yuan, Lin Chao-liang and Edith Chen, have won reputable international competitions and become recognizable on the world stage. Several performance groups, including the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, the Taipei Symphony Orchestra, and the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, have been promoting Western orchestral music while the Taipei Opera Theatre and the Taiwan Metropolitan Opera have been promoting Western opera.

In education, the training of secondary school music teachers in Taiwan’s universities is based almost entirely on Western music theory and practice. These teacher candidates are required to either major or minor in one of the following subjects: piano, voice, woodwind, strings, theory and composition, conducting, or Chinese traditional instruments. If one chooses to minor in one of above, the subject of Chinese traditional instruments is excluded and is replaced with percussion. Ho’s study included a questionnaire survey with nearly 2600 students, ranging from eight to sixteen year olds, in Taipei and Tainan in 2000. One aim of this research was to investigate the
interviewee’s preferences for class music activities. The result showed that the most welcomed activity is Western music. This reflects the dominance of Western music in Taiwan’s music education.

Besides the formal music curriculum, Taiwanese students are able to participate in marching bands or concert bands established by schools to have a wider contact with Western music from the elementary schools to colleges, and it is common for these students to participate in the regional or national level of music contests for concert bands. If we look at the roster of the 2008 National Student Music Competition (Indoor-College Level), there were about twenty-four concert bands from the colleges listed. In the 2008 Band Contest held by Taiwan Band Association, there were seven concert bands in the elementary school category, sixteen bands in the junior high school category, seven bands in the high school category, and eleven bands in the college and community band category. Moreover, an international band conference held in Tainan, Taiwan – the 2008 APBDA – drew approximately fifty-four Taiwanese bands to perform. These contests and conference display bands in Taiwan are fairly active and thousands of Taiwanese have been involved over the years. Although only very few of the musicians major in Western music in their advanced education, they at least experience the course of learning how to play instruments, how to play in a music ensemble, and how to establish unity with peers during a competition.

82 http://www.tnc.gov.tw/apbda/ accessed 10/14/08. APBDA refers to Asia Pacific Band Director Association. APBDA has hosted international band conferences every two years since 1978 and the locale of conference changes every year.
Nodame Cantabile seems to evoke these experiences for such viewers and further enhances their identification with the drama, as several comments drawn from blogs show (my translations):

…Nodame Cantabile not only just brings me happiness and relaxation, it also reminds me of the experience of being in a marching band in high school…Since I played tuba and the practice of marching band was very demanding, I felt exhausted all the time. However, I still can’t forget the happiness rehearsals brought me and the pride of achievement brought by performances…I might not have opportunities to participate in a band in the future, yet I am still able to possess this wonderful memory. Maybe the feeling I miss the most is the atmosphere—we are a team—which has the same goal to work together to perform perfect and harmonic music.\(^8\)

Recently I just finished the drama series Nodame Cantabile. To be honest, I never read the manga and I wasn’t interested in the drama either. In order to kill time, I grabbed seven episodes of Nodame and watched them in a row. Afterwards, I couldn’t help but finish the entire series and fell in love with it. So ascribed to it, I started listening to classical music again…Brahms’s Hungarian Dance reminds me of the experience when I performed it in a band while I was a fourth or fifth grader…\(^4\)

…but I am really interested in [Nodame Cantabile’s] topic. I miss so much everything associated with band, such as band rehearsals, sectional rehearsals, concert performances, how band members focused on instrumental practices, how much we were united and put our trust on our conductor, and so on. To me, who has participated in bands and has so many memories about them, music is the most interesting part of the plot…In Nodame Cantabile, I see people [in the S Orchestra] determined to practice hard to show their best and their group pride in the concert, and they also win a great ovation from the audience…All of these scenarios are just like the memories I have about my high school concert band. I feel so touched!!\(^5\)

…In Nodame Cantabile, when Chiaki conducts an orchestra, he often says “Let’s sing!” in his heart and this part makes me recall my college days. I was so excited when I saw this part of the plot since I have seen the same facial expressions on my college wind band’s conductor’s face. The conductor often said “You need to love music, everything here is for music!” Although he was not a conducting major, he coached us like a father figure, leading a group of people who were also

\(^8\) http://www.lilychen.net/f2blog/index.php?load=read&id=542 accessed 10/14/08.
\(^4\) http://kichyou.pixnet.net/blog/post/1671074 accessed 10/14/08.
not music majors yet crazy about music on Friday nights. These are my best memories about my college life.\(^\text{86}\)

These bloggers all have memories of playing in marching bands or concert bands, and they agree that *Nodame Cantabile* is reminiscent of their previous experiences. They especially relate their music experiences to the plot that the drama characters are determined to practice diligently for the pride of their performance group, such as the S orchestra and the R-S orchestra; the actors/musicians demonstrate a sense of unity, peer-bonding, and aspiration to create wonderful music. These audience members do not need to be music majors to empathize with the characters in *Nodame Cantabile*, but their musical backgrounds strongly connect them to the characters’ ensembles and to the drama itself.

It is due to this kind of diverse appeal – attracting a wide variety of non-musicians, former musicians, current musicians, *manga* lovers, and Japanese drama fans – that has helped generate the extraordinary popularity of *Nodame Cantabile* not only in Japan but also in other Asian countries and particularly in Taiwan.

\(^{86}\text{http://blueblueseattle.blogspot.com/2007/05/httpwwwbloggercomimggllinkgif.html\hspace{1em} accessed 10/14/08.}\)
CONCLUSION

The Japanese TV drama series, *Nodame Cantabile*, based on an ongoing *manga* by Tomoko Ninomiya, depicts love and friendships among a group of college Western art music majors at a Japanese conservatory. The drama established an extraordinary viewership rating in Japan and received numerous awards from Japan and beyond. Since *Tokyo Love Story*, as a pioneer of Japanese idol dramas, was aired in Japan in 1991, numerous Japanese idol dramas have been broadcast and soon became one of the most popular television consumptions in Japan. These dramas mainly depicted love lives of urban Japanese from different fields and occupations. Although drama producers exhausted a variety of topics in different series over the past decade, Western art music never made its way into the repertoire until *Nodame Cantabile* in 2006; this, unexpectedly, created a phenomenal popularity in Asian countries. *Nodame Cantabile* successfully promoted the careers of its main actors, Juri Ueno and Hiroshi Tamaki, generated the “Nodame Phenomenon” in Japan, and stimulated the emergence of miscellaneous affiliated *Nodame* products.

*Nodame Cantabile*’s success was based on a subtle balance between conventions and innovations. It followed the successful Japanese idol drama’s formula and impressed its viewers with high-quality production and a well-chosen cast. The resulting series met the expectations of both the Taiwanese *ha-ri zhu* and frequent Japanese drama viewers around the world, and established a basic tone for its success. In addition to the successful formula, this drama created a unique heroine, Nodame, who overthrew the model female character set up since Rika in 1991. The audience’s warm reception of the
character Nodame suggest modern women’s reaction against the rigid feministic model represented by Rika; female fans are prone to embrace the choices that enable them to display their flaws, emotions, and needs in front of men without overly shielding themselves.

Unlike some skin-deep Taiwanese idol dramas, *Nodame Cantabile* not only depicts the love affection between the main protagonists, Chiaki and Nodame, but also invites its viewers to look into the world of Japanese Western art musicians – their practices, lessons, rehearsals, concerts, music, and so forth. Since this drama is built around art music, the music producer and editor, Hattori Takayuki, decided to utilize art music as the main accompanying music instead of the typical choice, Japanese pop music. His Wagnerian leitmotif approach successfully matched the music with the plot, enhanced the theatrical effects, and motivated *Nodame* viewers to further explore Western art music.

Besides Takayuki’s skillful music arrangement, *Nodame’s* manga-ism may play an important role in alleviating the intimidation of Western art music for unfamiliar audience members. Because Taiwan and Japan share the same cultural proximity, Taiwanese viewers can easily recognize and enjoy the humor in the manga-ized *Nodame*; they thus can enjoy the art music simultaneously, even unintentionally. The manga-ized musicians in the drama reveal musicians’ down-to-earth attributes and in turn overthrow the stereotyped images of musicians – serious, mysterious, arrogant, unapproachable, and hard-to-understand – in the general public’s sight. The extremely manga-ized *Nodame Cantabile* provided a relaxing, friendly atmosphere for art music laymen and –women to acquaint themselves with Western art music.
Zealous Japanese drama fans constantly look for something in the dramas for them to identify with the characters. They often take tours to meaningful landmarks from a drama and fantasize about the plot at those locations. Although *Nodame Cantabile* does not provide such a landmark, its fans are able to embark on an audio tourist gaze, fantasizing the story and identifying with the characters through the music. Since this process is not confined to geographical and physical limitations, the fans of *Nodame Cantabile* are able to engage in this experience repeatedly almost anywhere and anytime. This audio tourist gaze enhances the bond between the viewers and *Nodame Cantabile* and boosts the drama’s popularity.

Besides art-music majors and art-music laymen, who each have unique responses to the drama, there is a group of audience members who are in the middle of the spectrum: they listen to Western art music, have some performance experiences, yet do not/did not major in music. Most of these people seem to have joined music ensembles in different levels of school. Due to their music experience, they tend to immediately appreciate the art music in *Nodame Cantabile*. Furthermore, since they can empathize with the peer-bonding and sense the development of unity witnessed in the music ensembles, they seem to strongly identify themselves with the musicians in the drama. They recall their own performance experiences through viewing the drama and feel a sense of satisfaction while seeing the characters achieve their dreams and execute outstanding performances.

All of these reasons help to explain *Nodame Cantabile*’s great popularity even outside of Japan and especially in Taiwan. The series promoted and popularized Western art music in Asian countries; art-music concerts and recitals that adopted *Nodame*’s
themes were well received and these events are still going strong. Nodame's theme-song, Beethoven's 7th, became extremely popular as a ringtone. Many viewers became obsessed with the art music in the drama and desired to identify and understand more classical music compositions. There were at least six different albums of Nodame Cantabile's music to satisfy the demand of the Taiwanese record market. Most importantly, many admitted that after watching Nodame Cantabile, they were able to appreciate and enjoy Western art music more than before. Meanwhile, critics claimed that the series and its soundtrack reinvigorated the Western art music industry in Japan. It is clear that the series' music has had the same impact in Taiwan. Nodame viewers' purchase and consumption of art music may suggest their implicit attempts to acquire a specific identity: a person who can express his/her emotions freely through art music (as Chiaki and Nodame); this behavior may also be meant to show others they possess cultural capital and cultural prestige.

Nodame Cantabile provides Westerners and non-music majors an opportunity to further understand the culture of Japanese music conservatories. Japanese music faculty tend to wear formal outfits in school and it is not uncommon for students to do so as well. After school, students participate in gokon or go to a lounge bar to have a drink. The power structure between the faculty and the students is rather stable and unchallengeable; teachers are able to determine many decisions for students without explaining and some even carry out physical punishment as part of a method of instruction. Overall, the social order and gender roles portrayed in the drama reflect that of Japan and neighboring Asian countries.
Western-centricism is still pervasive in the Japanese music conservatory. Musicians suspect the value of studying art music in Japan and treasure studying music abroad (especially in Europe) as essential in establishing a career. Due to the respect for Western art music’s heartland, Europe, institutions grant prestigious European musicians, such as the character Stresemann in the drama, great power. The conservatories prefer Mozart, Beethoven, and romantic composers to those of other eras and perform only tonal music; this repertoire is somewhat similar to that of American Midwestern schools of music as described by Nettl. The perceptions about talent also conform to Kingsbury’s theory, which is a matter of power relations between superiors (mainly professors in the case of Japanese music conservatory) and inferiors (mainly students).

Due to the many innovative achievements in this series, *Nodame Cantabile* stands out among its counterparts and it has had a phenomenal impact on the television and recording industries in Japan and beyond. As a ground-breaking feature for a Japanese TV series, *Nodale Cantabile*’s pervasive use of Western art music successfully changed viewers’ perceptions about Japanese dramas and about classical music in general. For such a popular, entertaining media genre, *Nodame Cantabile* has shown the power to feature an academic subject such as Western art music and still create a sensational success. This unparalleled success may demonstrate that the boundary between serious art and popular culture is blurring. It also gives hope to musicians, fans, and the industry that Western art music might regain its popularity through proper promotions via the popular media. *Nodame Cantabile* definitely created unprecedented models for 21st-century Japanese drama series and the promotion of Western art music.
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