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Not by Love Alone

The Violin in Japan, 1850–2010

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Biographical Details for the Visiting Violinists Listed in Not by Love Alone, Part 2, Chapter I.1

The first touring violinists found their way to Japan already in the nineteenth century, but they played chiefly for the foreign community. The artists who came from 1918 onwards, however, played to sizeable Japanese audiences, and several of them are still household names today. The list below lists visiting violinists who performed in Japan between 1918 and the late 1930s in chronological order of their first recorded appearance in Japan. It is almost certainly incomplete, especially for violinists who did not perform in Tokyo. Some of the violinists stayed longer, but it is not always possible to distinguish between those who left after giving a few concerts and those who settled, at least for a short time. Most of these violinists also made at least one or two recordings in Japan (marked with “rec” on the list).¹ Biographical details for the most famous virtuosos have been omitted.²

Emilio Colombo, 1918 rec

Emilio Colombo (1874–1937) is referred to by the *Radio Times* (1937) as “the doyen of restaurant players,” but also as a “serious musician, who has won considerable success in the past as a concert player.” His father, an Italian violinist, had an orchestra, which Emilio joined at the age of seven. On a European tour he was introduced to Pyotr Tchaikovsky, who suggested that Emilio study in Brussels with Cesar Thomson. He won the first prize with honours, and the Gold Medal at the Royal Conservatoire at Liege. Later, he became violinist to the Tsar of Russia, a post he held until the Revolution of 1917. His first recital in London was at the Aeolian Hall in 1921.³

Mishel Piastro (first visit in 1912) 1918, 1922, 1923

Performed as soloist and with the **Piastro Trio** (Alfred Hi/Mirovich pf., Mishel Piastro vn, Joseph Schuster vc.) in 1937 and 1939.

Mishel Piastro (1891–1970), one of Auer’s best students, arrived in California via East Asia in 1920 and was appointed concertmaster of the San Francisco Orchestra in 1925 and the New York Philharmonic in 1931. He later turned to conducting.⁴

(Alfred E. Jones,? – 1918) rec

¹ For details about recordings, see Nozawa, Kurisutofa N., “Nihon vaiorin rekôdo shi gairyaku,” in *Teikin Yûjô: Nihon no vaiorin ongaku shi*, ed. Matsumoto, Zenzô (Tokyo Ressun no Tomosha, 1995).

² Elman, Zimbalist, Kreisler, Heifetz, Thibaud hardly need introducing. Elman, Zimbalist and Heifetz were students of Auer, as were Piastro (1891–1970), Boris Lass (1894–) and Cecilia Hansen (1897–1989). Their names can be found in most works about famous violinists, such as Campbell, Margaret, *The Great Violinists* (London: Granada, 1980); Schwarz, Boris, *Great Masters of the Violin: from Corelli and Vivaldi to Stern, Zukerman and Perlman* (London: Robert Hale 1984). and Katz, Mark, *The Violin: A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

³ “Music Makers,” *Radio Times: Television Supplement, Monday 24 May, 21 May 1937*.

⁴ Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin*, 449.

Misha Elman, 1921, 1937 rec

Efrem Zimbalist, 1922, 1924, 1927, 1930, 1932 and 1935⁵ rec

Kathleen Parlow, 1922 rec

Kathleen Parlow (1890–1963) Canadian-born, studied with Auer from 1906, and embarked on a concert career from 1908, touring in Europe and America. Her Asian tour in 1922–23 was arranged by a Dutch agent, Mr. Augustin, requested from Dutch East Indies. It included Java, Japan, China, Korea, the Philippines. Arrangements in Japan were made by the music publisher Senô Kôjirô.⁶ At the start of the Second World War she settled in Canada where she performed chamber music and taught.

Jaroslav Kocián, 1922

Jaroslav Kocián (1883-1950) came from Bohemia and studied with Otakar Ševčík and in Prague. He enjoyed an international concert career, then settled in Russia and in 1910-11 was first violinist of the Mecklenburg Quartet in St Petersburg. From 1924 to 1943 he was violin professor at the Prague Conservatory. He composed church music, orchestral works and pieces for violin.⁷

Willy Burmester, 1923 rec

Willy Burmester (1869- 1933) studied with Joachim; he gave a sensational debut in Berlin in 1894 and for the next decades was highly successful in German cities and in London. His specialities were Paganini and short pieces, including his own compositions. Details about his life can be found in his autobiography.⁸

Fritz Kreisler, 1923

Jascha Heifetz, 1923, 1931

Natalie Boshko, 1924 rec

Natalie Boshko (1906-?) and her pianist sister Victoria had apparently performed for the Czar; they gave a recital in New York in 1917 and made recordings.⁹

Leopold Premyslav, 1924 (first visit in 1909)

Leopold Premyslav or Premiswlvav came from Warsaw and began performing as a child prodigy in Berlin and London. He studied in Berlin c.1899-1902 with Jacobsen and Joachim. His teachers also included Wilhelmy and Ysaÿe. After concert tours around the world, he settled in Berlin and was engaged by Richard Strauss as a concertmaster at the Royal Opera House. He performed regularly as a soloist at the symphony concerts conducted by Furtwängler and Weingartner and as a leader of his Premyslav-Quartet. After 1933 he embarked on another world tour, first to South America, then the United States and Australia. He eventually settled in South Africa, another violinist who had to flee from the Nazis. His

⁵ There is a detailed chapter on Zimbalist's Asian tours in Malan, Roy, *Efrem Zimbalist: A Life* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 2004).

⁶ French, Maida Parlow, *Kathleen Parlow: A Portrait* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1967), 81-85, 81. See also Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin*, 448.

⁷ Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin*, 399.

⁸ Burmester, Willy, *Fifty Years as a Concert Violinist: Recollections and Reflections*, trans. Wolf, Roberta Franke in collaboration with Samuel (Linthicum Heights, Maryland: Swand Publications, 1975); Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin*, 318-320.

⁹ "Sisters in Joint Recital: Victoria and Natalie Boshko Appear with Volpe Orchestra," *New York Times*, 1 April 1917.

wife was the cellist Eugenie Stoltz-Premyslav. Premyslav died in 1952 at the age of 67 in Johannesburg, South Africa, where a foundation named after him still exists or existed until recently.¹⁰

Japan–Russia Joint Symphony Orchestra, 1925

The orchestra, with 33 Russian musicians, most of them members of the symphony orchestra in Harbin, gave several performances in Tokyo before continuing to Shizuoka, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe.¹¹ The first and second concertmasters were Josef König (1875-1932) and Nikolai Schifferblatt (1887-1936). They subsequently returned to Japan to become the first foreign conductors of the newly-founded New Symphony Orchestra, the forerunner of the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Association) Orchestra.¹² See *Not by Love Alone* (pp. 140-43).

Boris Lass, 1925, 1926 rec

Hardly anything seems to be known about him. Apparently was Russian and had studied with Auer. He settled in Japan and was still there in 1934 when the press reported that he had been in Japan for ten years. He is said to have been the teacher of Tsuji Kichinosuke, the father of the violinist Tsuji Hisako (see *Not by Love Alone*, pp. 100-201).¹³ He performed in a string quartet and in a piano trio (with Mark Lass, pf., Constantine Shapiro, vc.) and duo (with Maxim Shapiro, pf.).

Leonid (Nikolaevič) Ševčuk, 1926 rec

Apparently he was another violinist who stayed longer, but not much seems to be known about him.

Alexander Yakovlevich Mogilevsky, 1926 rec

See *Not by Love Alone* (pp. 146-49) for details about Mogilevsky.

Michail Erdenko, 1927¹⁴ rec

Michail Erdenko (1885 -1940) reportedly came from a family of gypsy musicians. He was Professor at the conservatoire in Moscow. He made recordings with his wife Evgenia Erdenko. He arranged ancient and folk music, including the Jewish tune *Kol Nidre*.

¹⁰ "Einer der letzten Joachim-Schüler: Zum Tod von Leopold Premyslav," *Zeitschrift für Musik* 12. (1952): 693. See also Silke Wenzel, Artikel „Eugenie Stoltz-Premyslav“, in: *MUGI. Musikvermittlung und Genderforschung: Lexikon und multimediale Präsentationen*, hg. von Beatrix Borchard, Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg, 2003ff. Stand vom 28.1.2009.

URL: http://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/artikel/Eugenie_Stoltz-Premyslav (17 October 2014)

According to this article the couple lived in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia) and fled to South Africa from the Nazis in the 1930s. The articles also states that that neither is to be found in the usual dictionaries between 1900-1930, nor in *World Biographical Information System Online* (WBIS, checked 2008).

¹¹ Details in Iwano, Yûichi, *Ôdô rakudo no kôkyôgaku: Manshû - shirazaru ongakushi* (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1999), 46-52.

¹² From 1927 to 1929 and from 1929 to 1935 respectively.

¹³ Ôsaka Ongaku Daigaku Ongaku Bunka Kenkyûsho, ed. *Ôsaka ongaku bunkashi shiryô: Meiji/Taishô hen* (Osaka: Ôsaka Ongaku Daigaku, 1968), 471. Wikipedia article about Tsuji Kichinosuke 1898-1985): <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%BE%BB%E5%90%89%E4%B9%8B%E5%8A%A9> (21 March 2015)

¹⁴ Michail Erdenko 1885 -1940 is said to have come from a family of gypsy musicians. He was Professor at the conservatoire in Moscow; he made recordings with his wife Evgenia Erdenko.

Apparently his granddaughter carries on the family musical tradition as a singer:

<http://www.leonsia.ru/?mode=erdfamily> (17 October 2014)

Naum Blinder, 1927

Naum Blinder (1889–965), born in the Crimea, studied in Moscow, with Adolph Brodsky and taught in Odessa and Moscow Faculty. He later moved to America, where he became concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony.¹⁵

Robert Kitain, 1927 rec

Robert Kitain (?-?), a Russian, son of the composer and professor Milhail Gregorievitch Kitain, and brother of the pianist Anatole Kitain, studied in St Petersburg, where his teachers included Leopold Auer, and toured Europe, Asia and America, where he gave successful concerts in the 1940s. He appears to have settled in Mexico.¹⁶

Jacques Thibaud, 1928, 1936 rec

Eugen Klein 1928¹⁷

Eugen Klein (1893-1942) came from a Russian family of musicians and graduated from the conservatoire in Moscow. He came to Japan in 1926 after performing in Harbin. Besides performing as a soloist he on occasion conducted the Takarazuka Symphony Orchestra. He married the Japanese soprano Kitazawa Eiko.

Cecilia Hansen, 1928

Cecilia Hansen (1897-1989) studied with Leopold Auer, who described as one of his most talented pupils. She grew up in Russia, and had her first violin lessons with her Danish father before enrolling in Auer's class in St Petersburg at the age of ten. In 1921 she fled Russia. She toured America in 1923-24 and East Asia in 1928. Her first husband, Boris Sacharow, stayed in Shanghai as a teacher. In the 1930s Hansen settled in London with her second husband, Hermann Friedmann, where she gave concerts during the war. In 1950 she followed Friedmann to Heidelberg, where she lived and taught for the next 38 years. She spent her last years in London.¹⁸

Jan Kubelik, 1929

Jan Kubelik (1880–1940), the most famous of Otakar Ševčík's students and known for his technical perfection, was at the height of his international career between 1901 and 1910. He began to decline already by the time he was thirty, but continued performing to the end of his life.¹⁹

¹⁵ Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin*, 451-452, 538, 582.

¹⁶ World Biographical Information System Online (WBIS); Nelissen, Monika, "Weltbürgerling mit Wahlheimat in Hamburg. Hanseatische Lebensart: Im Gespräch mit Tamara Kitain, ehemalige Generalkonsulin von Mexiko in Hamburg," *Die Welt Online* 2005.

¹⁷ Ōsaka Ongaku Daigaku Ongaku Bunka Kenkyūsho, ed. *Ōsaka ongaku bunkashi shiryō: Shōwa hen* (Osaka: Ōsaka Ongaku Daigaku, 1970), 83, 97; Mōri, Masato, *Kishi Kōichi: Eien no seinen ongakuka* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 2006), 367.

¹⁸ http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecilia_Hansen#cite_ref-0 (21 March 2015)

Cites as source, Tully Potter: *The Players. First Record In: The Recorded Violin. The history of the violin on record*. S. 18–19. See also Roth, Henry, *Violin Virtuosos: From Paganini to the 21st Century* (Los Angeles: California Classics Books, 1997).

¹⁹ Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin*, 398-399.

Robert “Nêbâ”, 1930

Robert “Nêbâ” is described in a Japanese newspaper as a ‘young’ violinist on world tour: he performed in Osaka.²⁰

Robert Pollack, 1930 rec

Robert Pollack (1880-1962), trained at the Konservatorium der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, then in Leipzig and Geneva. From 1905 to 1914 he taught at the conservatoire in Geneva, from 1912 also masterclasses at Lausanne. During the First World War he ended up in Russian captivity, but after the revolution he had an appointment at the conservatoire in Moscow. In 1919 he was a director of masterclass at the Neue Wiener Konservatorium (successor of Franz Ondricek). In 1924 he became the first violinist of the Viennese Buxbaum-Quartet (Starkmann, Morawec, Buxbaum). In 1926 he taught in San Francisco, where he also led the California String Quartet. He moved to Tokyo in 1930 and taught at the Tokyo Academy of Music until 1937. His pupils in America included Isaac Stern.²¹

Alfred Hoffman, 1931

Alfred Hoffmann taught and conducted at the Tôkyô Kôtô Ongaku Gakuin (predecessor of Kunitachi College of Music) in 1932.²²

Renée Chemet, 1932 rec

Renée Chemet (1888–?), born in Boulogne-sur-Seine, studied at the Paris Conservatoire as a pupil of Mme Roy Got and later M. Berthelier. In 1902 she graduated top of her class and joined the prestigious Colonne Orchestra as first violinist. A year later she performed for the German Emperor. She toured successfully on the continent, and in 1904 performed at the Promenade and Symphony concerts at Queen’s Hall under Sir Henry Wood. In 1906 she toured North America and Mexico. In 1919 she gave 15 performances in England, and in 1921 she again performed in America, where she was hailed as the “French Kreisler.” She performed in China as well as in Japan in 1932. Reports that she “disappeared” in the Far East appear to be exaggerated to say the least. She was apparently based in New York in the 1930s, as she is listed in a directory compiled in 1936–37.²³ The work lists Freeman Concert as her Management. Moreover, biographers of the Japanese Composer Miyagi Michio, with whom she performed and recorded his famous piece *Haru no umi* (Sea in Springtime) in 1932, report that Miyagi met Chemet again in 1953 when he attended the Second World Festival of Folk Song and Dance – Biarritz – Pamplona.²⁴

²⁰ Ôsaka Ongaku Daigaku Ongaku Bunka Kenkyûsho, ed. *Ôsaka ongaku bunkashi shiryô: Shôwa hen*, 126.

²¹ Programme of performance in 1930 in Matsumoto, Zenzô, *Teikin yûjô: Nihon no vaiorin ongaku shi* (Tokyo: Ressen no Tomosha, 1995), 238. Biographical details in Einstein, Alfred, ed. *Das neue Musiklexikon: nach dem Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians herausgegeben von A. Eaglefield-Hull* (Berlin: Max Hesses Verlag, 1926), 497-498; Roth, *Violin Virtuosos*, 188, 238, 332; Tôkyô Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai, ed. *Tôkyô Geijutsu Daigaku hyakunenshi: Tôkyô Ongaku Gakkô hen 2* (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 2003), 1230.

²² Suchy, Irene, "Deutschsprachige Musiker in Japan vor 1945. Eine Fallstudie eines Kulturtransfers am Beispiel der Rezeption abendländischer Musik" (doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1992), 202.

²³ *Who's Who Today in the Musical World: A Biographical and Pictorial Record of Musicians of Today. Compiled in 1936-7.* (New York: Birdsall, 1938).

²⁴ Miyagi Michio Kinenkan (Miyagi Michio Memorial Hall Foundation), ed. *Miyagi Michio no sekai: Miyagi Michio seitan 100 nen kinen* (Tokyo: Miyagi Michio Kinenkan, 1993), 74, 105-107.

Joseph Szigeti, 1932 rec

Joseph Szigeti (1892–1973), a Hungarian, studied with Jenő Hubay (1858-1937) in Budapest. From 1905 he was launched on a child prodigy career. In the 1920s and 1930s he regularly toured the United States and the Soviet Union. His last years he spent in Switzerland.²⁵ He taught private pupils including (after 1945) several Japanese; Ushioda Matsuko, Maehashi Teiko, Sô Tomotada, Wanami Takayoshi and Unno Yoshio.

Pierre Reitlinger, 1933

Pierre Reitlinger (1897–) came from a family of French musicians; in 1920 he won the Prix d'excellence of the Paris conservatoire. He performed as soloist and in 1930 formed a quartet.²⁶

Konrad Liebrecht, 1934 rec

Konrad Liebrecht (1898-?), born in Vienna, studied at Konservatorium der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, concertmaster in Graz and Berlin; soloist with New Symphony Orchestra and Takarazuka.²⁷

Szymon Goldberg, 1936 rec

Polish-born Szymon Goldberg (1909–93) came to Berlin in 1917 and studied with Carl Flesch. From 1929 to 1934 he was one of the concertmasters of the Berlin Philharmonic, but had to leave when the Nazis came to power. Forced to concentrate on a solo career, he toured Europe and East Asia and America. In 1942 while touring the Dutch East Indies he was interned by the Japanese. After the war he continued his career on both sides of the Atlantic. From 1987 he regularly taught at Tôhō Gakuen School of Music. He married the Japanese pianist Yamane Miyoko in 1988 and spent his last years in Japan.²⁸

Willy Frey, 1936 rec

Willy Frey (1907-?), Polish-born, Frey studied Warsaw, in Leipzig and Berlin (1921-28 with Willy Hess) and performed as a soloist in Germany until he had to flee from the Nazis. He taught at the Tokyo Academy of Music from 1936 to 1943. He may have come to Japan together with the conductor Josef Rosenstock, under whose baton he had performed in the Jewish Culture League (Jüdischer Kulturbund).²⁹

Ferry Lorant, 1937 rec

(Ferri Lorant or Loraint, a Hungarian, says P. Berton; 1892-1978)

²⁵ Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin*, 386-392.

²⁶ WIBIS online.

²⁷ Biographical information from programmes of these orchestras, see Suchy, "Deutschsprachige Musiker in Japan", 215.

²⁸ Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin*, 344-345; Goldberg, Miyoko Yamane, *20 seiki no kyôjin Shimon Gôrudoberugu (Szymon Goldberg)* (Tokyo: Genki shobô, 2009).

²⁹ Tôkyô Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkaï, ed. *Hyakunenshi: Tôkyô Ongaku Gakkô hen 2*, 1572-1573; Suchy, "Deutschsprachige Musiker in Japan", 219, 193-194. According to Suchy, he probably taught at the Tokyo Academy of music again immediately after 1945. He appears to have moved to the U.S.A. later. He is listed as a violinist in the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra for 1965-66 and 1966-67(<http://archives.bpo.org/px-6566.htm> and <http://archives.bpo.org/px-6768.htm> accessed 21 March 2015)

Other foreign violinists who performed in Japan in this period (year of arrival unknown):

Michael Wexler

Michale Wexler (1896-?) reportedly had connections with the pianist Alexander Rutin (?-1932) who a stepbrother of the violinist Alexander Mogilevsky, earlier that year. Wexler, a native of Lithuania, had toured northern Europe as a child prodigy, studied with Leopold Auer, and taught at St Petersburg before moving to Vladivostok in 1917. He had intended to go to America when he stopped over in Japan, gave concerts all over the country and settled down in Osaka. He did go to New York in 1930, but returned to Japan, where he continued to perform and teach.³⁰

Sigismund Lukianovich Minchinski (Sigismond Menczynski, Sigmund Menzinsky; (? - 1974)) rec

Minchinski a Polish violinist, lived in Japan for many years and is mentioned in several memoirs, but not much appears to be known about him.³¹

Some Remarks

While my investigations, for obvious reasons, have concentrated on violinists, they were not the only artists to travel to Japan in the period between the two world wars. By then the Japanese had come a long way in their efforts to master Western classical music and many people from the educated classes were eager to listen to and learn more. Meanwhile, events in Europe, first the Russian Revolution then the rise of National Socialism in Germany drove numerous fine artists from their homeland. Russian musicians in particular played a vital role in the development of Western classical music in Japan in this period, which has yet to be fully researched and appreciated.

While a few of the violinists on this list are still household names today, most of them are likely to be unknown to all but hardened violin enthusiasts, and some will be unfamiliar even to these. Finding out who they are and how they lived, however, is of interest beyond the field of violin history. Their musical migrations shed light on the social history of musicians and provide intriguing examples of people and ideas in transit.

For this reason I applied for and received a grant from the University of Copenhagen's Asian Dynamics Initiative (ADI) to employ an expert in Slav languages, Sanne Arendse Hedegaard, who could examine reference works Russian (and, to a lesser extent, Polish and Czech) for information about the violinists from Eastern Europe. It proved more difficult than I had expected, however, to find information about the lesser known musicians who represented the focus of the project. Because most of the violinists who left Russia may never have returned, they do not feature in works published in the Soviet Union. Interestingly, those that do seem to have attracted attention there are the ones whose achievements in Japan are best known (such as Ono Anna and her sister, the painter Varvara Bubnova; see *Not by Love Alone*, pp. 143-46). There appears to be a nationalistic element in the writings about these more famous musicians, the emphasis being on their achievements in promoting Russian culture in Japan. These Russian works were usually based on Japanese sources, mostly the

³⁰ Mōri, *Kishi Kōichi*, 364.

³¹ Ōsaka Ongaku Daigaku Ongaku Bunka Kenkyūsho, ed. *Ōsaka ongaku bunkashi shiryō: Shōwa hen*, 208; Shapiro, Isaac, *Edokko: Growing Up a Foreigner in Wartime Japan* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2009), 120.

ones I had already found. In other words, the very circumstances of the musicians' transnational lives make it difficult to find out more about them.

On the other hand, many of the violinists being Jewish, the literature about Jewish emigration provided some important leads. Another potential lead, our research produced lies in the circumstance that the Russians who stayed in Japan for longer appear to have formed a close-knit community which also welcomed and entertained visiting artists, including a few famous ones who left memoirs. Investigating these networks (particularly in the Tokyo-Yokohama region and in the Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe region) may well provide further clues about individuals as well as shedding light on the lives of immigrant communities in Japan. However, such an investigation is well beyond "basic spade work" and mostly beyond the scope of my work about the violin in Japan.