

■ Topics : Club Activities

Okayama University *Hougakubu* :Traditional Japanese music club

Mayuka Nanba is a third year engineering student at the Department of Mechanical and Systems Engineering of Okayama University. And, when she is not programing robots Nanba manages the Okayama University 'Traditional Japanese Music Club—'*Hougakubu*'.

"Members of our club learn to play the koto, shamisen or shakuhatchi," says Nanba. "The Okayama University Hougakubu currently has about 100 members of whom 90% started from zero, without any previous experience of playing any of these instruments."

So how do complete beginners learn to master these challenging instruments? Nanba explains that newcomers are paired 'one-to-one' with experienced musicians. "This parent-child or 'oyako' approach is a unique and effective way of teaching complete beginners," she says. "The new members are expected to learn by themselves in their second year and in some cases to teach newcomers."

Nanba plays the koto. "Producing high quality sounds takes a lot of practice," she confides. "Learning the musical score is also quite demanding because it is completely different from music scores for instruments such as the piano or violin."

Members of the Okayama University *Hougaku Club* give live performances at the University and at City Hall annually, and recitals at shrines and functions following requests from groups outside the University.

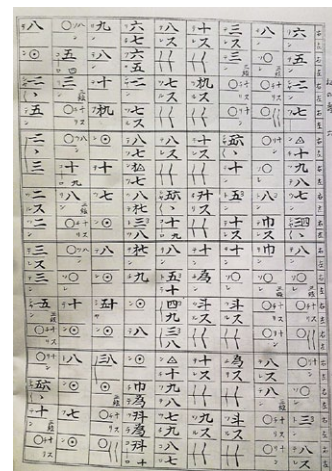
Nanba says that the club wants to "increase awareness of *Hougaku* both in Japan and overseas." The huge membership, including the involvement of overseas students, reflects the universal appeal of the club.

Further information

Hougakubu website: http://www.geocities.jp/okadai_hougaku/



The Okayama University hougakubu performing at the Okayama City Culture Hall.



An example of the unique music score use for playing the koto.