

Note: This article was originally published in Japanese and has been translated into English for the convenience of non-Japanese speakers. Please consult the original publication when you reference this paper. Also, figures are illustrated in the original paper.

Luther Whiting Mason Collection, University of Maryland Special Collections in Performing Arts, University of Maryland

This paper presents some photographs and letters from the collection of Luther Whiting Mason (1818-1896), deposited at the University of Maryland, which I found particularly interesting.¹ Mason was invited by the Japanese government in 1880 as an honorary foreign employee and stayed in Japan for about two and a half years. He introduced Western music to Japan at the dawn of its music education in the *Meiji* period. Edward Morse (1838-1925), the discoverer of the Omori Shell Mound, who was a professor at the University of Tokyo as an honorary foreign employee, and who is known to have collected Japanese ceramics and donated them to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, wrote the following in his book *Japan - Day by Day*,

On the 2nd July I was present at a public concert of the Normal School class, where Mr. Mason had trained students to sing in the Western style. This was held in the beautiful hall of the old Chinese School [Cathedral], which has a good acoustic quality. Class after class came out and sang various selections ... There was also piano playing, one of which was remarkably good. There was a violin, a clarinet, a flute, a bass viola and other orchestras, and they played 'Glorious Apollo', 'Angel of Peace', 'People of Halleck' and other pieces quite successfully. A little five-year-old boy named Sankichi Kosaka, who could barely reach the keys, played simple songs on the piano with remarkable finesse.²

The starting point of writing was my research on American painter J. McN. Whistler (1834-1903) which led my attention to the Mason Collection. Influenced by Japanese art, Whistler attempted to unite Western classical Greek and Japanese art in the midst of the Victorian Hellenistic currents of 19th century Britain. He advocated the universality of beauty, fused the artistic expressions of the East and West in his own works, painted a nocturnal view with the musical title of Nocturne, and opened up the possibility of a new form of figurative expression that would lead to the abstract paintings of the 20th century.

Whistler's work influenced the art of Japan as well as of Europe and the United States, but at the same time, the universality and unity of East and West aesthetics that he advocated had a profound influence on the policy of his patron, Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919), in collecting artworks. It was Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) who helped Freer to collect Japanese artworks. Fenollosa was critical of Whistler during his stay in Japan. However, after meeting Freer, he deepened his understanding of Whistler's work and discovered a unity of artistic expression of East and West. Fenollosa is also said to have taken courses in art history from Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908) at Harvard University, but Norton was close to John Ruskin (1819-1900), Whistler's emesis. The photographs and letters presented in this article were discovered in the course of following the interaction between the people of Whistler's time.

Figure 1 shows one of the photographs in the Mason Collection taken at the kindergarten attached to Tokyo Women's Normal School (1881). On the back of the photograph, there is an inscription 'Kindergarten in Japan 1881' (fig. 2). In the inventory, it states, 'This is the kindergarten attached to Tōkyō Joshi Shihan Gakkō [Tokyo Women Normal School]. Kindergarten, Tokyo (1881). Mason is seated on the porch with teachers and about 100 children. As stated in the inventory, Mason is sitting on the porch in the rear of the picture (Fig. 3). This photograph was published in 1934 in *History of Japanese*

Kindergartens as ‘Staff and Children of the Kindergarten Attached to Tokyo Women’s Normal School (1882)’.³ However, it is not possible to identify the individual from the black and white photograph.⁴ In addition, as shown in Figure 2, the photograph in the Mason Collection shows the year 1881 (Meiji 14). However, the *History of Japanese Kindergartens* lists the year 1882 (Meiji 15) as the year when the photograph was taken. Although I made enquiry to Rinkawa Shoten, which published a reprint of the reprint, to confirm the year of the photograph, it was not possible to obtain confirmation of the date. Since the photo was taken at the kindergarten attached to Tokyo Women's Normal School, I contacted the Ochanomizu University Museum of History and Archives, but neither the actual photo nor the record of the photo was available. Therefore, it was not possible find concrete evidence that the photo was taken in 1882. The description on the back of the photograph of the Mason Collection that I saw in person appears to have been written quite a long time ago, and the fact that the collection was deposited in the University of Maryland by the author's family beginning in 1972 suggests that it was probably written by the author or by a family member for the purpose of documentation.

This photograph was taken in 1881, when Okakura Tenshin (1861-1913) was working as an interpreter for the Masons as a member of the *Ongaku Torishirabe-Gakari* (later Tokyo Music School). At the left end of the last row of the photo, there is a person

who seems to be the young Okakura Tenshin, judging from the contour of the face, the slender single eyelids, the forehead, the cheekbones, and the shape of the jaw (Fig. 4). Not only because of the external factor of his appearance, but also because there were some hints in the letters to suspect that this man was Tenshin. In the Mason Collection, there is a letter dated 26 May 1881 from Nakamura Sen to Mrs. Virginia Irish, Mason's daughter (fig. 5). The right end of the last row of the picture in Figure 1 is thought to be Nakamura Sen (Fig. 3). In Nakamura's letter, she writes about the Empress Meiji's visit to Tokyo Women's Normal School and said, 'Mr. Okakura (the interpreter) has written a letter to Mrs. Mason, and would you be willing to hear all the details from him?' Nakamura Sen studied Western music as an apprentice in *Ongaku Torishirabe-Gakari*, and since she was fluent in English, she also served as an interpreter for the Masons. She was married to the pedagogue Takamine Hideo (1854-1910), who would later serve as principal of Tokyo Normal School and Women's Higher Normal School. She is also known to have taught piano to Koda Nobu (1870-1947), the younger sister of Koda Rohan (1867-1947), who would become a professor at the Tokyo Music School. Koda Nobu also learned instrumental music from Mason, and that she continued to communicate with Mason and his family after he returned to USA (Fig. 6).⁵

There is no letter from Okakura to Mrs. Mason in the Mason Collection informing

her of the Empress Meiji's visit, which Sen Nakamura mentions in her letter. However, the collection includes unpublished booklet *Luther Whiting Mason and His Contribution to Music in the Schools of Three Continents* written by Osborne McConathy (1875-1947) (hereafter referred to as the McConathy Papers) in 1947, which contains transcriptions of letters from Okakura to Mrs. Mason and to Mrs. Virginia Irish, Mason's daughter (Reference 1, Reference 2).⁶ In the letter from Okakura to Mrs. Mason dated May 6, 1881, Okakura wrote that he and Mason had visited the residence of Okuma Shigenobu. Also, Iwakura Tomomi and other high-ranking officials of the Meiji government had visited the Tokyo Women's Normal School and had been greatly pleased with the students' singing and the melodious performances of the minstrels, and it had been decided that the Empress would visit the Women's Normal School in mid-May. And a letter to Mrs. Virginia Irish, dated May 26, 1881, gives details of the Empress's arrival, the orchestral music played by the rehearsal ministers, and the songs by the children.

Both Nakamura and Okakura praised Mason's achievement in their letters. Nakamura seems to have continued to correspond with Mason after he returned to the United States for there is a portrait of Mrs. Takamine (née Nakamura) (fig. 7) as well as portraits of her two children in the Mason collection.⁷ Although there is no documentation to suggest that Okakura had any personal contact with Mason after his

departure, their relationship seems to have been good for Okakura wrote a letter to Mason's family, praising him for his accomplishments while he was on duty as Mason's interpreter. In 1929, Konishi Shinpachi (1854-1939), who was the director of the kindergarten at that time, recalled in his book *My Supervisory Period* as follows.

Mr. Izawa was the head of the *Ongaku Torishirabe-Gakari* and he brought Mason from the United States. And sometimes the two of them would argue, and Mason got into trouble. However, when Mason came to the kindergarten, he seemed very happy. Mr. Okakura and Mrs. Takamine took it in turns to translate and said that it was helpful that we had Mason come to the kindergarten since it was controversial once Mason and Isawa started to argue. ⁸

Also, in his recollections of 'Mr. Mason', Konishi wrote: 'When he seemed to disagree with Mr. Isawa, the headmaster of the music school, Mr. Mason was in a bad mood. And his interpreter, Mr. Okakura and Miss Nakamura seemed to be troubled.'⁹

I would like you to look again at the picture in Figure 1 presented in this paper. Is it possible to consider that Okakura and Nakamura, who supported Mason, are on the left and right sides of the picture? In my research on Whistler, the first painter who gave

musical titles to his Japanese inspired paintings, it was by chance that I came across the Mason collection, which left a significant mark on Japanese music education. With the hope that materials will be found to complement the reasoning presented in this paper, I would like to ask for discussions and opinions from researchers in the fields of Japanese modern art history, history of music education, and others.

¹ LUTHER WHITING MASON COLLECTION, University of Maryland Special Collections in Performing Arts, University of Maryland.

² E.S. Morse, *Japan Day by Day*, translated by Kinichi Ishikawa, 3, Toyo Bunko, 179, 1971, pp. 55-56 (Chapter 19: Japan in 1882).

³ Kurahashi Sozo and Shinjo Yoshiko, *History of Japanese Kindergartens*, Toyo Tosho, 1934 (first edition). I referred a reprint of the 1980 reprint by Rinkawa Shoten.

⁴ This photograph also appears in Sondra Wieland Howe, *Luther Whiting Mason International Music Educator*, University of Kansas, 1997, p. 78, as part of the Mason Collection, however, the illustration is quite vague and it is hard to identify individuals. Howe claimed to have seen the Mason Collection, which is presented here by the author. However, it cannot be said that the collection was actually scrutinized carefully; therefore, it is not possible to obtain accurate information. Although this book is claimed to be a publication of his doctoral dissertation written in 1988, he relies solely on the English-language literature, and there is no indication that he has studied academic papers or primary sources on music education research in Japan.

⁵ Letter from Nobu Kōda to Mrs. Irish; June 30, 1890, 52 Austin St., Cambridge, Mass.

⁶ Osbourne McConathy, *Luther Whiting Mason and His Contribution to Music in the Schools of Three Countries*, an unpublished manuscript located in the MENC National Center, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland. The letter in reference 1 was written in Larry McGarrell's 'On the Music Education of Luther Whiting Mason: Background to Music Education in the Early Meiji Era' (M.A. Thesis, Tokyo University of the Arts, 1976), pp. 75-76, and was written by Rihei Nakamura in his

Trajectory of Western Music Adopters- An Introduction to the History of Japanese Modern Western Music, Tosuishobo, 1993, pp. 521-514. Rihei Nakamura has not seen the McConathy Papers and quotes from McGarrell's master's thesis. Reference 2 is not mentioned in any of the articles, but only in the McConathy Papers. There are several grammatical and other errors in the letters, but since the possibility that they may have occurred in the transcription of the McConathy Papers cannot be ruled out, I will not elaborate on them in this paper.

⁷ In the inventory, it is stated as Takamine Children: Hideichiro Takamine and Toshio Takamine. Inscription: "to Prof. L.W. Mason with Best Wishes"

⁸ Shinpachi Konishi, 'My Auditor's Time', in *Education of Children*, Japan Kindergarten Association, vol. 29 no. 1, 1929, p. 23.

⁹ Kurahashi Sozo and Shinjo Yoshiko, op.cit., p.283.