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2015 KYOTO LECTURES

Wednesday, June 17th, 18:00h

Alison Tokita

SPEAKER

Japanese Singers of Tales: Ten Centuries of Performed Narrative A Book Talk

In her recently published book *Japanese Singers of Tales: Ten Centuries of Performed Narrative* (Ashgate, 2015; SOAS Musicology Series), Alison Tokita presents a series of case studies that demonstrate the persistence of Japanese sung narratives in a multiplicity of genres over ten centuries, and the factors contributing to change in performance modes. Narratives such as the Heike and Soga cycles were continually re-told and recycled in different versions and formats over several centuries, serving to build a common identity over space (the geographical extent of 'Japan') and time (the enduring power of specific stories). There was a move away from oral narrative to text-based performance, and from a simple narrative situation with one performer to complex theatrical narratives with dancers, singers and other musicians. All the genres treated in the book—*kōshiki shōmyō*, *heike narrative*, *kōwaka*, *nō*, and many branches of *jōruri*—are still extant performance traditions. They are documented with substantial musical analysis and provide the basis for a new theory of musically delivered narratives in Japan.

Alison Tokita is Director of the Research Centre for Japanese Traditional Music at the Kyoto City University of Arts. After an extensive career in Japanese Studies at Monash University in Australia, she had appointments at the Tokyo Institute of Technology and Doshisha University, before taking up her current position. She is the co-editor of the *Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music* (2008), and has published widely on Japanese musical narratives. She is currently working on *naniwa-bushi* narrative, and on the piano and the art song as manifestations of musical modernity in East Asia in the colonial period.

This lecture will be held at the Institute for Research in Humanities (IRH), Kyoto University (seminar room 1, 1st floor).

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