

Teacher of traditional music is also a craftsman



KAREN CUBIE
Tervaki Hasegawa plays one of his flutes in his workshop.

sahiro Turie, a Chiba Prefecture English teacher. "They all memorize the strains of music, so it's rather difficult to teach."

The ohayashi music the students were learning is played on special drums and flutes. The large "odaiiko" drums are made of cowskin stretched over barrel-shaped wood. Students kneel before these and pound them with heavy wooden sticks. The smaller "sukeshime daiiko" drums are also made of cowskin stretched over wooden barrels. Students hit the edges of these drums with their palms, and play the center of the drums with their fingers.

The "shinobue" flute, a long, five-like bamboo instrument, is special to Hasegawa. In addition to teaching approximately 100 students, he is also a skilled wood craftsman. In his tiny countryside workshop, he carves both "shinobue" flutes, and special ceremonial wooden dragon or lion heads called "shishigashira."

"This is a traditional type of carving," Turie explained as Hasegawa and his students continued their concert. "His carving is permitted by the prefectural government of Chiba."

Shinobue flutes are not played only in ohayashi music. These instruments are also used in the traditional Japanese Noh and kabuki dramas.

Hasegawa's flutes are well-known by Japanese "shinobue" musicians. "One of Japan's most famous taiko to explain through our interpreter, Ma-

View from Japan

KAREN CUBIE



band, a group called 'kodou,' uses his flutes," Turie explained. "This group performs overseas often."

The class I visited often performs together for area festivals.

"Sometimes they walk to the shrine while playing," Hasegawa said through Turie. "The main festival, the Harvest Festival, is held in July or August of every year. They usually play at that time."

"This group is also asked to perform in other towns and cities in addition to festival times," he added.

These students, all between the ages of 9 and 14, have played for only three years.

"If adults try to learn the same things, it will take them almost ten years," Hasegawa said.

He shouted a low, guttural command, and another, more melancholy strain of music filled the room.

"This music shows 'wabi sabi,'" Turie explained as we listened. "This is the traditional feeling of the Japanese people toward nature, or life."

After the class was over, we followed Hasegawa to his small workshop. I stepped onto the raised wooden floor of the crowded hut, and tried to squeeze my body someplace between the blazing kotatsu (Japanese wood burning stove) and the pile of ferociously grinning white wooden heads.

Hasegawa, squatting comfortably across the room, began to tell Turie about his work.

"He doesn't use any special techniques, materials, or tools," Turie explained. "He uses regular woodcarving tools. All the carving is by hand."

I looked at the stacks of unfinished, white flutes on the shelves lining the walls.

"It takes about 10 days to make a flute," Turie translated. "He uses bamboo. The best bamboo is five years old, so he must cut the bamboo, and let it dry for five years before he makes the flute."

The flutes cost 6,000Y (about \$480 each), and the ferocious lion or dragon heads sell for 400,000Y (about \$3,200) each.

"They aren't bought by individuals, but by a temple, or a group of people," Hasegawa explained.

After he has finished carving a dragon or lion's head, Hasegawa sands it and paints it, usually in black, red, and gold. Then he applies coats of "unushi," a lacquer-like finish which creates a smooth,



A completed shishigashira Tervaki Hasegawa.

shiny surface.

While Hasegawa talked, he piece of wood and began to carve, though his workshop is tiny, it As he carves, he throws the shavings into the stove for heat.

As the interview drew to a close, Hasegawa presented me with a lo gawa presented me with a lo gawa presented me with a lo gawa presented me with a lo shop, and I stepped down and cold, rainy night.



Hasegawa feeds wood chips into a small stove in his workshop. Wood shavings from his carving keep the workshop warm.

Hasegawa's students perform an ohayashi number on flutes and drums. The students play without the use of a written score.

