

On Professor Robert Garfias

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Professor Robert Garfias was born in 1932 in San Francisco as a Mexican-American. After having studied anthropology and composition there, he moved to Los Angeles to study ethnomusicology at University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). This corresponded to the time in which ethnomusicology was rising in the USA. It was only one year after the establishment of the Society for ethnomusicology that Professor Garfias submitted in 1958 his MA thesis on Japanese music: the basic melody of the Togaku pieces of the Gagaku repertoire. In 1964 he completed his doctoral dissertation: the Togaku compositions of the Gagaku repertoire. This worked as a basis for his substantial book on *gagaku* (Garfias 1976).

In my opinion, his stay in Japan and his research method on *gagaku* seem to have characterized his later research in ethnomusicology. It could be summarized in the following three points: firstly, attitude to consider music without isolating it from its social context; secondly, attitude to warmly respect practical musicians; and thirdly attitude to acquire appropriate performance and language skills. Professor Garfias succeeded in obtaining these attitudes and combining them in his research.

For instance, his attitude to consider *gagaku* as dynamic process rather than as a fixed form derives from his respect towards *gagaku* musicians. It should be noted here: it was thanks to Professor Garfias that UCLA started *gagaku* course in proper curricula and succeed in inviting the late maestro TOGI Suenobu (the second awardee of the Koizumi prize) from the Imperial Household.

Later he moved to University of Washington in Seattle and promoted ethnomusicology. He opened not only *gagaku* class but also *ziuta (jiuta) sōkyoku* class in his university.

In this connection, it should be emphasized that Professor Garfias has shown incomparable linguistic abilities. First, he acquired a polite Japanese language. Following his research interest in other regions such as Okinawa, Korea, Burma (Myanmar), Rumania,

Portugal, Mozambique, etc., he continued to acquire those languages quickly. Thanks to his linguistic abilities, he evaluated activities of musicians in those regions and published his research result in the form of lucid papers and audio/visual documentation.

Professor Garfias has contributed to musicology in general in two ways. Firstly, through his own research he has demonstrated the well-balanced method for describing social context and music structure in various regions and returned his research results to the fields. Secondly, as administrator of the University of Washington and University of California Irvine, he established organizations for enhancing musicology and has been conducting them productively.

Regarding to his recent relationship to Japan, it should be mentioned that Japanese musicologists have profited a great deal from his stay in the National Museum for Ethnology as well as his book (Garfias 2004). I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Timothy Rice (UCLA), ex-colleague of Professor Robert Garfias in the University of Washington, who edited a Festschrift for Professor Garfias (Rice 2011).

References

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