Exploring the Life of Kasagi Shizuko Through NHK's *Asadora* (Morning Drama) "Boogie Woogie" (2023)

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NHK 連続テレビ小説「ブギウギ」(2023) を通じて笠置シヅ子の生涯を辿る

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In October 2023, NHK will release "Boogie Woogie," a new morning television drama (Asadora) based on the life of the pre-and post-war jazz singer and actress Kasagi Shizuko (1914 -1985). This series has been an important vehicle for educating a general television audience on the lives of relatively unknown Meiji, Taisho and Shōwa-era female pioneers for over six decades. The fictionalized story of Kasagi's life is expected to attract a domestic audience of close to twenty million as well as a significant number of non-Japanese viewers who are familiar with remakes of songs such as "Tokyo Boogie Woogie." In anticipation of its release, an effort is made to provide a detailed narrative and analysis of the woman known for cheering up Japanese society in the immediate post-war years through her jazz-influenced "boogie-woogie" songs. This is done by tracing her traumatic and dramatic life as a woman negotiating a variety of gender-based barriers including single motherhood and the death of her younger lover. Finally too, it explores her post-war sex-industry worker fans and her decision to retire from singing to focus on comedic acting following the rise of her teenage imitator, Misora Hibari in the early 1950s.

Key words: Kasagi Shizuko, Swing Jazz, boogie-woogie, Hattori Ryōichi, Shōchiku Gakugekidan, NHK Asadora

NHK は，2023 年後期の連続テレビ小説（いわゆる「朝ドラ」）として，戦前・戦後を通じてジャズシンガーおよび女優として活躍した笠置シヅ子（1914～1985）の生涯を題材にしたシリーズを放映する予定である。この「朝ドラ」により，明治・大正・昭和時代の 60 年以上に渡って，あまり知られることのなかった笠置シヅ子という先駆的女性の生涯が広く認知される重要な契機になると考えられる。その対象には，約 2000 万人にも及ぶとされる日本国内の朝ドラ視聴者だけでなく，「東京ブギウギ」という有名な曲を知る世界中の人々も含まれる。本稿は，ジャズの影響を受けた「ブギウギ」を通じて，ジェンダーに起因する様々な障壁を乗り越えつつ，戦後間もない日本社会を鼓舞し続けた笠置シズ子の生涯と功績を検討し，最終的に彼女の活躍が美空ひばりという戦後の大スターを生み出していったことを指摘する。

キーワード：笠置シヅ子，スイングジャズ，ブギウギ，服部良一，松竹楽劇団，NHK 朝ドラ

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In June 2022, NHK announced plans to make a *renzoku terebi shōsetsu* (serialized television novel) based on the life of jazz singer and actress Kasagi Shizuko (1914-1985). The *asadora* (morning drama), to be titled "Boogie Woogie" will be directed by Adachi Shin and feature music by Hattori Takayuki, the grandson of Hattori Ryōichi (1907-1993), the singer's principal mentor and songwriter. Kasagi (played by actress Mizutani Shuri), is renowned in Japanese popular culture history for her energetic performances of jazz-influenced "boogie-woogie" songs. Almost all of her best-selling songs were composed by the elder Hattori, whose fictional role will be played by Kusanagi Tsuyoshi of the pop group SMAP. These up-tempo jazz and pop tunes, legendary for "cheering up" the Japanese population in the devastation of the immediate post-war years, made Kasagi a household name. While only her most famous song "Tokyo Boogie Woogie" is known by a younger demographic today, largely through cover versions, her life and career are familiar to most of the demographic—a largely female one—that has been the core audience for *asadora* since its inception in 1961. In its first two decades, NHK's *asadora* acquired considerable popular culture prominence, stimulating breakfast-time family gatherings around millions of television sets nationwide. This was especially the case in the late 1960s following the success of *Ohana-han* (1966-67), a drama that attracted over half of the overall television audience, with average ratings hovering around forty percent in the following two decades (Harvey 1995: 82). In more recent years the drama's target demographic has narrowed to an older one and functions largely as a nostalgic vehicle for projecting an ideal image of Japanese social progress and cultural life built around what Buwak Respati describes as "female-centered stories within a specific regional and historical context" (2022: 2).

Promotional Scenes from NHK's "Boogie Woogie" featuring Mizutani Shuri and Kusanagi Tsuyoshi

Asadora narratives have generally been set in the early- or mid-Shōwa era and typically see the heroine moving from a rural town to either Tokyo or Osaka to pursue a dream, often against the backdrop of war and occupation (Masuda 2019: 130, 139). In most cases, this dream is achieved while still preserving the protagonist's country roots and loyalty to the *furusato* (hometown) values of kindness, modesty, self-sacrifice, filial piety and the human heart (Respati 2022: 6). In recent *asadora,* the reluctant protagonist is more often than not a young woman from a complex or difficult background who, inspired by seminal events as well as fateful

encounters with mentors (usually men), chooses a difficult career path, not unlike those of the female characters in George Eliot's "Middlemarch" and Charles Dickens's "Little Dorrit" (Harvey 1995: 83). This journey, often full of "grief and privation," is perhaps best embodied by the character of *Oshin* (1983-84), the ambitious and resilient female protagonist created by screenwriter Hashida Sugako whose story became an international success. In this drama, one that Paul Harvey characterizes as "innovative with regard to women's roles," the heroine is involved in a "negotiating and twisting [of] Japanese core values." Harvey further argues that this resonates with the core female viewers' own efforts to balance the conflicting demands of today's independent woman in a society still underpinned by patriarchal characteristics (89-90). It seems certain, given this template, that the choices taken by Kasagi in "Boogie Woogie" will, like those of *Oshin,* compel her to show a similar level of perseverance and patience when confronting the challenges of the war compounded by classism, sickness, death and the barriers to fulfillment and happiness raised by old-fashioned gender norms. Such tropes, explored here as part of an academic assessment of her career, are certain to be a key feature of Kasagi's story.

The inclination of the *asadora* producers to elevate the lives of what are often relatively obscure women from small-town Meiji, Taisho, and early Shōwa, and bring them to a national audience raises several questions about authenticity and the writing of history. Is history entertainment? To what degree are narrative techniques such as the conflation of events, anachronistic imputation of contemporary attitudes to historical personages, and exaggeration of the importance of certain individuals acceptable? Where do we draw the line between fiction and history? Is history as entertainment more acceptable if it results in an expanded interest in the profession and its products among the general public? Robert Rosenstone has pointed out that most people in contemporary society get their history from movies and TV rather than from any kind of reading or study (2012). Japan, with its long tradition of the larger-than-life *jidaigeki* (Edo-period historical drama) genre that has been a key component of Japanese entertainment since the inception of television drama in the early 1960s, is certainly a case in point. Indeed, like the *jidaigeki,* every *asadora* contains frequent historical conflations, inaccuracies, simplifications, exaggerations and embellishments, while ahistorical representations and mannerisms are a basic part of its approach to making history accessible to a contemporary audience. At the same time, however, by ritually watching these epic dramas every morning, the audience of well over ten million is offered a "view of national history from the perspective of women" that cannot be found elsewhere in Japanese popular culture entertainment (Scherer & Thelen 2020: 10). Given this, its role as perhaps Japan's most widely watched source of contemporary history should be the backdrop to any critical examination of the actual life of one of the major protagonists.

This is certainly the case for the upcoming drama on the life of Kasagi, a young woman from a poor Osaka family born out of wedlock. This singer-dancer-actress not only transcended

gender norms by working as a stage performer in Tokyo's entertainment districts but introduced a jazz-based singing and performance style that wartime authorities considered to be a potential threat to the evolving new national policy for music and dance. That this female artist then had a child out of wedlock with the dying son of a wealthy entertainment impresario, came close to losing her career during the war, and finally, under the tutelage of Japan's leading pre-war composer, made an emotional comeback to become one of the greatest popular cultural representatives of Japan's post-war revival, is surely the epitome of a drama with wide gender-based appeal. As such, understanding the real story of this extraordinary woman can open a window into the many ways that NHK has effectively acted as a historical custodian, providing viewers with an interpretation of how modern-day Japanese culture and values were created in the crucible of the twentieth century's key events and conflicts.

Asadora as Female Entertainment Genre and Hometown Nostalgia

Although the first two decades of *asadora* productions appealed to a demographic somewhat younger than the current core audience, the majority of these fictionalized and romanticized historical dramas were generally aimed at a middle-aged female audience, especially housewives (Nihei 2020: 10). In more recent years, however, NHK, which is officially charged with promoting regional diversity and the preservation of Japan's past culture, also devises them to provide a source of pride for residents of the towns and prefectures from which the main figures emerged (NHK Standards for Domestic Programs 1998). Indeed, those local governments with scenes set in their regions, have often capitalized on *furusato* (hometown) nostalgia-based tourism (Respati 2022: 3-6). In the case of the upcoming Kasagi drama, the settings are rural Kagawa prefecture, the vibrant theater districts of pre-war Osaka and the world of immediate post-war Tokyo's entertainment districts. These locations and the role of *asadora* in both popularizing and at times distorting Japan's actual entertainment history, are part of the exploration of Kasagi's life that follows. Her personal story here will provide both Japanese and non-Japanese viewers of the drama with the background needed to assess the drama's veracity as well as its ability to convey the complex cultural, social, and sexual upheaval that her twenty-five-year entertainment career embodied.

As Scherer has noted, many *asadora* heroines are based on actual historical personalities. The life stories of these women, however, were in many cases unknown outside of a few historians or enthusiasts before their broadcast (2019: 105). In some cases, these women's historical anonymity can be attributed to the fact that, like many of their generation, their extraordinary efforts and activities were conducted, behind the scenes, in line with societal expectations of deference to husbands and sons. In other cases, the reason for their obscurity parallels those of long-ignored or underrated western women working in the arts in the 1930s and 1940s, such as American actress Hedy Lamar, screenwriter Frances Marion and R&B musician Sister Rosetta. The achievements of these and several other neglected western women

entertainment pioneers have only very recently been reassessed by American historians and documentary filmmakers. To a considerable degree, *asadora* can be seen as Japan's own version of the ongoing process of reassessing the contribution of unrecognized but extraordinary women to history.

Among the women with some connection to the world of art, fashion, and entertainment during the early to mid-Shōwa years that *asadora* have brought from obscurity to national attention are singer Satō Chiyako (*Ichibanboshi,* 1977); Asakusa actress Sawamura Sadako (*Otei-chan* 1978); screenwriter Oishi Shizuka (*Odori,* 2000); actresses Nakanishi Yuriko (*Teruteru Kazoku,* 2003) and Naniwa Chieko (*Ochoyan* 2021); dressmaker-designer Koshino Ayako (*Carnation,* 2011) and entertainment-company-owner Yoshimoto Sei (*Warotenka,* 2017) (NHK Archives n.d; Niehei et al 2020: 151-58). The somewhat formulaic manner in which the lives of these early Shōwa entertainment pioneers were portrayed in their respective *asadoras* can safely be relied on as a predictor of the ways in which the screenwriter and director will attempt to balance the fact and fiction surrounding Kasagi Shizuko's difficult but compelling life story. Unlike the earlier figures, however, none of whom have any significant number of followers or academic biographers, Kasagi's life has long attracted some degree of interest from journalists and Shōwa entertainment fans and bloggers. As such, it seems highly likely that the inevitable licenses taken by the fictionalized Boogie Woogie will invite considerable comment and controversy on issues related to the veracity and accuracy with which certain key events in her life are portrayed. For this reason, as well as to consolidate existing scholarship in English, a detailed narrative of her life based on a wide range of Japanese primary and secondary sources is presented below, followed by a discussion of how the events described might feature in the *asadora.*

Theater Musical *Waga Uta Boogie Woogie*, 1993

Theater Musical *Tokyo Boogie Woogie*, 2019

NHK Morning Drama (*asadora*) *Boogie Boogie,* Fall 2023

From Orphan to Dance Troupe Entertainer: Exploring the Complexities of Kasagi Shizuko's Early Life and Career

Unlike many *asadora* heroines, Kasagi Shizuko enjoys some level of name recognition outside of the baby boom generation. This is largely due to NHK's musical "Waga Uta Boogie

Woogie" (1987) about the artist, which has been produced several times, as well as cover versions of "Tokyo Boogie Woogie" by contemporary singers (Chidorin Diary 2022). Kasagi is also regularly mentioned in popular articles about post-war Japan and has many social media fans. Despite this, relatively little serious writing has been done in either Japanese or English on Kasagi's overall contribution to Japanese popular culture. Among the three scholars whose English language work informs this contribution, only Hosokawa (2007) deals at any length with her pre-war career. However, while his work provides a detailed analysis of her vocal prowess, especially her scat singing innovations, energetic dancing, and ability to transform Hattori Ryōichi's melodies to capture the swinging sound of 1930s African American jazz, it does not deal much with personal matters and the ways in which these shaped her career. This is true too of popular music and post-war film scholars Bourdaghs (2012), Shamoon (2014) and Nagahara (2017), all of whom not surprisingly focus on her immediate post-war role as a symbol of the aspirations of ordinary Japanese during the Occupation. Bourdaghs' essay on her live performance gives attention to her "celebration of the deliverance of female sexuality from wartime state regulation" and mentions in passing, her popularity with post-war *panpan* sex workers (35) while Shamoon emphasizes her "exotic, Westernized, sexualized body and her successful "imitation of American musical forms (118) and Nagahara her unambiguously American sound (2017: 153). In contrast with western scholarship, Kasagi's career has been examined by Japanese scholars largely in terms of the inspirational impact of her most popular songs and movies as well as her influence on the career of Misora Hibari (Shimada 2010; Wajima 2020, 2023a; Satō 2023). Surprisingly, few western or Japanese academics, however, have made full use of Sakoguchi Sanae's 2010 biography. The only detailed study of her personal life and the many tragedies that she endured as a symbol of post-war recovery until the release of the *asadora* itself, this work is an important secondary source for the narrative presented below.

Born Kamei Shizuko in August 1914 in rural Kagawa, Shikoku, Kasagi was the illegitimate daughter of the seventeen-year-old heir to a landowning family. Her complex life began with her adoption by Kamei Ume, a friend of her teenage mother living in Osaka, a decision that was apparently the result of her own mother's inability to produce breastmilk. Despite the circumstance of her adoption, the young Shizuko would experience a warm upbringing and was a favorite of customers in her parents' public bathhouse, often performing for them on a makeshift stage in the dressing room and taking traditional dance lessons. An accomplished dancer by the time of her graduation from elementary school, she would audition for the upscale Takarazuka Opera, an organization that promoted itself as a training school in the arts for middle-class girls with a good family background. Despite passing all of the entrance tests, however, she was rejected because of her diminutive size. Undeterred and with support from her adoptive family, who having already lost several children, put much of their energy into Shizuko, she would talk her way into a trainee position in the Dotonbori

Shōchikuza Theater, home of the Shōchiku gakugeki-bu seito yōsei-sho (Shochiku Music and Drama Club). The latter while still developing its approach to modern dance and song-based entertainment, had already begun to consolidate itself as the south Osakan, lower-middle class rival to the north-based elite Takarazuka troupe (Sakoguchi 2010: 23-24; Wajima 2023a 70-72: Bugiugi arasuji to netabare 2013).

In August 1928, under the stage name Mikasa Shizuko the talented fourteen-year-old was given the chance to appear on stage with the newly formed Asakusa (Tokyo) branch of the dance troupe, Shochiku Shōjo Kagekidan (SSK). Here she met and made friends with the then thirteen-year-old Mizunoe Takiko (1915-2009), a new SSK recruit who went on to become arguably the single most well-known female entertainer of 1930s Japan, and someone to whom Kasagi is often compared in terms of her role as a popular culture icon (Sakoguchi 2010: 23-26). These relatively smooth and pleasant teenage years would be interrupted in 1931, however, by the first of what would be many difficult moments in her life. Attending a memorial service for family members in Kagawa, the now seventeen-year-old trainee would overhear a secret conversation that partially uncovered the story of her adoption. She would be further traumatized by an unexpected meeting with her birth mother in which the latter would choose not to acknowledge her daughter (BizConsul 2022). This harrowing and formative experience seems certain to be at the center of Boogie Woogie, given that maximizing family breakup-related pathos and sentimentality is a recurring trope in *asadora.*

As with past *asadora,* "Boogie Woogie" will feature several semi-fictionalized characters that allow for female friendships to take center stage in many scenes of everyday life. These will include characters that match the accomplished ballet dancer Asuka Akiko (1907-37), and the troupe's two leading *otokoyaku* (male imitators) Mizusa Asa ("Arthur") and Kashiwa Harue. Together with Kasagi, these three women were among several colleagues who would participate in the so-called the *momoiro sōgi* (Pink Dispute), a strike for better working conditions organized in July 1933 by the members of SSK in Asakusa. The solidarity action by the Osaka branch would include a dramatic late-night train ride led by Asuka Akiko to the sacred Mt. Koya in Wakayama. On arrival, the troupe members barricaded themselves for ten days in the well-known *Kongobuji* Shingon temple and appealed for support from the priests (Mizunoe 1983: 154-55 Suzumodern blog 2016: Bugiugi arasuji to netabare 2023). While this action—one obviously well-suited for television drama—did help bring about an improvement in the low pay of the still mostly teenage "students," it also triggered a slump in the troupe's fortunes leading to a reorganization under the name Osaka Shōchiku Shōjo Kagekidan (OSSK). The subsequent reinvention of the troupe, in part a response to the transformation of the Tokyo-based movie industry triggered by talkie technology, would coincide with changes in the business model adopted by the larger Shōchiku organization. For both OSSK and SSK, this would entail a shift away from the previous template of mixing western and *naniwabushi*-type traditional dance and singing styles. The new approach would adopt a much more Americanized

delivery built around exuberant tap dance routines, jazz-influenced songs and a focus on individual stars. This evolution clearly suited Kasagi's developing vocal style and on-stage performance persona and by late 1933, she was ranked among the top ten stars of OSSK, participating in the troupe's popular "Autumn Dance." A year later she made her first ever recording for Columbia Records of a foxtrot-styled song "Koi no tōgemichi" (Step of Love). The song would be used as the theme tune of a production entitled "Cahiers d'Amour" at the newly opened *Daigeki* (Osaka Grand Theater) (Wajima 2023b: 38-40; Bugiugi arasuji to netabare 2023) While a good showcase for her voice, the performance did not yet suggest that the singer had a talent that was significantly different from other rising OSSK artists. Indeed, Kasagi remained largely unknown during the mid-1930s, with the modern female vocalist hierarchy headed by nisei jazz singer and tap dancer Alice Kawahata (1916-2007) known as the Asian Josephine Baker (Murphy 2022: 170-87), SSK's tango specialist Edogawa Ranko (1913-1990) and the classically trained Awaya Noriko (1907-1999). The latter in particular would be associated with Hattori melodies during these years, most notably *Wakare no Burūsu* (Farewell Blues) in 1937 (Segawa 1983: 262; KJ's Book and Music Blog 2018).

Honing her vocal style, with help from OSSK director Matsumoto Shiro alongside *otokoyaku* tap dancing star Akizuki Emiko (1917-2002) and *onnayaku* ballet (and tap) specialist Ashihara Chizuko (1919-2009), Kasagi's big break finally came in April 1938. The singer was selected along with her OSSK co-stars to join the Shōchiku Gakugekidan (SGD), a new and well-funded experimental male-female variety theater troupe under the musical direction of Kami Kyosuke (1902-1981), a U.S-trained jazz intellectual and the leading composer of soundtracks for the P.C.L movie studios (Sakoguchi 2010: 27-8; Chiorin Diary 2023; Wajima 2023a: 72). This pioneering and carefully assembled group of theater directors, choreographers and artists, headed by Otani Hiroshi (the son of the Shochiku founder Otani Takejiro), would even have its own fan magazine, aimed at a middle-class audience (Segawa 1983 270; Bugiugi arasuji to netabare 2023). Under Otani's leadership, SGD would target the upscale Ginza-Marunouchi audience, a demographic that was known to favor Takarazuka's high-class entertainment vehicles. This would be done in the comfort of the spectacular new Imperial Theater through a combination of comic sketches and parodies of western movies, as well as line, tap and solo dance routines, all in meticulous and lavish costumes. The performances would then be followed by an American movie, often a musical, from which the dance routines had already been borrowed. In addition to the OSSK recruits, and the so-called Osaka Rocket Girls, SGD brought into its fold, the accomplished American nisei jazz singers Miyagawa Harumi (1914-92) and Betty Inada (1913-2001). These two women added an exotic element to a new entertainment model that was seen by parent company Shōchiku as a vehicle to compete with rival Takarazuka's own new upscale theater. Also in its sight was the growing movie audience at Toho's Nichigeki, a venue that from 1936, boasted the exuberant Nishigeki Dancing Team (Tsukahara 2006a; Kawatake n.d; Satō 2014; Segawa 1983: 267-72; Hosokawa 2005: 20-

21).

During rehearsals, Kami became convinced that Akizuki's unmatched tap-dancing skills, under the direction of U.S-trained dancer Nakagawa Saburo, could be a key to the success of the troupe. By contrast, his newly appointed assistant, Columbia-affiliated Hattori Ryōichi, recently returned from Manchuria, and with a wealth of experience honed in the jazz halls of Kobe and Nishinomiya (Hyogo prefecture) in the early 1930s, was on the lookout for a new vehicle for his musical ideas (Wajima 2023b: 67-68). According to his account, Hattori was taken aback by the way in which the sickly-looking Kasagi transformed herself once on stage. Wearing high heels and 3-centimeter false eyelashes, the diminutive Kansai-accented singer showcased an energetic and untamed dancing style fused with skills honed in the tough world of Osaka's entertainment business. These, as well as her unique rhythmic phrasing, marked her as a potential vehicle for Hattori's interest in incorporating elements of the swing jazz style, especially that of big band conductor and orchestrator Cab Calloway, that had swept the United States two years earlier (Hosokawa 2005: 21; Tsukahara 2006a; Tsukahara 2006b; Sakoguchi 2010: 30-31; Wajima 2023b: 105-106).

Late in 1938, Kami left SGD leaving Hattori with the final say in the artistic direction of the variety troupe. His favor created the conditions for Kasagi's emergence as one of the leading vocalists of pre-war Japan and the personification of so-called "Hot Jazz." Hattori, who also grew up in downtown Osaka, was particularly impressed by Kasagi's ability to project her powerful spontaneous vocals and enunciate vowels in a manner that echoed elements of the offbeat swinging style of African American jazz vocalists Ivie Anderson and Maxine Sullivan. Other possible influences on his arrangements and her style were the songs of the two leading white singers of the late 1930s, comedic actresses Martha Raye and Alice Faye and the half Native-American "Mrs Swing," Mildred Bailey (Hosokawa 2007: 159, 168: Wajima 2023b 120-27). Both Sullivan and Raye had broken through to a mass American audience in movie performances and by 1939 had become familiar and much admired by Japanese jazz aficionados and moviegoers. The critics among these enthusiasts, most notably Futaba Jusaburo, showered Kasagi's first-ever overtly scat-style performance of a new Hattori composition "Rappa to Musume" (Trumpet and a Girl), with unrestrained praise for its embodiment of call and response "swing." The song, composed and arranged in what Wajima considers to be something akin to a "jump blues" style, was featured in the SGD musical Green Shadow in July 1939 (Wajima 2023b 135-36). The performance saw Kasagi taking on the role of the daughter of an African American trumpeter in what was a clear homage to Marsha Raye's lightly corked character in the 1937 film "Artists and Models" featuring Louis Armstrong. Kasagi's compelling performance of the song, an expression of what Hosokawa describes as her "internalization of jazz rhythms," resulted in the entertainment magazine *Star* dubbing the singer the "Queen of Swing" while critic Shimizu Shunji chose instead to label her as a *tōchi* (torch singer) in part because of her deft use of the microphone (Hosokawa 2005, 24-25; Satō

2014; Wajima 2023b: 113, 124). With SKD's Mizunoe Takiko, arguably the most well-known female entertainer in Japan, away on a lengthy U.S visit in mid 1939, Kasagi would now find herself elevated by the media to the upper echelons of Tokyo's ever-changing entertainment world. It would also lead to her being awarded an unusually high salary of two hundred yen. Of this, however, the singer kept only thirty yen for her spartan lifestyle, sending the rest to her parents and relatives, an example of filial devotion that seems tailor-made for the drama's screenplay (Sakoguchi 2010: 32-34; Satō 2014; Shibuki 2022: 16-17).

Kasagi's performances led to a brief appearance in Makino Masahiro's 1938 comedy movie *Yajikita tairiku dōchū* (Yaji and Kita's Continental Road) which poked fun at a famous 1920s Kabuki comedy along with appearance in several other operettas and music shows (BizConsul 2022). The most notable of these, "Jazz Star" was directed by Hattori collaborator Omachi Tatsuo and saw Kasagi take center stage with the band arranged around her. Sensing the moment of her ascent to a unique status among contemporary singers, Hattori arranged an exclusive contract for his protege with Nippon Columbia, and in late 1939 cut a recording of "Rappa to Musume" with the Columbia Jazz Orchestra featuring P.C.L trumpeter Saito Hiroyoshi and an additional eight brass players (Kawatake nd; Sakoguchi 2010: 33). Released in early 1940, the song is recognized today as a seminal musical event in Japanese recorded music history and has been much covered by contemporary artists. As such, this recording (and perhaps too, the follow-ups later in the year, "Sentimental Dinah" "St Louis Blues," "Penny Serenade," and "Hot China"), can be expected to feature prominently in the *asadora.* Hattori, meanwhile, increasingly aware of just how uniquely talented and charismatic Kasagi could be, while still writing for other artists including Awaya and male vocalist Kirishima Noboru, made a risky commitment to her future career and development even as the political situation threatened to derail the trajectory of both of their careers (Hosokawa 2007: 169-70: Sakoguchi 2010: 32-33).

Osaka Shōchiku Shōjo Kagekidan under the name Mikasa Shizuko (middle) ca. 1933

Osaka Shōchiku Shōjo Kagekidan, 1936

Feature on SKG in *Weekly Asahi*, December 1939

Love and Acceptance in a Time of War: Yoshimoto Eisuke, *Panpan* Fandom and the Power of Single Motherhood

Although able to ignore the growing government clampdown on entertainment until mid-1940, the very fact that SDG was a mixed-gender outfit built on creative variations of American movie and musical culture, ensured that the troupe in general, and Kasagi's energetic performance style in particular, would come to the attention of the authorities. In mid-1940, with SDG downsizing into a smaller theater, Kasagi found herself called into the local police station on a directive from military authorities. Here she was instructed to stay within ninety centimeters of the microphone and maintain an upright stance when performing (Sakoguchi 2010: 39-40). While not alone in being scrutinized by authorities, most of the other entertainers forced into making some changes in their stage personas were those using western names such as the crooner Dick Mine, The Milk Brothers, and nisei singer Betty Inada (Atkins 2001: 151). Within less than a year, a period in which she would shift away from jazz into comedic pop songs, the atmosphere in the show business world would deteriorate further when several well-known cross-dressing *otokoyaku* stars of the racy girl's "opera" troupe Shōchiku Shōjo Kagekidan (SKD) including Mizunoe Takiko and Kawaji Ryūko, were told to abandon their overtly male performing personas. In January 1941, with dance halls already closed and even coffee houses under scrutiny, SDG disbanded. In response, Kasagi worked to set up her own small combo under trombonist Nakazawa Hisashi ("Kasagi Shizuko and Her Orchestra") and attempted to make a living performing mostly traditional Japanese folk songs in movie theaters or small venues, often in Osaka (Sakoguchi 2010: 40-42).

Unlike her slightly older contemporaries, music school graduates and chanson singers Awaya Noriko, Watanabe Hamako (1910-1999) and Futaba Akiko (1915-2011), Kasagi would find herself effectively downgraded by the Japan Music Culture Association (Dai nippon ongaku bunka kyōkai). Formed in 1941 under the influence of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, the committee consisted of composers and musicians charged with developing a national light music (*keiongaku*) distinct from western genres or those designated as the enemy's cultural expression. This de-westernized, deracinated and melody-focused instrumental version of "jazz" was utilized to support the war effort and to provide comfort for wounded soldiers (Atkins 2001: 129, 140-144). Ultimately, almost every pre-war entertainer, regardless of their actual feelings about this directive, participated in one form or another, with Hattori joining a who's who of actors, musicians and comedians in the making of the music and song-based troop entertainment movie *Ongaku Daishingun* (Music March) in early 1943. The movie featured an early boogie-style song by Otani Rinko that the composer worked on while in Shanghai (Satō 2014; Satō 2021).

In 1942 Kasagi, now under contract with Toho, recorded a Hattori-Fujiura Ko composition "Aire Kawaiiya" written in the so-called *nanpō kayō* (southern song) style that was considered

acceptable by censors (Tsukahara 2006a: Satō 2014). The unreleased piece, which contained elements of Cuban rhythms, proved to be her final recording of the war and in the following year, despite the occasional theater performance of Southern songs, the singer found herself stuck in yet another unmotivating tour of munitions factories (Sakoguchi 2010: 47; Wajima 2023b: 155). In June 1943, however, the twenty-eight-year-old's life was transformed by a chance meeting in Nagoya with Yoshimoto Eisuke, a nineteen-year Waseda University student and the oldest son of Yoshimoto Sei, the widowed wife of the founder of the Osaka-based Yoshimoto Kōgyō entertainment agency. Despite a nine-year age gap − Eisuke was an enthusiastic fan of the singer − the unlikely pair fell in love and attempted to find some comfort in each other in the dark times of 1944-45. They faced strong opposition, however, from Sei, a major figure in the Kansai entertainment industry, and this conflict also seems ripe for dramatic explolation.

In August 1945, with both of their homes in Tokyo destroyed by firebombs, the couple were finally able to live together in a room found by Eisuke's uncle, Hayashi Hirotaka (the future president of Yoshimoto Kōgyō) in the same building as Hattori. Despite the extreme harshness of everyday life in 1945-46, the six months they lived together were perhaps the happiest time in Kasagi's life. Eisuke dropped out of Waseda University to work under Hayashi and helped Kasagi to reactivate her career under a new manager, Yamauchi Yoshi (Sakoguchi 2010: 49-51; Excite News 2018). Just three months into the Occupation she appeared with Takarazuka actress Todoroki Yukiko and Hawaiian-born musician-actor Haida Katsuhiko in the first large-scale post-war musical event ("Highlight") at the Nichigeki theater (Sakoguchi 2010: 67; Bourdaghs 2012: 30-31; Satō 2014). Living freely and in the moment for perhaps the first time in her life, she found herself pregnant in October 1946. However, just as they were contemplating marriage and Kasagi's retirement from show business, the couple's happiness was abruptly cut short. Eisuke, suffering like many at the time from tuberculosis, was forced to leave Tokyo in early January to recuperate in his mother's house. With her pregnancy now visible, Kasagi announced to Hattori that her re-recordings of "Sentimental Dinah" and "Aire Kawaii" for Columbia and upcoming appearance as the star of his newly written symphonic jazz-style musical operetta "Jazz Carmen" in February 1947 would be her last. While perhaps not planning to fully retire, she made it clear that she would stop working at least until the birth of her child. While no photos of these legendary performances exist, Kasagi wore a skirt and shawl to hide her condition from the audience, a scene which is another obvious candidate for the *asadora.* Four months later and just weeks before the delivery of her daughter, her world collapsed on news of Eisuke's death (Sakoguchi 2010: 68-70: Satō 2014; Satō Tsuyoshi 2020).

Despite the tragic news, the birth of her daughter and the support of not only Hattori but Hayashi, (who brought news of Eisuke's choice of names for his child before his death), proved to be a watershed moment in both her personal and public career. As an adoptee unacknowledged by her own mother, Kasagi informed her closest friends that she would raise

her daughter (Eiko) as a single mother despite an offer of adoption from Eisuke's mother. This decision, symbolized by her frequent appearance on stage with her baby daughter, led to an outpouring of support from fans, including, many in the so-called *panpan* sex worker community of Yūrakuchō, Tokyo (Ichikawa 2009: 58-59; Wajima 2023b 208-11). These women were informally led by nineteen-year-old "Rakucho no Otoki" a flamboyant *panpan* made famous by an NHK broadcast in April 1947 (Dower 2000: 123-24; Yabunirami Blog 2021) who was befriended by Kasagi. Many *panpan,* it seems likely, saw commonalities in Kasagi's experience and resilience and would attend her performances, often, according to Hattori, bringing flowers to the stage and effectively acting as an informal fandom (Sakoguchi 2010: 94-98). Within a year of her tragic loss, Kasagi, who openly gave her support to sex worker rehabilitation centers, emerged as the voice of hope for not only these women of the night but for hundreds of thousands of war widows, abandoned and orphaned teenagers, elder sisters taking care of siblings and many others struggling to cope with a world of shortages, black markets, disease and daily humiliations (Kawaguchi 1996: 51). Her status with this demographic, especially the *panpan,* was in stark contrast to that of the more diva-like pre-war recording artists, most notably Awaya Noriko, Watanabe Hamako and Mizunoe Takiko all of whom indicated their unwillingness to be associated with any song or musical vehicle that acknowledged the plight of the *panpan* or that hinted of *kasutori*-inspired sexuality (Takai 2016: 18). Indeed Awaya, who had sung Hattori's songs before the war, pointedly turned down the song "Hoshi no Nagare ni" (In the Flow of the Stars), an orphaned woman's lament for being forced into prostitution that became a favorite of the *panpan* when recorded by Kikuchi Akiko. The movingly constructed lyrics by Shimizu Minoru were written after the poet read a letter in the Mainichi newspaper sent in by a young, orphaned woman left with no choice but to work on the streets. Sung in a style that echoed that of Marlene Dietrich's "Lily Marlene," the oft-covered song came to embody precisely the opposite sentiment of Kasagi's optimistic boogie-woogie songs (Nishiyama 2022; Ichikawa 2009: 62-63).

With daughter Eiko,
late 1947

With daughter Eiko,
August 1951

Kasagi Eiko with mother's dress
from *Haru no Kyōen,* July 2018

With strong support from the most disadvantaged sectors of immediate post-war urban Japan, Kasagi rebuilt her life and became the voice of Hattori's dream of a musical expression built around a combination of symphonic and swing jazz fused with opera that could contribute

to Japan's spiritual revival (Wajima 2023b: 186). This "democratic" urge on the part of the artist to support the country's most vulnerable and outcast will likely provide NHK with an opportunity to showcase the idea that the immediate post-war years involved a rejection of the hierarchical, status-based society that is widely blamed for the rise of militarism. Meanwhile, now free from wartime restrictions and full of creative energy after a year in Shanghai and two years in which he composed numerous patriotic songs (Atkins 2001: 157), Hattori worked tirelessly to provide his muse with an outpouring of jazz-infused compositions that in combination with her vocal delivery, vibrant dance style, and modest but optimistic demeanor, perfectly matched the country's mood. Her performances and the reaction to them, especially by young women, also gave Kasagi the means with which to cope with her personal grief and achieve an unprecedented status as a single mother who embodied the post-war tenacity, resolution, and fortitude of women of her generation.

Beyond Boogie Woogie: Kasagi as Occupied Japan's Popular Culture Icon

The story behind Kasagi's "Tokyo Boogie Woogie," a song said to embody an optimistic brightness amid the ruins, has attained legendary status in Japanese popular culture. Most accounts detail Hattori's experimentation with rhythm after hearing the Andrews Sisters' "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" while in Shanghai composing music as part of the war effort (Tsukahara 2006a). Others focus on how the rhythm came to him while riding a train in Tokyo and his dream of brightening not only Kasagi's mood but the gloominess of early Occupation Japan (Satō Tsuyoshi 2020; Sakoguchi 2010: 79). This was done by fashioning an optimistic new musical movement that was the anthesis of the dark blues songs of pre-war Japan, epitomized by some of his own pre-war compositions for Awaya Noriko. "Tokyo Boogie Woogie" was recorded in late August 1947 with the Columbia Orchestra in front of a crowd of enthusiastic GIs who had been invited to the recording by the English-speaking lyricist Suzuki Masaru (Sakoguchi 2010: 80-81; Wajima 2023b: 190-94). It was then performed by Kasagi in September at a concert at the Umeda Theater in Osaka and in the Nichigeki musical "Odoru Manga Festival: Urashima Futari Ryugu-e Go." This was followed by its use in the movie *Haru no Kyōen* (Spring Feast) (dir. Yamamoto Kajirō), featuring the popular Nichigeki Dancing Team (Satō 2014; Yabunirama 2021). The recording itself was released by Columbia in January 1948 and became a major hit following its adoption by NHK radio in March. Already seen by many as the voice of emotional resilience, perseverance, and hope in occupied Japan, Kasagi's status would only grow with the almost simultaneous appearance of her riveting and "animal-like" performance of the earlier Hattori song "Jungle Boogie" in Kurosawa Akira's *Yoidore Tenshi* (Drunken Angel). Released in April 1948, her performance in a spaghetti-strapped dress and feathered headdress that echoed that of Josephine Baker from two decades earlier, seems certain to feature as one of the key musical moments in the second half of the *asadora* (Tsukahara 2006a; Hosokawa 2007: 160; Shimada 2010: 14; Wajima 2023b: 201).

Kasagi's role in this Kurosawa movie classic has been the subject of both musicological and socio-cultural analysis by Bourdaghs, Shamoon, and Nagahara, all three of whom emphasize the physical liberation and female sexual desire aspects of her performance and persona (Bourdaghs 2012: 31-35; Shamoon 2014: 117-118; Nagahara 2017: 153-57). Bourdaghs also notes that Kasagi was not afraid to assert herself, going as far as to request that Hattori tone down the sexual innuendo of Kurosawa's original lyrics for "Janguru bugi" (Jungle Boogie). Both scholars give deserved attention to the way in which *Yoidore Tenshi* presents the complex, sensitive, and oft-censored topic of the *panpan* sex workers' dilemmas. This ultimately unavoidable subject, a byproduct of the massive scale and length of the military occupation, is also the indirect theme of November 1947's "Sekohan Musume" (Secondhand Daughter). This Hattori song, with ingenious lyrics penned by Yuki Yujiro, sees the singer lament that her kimono, handbag, high heels, and even her lover are all secondhand castoffs obtained from the PX stores of GHQ and by implication acquired through a relationship with a GI (Tsukahara 2006a). The *panpan* theme is of course front and center in Shima Kōji's *Ginza kankan musume* (Ginza Kankan Girl) released in August 1949 with Kasagi singing and acting alongside the leading young actress of the era, Takamine Hideko (1924-2010). The two performers play the role of good-hearted impoverished orphans who, aspiring to be genuine artists, are persuaded by their humorous giant-like friend played by Kishii Akira (1910-1965) to earn money as cabaret singers, precisely the dubious environment of the *panpan* girls, gangsters and other members of the nighttime *kasutori* world of alcohol, crime, and sex. Show business legend has it that when asked by Kasagi and Takamine what the word "kankan," an obvious replacement for *panpan,* actually meant, director Kōji claimed not to know. This anecdote matches Shamoon's reading of the song's "light-hearted, innocent delivery" that when combined with Hattori's "upbeat, cheery melody" acts to soften the "references to prostitution in the lyrics" by Saeki Takao. By so doing, the film effectively tames "the erotic aspects of *kasutori* culture" and leaves both Kasagi (and Takamine) untainted by hints of sexuality in their roles, despite Kasagi's known friendship with and sympathy for *panpan* (Shamoon 2014: 124-25).

With Hattori Ryōichi ca. 1946-47

Daiei movie *Haru no hibiki utage*, 1947

Singing "Tokyo Boogie Boogie," 1947

Peers and Imitators: Locating Kasagi in Japan's Post-War Show Business Firmament

Although Bourdaghs notes comparisons made between Kasagi and the singer-comedienne Martha Raye (2012: 44), all three western scholars tend to focus on the physicality of stage persona or the "Japanese Jazz" aspects of Hattori's Boogie Woogie songs. For the screenwriter of the twenty-five-hour-long *asadora*, however, the relationships that she forged with certain individuals both before and after coming to national fame with "Tokyo Boogie Woogie," seem more likely to feature than any issues of music history or jazz authenticity. These include her complex relationship with Awaya Noriko, known for her strict, uncompromising and, at times, judgmental personality and her entanglements with Misora Hibari (1937-89), the child actress and singer who based her early style and image entirely on Kasagi. Given Misora's legendary status in Japan, a conflated character who cannot easily be identified as the teenage star, may give the director a way of avoiding controversy over the nature of the quite bitter rivalry that existed between the two. Unlike these two female musical divas, the male artist most likely to feature in the *asadora*, "Enoken" (Enomoto Ken'ichi), Japan's King of Comedy poses far less of a casting issue. Given his enormous impact on Kasagi's life, and the opportunity to inject humor into the difficult post-war years, a character based on this larger-than-life figure seems certain to feature. The connection between the two began as early as March 1946 when the comedian, recognizing Kasagi's natural comedic and vaudevillian talents invited her to sing a complex Latin rumba-tinged Hattori song "Kopekachita" in his "Butai wa mawaru" (The Stage Revolves) musical. A few months later, in August, she also sang an early version of the composer's "Junguru Bugi" in *Enoken no Tāzan* (Enoken's Tarzan). In the following three years, the two entertainers appeared in an additional seven theater performances, mostly at the Yurakacho Theater, achieving considerable acclaim as a comedic duo (Fukushima 2009: 335; Sakoguchi 2010: 102-112, 149-56; Satō 2014; Satō 2023: 153-37, 204-09)

Remarkably, the year 1949, one in which she not only recorded her biggest hits but performed for 70,000 fans in just one week at the Nichigeki, also saw her making singing appearances in several movies, including *Hateshinaki jōnetsu* (Endless Passion), a fictionalized biography of Hattori. While the latter was not a comedy, she would move increasingly toward comic roles alongside Enoken in several musical comedies. Working at a frantic pace, Hattori provided the music for all of these, most notably *Uta Enoken torimonojō* (Singing Enoken Trapbook), 1948, and *Enoken Kasagi no Osome Hisamatsu* (Enoken and Kasagi Paradise Couple), 1949, both directed by Watanabe Kunio. In the latter, the two stars, one famed for his trademark big eyeballs and the other for her outsize mouth and facial expressions, duet together on the movie's theme song with lyrics extolling these physical attributes (Sakoguchi 2010: 123-24; Fukushima 2009: 343-44). The story of Kasagi's meeting and subsequent collaborations with Enoken, something entirely missing from any account in English, is, in the opinion of Satō

Toshiaki, a leading scholar of popular movies, music, and theater, one of the key moments in Japanese post-war popular culture and obviously lends itself to a dramatical representation and a way to provide some levity amidst the personal tragedies (Satō 2020).

In early 1950, Kasagi recorded a new comedic Hattori song, "Kaimono Bugi" (Shopping Boogie) whose lyrics may have been inspired by the removal of meat, fish, eggs, and vegetables from government rationing a few months earlier. Singing her list of shopping items in a strong Osaka dialect in rapid machine gun style, the song, featured in an insert in the Shōchiku Ofuna movie *Pekochan to Densuke,* dir. Mizuho Shunkai (1950) allegedly sold 450,000 copies and helped further develop and consolidate the role of Osaka humor and language as a key component of post-war Japanese comedy and show business culture (Sakoguchi 2010: 138-40; Tsukahara 2006a; Satō 2014). At the same time, however, the singing -theater-movie star, like many female artists, apparently became a victim of embezzlement by her methamphetamine and gambling-addicted manager Yamauchi who himself was under pressure from the underworld-riddled entertainment business at the time (Sakoguchi 156-58). The embezzlement of most of her earnings took place during Kasagi's four-month tour of the West Coast of the U.S and Hawaii in mid-1950, one that included a performance for the Japanese-American community in Little Tokyo. This event was organized by Japanese immigrant and Buddhist priest Kitagawa Taido, who assigned his son Johnny Kitagawa to take care of Hattori and Kasagi. Johnny Kitagawa would later reunite with Hattori in Tokyo and secretly abuse his son Yoshitsugu, a shocking secret revealed during the August 2023 media scandals about the late Kitagawa just weeks before the release of the *asadora.*

To top off a particularly complicated year for Kasagi, only one month before her departure to Hawaii, Misora Hibari had undertaken a similar tour together with pre-war star Kawada Haruhisa. Just thirteen at the time, the so-called "Baby Kasagi" had started her career in 1948 at the age of eleven, skillfully imitating Kasagi's boogie-woogie songs. The subsequent controversy over whether Misora, who had few non-Hattori songs in her repertoire, was entitled to sing Hattori's songs while in the U.S, has been described and analyzed by Bourdaghs. As he suggests, efforts made by Hattori and his representatives failed to stop Misora from performing these songs, thus in effect stealing Kasagi's thunder before her own trip with Hattori and his performing sister Tomiko (2012: 55-58). More importantly, they hurt Kasagi's reputation as the press gleefully created what was essentially a fake rivalry between the veteran and her child imitator and made much of an incident in which Kasagi told Misora not to sing any Hattori boogie woogie song just minutes before she was due to sing on stage. This incident incurred the lifelong enmity of Misora's mother Kato Kimie, a woman described as Japan's first "stage mother," and like many other controversies involving Misora, would become a part of Japanese show business lore (Sakoguchi 2010: 150-55).

With Misora's "Kanashiki Kuchibue" (Mournful Whistle) from the 1949 movie of the same name matching sales of "Kaimono Bugi," (Shimada 2010: 15-16), it is perhaps not

surprising that Kasagi, though energized by her meeting with American actress and singer Betty Hutton while on tour, may have been somewhat resentful of the child star. Like many other female singers, including her contemporary Mizunoe Takiko, she was also at times, clearly a victim of the patriarchal machinations of the Japanese show business scene. In addition to the imitation and tour issue, one of the reasons for this feeling was the fact that Misora had reached a high degree of fame and acceptance without the strict training in one of the three main pre-war girl's opera and dance troupes (Takarazuka Revue, Shochiku Shōjo Kagekidan or Nichigeki Dancing Team) that Kasagi and others from her generation had undergone (Sakoguchi 2010: 160; Wajima 2020: 138). In addition, as a young and highly protective mother, Kasagi, like many in the media, had reservations about the behavior of Kato Kimie and Fukushima Michito, the single-minded manager that Kato had appointed. Kato, too had few qualms about allowing her daughter to take on adult-themed songs such as "Hoshi no Nagare ni" and Kasagi's own "Sekohan Musume." Above all, she seemed willing to do whatever it took to launch an adult career for her thirteen-year-old daughter, including making a strong connection with the Yamaguchi Gumi's Taoka Kazuo, a major figure in the Kobe underworld and later an entertainment impresario with great power (Sakoguchi 2010: 166-82; Wajima 2020: 141).

With Misora's September 1950 movie performance in comedy director Torajiro Saito's *Tōkyō kiddo* (Tokyo Kid), the child star, labeled a genius by much of the press, took the big first jump as she leapfrogged over Kasagi in terms of overall popularity. She was joined in 1952 by two other girls her own age, with no training in show business, Eri Chiemi and Yukimura Izumi (Furmanovsky, 2021: 48-55). In addition to these two teenagers, the same year saw the emergence of the glamorous thirty-year-old Takarazuka actress Fubuki Koshiji to take on the combined singer-dancer-actress-comedienne role that Kasagi had made her own for almost a decade (Sakoguchi 2010: 203). The increasing popularity of these individuals in 1952-53, coincided with media gossip about a Hattori-Kasagi slump despite the singer's well-received performance of "Kaimono Bugi" at the second NHK Kōhaku Uta Gassen (Red and White Singing Contest) and continued movie appearances. By 1953, however, with the now middle-

Movie: *Enoken/Kasagi no Osome Hisamatsu, 1949*

Movie: Ginza Kankan Musume, August 1949

Movie: *Pekochan to Densuke*, May 1950

aged veteran determined to maintain her close parenting style and enjoy her comfortable economic status, Kasagi contemplated an end to her singing and dancing career. She would later cite the impact of the loss of her slim figure on her motivation to dance as a major factor in her decision to move almost exclusively into comedic and serious acting, both on radio and television, for the rest of her career (Sakoguchi 2010: 196-200, 205-06).

As aware as anyone in Japanese showbusiness of the fleeting nature of fame, Kasagi, who in 1954 turned forty, made her last records and movies in 1955 and 1956, having failed to match the success of Misora Hibari and Eri Chiemi with mambo songs. In 1957 she made a formal announcement of her retirement as a singer-dancer and began a new career as a TV actress. Her biggest role was in Fuji television's *Taifū kazoku* (Typhoon Family) 1960-64, but she continued acting in movies and appearing as a judge in TV singing shows and highly popular kitchen soap commercials until her mid-fifties (Sakoguchi 2010: 206-08). By the time of her death from breast cancer in 1985, Kasagi's career as a singer was largely unknown to those born after the Occupation. In subsequent decades, however, a range of fans and musical artists have rediscovered her work, including the pre-war Swinging Jazz records. This interest led to 1993's musical *Waga Uta Boogie-Woogie—The Story of Shizuko Kasagi,* numerous CD compilations of her songs; a host of cover versions of "Tokyo Boogie Woogie" and several musicals in which the character of Kasagi appears. While Hattori at one point suggested that Kasagi's dramatic physicality at times detracted from the musical innovation that was his main goal as an artist, his close connection with the singer and her transcendent post-war success is now enshrined in Japanese popular culture. Indeed, the role of his grandson in shaping the music for the *asadora* and the certainty of a strong focus on their relationship in the drama, ensures that the two giants of Shōwa music will forever be known together.

Writing History on Screen: *Asadora* and the Promotion of Kasagi Shizuko as Symbol of Post-War Japan's Cultural and Emotional Resilience

It seems reasonable to surmise, given "Boogie Woogie"'s estimated twenty-five-hour duration, that the key events in Kasagi's personal and professional life explored in this article will appear in the *asadora* in one manifestation or another. It is also equally likely that the manner in which they are presented will follow the *asadora* or indeed NHK historical drama narrative template. This incorporates exaggerated or oversimplified portrayals of complex events often presented through ahistorical dramatic interactions between the main personalities. In addition, as would be expected in a drama aimed at a mass audience, it also involves the downplaying or omission of events that do not lend themselves to melodrama. It is largely because of these tendencies that an accurate narrative and evidence-based interpretation of Kasagi's career can be useful. It provides the "Boogie Woogie" audience with a tool to critically examine the drama as a whole and consider the nature of film-based modern history creation. At a more specific level, viewers can be expected to ask themselves questions. Was

Kasagi Shizuko simply an artist trying to find a way to barter her skills and talent to survive in the maelstrom of Japan's post-war rebuilding? If so, is her status as a symbol of Occupation-era women's efforts to rebuild their post-war lives in large part the consequence of being chosen as the vehicle for Hattori's unerring and timely musical genius? An additional, but important, question is whether or not Kasagi should not only be seen as the woman who "cheered up" Japan but as a proto-feminist and timeless progressive female role model who helped reshape Japanese post-war culture. Along with these broader historical considerations, millions of fans of Japanese mainstream pop (*kayokyoku*) and *enka,* may ask if Kasagi was a willing facilitator in the emergence of Misora Hibari, twentieth-century Japan's most iconic singer as her musical successor, or was she in fact resentful about the manner in which Misora so rapidly eclipsed her in the post-war entertainment world? While the drama will surely make use of existing scholarship to hint at some answers to these questions, it is hoped that the narrative and analysis presented here will also provide viewers of the drama with a critical point of entry into the larger issues that arise in any serious examination of Japan's complex Occupation-shaped post-war popular culture.

These issues of interpretation, assessment and historical revision are also a major component of the larger discussion of film as history discussed by Robert Rosenstone (2012). The most fundamental of Rosenstone's arguments is the notion that filmmakers, by telling a story that attempts to make meaning out of historical events, are in effect functioning as historians themselves. Throughout this article, suggestions have been made about key events in Kasagi's life that seem likely to provide dramatic inflection points for NHK's narrative plot. Most of them, it seems self-evident, are sufficiently imbued with the kind of human drama and pathos that can readily provide episode subplots and storylines even for a drama of this length. The final decisions on which events will be most central are of course not fully predictable. However, given that Kasagi's story, unlike some of the other *asadora* biographies of entertainers, has appeared as a musical as well as been the subject of a full biography, most of the key events and characters described above can be expected to feature in the pivotal episodes and scenes. For those interested in the *asadora*'s potential role in writing history, however, the questions should perhaps focus on how it portrays salient historical events and whether they are aimed more at delivering emotional resonance and a sense of shared cultural values for the core audience, than in providing a historically nuanced account of events.

Given the nature of the content and style of past *asadora,* as described earlier, there is good reason to believe that "Boogie Woogie" will not only be about how Kamei Shizuko, a working class girl, became Kasagi Shizuko, Queen of Boogie Woogie and cheerleader for postwar Japan. Rather, the record of past *asadora* suggests that the drama will also have an additional subtext. This will be the story of how the post-war generations of women who will be the core audience for "Boogie Woogie" in 2023, became the women they are today, thanks in part to the impact of Kasagi and Hattori on the way in which post-war Japan chose to

reimagine and rebuild itself. The fact, for example, that Kasagi was an adopted child, obviously makes for an excellent plot point that can be repeatedly used to imbue the character with a motivation that explains most of her life choices. While it might in fact be an oversimplification of what actually motivated the real Kasagi Shizuko at different times in her life, such a simple causal explanation allows for a good storyline and easy emotional connection with the audience. That she met her mother but remained unacknowledged is also an event that is sure to run through the drama and may be expected to resonate with middle-aged Japanese women who have been both mothers and daughters. Finally, too, the objectively dramatic events of Kasagi's life as well as her humble offstage demeanor as an everyday straight-talking Kansai woman and devoted mother, can only act to amplify the audience's identification with the fictional Kasagi character and compel it to stay loyal to the six-month production. With a likely viewership of around twenty million and the paratext of accompanying productions, publicity packages, magazine articles and media events that will accompany the drama (Scherer 2019: 4-5), even many casual viewers or observers of contemporary Japan should find some interest in either "Boogie Woogie"'s actual story or its reception in the media. For the cultural historian of the Shōwa era, however, the main interest will surely be the degree to which the creators of this much- anticipated *asadora* are able to use the film media to write the history of this inarguably heroic symbol of post-war Japan in a historically contextualized, nuanced and realistic manner; one that reflects the real impact of the events presented in this study.

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