

The Japanese throughout the country greatly appreciate the Matsuri festival. Every city, town and village has its own festival. There are of various types some are of religious or ritual character, and some are mostly conceived as entertainment. The festivals vary according to circumstances and place. They may take place in the rice field, at the seashore, on the mountain, in the smaller or bigger town, etc., and differ in northern, eastern, western and southern Japan. There is a great contrast between the festival at Edo (the present capital, Tokyo) in the East and that in Kyoto (the former capital), the former being more brilliant and gay and the latter more sober and dignified.

Hayashi or Bayashi is a term used to describe an instrumental ensemble made of a flute, a drum, and various percussions such as a gong, a scraper and a clapper. An ensemble made of a flute, a small hour-glass drum, a larger hour-glass drum and a flat drum, such as is used in the Noh play, is a typical Hayashi. However in folk music we find Hayashi ensembles made of different instruments, for instance, a transverse flute, two flat drums, a big barrel drum and a gong such as in the Edo Matsuri Bayashi recorded here (Side 2, N. 4.).

The repertoire of Edo Matsuri Bayashi consists of four main pieces, Yatai, Shoden, Kamakura and Shichome which are used in every performance, and several additional pieces, one or two of which are inserted between those four pieces. A standard performance should present five movements Yatai (slow), Shoden (faster), Kamakura (slower), Shichome (fastest), and Yatai (slow). In this record, Yatai, Shoden and Shichome form the most brilliant parts of the performance.

The Edo Matsuri Bayashi is played by ordinary people during the summer or the fall on the stage found in the shrines or on temporary stages built at the corner of the streets where people gather. This music brings a deep feeling of nostalgia to the mind of the writer of this comment, who was born in downtown Tokyo.