

# The Many Faces of “Dinah”: A Prewar American Popular Song and the Lineage of its Recordings in the U.S. and Japan

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## 「ダイナ」の多面性

——戦前アメリカと日本における一つの流行歌とそのレコード——

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### 要 約

1925年にニューヨークで作曲された「ダイナ」は、1920・30年代のアメリカと日本両国におけるもっとも人気のあるポピュラーソングの一つになり、数多くのアメリカ人と日本人の演奏家によって録音された。本稿では、1935年までに両国で録音されたこの曲のレコードのなかで、最も人気があり流行したもののいくつかを選択して分析し比較する。さらにアメリカの演奏家たちによって生み出された「ダイナ」の演奏習慣を表示する。そして日本人の演奏家たちが、自分たちの想像力を通してこの曲の新しい理解を重ねる中で、レコードを通して日本に伝わった演奏習慣をどのように応用していったかを考察する。

### 1. Introduction

“Dinah,” published in 1925, was one of the leading hit songs to emerge from New York City’s “Tin Pan Alley” music industry during the interwar period, and was recorded in the U.S. by numerous singers and dance bands during the late 1920s and 1930s. It was also one of the most popular songs of the 1930s in Japan, where Japanese composers, arrangers, lyricists and performers, inspired in part by U.S. records, developed and recorded their own versions. In this paper I examine and compare a selection of the American and Japanese recordings of this song with the aim of tracing lines

of influence, focusing on the aural evidence of the recordings themselves in relation to their recording and release dates. The analysis will show how American recordings of the song, which resulted from complex interactions of African American and European American artists and musical styles, established certain loose conventions of performance practices that were conveyed to Japan and to Japanese artists. It will then show how these Japanese artists made flexible use of American precedents, while also drawing influences from other Japanese recordings and adding their own individual creative ideas.

The spread of American or American-influenced popular music in prewar Japan (broadly subsumed at the time under the term “jazz”, or *jazu*) was closely tied to the rapid growth of Japan’s record industry, especially after three major companies with international affiliations (Nippon Columbia, Nippon Victor, and Nippon Polydor) were established and set up modern recording and production facilities in 1927 and 1928. In addition to records imported from the U.S., master discs were imported to Japan and used to manufacture American records, which were released for sale on Japanese labels. Japanese artists also began recording their own versions of American songs with Japanese (or Japanese and English) lyrics, as well as writing original songs in American-influenced styles. At the same time a culture of live jazz performance was developing in Japan, especially in dance halls and revue shows, where American as well as Japanese “jazz songs” were often performed live. Thus from the late 1920s through the 1930s American and American-influenced music was becoming increasingly familiar and popular among many urban Japanese, and especially among the young *moga* (“modern girls”) and *mobo* (“modern boys”) who had a taste for things Western. It is in this context that “Dinah” became an enduring hit in Japan.

In developing their arrangements and performances of American songs, Japanese musicians learned from American models through the media of records and sheet music and, to a lesser extent, through direct contact with American musicians. In a number of pioneering publications and in explanatory notes to CD reissues, Segawa Masahisa has noted the influences of certain American artists and their records on Japanese artists and recordings

of this period, including recordings of “Dinah” (Segawa 1992, 2005, 2009). Many details of these influences have yet to be uncovered, however, and there is a need for more thorough comparative research on American recordings and the Japanese recordings that they may have influenced. As Atkins (2001) and Hosokawa (2007) have argued, Japanese jazz musicians of this period were by no means mere “imitators” of American jazz; their creativity is evident both in their musical ideas and in their adaptation of jazz to the cultural and social environment of prewar Japan. But in order to understand their creativity it is important to understand exactly what they did adopt from American sources, how they worked with American material and added their own ideas to it, and how they influenced one another. This paper aims to make a small contribution to such understanding.

In particular, I will explore some of the lines of influence that connect Japanese and American recorded performances by analyzing and comparing recordings of one particular song. By limiting attention to a single song, I hope to bring the intertextual relationships among various recordings, and hence the lines of influence among artists, into sharp focus. In this way I hope to shed some light on the complexities of the process by which jazz music was adopted, reinterpreted and recreated in Japan.

## **2. The Song: Its Background, Reception in the U.S., and Musical and Lyrical Structure**

Before the 1925 song “Dinah” was written, the name “Dinah” had appeared in the titles of at least ten American popular songs published between 1850 and 1913. In some of these earlier song titles the name appears as “Dinah Lee,” while in others it is rhymed with “Carolina,” both of which features also occur in the 1925 song that is the topic of this paper.<sup>1</sup> The song in question here, then, is itself part of a lineage of “Dinah” songs, of which it is the most successful example.

“Dinah” was written by Harry Akst in 1925, with lyrics by Sam M. Lewis and Joe Young. It was first performed the same year in the Broadway musical “Kid Boots” by singer Eddie Cantor, who added it to his finale after the show

had already begun its run. The song's real popularity, however, is attributed to African American blues singer Ethel Waters, who sang it later in 1925 in her nightclub show at Selvin's Plantation Club in Manhattan (Furia and Lasser 2006: 47–8). Waters' recording of the song was a hit the following year, and eight more hit recordings of "Dinah" by various artists followed during the succeeding two decades.<sup>2</sup>

Musically, "Dinah" follows the standard form of most Tin Pan Alley songs published from the 1920s through the early 1950s: it consists of an introductory "verse" (16 measures long in this case) followed by a 32-measure "refrain" (or "chorus) in AABA form, where the A section and B section are 8 measures each. "AABA" refers to the melodic and harmonic structure: the lyrics are different in each of the four sections, and generally follow a rhyme scheme that is complemented by the melody.<sup>3</sup> In actual performances and recordings of Tin Pan Alley songs the introductory verse section was frequently omitted. This was the case with "Dinah" as well: the verse section appears in the earliest U.S. recordings from 1925, but is omitted in most later ones and in all Japanese recordings that I have heard. The refrain, then, is the core of the song, and the only part that was familiar to most listeners in Japan. The initial lyrics of the four sections of the refrain are as follows:

A: Dinah—is there anyone finer ...

A: Dinah—with her Dixie eyes blazin' ...

B: Every night, why do I shake with fright? ...

A: Dinah—if she wandered to China ...

Lyricaly, this is a playful love song full of rhymes and puns on the name "Dinah." The melody of the A section contains two-note phrases in the first, third, and fifth measures that help to emphasize pairs or triplets of rhyming words: Dinah, finer, Carolina; blazin', gaze in; Dinah, China, ocean liner. The B section, as in most Tin Pan Alley songs of this period, presents a musical and lyrical contrast to the A section. Whereas the A section music is in a major key, the B section shifts to the relative minor key; whereas the A section lyrics sing the praises of Dinah and the protagonist's devotion to her, the B

section shifts to his fear that she will leave him, using three-syllable phrases emphasized by a repeated three-note melodic figure: “Every night / Why do I / Shake with fright?” The answer to this question includes a pun that manages to suggest the beloved’s (explosive) personality, or possibly her sex appeal, while also rhyming with “night” and “fright”: “Because my Dinah might [dynamite] / Change her mind about me.” The effect of this clever word play is to soften any concern the listener might feel for the protagonist’s fragile emotional state, and to keep the song firmly in the realm of fun. The final A section features the young man’s rather comical pledge to follow his beloved to China if necessary. “Dinah” is a love song, but one that is not designed to be taken too seriously: it is a romantic comedy in which verbal play is the name of the game.

### 3. The “Dinah” Phenomenon in Japan

The 1928 hit recordings by Futamura Teiichi of Japanese-language versions of two American songs, “Aozora” (My Blue Heaven) and “Arabia no Uta” (Sing Me a Song of Araby), along with his recording of a Japanese composition, “Kimi Koishi,” introduced Japanese listeners to the 32-measure AABA song form and to the instrumentation of American dance bands (Mitsui 2004, 2005). Thus by the time “Dinah” appeared in Japan, these elements of American popular song had become somewhat familiar to at least a large minority of the urban record-buying public.

Although it may have been available earlier through imported records and sheet music, the first record of “Dinah” to appear on a Japanese record label was that of Ted Lewis and the Four Dusty Travelers, released by Nippon Columbia in September 1930. It is not clear whether this record attracted much attention, however. Then in 1933 the African American singer Midge Williams performed “Dinah” along with other American songs at the Florida Dance Hall in Tokyo. Her performances did attract a great deal of attention from Japan’s jazz community, and they may have inspired the first Japanese recording of the song, by Nakano Tadaharu and the Columbia Nakano Rhythm Boys, in January 1934. Midge Williams herself recorded the song

in Tokyo the following month, also for Nippon Columbia. These records, however, were soon overshadowed by Dick Mine’s recording on the Teichiku label, which was released in December 1934 and quickly became a hit. The song was played constantly in cafes and dance halls, and soon a “Dinah whirlwind” swept the country, prompting other record companies to make their own versions, and even inspiring a cosmetics company to market a product with the name “Dinah Cream” (Kurata 1979: 416). Segawa Masahisa (personal communication) estimates that at least fifty different commercial recordings of “Dinah” were released in Japan before the Pacific war, and that it was probably the most frequently recorded song in Japan up to that time. Kurata suggests that the success of this song resulted in a broad revision of Japanese people’s image of jazz music in general, making it acceptable to a larger audience than before and moving it from a rather marginal position into the mainstream of Japanese popular culture (1979: 416).

#### 4. Recordings and Japanese Releases of “Dinah”

The following chronological list shows the U.S. recordings of “Dinah” that were released in Japan before the Pacific War, as well as the most popular and influential Japanese recordings of the song.<sup>4</sup>

Note: Names shown in parentheses are artists whose recordings I was unable to locate. Names shown in boldface are the artists whose recordings are discussed and analyzed below.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Recorded</u> ( <i>italics = recorded in Japan</i> )	<u>Released in Japan</u> (or * re-released)
1925/9	<b>The Revelers</b>	
1925/10	<b>Ethel Waters</b> [1]	
1925/12	<b>Cliff Edwards</b>	
1929/4	Red Nichols	
1930/1	<b>Ted Lewis &amp; 4 Dusty Travelers</b>	
1930/9		<b>Ted Lewis &amp; 4 Dusty Travelers</b>
1931/12	<b>Bing Crosby &amp; Mills Bros.</b>	
1932/6	<b>Cab Calloway</b>	

The Many Faces of “Dinah”

1933/9	(Prima, Rose & Gast)	
1934/1	<i>Nakano Tadaharu</i>	
1934/2	<i>Midge Williams</i>	
1934/4		<i>Nakano Tadaharu</i>
1934/6		<i>Midge Williams</i>
1934/8	(Ethel Waters[2])	
1934/11	<i>Dick Mine</i>	
1934/12		<i>Dick Mine</i>
1934/12	<b>Boswell Sisters</b>	
1935/?		<b>Bing Crosby &amp; Mills Bros.</b>
1935/?		<b>Boswell Sisters</b>
1935/6	<i>Rickie Miyagawa</i>	
1935/6	Fats Waller	
1935/6		(Prima, Rose & Gast)
1935/8	(Mills Blue Rhythm Band)	
1935/10	(Ray Noble)	
1935/10		<i>Rickie Miyagawa</i>
1935/10	<i>Kishii Akira</i>	
1935/12		<i>Kishii Akira</i>
1936/1		<b>*Bing Crosby &amp; Mills Bros.</b>
1936/1		<b>*Boswell Sisters</b>
1936/3		(Mills Blue Rhythm Band)
1936/6		(Ray Noble)
1936/9	(Billy Costello)	
1936/10		<i>Enomoto Ken'ichi (Enoken)</i>
1937/1		<b>Cab Calloway</b>
1937/4		(Ethel Waters[2])
1937/5		Fats Waller
1937/6		Red Nichols
1937/6		(Billy Costello)
1938/5		<i>Hayashi Isao</i>
1938/5		<b>*Bing Crosby &amp; Mills Bros.</b>
1938/5		*(Ethel Waters[2])
1938/7		<b>*Midge Williams</b>
1939/4		<b>*Boswell Sisters</b>
1939/8		<i>Kawada Yoshio (“Rōkyoku Dinah”)</i>
1939/9		*(Billy Costello)
1940/2		<b>*Cab Calloway</b>

This paper will focus on the recordings shown in boldface, which include primarily Japanese recordings of “Dinah” released on major labels through 1935, plus the American recordings that I have identified as probable direct or indirect influences on those Japanese recordings.

The American recordings of “Dinah” shown in this list are, as far as I have been able to determine, the only ones issued on Japanese labels during this period. It is essential to note, however, that other U.S. records were available in Japan as imports. These were more expensive than Japanese releases, but musicians and devoted fans spent a great deal of time listening to them at jazz coffeehouses or *kissaten*, which often maintained large collections of imported records (Atkins 2001: 74–5). Thus it is quite likely that Japanese musicians were familiar with other U.S. recordings of “Dinah” in addition to those in this chart, and also that they were familiar with the ones in the chart before the Japanese release dates. As for Japanese recordings of “Dinah,” this list shows only the most prominent ones released on major labels; many more were released on minor labels (Segawa and Otani 2009: 153–6), and an exhaustive study of these is beyond the scope of the present paper.

Despite its limitations, this chronological list gives some impression of the “Dinah boom” that took place in Japan after the appearance of Dick Mine’s recording in December 1934. New recordings of the song by Japanese artists, as well as numerous releases and re-releases of recordings by American artists, followed one after another throughout the 1930s as the various record companies competed to cash in on Dinah-fever.

## 5. The “Dinah” Tradition and its Conventions

The many musicians who recorded this song did so in their own distinctive styles. On the other hand, the aural evidence leaves no doubt that musicians referred to earlier recordings of the song as they developed their own individual interpretations, and that certain seminal recordings exerted especially strong influence on later ones. Thus over time the arranging and performing of “Dinah” became a kind of flexible tradition, in which most artists borrowed at least some features of their performances from past recordings of the song, and some of those features became loose conventions that appear in numerous recordings, modified or occasionally satirized according to the purposes and talents of each artist.

Some of the main features that are shared among various recordings of

“Dinah” are the following:

- Prominent use of trumpet or cornet
- Vocal group performance, or a solo vocalist interacting with a vocal group
- A tempo shift in the latter half of the song, from slow tempo to fast tempo
- Puns and other verbal play (in the original English lyrics and in Japanese lyrics)
- Scat singing (improvisational singing using vocables or “nonsense” syllables, including vocal imitations of a trumpet in some cases)

As we will see, each of these features occurs in at least five recordings of the song, and all are found in both U.S. and Japanese recordings. In addition, there are other specific musical and lyrical features that are shared only among some Japanese recordings.

In the sections that follow I will analyze the selected recordings, in chronological order, noting prominent features of musical arrangement, performance style, and in some cases lyrics. I will especially note features that reveal or suggest the influences of earlier recordings, as well as distinctive or original features.

The structure of each recorded performance will be shown in outline form. Most performances consist of from three to five repetitions of the refrain (the 32-measure AABA structure), together with short introductions, interludes, and endings in some cases. Some recordings also include the 16 measure verse. The letters (A) and (B) in parentheses refer to the A and B sections of the AABA refrain structure. Tempos are shown above the sections to which they apply, in BPM (beats per minute).<sup>5</sup>

## 6. Analyses of U.S. Recordings

### The Revelers

The Revelers, a white vocal quartet who usually sang with piano accompaniment, recorded “Dinah” in September 1925. This seems to be the first example of a vocal group interpretation of the song.

Outline: The Revelers

Introduction (free rhythm): humming, “coming for to carry me home”

(Tempo: about 130–135 BPM, with frequent shifts and free rhythm passages)

Refrain 1: choral vocal (AABA)

Verse: choral vocal

Refrain 2: choral vocal (AABA)

The verse is sung in between two repetitions of the refrain, instead of its usual position before the first refrain. The group sings both verse and refrain in a slow tempo interspersed with free rhythm passages, emphasizing clear articulation of the lyrics, harmonies, and countermelodies behind the main vocal line. The performance shows little jazz influence, but a syncopated rhythmic pattern used in the B sections suggests African American (perhaps ragtime) influences. Another revealing touch is the addition (as an introduction) of the phrase “coming for to carry me home,” a quote from the spiritual “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” which by this time had been performed and recorded by a number of African American vocal groups, including the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Apollo Jubilee Quartette (Brooks and Spottswood 2005: 258–9). Thus although this version of “Dinah” is quite different from later and jazzier versions, it does foreshadow them both as a vocal group rendition and through its clear reference to African American vocal groups.

### **Ethel Waters and the Plantation Orchestra**

As noted above, the first hit recording of “Dinah” was that of African American blues singer Ethel Waters, recorded in October 1925 after she had sung the song to great acclaim in her nightclub act. This record was apparently not released in Japan, but may have been available as an import. (A 1934 recording of the song by Waters was released in Japan in 1937.)

Outline: Ethel Waters

Opening: bell

Introduction: ensemble

(Tempo: quarter note = 105)

Verse: vocal with trumpet responses (16 measures)

Refrain 1: solo vocal (AABA)

Refrain 2: solo vocal (AABA)

The performance opens with a single stroke on a bell, which is repeated during the verse section, coinciding with the lyrics “I hear church bells ringing.” This bell may have been a precedent for the bells that open the Nakano Columbia Rhythm Boys recording (see below). The performance is done in a slow classic blues style. In the verse section a trumpet carries on a dialogue with the vocalist, which became a “Dinah” convention. (Trumpet-vocal interaction also occurs on other classic blues records of the time, such as Bessie Smith’s famous 1925 recording of “St. Louis Blues.”) Waters’ bluesy vocal inflections, especially on the words “Dinah Lee,” may have been a model for Midge Williams (see below).

### **Cliff Edwards and His Hot Combination**

Cliff Edwards, also known as Ukulele Ike, recorded “Dinah” on the Perfect label in December 1925. Some of the major conventions of “Dinah” performance seem to have begun with his recording.

Outline: Cliff Edwards

(Tempo: quarter note = 178 BPM)

Introduction: ensemble (A-section of refrain, plus 4 measures)

Verse: vocal (16 measures)

Refrain 1: solo vocal (AABA)

Refrain 2: trumpet and scat vocal (trumpet imitation) (AABA)

Refrain 3: solo vocal (AABA)

Ending: ensemble improvisation (A-section)

Edwards plays the song at a medium tempo, constant throughout, with a four-beat jazz rhythm. After an ensemble instrumental introduction, he sings the song as originally written, with verse followed by refrain. Trumpet improvisations respond to the vocalist during the refrain. The second refrain is performed as an improvisational dialogue between trumpet and scat singing, in which the scat singing makes use of vocal imitations of a trumpet. (The trumpet player on this piece is Red Nichols, who later became a well-known band leader himself and recorded his own version of the song.) Edwards then sings a final refrain, following the original melody and lyrics. Thus the “Dinah” convention of trumpet-vocal dialogue is continued, while the conventions of scat singing and of vocal imitation of a trumpet seem to begin with this record.

### **Ted Lewis and the Four Dusty Travelers**

Ted Lewis was a white singer, band leader, clarinet and saxophone player, and vaudeville performer whose comedic style made him one of the most popular and familiar representatives of jazz during the 1920s and 1930s. He recorded “Dinah” in January 1930, on the Columbia label, together with an African American vocal quartet, the Four Dusty Travelers, who were known for recording both spirituals and secular songs (Griffith and Savage 2006: 229). One could speculate that the Revelers’ earlier recording, with its reference to an African American spiritual, might have suggested to Lewis the idea of collaborating with an African American vocal group on this song.

Lewis’s band on this piece included cornetist Muggsy Spanier and clarinetist Jimmy Dorsey, both leading white jazz musicians by this time (Rust 1975: 1098–9).

## The Many Faces of “Dinah”

Outline: Ted Lewis / Four Dusty Travelers

(Tempo: quarter note = 170 BPM)

Introduction: cornet with clarinet countermelody (A)

Refrain 1: cornet with group vocal echoing each phrase (AABA)

Refrain 2: cornet (AA), violin (B), cornet (A)

Refrain 3: group vocal with solo vocal echoing each phrase (AABA)

Refrain 4: ensemble melody / clarinet solo (AABA)

Ending: free rhythm group vocal “Dinah Lee”

The piece is played in a four-beat rhythm, at a constant medium tempo throughout. It opens with an 8-measure instrumental introduction, with cornet playing the melody of the refrain A section and clarinet improvising a countermelody, in New Orleans jazz style. This is followed by the first complete refrain (AABA), in which a muted cornet plays the melody as written, and each phrase is “echoed” by the vocal quartet, who sing the lyrics of each phrase just after the cornet. Another cornet player (probably Spanier) inserts a short improvisation at the end of the B section.

The second refrain features a cornet solo, supported by the band; in the contrasting B section, the melody is played on violin. At the end of this B section the violin and band drop out, and unaccompanied cornet plays a syncopated phrase that leads back to accompanied cornet improvisations in the final A section. This pattern of using contrasting instrumentation for the contrasting melodies of the A and B sections was common in arrangements of Tin Pan Alley songs, and as we will see it occurs in many later versions of “Dinah.”

The third refrain is another dialogue: the vocal group sings the melody with lyrics in the background, while Ted Lewis as solo vocalist echoes each phrase of the lyrics just after the quartet (in rather the same way that the vocal group echoed the trumpet in the first refrain). Lewis, however, speaks rather than sings the lyrics, using his signature style of exaggerated declamation, his voice quivering with staged emotion. The comedic effect of his delivery accentuates the humorously exaggerated emotion of the lyrics. As in the second refrain, a brief cornet improvisation concludes the B section and leads

back to the final A section. In the fourth and final refrain, the band plays the melody behind an improvised clarinet solo. Finally, the vocal group sings the phrase “Dinah Lee” on a concluding fermata (in free rhythm).

This record by Ted Lewis and the Four Dusty Travelers appears to have been the first recording of “Dinah” to be released on a Japanese label (Nippon Columbia, in September 1930). As we will see, it was almost certainly a specific influence on the Columbia Nakano Rhythm Boys when they recorded the song in January 1934. More broadly, the dialogues between vocal group and vocal soloist or trumpet / cornet, the cornet solo with contrasting instrumentation in the B section, and the unaccompanied cornet lead-ins at the ends of the B sections are all features that appear in later recordings of the song, in both the U.S. and Japan. In addition, Lewis’s adaptation of this lighthearted song to his own style of vaudeville musical comedy may have been a general influence on the playful approach of later versions. The combination of an African American vocal group with a white solo singer (at a time when black-white collaborations in commercial popular music were unusual) also foreshadows, and may well have inspired, the hit recording by Bing Crosby and the Mills Brothers, which we consider next.

### **Bing Crosby and the Mills Brothers**

The Mills Brothers, an African American vocal quartet known for close harmonies and vocal imitations of musical instruments, rose to fame in 1931 with their record of “Tiger Rag” and “Nobody’s Sweetheart,” which became the first record in history by a vocal quartet to sell over a million discs (Ewen 1977: 284; see also Waterman 2003: 133–4). White crooner Bing Crosby had become well known in the late 1920s as a member of the Rhythm Boys vocal trio, who recorded with the orchestra of the white “King of Jazz,” Paul Whiteman. In December 1931 (about half a year after the Rhythm Boys had disbanded) Crosby sang together with the Mills Brothers on a recording of “Dinah,” which became the black quartet’s second major hit.

Outline: Bing Crosby / Mills Brothers  
(Tempo: quarter note = 121)

The Many Faces of “Dinah”

Introduction: ensemble (A)

Refrain 1: solo vocal (AABA)

(Tempo: quarter note = 258)

Refrain 2: group vocal (AABA)

Refrain 3: solo scat singing, over group vocal “Dinah” (AA)

solo vocal with lyrics / trumpet improvisations (B)

group vocal “The name of this song is Dinah” / solo vocal responses (A)

Refrain 4: solo vocal (AA), scat singing with trumpet imitation (B), solo vocal (A)

The first half of the piece is done in a gentle two-beat bounce rhythm taken at a slow tempo. It opens with the A section of the refrain played by the orchestra; a brief unaccompanied trumpet break then leads into a complete refrain, sung by Crosby with orchestral accompaniment. Another short trumpet break leads into a doubling of the tempo and a second refrain by the Mills Brothers, sung unaccompanied in four-beat rhythm, with a vocal bass line supporting tight harmonies. At the end of this refrain a solo break of scat singing by one of the Mills Brothers leads to a third refrain, this time with scat singing by Crosby over rhythmic repetitions of the word “Dinah” by the Mills Brothers. In the B section of this refrain Crosby sings the lyrics, supported by the orchestra and by trumpet improvisations. The final A section of the third refrain has the Mills Brothers repeating “The name of this song is Dinah,” interspersed with Crosby’s improvised responses (“Well, tell it” etc.). The fourth and final refrain is sung in the A sections by Crosby, with lyrics but with free variations on the melody and rhythm; the B section features scat singing by one of the Mills Brothers (probably Harry Mills), imitating the sound of a trumpet.

This recording was popular not only in the U.S., but in Japan as well (Mori 1998: 96). It was issued on Japanese labels three times beginning in 1935, and it was clearly available earlier than that as an import record, since its influence can be heard on Japanese recordings from 1934 onward. In particular, the tradition of a shift from slow to fast tempo seems to begin with

this record. Scat singing and unaccompanied trumpet breaks leading from one refrain to another are features that this recording seems to have carried on from earlier ones (Cliff Edwards and Ted Lewis, respectively) and passed on to later ones. A more specific convention of scat singing on the B section of the final refrain apparently began with this recording. Crosby's crooning vocal style influenced Japanese singers, as did the Mills Brothers' vocal instrument imitations and rhythmic approach. In particular, we will see that the Mills Brothers' rhythmic repetition of "You know her ... you know her" in the second refrain was later imitated in Japan by Midge Williams and by Rickie Miyagawa.

### **Cab Calloway**

Cab Calloway, whose flamboyant stage presence, scat singing and first-rate sidemen made him one of the most popular black jazz singers and band leaders of the 1930s, recorded "Dinah" in June 1932. Like the Crosby / Mills Brothers version recorded half a year earlier, scat singing is a central feature of his interpretation, but his scatting is far wilder than Crosby's, and it is not clear whether or to what extent Calloway was influenced by the earlier record. Calloway had been doing scat singing at least since March 1931, when his classic "Minnie the Moocher" was recorded with scat vocals, well before the Crosby / Mills Brothers recording of "Dinah."

Outline: Cab Calloway

(Tempo: quarter note = 180 BPM)

Introduction: ensemble (6 measures)

Refrain 1: trombone (AA), ensemble variations (B), trombone (A)

Refrain 2: tenor saxophone improvised solo (AABA)

Refrain 3: solo vocal (lyrics and scat singing) (AABA)

Refrain 4: ensemble, interplay between brass and reeds (AABA)

Calloway's band is considered one of the "protoswing" bands of the early 1930s (Stowe 1994: 122), and his swinging medium-tempo jazz arrangement of "Dinah" does indeed anticipate the popular swing band style of the mid

to late 1930s. The band is at least as prominent as the vocalist. The first two refrains are instrumental: in the first refrain, the A section melody is interpreted freely on trombone, while the band plays arranged variations in the B section; the second refrain is a tenor sax solo with band support. An unaccompanied scat singing break by Calloway leads into the third refrain, where he sings the lyrics in a highly improvisational style, with melodic emphasis on the fifth above the tonic. (This last feature may show the influence of Lous Armstrong’s 1931 recording of the song.) More scat vocables lead into a final instrumental refrain that includes call-and-response interplay between the brass and reed sections, a hallmark feature of many swing band arrangements.

As we will see, Cab Calloway’s melodic approach to this song seems likely to have been an influence on artists who recorded in Japan, in particular Midge Williams and perhaps Rickie Miyagawa.

### **The Boswell Sisters**

A popular female vocal group, the Boswell Sisters, recorded “Dinah” in December 1934, too late to have influenced the key 1934 Japanese recordings discussed below (by Midge Williams, the Nakano Rhythm Boys, and Dick Mine). Their recording is notable, however, in that it shows the continuation of vocal group “Dinah” interpretations in the U.S., and also because it features a slow-to-fast tempo shift, which may have been inspired by the Bing Crosby / Mills Brothers version. These conventions thus continued in the U.S. at the same time that they had been transmitted to Japan.

## **7. Analyses of Japanese Recordings**

This section will examine recordings of “Dinah” made in Japan through 1935, by both Japanese and American singers, and released on major Japanese record labels.

### **Columbia Nakano Rhythm Boys** コロムビア・ナカノ・リズム・ボーイズ

The Columbia Nakano Rhythm Boys recording made on January 31, 1934,

is to my knowledge the first recording of “Dinah” in Japan. The Columbia Nakano Rhythm boys (hereafter CNRB) were a vocal quartet who had made their debut recording at Nippon Columbia in October 1933. They were led by singer Nakano Tadaharu 中野忠晴, the fifth member of the group, who directed the quartet, arranged their songs, and added his own solo vocals to their recordings. The name of the group is a direct reference to the Rhythm Boys, the vocal trio that launched Bing Crosby’s career, and suggests the extent of Nakano’s interest in Crosby’s music. According to Segawa (CD notes to *Nakano Tadaharu and Columbia Nakano Rhythm Boys*), Nakano also studied closely the recordings of the Mills Brothers; and indeed their influence is clear in the vocal bass lines and other features of many CNRB recordings.

Previous commentators have naturally assumed that the CNRB recording of “Dinah” was inspired and modeled on that of Crosby and the Mills Brothers, which had not yet been released on a Japanese label but was no doubt available in Japan as an import. Mori (1998: 96) asserts that Nakano and his quartet listened carefully and repeatedly to the Crosby / Mills brothers record while preparing their own arrangement of “Dinah.” The musical evidence shows clearly, however, that the strongest influence on the details of Nakano’s arrangement was *not* that of Crosby and the Mills Brothers, but rather that of Ted Lewis and the Four Dusty Travelers, discussed above, whose recording of “Dinah” had been released in Japan (by Nippon Columbia) in September 1930.

Outline: Columbia Nakano Rhythm Boys

Opening: bells

(Tempo: quarter note = 185)

Introduction: repeated ensemble phrase, group vocal “Dinah”

trumpet (A)

Refrain 1: solo vocal (AABA)

Interlude: trumpet (A)

Refrain 2: solo vocal with group vocal echoing each phrase (AAB)

group vocal with solo vocal responses “nn” (A)

Refrain 3: clarinet solo (AABA)

The CNRB piece opens with bells playing four notes of Westminster chimes—an original touch, although it may have been suggested by the bell that opens Ethel Waters’ 1925 recording. An introductory melodic phrase is then repeated three times by the orchestra, with a choral response on the word “Dinah” each time. The A section of the melody is then played on trumpet, followed by a complete refrain sung as a solo by Nakano. Another A section on trumpet is played as an interlude, after which a second complete refrain is sung. This time Nakano sings the first two A sections and the B section solo, with the vocal quartet echoing each phrase. Except for the Japanese lyrics, these choral responses by the quartet are rhythmically and melodically almost identical to those of the first refrain of Ted Lewis’s record (discussed above), where each phrase of the trumpet melody is echoed by the Four Dusty Travelers. In the final A section of this refrain the “call” and “response” roles are reversed: the melody is sung (with lyrics) by the quartet, and Nakano responds “nn” after each phrase. The third and final refrain is a clarinet solo with rhythmic punctuations by the orchestra.

The musical similarities between this recording and that of Ted Lewis are striking and quite specific: (1) a similar tempo and four-beat rhythmic feel, constant throughout both versions; (2) an introductory trumpet solo on the A section; (3) nearly identical (except for the lyrics) group vocal responses in the first refrain of Ted Lewis’s recording and the second refrain of the Nakano Rhythm Boys recording; and (4) a clarinet solo in the final refrain. The Crosby / Mills Brothers recording shares none of these features, and includes a slow-to-fast tempo shift not found in either Nakano’s or Lewis’s versions. On the other hand, Crosby’s record does include a first refrain by the solo singer, followed by the entrance of the vocal quartet, and this very general feature is paralleled by the Nakano Rhythm Boys version. The influence of Ted Lewis’s version on certain specific aspects of Nakano’s is unmistakable, while that of Crosby’s version is likely at a more general level.

Nakano’s version does, however, include original features that do not appear on earlier records, such as the ensemble phrase and choral responses

of “Dinah” in the introduction. Another entirely original feature of Nakano’s version is the Japanese lyrics, written by Nakano Tadaharu himself. With images of moonlit beaches and tears, they give this love song a less humorous and more tender feeling than the original English lyrics. But they retain the verbally playful spirit of the original, using Japanese puns on the name “Dinah” in place of English rhymes. In particular, lines such as *kikasete choudai na, nakasete choudai na* (“let me hear, let me weep”) skillfully place the syllables *daina* at the ends of melodic phrases, giving an effect similar to the rhymes of the original lyrics.

### **Midge Williams**

The visit to Japan of African American jazz singer Midge Williams left a substantial impact on the Japanese jazz community. She arrived in Japan in December 1933 together with her three brothers, who were also singers and dancers, on their way home to the U.S. after an engagement in Shanghai. Soon Williams was singing nightly at the Florida Dance Hall in Tokyo; Japanese jazz singers and musicians listened to her performances with rapt attention, and some recall that Williams gave them singing lessons between sets (Uchida 1976: 114, 439; Segawa 2005: 136–40).

In February 1934 Williams recorded several songs for the Nippon Columbia label, and one of these was “Dinah,” which had been a regular number in her performances at the Florida Dance Hall. She was accompanied by her own pianist, Roger Segure (later an active jazz arranger in the U.S.), and by the Columbia Jazz Band, which in addition to many prominent Japanese jazz players included American saxophonist Thomas Misman, who arranged this version of “Dinah” for Williams.

Outline: Midge Williams

Opening: free rhythm trumpet solo phrase, clarinet response

(Tempo: quarter note = 180)

Refrain 1: solo vocal with Japanese lyrics (AABA)

Refrain 2: trumpet solo (AA), piano solo (B), trumpet solo (A)

Refrain 3: solo vocal with English lyrics (AABA)

(Tempo: quarter note = 240)

Refrain 4: clarinet (AA), trumpet (B), clarinet (A)

Refrain 5: solo vocal—English (AA), scat singing (B), solo vocal—  
English (A)

The record begins with a brief unaccompanied trumpet phrase, followed by an equally brief clarinet response. Williams then sings the first refrain at a medium tempo, in Japanese, with lyrics by Nogawa Kōbun 野川香文. Here and throughout the song she departs considerably from the written melody, singing her own melodic and rhythmic variations and adding an occasional blues inflection. The second refrain is played as a trumpet solo on the A sections and piano solo on the B section, and on the third refrain Williams sings in English. (This practice of singing an American song first with Japanese lyrics, then with English lyrics, was also commonly used by Japanese-American singers such as Rickie Miyagawa, discussed below.) A shift to a faster tempo leads to the fourth refrain, with a clarinet solo on the A sections and trumpet on the B section. The fifth and final refrain is again vocal; Williams sings the English lyrics with very free variations on the melody in the A sections, and does scat singing with vocables on the B section.

Over a sparse arrangement with no ensemble passages, Midge Williams takes a free and very personal approach to this song. It is clear, however, that she had listened to and absorbed some of the earlier American recordings discussed above. Her blue-note inflections on certain phrases, especially on “Dinah Lee,” are similar to those of Ethel Waters on her 1925 recording. Most revealing is her rhythmic repetition of the phrase “you know her ... you know her” in the first A section of both the third and fifth refrains: the Mills Brothers use exactly the same repetition and rhythmic phrasing on the second refrain of their 1931 record. The shift from slow to fast tempo also suggests the influence of the Crosby / Mills Brothers recording; and the position of Williams’ scat-singing break, on the B section of the final refrain, is identical to that of the Mills Brothers’ trumpet-like scatting. On the other hand, Williams’ version of the A section melody, starting on the fifth above

the tonic, suggests possible influences from Cab Calloway's 1932 record, as does her style of scat singing.

Williams may have been the first person to perform this song publicly in Japan, and thus may have initiated the entire Japanese "Dinah" fad. It is interesting to note that the Columbia Nakano Rhythm Boys recorded "Dinah" at the end of January 1934, a month or so after Williams began performing at the Florida and less than a month before she made her own recording. Musically the two recordings have little in common, but the timing suggests that Williams' performances at the Florida may well have been the impetus that led the CNRB to make the first Japanese recording of the song.

### **Dick Mine and Nanri Fumio** デイック・ミネと南里文雄

Jazz singer and Hawaiian steel guitarist Dick Mine recorded "Dinah" as his debut for the Teichiku record company, in November 1934. The record was an enormous hit, and its success launched the singer's career, established Teichiku as a major record company, and set the Japanese "Dinah" boom into full swing.

In addition to singing and playing steel guitar, Mine himself wrote the lyrics for this version. He shares the spotlight, however, with Japan's leading jazz trumpeter, Nanri Fumio. Both were in top form on this session, and they produced what is widely considered one of the gems of prewar Japanese popular music.

Outline: Dick Mine and Nanri Fumio

Introduction: trumpet solo (free rhythm)

(Tempo: quarter note = 124 BPM)

Refrain 1: steel guitar (AA), saxophone (B), steel guitar (A)

Refrain 2: vocal with Japanese lyrics (AABA)

Refrain 3: saxophone (AA), trumpet (B), saxophone (A)

(Tempo: quarter note = 252 BPM)

Refrain 4: trumpet (AA), saxophone (B), trumpet (A)

A short unaccompanied trumpet solo opens the song. Nanri was a great

admirer of Louis Armstrong, and as Segawa points out (1992: 224), his introductory solo here quotes from Armstrong’s solo at the opening of “West End Blues.” The two solos are not identical, however, and Nanri’s distinct style comes through clearly. The first refrain, at a medium four-beat tempo, features Mine playing variations of the melody on steel guitar in the A sections, and a contrasting saxophone playing the B section melody. The second refrain is sung by Mine, with trumpet improvisations responding in the background. The third refrain has the melody played on saxophone in the A sections, with trumpet improvisations in the B section. A brief unaccompanied trumpet phrase (rather similar to one in Ted Lewis’s recording) leads into a doubling of the tempo and the final refrain, where Nanri’s brilliant trumpet solo takes the A sections, and a saxophone solo the B section.

Dick Mine’s arrangement, while highlighting his own and Nanri’s talents, also follows established precedents of “Dinah” performance. He sings in Crosby-influenced crooning style, though with distinct inflections, especially at the end of each phrase in the A section, that seem to be partly his own and partly influenced by Nakano Tadaharu. Trumpet solos and trumpet / vocal interactions had of course been a feature of many earlier recordings; the slow-to-fast tempo shift was used first by Crosby and the Mills Brothers in the U.S., then in Japan by Midge Williams; and the unaccompanied trumpet phrase that opens Williams’ recording may have suggested to Nanri the idea of doing something similar. The originality of this recording should also be emphasized, however. The steel guitar in the first refrain, and the tempo shift followed not by a vocal refrain but by a final trumpet solo, are both new and very effective features of this arrangement. Nanri’s solos, furthermore, show a mastery of jazz phrasing and rhythmic sense that are rare in early 1930s Japanese jazz. In his solo at the end of the song Nanri may have been influenced to some extent by Louis Armstrong’s 1931 recording of “Dinah,”<sup>6</sup> but the similarities to Armstrong’s improvisations are quite limited; Nanri’s solo is entirely his own.

Mine’s lyrics show some similarities to those used by Midge Williams, in the word *uruwashi* (here *uruwashiku*) and the line *watashi no koibito*. His lyrics are those of a sentimental love song, but like Nakano Tadaharu,

he plays with the sounds of Japanese words in a way roughly analogous to the rhymes and puns of the original English lyrics. In this case the word play takes the form of the similar sounds in *uruwashiki*, *shitawashiku*, and *kuruwashiku*.

After Dick Mine's version became a hit, further Japanese recordings of Dinah from other record companies followed in short order. We will consider two of these.

### **Rickie Miyagawa** リッキー宮川

Japanese-American singer Rickie Miyagawa, who had grown up in Seattle, Washington, came to Japan in the early 1930s with his younger sister, Harumi (Uchida 1976: 364). These two were among a number of Japanese-American singers active in Japan during this period, whose semi-exotic American identity and ability to sing in both Japanese and English gave them a special appeal to Japanese audiences.

Miyagawa recorded "Dinah" on June 18, 1935, with accompaniment by the Columbia Jazz Band, the same band with largely the same members who had supported Midge Williams on her recording over a year earlier. The elegant arrangement of Miyagawa's version is by guitarist Tsunoda Takashi 角田孝, who played on both records (Uchida 1976: 114; Segawa, *Nihon no Jazu Songu* CD notes).

Outline: Rickie Miyagawa

(Tempo: quarter note = 125)

Introduction: baritone saxophone (A)

Refrain 1: solo vocal with Japanese lyrics (AABA)

Guitar interlude

Refrain 2: trumpet (AA), guitar (B), trumpet (A)

(Tempo: quarter note = 243)

Refrain 3: solo vocal with English lyrics (AABA)

Refrain 4: trumpet solo (AA), scat singing (B), solo vocal with Japanese lyrics (A)

The record begins with the A section of the melody, played at a slow tempo on baritone saxophone. A short break of scat singing leads into the first refrain, sung in Japanese. After a short guitar interlude, an instrumental second refrain features trumpet playing the melody in the A sections and guitar in the B section. The tempo then doubles, and Miyagawa sings a refrain with the English lyrics at the faster tempo. A fourth and final refrain has a trumpet solo on the first two A sections, scat singing on the B section, and Japanese lyrics on the concluding A section.

Tsunoda’s arrangement shows clear influences from the Bing Crosby / Mills Brothers recording in the instrumental accompaniment of the first refrain, while the slow-to-fast tempo shift follows the tradition of Crosby / Mills Brothers, Midge Williams, and Dick Mine. Miyagawa’s vocals on the first refrain may be influenced by Crosby’s crooning style, but more direct influences on his melodic inflections would seem to be Nakano Tadaharu and Dick Mine. His English singing on the fast tempo third refrain, on the other hand, reflects the influence of the Mills Brothers, and / or Midge Williams: he uses the same rhythmic repetition of “you know her ... you know her” that we have noted on those two earlier records; and his variation of the A section melody, emphasizing the fifth above the tonic, shows strong similarities to that of Williams (and Calloway). His scat singing near the end of the recording, which Segawa suggests (*Nihon no Jazu Songu* CD notes) is in the style of Bing Crosby, seems to me closer to that of Cab Calloway or Midge Williams. It is notable that Miyagawa uses scat singing in only two places: as a lead-in to his first refrain, just as Cab Calloway does; and on the B section of the final refrain, following the examples of the Mills Brothers and Midge Williams. His Japanese lyrics, on the other hand, are those written by Nakano Tadaharu for the CNRB recording, done a year and a half earlier on the same Nippon Columbia label.

**Kishii Akira** 岸井明

Comedian and singer Kishii Akira recorded “Dinah” for Nippon Victor on October 25, 1935, using an arrangement by trombonist Taniguchi Mataji 谷口又士. Kishii was an admirer of Bing Crosby, and sang the song in a

somewhat comical crooning style.

Outline: Kishii Akira

(Tempo: quarter note = 110)

Introduction: ensemble (A)

Refrain 1: solo vocal with Japanese lyrics (AABA)

Refrain 2: ensemble variations on melody (AABA)

(Tempo: quarter note = 235)

Refrain 3: solo vocal with Japanese lyrics (AA)

scat singing with vocal imitations of trumpet (B)

solo vocal with Japanese lyrics (A)

The first two refrains are played at a slow tempo—about 110 BPM, the slowest of any version we have considered except that of Ethel Waters. The A section is played as an ensemble introduction, followed by a complete vocal refrain. The second refrain is an ensemble arrangement at the same slow tempo, with harmonized variations on the melody in the A sections, and a smooth interplay of separate brass and reed section parts in the B section. The tempo then doubles, and Kishii sings a fast tempo refrain with lyrics on the A sections and vocal imitations of a trumpet on the B section.

The influence on Kishii of Dick Mine's crooning style is evident in the slow-tempo first refrain: Kishii's vocal ornaments at certain points and his "Awww" interjected before the last A section seem to be borrowed directly from Mine's rendition of the song. In the fast refrain after the tempo shift, Kishii sings a variation on the melody that emphasizes the fifth above the tonic, just as Rickie Miyazawa does in his fast refrain; as noted above, this melodic variation seems to follow in the tradition of Cab Calloway and Midge Williams. The vocal trumpet imitations on the B section of the final refrain reflect Mills Brothers influence, and carry on the tradition (established by the Mills Brothers, Williams and Miyagawa) of scatting at that point in the song.

The lyrics of Kishii's version, written by Kamiyama Gasuke 上山雅輔, are of the sweet love song variety and avoid the puns used in other versions.

Taniguchi’s arrangement is quite polished, and the second refrain especially, with its *solì* (harmonized melody in the style of an improvised solo) in the A sections and saxophone countermelody in the B section, shows originality based on an up-to-date understanding of the swing band style that was emerging in the U.S.

### **Briefly noted: Parodies of “Dinah”**

The enormous popularity of “Dinah” and its multiple recorded versions made it ripe for parody, and parody versions soon appeared.

Comedian and singer Enomoto Ken’ichi 榎本健一 (popularly known as Enoken) released a version called “Enoken no Daina” (Enoken’s Dinah) in October 1936, using a musical arrangement (by Hosoda Sadao 細田定雄) and lyrics (by Satō Hachirō サトウハチロー) that parody the CNRB version. In place of Nakano Tadaharu’s “*Daina—utatte choudai na*” (“please sing for me, Dinah), Enoken sings “*Danna—nomasete choudai na*” (“please give me a drink, Mister”).

Kawada Yoshio 川田義雄 (of the group Akireta Boys) recorded a song called “Rōkyoku Dinah” in August 1938. It opens with a trumpet solo identical to that of Nanri Fumio at the beginning of Dick Mine’s recording, followed by an ensemble rendition of the A section melody of “Dinah,” but then changes suddenly into a *naniwabushi* (*rōkyoku*) piece with quite different musical features. The lyrics poke fun at the song and at each of the syllables of “Daina”: “*Daina no da no ji wa dajare no da no ji*” (“the ‘da’ in ‘Daina’ is the ‘da’ in ‘dajare’ [pun]”). Thus the punning tradition in “Dinah,” a feature of both English and Japanese versions of the song, is itself made into the object of verbally playful satire.

## **8. Conclusions**

We have seen that a variety of practices in the performance of “Dinah” seem to have been passed from one musician to another through the medium of records, forming lines of influence that might be seen as loose conventions forming part of an emerging tradition of “Dinah” performance. The recordings

discussed above may not have been the only “texts” that contributed to the formation of this tradition: other, less well-known recordings, not to mention live performances and written arrangements, may well have influenced some of the features and practices discussed above. With this qualification in mind, the major examples of “Dinah” conventions that we have seen can be summarized as follows.

Trumpet: Most recordings that we have analyzed include a prominent role for trumpet or cornet, often in dialog with the singer. This is a tradition that began with some of the earliest recordings (by Ethel Waters and Cliff Edwards) and was transmitted to Japan, reaching a high point in Dick Mine’s recording with Nanri Fumio. Nanri’s opening solo on this recording then became familiar enough to be imitated in the parodic “Rōkyoku Dinah.”

The voice-trumpet dialog concept that appears in many of these recordings has its origins in the city blues of singers such as Ethel Waters, as well as in early jazz. It is an example of the voice-instrument dialog form that is an essential feature of blues and much blues-influenced music, and can thus be considered an aspect of African American music that “Dinah” helped to familiarize in Japan.

Tempo shift (Slow first half—fast second half): This pattern seems to have originated with Bing Crosby and the Mills Brothers. It was then used in the U.S. by the Boswell Sisters, and by Midge Williams in her Japanese recording. Dick Mine presumably borrowed the idea from either Williams or Crosby / Mills Brothers, but substituted a trumpet solo for the vocal refrain after the tempo shift. Miyagawa and Kishii used the same device with vocals after the tempo shift, following the example of Crosby and Williams.

The tempo shift enabled “Dinah” to become a meeting ground for two categories of music: crooning, the new and intimate singing style made possible by the microphone, that had been perfected by white singers such as Crosby; and jazz, the African American music that during the 1920s had become a nationwide craze in the U.S., attracting both whites and blacks. For Bing Crosby and the Mills Brothers, the tempo shift was a way to bring

together Crosby’s crooning (in the slow part) with a hot jazz vocal dialogue highlighting the Mills Brothers (in the fast part). For Japanese musicians also, it was a way to explore two styles in one performance. Dick Mine’s languorous Hawaiian guitar and crooning vocal could be combined with Nanri Fumio’s hot trumpet solo on one record. Similarly, Rickie Miyagawa and Kishii Akira both tend to use a Bing Crosby or Dick Mine style of crooning in the slow refrain, followed by more “jazzy” melodic variations roughly similar to those of Midge Williams and Cab Calloway in the fast refrain. The tempo shift thus gives them the opportunity to combine in one song a relatively “white” crooning style with a relatively “black” hot jazz style.

Vocal group (interacting with vocal solo): Harmony vocal groups had been a major presence in American popular music since the late 19th century, and had developed through a complex process of mutual influences between blacks and whites. The first vocal group rendition of “Dinah” was by a white group, the Revelers, but clearly acknowledges the influence of African American choral groups through its reference to a well-known spiritual. This was followed by two records in which a white star singer collaborated with a black vocal quartet: Ted Lewis and the Four Dusty Travelers, and Bing Crosby and the Mills Brothers. The latter of these two, very likely inspired by the former, became a major hit in the U.S. and also one of the main influences on Japanese versions of “Dinah.” The Nakano Rhythm Boys version was strongly influenced in its musical details by the Ted Lewis / Four Dusty Travelers record, and at a more general level by the Crosby / Mills Brothers version as well. Meanwhile the Crosby / Mills Brothers version influenced other American vocal groups, such as the Boswell Sisters.

Scat singing: Improvisational singing with vocables was becoming popular among both black and white American singers during the late 1920s. Louis Armstrong was perhaps the most influential scat singer, but Cliff Edwards was another early practitioner, and used the technique on his 1925 recording of “Dinah” as we have seen. Following the precedent set by Edwards, perhaps, scat singing was a feature of later “Dinah” records from Bing Crosby and

the Mills Brothers to Cab Calloway, Midge Williams, Rickie Miyagawa and Kishii Akira. Among these, vocal imitations of the sound of a trumpet are used by Edwards, the Mills Brothers (who were famous for vocal imitations of instrumental sounds), and Kishii Akira. In these cases we might say that the “Dinah” tradition of scat singing overlaps with the tradition of trumpet solos. Moreover, a specific convention developed regarding the location of scat singing within the overall structure of a performance: the Mills Brothers, Midge Williams, Rickie Miyagawa, and Kishii Akira all do their scatting on the B section of the final refrain.

The styles of scatting ranged from the wild abandon of Cab Calloway to the relatively restrained improvisations of Kishii Akira. But even if done in a limited way, scat singing was one aspect of the generally playful mood of the song, which was expressed by American and Japanese singers alike.

Puns / verbal games: The original English lyrics, as noted earlier, are full of verbal playfulness in the form of puns and clever rhymes. The Mills Brothers added more play to the lyrics with their rhythmic repetitions of “Dinah” and “The name of this song is Dinah.” These innovations by the Mills Brothers may have inspired Japanese lyricists and singers to play with the words too. Japanese artists, in any case, had more freedom for lyrical games than did American artists, since they were working in Japanese and thus were not constrained by the original English lyrics as American artists were. Japanese lyricists came up with distinctly Japanese puns on the name “Dinah,” and Nakano Tadaharu, perhaps inspired by Bing Crosby’s African American style vocal responses to the Mills Brothers (“Well, tell it” etc.), used a Japanese style conversational response (“nn”) in interacting with his own vocal quartet. The parody versions of “Dinah” by Enoken and Kawada Yoshio were a natural outgrowth of the mood of lighthearted fun surrounding the song.

In general this analysis has confirmed the common opinion that the recording by Bing Crosby and the Mills Brothers exerted a strong influence on Japanese interpretations of “Dinah.” An important exception has been found, however, in the CNRB recording, which shows clear affinities to the 1930 recording by Ted Lewis, and relatively few similarities to Crosby’s

recording. Another qualification is that Midge Williams follows some aspects of Crosby’s performance in her own Japanese recording, so that some aspects of the Crosby influence on Japanese singers may in fact be indirect influence through Williams’ record.

American recordings of “Dinah” cut across several of the main genres of U.S. popular music: city blues, vocal quartets, vaudeville, 1920s jazz, crooning, and swing. Looking at the various recordings of it in the U.S. is to look at a cross section of the mainstream popular music styles of the time. In Japan, on the other hand, “Dinah” was in almost every instance a “jazz song,” a representative of the broad category of music known as “jazz,” and it helped that genre to move closer to the mainstream of Japanese popular music. In the process, it may have created tension with other, older genres of Japanese popular music, a tension that can be seen, perhaps, in “Rōkyoku no Dinah,” where this jazz song is parodied within a competing Japanese genre.

Although a full consideration of social and cultural issues surrounding “Dinah” is beyond the scope of the present paper, it is worth noting that performances and recordings of “Dinah” in the U.S. were part of an ongoing interaction between white and black artists and musical genres, and that in both the U.S. and Japan the song may have played a role in increasing mainstream awareness of African American music and musicians. The Revelers’ quote from “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” at the beginning of their version seems to be a frank acknowledgement of their musical debt to the African American vocal group tradition, an acknowledgement that many U.S. listeners would have understood. Ethel Waters’ hit recording helped to launch her often groundbreaking career as an African American singer and actress in the American mainstream. The recordings by Ted Lewis and the Four Dusty Travelers and by Bing Crosby and the Mills Brothers represent two early and popular examples of public musical collaborations between black and white singers. These were also the two recordings of “Dinah” that most strongly influenced Japanese artists; and while Ted Lewis and the Four Dusty Travelers may not have been well known among Japanese listeners, Bing Crosby and the Mills Brothers certainly were, and many of those listeners

probably also knew that Crosby was white and the Mills Brothers were black. Midge Williams, the most influential African American artist to perform in prewar Japan, may well have influenced perceptions of race as well as music through her performances and her informal teaching of Japanese singers. Black Americans and their interactions with white Americans were playing increasingly central roles in the development of U.S. popular music; “Dinah” was a part of this process, and it also helped to transmit an awareness of this process to Japan.

Like many successful Tin Pan Alley songs, “Dinah” is catchy, clever, well-crafted, and not at all profound. Its lack of depth is indeed a part of what made it so popular and so flexible, what enabled it to inspire countless interpretations and improvisations. The playfulness of the lyrics and the simple but appealing melody encouraged musicians, arrangers and lyricists to treat the song with a light and easy touch. Japanese artists, while working with the loose conventions that had evolved in the U.S. and responding to each other’s innovations, adapted and reinterpreted the playful spirit of the song through their own lyrical and musical creativity. The “Dinah” phenomenon in Japan shows how Japanese musicians, although very serious in their passion for jazz, were also having a great deal of fun with it.

### Notes

- 1 Data from the online database of the Center for Popular Music at Middle Tennessee State University: <http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/dbtw-wpd/textbase/musicbrf.htm>
- 2 See <http://www.jazzstandards.com/compositions-1/dinah.htm>.
- 3 For a concise explanation of the 32-measure AABA form, see Starr and Waterman 2003: 64–5.
- 4 Here and elsewhere, data on recording and release dates of records are derived from Komota et. al. 1994, Rust 1975, Yamada 2002, and Shōwakan 2003.
- 5 Tempos are based on my own measurements, and should be considered approximate, since there was some variation in the recording and playback speeds of “78RPM” records.
- 6 Armstrong’s 1931 recording of “Dinah” was apparently not released on a Japanese

label, but may have been available as an import.

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## Discography

Original 78RPM record numbers (initial release only):

Artist	Record Number
The Revelers	Victor (U.S.) 19796

The Many Faces of “Dinah”

Ethel Waters[1]	Columbia (U.S.) 487
Cliff Edwards	Perfect (U.S.) 11598
Ted Lewis & 4 Dusty Travelers	Columbia (U.S.) 2181
Bing Crosby & Mills Brothers	Brunswick (U.S.) 6240
Cab Calloway	Banner (U.S.) 32483
<i>Nakano Tadaharu</i>	Columbia (Japan) 27820
<i>Midge Williams</i>	Columbia (Japan) 27874
<i>Dick Mine</i>	Teichiku (Japan) 15073
Boswell Sisters	Brunswick (U.S.) 7412
<i>Rickie Miyagawa</i>	Columbia (Japan) 28493
<i>Kishii Akira</i>	Victor (Japan) 53606
<i>Kawada Yoshio</i>	Victor (Japan) 54598
<i>Enomoto Ken'ichi</i>	Polydor (Japan) 2341

CD and MP3 reissues:

- Calloway, Cab. 1990. *Cab Calloway and His Orchestra, 1931–1932*. Classics Records CLASSICS 526. One compact disc.
- Crosby, Bing. 2008. *Jazz Singer 1931–1941*. Retrieval Records RTR 79054. One compact disc.
- Lewis, Ted and his band. 2008. *The High-Hatted Tragedian of Jazz*. Van Up Records. MP3 collection (available on amazon.co.jp).
- Nakano Tadaharu and Columbia Nakano Rhythm Boys*. 2010. Columbia Music Entertainment, Inc. COCP 36178–79. Two compact discs.  
『中野忠晴／コロムビア・ナカノ・リズム・ボーイズ』2010 コロムビアミュージックエンタテインメント株式会社 COCP 36178–79
- Nihon no Jazu Songu: Senzen hen* (Japanese Jazz Songs—Prewar Volume): *Jazz Singers, Top Ladies, Top Guys*. 2006. Columbia Music Entertainment, Inc. BRIDGE-070. One compact disc.  
『日本のジャズソング～戦前篇：ジャズシンガー・トップレディース・トップガイズ』2006 コロムビアミュージックエンタテインメント株式会社 BRIDGE-070
- Nihon no Ryūkōka Shi Taikai* (A Compendium of Japanese Popular Songs). 1989. Library Association of Japan / Daicel Chemical Corporation. Sixty compact discs.  
『日本流行歌史大系』1989 日本図書館協会／日本ダイセル化学工業株式会社
- Orijinaru Ban ni yoru Shōwa no Ryūkōka* (Popular Songs of the Shōwa Period, from the original recordings). 1998. Nippon Columbia COCP 30171→90. Twenty compact

discs.

『オリジナル盤による昭和の流行歌』1998 日本コロムビア COCP 30171→90  
*Sing! Sing! Sing! Shōwa no Jazu Songu Meishō Sen 1928-1962* (Sing! Sing! Sing!  
A Selection of Famous Jazz Songs of the Shōwa Period, 1928-1962). 2001. Victor  
Entertainment, Inc., Japan VICJ-60718-9. Two compact discs.  
『シング・シング・シング：昭和のジャズ・ソング名唱選 1928～1962』2001 ビ  
クターエンタテインメント株式会社 VICJ-60718-9