N.B. (1) Because of space concerns, virtually all tracks below are excerpts. (2) The Index of Musical Works will lead to any text references for these songs. (3) Many of the tracks taken from commercial CDs are re-issues, and the liner notes do not always state the original dates of recording. For example, CD13 below was probably recorded about twenty years earlier than shown. (4) Melodic modes are shown at the end of each entry. Concerning the distinction of yo and ritsu, see pp. 36–8. Remember that the miyako-bushi mode may substitute a yo (inaka-bushi, min’yo) tetrachord in some passages, that occasional neighbour or passing notes may appear, that miyako-bushi and ritsu often shade into one another in actual performance, and that classification is difficult and sometimes arbitrary. (5) All tracks taken from commercial recordings are used by permission of the relevant company, who hold the copyright with all rights reserved. Sincere thanks to Fujimoto Soh for his help in licensing some tracks.

CD1: ‘Yagi Bushi’ (Gunma Pref.). Horigome Genta IV (vocal), Shiina Suketaro (shinobue) et al. As usual for this song, the singer chooses a convenient pitch without regard for the pitch of the preceding flute passage. In some songs (e.g. CD7 below) this may even happen when flute and voice co-occur. Percussion sometimes traditionally included empty wooden sake barrels, an effect imitated here. This long dance-ballad tells the tale of the famous local gambling boss and Robin Hood figure Kunisada Chu-ji (1810–50). (Victor CD Ketteiban: Nihon no min’yo, VICG-41013–14, 1997.) [yo on 2]

CD2: ‘Esashi Oiwake’ (Hokkaido). Aosaka Mitsuru (vocal). As with track 28, this comes from an instructional cassette. See Fig. 4.7. (Cassette Esashi Oiwake no utaikata, n.d. Esashi: Ō-seikai.) [yo on 6/3]


CD4: ‘Tsubaru Yosare Bushi’ (Aomori Pref.). Kikuchi Tetsuo (vocal), Hasegawa Yūji (shamisen) et al. An incredible piece of vocal artistry, partially improvised; other versions of this famous song may sound very different. Note the uneven
rhythm of the shamisen part. (Columbia CD Ketteiban: kore ga Tsugaru min’yō da, COCF-10981, 1993.) [yō on 6 with upper neighbour 7]

CD5: ‘Kiso Bushi’ (Nagano Pref.). Kiso Bushi Preservation Society, Agematsu-machi, Kiso-gun. Note that the dance-cycle length (marked by clapping) and the song-cycle length of this Bon dance song differ. (Victor CD Fukkoku: Nihon no minzoku ongaku, Furyū 4, VZCG-8020, 1998 (recorded 1966).) [yō on 5 = ritsu]

CD6: ‘Itsuki no Komoriuta’ (Kumamoto Pref.). Dōsaka Yoshiko (vocal). Before a popular arrangement around 1953 led to a standard stage version, countless variants of this lullaby were sung in the Itsuki region of Kumamoto; this is one of them. (Smithsonian Folkways CD Traditional folk songs of Japan (2 CDs), F4534 (original LP 1963); singer is identified only as ‘Japanese woman’ but is clearly Dōsaka.) [miyako-bushi on 6]

CD7: ‘Shinjō Hayashida’ (Hiroshima Pref.). Local residents of Shinjō. Rice-transplanting song. Notice that the vocals and flutes are melodically independent. (Victor LP Hōgaku Taikei 12: Kyo-do geinō, VP-3029, 1972.) [yō on 6 with variation]


CD10: ‘Sakata / Medeta Bushi’ (Iwate Pref.). Five elderly residents of Iwasaki gathered for a tea-drinking session, at which songs are sung (see Fig. 2.2). (Recorded by David Hughes [tape 1988.4], 24 July 1988.) [miyako-bushi on 3]

CD11: ‘Kuzunoha Kowakare’ (Niigata Pref.). Sugimoto Kikue (vocal, shamisen) and another singer. Two goze, blind female itinerant performers. Sugimoto briefly has to re-adjust her shamisen’s tuning in mid-song. (Victor LP Hōgaku Taikei 12: Kyo-do geinō, VP-3029, 1972.) [yō on 6/3]

CD12: ‘Kagoshima Ohara Bushi’ (Kagoshima Pref.). Maezono Tomiko (vocal), Ijichi Ayako (shamisen) et al. At 1′12″ the lead singer inserts a spoken hayashi-kotoba passage in heavy local dialect: ima kita nisedon yoka nisedon / sōdan kaketara hatchikoso na nisedon, ‘The boy who’s just arrived is a good-looking guy / but talk to him and he’ll probably run away’. A simple shamisen motif recurs throughout. (Victor CD Ketteiban: Nihon no min’yō, VICG-41013–14, 1997.) [miyako-bushi on 3]

CD13: ‘Yasugi Bushi’ (Shimane Pref.). Izumo Ainosuke II (vocal), Adachi Junkichi & Nosaka Suketoshi (shamisen) et al. This is a lively male dance version of this famous song. As usual for ‘Yasugi Bushi’, two shamisen improvise independent lines. Liner notes credit a player of the dōtsuzumi and kotsuzumi, which are uniquely played by one performer for this min’yō, but none are audible. (Victor CD Ketteiban: Nihon no min’yō, VICG-41013–14, 1997.) [yō on 6]

CD14: ‘Sasa Odori’ (Aomori Pref.). Residents of Neshiro, Hachinohe City. A single verse of 26 moras is made to last around a minute through repetition of