

## ***Hayashi* Festival Musicians**

The Nebuta Festival would not be what it is without its sounds and, much like the floats, the music is all hand-powered. The *hayashi* or *hayashigata* (traditional festival ensembles) each consist of 50–100 musicians and three types of instruments. During the parade, spectators first hear the pounding beat of the drums (*taiko*) from a distance, followed by high-pitched bamboo flutes (*shinobue*), and then the jingle of small hand cymbals (*teburigane*).

Two main melodies are played throughout the parade, with all *hayashi* performing the same tunes. This has been the case since 1952, when the festival organizers decided to adopt a common repertoire, known as *seicho hayashi*, instead of letting the committees try to outdo each other with different compositions. The *seicho hayashi* originally comprised 10 melodies. Eight of these were for the *taiko* and functioned as a means of communication within the float unit, signifying commands such as “Assemble,” “Forward,” and “Backward.” The latter two remain in use today, with “Forward” (*Shinko*) now considered the “theme song” of the Nebuta Festival. Played when the Nebuta float is moving forward, it contains the double meanings of summoning and seeing off the gods.