

Beyond “Sakura”: A socio-cultural exploration into the music and culture of Japan

CASMEC 2017

Friday, February 17, 2017, 3:30 – 4:20 p.m., McEnery Convention Center, Rm. 213, San Jose, CA

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Sakura - Japanese Folk Song

- A traditional Japanese folk song, most commonly associated with Japanese culture
- It depicts spring, the season of cherry blossoms
- Since Japan has distinct seasons, Japanese people have a great love for cherry blossoms that symbolize the start of spring.

Japanese Characters:	Japanese Lyrics:	English Translation:
桜 桜 弥生の空は 見渡す限り 霞が雲か 匂いぞ 出ずる いざや いざや 見に行かん	Sakura, Sakura, ya-yo-i no so-ra wa. Mi-wa-ta-su ka-gi-ri, Ka-su-mi ka ku-mo ka, Ni-o-i zo i-zu-ru, i-za-ya, i-za-ya, Mi-ni yu-ka-n.	Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms, Across the spring sky, As far as the eye can see. Is it mist, or clouds? Fragrant in the air. Come now, come now, Let's go and see them!

Sakura

さくら

sa ku ra sa ku ra ya yo i no so ra - wa Mi wa ta su ka gi - ri
Cherry Blossoms, Cherry Blossoms, across the spring sky, as far as the eye can see

7
Ka su mi ka ku mo - ka Ni o i zo i zu - ru
Is it mist, or clouds? Fragrant in the air

11
i za ya i za ya Mi ni yu - ka n
Come now, come now, Let's go and see them!

Instruments

String Instruments:

- Koto
- Taishōgōto
- Shamisen
- Biwa

Wind Instruments:

- Shō
- Shakuhachi
- Shinobue
- Horagai

Percussion Instruments

- Hyōshigi
- Mokugyo
- Tsuzumi
- Shime Taiko
- Ōdaiko

Children's Song:

Panda, Usagi, Koara (Panda, Rabbit, Koala Song)

- Activity: Replace “Panda”, “Usagi”, and “Koara” with your students’ favorite animals! Create new gestures to describe those animals.
- English Translation:

Come here, come here, come here, come here, panda, panda

Come here, come here, come here, come here, rabbit, rabbit

Come here come here, come here, come here, koala, koala

Panda, rabbit, koala

Panda, Usagi, Koara

パンダうさぎコアラ

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Obon Festival and Tankōbushi Dance (The Song of the Coal Miners)

- Obon is a series of events, usually held in July or August, that honors the spirits of one’s ancestors in accordance with Buddhist traditions.
- One of the events is a festival that brings communities together to share food, music, and dance
- *Bon Odori* is a communal activity for all ages to join together in dance to welcome the spirits of the dead
- *Odori* means dance. An odori during obon/bon season, hence “*Bon Odori*”
- Typically danced in a circle with the instruments (side flute and taiko drums) and the lead dancers in the middle on a stage.
- *Tankōbushi*, also known as *The Song of the Coal Miners*, is one of the most popular *Bon Odori* dances.
- Use this video for reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UC0ifLy7unk>
- Movements for *Tankōbushi*:

Face in the direction you are walking

Dig and step to the right (x2)

Dig and step to the left (x2)

Carry coals to the right, carry coals to the left

Look away to the left and step back, look away to the right and step back

Push to the right, push to the left

Open gate and step forward and back.

Clap-clap and clap in place

[Repeat]

Japanese Music: Past and Present

Noh Theater

- A major form of classical Japanese musical drama
- This art form combines dance, music, and acting into a dramatic showcase of Japanese traditional literature
- Noh Theater is easily recognizable by their unique masks and costumes
- Music usually includes drums and a shamisen; slow and drone-like
- Noh Theater Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o--VbWf6M0c>

J-Pop (Japanese Popular Music)

- Originally influenced by foreign music like The Beatles
- Music includes western-style rock band instruments and electronic music
- Developed into its own genre
- J-Pop Video (Kyary Pamyu Pamyu “Invader”):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcIOg_m-bp4

Activity: discuss with your students the contrasting elements of the two selections. Contrast the slow and fast tempos of each selection.

Children’s Song:

Kaeru no uta (Frog Song)

- Activity: sing in a round for a challenge!
- English Translation:

*I can hear the song of the frog.
Croak, croak, croak, croak,
Ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, croak, croak, croak.*

Kaeru no uta

かえるのうた

(Frog Song)

Ka - e - ru - no u - ta ga Ki - ko - e - te ku - ru - yo

Gwa! Gwa! Gwa! Gwa! Ge-ro, Ge-ro, Ge-ro, Ge-ro, Gwa! Gwa! Gwa!