



Smithsonian Folkways

An Introduction to Japanese Music: “Sakura, Sakura”

A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson

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Summary:

This lesson is aimed at bringing students experiences to Japanese music, including attention to listening to music in a minor key, singing Japanese words, discussing Japanese cultural sensibilities, and using the body to respond to music that moves at a slow tempo.

Suggested Grade Levels: K-2

Country: Japan

Region: East Asia

Culture Group: Japanese

Genre: World

Instruments: Voice

Language: Japanese

Co-Curricular Areas: Social Studies, History

National Standards: 1, 6, 8, 9

Prerequisites: None

Objectives:

- Listening to songs
- Try to sing along with the Japanese language
- Understanding the sense of the Japanese culture
- Expression with use of body movements

Materials:

- Piano
- “Sakura” by Okamoto from *Sakura: A Musical Celebration of the Cherry Blossoms* (SFW 40509)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/kyoko-okamoto/sakura/world/music/track/smithsonian>
- “Music of Six Steps” by Yuize : *A Musical Celebration of the Cherry Blossoms* (SFW 40509)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/shinichi-yuize/rokudan-no-shirabe-music-of-six-steps/world/music/track/smithsonian>

- *A Musical Celebration of the Cherry Blossoms* (SFW 40509) liner notes
http://media.smithsonianfolkways.org/liner_notes/smithsonian_folkways/SFW_40509.pdf
- Fumiko Coburn play the Koto at the Japanese Gardens Fall Festival in Fort Worth, Texas; photo available online
- “Awa Odori” by people from all ages: *Traditional Folk Dances of Japan Various Artists* (FW04356)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/people-of-all-ages/awa-odori/world/music/track/smithsonian>
- “Gujo Odori” by Japanese dancers, musicians: *Traditional Folk Dances of Japan Various Artists* (FW04356)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/japanese-dancers-musicians/gujo-odori/world/music/track/smithsonian>
- “Sado Okesa” by Japanese dancers, musicians :*Traditional Folk Dances of Japan Various Artists* (FW04356)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/japanese-dancers-musicians/sado-okesa/world/music/track/smithsonian>

Lesson Segments:

- 1. What Instrument Did You Hear?** (National Standards 6, 9)
- 2. Talk About Sensibility** (National Standards 1, 6, 8, 9)
- 3. What is Good Singing?** (National Standard 1)
- 4. Communication Through Movement** (National Standards 1, 6, 8, 9)

1. What instrument did you hear?

- a. Play recording of Sakura.
 - i. Ask the students what instrument they heard (the first 30 seconds of the track is sufficient)
 - ii. Show them the picture of a “Koto” which is a traditional Japanese instrument
- b. State that this song has lyrics and sing them for the students.
 - i. Ask students what they felt while they listening to the song, or how the song made them feel
- c. Have students listen to “Rokudan no shirabe” (“Music of Six Steps”) and “Awa Odori”.
 - i. Ask student to listen for differences and similarities between the tracks in terms of key, style, and melody
 - ii. Discuss if the pieces are in a major or minor tonality
 1. To help lead the students to the correct answer, ask them if the songs sound happy or sad



Assessment: Can the students concentrate on listening to the songs? The students should be able to describe if the pieces are in a major or minor (happy or sad) tonality? Are they interested in singing the song in a foreign language?

2. Talk About Sensibility

- a. Discuss how cherry blossoms fall.
 - i. Show students some examples of falling leaves
 - ii. Explain that Japanese sense of the fleeting nature of things and how this sensibility is expressed by the song
- b. Give some background history of the song of Sakura, and the words “sakura” and “Izaya”.
 - i. Ask students to pronounce “Sa-ku-ra” and “I-za-ya”
 - ii. Have the students listen carefully to the song and count the number of times they can hear Sakura and Izaya
 - iii. Discuss this and then let the students sing sakura together

Sakura:

Musical notation for the song 'Sakura'. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two measures. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first measure contains the notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, with the lyrics 'sa ku ra' above and 'i za ya' below. The second measure contains the notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, with the lyrics 'sa ku ra' above and 'i za ya' below. The bass clef staff is empty.

Assessment: Do the students understand the Japanese sense of the fleeting nature of things? Are the students aware of which Japanese words are being sung?

3. What is Good Singing?

- a. Discuss what good singing is.
 - i. Give students some ideas (such as breath management and intonation)
 - ii. Ask them to sing a single phrase while they draw a rainbow with their hands

1. All syllables should be sung evenly through the rainbow motion
- iii. Discuss the differences between singing with and without the rainbow motion
 1. Tell students how music is not about hitting notes, but about using the space between the notes to connect them

Assessment: Do the students express an interest in songs that are a minor tonality? Do they learn to sing long phrases properly? Can they differentiate between singing with and without the rainbow motion?

4. Communication Through Movement

- a. Have the students sing “Sakura” while sliding their feet quietly on the floor.
- b. Have students listen to “Awa Odori”, “Gujyo Odori”, and “Sado Okesa” to try sliding their feet with slow-paced dance music.
- c. Let students imagine what the sakura buds and flowers look like using their hands.
- d. Split the students into pairs.
 - i. Each pair of students should be facing each other, holding hands
 1. This represents the bud of a cherry blossom
 - ii. Next have each student face away from his or her partner while holding hands
 1. Students facing away from each other represent the cherry blossom in bloom
 - iii. Repeat this process with larger groups (four, eight, twelve, etc) until all students are in a single group

Assessment: Do the students have fun singing Sakura? Do they enjoy creating imaginary cherry blossoms together using body motions?

Sakura

Sakura sakura

Yayoika kumoka

Nioizo izuru

Izaya izaya Miniyukan

Cherry blossoms, Cherry blossoms

All around so bright in the March sky

Like a mist of floating cloud filling the air with Fragrance

Oh come, oh come, let us come to see the cherry blossoms