



Internet Guide

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Traditional Japanese Music

This Internet Guide presents annotations of Web sites that address generally the issue of traditional Japanese music and sites that focus on particular instruments (*koto*, *shakuhachi*, *shamisen*, and *taiko*). Music plays a large role in the traditional dramatic arts of *kabuki* and *noh*, so the guide concludes with annotations of sites addressing these art forms.

General Sites

The Color of Traditional Japanese Music

[http://web-](http://web-japan.org/nipponia/nipponia22/en/topic/index.html)

[japan.org/nipponia/nipponia22/en/topic/index.html](http://web-japan.org/nipponia/nipponia22/en/topic/index.html)

This article from *Nipponia* magazine discusses and presents photographs of 19 traditional Japanese musical instruments. The article suggests that Japanese traditional music is quite varied. The variety comes mainly from the different techniques used to create a wide range of timbre—the color of Japanese sound.

Japanese Music

<http://asnic.utexas.edu/asnic/countries/japan/japmusic.html>

This essay discusses traditional Japanese music, *gagaku* (ancient court music), *noh*, *shakuhachi*, *koto* and *shamisen*, folk songs, popular music, Japanese children's songs, western music, and new Japanese music.

Kids Web Japan—Traditional Music

<http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/koto/music.html>

Presents an overview of the history of the *koto* and traditional music in Japan, as well as descriptions of other instruments and how people enjoy them today. **A Look at the Koto** ([http://web-](http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/koto/parts.html)

[japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/koto/parts.html](http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/koto/parts.html)) offers an explanation of the *koto*, its parts, and the tools used to play it. In addition, you can “play” a *koto* by clicking on

Virtual Koto ([\[japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/koto/virtual-koto.html\]\(http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/koto/virtual-koto.html\)\).](http://web-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Ancient Japan: the Earliest Japanese Music

<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/ANCJAPAN/MUSIC.HTM>

Describes the earliest Japanese music (the musical life of the Nara and Heian periods and before) and early religious music. It suggests that perhaps the most permanent musical culture developed in early Japan was the *gagaku*, or court instrumental music, developed at the Heian court. It concludes with a discussion of Japanese instruments.

Japanese Traditional Music

<http://jtrad.columbia.jp/eng/>

This site presents a long essay on the history of traditional Japanese music; describes categories of traditional music and explanations of each category; discusses 11 musical instruments; and offers 100 selections of music (solo instrumental, vocal, and chanting), each several minutes long.

Music: Reflection of traditions from East and West

<http://web-japan.org/factsheet/music/index.html>

This Japan Fact Sheet discusses many aspects of Japanese music, not just traditional music. Sections of the Fact Sheet are: introduction; *gagaku*; religious music; *biwa*, *koto*, *shakuhachi* and *shamisen*; folk songs; Western music comes to Japan; the native ballad, or *enka*; the birth of Japanese pop music, or *kayokyoku*; “new music” and after; and Western classical music in Japan.

Particular Instruments

Koto

Koto Page for Kids

<http://www.kotoworld.com/kids.html>

On this page, you can read about the instrument, learn to make your own *koto*, and read the story of Plum Boy.

Virtual O-Koto

<http://www.genkienglish.net/genkijapan/koto.htm>

In addition to briefly describing the *koto*, this site lets you listen to a “virtual” *koto* playing one of the most famous

koto pieces, “Sakura, Sakura.” In addition, by moving the mouse over the “strings,” you can play the *koto*.

Koto no Koto (Koto Things)

<http://koto.home.att.net/>

This Web site is all about the Japanese instrument called a *koto* and the music that is made with *koto* and accompanying instruments.

Shakuhachi

How to make a PVC Shakuhachi

<http://www.fides.dti.ne.jp/~sogawa/englishpagepvc.html>

Professional shakuhachi performer and maker Kinya Sogawa shares his excitement about this wonderful traditional Japanese bamboo flute, and describes how to make one out of commonly available plastic pipe.

Shakuhachi Summer Camp of the Rockies

<http://www.shakucamp.com/index.htm>

The Sixth Annual Shakuhachi Summer Camp of the Rockies took place from Thursday, June 24 to Monday, June 28, 2004. This site discusses the curriculum, faculty, schedule, accommodations, and travel to the summer camp.

Bamboo Bell—Shakuhachi Zen Music

<http://home.earthlink.net/~neljen/indexbb.html>

Bamboo Bell is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public on the *shakuhachi*, the Japanese bamboo flute. The site describes a *shakuhachi* teaching method, and includes photographs and three *shakuhachi*-related articles.

Taiko

Taiko: Overview and History

<http://www.taiko.com/resource/history.html>

This site offers an overview of the *taiko* art form, links to *taiko* articles and research, and a glossary of *taiko* terms. It also notes that information about the various styles of *taiko* drums is available on the *taiko page* (<http://www.taiko.com/resource/taiko.html>).

The Art of Taiko

<http://library.thinkquest.org/5997/>

Developed as a thinkquest by four elementary school students at Bicentennial North elementary school, Glendale, Arizona, this site discusses the history of *taiko*. The students' experiences with *taiko*, how the drums are made, and how to play *taiko*.

Taiko Drum Lesson and Taiko Rudiments

<http://users.lmi.net/taikousa/lesson.html>

http://users.lmi.net/taikousa/taiko_rudiments.html

Maintained by Tatsumaki Taiko, a group of percussionists from the San Francisco Bay Area, this site offers a *taiko* drum lesson and drum technique and methods for improving practice.

Shamisen

Shamisen

http://jtrad.columbia.jp/eng/i_shamisen.html

This site presents a brief description of the historical development of the *shamisen*, describes its construction, and concludes with a description of playing techniques.

Tsugaru Shamisen

<http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/master/tsugaru/>

The *tsugaru shamisen* is a unique style of folk music that grew up in the snowy regions of northern Japan. This site discusses its history, what kids go through to master a traditional art or craft, how often these kids rehearse, and how they spend their time when not in the limelight.

Noh and Kabuki

Noh and Kyogen—the Instruments

http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/noh/en/roles_musical.html

This Japan Arts Council site describes the instruments used in the *noh* and *kyogen* plays—the *noh* flute, the shoulder drum, the hip drum, and the stick drum. Includes sound files for each instrument.

An Introduction to Kabuki

<http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/kabuki.html>

This *Japan Digest* notes that *kabuki* is a highly stylized performing art that combines acting, dancing, and music in an extraordinary spectacle of form, color, and sound.

Kabuki Sounds

<http://www.fix.co.jp/kabuki/sound.html>

Includes sound files for five instruments used in *kabuki*. Also includes sound files of shouts that *kabuki* enthusiasts often yell out during performances. See also <http://www.fix.co.jp/kabuki/kabuki.html> for more information about *kabuki*.

Compiled by Roger Sensenbaugh

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