


Music of Japan



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何 起
似 舞
花 弄
人 清
向 影

Summary



The **music of Japan** includes a wide array of styles, and is basically divided into traditional and modern. The word for *music* in Japanese is 音楽 (*ongaku*), combining the kanji 音 "on" (*sound*) with the kanji 楽 "gaku" (*enjoy*). Japan was the second largest music market in the world. Traditional Japanese music is quite different from Western music as it is often based on the intervals of human breathing rather than mathematical timing. In addition to traditional instruments Japanese music is also known for unusual instruments like the "singing wells" and "singing bowls".

Since the 1990s Japanese music is widely known and popular in the West, primarily due to its unique genres such as j-pop, j-rock and visual kei. Often these kind of music gets to the western listener through soundtracks of Japanese animation or video games. Almost every of Japanese cultural festivals is visited by Japanese groups and performers.

History

Traditional and folk music

There are two forms of music recognized to be the oldest forms of traditional Japanese music. They are *shōmyō* (声明 or 聲明), or Buddhist chanting, and *gagaku* (雅樂) or orchestral court music, both of which date to the Nara and Heian periods. *Gagaku* is a type of classical music that has been performed at the Imperial court since the Heian period. *Kagura-uta*, *Azuma-asobi* and *Yamato-uta* are indigenous repertoires (местные репертуары).

Instruments of traditional music

- The **shamisen** or **sangen** (literally "three strings") is a three-stringed, Japanese musical instrument derived (произшедший) from the Chinese instrument *sanxian*. It is played with a plectrum called a *bachi*. The construction of the shamisen varies in shape and size, depending on the genre in which it is used.
- The **koto** is a traditional Japanese stringed musical instrument derived from the Chinese *zheng*. The koto is the national instrument of Japan. Koto are about 180 centimetres length. It have 13 strings that are usually strung over 13 movable bridges. There is also a 17-string koto variant.
- The **Fue** is the class of flutes native to Japan. Fue come in many varieties, they are generally high-pitched (высокие) and made of a bamboo called *shinobue*. The most popular of the fue is the *shakuhachi*.
- **Taiko** are a broad range of Japanese percussion instruments. The process of constructing taiko varies between manufacturers, and can take several years depending on methodology. In feudal Japan, taiko were often used to motivate troops, call out orders or announcements, and set a marching pace.



Arrival of Western music

European music began to penetrate into Japan after the Meiji revolution. Since 1872, teaching singing in the Japanese school was introduced in the European manner. In 1887 the Tokyo Music School was opened, and the invited European and American artists taught here. Western music, especially military marches, soon became popular in Japan. Two major forms of music that developed during this period were shoka, which was composed to bring western music to schools, and gunka, which are military marches with some Japanese elements. As Japan moved towards representative democracy in the late 19th century, leaders hired singers to sell copies of songs that aired their messages, since the leaders themselves were prohibited from speaking in public. At the end of the 19th century, a streetcorner singing became popular; this was called rōkyoku.

Westernized pop music is called kayōkyoku. The first "Western" song in Japanese music was the song "Kachūsha no Uta" (Песня Катюши), composed by Shinpei Nakayama which was one of the first major best-selling records in Japan. At this time, the composers are increasingly becoming interested in foreign genres, among which the most popular was jazz.

Kayōkyoku became a major industry, especially after the arrival of superstar Misora Hibari. In the 1950s, tango and other kinds of Latin music, especially Cuban music, became very popular in Japan. Kayōkyoku became associated with traditional Japanese structures, while more Western-style music was called Japanese pop.

Western classical music has a strong presence in Japan but it does not represent Japan's original culture. The Japanese were first exposed (подвержены) to it in the second half of the 19th century, after more than 200 years of national isolation during the Edo Period. But after that, Japanese studied classical music earnestly to make it a part of their own artistic culture.

Popular music

J-Pop

J-pop is a loosely defined musical genre that entered the musical mainstream of Japan in the 1990s. Modern J-pop has its roots in 1960s pop and rock music, such as The Beatles. J-pop was further defined by Japanese new wave bands such as Yellow Magic Orchestra and Southern All Stars in late 1970s. Eventually, J-pop replaced *kayōkyoku* ("Lyric Singing Music").

Idol music

Japanese idol musical artists are a significant part of the music market, with girl groups and boy bands regularly topping the singles chart.

Since the end of the 2010s, more and more idol groups have emerged. The high number of idol groups in the Japanese entertainment industry is sometimes called "Idol sengoku jidai" (lit. Idol war age).

Yellow Magic Orchestra



AKB48



Rock

In the 1960s, many Japanese rock bands were influenced by Western rock musicians such as The Beatles, Bob Dylan, and the Rolling Stones. John Lennon of The Beatles later became one of the most popular Western musicians in Japan. Group Sounds is a genre of Japanese rock music that was popular in the mid to late 1960s. After the boom of Group Sounds, there were several influential (влиятельные) singer-songwriters, such as Nobuyasu Okabayashi and Wataru Takada, who was influenced by American folk music.

Homegrown Japanese folk rock had developed by the late 1960s. Performers like Happy End are considered to have virtually developed the genre. The band Champloose, along with Carol, RC Succession and Shinji Harada were especially famous and helped to define the genre's sound. Beginning of the late sixties is characterized by musicians mixing rock music with American-style folk and pop elements.

Several Japanese musicians began experimenting with electronic rock in the early 1970s. The most notable was the internationally renowned (прославившийся) Isao Tomita.

Also during the 1980s, Japanese metal and rock bands gave birth to the movement known as visual kei, represented by bands like X Japan, Buck-Tick, Luna Sea, Malice Mizer and many others, that experienced national, and international success.

In the 1990s, Japanese rock musicians such as B'z, Mr. Children, Glay and many others achieved great commercial success. In the 1990s, pop songs were often used in films, anime, television advertisement and dramatic programming.

Though the rock scene in the 2000s newer bands such as Bump of Chicken, ONE OK ROCK, Sambomaster, Orange Range, Remioromen, Radwimps and Aqua Timez have achieved success.



The Spiders



Isao Tomita



ViViD



Luna Sea



B'z



Glay



ONE OK ROCK



Bump of Chicken



Radwimps

Dance and disco music

In 1984, American musician Michael Jackson's album *Thriller* became the first album by a Western artist to sell over one million copies in Japanese Oricon charts history. His style is cited as one of the models for Japanese dance music, leading the popularity of Avex Group and Johnny & Associates. Among well known disco artists are Every Little Thing, Ayumi Hamasaki, Hikaru Utada and Morning Musume.

Hip hop

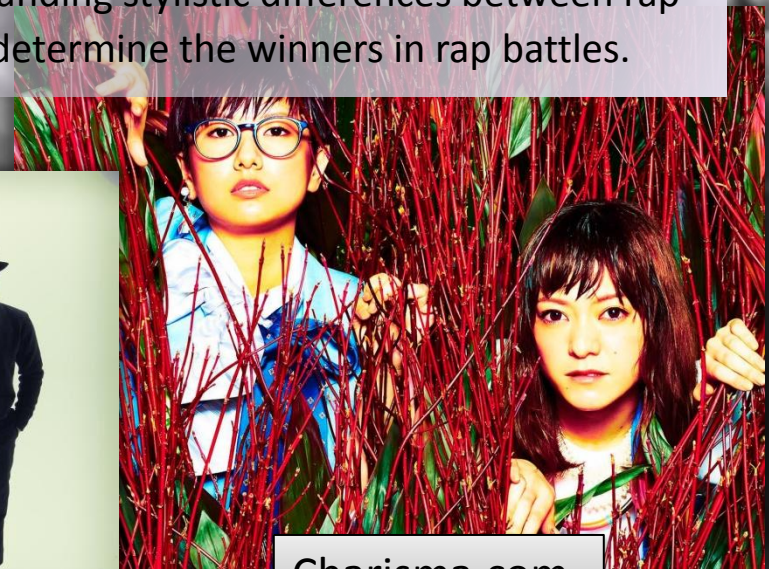
Hip-hop is a newer form of music in Japan. Many felt it was a trend that would immediately pass. However, the genre has lasted for many years and is still thriving. In fact, rappers from Japan didn't achieve the success in other countries until the late 1980s because of the music world's belief that "Japanese sentences were not capable of forming the rhyming effect that was contained in American rappers' songs". Different "families" of rappers perform on club stage. A family usually have a number of proteges, who know "the key to understanding stylistic differences between rap groups." Hip-hop fans in the audience are the judges who determine the winners in rap battles.



Every Little Thing



Dragon Ash



Charisma.com

Game music

When the first electronic games were sold, they only had rudimentary sound chips with which to produce music. As the technology advanced, the quality of sound and music these game machines could produce increased dramatically. Many games have had beautiful music to accompany their gameplay, one of the most important games in the history of the video game music is *Dragon Quest*. Koichi Sugiyama, a composer who was known for his music for various anime and TV shows, got involved in the project out of pure curiosity and proved that games can have serious soundtracks.

Another well-known author of video game music is Nobuo Uematsu. Uematsu's earlier compositions for the game series, *Final Fantasy*, are being arranged for full orchestral score. Koji Kondo, the sound manager for Nintendo, is also prominent (ИЗВЕСТЕН) on the Japanese game music scene. He is best known for his *Zelda* and *Mario* themes.

Jun Senoue is well known for composing music for *Sonic the Hedgehog*. He also is the guitarist of duet Crush 40 that is known for creating the theme songs to many other Sonic games.

Motoi Sakuraba is another well-known video game composer. He is known for composing music for the *Tales of series*, *Dark Souls*, *Eternal Sonata*, *Star Ocean*, *Valkyrie Profile*, *Golden Sun* as well as numerous Mario sports games.



Utaite

Utaite (歌い手) is a Japanese term for people who cover previously released songs and post them on Nico Nico Douga and YouTube under the utattemita (literally "tried to sing") category. The term "utaite" is unique to Nico Nico Douga singers, making it different from Kashu (歌手), which means "singer" in general.

Generally, utaite do cover songs for VOCALOID original songs, anime and game related songs, and J-Pop. They also do parodies with different lyrics for popular songs, intended for amusement.

Some utaite release original music/drama CDs during events like Comiket and VoMas. A few utaite also have become partly or wholly professional singers and have released their albums under official labels.

Recently, utaite appearing in concerts and live events have become more prolific (ДОХОДНЫМИ) and public. Most of these singers perform on Nico Nico Live concerts.

An utaite's wonderful covers are attributed not only to his or her beautiful rendition (ИСПОЛНЕНИЕ) but also because of the dexterous mixing and encoding (ЛОВКОЕ СМЕЩЕНИЕ И КОДИРОВАНИЕ) of the song so that it sounds high-quality.

VOCALOID producers are people involved in composing original songs. Some of these people also sing and upload their covers under the utattemita category. Famous producers who also sing are Tourai, Glutamine, GigaP, Mafumafu and many others.



Mafumafu



GigaP, Reol, Okiku



Amatsuki

Thanks for listening!

