

# Traditional Japanese musical instruments

**Traditional Japanese musical instruments** comprise a wide range of string, wind, and percussion instruments.

## String

### Plucked

- Biwa (琵琶) - pear-shaped lute
- Ichigenkin (kanji: 一絃琴) - one-string zither
- Koto (琴, 箏) - long zither
- Junanagen (十七絃) - 17-stringed zither
- Taishogoto (大正琴) - zither with metal strings and keys
- Kugo (箏篳) - an angled harp used in ancient times and recently revived
- Sanshin (三線) - three-string banjo from Okinawa
- Shamisen (三味線) - A banjo-like lute with three strings, the shamisen was brought to Japan from China in the 16th century. Popular in Edo's pleasure districts, the shamisen was often used in Kabuki theater. Made from red sandalwood and ranging from 1.1 to 1.4 meters long, the shamisen has ivory pegs, strings made from twisted silk, and a belly covered in cat or dog skin. The strings, which are of different thickness, are plucked or struck with a tortoise shell pick.
- Yamatogoto (大和琴) - ancient long zither; also called *wagon* (和琴)
- Tonkori (トンコリ) - plucked instrument used by the Ainu of Hokkaidō



Kitagawa Utamaro, "Flowers of Edo: Young Woman's Narrative Chanting to the Shamisen", ca. 1880

### Bowed

- bowed lute with three (or, more rarely, four) strings and a skin-covered body

## Wind

### Flutes

Japanese flutes are called Fue. there are eight different flutes

- Hocchiku (法竹) - vertical bamboo flute
- Nohkan (能管) - transverse bamboo flute used for noh theater
- Ryūteki (龍笛) - transverse bamboo flute used for gagaku
- Kagurabue (神楽笛) - transverse bamboo flute used for *mi-kagura* (御神楽, Shinto ritual music)
- Komabue (高麗笛) - transverse bamboo flute used for komagaku; similar to the *ryūteki*
- Shakuhachi (尺八) - vertical bamboo flute used for Zen meditation
- Shinobue (篠笛) - transverse folk bamboo flute
- Tsuchibue (hiragana: つちぶえ; kanji: 土笛; literally "earthen flute") - globular flute made from clay

## Reeded Instruments

- Hichiriki (篳篥) - double-reeded instrument used in gagaku

## Free reed mouth organs

- Shō (笙) - 17-pipe mouth organ used for gagaku
- U (竽) - large mouth organ

## Horns

- Horagai (法螺貝) - seashell horn; also called *jinkai* (陣貝)

## Percussion

### Drums

- Kakko (羯鼓) - small drum used in gagaku
- Taiko (太鼓), literally "great drum"
  - Ōtsuzumi (大鼓) - hand drum
  - Shime-daiko (締太鼓) - small drum played with sticks
  - Tsuzumi (鼓) - small hand drum
- Tsuridaiko (釣太鼓) - drum on a stand with ornately painted head, played with a padded stick
- Ikko - small, ornately decorated hourglass-shaped drum
- San-no-tsuzumi (三の鼓), hourglass-shaped double-headed drum; struck only on one side
- Den-den daiko (でんでん太鼓) - pellet drum, used as a children's toy



An ornately painted *tsuri-daiko*, used in gagaku music

### Other

- Hyōshigi (拍子木) - wooden or bamboo clappers
- Mokugyo (木魚) - woodblock carved in the shape of a fish, struck with a wooden stick; often used in Buddhist chanting
- Shōko (鈺鼓) - small gong used in gagaku; struck with two horn beaters
- Sasara (ささら) - clapper made from wooden slats connected by a rope or cord
  - Ita-sasara (板ささら) - clapper made from wooden slats connected by a rope or cord
  - Bin-sasara (編木, 板ささら; also spelled *bin-zasara*) - clapper made from wooden slats connected by a rope or cord
- Kokiriko (筑子, こきりこ) - many people confuse the kokiriko with the sasara and sasara are often sold outside Japan under the name kokiriko. In fact, the kokiriko is a pair of sticks which are beaten together slowly and rhythmically.
- Kagura suzu - hand-held bell tree with three tiers of pellet bells
- Kane (鈺) - small flat gong
- Shakuyoshi (also called *shaku*) - clapper made from a pair of flat wooden sticks

## Other

- Mukkuri (ムックリ) - jaw harp used by the Ainu people
  - Koukin (口琴) - general name for the jaw harp, in Edo period also called Biyabon (びやぼん)
-

# Article Sources and Contributors

**Traditional Japanese musical instruments** *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=459810009> *Contributors:* Alansohn, Badagnani, Bendono, Cattus, Ceridwen, D.h, Elijah11, Erkan Yilmaz, Favonian, Gogo Dodo, Joseph Solis in Australia, Kierano, Kogejoe, Kusunose, Loyalist Cannons, MatthewVanitas, Mtimpson, NawlinWiki, Noveltyghost, Oda Mari, Opus88888, Prosperosity, Puchiko, RadioFan, RobertG, Rror, Saineolai, Scapler, TerraHikaru, Tokek, Uitorio, Versus22, VictorianMutant, Vrenator, WikHead, 68 anonymous edits

# Image Sources, Licenses and Contributors

**Image:KitagawaUtamaro FlowersOfEdo.jpg** *Source:* [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:KitagawaUtamaro\\_FlowersOfEdo.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:KitagawaUtamaro_FlowersOfEdo.jpg) *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Ceridwen, Milena, Pitke, Toto-tarou

**Image:Tsuridaiko.jpg** *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Tsuridaiko.jpg> *License:* unknown *Contributors:* Badagnani

# License

---

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported  
[//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

---