



101 Japanese Children's Songs

日本の子供唱歌集 101

Development of Note Reading Skills

For VIOLIN



By Yoko Abe

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Preface

Welcome to *101 Japanese Children's Songs*.

This book is a collection of 101 Japanese children's songs which were mostly composed from 1884 to 1921.

Japanese people admire the beauty of nature, seasons and scenic places. Many lyricists and composers have expressed such beauty by creating songs for children. From 1912 on, Western music was accessible to the Japanese. Prior to that, however, they used the pentatonic five tone pattern (C D E G A C) which is challenging for children who have not grown up hearing these tunes. Unable to guess notes or keys, they must truly read each note to play it correctly.

101 Japanese Children's Songs consist of warabe uta, shoka, ancient tunes, and folk songs of various districts.

Warabe uta (similar to Nursery Rhymes). The composers and lyricists are unknown. The words and rhythms of warabe uta are very simple; often, only a few notes of a scale are used so that the preschool children can learn to sing easily. Warabe uta were sung by children when they played games with friends, usually in a large group (ages 4 to 10) or by parents and grandparents singing to their children over many generations. When I was a child in Japan I sang these songs with neighbor children as well. Some songs tell about the children's daily life. Other songs help children learn how to collaborate while they play together.

Shoka (Songs). These are songs that children learned at school or from parents or grandparents. Certain songs were selected by the Japanese Ministry of Education for the school text books from 1910 to 1944. They are called monbusho songs and were either commissioned or chosen from existing songs.

I hope that this collection not only improves note reading and sight reading skills for young students, but that it also provides them with pleasure while playing the tunes.

Author's Note

This book is dedicated to my aunt Ruth Tottori, who was a former Co-President of Honolulu Poi Company in Honolulu, Hawaii. She passed away at age 100.

I visited Aunt Ruth and her daughter Wanda in Hawaii many times. A couple of years before Ruth passed away I stayed at her house for a few days. Wanda warned me that her mother might start singing loudly at night. I did not pay too much attention to what she said because aunty was singing some during the day. But sure enough she began to sing loudly about 2 AM! This struck me as very strange. The first time I came to the United States, I stayed at my uncle and aunt Tottori's house for a month, and I never heard her sing a single note.

The songs Ruth was singing during the night were the songs I sang when I was a child. The next day I played those songs for her on my violin after her breakfast. Her face lit up instantly and she started singing. She had the face of an innocent child with a deep love for life and peace written all over it. As I saw her big smiling face and heard her sing at the top of her lungs, I felt it was very important to preserve some of these songs because they touch children's heart and stay with them forever.

When Ruth was very young her father took her to the field every day. He sang many Japanese children's songs to her while he was cultivating the field with a water buffalo. He had emigrated from Japan to Hawaii when he was a teenager.

Ruth made me realize how important the children's songs are to the Japanese people especially the ones who left Japan.

Yoko Abe

Japanese Language

5 Vowels: “A” sounds like “a” when you say “ah” or “father” not “a” when you say “dad.”

“I” sounds like letter “i” when you say “Hawaii.”

“U” sounds like “oo.”

“E” sounds like ‘e’ when you say, “evan.”

“O” is like “oh.”

46 Consonants: letters “k, s, t, n, h, m, y, r, w” combined with five vowels make 50 letters of Japanese alphabet (including five vowels), They are ka, ki, ku, ke, ko, sa, shi, su, se so, ta, chi, tsu, te, to, etc.

And we have one more letter “n” which you say “n” with your mouth closed.

Japanese does not have letter “L” Instead there is “R” which is pronounced somewhat between L and R sound in English.

Japanese pronunciation is very similar to Hawaiian language and lot closer to Spanish than English.

Translation and/or the explanation of the verses:

1. **Japanese Flag:** A red Sun in the center of the white rectangle is the Japanese Flag. How pretty it looks soaring in the blue sky.
9. **Little Stream in Spring:** After the Winter, the water of a little stream is gently passing by the banks full of vetch and violet flowers as if to say they are so beautiful.
22. **Moon:** The big full moon looks like a tray. She hides behind the black cloud, then she comes out again.
36. **Cherry Blossom:** There are cherry blossoms everywhere on the hill, in the field as far as you can see. It looks like the mist or cloud but the fragrance traveling through the morning sun tells they are cherry blossom in full bloom.
44. **Spring Has Come:** Spring has come, spring has come. Where did it come? It came to the mountain, field and my town.
50. **Home town:** The hills where I chased rabbits, the river I fished are fond memories of my home town that I often dream about and think about. This is a person who left his countryside home town to work in the big city and hopes to go back some day.
56. **The Moon Over the Ruined Castle:** Where did the glory of the old time go? The Castle is ruined and no more soldiers passing Sake Cup in the castle at Spring celebration. Only the moonlight through the pine tree branches looks the same as before.
87. **Peach Boy:** A dog, a monkey and a pheasant asked Momotaro, Peach Boy, at different times, “Peach Boy, please let me have one of the cakes. Peach Boy says, “You can have one if you accompany me to battle the Ogres who attack and steal from the poor village people.”

92. A Hare and a Turtle: A hare says, “Hello Turtle. You are the world slowest walker. Why are you so slow?” The turtle says. “No, I am not. Why don’t we race to the bottom of the hill over there?” The hare runs very fast but got tired so he thought it wouldn’t hurt to take a little nap because the turtle will never come this way. He woke up and sees no sign of the turtle so he runs to the goal just to find a turtle waiting.

101. Japanese National Anthem: Long live the Emperor and Japan.

Chapter 1

1. Japanese Flag

Okano

♩ = 108



shiro jini a ka ku hi no ma ru so me te

a u tsu ku shi i ni ho n no ha ta wa

2. My Doll

Monbusho song

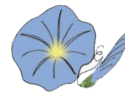
♩ = 104

Monbusho song

3. Morning Glories

Monbusho song

♩ = 136



Monbusho song