



# JAPANESE MUSIC GENRE: **ENKA**

Julie Waldrop



# What is it?

**Enka is a music style unique to Japan.**

This popular music genre **resembles traditional Japanese music.**

- There are two types: Traditional Enka and Modern Enka.
- Traditional Enka is from the Meiji Period.
- Modern Enka starts from the postwar era.

Although it is considered a traditional music style, it is still popular today.





# Origins of Enka

## Traditional Enka

Called **Sōshi Enka** (壮士演歌), Enka music started in the **Meiji period** of the 1880's to 1890's as a **political statement, criticism, or satire**.

Political texts were made into music and sung by opposition activists of the Freedom and People's Rights Movements to avoid the government's restrictions on political dissent speech.

During the end of the Meiji period, Enka songs expanded to express general emotions or feelings.

## Modern Enka

**Modern Enka** became popular **after World War II**. It was a shortened version of the old music, rōkyoku, and a kind of ballad that **expressed love, hardships, loss and more**. This is the genre that continues today.

# MUSICAL STYLE

## THEMES

Enka resembles the **blues** as it was based on the pentatonic scale and often has lyrics that express the same themes as blues songs. Some of these **themes include love, loss, sadness, death, and hardships**; however, it also includes **encouragement and self-perseverance** during difficult times. This is why the genre is considered to be emotional and expressive.

## TECHNIQUES

Also known as **kobushi**, enka singers employ melisma, in which one syllable is sung while moving between different succeeding notes. The kind of vibrato is slightly different as the pitch alternates irregularly in only one scale degree.

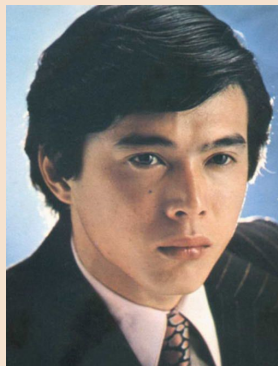


## PERFORMANCE

Enka portrays a **traditional and romanticized aspect of Japanese culture**. Enka singers are predominantly females and normally perform in a **kimono**, though male performers are dressed in formal attire and sometimes traditional attire. The melodies of enka are similar to Western harmonies. It uses **electronic instruments**, but also incorporates traditional **Japanese instruments**, such as the shamisen and shakuhachi.



# FAMOUS ENKA SINGERS



Mori Shinichi



Kiyoshi  
Hikawa

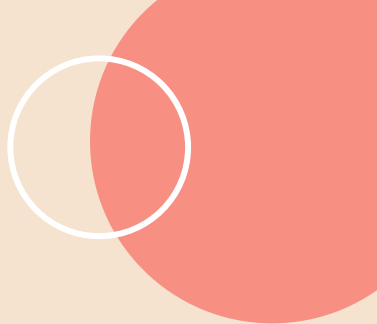


Ayako Fuji



Snow has melted, a brook murmurs, a wooden bridge

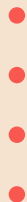




# MISORA HIBARI

Misora Hibari was the most popular enka singer and remains a cultural icon.

The singer and actress emerged in 1949 when she was 12 years old and remained popular until her death in 1989. She recorded over 1,200 songs and 675 albums. Her record sales had passed 100 million by 2019. At the peak of her career, she appeared in a new movie almost every month. She had received the Medal of Honor for her contributions to music and was the first woman to receive the People's Honour Award. She continues to sell hundreds of thousands of recordings a year and is still well-known in the Japanese music industry. Her most popular songs included Jinsei Ichiro (1970), Ai san san (1986) and Kawa no Nagare no Yō ni (1989).



# FAMOUS ENKA SONGS

- 津軽海峡冬景色 (Tsugaru Kaikyo Fuyugeshiki) - Ishikawa Sayuri, 1977
  - <https://youtu.be/Leiebo4V2cE>
- 酒よ (Sake Yo)- Yoshi Ikuzo, 2014
  - <https://youtu.be/DXW-8lsdsBI?t=330>
- 北の宿から(Kita no yado kara) - Miyako Harumi, 1975
  - [https://youtu.be/QKmma\\_bRdQE](https://youtu.be/QKmma_bRdQE)
- 女のみち (Onna no michi; Path of a Woman), - Miya Shiro and the Pinkara Trio, 1972
  - [https://youtu.be/UKe\\_jtPY-cA](https://youtu.be/UKe_jtPY-cA)
- リンゴ追分 (Ringo Oiwake) - Misora Hibari, 1952
  - <https://youtu.be/S0KLu6lZ5Yw>



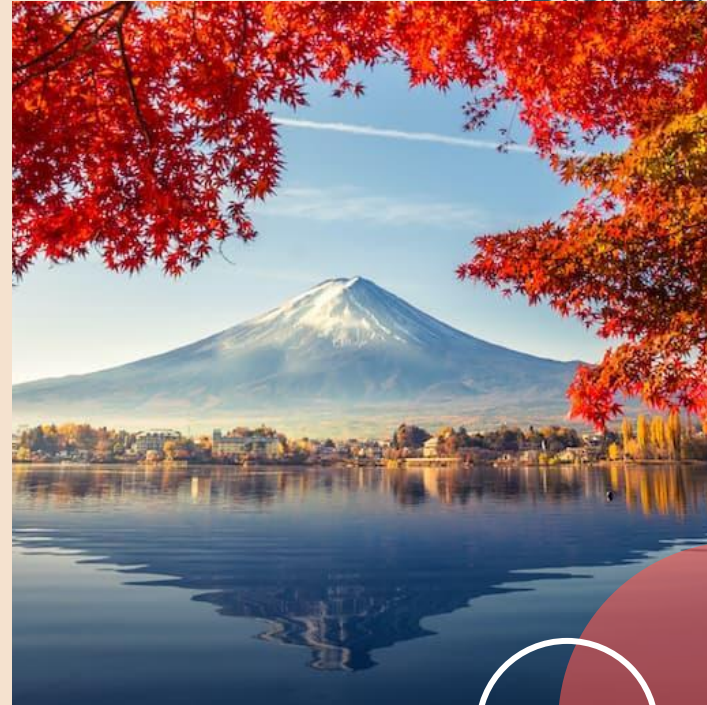
# SIGNIFICANCE TODAY

Enka music has been unique to Japan, and unlike other genres, it resembles traditional Japanese music.

While exhibiting Japanese culture and traditions, it has also become modernized and developed throughout the years.

Soshi Enka was very significant during the Meiji period as a method for political opposition and transformed to become important for self-expression.

Today, Modern Enka is still popular in Japan, especially among the elderly and adults. Although not as popular, the genre still permeates into the younger generation.

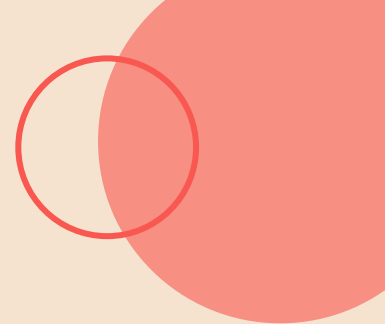




# SINGING WAS A LARGE PART OF MY MOTHER'S LIFE.

My mother loves Enka music and I hear her singing it during karaoke all the time. This is why I was intrigued to do research and create this presentation about it.





# RESOURCES

## Slide 2

- <https://guidable.co/culture/entertainment/enka-music-a-japanese-tradition/>
- <http://yabai.com/p/2750>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enka>
- <http://factsanddetails.com/japan/cat20/sub130/item1861.html>
- Image: 280 × 419

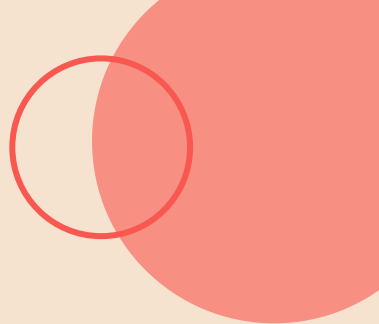
## Slide 3

- <https://guidable.co/culture/entertainment/enka-music-a-japanese-tradition/>
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- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enka>
- <http://factsanddetails.com/japan/cat20/sub130/item1861.html>

## Slide 4

- <https://www.musicgenreslist.com/music-enka/>
- <http://yabai.com/p/2750>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enka>
- <http://factsanddetails.com/japan/cat20/sub130/item1861.html>
- Landscape Image: 2145 × 1207
- Shamisen Image: 300 × 239
- 





# RESOURCES

## Slide 5

- Image of Mori Shinichi: 500 × 666
- Image of Kiyoshi Hikawa: 225 × 350
- Image of Ayako Fuji: 512 × 512
- Video of Mori Shinichi:  
<https://youtu.be/z5oWOPJtmEk>
- Video of Kiyoshi Hikawa:  
<https://youtu.be/Go-Gc8fSpdg>
- Video of Ayako Fuji:  
<https://youtu.be/Tpzdv3t5ZSA>
- <http://factsanddetails.com/japan/cat20/sub130/item1861.html>

## Slide 6

- <http://factsanddetails.com/japan/cat20/sub130/item1861.html>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hibari\\_Misora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hibari_Misora)
- Image of Hibari Misora: 410 × 667

## Slide 7

- Video of Tsugaru Kaikyo Fuyugesiki:  
<https://youtu.be/Leiebo4V2cE>
- Video of Sake Yo:  
<https://youtu.be/DXW-8lsdsBI?t=330>
- Video of Kita no yado kara:  
[https://youtu.be/QKmma\\_bRdQE](https://youtu.be/QKmma_bRdQE)
- Video of Onna no michi:  
[https://youtu.be/UKe\\_itPY-cA](https://youtu.be/UKe_itPY-cA)
- Video of Ringo Oiwake:  
<https://youtu.be/S0KLu6lZ5Yw>
- <https://medium.com/@howtojapanese/japans-top-50-bestselling-enka-songs-6066a1fe464b>
- <https://www.theboukengirl.com/en/blog/best-enka-songs-of-all-time>
- <https://takelessons.com/blog/famous-japanese-songs-z05>

## Slide 8

- <http://yabai.com/p/2750>
- <https://guidable.co/culture/entertainment/enka-music-a-japanese-tradition/>
- 960 × 640