



# Learn to play the Japanese Koto!! Grades 1 - 5

## What is a Koto?

The koto is considered the national instrument of Japan. It is an ancient stringed instrument with roots in China and Japan that extend back over 1,000 years. The koto is made from a wood called paulownia ("kiri"), and is about 6 feet long and a foot wide. It has 13 strings: each string has a white bridge placed under it which tunes the string. The koto is played using both hands, the right hand with three picks, called "tsume", made of plastic, and the left hand, which provides pizzicato sounds and also adds tonal shadings by bending notes, adding vibrato, and so on. It is built to represent a dragon, a symbol of good luck.

It was first used as a court instrument in Japan, heard only by the emperor and the royal court in a highly stylized kind of music called "Gagaku" ('elegant music'). Koto can be heard today in a variety of settings, from jazz to classical, pop to world music. The koto is very adaptable; it can be tuned to a variety of tunings, and played in a variety of ways, and blends well with many other instruments. It seems to be enjoying its new role as a world instrument.

## Koto Class - Introductory

Learning the Japanese koto can give students the same benefits as learning western musical instruments, with the added benefit of learning about another culture and language. Your child does not need to know Japanese to take this class. It is a good way to try the koto without going through the expense of purchasing the instrument or the equipment. The number of students in the koto class is limited due to the size of the instrument, which is 6 feet long, and takes up some space. We will only be able to accept up to 10 students per class. We will provide the instruments and the finger picks. Classes are once a week, Mondays from September 14 to November 16.

## **Shirley Kazuyo Muramoto – DaiShihan (Master's degree) koto instructor**

Shirley Kazuyo Muramoto, a native of Oakland, attained her teaching degree on the koto in 1976 Fukuoka, Japan, and her master's in 2001. Shirley is also the director of the world jazz fusion group, the Murasaki Ensemble. Because of her versatility, she is one of the most sought after koto musicians in the Bay Area, performing in a diverse variety of events and recordings. She has been teaching and performing in the Bay Area for over 30 years. Her website is [www.skmkoto.com](http://www.skmkoto.com).

## Class Information

**When:** Mondays, Sept. 14 to Nov. 16, (total of 10 sessions)

Grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 2<sup>nd</sup>: 3:00 – 3:45

Grades 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>: 4:00 – 4:45

**Cost:** \$150.00

To sign up, please send bottom portion of flyer with payment to **Shirley Muramoto, 4026 Woodruff Ave, Oakland, 94602. Phone (510) 482-1640** (tear off)

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**Name of Student**

**Grade/Teacher**

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**Parent/Guardian Name**

**Telephone (w/area code)**

**Email**

## **Circle One**

Grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 2<sup>nd</sup>: 3:00 – 3:45

Grades 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>: 4:00 – 4:45

**\*PTA Scholarship applicants:** return this form with scholarship application to the PTA box in the main office.

