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**Level/Class:**

This lesson is intended for third grade students of mixed ability levels in a year long General Music class.

**Objectives:**

The students will listen to, practice and perform the Japanese folk song, *Sakura*. Instruction will be given on the pentatonic scale with guided discussion to its unique sound and its five-note basis. To aid the students in understanding the significance of the music they will read and organize information about the Asian practice of flower viewing with particular emphasis on the favored species in Japan, the cherry blossom.

**Time:**

This lesson will take two one-hour teaching periods. The first hour will be used to introduce the pentatonic scale, using both recorded sound and hands-on opportunities with Orff instruments, and in learning and performing the folk song. The second hour will begin with a brief review of the song, followed by an overhead to read aloud, pictures to be viewed of the cherry blossoms in bloom and a simple paper-punch activity to decorate their music folders.

**Materials needed:**

- Overhead transparencies of a map of Japan, a list of review questions, a class reading activity and instructions for the paper punch art project.
- Listening examples of the shakuhachi flute, shomyo Buddhist chant and gagaku imperial court music AND video clips of performances by these groups.

**Shakuhachi flute:**

Soundtrack to "Legends of the Fall" (1994) : James Horner

Track 5 – Samuel goes to War

Soundtrack to "Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon" (2000): Tan Dung

Track 4 – The Eternal Vow

Soundtrack to "Memoirs of a Geisha" (2005): John Williams

Track 2 – Journey to the Hanamachi

Track 4 – Brush on Silk

Track 10 – The Garden Meeting

**Shomyo Buddhist Chant**

- [XEBEC SoundArts Shomyo](#)

[www.sukothai.com/Xebec-sakurai.html](http://www.sukothai.com/Xebec-sakurai.html) - 13k -

[wmp.emusic.com/album/Shomyo-Shomyo-Buddhist-Liturgical-Chant-MP3-Download/11184702.html](http://wmp.emusic.com/album/Shomyo-Shomyo-Buddhist-Liturgical-Chant-MP3-Download/11184702.html) - 23k –

## **Gagaku Imperial Court Music**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfPbyRzm-B8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfPbyRzm-B8) - 63k –

- Orff instruments w/mallets, finger cymbals, woodblock and gong  
(Share the Music ( copyright 2000) Grade 3 / Orchestration for Orff Instruments. McGraw-Hill School Division. Page 40 – Activity #13.

- Hand-outs  
[gojapan.about.com/cs/cherryblossoms/a/sakurafestival.htm](http://gojapan.about.com/cs/cherryblossoms/a/sakurafestival.htm) - 23k  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentatonic>

- Posters and/or prints of Cherry Blossom Festival  
<http://www.art.com/>

- Decorative paper, 6 - 1” blossom-shaped paper punch, pre-made green leaves, 25 white sheets, 6 glue sticks and 6 brown markers and a tree branch.  
[www.diynetwork.com](http://www.diynetwork.com) : Paper Punched-Art Cherry Blossoms

### **Assessment:**

Students will be informally assessed on their participation on the instruments and in singing. They will be formally assessed with a ten question quiz and on their completed art project.

### **Procedure:**

- A. Before class prepare the overhead transparencies and set out the Orff instruments already set-up with a pentatonic scale.
- B. Direct the students’ attention to the world map and assist them in locating Asia and identifying the countries that includes.
- C. Begin a dialogue concerning the music of Asia and what makes it uniquely recognizable. (allow the students to use their *own words* in describing what they hear and identify as b “Asian” music, before moving to the theory, technique and musical instruments creating that unique sound) Introduce the pentatonic scale (five pitches per octave) and compare that to the conventional heptatonic scale (seven pitches per octave). There are many different pentatonic scales such as the Yo scale (kids will love that name!) used in Japanese shomyo Buddhist chant and gagaku imperial court music. Play recorded examples and video clips of recent performances available on-line.
- D. Move groups of students to the instruments and teach the orchestration.
  1. Teach the bass xylophone/bass metallophone and alto metallophone parts.  
Have the children:
    - Sing the song as they pat the first beat and clap the third beat of each measure.
    - Transfer the first beat pat to the BX/BM and the third beat clap to the AM.  
Take turns playing the parts on any available barred instruments.
    - Sing the song as some children play the BX/BM and AM parts.
  2. Add the soprano glockenspiel/alto glockenspiel part.  
Have the children:
    - Sing the song as they snap eighth notes throughout.

- Improvise in eighth notes on the following pitches: D F# G B D' on any available barred instruments.
  - Sing the song as some children improvise on the pitches, as above, on the SG and AG. Gradually combine with the parts previously learned.
3. Teach the gong, woodblock and finger cymbals parts.
- Have the children:
- From two groups. Have one group sing the song as they clap the rhythm of the woodblock part, while the other group snaps after each time they sing the words *cherry tree*.
  - Transfer the claps to the woodblock and the snaps to the finger cymbals. Take turns playing these parts.
  - Sing and perform the entire orchestration as written, with the gong playing one suspended sound at the beginning and at the end of the song

### Day Two

- E. Review and perform, *Sakura*.
- F. Ask for volunteers, identified by raising their hand, to answer the questions on the overhead at the front of the room.
- G. Move to the second overhead, choosing several students to read aloud as the other students follow with their eyes.
- H. Divide the students into 6 groups of 4, hand out the art materials and read through the instructions from the overhead provided.
- I. Conclude class by collecting the folders, putting away the art materials, a “quick-ten” list of things they have learned and a final singing of *Sakura*.



## PAPER PUNCHED-ART CHERRY BLOSSOMS



1. It's important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to do this project. Punched art is free flowing. If you make a mistake just add an extra dab of glue and an extra flower!
2. Using the tree branch from the front of the room as a guide, sketch limbs on the white sheet with a pencil and then color the branches brown with the marker provided. Add more branches for a fuller look.
3. Punch several blossom shapes out of the decorative paper.
4. Arrange the blossoms and leaves on the paper and then secure them using the glue stick. Layering and grouping the petals in threes adds to the overall composition.
5. Make sure your name is on the back of your art work.

Sakura is the Japanese name for cherry trees, and their blossoms. Sakura is native to the Himalayas, including northern India, and to east Asian states such as China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Japan has a wide variety of sakura; well over 200 varieties can be found there.

During the Heian Period (794-1191), the Japanese nobility sought to copy many practices from China, including the social practice of flower viewing (*hanami*), where the imperial households, poets, singers, and other aristocrats would gather and celebrate under the blossoms. In Japan, cherry trees were planted and cultivated for their beauty, for the adornment of the grounds of the nobility of Kyoto, at least as early as 794. In China, the *ume* “plum” tree (actually a species of apricot) was held in highest regard, but by the middle of the ninth century, the sakura had replaced the plum as the favored species in Japan.

Every year the Japanese Meteorological Agency and the public track the *sakura zensen* (cherry-blossom front) as it moves northward up the archipelago with the approach of warmer weather with nightly forecasts following the weather segment of news programs. The blossoming begins in Okinawa in January and typically reaches Kyoto and Tokyo at the end of March of the beginning of April. It proceeds into areas at the higher altitudes and northward, arriving in Hokkaido a few weeks later. Japanese pay close attention to these forecasts and turn out in large numbers at parks, shrines, and temples with family and friends to hold flower-viewing parties. *Hanami* festivals celebrate the beauty of the sakura and for many are a chance to relax and enjoy the beautiful view. The custom of *hanami* dates back many centuries in Japan: the eighth-century chronicle *Nihon Shoki* records *hanami* festivals being held as early as the third century CE.

Most Japanese schools and public buildings have sakura trees outside of them. Since the business and school year both begin in April, in many parts of Honshu, the first day of work or school coincides with the cherry blossom season.

In China the cherry blossom symbolizes feminine beauty or love but in Japan the blossoms are believed to express the quick passing of life, because of their short blooming season. Cherry blossoms also symbolize clouds because of the way they look when they bloom, besides being an enduring metaphor (figure of speech) that is often associated with Buddhism, *mono no aware*. The brief blooming period, the extreme beauty and quick death, has often been associated with mortality; for this reason, sakura are richly symbolic, and have been used often in Japanese art, manga, anime, and film.

During World War II, the sakura was used to motivate and unify the people. Japanese pilots would paint them on the sides of their planes before embarking on a suicide mission, or even take branches of the trees with them. A cherry blossom painted on the side of the bomber symbolized how short and fragile life could be. The government even encouraged the people to believe that the souls of downed warriors were reincarnated in the blossoms.

The most popular variety of sakura in Japan is the *Somei Yoshino*. Its flowers are nearly pure white, tinged with the palest pink, especially near the stem. They bloom and usually fall within a week, before the leaves come out. Therefore, the trees look nearly white from top to bottom.

The variety takes its name from the village of Somei (now part of Toshima in Tokyo). It was developed in the mid-to late-19<sup>th</sup> century.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Japan appears to have been “torn away” from the coast of what country?
2. What countries make up Asia?
3. Explain the difference between the traditional heptatonic scale and the pentatonic scale used in Chinese and Japanese folk music.
4. Name the five pitches used on the Orff instruments in setting them up to play *Sakura*.
5. Name two other ethnic groups that use the pentatonic scale in their folk music.
6. Define the musical term “Improvisation” and explain how it works when using the pentatonic scale.
7. What yearly event is being celebrated in the Japanese folk song *Sakura*?
8. Explain the difference between a *xylophone* and a *metallaphone*.
9. What pentatonic scale is used by the shamyō Buddhist monks?
10. What is the first thing that comes to mind when someone says “Japan”?

## FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. Map activity:

On the map provided please label the following:

- China
- Japan
- Korea
- Taiwan
- The Himalayas
- Okinawa, Kyoto, Tokyo, Hokkaido

2. Explain in your own words the meaning of the phrase *mono no aware* and what that has to do with cherry blossoms.

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3. How were cherry blossoms used by the Japanese during WW II?

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4. How is a heptatonic scale different from a pentatonic scale?

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5. Define "Improvisation".

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