

A close-up photograph of Junko Ueda, a woman with dark hair, looking upwards and to the right. She is holding a Satsuma Biwa, a traditional Japanese stringed instrument, which is visible on the right side of the frame. The lighting is warm and focused on her face and the instrument.

Junko Ueda

satsuma biwa & voice

Japanese Traditional Story-Telling Music

” *A voice full of mystery and solemnity, yet sensuality... performing her instrument with an amazing precision and variety...*

(Le Monde, France)

” *Breath taking beauty...*

(De Volkskrant, Holland)

琵琶弾語り

www.junkoueda.com

Heike Monogatari

a story-telling tradition

Heike Monogatari is a most well-known thirteenth century's Japanese epic. It describes the rise and prosperity of the Heike-clan (Kyoto), from the beginning of the twelfth century until their ruin in 1185, when they lost their war with the Genji-clan from Kamakura (southern Tokyo).

Heike Monogatari is based on the Buddhist idea of cause and effect and human life's impermanence. The story opens with the famous philosophical poem **Gion-Shôja**.

The song is accompanied by satsuma-biwa. The masculine atmosphere of its striking-effect as well as the sensitive and plaintive sonority high-lights the heroic, tragic and dramatic episodes of the Heike Monogatari.

*At Gion-Shôja Temple
the sound of the bell
reflecting the resonance
of the impermanency of all life.*

*The color of the sara-sôju flower
tells us about the inescapable decline
of the human life.*

Pride is followed by a fall.

*During a spring night
just like a dream.*

”

Junko Ueda

satsuma biwa & voice



A musical performance of Junko Ueda extends Japanese ancient sound into modern times. The satsuma-biwa story-telling tradition is a unique musical treasures which has been passed on from generation to generation. Junko Ueda, born in Tokyo, Japan, is a Japanese singer and satsuma-biwa player, presenting Japanese traditional biwa music (story-telling) and shomyo Buddhist chanting. Ueda studied satsuma-biwa with the famous Kinshi Tsuruta (Tsuruta-ryû style) as well as Buddhist shomyo-chanting with Kôshin Ebihara. She studied composition (under a.o. Jôji Yuasa) at the Tokyo College of Music. Ueda is based in Europe/Japan and has presented her concert, workshop and other collaborations at music festivals all over the world (e.g. with flutist Wil Offermans ; cellist Yo Yo Ma; the Dutch Nieuw Ensemble; and composers Jean-Claude Eloy, Keiko Harada, Akemi Naitô). Ueda is also specialized to perform the pieces for biwa by Japanese composer Tôru Takemitsu.

Recordings

solo CD's

The two biwa solo CDs by Ueda **Japon: L'épopée de Heike** (CD650 VDE/AIMP, Geneva) and **Satsuma-Biwa** (ARN64577 Ethnomad/Arion, Paris) have received several prizes e.g. the Grand Prix du Disque, Académie Charles Cros, Paris and Choc Le Monde de la Musique, Paris.

CD Satsuma-Biwa

1. **Dan-no-Ura** (traditional Tsuruta-ryû style)
2. **Yoshitsune** (traditional Tsuruta-ryû style)
3. **Voyage** (composed by Tôru Takemitsu, 1973)

CD Japon: L'épopée des Heike

1. **Atsumori** (traditional Tsuruta-ryû style)
2. **Nasu-no-Yoichi** (traditional Tsuruta-ryû style)
3. **Ôhara-Gokô** (traditional Tsuruta-ryû style)



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