

2020 PHILADELPHIA OBON FESTIVAL



SHOFUSO
JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER



BON ODORI DANCE LESSONS



HISTORY

Bon Odori, or Obon-festival dance, has a long history, spanning almost 600 years. Although this folk dance is practiced throughout Japan, many regions have their own music styles and dances. For example, citizens of Tokyo would dance to the folk song, “Tokyo Ondo”, while “Awa Odori” is famous in Tokushima in Shikoku Prefecture.



History

There are two different types of Bon Odori dance, one is sento-odori, or traditional dancing, which features dancers dancing to live music, typically using instruments such as a flute, drums, or the shamisen, similar to a banjo. The other style of Bon Odori is called minyo-odori. In this style, dancers are accompanied by arranged music called Ondo and dance in a circle around a wooden tower built for the occasion called yagura. Some dances have participants dance around the yagura clockwise, and others go counter-clockwise.

Other dance customs that differentiate between regions are the dance moves themselves, and the use of props while dancing. Many dances are themed around the activities and work of the region. For instance, “Tanko Bushi,” the song of the Miike mine in Kyushu, has dancers mimic the movements of miners. Movements that simulate digging, hanging lanterns, or pushing carts are performed as dance moves, acted out in unison to the tune of the music by all of the dancers. Areas known for fishing might use moves inspired by fisherman, etc. Different Bon Odori will also use different props ranging from uchiwa-style fans, small towels with colored designs called tenugui, wooden clappers called kachi-kachi, among others.



Yagi Bushi

Gunma



Tanko Bushi

Fukuoka



Hokkai Bon Uta

Hokkaido



Soma Bon Uta

Fukushima





SHOFUSO
JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER