

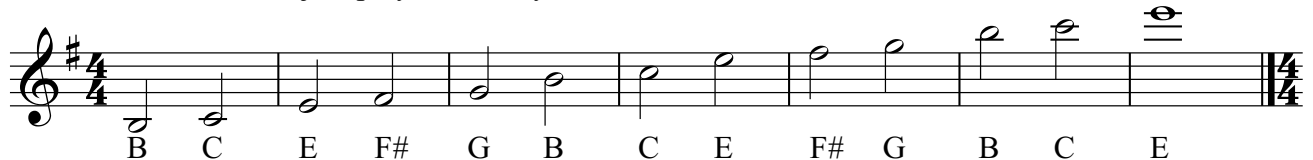


What Do We Know About Sakura?



Sakura is a song about the cherry tree coming into bloom. It was written for beginner koto players. The Koto is a traditional Japanese instrument with 13 strings tuned to various pitches of the notes D, E flat, G A and B flat. We have simplified the notes to fit the guitar better, but the effect will be the same.

Try and familiarise yourself with these notes as you will be using some of them to play Sakura. If you don't know them all just play the ones you have learned



Activity:

Improvise some short doodles using the notes you like most. You can make it sound Japanese by playing the notes in ascending and descending scales. Play next to the bridge on your guitar as it sounds a lot like the Koto. Also try using some of the rhythms you have previously explored to make it sound really interesting. Have fun experimenting with your creations.

The Song. Let's learn the words.

Sak-ur-a, Sak-ur-a,
No-ya-ma mo sa-to mo,
Mi -wa -ta -su ka-gi ri,
Ka -su-mi ka ku -mo ka,
A-sa-hi ni ni o u.
Sak-ur-a, Sak-ur-a,
Ha-na za ku-ri.

Translation

Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms,
Blanketing the countryside
As far as you can see,
Is it a mist, or clouds,
Fragrant in the morning sun.
Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms,
Flowers in full bloom.

Listen to Sakura being performed on a traditional Japanese Koto. <https://youtu.be/AK51LbIcEOw>
Sometimes it helps you to listen if you close your eyes. How does the piece make you feel?

Take some time also to listen to Manus Noble performing Sakura 'Theme and Variations' by Yuquijiro Yocoh on guitar. <https://youtu.be/Rud73FAo4RA>

1. What is a Theme and Variations?
2. Can you identify the different sound effects that the performer is using? Listen for sections where you can hear block chords, tremolo, harmonics, and pitch bends. Which is your favourite variation?
3. Can you find another example of a Theme and Variations to listen to maybe for another instrument or orchestra?
4. It would be fun to write your own Theme and Variations to play.

Minako - bonus piece that uses two note chords. Play either the top notes or the bottom notes or both together and listen to the harmonies. Minako is a Japanese name and means 'beautiful'. You could research some other Japanese names and find out their meanings.

