

BON ODORI DANCE TUTORIALS - 2026

All dance tutorials can be accessed through YouTube



BON ODORI UTA – Song of Bon Odori (*Uchiwa – paddle fan*)

Open YouTube, search: **American Bon Consortium Virtual Bon Dance #7 – 21:52**

ASHIBINAA – Let's Play – Shuken Maekawa

Open YouTube search: **Ashibinaa - odorigirl**

HAWAII ONDO – Hawaii Dance

Open YouTube search: **Hawaii Ondo (Michael Ching)**

KAGOSHIMA OHARA BUSHI – Kagoshima Prefecture Dance

Open YouTube search: **Learn How to Dance Japanese Bon Dance “Kagoshima Ohara Bushi”** (*Choreography differs slightly from ours, use choreography below)

Clap cho chonga chon/with right foot, step facing into the circle and spread arms (like safe), then step back with feet together and clap/step with right foot and flick hands up right side once/step with left foot and flick hands up left side once/step forward with right foot and make a half moon/step forward with the left foot and make a half moon//step back with left foot, salute with right hand, left arm by your side/step back with the right foot and salute with the left hand with right arm by your side/ step forward with feet together placing hands in front like holding a tray/take 3 steps, right, left, right/repeat clap cho chonga chon

MEMANBETSU BAYASHI – Memanbetsu Town Dance

Open YouTube search: **Memanbetsu Bayashi demonstration video-2021 virtual obon**
Buddhist Church of San Francisco

SHIGISAN ONDO –Mount Shigi Dance (Tenugui -- towel)

Open YouTube search: **Shigisan Ondo Ron /Gee**

UKI UKI ONDO – Cheerful/Excited Dance (Uchiwa – paddle fan)

Open YouTube search: **Tutorial and Practice Yuki Yuki Ondo Ron Gee**

YASAKOI NARUKO ONDO–Come at night to celebrate celebrate

(Naruko - hand clappers or kachi kachi -- castanets)

Open YouTube search: **Bon Dance OCBC – Yasakoi Naruko Odori**

KYUSHU TANKO BUSHI – Coal Miner's Dance

Open YouTube, search: **Tanko Bushi – Bon Dance Instructional Video**
Hompa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

BON DANCES AND THEIR MEANINGS:

BON ODORI UTA (1934) Song of Bon Odori

Ahh – Bon, how pleasant Bon is.
Those who have parted from us
Come to meet with us again, on this clear day.

Ahh – The clouds, from between the clouds
An envious moon, comes to see the dancing.

Ahh - The dance if you dance the dance
Clap your hands
If you don't take up the spirit of the dance
The song will never come forth.

Ahh – This evening, this evening's moon
A moon of True Thusness
We spend this evening contemplating
The religious devotion of our parents.

Ahh – The dance, the dance of Nembutsu (**mindfulness of the Buddha*)
The lightness and ease of spirit
There will be no pain in tomorrow's labor.

Ahh – The village, the village Obon
The red face of Emma (King of Death) is forgotten.

ASHIBINAA (1988) – Let's Play: By Shuken Maekawa

The title of the song Ashibinā means a garden or a yard in which to play. The song is about a dance party at Ashibinā. In Okinawa, they used to have a dance party at a religious precinct called Moashibi. The song begins by stating that, "on the night at Moashibi, I am so excited." Then he asks everyone to join the party and bring the taiko (drum) and sanshin literally "three strings" an Okinawan musical instrument and precursor of the Japanese shamisen); he describes how the hermit crabs and the girls both enjoy shaking their hips with the music. In the end, he sings that Ashibinā is happy place, where everyone dances with joy. The Okinawan word Ashibinā is composed of two words, Ashibi which means asobi in mainland Japanese, means play in English and nā which means niwa, a yard or ground. Hence, Ashibinā means a playground. In the olden days, the playground was also used as a "pray" ground to thank and ask the gods for abundant

crops and fish. It is thought that the word asobu (to play) had a close relationship with religious thought. In Buddhism "play" means to be free of any bonds and to enjoy saving other people. In Shoshinge, Shinran Shonin stated that those who attained the birth in the Pure Land and become Buddhas will return to this world, the forest of blind attachment, to play.

When they reach that lotus-held world, They immediately realize the body of suchness or dharma-nature. Then sporting in the forests of blind passions, they manifest transcendent powers; Entering the garden of birth-and-death, they assume various forms to guide others.

In the third line of this passage, Japanese kanji asobu is translated as "sporting." The origin of the word "sport" is Latin and old French, "desporter" which means play and enjoy. In the passage, "sporting" or "playing" implies to enjoy guiding other people to be born in the Pure Land. Our world or our heart and mind is compared to the forest of blind attachment but that is the place where the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are playing. This world filled with suffering is the Ashibinā for Amida Buddha, other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Wherever and whenever we suffer, as if playing, Amida Buddha enjoys saving us.

Lyrics:

moo ashibi nu yuru ya (it's already night for fun)
ishousha chinu dondon (My heart beating with joy)
ashibinaa ni Nna yuti kuu (Come and get together at Ashibina (my play garden)
Teeku Sanshin katamiti kuu (Carry your Taiko-drum and sanshin and come here)
dei wattaa shima – Uta Sanshin dikirachi (Let's sing our Shima-uta with excellent
Sanshin)
moorana tunugana (Let's dance and jump...)

Uta ni Shin tatatiti (Sing Shima – uta mindfully)
tunai nu mura madin (Up to the village next door)
Chika seru chimueeshi abitooshiga (intend to hear this song to the next village)
kazi ya maa niga huchoora yaa (I wonder where is wind blowing?)
dei wattaa shima – Uta hweeshi dikirachi (Let's sing our Shima-uta with excellent
Rhythm)
moorana tunugana (Let's dance and jump...)

ariari amangwaa (oh hermit crab...)
yaa kuma yuti kuu (You, too, come and get together here)
washita sima nu uta (our shima-uta make you come here)
ashibi chichi du caaga yaa chibi tugarachi (hermit crab, too, coming with its bottom
Peak)
dei wattaa shima – Uta Sanshin dikirachi (Let's sing our Shima-uta with excellent
Sanshin)
moorana tunugana (Let's dance and jump...)

yukubai suru gani gwaa (Walking sideward crab)
Yaa ya maakai ga (Where're you going?)
Anagwaa ru(du) tumeeti (Are you looking for a hole?)
Accurui abukun bukubuku mii guruguru (Crab's bubble is "bukubuku" and eyes
"guruguru")
dei wattaa shima – Uta hweeshi dikirachi (Let's sing our Shima-uta with excellent
rhythm)
moorana tunugana (Let's dance and jump...)
angwaataa ga mooii ya yoo (girl's dancing)
gamakun kun simiti (Tight waist)
niiseetaa ga hwichuru Sanshin ni (young men who play the Sanshin)
hweeshi tatituti chibi huihui (along with Sanshin, girls are shaking their bottoms)
dei wattaa shima – Uta Sanshin dikirachi (Let's sing our Shima-uta with excellent
Sanshin)
moorana tunugana (Let's dance and jump...)
Ashibinaa ya dikasinamun (Ashibina is the place where you get happiness)
umanchu uchisuruti tiibyoooshi (Everybody clap hands together)
awachooti hiyamikasee (girls dancing)
miruku yuugahuu manichun doo (we'll invite good year)
dei wattaa shima-Uta hweeshi dikirachi (Let's sing our Shima-uta with excellent
rhythm)
moorana tunugana (Let's dance and jump...)

HAWAII ONDO – (1991)

There is a popular comedic/folk song called Hawaii Ondo (released by the Tonosama Kings in 1991). The translations of its lyrics is an upbeat, whimsical travelogue about visiting the Hawaiian Islands, enjoying hula dancing, surfing, and soaking in the tropical sun.

Lyrics unavailable

KAGOSHIMA OHARA BUSHI –

Kagoshima Ohara Bushi (鹿児島おはら節) is the most famous folk song and traditional dance of Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan.

"Kagoshima": Refers to the prefecture and city in southern Kyushu where the song originated and remains deeply ingrained in the local culture.

"Ohara": Comes from "Ohara-cho" (or Harara), a specific district in Kagoshima City where the song is historically said to have been born.

"Bushi": Translates to "melody" or "tune," and is commonly used as a suffix for traditional Japanese folk songs.

Translation of the lyrics:

Flowers in Kirishima, cigarettes in Kokubu
Rising and burning, (o-haraha) it's Sakurajima
(ha yoiyoi yoiyasato)

Dressing up in a haori, and questioning the destination
Gently closing the chest of drawers (o-haraha) with my back
(ha yoiyoi yoiyasato)

Thinking of the slight rise of the moon as dawn
Leaving you (o-haraha) worries me
(ha yoiyoi yoiyasato)

Stop working hard for no reason
You should be concerned (o-haraha) because you get home late.
(ha yoiyoi yoiyasato)

Tired of my thoughts, I doze off,
Dreaming dreams (o-haraha) about my husband again.
(ha yoiyoi yoiyasato)

MEMANBETSU BAYASHI

Memambetsu Bayashi translates to "Memambetsu Festival Music" or "Memambetsu Folk Song." It refers to a traditional Japanese folk song and lively Bon-Odori dance celebrating Memambetsu, a town in the Okhotsk region of Hokkaido, Japan

Here's the breakdown of the name:

Memambetsu: A town (now merged into the town of Ozora). The name itself originates from the indigenous Ainu language, meaning "a river with a cool, clear spring."

Bayashi: Refers to traditional Japanese festival music—often featuring taiko drums and flutes—or a local folk song that accompanies a dance.

Because of its upbeat rhythm, Memambetsu Bayashi is very popular for Bon Odori (summer festival dancing) and is frequently performed at Japanese cultural festivals worldwide. The famous folk singer Takio Ito recorded a popular version of this track.

Lyrics unavailable

SHIGISAN ONDO –

Shigisan Ondo (しぎさん音頭) refers to a traditional Japanese folk song and circle dance associated with Obon summer festivals. It originated in the region around Mount Shigi (Shigi-san), a culturally significant mountain in the Nara and Osaka prefectures of Japan, famous for its ancient Buddhist temple, Chogosonshi-ji.

Lyrics unavailable

UKI UKI ONDO

Translates to "Cheerful/Excited Dance". It is a joyful, lighthearted Japanese folk dance often performed at summer festivals (matsuri) and Obon celebrations.

An onomatopoeia describing a feeling of excitement, happiness, or a buoyant, floating mood. It compares the feeling of a light, joyful heart to a bobbing float.

Lyrics available in Japanese only

YASAKOI NARUKO ONDO

Yosakoi naruko ondo refers to the traditional, foundational folk song and dance of the energetic Yosakoi festival, which originated in Kochi Prefecture, Japan.

The phrase breaks down into three key elements:

Yosakoi (夜さ来い): Translates literally to "come at night" in the local Tosa dialect, originating from an invitation to come out and celebrate.

Naruko (鳴子): Small, distinctive wooden clappers with colorful stripes (traditionally red, black, and yellow) used by every dancer. They were historically used to scare birds away from rice fields.

Ondo (音頭): A type of Japanese folk song or traditional rhythm designed for group dancing.

Lyrics available in Japanese only

KYUSHU TANKO BUSHI – Coal Miner's Dance (author unknown, song evolved amongst coal miners in Japan, first recorded in 1932)

The moon has risen, the moon has risen
High above the coal mine of Miiketan
But the smoke stack is so high, it may be smoky.

Beyond the mountains, one, two, three
Double camellias bloom.
But no matter how colorful the blooms are,
They are meaningless if Samachan won't come with me.

If there is truth in your words,
I will make up my mind to part with you.
If you can make me a girl of 18 again, I will part with you.