

Discover the Soul of Edo

vol.1

Written by Yasunobu Kitagawa



Yasunobu Kitagawa

Started training in traditional Japanese dance at age 3 and began studying shamisen and vocal music at age 6. In 2011, inherited the name 'Yasunobu' from grandfather and has since been active as a teacher and performer. Also creates new Jōruri works, handling lyrics, composition, and stage direction.



🌸 The Japanese Concept of “Sound”

In Japanese culture, sound is not just the instant it is made. For example, the beauty of a temple bell lies in its resonance — the lingering echo and the moment it fades into silence. This is the essence of wabi-sabi — beauty in transience and imperfection. Shamisen music is the same: listen not only to the notes, but also to the space between them, and you will feel the spirit of Edo.



♪ Unique Expression

The shamisen has only three strings, played with three fingers of the left hand. Unlike a guitar, it does not use chord shapes — each note is played individually. Yet, with these three strings, the shamisen can express an incredible range: from the chirping of insects to the bustle of a festival, from a quiet night to a raging storm, even the delicate image of a single autumn leaf drifting to the ground.

♪ About the Singing

Shamisen singing uses a unique vocal style: the mouth is not opened wide, and subtle control of the throat, tongue, and nasal sounds creates delicate expression. Vowels — a, i, u, e, o — are given special importance, similar to Noh and Kabuki performance. Unlike Western music, which divides roles by voice range and gender, a single singer performs all voices — from male to female roles. The shamisen's tuning is adjusted to suit the singer.