

# Discover the Soul of Edo

## vol.2

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## Traditional Japanese Shamisen Music — SHIN-NAI —

### ① What is SHIN-NAI?

**SHIN-NAI** is a form of traditional Japanese narrative music, born in the Edo period. It combines shamisen (three-stringed lute), narrative singing, and dramatic storytelling to express the emotions of love, sorrow, and the human spirit.

This refined art form was once performed for lords, merchants, and geisha in the old pleasure quarters of Edo (now Tokyo).



### ② Two Faces of SHIN-NAI

There are two main styles of SHIN-NAI:

#### ① SHIN-NAI BUSHI

A classical form of Jōruri (narrative music) from the Edo period, featuring long and dramatic performances.

These pieces often last nearly two hours, combining song, spoken lines, and vivid scene descriptions to tell emotional stories.

#### ② SHIN-NAI KOUTA

A modern, post-war development that blends the essence of classical SHIN-NAI with a more accessible style.

Each song lasts about 5–6 minutes, making it more approachable and popular with the public.

It sparked a major nationwide boom from around 1950, capturing the hearts of listeners across Japan.