

Discover the Soul of Edo

vol.3

Exploring the World of Joruri:
Japan's Narrative Music



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3. 🌸 Why It Captivates Us: Timeless Human Drama

Why has Joruri been loved for centuries? The secret lies in its **shift from history to humanity**.

Early narrative music focused on tragic wars and Buddhist teachings. However, Joruri revolutionized entertainment by focusing on **romance, real-life incidents, and social scandals**. Just like today's movies, dramas, and celebrity gossip, Joruri speaks to **universal human interests**. Whether it was a headline-making event 300 years ago or a classic love story, these themes remain as compelling now as they were then.

1. 🌸 The Origin: A Tale of Forbidden Love

The term "**Joruri**" dates back to the Muromachi period. It originates from the **Joruri Gozen Monogatari** (The Tale of Princess Joruri), a romantic story about the legendary samurai **Minamoto no Yoshitsune** and **Princess Joruri**. Initially performed by lute-playing priests (biwa hoshi), the story became so popular that audiences began calling it simply "Joruri." Over time, the performance evolved to include the **shamisen**, eventually becoming the foundation for Japan's traditional puppet theater, **Ningyo Joruri**.



2. 🎵 Eight Distinct Styles of Joruri

Since the Edo period, Joruri has branched into various lineages known as "**-bushi**" (styles), each reflecting the unique artistic identity of its founder. Today, there are eight distinct traditions that continue to preserve their own unique character: **Gidayu-bushi, Kato-bushi, Itchu-bushi, Tokiwazu-bushi, Tomimoto-bushi, Kiyomoto-bushi, Shinnai-bushi, and Miyazono-bushi**. Even though they all fall under the name "Joruri," each style has its own unique tone and musicality, ranging from powerful and heavy to elegant and lyrical.

Joruri is not just a classical art form; it is a living narrative that captures the essence of human emotion through the unique resonance of the shamisen and the power of storytelling.



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