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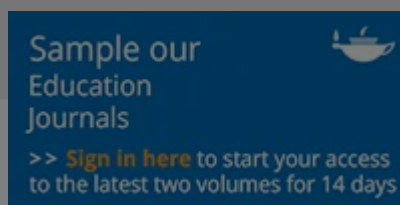
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Changing adult learning in Japan: the shift from traditional singing to karaoke

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Abstract

Lifelong learning in Japan involves various cultural and/or sporting activities for personal enjoyment rather than for individual or national economic benefit. Currently the study of adult learning in Japan is popular among countries where karaoke is a new phenomenon. This study examines the consequences of the shift from traditional singing to karaoke. Fifteen months of participant observation and survey revealed that the shift from traditional singing to karaoke is more than a change in the form of learning. These changes have made the

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Notes

Hideo Watanabe is Assistant Professor of Languages and Cultures at William Paterson University. He is a cultural anthropologist. His research interests include education, music, and religion in Japan and Korea. He can be contacted at William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ 07470-2103, USA; e-mail: watanabeh@wpunj.edu

Culture Centres are commercially operated adult education centres built in the period 1980–1984. They offer courses in a wide variety of subjects for a fee.

Karaoke is singing to recorded background music and was invented in Japan in the 1970s.

Kata is the stylized gestures or movements observed in Japanese arts and martial arts.

Iemoto is a hierarchical social structure of classical arts under which various disciples are interlinked with other disciples through their masters.

According to Japan's Statistics Bureau, the entire Japanese population was 8,320,000 in 1950, 11,706,000 in 1980, 12,693,000 in 2000 and 12,769,000 in 2003.

Utai was developed 500 years ago in the Muromachi period (1333–1568) and was studied by samurai as a means of self-cultivation. In the Edo period (1600–1868) it also became prevalent among wealthy merchants. Encouraged by the national government, it became popular among successful businessmen in the Showa period (1926–1989).

Since utai has an intimate relationship with the Japanese people, it has an important role in the history of Japanese culture.

Nagauta is a type of Japanese music that is played on a shamisen (three-stringed plectrum) and a vocal line. It was developed during the Edo period and is originally a form of music that was practiced by the lower class. However, having been taken up by the aristocracy, nagauta was widely performed at the Edo period and is present in the modern Japanese music scene.

Kabuki is a form of Japanese drama that was developed in the 17th century. It is a form of drama that is characterized by its elaborate costumes and makeup, and its focus on the lives of the samurai.



Shigin usually has no musical accompaniment. It developed at the end of the Edo period and was loved by samurai. Nowadays shigin is widely studied by elderly people and housewives.

Min'yô differs from other forms of traditional singing created by composers in the sense that it originated in local areas and was passed down from generation to generation. There was a min'yô boom some years ago, but that has now past.

Additional information

Notes on contributors

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