

## Music workshop 'Introduction to Japanese children's songs I “Warabeuta”

YOKO MOTONO

(Associate Professor, Junior College Tokyo University of Social Welfare)

DAIJU MISAWA

(Associate Professor, Tokai University)

TAKAYUKI NINOMIYA

(Associate Professor, Seirei Christopher University)

In Japan, children have consistently learned songs in their own language from early childhood education to the end of compulsory education. Warabeuta\*<sup>1)</sup>, which the authors will discuss in this article, are traditional songs for children. They originate spontaneously from children's play and daily life and have been passed down orally, often in the style of traditional games accompanied by singing. Even today, 'warabeuta' are actively incorporated into childcare and early childhood education facilities as playful songs in daily life, and are also included in primary schools music textbooks and are widely sung by children. It is not simply a continuation of conventional music, but has always been improvised from the creativity of children up to the present day, in other words, it can be seen as a form of living traditional Japanese culture. Therefore, children usually sing and play freely, without the need for musical scores or the use of instruments.

The 'warabeuta' with their playful songs are sung from the pitch of the children's normal voice, so the vocal range is relatively narrow, often within five degrees, and the children can sing without raising their voices or straining their voices. It is also said to promote the development of physical functions such as motor skills and a sense of rhythm while playing. Furthermore, playing happily with friends while singing 'warabeuta' improves communication skills and helps children to learn words and numbers used in everyday life while playing.

In this workshop, we would like to introduce 'warabeuta' accompanied by various kinds of play, from playing alone to playing in groups, and share the joy of 'warabeuta' with Thai children beyond language, with the aim of building communication.

\* 1) "There is no single definition or classification of 'warabeuta', but various theories." (Omi 2001), the definition and classification of warabeuta remains uncertain even today.

(1) Atsuko Omi (2001). Educational Significance of Warabeuta in Early Childhood Education. *Kawamura-Gakuen Women's University Research Bulletin*, 12-2. 70

## Music workshop 'Introduction to Japanese Children's Songs II "Niji"

TAKAYUKI NINOMIYA

(Associate Professor, Seirei Christopher University)

YOKO MOTONO

(Associate Professor, Junior College Tokyo University of Social Welfare)

DAIJU MISAWA

(Associate Professor, Tokai University)

In Japan, there are national guidelines for early childhood education, such as 'nursery school guidelines' and 'kindergarten education guidelines', which include the five areas of 'health', 'human relations', 'environment', 'language' and 'expression' as matters of instruction to achieve the 'aims'. This time, we will introduce a song called 'Niji' <sup>1)</sup> from 'Japanese Children's Songs', which is related to 'Expression' in the five areas, together with a performance of the song.

Firstly, in the musical activities of the "Expression" area of Japanese early childhood education, activities are developed so that children can "experience fun" through singing songs and using simple rhythm instruments. In particular, in singing, the aim is not to create a highly finished musical work by playing the pitch and rhythm perfectly according to the score, but to listen to songs, sing favourite parts and sing along with physical expression, so that young children can enjoy expressive activities while the childcare workers are creative and ingenious every day.

This time, we will focus on the song "Niji", which is very popular among Japanese children. This song is in 4/4 time and in the key of G major, with the lowest note being A3 and the highest B4, which is a natural and easy range for young children to sing in terms of their vocal range. The lyrics are also easy to understand because they are written about scenes of daily life and nature that are familiar to young children. Although there are various theories in previous research, some studies by Motono (2021) et al. have reported that children's pitch begins to become unstable above C5.<sup>2)</sup>

This time, we would like to share the opportunity to get to know "Niji", a popular song among Japanese children, and, if possible, to enjoy musical expression by adding physical expression in line with the lyrics.

(1) Yoshiko Ito (2008), Message Songs in Sign Language 25, *Ongakunotomoshia*, pp.102-103.

(2) Motono Yoko. Ninomiya Takayuki. Okamura Hiroshi. (2021) *Proceedings of the 41st Annual Conference of the International Society for Early Childhood Education*.