

Kimi'ngayo

君が代

(Japanese National Anthem)

for TTBB, a cappella

Arr. by

Kentaro Sato



Wiseman Project

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Practical Japanese Singing Pronunciation with IPA by Kentaro Sato (Ken-P)

1. Japanese Singing Vowels

There are five vowels in the Japanese language, and they are transcribed as “I/i,” “E/e,” “A/a,” “O/o,” and “U/u.”

i = [i], same as English “long e [pronounced ‘ee’],” as in “feet [fi:t]” & “me [mi:].”

You may slightly modify [i] toward [ɪ] to achieve unified vowel production. Do not make it [j] even if another vowel follows.

e = [ɛ], same as English “short e [pronounced ‘eh’],” as in “fed [fɛd]” & “met [mɛt].”

Do not use either [e] or [æ] for this sound.

a = [ɑ], same as English “open a [pronounced ‘ah’],” as in “far [fɑ:] / fɑə]” & “Mars [mɑ:z / mɑə-z].”

You may use [a] or [ʌ] to achieve unified vowel production in some cases. Do not use neither [æ] nor [ɔ] for this sound.

o = [o], same as English “long or closed o [pronounced ‘oh’],” as in “hole [hoʊl]” & “pole [poʊl].” *(not UK [həʊl] / [pəʊl])

You may slightly modify [o] toward [ɔ] for louder/higher passages. Do not make it the English diphthong [oo].

u = [u], same as English “long u [pronounced ‘oo’],” as in “food [fu:d]” & “moon [mu:n]”

Although the Japanese spoken “u” is closer to [ʊ] or [ɪ], do not use this spoken “u” for singing.

Do not make it [w], even if another vowel follows.

2. Japanese Singing Consonants

Transcription	IPA	English Example	Transcription	IPA	English Example
b	[b]	boss [bɒs]	m	[m]	map [mæp]
by	[bj]	Bjorn [bjɔ:n / bjɔən]	my	[mj]	mute [mjʊ:t]
ch	[tɕ]	(alternative [tʃ]), chess [tʃɛs]	n	[n]	nod [nɒd]
d	[d]	dot [dɒt]	ny	[nj]	lanyard [læ.njəd / læ.njəd]
dy	[dj]	due [dju:] *some speakers pronounce it [du:].	ng	[ŋ]	song [sɒŋ]
dz	[dʒ]	odds [ɒdʒ]	ngy	[ŋj]	
f	[f]	food [fu:d] *foreign or foreign-origin words only.	p	[p]	pot [pɒt]
g	[g]	gut [gʌt]	py	[pj]	pure [pjʊə / pjʊə]
gy	[gj]	Magyar [mæ.gja: / mæ.gjaə]	r	[ɾ]	(alternative [l], look [lɒk])
h	[h]	hat [hæt] *before transcribed “e” “a” & “o”	ry	[ɾj]	(alternative [lj], Liu [lju])
h	[ç]	(alternative [h], he [hi:]) *before transcribed “i”	s	[s]	sing [sɪŋ]
h	[φ]	(alternative [h], who [hu:]) *before transcribed “u”	sh	[ɕ]	(alternative [ʃ], she [ʃi:])
hy	[ç]	(alternative [hj], hue [hju:])	t	[t]	tall [tɔ:l]
hw	[φ]	(alternative [f], fee [fi:])	ts	[ts]	pets [pɛts]
j	[dʒ]	(alternative [dʒ], jet [dʒet])	v	[v]	veal [vi:l] *foreign or foreign-origin words only.
k	[k]	king [kɪŋ]	w	[β]	(alternative [w], wall [wɔ:l])
ky	[kj]	cute [kju:t]	y	[j]	you [ju:]
l	[l]	leap [li:p] *foreign or foreign-origin words only.	z	[z]	zebra [zɛ.brə / zi:.brə]

i.) Japanese sh [ɕ], j [dʒ], and ch [tɕ] are different from their English counterparts, sh [ʃ], j [dʒ / ʒ], ch [tʃ]. Japanese sh, j, and ch should be produced with an “i-ish” mouth shape with no lip pursing, and they contain higher overtones than their English counterparts.

ii.) Japanese “r” is a one-tapped/flapped/flipped r. Do not use an Italian rolled r [r], an English r [ɹ], a French uvular r [ʀ], or a Chinese r [ɹ]. If this is difficult, you may substitute “l” [l] for it.

iii.) Although the Japanese spoken “w [β]” has less roundness of the lips than the English “w [w]” (or even no roundness), singers may use [w].

iv.) Although the Japanese spoken “n” may change its sound to [n], [ŋ], [ɳ] or [ɴ] according to what follows it, [n] will suffice in singing.

v.) A sound of “ng [ŋ]” or “ngy [ŋj]” is called “びたくおん bidakuon” in Japanese. Do not use [g] or [gj] as a substitution.

3. Structure of Japanese Syllables

Unlike English syllables, Japanese syllables are almost always open (i.e., they end with a vowel sound) with no liaison. In addition, they are monophthongs (i.e., they contain only one vowel in a syllable, with no glide). Therefore, most Japanese syllables are either: 1) [one vowel]; or 2) [one consonant/ consonant cluster] + [one vowel]. However, some exceptions might occur with the consonants “n” and “m.” Both “n” and “m” might appear at the end of a syllable, as in “pen” and “beam,” but they are not as strong as their English counterparts, which sound “pen-uh” and “beam-uh.” There may also appear either an open “n” [as in ‘rock ‘n’ roll’] or closed “m” humming, which makes them pseudo-independent syllables. There may also be an exception to the voiceless consonants becoming pseudo-independent syllables: when they are followed by a vowel in parentheses or a small circle (e.g., “light 光/ひかり h(i)kari / hikari [φ.ka.ri]”), this indicates that the vowel may drop, thereby becoming non-pitched, because it is too short. The score will indicate such exceptions and how to execute them vocally.

Capital letters indicate the first letter of a word. A hyphen indicates that the connected syllables belong to a word or a meaningful chunk of a sentence; therefore, it is best to avoid taking a noticeable breath at any hyphenated part. Both a macron (a straight bar placed above a letter) and consecutive same vowels indicate that the vowel is long (e.g., “pass 通る/とる tōru/tooru [to:.ru]” vs “get 取る/とる toru [to.ru]”). A macron is preferred. In speech, Japanese syllables maintain a steady and constant duration, although this rule might not be apparent in music; therefore, a macron or consecutive same vowels may not appear in the score, since the duration of the vowel is determined by the given note value.

In order to make the syllabic separation clearer, an apostrophe may appear: 1) to indicate a clear separation with a possible glottal attack before a vowel (e.g., a big man おおとこ Ōotoko = Ō-o-to-ko [o:.o.to.ko]; and 2) to designate pseudo-independent syllabic consonants (e.g., “easy 安易/あにい an'i = a-n-i [a.ni]” vs “brother 兄/あに ani = a-ni [a.ni]”); and 3) to indicate the beginning of a consonant sound that is represented by multiple letters including a double consonant (e.g., task 作業/さぎょう sangyō → sa'ngyō = sa-nyō [sa.n.jō:]). Since the syllabic division is shown clearly in music by hyphenation, both 2) and 3) might not appear in the score.

A double consonant (e.g., “same いっち i-'cchi, [i.ɕi:]” vs “one いち i-'chi [i.ɕi:]”) indicates that the preceding vowel will be shortened or that there is a short stop or rest between the syllables, as in the Italian word “tutti.” This is called “そくおん sokuon” in Japanese, and is known as gemination or consonant elongation. In the music, singers must clearly execute the indicated rest between the syllables or *staccatos* on the first syllable of such words.

TTBB Chorus ver.

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Arr. and English Translation by

Kentaro Sato (Ken-P)

June 5, 2009

♩ = c.50-60 **Honorably** *The 1st Tenor has the melody.

mp *mf*

T 8

Ki - mi - nga — Yo - wa Chi - yo ni — Ya - chi - yo - ni,
ki - mi - ŋa* — jo - wa tçi* - ja - tçi* - jo - ni

B

*You might substitute [ŋa] with [ga].

*You might substitute [tçi] with [tçi].

f

T 5

Sa - za - re I - shi - no I - wa - o - Na ri - te,
sa - za - re - çi* - i - wa - o - to na ri - te

B

*You might substitute [çi] with [çi].

mf *rit.*

T 9

Ko - ke - no ma - de.
ke - no su - ma - de

B

きみ よ ちよ やちよ
君が代は千代に八千代に
さざれいし いわお
細石の巖となりて
こけ む
苔の生すまで

Kimi'ngayo-wa Chiyo-ni Ya'chiyo-ni,
Sazarei'shi-no Iwao-to Narite,
Koke-no Musumade.

May you prosper long,
until the pebbles grow into a rock
and it lushes with moss.