

Sounds of the Tsuchizaki Minato Hikiyama Matsuri Festival

Music fills the air during the Tsuchizaki Minato Hikiyama Festival amid the shouts of the crowd and the screeching of wooden wheels turning. While the *hikiyama* are in motion, musicians riding on the back of each float play a type of traditional music known as *minato bayashi*, which is unique to Tsuchizaki. *Minato bayashi* is performed with a *yokobue* (wooden flute), *taiko* drums, the three-stringed shamisen, and a small metal gong.

Musicians select from a repertoire of five different pieces to match the atmosphere during different parts of the festival parades. Until the mid-1940s, the melodies were passed down strictly from master to student, but they are now taught to anyone who wants to learn.

When the floats are stopped along the route, participants perform various dances, including the dance to a humorous local folk song called “Akita Ondo.” The song’s amusing lyrics are often improvised, and contemporary variations usually mention local delicacies or sights from the festival.

Recordings and video of *minato bayashi* festival music and “Akita Ondo”
song and dance are exhibited at the Tsuchizaki Minato Port Area Historical
Museum.