

TOKYO DONTAKU
Japanese Bon Dance

This dance was learned in Honolulu where the Japanese community celebrates the Buddhist feast of the dead with week-end dance festivals on the swept ground in front of their temples. The musicians play on a raised stand in the middle of the circling dancers with banners and bunting and fluttering prayer scrolls. A huge drum stands beside the band stand and is performed upon by gyrating experts occasionally. The dancers wear cotton kimonos (Yukata), tabi and go-aheads; the men dance more vigorously so they bend their foreheads with the little cotton towels given by each temple to those who dance there. The dance notation is by Mary Scott who is leader of the Honolulu Folk Dance Group. Kimonos are very modest and quite restricting. You dance pigeon-toed and with knees close together and a little bent. Hands are soft and graceful but the fingers are kept parallel with only the thumbs separating themselves from the flowing movement.

The dance sequence begins with the vocal on Victor V-40871 (side P-2900). The music has a strong first beat in a 4-beat meas. Most steps movements are made on the emphasized beat. Another record is Star 8414.

A

- 1,2 Starting R walk fwd 2 steps clapping hands in front of chest (R&L)
- 3 As though continuing sequence of 3 instead step fwd with a little crouching dip and instead of clapping the hands, let them pass each other across and down in that "end of sequence" signal so common in Japanese dances. The LF is L in place behind.
- & Step back L.
- 4 Step back R and repeat clap of first two fwd steps.

B

- 1 Step back L moving both arms down and back to L as though paddling a boat.
- 2 Step back R moving both hands as above to R
- 3 Step fwd L raising L hand palm back upright in front of L ear, R hand is upright fwd at end of straight-ahead arm.
- & Step fwd R raising R hand palm back upright in front of R ear etc.
- 4 Repeat 3.

(Dance ends here on V-40871 record)

C

- 1 Step fwd R facing outside LOD dipping knee and starting "tree" made with bowed arms, hands meeting first below knees then swooping around and up.
- 2 Draw L ft to R ankle (you may need to touch the L for balance but the experts do not put the L ft down on this) completing arm movement with hands meeting and arms bowed overhead.
- 3 Step fwd L facing inside LOD, making another tree as you
- 4 Draw R ft up to L and complete rounded tree overhead.

D

- 1,2 Holding R arm high, L bowed across at waist to hold you kimono sleeve so it won't swing out, make a flat-footed stepping turn R almost completely around yourself.
- 3,4 Holding L arm high, R bowed across, make the same stepping turn L. End in pos to begin dance sequence again. Repeat to end of record.

Presented by Madelynne Greene