



(Photo credit: Jim Miller/View Neighborhood News)

#### **Program Types**

45 minute - 1 hour demonstrations, performances; festival or special event performances (on stage or exhibition).

#### **Language Proficiencies**

English, Japanese

#### **Fees**

Email to Inquire

#### **Availability**

Email to Inquire

#### **Audiences**

College, young adult, adult, seniors

#### **Venues**

Colleges and universities, libraries, museums, community centers, special events, exhibitions, festivals and fairs.

#### **Technical requirements**

Email to inquire

#### **Counties**

Clark



## **Yoko Fitzpatrick**

**Folk Arts: Koto Music and Japanese Traditions**



Henderson, NV

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Yoko Fitzpatrick is dedicated to passing on traditional Japanese arts that she learned from her family and perfected through years of practice. She taught hundreds of students to play the *koto* in Japan before moving to Las Vegas in 2000. Now she teaches and performs *koto* music and other Japanese traditions including the tea ceremony, *origami* paper folding, *kimono* style of dress, and *ikebana* flower arranging in private and community settings in southern Nevada.

The traditional *koto*—also called “the Japanese harp,”—is a hollow, wooden instrument, about six feet long, with 13 strings. Yoko is a virtuoso 13-string *Koto* player. She also plays and teaches the 17-string “bass” *koto*, which sounds in a lower register, and the *nijugen* or 21-string *koto*, and the *Sangen*, a three-string plucked instrument. She also specializes in teaching classical piano and sight-reading to children.

Introduced to Japan from China in the seventh and eighth centuries, the *koto* became one of the primary chamber and Japanese court instruments, and today is the official national instrument of Japan. The 13 strings are lightly arched across top of the instrument by movable bridges that are placed under each string and moved during performance to create different tunings. The sound is produced by a solo musician who plucks the strings with finger picks, or *tsume*, that are worn on the thumb and first two fingers of the right hand. The left hand moves over the strings, pressing down to change the pitch or touching a string to create a vibrato effect.

*Koto* music is usually performed by a group of *koto* performers and is accompanied by the *Sangen* and the *Syakuhachi* flute. The *koto* is a classic symbol of traditional culture that also appears in Japanese visual arts. Paintings, *shoji* screens (rice paper wall dividers), and silk scrolls often portray a musician playing the *koto* in a natural setting. It is said that the shape of the instrument resembles the dragon, and the same words used to describe physical characteristics attributed to that mythical creature are the names for different parts of the *koto*.

Yoko inspires students and audiences to reflect on the deeper, symbolic meanings represented in the beautiful and evocative arts that she presents.