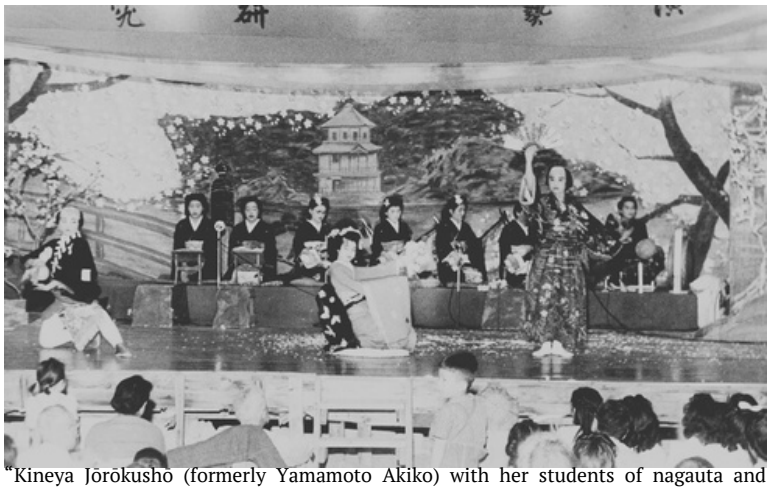
THE NISEI VOICE

Creativity in Captivity: Remembering the Performing Arts in Japanese American Incarceration Camps



"Kineya Jōrōkusho (formerly Yamamoto Akiko) with her students of nagauta and Japanese classical dance, 1940s, Gila River concentration camp, Arizona" (Densho Encyclopedia Contributors).

In the world of music, 1946 saw Frank Sinatra beg his date for just *five minutes more,* and Dinah Shore *laughing on the outside and crying on the inside* about an old lover. People swayed to "Prisoner of Love" by Perry Como and rang in the holidays with "Let it Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow!" by Vaughn Monroe and His Orchestra. 1946 even welcomed a new style of fast-paced jazz called "bebop," meant for listening rather than dancing, thanks to musicians like Dizzy Gillespie (John Gennari). Music has seen an expressive shift since the end of World War II—but for some Americans, the shift in music styles and practices holds a different meaning than it does for others. For Japanese Americans, the music of 1946 represents the transition from a significant period in which their normal lives were placed on hold: their incarceration at War Relocation Authority (WRA) camps during the war. While their lives may have moved, music moved with them.

The WRA implemented a Recreation Department and a Music Department in each of its camps, and employed teachers to lead them (Minako Waseda). Some of these teachers were outside hires, while others were Japanese Americans from within the camps. Mae Hara helped found the music program at Minidoka War Relocation Center, where she was incarcerated. Despite having no funding for the program, she taught a choir of nearly 100 people, using pianos from the camp churches (Hara). The camp music departments intended to promote American loyalty through the practice of Western and American popular music. Mary Kageyama, who was incarcerated at Gila War Relocation Center, studied in an a cappella group at the camp. She recalled learning a song titled "Ballad for Americans," which described the history of the United States. "It was a beautiful song," she said. "They wanted to [share the song with people outside of camps, so they could] see that this is the kind of song that the kids in camp are singing… We did have the outlying Caucasians come into the camp to listen to [our singing program]" (Mary Kageyama).

Despite the WRA's push for Americanization through music in the camps, Japanese art and entertainment traditions carried on within camp fences. Many camp residents involved in the arts continued to practice Japanese genres of music with traditional



"A Shakuhachi player and a young girl, Jul. 1945, Topaz concentration camp, Utah. (Densho Encyclopedia Contributors).

Japanese instruments. Others produced kabuki plays, a style of Japanese drama and dance theatre (Waseda). The practice of traditional Japanese arts created hope and a sense of normalcy in camp, and allowed many to express themselves during a time when their identities were diminished. At the Tule Lake War Relocation Center, Japanese arts even became a form of resistance against Americanization. Some Tule Lake residents, who identified as Japanese loyalists, used music to prepare themselves and others for an eventual move to Japan following the war (Waseda).

Regardless of intent, music and the arts offered a means of escapism to the Japanese Americans confined within camp walls. Following their release from the camps, over 120,000 Japanese Americans are attempting to rebuild their everyday lives and return to the homes, cities, jobs, and communities they once knew—a difficult feat considering how much they gave up at their time of relocation. Just as music followed them into the camps, music follows them through this transition, as they have said goodbye to the arts and entertainment practices that uniquely occurred within the confines of camp life.

The Nisei Voice Veterans Tribute

***The Nisei Voice* honors the** service of Japanese Americans who served in the United States Army in World War II, in segregated units, the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Their contributions are indicative of their strength, fearlessness, and American devotion. Today, we highlight the service of six veterans.

Esami Isumu Okamoto was born on November 2, 1917, in Los Angeles, California, to mother Toku Jimbo and father Toyoji Okamoto ("Esami Okamoto in Electronic Army Serial Number"). He completed two years of high school and worked as a sales clerk before serving in World War II ("Esami Okamoto in California, World War II Draft").

Okamoto registered for the United States Army draft on October 16, 1940. He began serving on March 7, 1941. He was part of the 442nd 2nd Battalion, E Company, and held the rank of Private. In the spring and summer of 1944, he participated in the Allied Forces' attack on the Gothic Line, a defensive position held by both German and Italian forces along the Arno River in Italy. While the U.S. Fifth Army, under Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, rushed to liberate Rome, Italy, German forces strengthened their defenses farther north on the Arno River. In July 1944, during the Allied Forces' attack on the Gothic Line, Okamoto was wounded in battle and received the Purple Heart military decoration. He was one of five hundred Japanese American soldiers from the 442nd 2nd Battalion to earn the Purple Heart that month on the Arno River ("Narrative of Events"). On July 28, 1944, in Cecina, Italy, the 2nd Battalion formed part of the Guard of Honor for King George VI of England, who personally felicitated the battalion members who had earned the Purple Heart. Lieutenant General Clark also personally commended the 442nd for their contributions on the Arno River.

Okamoto was discharged on January 8, 1945. He is currently settling back into life in Chicago, Illinois, with his wife, Yoshiye Okamoto ("Illinois, Cook County Deaths").

George Okamoto was born on November 19, 1918, in Sacramento, California. He was raised by his mother, Ikuyo Tokunaga Okamoto, and father, Hidema Okamoto ("George Okamoto in United States Social Security"). He completed all four years of high school, worked as a sales clerk, and relocated to Los Angeles before serving in World War II ("George Okamoto in Electronic Army Serial Number").

Okamoto enlisted in the United States Army on November 18, 1941. He was part of the 442nd, 2nd Battalion, H Company, where he first held the rank of Private. He went on to earn the rank of Staff Sergeant over the course of his service. Okamoto received the Combat Infantryman Badge military decoration, recognizing his engagement in active ground combat as an Infantry soldier ("Appendix Personnel, Awards". He also earned the Distinguished Unit Badge decoration, "awarded to soldiers who served in a unit that was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy occurring on or after December 7, 1941. The unit's combat action would normally be a very brief span of a few days of very intensive fighting" ("Guide to Medals").

Okamoto's membership in the 442nd, 2nd Battalion, H Company is indicative of his heroism. The 2nd Battalion, H Company, is notable for its efforts on the Gothic Line, a defensive position held by both German and Italian forces along the Arno River in Italy ("Narrative of Events"). Additionally, the 442nd is honorably recognized for its contributions to the Rhineland Campaign in the Vosges Mountains in France ("Rhineland Campaign"). The Rhineland Campaign included the historic Rescue of the Lost Battalion, in which Japanese American soldiers —including those of the 2nd Battalion, H Company—engaged in six days of combat to rescue members of the 1st Battalion, 141st Texas Regiment, who "found themselves cut off and surrounded behind enemy lines with limited food and water" (Abby Salyers Grubb).

Charles Sadao Mayeda was born on July 9, 1917, in Vacaville, Solano County, California. He was born to his father, Frank Yashitaro Mayeda, and mother, Akiko Kuroiwa, immigrants from Japan to the United States. He completed four years of high school and worked as a radio mechanic ("Charles Mayeda in California, World War II Draft"). He was relocated to the Gila River Relocation Center in Pinal County, Arizona, before serving in World War II ("Charles Mayeda in U.S., Japanese Americans Relocated").

Mayeda enlisted in the Army on May 25, 1943, in Salt Lake City,

Utah ("Charles Mayeda in Electronic Army Serial Number"). He was initially ranked as Private, but worked up to Technician 4 rank due to his skills in mechanics and repairs. Soldiers who rank as Technicians are not trained as combat leaders, but hold specialized technical skills; they include medics, tank drivers, mechanics, mail clerks, cooks, musicians, radio operators, and repairmen ("History of Enlisted Ranks").

Within the 442nd, Mayeda was a member of the 3rd Battalion, Headquarters Company. The 3rd Battalion notably contributed to the Rhineland Campaign in the Vosges Mountains in France, including the Rescue of the Lost Battalion, in which soldiers of the 442nd endured six days of combat to rescue members of the 1st Battalion, 141st Texas Regiment ("Rhineland Campaign"). The 3rd Battalion also contributed to efforts against the Gothic Line. They were commended by Lieutenant General Clark of the U.S. Fifth Army for their work on the Gothic Line. During his service, Mayeda earned a Silver Star, which recognizes "gallantry in action," and is the third-highest military combat decoration within the U.S. Army ("Guide to Medals"). He also earned a Purple Heart recognizing he had been wounded in action, a Combat Infantrymen Badge, and a Distinguished Unit Badge ("Appendix Personnel, Awards").

Mayeda was discharged on November 27, 1945, and is settling into life in St. Paul, Minnesota, to continue working in radio mechanics ("United States Census, 1950").

Keichi Ueda was born on January 3, 1925, in Pahala, Hawaii ("Keichi Ueda in United States Social Security"). He was born to his mother, Shizuko Udo, and his father, Kenzo Ueda. He completed three years of high school and worked in construction before serving in World War II ("Keichi Ueda in Electronic Army Serial Number").

Ueda enlisted in the Army on August 17, 1944 ("Keichi Ueda in U.S., World War II Draft"). He was a member of the 3rd Battalion, K Company, and enlisted as Private. The 3rd Battalion, K Company, was notably one of the units that took the brunt of the fire in the Rescue of the Lost Battalion, in which members of the 442nd RCT rescued the 1st Battalion, 141st Texas Regiment in the Vosges Mountains in France (Grubb). K Company emerged from the rescue with only eight infantrymen. Ueda was likely assigned to K Company to fill in after their unfortunate losses.

Since his discharge from the Army, Ueda has been living in Pahala, Hawaii.

Teruo Ted Kodama was born on October 14, 1918, in Los Angeles, California ("Teruo Kodama in U.S., World War II Draft"). He completed four years of high school and worked as both a driver and a swamper ("Teruo Kodama in California, U.S., Voter Registrations"). His family was split during the incarceration of Japanese Americans. He was incarcerated at the Poston War Relocation Center in Parker, Arizona, alongside his father ("Teruo Kodama in U.S. Final Accountability"). Meanwhile, his brother, sister-in-law, and nephew were incarcerated at Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Park County, Wyoming ("Robert Kodama in U.S. Final Accountability").

Kodama enlisted in World War II on June 28, 1943, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was ranked as Private at the time of enlistment, but eventually earned the Staff Sergeant rank. Within the 442nd RCT, he was a member of the 3rd Battalion, M Company. Kodama earned the Combat Infantrymen Badge, recognizing his engagement in active ground combat as an Infantry soldier ("Appendix Personnel, Awards").

Following his discharge on December 6, 1945, Kodama reunited with his family in California ("Teruo Kodama in U.S. Veterans' Gravesites").

Robert "Castle" Yasuto Tabata was born on August 1, 1919, in Honolulu, Hawaii ("Robert Tabata in U.S., World War II Draft"). He was born to his mother, Sawa Tanouye, and his father, Yasuki Tabata ("Robert Tabata in United States, Social Security"). His family relocated from Honolulu to Los Angeles, California, where he completed all four years of high school. He and his wife, Margarette Tabata, were incarcerated at the Poston War Relocation Center in Parker, Arizona, before he served in World War II ("Robert Tabata in U.S., Japanese Americans Relocated").

Tabata enlisted in the United States Army on December 12, 1945, in Chicago, Illinois. He was listed for a one-year enlistment, held the Private First Class rank, and was possibly a replacement for a soldier who had been transferred to the Enlisted Reserve Corps. Tabata was not part of a battalion within the 442nd; rather, he served in the 442nd Headquarters Company. The Headquarters Company was responsible for overseeing the health and operations of the unit, including medical services, training, logistics, supplies, and combat intelligence and counterintelligence ("Headquarters Company"). Private ranks held roles such as messengers, clerical services, mail delivery, truck drivers, and record keepers.

Tabata was recently discharged on December 11, 1946. He and his wife are currently settling into life in Ogden, Utah ("Robert Tabata in United States Census, 1950").



"Members of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team are seen in the Vosges mountain range in France" (American Battle Momuments Commission).

The Honor Roll

The Nisei Voice presents "The Honor Roll," a recognition of members of our community who have made significant contributions to the arts and culture. From staple names to our brightest new hopes, here are some of the most notable Asians in America in 1946.

Sono Osato

From Dec. 1944 to Dec. 1945, Sono Osato starred as Ivy Smith in *On the Town* on Broadway (Internet Broadway Database). While she hasn't starred in any major projects this year, Osato hasn't faded into the background. She performed "a dance exhibition for striking CIO workers at the GE plant in Schenectady, New York," associated herself with the Japanese American Committee for Democracy, and taught a free ballet class for African American youth (Greg Robinson).



"Susan Steel and Sono Osato in a scene from the stage production of On the Town," (Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library).



Pfc. Sadao Munemori (Katie Lange, U.S. Department of Defense).

Sadao Munemori

22-year-old Sadao Munemori served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, 100th Battalion, A Company, and heroically sacrificed his life for his fellow soldiers in battle (Katie Lange). In April 1945, A Company approached the Gothic Line in Italy, where Munemori attacked the firing German soldiers and "knocked out two machine guns with grenades" (Lange). As firing became intense and his unit began to retreat, Munemori almost made it to shelter when he noticed "a live grenade bounced off his helmet and into the ditch toward" two of his comrades (Lange). He quickly dove onto the grenade to protect his fellow soldiers and take the explosion himself. He was initially recognized for his bravery and sacrifice with a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross; however, on March 13, 1946, his award was upgraded to the Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration (Lange). He is the first Japanese American to receive the Medal of Honor, and it was presented to his mother on his behalf (Lange).

Carlos Bulosan

Filipino American Carlos Bulosan published his book, America Is in the Heart, with the publishing house Harcourt Brace & Company this year (Burnside Rare Books). The book recounts his childhood in the Philippines and his migration to the United States in 1930.

Chien-Shiung Wu

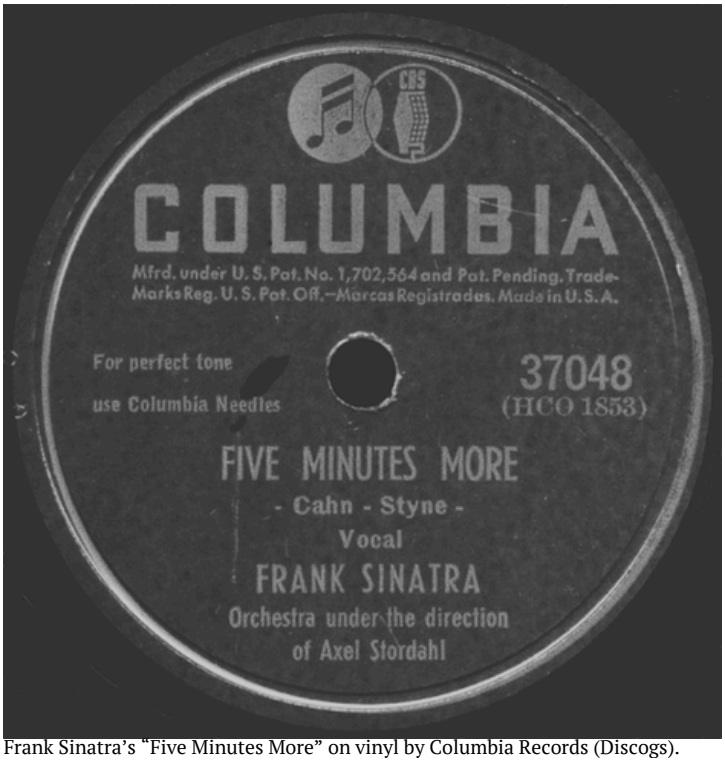
Chien-Shiung Wu is a nuclear physicist who received her Bachelor's in physics in China in 1936, then her Ph.D. in physics from the University of California in 1940 ("The Fall of Parity"). This year, she began serving as a research associate at the Physics Department of Columbia University (Keith Burbank).

Billboard Releases First-Ever Top 30 Hits for 1946

Have you ever wondered what music America is listening to the most? Billboard has released its first-ever year-end songs chart: the Top 30 Hits of 1946, ranking the top songs in pop, R&B, and country. The songs on this chart are tracked by a combination of music retailers' bestsellers and radio airplay—so a song has to be a true American favorite to make the list (Billboard). Did your favorite tracks of the year make the cut? Here's Billboard's Top 30 Hits of 1946.

Billboard Top 30 Hits, 1946

1. PRISONER OF LOVE Perry Como
2. TO EACH HIS OWN Eddy Howard
3. THE GYPSY The Ink Spots
4. FIVE MINUTES MORE Frank Sinatra
5. RUMORS ARE FLYING Frankie Carle and His Orchestra
6. OH! WHAT IT SEEMED TO BE Frankie Carle and His Orchestra
7. PERSONALITY Johnny Mercer and the Pied Pipers
8. SOUTH AMERICA, TAKE IT AWAY Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters
9. THE GYPSY Dinah Shore
10. OH! WHAT IT SEEMED TO BE Frank Sinatra
11. SURRENDER Perry Como
12. DOCTOR, LAWYER, INDIAN CHIEF Betty Hutton
13. LET IT SNOW! LET IT SNOW! LET IT SNOW! Vaughn Monroe and His Orchestra
14. TO EACH HIS OWN Freddy Martin and His Orchestra
15. OLE BUTTERMILK SKY Kay Kyser and His Orchestra
16. TO EACH HIS OWN The Ink Spots
17. SYMPHONY Freddy Martin and His Orchestra
18. THE OLD LAMPLIGHTER Sammy Kaye
19. I CAN'T BEGIN TO TELL YOU Bing Crosby and Carmen Cavallaro
20. I'M A BIG GIRL NOW Sammy Kaye
21. SYMPHONY Bing Crosby
22. THE GYPSY Sammy Kaye
23. DOIN' WHAT COME NATUR'LLY Dinah Shore with Spade Cooley and His Orchestra
24. LAUGHING ON THE OUTSIDE (Crying On the Inside) Dinah Shore
25. GIVE ME FIVE MINUTES MORE Tex Beneke and the Miller Orchestra
26. LAUGHING ON THE OUTSIDE (Crying On the Inside) Andy Russell
27. HEY! BA-BA-RE-BOP Tex Beneke with the Glenn Miller Orchestra
28. THEY SAY IT'S WONDERFUL Perry Como
29. TO EACH HIS OWN Tony Martin
30. YOU WON'T BE SATISFIED Les Brown and His Orchestra



Frank Sinatra's "Five Minutes More" on vinyl by Columbia Records (Discogs).


The Ink Spots in *Billboard Music Yearbook 1943,* page 3.

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