



# TAIKO TAIKO



The definitive source of information on Taiko events in the UK from Britain's foremost Taiko drum group.

autumn 1997

issue 4

## MUGENKYO AUTUMN DATES:

### SEPTEMBER

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 9 Glasgow, Giffnock Eastwood Theatre, 7:30pm    | 0141 577 4974 (£6/£3)                |
| 11 Cumbernauld Theatre, 7:45pm                  | 01236 732 887 (£7/£4)                |
| 14 Builth Wells, Wyese Arts Centre, 8:00pm      | 01982 552 555 (£7/£5)                |
| 17 Grantham, Guildhall Arts Centre, 8:00pm      | 01476 593 966 (£6/£4.50)             |
| 18 Sheringham, Little Theatre, 8:00pm           | 01263 822 347 (£6/£5 - mems £1 less) |
| 19 Pulham Market, Memorial Hall, 7:30pm         | 01379 676 602 (£4.50/£3.50)          |
| 20 Hunstanton, The Smithdon High School, 6:00pm | 01485 570 231 (£TBA)                 |
| 27 Chatham, Medway Arts Centre, 8:00pm          | 01634 408 965 (£3.50 conc to £7.50)  |

### OCTOBER

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 11 Harlech, Theatr Ardudwy, 7:30pm  | 01766 780 667 (£TBA)                               |
| 12 Newtown, Theatr Hafren, 7:45pm   | 01686 625 007 (£7/£6 early saver pre 15 Sep £4.75) |
| 17 Worcester, Huntingdon Hall, 7:30pm   | 01905 611 427 (£8/£7)                              |
| 21 Wakefield Theatre Royal and Opera House, 7:30pm                                    | 01924 211 311 (£8/£7/£6conc)                       |
| 23 London (Edmonton), Millfield Theatre, 8:00pm<br>also school show at 1:30pm (£1.50) | 0181 807 6680 (£8)                                 |
| 24 Aberystwyth Arts Centre, 8:00pm  | 01970 623 232 (£6.50/£5.50)                        |
| Nov, 3 - 23 MUGENKYO in JAPAN!!   |  |
| 29 Pontardawe Arts Centre, 7:30pm   | 01792 863 722 (£5)                                 |



The "Kamui Project", Cockpit Theatre, London, April 1997, with James Barrow from Akatsuki Daiko on the yokobue (Japanese flute)



Goodbye in Glasgow to Katsuhiko McUemura & welcome to trainee Claire "bigmouth" Spencer

**A BIG THANK YOU** to those of you who sent in donations towards the cost of this newsletter:

Nalaka Weerakoon, George Mathers, Robin Davis, Mrs. B. McNeil, Mr. D.P. McNeil, Richard Chamberlin, Phylles Walters, Jacqueline Grant, Heather Ferguson, Zoe Gray, Dee Dolan, Godfrey King, C.M. Jught, Antonia Parsons, and Mari Bentley.

Please remember, it costs money to put out a newsletter - about £300 per issue for photocopying and postage! Please help us to continue by sending donations - any amount however large or small is appreciated (first/second class stamps or cheques made payable to: Mugenkyo), Thank you!

**MUGENKYO CD & T-SHIRT NOW AVAILABLE**  
(see back for details)

# THE SUMMER ADVENTURES OF MUGENKYO

- Liz's diary -

Hello and welcome to another round up of the last few months events! (Sounds like a sports programme!) I think the first one to kick off with would be the wedding of Tim and Kazuyo (friends of the group) on the 10th May this year, who came all the way from Japan to be married in this country.

Then came the Martial Arts performance at Pontins in Camber Sands. During the song "Hikiami", I turned towards Miyuki to see one side of her face streaming with blood! I think the sheer expression of horror on my face was enough for her to know that there was something very wrong. She was immediately rushed to the nearest hospital (about a thousand miles away) to have the gash super-glued together. Modern technology... stunning! Needless to say the doctors looked at her in disbelief as she explained that it was self-inflicted with a drumstick as thick as a rolling pin!

The Crucible in Sheffield! Now there's a venue you don't get to play at every day... and we're not likely to again either.

Due to a major cock-up with the box office organisation, we had an audience of 90 people for a 1,000 seater venue!... it was surprising anyone turned up at all considering people enquiring for tickets were being told that the event was cancelled. Nevertheless, what few people there were made the night well worthwhile when they raucously joined in with Matsuri (the festival piece).

We were lucky enough to be accompanied by Emi Maidment, a Japanese flautist on our dates in Cardiff, Durham and Edinburgh. Her intense and haunting pieces were received enthusiastically and we felt it blended well with the atmosphere of the Taiko.

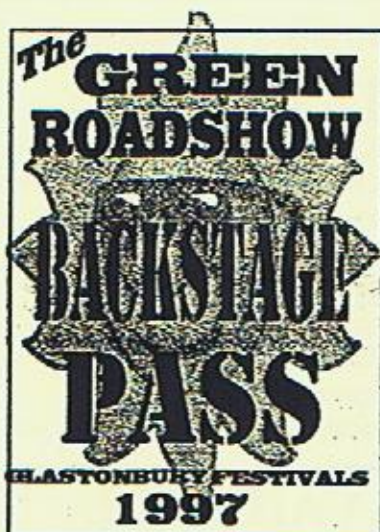
On June 23rd we at last did a joint performance with the percussionist Joji Hirota at the Studio Theatre in London - something we'd talked of doing for many months but as yet had not been able to do. The theatre was full to bursting with an extremely receptive audience, which contained to our delight all the members of Uzume Taiko Ensemble from Canada, who had recently completed their British tour. Their support was greatly appreciated. We hope to play together again with Joji in the not too distant future.

Now then, Glastonbury....mmm....mud is the first thing that springs to mind and having to be pushed uphill on that sea of

sludge by eight people is also a fond memory. But what a great gig!! A packed tent throbbed with eager Festival people determined not to let the rain dampen their enthusiasm. I don't think anything could have dampened the enthusiasm of one particular glazey eyed individual who was dancing around a little wildly with a huge placard in his arms, much to the amusement of the rest of the audience. A little bit of a contrast to the next event we played at in Southgate, London the following day. It consisted of playing in a pub carpark overlooking a busy roundabout, a total of five people at any one time to watch, two or three of them being the pub staff and the odd car pulling in just to turn around. Obviously we're not huge in Southgate yet! Mmmm... OK

Perhaps the most exciting part of the last few months has been the Scotland Tour. Two glorious weeks of the most stunning landscape I've ever seen. It was on this trip that our new trainee member Claire Spencer was to join us. We started off in Paisley Arts Centre, which had sold so many tickets that extra room had to be made for eight of Neil's family who had come from Glasgow to support us! We were joined that evening by an amazing bagpiper friend of ours from Ayrshire, Rob Welsh, who added a magical and uplifting vibration to the performance during "Matsuri". A very touching moment for us was when the song "Haste ye Back" was heard within the audience after our encore, a song of appreciation that is rarely sung for "foreigners". It was especially touching as this was Katsuhiko's last performance with Mugenkyo before his return to Japan. We're going to miss him greatly...

Next... up, up into the wild, untouched mountains and lochs leading to our next venue, Glenuig. There were several gasps of wonder during a rather stunned silence as we approached the village which was set in the most beautiful landscape. We thought that in a village as small as this (population 30!), the audience would be quite minimal, but oh no! Packed out again, the temperature was hot and the reception quite overwhelming. Even the midges dance in Glenuig! We were sad to leave this wonderful place behind us, but glad to have experienced it, as we headed off towards Dingwall for our next performance. A warm reception and a great deal of interest in the drums Taiko drums after the show.



## Rain defies the beat of the Taiko

BANGING the drum for their performance later that evening in Culloden Academy, MUGENKYO turned up the beat for the 500 people who arrived for Sunday afternoon's Bellfield Park performance.

And the four-strong group made a wise start with the one male member of the four-strong group telling us: "OK, let's get rid of the rain!"

But despite the athletic power of the team, leaping round among their yellow banners to do mischief to their giant drums in a ceremonial anti-rain piece, down came the drizzle. We didn't notice.

Fascinated, in spite of himself, a wee boy down the front put his hands over his ears to muffle the impact of the sound right in front of him - but he didn't move away.

And the energy of the four pieces the group chose to give as a taster for the later show "full of surprises" made the whole thing potentially perfect for the next workout craze - stretching up their sticks in time, bounding from drum to drum, racing across the front of the crowd to sanctify us with their tiny cymbals and toning those upper arms by giving their drums a sound thrashing. MC



DRUMMING UP SUPPORT ... around 500 turned out for Mugenkyo's free show last Sunday  
Picture: Alan Hurter

The pass to the mud-bath

Highland News, 12th July, 1997



Was that DON-KARA-KA or DON-DOKO-DON ???!!!

The following day we played a half hour spot in Inverness to which more than 400 people turned up, all of whom stayed to brave the drizzle (see article). Later that evening we performed at the Culloden Academy. A rather strange experience at first because at the end of our first number no one clapped. There we were, posed with hands in mid air for what seemed like an eternity and not a sound. Eventually, the silence pushed one brave individual to start and so forth. The same again for the next song until things began to loosen up somewhat. By the time we played Matsuri (festival), there were people dancing and one particularly enthusiastic couple had decided to bring their own percussion and join in! It was great!! It's always very heartwarming to see the Taiko stirring something inside people.

The following day we headed back to Inverness for an interview with BBC Radio Scotland for which we also played two songs live in the studio. Three days later after a much needed mini-break we played at the Jenning Theatre in Cockermonth (try saying that with a straight face!). An extremely hot evening to try a full theatre show, but nevertheless it was a good'n. The B&B was a particularly comfortable one and even catered for vegetarians! The thing with B&B's is we never know just what they'll be like until we arrive. Some of them are great & some of them, well... we won't mention any names!

Annnnyway, moving swiftly along now. For the next performance the day after we headed way down south to the Henley Festival. Again, quite a stark contrast with Glastonbury. From bohemian hippiedom to champagne drinking black tie affairs. Thanks or no thanks to the champers, the 400 people in the audience thoroughly enjoyed the show which ended spot on time for the firework finale. The Norwich City Festival has definately got to be one of the best days we've had this summer. We played first of all in the market square, nearly melting in the process, and were then whipped away by Hiromi-san, who did a great job of looking after us. He took us out for the most delicious Chinese meal after freshening up at his Buddhist/ martial arts dojo, before we returned to the mainstage where we played to an amazing crowd of nearly 4,000 people! Norwich rocks!!

The 13th of July in Cardiff Bay was a bit of a write off really. We were pretty much rained and blown away!

Then there was Phoenix!! Mugenkyo and David Bowie on the same poster! Grrrrreat fun..... until 12 o'clock on our last night, the Tardis (name given to the van because it can hold the world and its mother and yes of course... the Taiko drums) decided that it wouldn't start and to top it all, our alarm to wake the dead exploded into the festive night air. An hour and a half later, we managed to kill the alarm and were then forced to leave our beloved equipment, whilst we waited for the

night-bus (!! ) to Stratford so that we could travel the 15 miles back from there to the hotel. The next day a "very nice man" came to fit a new battery which was our ticket to the next venue.

The Lambeth Country fair was good fun (even though we'd had only three hours sleep!). Not a load of sheep and cows like we'd expected, but a taste of the countryside (in the middle of Brixton!), along with a mixture of multi-cultural events. A great crowd too.

South-west bound! We took the Falmouth Arts Centre by storm, which apparently could have been sold out twice over. One person commented after the show that the "liked the special effects" (this consisting of us being showered by old flakes of paint falling from the ceiling from the vibration of the drums). The following day we were in Bridport, Dorset. A special performance for me because six of my family turned up to see the group for the first time.

Nowwww then. We have at last RECORDED A CD!! Yes! For four days we sweated it out in the recording studio. After many many hours rehearsal, many a swear word muttered and many a stick flying, we finally dit it!! CDs & tapes will be available through the newsletter (see back for details) and also at our future performances.

Abergavenny was a great success, the Welsh always know how to have a good time and join in. Three of Claire's family turned up to this performance, one being her 90 year old grandmother, who'd come prepared with ear plugs! The festival at Crawley went down a treat with a very loud and supportive audience (can't have been anything to do with the fact that quite a few people were "half cut" perchance?) To round off the performances was New Buckenham castle in Norfolk. We nearly died that day under what felt like the hottest sun this century - especially as we had to transport all our drums one by one by tractor! But we made it to the end and came back to do an encore! It's the first time we've ever had the pleasure of a castle for a changing room!!

Another highlight of the last months was the Taiko classes held in London - 6 weeks long introductory courses - well done to all 30 of you!

Well that's all for now folks. We'll keep on dashing from one end of the country to the other. You might see us practising with our bachi (drum sticks) on the pavement outside your local launderette, practising with our hands on your local pub table or racing through your town practising with empty plastic bottles in the van! Wherever we are, we hope to see you there. See you soon!!



Hello? Is there anyone there who can tell me how to work these knobs?!

# MERCHANDISE NOW AVAILABLE !!

**MUGENKYO CD** - £12 (incl. VAT, p+p)

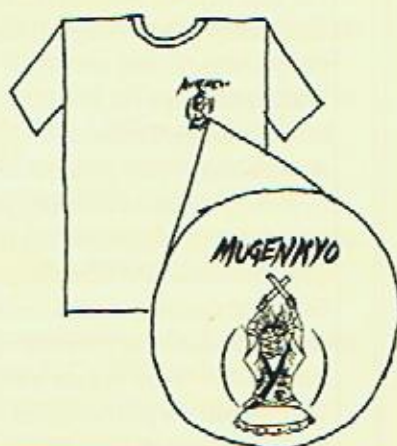
also available on cassette - £8 (incl.)

running time: 48 min

This album was recorded at Blackwing studios, set in an old converted church tucked away in south London. Recorded on analogue equipment - unlike just about every other studio, they hadn't gone digital with the modern age. We loved the warmth, sound & atmosphere of this place - a perfect setting to record Taiko drums, which aren't digital either! Thank you to Roger the engineer and everyone at the studio!

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front



**T-SHIRT** - £10 (incl. VAT, p+p)

high quality black cotton T-shirt with yellow writing  
sizes: S, M, L, XL (sorry no children's sizes)

in case anyone asks you...

The symbol on the back is a stylized Japanese character "HIBIKI", meaning "reverberation", which can also be read as "kyo" (as in "Mugen-KYO"). Hibiki is the name of our teacher's group in Japan. It's our own design which also incorporates the Taiko symbol → 

## TRACK LISTING:

- 1. IKKYO (one vibration)** - our thunderous show opener - Listen out for the crash of equipment falling over due to the vibrations caused by the Taiko in the studio! We decided to keep this take, because the crash added to the atmosphere - can you spot it??
- 2. KUZURYU (the nine-headed dragon)** - Written by our teacher's group, "Hibiki Daiko", this proved to be the most difficult song to record, taking us exactly NINE takes to get it right, but worth it in the end! - real nine-headed dragon...
- 3. ONSEN** - Listen out for Neil's over-the-top shouting - called "kakegoe".
- 4. KIMAI (demon dance)** - In the studio we were able to experiment with the sounds to create a completely different sounding piece to our live version. We also added bells and cymbals to build a haunting atmosphere.
- 5. TOJIMBO** - another Hibiki song, which is blindingly fast & energetic - Liz actually drops her stick in this take, but covers it up expertly!
- 6. HIKIAMI** - the piece where Liz & Miyuki mirror each other's movements on either side of the Taiko drum. We added a couple of overdubs on this piece to build it up to a powerful ending.
- 7. MATSURI (festival)** - an old favourite, where everyone joins in clapping & shouting. The weird noise in the background is actually cicada insects, which chirp continuously throughout the Japanese summer.

**WARNING:** a Taiko recording is never a substitute for a live concert, as the sound waves from the Taiko are meant to be FELT, not heard!... to recreate a MUGENKYO concert in the comfort of your own home, turn up your stereo as loud as you possibly can, and ENJOY!

## MUGENKYO MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

### ITEMS ORDERED:

Mugenkyo CD (£12) \_\_\_\_\_

Mugenkyo cassette (£8) \_\_\_\_\_

T-shirt (£10) \_\_\_\_\_

please specify size (S, M, L, XL)

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

All prices include VAT, packaging and postage within the UK (please allow 21 days for delivery)  
Please send cheque or postal order payable to: MUGENKYO  
44 Vince Court, Charles Square, London N1 6HN