

The definitive source of information on Taiko events in the U.K. from Mugenkyo, Europe's foremost Taiko drum group

TAIKO TAIKO

CHRISTMAS ISSUE '98

Issue No.8

Smile Please!



Welcome to this year's last edition of *Taiko Taiko*. We'd like to wish all our readers a fantastic festive season. So what have we been up to since the last issue? Weeeell... in September we travelled to Longleat in Wiltshire for a very special event... a joint concert with Joji Hirota - the respected Japanese percussionist, James Barrow, and Mark Alcock, an ex-member of Mugenkyo - a great reunion - culminating in a joint encore

with the sensual Indo-Japanese dancer Shakti, an amazing end to a magical evening. We hope to be reunited again with Shakti next year at the Edinburgh Festival - more news in future issues.

Also in September, Miyuki's mum, Harumi, arrived for three weeks of costume-making - a flashy new strip for the new season in spring! The sewing machine even came on tour with us to the Isle of Wight and Chatham, with Harumi sewing in the dressing

room, right up to the moment we stepped on stage. Thank you Harumi! The Isle of Wight was a very special gig, with Shane jumping into his new role as the king of the "chappa" hand cymbals!

The rest of September was very quiet in terms of performing, but the office was in full steam, with all the letter-folding, stamp-licking, envelope-stuffing for our bi-annual big mailout - so much happening behind the scenes! ↪

October saw us on the road again for a full three weeks, including... a sell-out in Bewdley, down to the sea-side in Weston-super-mare, and then on to the Birmingham Motor Show for the press day... fifty five seconds for Subaru. Could you see a member of Mugenkyo sipping champagne while trying out the leather seats of the latest Porsche? Oh no! We were only interested in measuring out the backs of the new vans on display, to see which ones would fit our drums. Flashy cars that can't carry Taiko drums are simply no good to us! Still it was a fun day out. On to Woking for another sell-out show, and the highlight of October was undoubtedly... Dorking...

MUGENKYO

WINTER CLASSES

An introduction to the Japanese art of taiko drumming, these are all six week courses, packed with fun. No previous experience of playing drums, percussion or reading music is necessary. Mugenkyo's busy touring schedule means that every year we are only able to run classes during the winter months. Numbers are limited so book early.



GOUROCK

Gamble Halls, Shore Street, Gourock

On Mondays: January 18, 25,

February 1, 8, 15, 22

7:00 — 9:00 p.m.

£20/£30

For more details,

please call: **Catriona Henderson**

01475 729561

LIVINGSTON

Howden Park Centre, Howden,

Livingston

On Tuesdays: January 19, 26,

February 2, 9, 16, 23

7:30 — 9:30 p.m.

£24/£36

For more details,

please call: **01506 433634**

GLASGOW

*Kinning Park Complex, Cornwall

Street, Kinning Park, Glasgow

On Wednesday: January 20, 27,

February 3, 10, 17

7:00 — 9:00pm

£42

For more details,

Please Call: **Neil on 0141 644 4971**

*(venue to be confirmed)



ALL IN A DAYS WORK

from top to bottom:

- The end of a fantastic night in Dorking.
- Neil Showing how not to approach a taiko drum.
- Miyuki's mum last second preparations.
- Kurumaya-Sensei, launches the all new custom taiko dodgem.
- Shakti: Not a member of "Riverdance"
- Mail me out: Kurumaya-Sensei keeping incredibly calm as ever.

such an ordinary sounding place, but ended up being one of the most memorable concerts of the year, thanks to the visit of Yoshizawa-san, Kitagawa-san and Uchida-san — fellow Taiko players and students of Kurumaya-Sensei, who'd come all the way from Japan to be with us this night. We used to train with them in Japan, and here they were with us in... Dorking of all places! The evening was electric thanks to an enthusiastic audience of over 600 people. (We also managed to squeeze in a mad whirlwind sightseeing tour of London for them, Japanese style: all the sights in just one day.)

October drew to a close with the wildest and wackiest street carnival imaginable: The Halloween Carnival in Derry, with nearly every person in the crowd of 20,000 in fabulous costumes - we felt seriously under-dressed in our "happi coats"! We were eagerly awaited by the crowd at our stage, expectant after seeing our appearance on the "Kelly Show" the night before — a popular late night music and chat show on Ulster TV. Apart from our early shock of seeing a gang of eight-year olds throw bottles at the RUC truck parked next to the stage, the rest of the evening was non-stop party atmosphere and everyone but everyone had a fantastic evening. Well done to the people of Derry — they take first prize for the party of the year! If you didn't know where to go next Halloween, you do now... highly recommended!

COULD YOU BE A TAIKO DRUMMER?

THIS WINTER... We are looking for possible future members of Mugenkyo (both female & male). No previous drumming experience is necessary, but you must be energetic, creative, rhythmic and able to make a serious time commitment

we only take
on full-time apprentices.

Interested? Call Neil on
0141 644 4971

for details and application form.

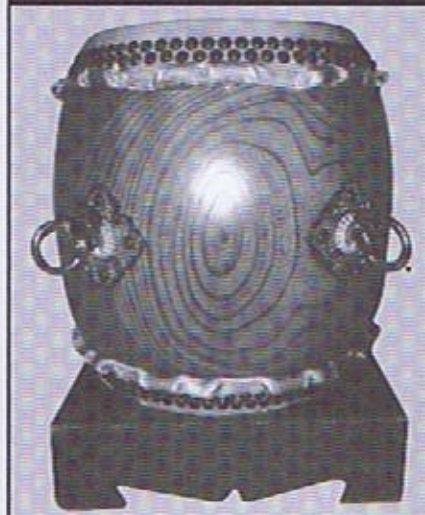


The nagado is the emperor of the taiko drums, carved out of a single tree trunk, with a cowhide stretched across the top, and held in place by tacks. This type of drum originally came from China to Japan with the advent of Buddhism. In Japan you can see the nagado in Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, played for ceremonial reasons, as well as on the stage and at festivals. In some parts of Japan it is known as a *miya-daiko* or *chu-daiko*.

Most commonly the body is made from *keyaki*, a type of Japanese elm. The logs are dried out for several years, then hollowed out and left to dry for several more. Then the bodies are carved into shape. The traditional method is by hand, but now



NAGADO long body drum



machines are used, which is more efficient because one log can produce two or three drums by hollowing out one body out of another, like a Russian doll.

The skins are cowhide — preferably four-year old female cow, according to the top drum makers, and are treated with salt before stretching the wet hides. The old method of stretching the skin is by slowly tightening the ropes attached to the skin by twisting them with sticks (see photo right). These days, however, hydraulic jacks are used — exactly how is a trade secret, and photos are forbidden in the top taiko factories. The skins are tacked down when stretched, which means they cannot be tuned, although their tone does change according to the

age and also the weather. A good skin should not need to be re-skinned for 10 years or more — although the way we hit them, we don't expect them to last that long!

The rings — handy for lifting and carrying these heavy drums — were traditionally used for hanging the drum in the temple. The demand for bigger and bigger *odaiko* (big taiko) have led the taiko factories to look to the African rainforest to supply the tree trunks — usually

the huge Bubinga trees — and specially bred enormous cows for the skins. *Odaiko*'s may look good, but they certainly aren't very animal or environmentally friendly! Don't worry... you won't see Mugenkyo buying a drum made in this way.



Taiko Drums and Percussion Part 1

November saw us back in Shropshire, Birmingham, Wellingborough, squeezing in a day for a photo shoot in Bristol, and finally our last performance of the year in Maidenhead. The concert was filmed for broadcast on Japanese national television the next evening. This certainly was a memorable end to our "season" in 1998. We then said a sad farewell to Kurumaya-sensei at the ungodly hour of 5 am at Glasgow airport, who returned to his hometown in Japan to spend the important Japanese festival of New Years Day with his family, and a few concerts with his group in Japan. Bar any disasters, he'll be back with us for another packed season of concerts from next March...

We'd like to thank everybody who have come to our performances and have supported us throughout the year. We really couldn't have done it without you, and that's a fact. Our best wishes go out to everyone. We hope you have enjoyed the year as much as we have, and we would love to see you again next year, when we will begin our new touring season from March, 1999. Until then, have another... wait for it

TAIKOTASTIC CHRISTMAS!
Best wishes from Mugenkyo.

Name: _____

Address _____

Post Code _____

Items Ordered

Mugenkyo CD	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mugenkyo Cassette	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mugenkyo T-Shirt	£10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kodo Book	£23.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total Enclosed		<input type="checkbox"/>

All prices include VAT. Packaging and postage within the U.K. (please allow 21 days for delivery) please send cheques or postal orders payable to MUGENKYO P.O. Box 5124, Glasgow G76 9YA

MUGENKYO



Welcome to Shane Connolly, who has just completed his apprenticeship with the group, to become a full member of Mugenkyo. Apart from his drumming skills, the new look of "Taiko Taiko" is all thanks to Shane. Previously Shane was working as a graphic designer at the Big Issue, and has been playing drums with several bands in the Glasgow area. These days he has time for little else apart from Taiko — sorry Shane! Shane is 30, 5'7", has brown hair and Green eyes, and enjoys playing football, cooking curries, riding his scooter, hill walking and more recently learning to speak a little Japanese. Expect to see a lot more of Shane next year, as he consolidates his place in the Mugenkyo team.

a BIG thankyou



To those of you who sent in donations towards the cost of this newsletter!

Mr G Crawly, Miss Lenetta Herley, Rana Partridge, Judith May, Claire Inness, Jon Sturrock, M J Turner, Mr J J Ozin, Ms J Wood, Patricia Thomson, Ben Redman, M J Turner, K S Stewart, Jon Childs, Jackie Wood, David Verrinder, Mr & Mrs The & T I Moy

Please remember, it costs money to put out a newsletter
We receive no financial backing.
Please help us to continue by sending donations — any amount however large or small is greatly appreciated (first/second class stamps or cheques made payable to: Mugenkyo)
Or alternatively, **BUY OUR MERCHANDISE!**

And a special thank you to all the kids at Waycroft Primary School, Bristol for their wonderful drawings and messages, they have pride of place on our office wall.



MUGENKYO CD

£12/cassette £8

(includes p&p)

Running time: 48 mins

"brilliant rhythmic precision"

"... the energy and power of Taiko thundering into your home"

T-SHIRT £10 (includes p&p)

High quality black cotton with yellow writing SORRY XL ONLY!

The symbol on the back is a stylized Japanese character "kyo" (as in Mugen-KYO), meaning REVERBERATION, incorporating the Taiko symbol.



SMALL MUGENKYO LOGO ON FRONT



KODO BOOK

We are pleased to be able to offer "Children of the Drum" (softback) £19.85 + £4.10 p&p = £23.95 by Mark Coutts-Smith, published by Lightworks Press
A must for all serious Taiko fans!

Kodo book

A large format book of beautiful photographs and text, this is the first major publication about the Kodo Drummers in English. The author spent five years on Sado Island amongst this extraordinary community, where he was able to get closer to the legend of Kodo than any other Westerner. An



introductory essay tells the complete story of how a 60's inspired commune became today's globe-trotting group, and explains how Kodo and Sado Island fit into the history of Japanese drumming. The 95 photographs offer a glimpse of an earthy physical Japan and provide a unique insight into the origins of Kodo's elemental power. "Stirringly beautiful... an intimate look at Kodo" This is a must for all serious Taiko fans! See order form opposite for details