

TAIKO TAIKO

www.mugenkyo-taiko.co.uk



Thank you to Avril and Stuart for the following messages:

"Just occasionally something moves me and takes me to a place my soul calls home."

Avril

"... There's an observation on life and the rate of change which we all experience which is described by an experiment with frogs placed in a large glass fish tank of cold water. Very, very slowly, imperceptibly, over a long period of time, the water is increasingly heated, until it gets very hot indeed. Because the temperature increase is so slow the frogs do not notice that they are being boiled to death slowly. They don't leap out to safety, they may notice discomfort, but are reassured by the fact that they are in the company of others; a chilling tale despite the heat involved! I'm not saying that I'm in the midst of a drama, or boiling to death in bourgeois mediocrity, but I am saying that many of us can be lulled into a sense of "I'm OK" because our perceptions and unconscious philosophy shift over time with the choices we make.

Joining workshops, coming to shows, and feeling part of Mugenkyo is a breath of cool fresh air for me, and, I'm sure, for many others. Escapist? Perhaps, but great fun. I admire the commitment you've made to Taiko whilst still living in the real, present world of gigs and travel/tours, B&Bs, late finishes and early starts, and money. The 'Taiko monk' idea does have some appeal but it seems so divorced from reality that it's a fantasy too.

All I'm saying is, keep it up, keep giving us splashes of cool water in our hot little fish tanks."

Stuart



Right: Colour painting by Andie Clay, Cardigan

THE RETURN OF KODO KODO BOOK



Kodo are the undisputed kings of Taiko, and must be experienced at least once in everyone's lifetime. 'KODO' translates both as 'heartbeat' and 'children of the drum', signifying

that Taiko is to be played with the innocence and purity of a child. They are based on Sado Island, whose harsh climate made it the ideal location to send political exiles in feudal Japan. Now, Kodo have built a community there dedicated to preserving and developing traditional Japanese performing arts, focusing on Taiko drumming. They are coming again to our shores next month. On the opening night at the Barbican Centre (27th May), the Kodo drummers will be performing with the Tuvan throat-singers Huun Huur Tu, who stunned audiences at last year's Edinburgh Festival with their other-worldly singing style. Kodo's drumming is powerful and moving, Huun Huur Tu's singing transports you to another dimension, so a collaboration between the two could quite possibly be mind-blowing! They will also be presenting a 'workshop demonstration' from 2:00 until 3:15 pm on May 29th. Kodo then tour their show to other venues around the country. See their website for details: www.kodo.or.jp

KODO TOUR DATES

May

27-31 Barbican Centre, London

June

7 Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

9 Royal Centre, Nottingham

10,11 Symphony Hall, Birmingham

13 De Montfort Hall, Leicester

16 The Anvil, Basingstoke

We are pleased to be able to offer through Mugenkyo's merchandise mail order:

'Children of the Drum' by Mark Coutts-Smith, published by Lightworks Press. 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".



TAIKO CLASSES AROUND THE UK

For Taiko classes in London contact Mark Alcock on 0958 949 023 or email: mark@alcock.com

For Taiko classes in Exeter for both adults and young people (12-16) contact Jonathan Kirby on 01392 494 486 or email: info@kagemusha.com

For Taiko classes in Reading contact James Barrow on 0118 946 3317 or email: taikojb@globalnet.co.uk

Top: Promotional leaflet for 'KODO'
Middle: Book cover 'Children of the Drum'
Bottom: Don't eat it all at once!



MUGENKYO UPDATE What's been happening...

Spring has stubbornly still not sprung in Taiko Hagow, but at least we can say we've had a few summery teaser tasters of it around the country in the first few months of the new millennium. Who would have believed we'd be kicking off the season at the spiffy new Stadium Of Light, home to Sunderland FC and venue to their raucous derby game with Newcastle United on February 5th? Neil and Al had that swallowed-a-coathanger look of adolescent glee all over their faces as Mugenkyo ran out from the tunnel onto the pitch to provide some pre-match entertainment for the north-east faithful. Our mini-set ended abruptly on the advice of the police, who were worried that our drumming was winding up an already excited crowd to the point of bloodlust...Rock n' Roll!

The first performance proper for the new line-up went off more peacefully in High Wycombe and a workshop for the hearing-impaired at Bath's Ustinov theatre was memorable and rewarding for all of us. A school show in Canvey Island was the first of a series of 'Beat Of Japan' performances Mugenkyo is undertaking this year, to spread knowledge of taiko drumming through schools around the country. Kiddie power was at its most magnificent

during the lunchtime concert we headlined at the Birmingham Symphony Hall, which ended with the three thousand nine and ten year-olds swinging their school jumpers around their heads. For a couple of glorious, if frightening, minutes, Mugenkyo were almost as popular with little children as the latest Pokemon creature...

The end of February found us at Bexhill-On-Sea's De La Warr Pavilion, a charismatic venue with a Grade 1 listing but an uncertain future. Bexhill itself has claims to being the home of motor racing, and the theatre's sleek design gives the idea a bit of romantic authority. The Pavilion, voted Britain's third best-loved building by English Heritage, is to be taken over and refurbished by a brewery...

Mugenkyo's brush with The Brit Awards is too convoluted a tale to tell in full here, but the basics are these: having initially been invited to open the awards on stage with Sive and Queen, we ended

up with little to show for the two days except a bitter taste in the mouth. But our experience recording for Apache Indian's 'Soul Music' show at Carlton TV Nottingham a couple of days later was altogether more positive. We were also lucky enough to catch performances by Fierce and the dancey,



Top: The handsome De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea

Middle: "Run! It's the riot police!" Stadium of Light, Sunderland

Bottom: "Beam me up Scotty!" On the bridge at Townhouse Studios in London, recording for the Brit Awards




MUGENKYO UPDATE What's been happening cont...

tabla-driven Trickbaby. Apache himself was a real gentleman, and the entire crew treated us with courtesy and kindness. March, and the Cheltenham Everyman theatre has the front rows up and dancing, while Widnes the next day sees us putting our feet up in the dressing room the Beatles shared at the beginning of their fame. Did we really catch an hour's kip on the same couch as John Lennon? Sadly, the Queen's Hall theatre is another due to be demolished and/or relocated in the near future.



After the first of a series of shows we'll be doing this year for the friendly Alton Towers, we snatched some time off in early April to see Wadaiko Yamato in Stoke and Nottingham, who were as sweet and charming in person as they were deliciously funky on stage. School shows dominated the middle of the month.

Respect to the kids in Southend! Bless your cotton socks! We were able to see Yamato in action twice more, in Edinburgh and Warwick, for some serious, if highly enjoyable, taiko study... Still no sign of the end of winter, but our Courrock classes started with a flourish none-the-less. Then it was off to Abergavenny, where we gave our smashing new giant gong its world premiere as part of a revamped set. It's hailing again in Glasgow as May approaches. Has spring really forgotten us? Nae bother! We'll settle for an early summer in Paris... 



A BIG THANK YOU TO...

Anthony Woolston, Peter Crotty, Scott Macleod Collins, Sybil Mackie, Jeff Hogg, Nan Maxwell, Jan Sturrock, Mr & Mrs Patricia Thomson, Adam Leek

Please remember, it costs money to put out a newsletter. Please help us to continue by sending donations - a book of stamps, postal orders or cheques (made payable to Mugenkyo), and even cash gratefully accepted.

Or alternatively, buy our merchandise!

Top: Colour painting titled 'Mugenkyo', by Sonja Benskin Mesher, Dolgellau
Bottom: Brit Awards passes!

ORDER FORM

Name:
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Items Ordered

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

All prices include VAT, packaging and postage within the UK. (please allow 21 days for delivery) Please send cheques or postal orders payable to ...

'MUGENKYO'
P.O. BOX 5124
Lanark ML11 0WA

WADAIKO YAMATO REVIEW

Festival Theatre, Edinburgh

Brash, bold and beautiful. The moment Yamato walked out on stage wearing trainers rather than the traditional 'tabi', it was apparent that they were going to present something completely original. The show started with a thumping heartbeat in the speakers, which then transferred to the huge drums on stage. Their second song, where five drummers played the small high-pitched 'shime' drums sitting in a tight row, was a feat of speed and precision, their hands moving so fast they were a blur. Their third song was played with all of the drummers carrying the 'okedo' on slings over the shoulder in the Korean style, walk-

ing and moving in unison. This piece developed into a humorous battle between two players, engaging and inviting the audience to join in. If the first half of the show showed off their dexterity, the second half demonstrated their wide-ranging musical talents. It opened with a very original piece combining the rhythmic strummings of the 'shamisen' three-stringed zither with the Taiko. Haunting flute melodies, gong and voice were also used to full effect.

The show climaxed with the 10-strong group thumping out rhythms on the impressive array of huge 'odaiko' large drums. The members of Yamato are young and fashionable, with modern costumes and designer haircuts. Their

show is similarly strong on presentation - an extremely well put together show, which skillfully brought the audience through highs and lows, humour and seriousness. The humour in the show was outstanding - such a long cry from the 'inscrutable Japanese' label, the Yamato members were approachable and human. Their songs have evolved since we saw them last at the Edinburgh Fringe two years ago, as they develop more and more

their own original style. All of their songs are very contemporary - both in terms of the rhythms played and the style of drumming - composed by Masa Ogawa, the group leader. What was most impressive about the group was their charisma and their ability to bring the audience to clap, shout and laugh with them. So, the question is, is Taiko the new rock & roll? With Yamato, it certainly is. Don't miss them on their next visit to these shores planned for 2001. **M**



Above: Promotional leaflet for 'Wadaiko Yamato'

Background: drawing by Karina Williams, Cardigan Secondary School

MERCHANDISE

MUGENKYO CD/TAPE

£12 for the CD / £8 for the tape

(includes p&p) Running time approx 48 minutes

"Brilliant rhythmic precision"

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

MUGENKYO T-SHIRT

£12 (includes p&p)

Available in gold with black print

with the large Mugenkyo logo on the back (MED & XL)

KODO BOOK

£19.85 & p&p = £23.95

We are pleased to be able to offer "Children of the Drum" (softback)

by Mark Coutts-Smith, published by Lightworks Press. A must for all serious Taiko fans!



Back of T-shirt

MUGENKYO CONCERT DATES



Designed by Kieron Lea Hodgson ~ Illustration and Design ~ tel: 07946 531 746

May

- 19 Castle Hall, Hertford (01992 589 026)
- 20 Alton Towers (daytime event)
- 21 Greenock Town Hall (01475 715 666)
At this concert as part of the Inverclyde festival, we are proud to present the Courrock class participants, who will perform a short guest spot as part of our show. We will also be performing with a Piper - a new and interesting musical combination!
- 29 Music Live Festival, Atlantic Gate, Kings Dock, Liverpool (free) (2.00pm-4.00pm to be confirmed)
- 30 Bromley Festival, London (day, free event) (0181 663 0901)

June

- 4 Barnsley Millennium Festival, Cannon Hall (day, free) (01226 790 270)
- 5 Leominster College (01568 613 477)
- 6 Oakengates Theatre, Telford (01952 619 020)
- 8-9 St. George's Theatre, Great Yarmouth (01493 858 387)
- 21 Crassington Festival, North Yorkshire (01756 752 691)
- 30 Haverhill Town Hall (01440 714 140)

July

- 1 Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford-on-Avon (01225 860 110)
- 3-6 Channel Islands tour (01481 711 360):
3rd Sark, 4th Guernsey, 5th Alderney, 6th Jersey
- 9 Alton Towers (day)
- 15 Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton (01823 282 244)
- 16 Sutton Borough Show, Cheam Park, Sutton (day, free)
- 20 Aquaculture Festival, Torquay (day, free) (01803 296 296)
- 21 The Wharf, Tavistock (01822 613 928)
- 22 Oundle Festival (01832 272 026)
- 23-26 Alton Towers (day)
- 31 Alton Towers (day)

August

- 1 Alton Towers (day)
- 5 'Summer in the City' Festival, Dundee (day, free) (01382 434 067)
- 6 Morecambe Festival of Light and Water, Morecambe Arena (free) (01524 582 801)
- 7 - 28 Garage Theatre, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, 4:15 pm daily (0131 221 9009 or 0131 226 5138)

Following a sold-out three week run last year, Mugenkyo return to the Edinburgh Fringe - same venue, same time, different show. The intimacy of the venue allows the front row of the audience to sit very close to the drums, feeling their vibrations beating in their chests!

Below; Sylvia Rome in action!

