



# taiko taiko

the *MUGENKYO* newsletter  
autumn 2000

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## Summer? What summer?

In the end, Mugenkyo were more than happy to settle for a spectacular Paris springtime, a glorious week in the Channel Islands, and 22 fantastic days at the Edinburgh Fringe...

right: Miqui outstretches the Eiffel Tower  
Below: Mugenkyo performing at the Paris Disneyworld Conference Centre



# Summer drummin'!





Here we go! Mugenkyo at Disneyworld



The workshop classes, backstage at the Inverclyde Festival



Hole-in-one queen Sylvia with Nail, Great Yarmouth



Rubbing shoulders with greatness, Great Yarmouth



Mugenkyo & In Taranino  
At the 3D cinema, Paris Disneyworld



Off to Alderney! (weather permitting...)

May began at Alton Towers, the first of nine days of outdoor performances at the park over the summer. Mugenkyo entertained the queues near the entrance to "The Hex" – just about the only ride the whole group could be persuaded to go on. The same week had us performing at the Ashcroft Theatre, Croydon, as Engelbert Humperdinck packed them in next door...

Shakespeare – a marginally greater legend – is said to have walked the boards at the Kings Lynn Arts Centre, reputedly the oldest theatre in Britain. No ghosts backstage, alas (poor Yorick). A short set at Blackburn Museum gave rise to concerns about the safety of certain exhibits in close proximity to the odaiko; luckily some loosened plaster was the only casualty among the artifacts. Two Beat Of Japan\* shows later, we were on the ferry to Calais, bound for Paris and our appearance for the Nikken Conference at Disneyworld. For ten minutes on a giant stage, flooded with dry ice punctured with green lasers, behind an enormous transparent jungle screen... well, we were just about "living the dream", as Nikken would put it...



\* This year we were fortunate to receive a grant from the GB Sasakawa Foundation for our "Beat of Japan" project – to perform twenty educational concerts at secondary schools around the country. The concerts were a combination of performing taiko pieces, and explaining about the background of Taiko – the history, how the drums are made, and also teaching the students a simple taiko rhythm. The concerts were a great success and we hope to be able to repeat the project in the next year.



There were five heady nights off in sumptuous Paris before we returned to Britain and the Inverclyde Festival, where the two Gourrock workshop classes took to the stage and did us proud. Over thirty people, divided into beginners' and advanced classes, performed the pieces they had learnt in the workshops. We were also lucky enough to have the opportunity to play with piper Iain Darroch... a very special night. May ended with festival performances in Falkirk's Callander Hall and the middle of a shopping centre in Bromley...

Early June, and the van is stuck in the mud at the Barnsley festival. But we're blessed with better weather for our two nights at Maria Myers' St. Georges Theatre, Great Yarmouth. Great sporting prowess is displayed on the crazy golf and bowling greens of Great Yarmouth seafront...

A week of afternoon B.O.J shows in Tyne & Wear fits nicely into Neil and Al's Euro 2000 viewing schedule; Al is injured for the week, but a visit to a sports physio in Newcastle gets him back on the road to match fitness. Suddenly it's July, and we're off to the Channel Islands! Our tour begins on Sark, reached via ferry from Guernsey. Our equipment shares the seats with holiday-makers and daytrippers, and is then carted by tractor up to car-free Sark's Island Hall. We're back in Guernsey the next day for a sell-out performance at St. James, but fog delays our exciting trislander flight to Alderney the following morning...

When we finally arrive, the stoical Alderney locals explain that fog is part and parcel of life on the island. It descends thick and fast to delay our next flight, to Jersey... Luckily we make it to the biggest Channel Island in good time for our final show of the tour, another sell-out. We enjoy a welcome day off on Jersey before returning to England and five days working with the Coral Arts "Woods Between The Worlds"

project in Wiltshire: Mugenkyo, Sammy, Margo, Jess and Jane teach percussion, talko, movement, singing and drama to local students as part of a wide-ranging week of events, culminating in an outdoor performance and Marlborough school's fearsome nine-headed dragon. Leaving Wiltshire, we get the chance to be Mulders and Scullys for the morning when we investigate a fresh crop circle... But there's no time to rest just yet, and Mugenkyo push on through July into August with theatre shows in Taunton, Cheam, Tavistock and Oundle, and outdoor performances to packed crowds at the Torquay Aquaculture Festival and the Morecambe Bay Festival. The latter climaxes in a seemingly never-ending fireworks display, sending us off on our way to three fabulous weeks at Edinburgh's Garage Theatre for the Edinburgh Fringe. Great fun was had by all, but a guest performance by shamisen legend Chikuzan at one of the shows was particularly memorable, while dancer Egiku Hanayagi and clowns Yoshiko and Butchy joined us on stage for our last performance. The audience took the roof off the theatre! It was the perfect end to an unforgettable summer...



Sark - The obedo disembarks



Sark's public transport system



The nine-headed dragon, famed by the children of Marlborough School



The truth is... right here!  
Al, Bill and Neil mid-crop circle, Wiltshire



Egiku Hanayagi



Chikuzan



The man who saw everything at the Edinburgh Fringe



Yoshiko & Butchy





This summer we were visited by two excellent Taiko groups from Japan, Kodo and Tokyo Dagekidan. Kodo's tour began at London's Barbican Centre, followed by concerts around the country. They were stunning as usual - Kodo are as close as you'll ever get to technical perfection in Taiko. Their harsh training programme and strict selection process ensures that every new member fits into the Kodo mold, and is absolutely top-notch.

The concert opened with a new piece, Mikazuki-no-yoru, which employed a non-traditional 5-beat count juxtaposed with traditional rhythms. One of the highlights of the concert was the graceful Hana-Hachijo, based on the fisherman's style from Hachijo Island played on a single drum. In the corner of the stage a dancer appeared in a kimono, moving in silence. The dance flowed seamlessly into a powerful taiko song, her arms making beautiful arcs then whipping the bachi (sticks) against the skin. In the second half Kodo performed a few more melodic pieces, with fue (flute) and soft percussion. And of course Yoshikazu Fujimoto astounded all with his powerful Odaiko (big drum). Altogether a truly moving experience.

Tokyo Dagekidan were a group with a totally different flavour, but equally enjoyable. Their three week tour took them up and down the country, and we managed to catch them in Ludlow. They are a five-piece from Tokyo, who play with a very masculine energy. Each player had a very different character, and their costumes reflected both their individuality and also their modern approach to Taiko. Their strength and power impressed the audience, but also their humour. The last piece in the first half, Kan-Kan, was a mad take off of Stomp, with rhythms played out on plastic buckets, flutes made out of hosepipes and rakes, and with one of the group wandering about like a monkey. In the second half there were more melodic numbers, and also a shime (small high-pitched drum) and odaiko (big drum) piece that was absolutely stunning. My only complaint about the show was that there was too much flute and not enough Taiko! If they do come back to Britain, they are highly recommended.

Next year is the year-long Japan 2001 Festival, and we will have many more Taiko groups touring the country. Look out for tour dates in this newsletter!



Tokyo Dagekidan



Ando's Legend of Yoshikazu

## new! merchandise



skinny tee, one size, red w/black trim £10



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front

medium/x-large t-shirt  
black w/white print, black w/orange print £10

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### MUGENKYO CD/TAPE CD £12 Tape £8

(Includes p&p)  
Running time approx 48 minutes  
"Brilliant rhythmic precision"  
"...the energy and power of Taiko thundering into your home"

**KODO BOOK**  
£19.85 + p&p = £23.95  
We are pleased to be able to offer  
"Children of the Drum"  
by Mark Coutts-Smith,  
published by Lightworks Press.  
A must for all serious taiko fans!

# MUGENKYO tour dates

## SEPTEMBER

Tue 26th: Wyvern Theatre, Swindon (01793 524 481)  
Thu 28th: Octagon Theatre, Yeovil (01935 422 884)  
Fri 29th &  
Sat 30th: Ustinov Studio, Theatre Royal Bath (01225 448 844)

## OCTOBER

Sun 1st: The Courtyard Theatre, Hereford (01432 359 252)  
Mon 2nd: Beck Theatre, Hayes (0181 561 7506)  
Tue 3rd: Princess Theatre, Torquay (01803 290 290)  
Wed 4th: Playhouse Theatre, Weston-Super-Mare (01934 645 544)  
Thu 5th: Secombe Theatre, Sutton (0181 770 6990)  
Sat 7th: Medina Theatre, Isle of Wight (01983 527 020)  
Sun 8th: Clair Hall, Haywards Heath (01444 445 440)  
Tue 10th: White Rock Theatre, Hastings (01424 781 000)  
Wed 11th: Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich (01603 626 560)  
Thu 12th: Civic Centre, Aylesbury (01296 486 009)  
Sat 14th: Old Laundry Theatre, Cumbria (01539 884 444)  
Sun 15th: Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury (01684 295 074)  
Mon 16th: City Hall, Salisbury (01722 327 676)  
Tue 17th: Northbrook Theatre, Worthing (01903 606 162)  
Wed 18th: Dorking Grand Hall, Surrey (01306 881 717)  
Thu 19th: Rhoda McGaw Theatre, Woking (01483 761 144)

## NOVEMBER

Thu 9th: Pontardawe Arts Centre (01792 863 722)  
Sat 11th: Blackwood Miners Institute, Gwent (01495 227 206)  
Mon 13th: Theatr Mwldan, Cardigan (01239 621 200)  
Tue 14th: Theatr Ardudwy, Harlech (01776 780 667)  
Wed 15th: Aberystwyth Arts Centre (01970 623 232)  
Thu 16th: Neptune Theatre, Liverpool (0151 709 7844)  
Fri 17th &  
Sat 18th: Halifax Square Chapel (01422 349 422)  
Sun 19th: Grand Opera House, York (01904 671 818)  
Tue 21st: Elgin (tbc)  
Wed 22nd: Invergordon Arts Centre (01349 868 486)

### TAIKO DRUMMING IN SOUTHWEST ENGLAND KAGEMUSHA TAIKO

A big congratulations to Kagemusha Taiko for receiving a Japan Festival Award 2000, for "outstanding contributions to promoting Japanese culture in the UK". Based in Exeter, Jonathan and Gabrielle Kirby work tirelessly on promoting Taiko in the Southwest - teaching both beginners and intermediate classes, organising corporate team-building sessions, running the first Junior Taiko group in the country, and most recently setting up an adults performing group. Kagemusha will be showcasing their work at a concert at the Exeter Arts Centre on 21st December. Kagemusha's autumn programme of classes will begin on 10th September, with different sessions for beginners, intermediates and juniors. For further information contact:  
tel 01392 494 486  
Kagemusha Taiko, P.O. Box 128, Exeter EX4 6YT  
email: info@kagemusha.com  
web: www.kagemusha.com

### Order Form

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Mugenkyo Cassette	£8	
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T-Shirt black w/white XL	£10	
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Kodo Book	£23.95	
Total enclosed: £		

All prices include VAT, postage and packaging within the UK (please allow 21 days for delivery). Please send cheques/postal orders payable to MUGENKYO, P.O. Box 5124, Lanark ML11 0WA

### NEWSLETTER THANKYOUS

John & Jane Hill, Margaret Elnon, Scott Macleod, J Hahn, Mr & Mrs Lawson, Robin Davis, Masami Kita-Geerlings