

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

TAIKO TAIKO

Winter Issue 2000
Issue No. 15

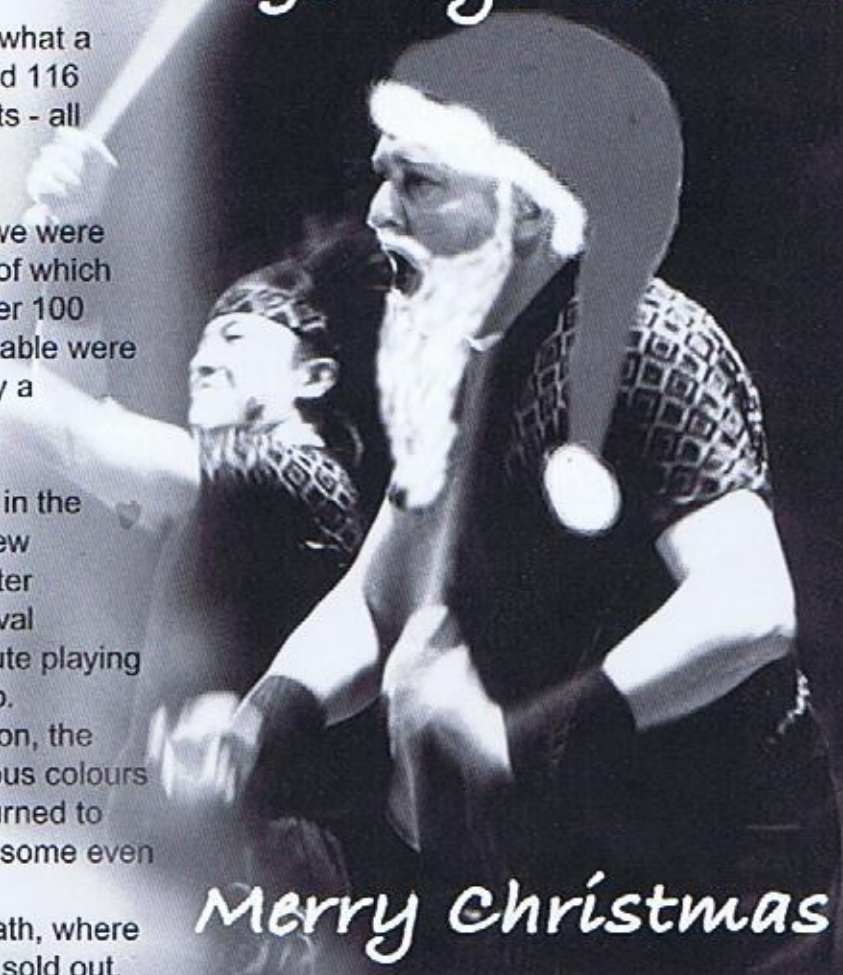
Mugenkyo-ho-ho-ho!

As we approach our annual winter break, we can look back upon the year and think what a crazy crazy year it's been! We've performed 116 concerts this year, plus 26 schools concerts - all over the length & breadth of the country. Our autumn began with the World Potato Championships in Dundee. Well, actually we were performing at the Food and Flower Show, of which the Potato Championships were a part. Over 100 different varieties of this stumpy root vegetable were on display, with the blue ribbon scooped by a perfectly shaped pair of Golden Russetts. Then we were into our October tour - three and a half weeks on the road mostly in the south of England. It was the first tour for new member Teresa Brookes, who joined us after successfully surviving the Edinburgh Festival marathon. Her bright smile and ethereal flute playing has been a wonderful addition to the group. On tour we were accompanied by Tim Upton, the lighting technician, who bathed us in glorious colours and bright flashes! During this tour we returned to many familiar venues, for the second, and some even for the third time.

One of these was the Ustinov theatre in Bath, where the two shows we played were completely sold out.

When we arrived we realised the 1.20 metre odaiko wouldn't fit through the door, and so a section of the floor of the stage had to be taken out in order to hoist the odaiko up through the floor from the foyer below. The Beck Theatre in Hayes was best forgotten, in particular the tacky Pearl & Dean adverts shown in the interval - an unfortunate feature of the more commercial venues we've played at. On this tour we also performed at our biggest theatre yet - 1700 seats at the Princess Theatre in Torquay, unfortunately not all of them occupied! At the Playhouse in Weston-super-mare we were given a very warm welcome by the friendly staff. At the Medina Theatre on the Isle of Wight, Al unveiled his new blonde haircolour, a great hit with the ladies! We then headed on to Hastings, where we battled with the hurricane-force winds to get our equipment in and out of the theatre. The wind was so strong, the smaller members of the group (i.e. Ali and Miyuki) had to hug lamp post, in order to stop being blown away while also getting a good soaking from the huge waves that came crashing over the boardwalk.

Merry Christmas



In Norwich we performed at the charming old Maddermarket Theatre, which is becoming one of our favourite venues, thanks to the lovely atmosphere and enthusiastic packed-out audience. Norwich Rocks! Our concert at the Old Laundry in Bowness on Windemere was sold out for the second year running, in fact there was even an advert in the local paper requesting a pair of tickets at any cost! We will be playing two nights there next year, so hopefully everyone will be able to get tickets next time. We then headed back to the south coast to Worthing, to perform at the Northbrook Theatre, which is a part of the college there. The students were great, and even joined in with Matsuri, the festival song, with coordinated dancing along the aisles and "woah woah" catcalls. Crazy! We returned for the third year in a row to Dorking for another great gig.

We headed back to base for a couple weeks, then set off again on our November tour, concentrating this time on Wales, North England and North Scotland. Actually there was one London date tucked in there, an event at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where we froze on the steps and stopped the traffic in Kensington as we welcomed the guests for the Asian Arts extravaganza. The Welsh leg of our tour started with Pontardawe, then continued to Cardigan, Harlech and Aberystwyth in west mid-Wales, all return visits to well-loved venues, catching glimpses of the amazing scenery in between. We stopped in for a quick visit to James Barrow, formerly based in Reading, who has now relocated to west Wales and set up a new organisation called "Taiko Wales". James - we know where you live (!), and wish you the best of luck in spreading Taiko drumming in Wales. We met more of our "taiko family" in Liverpool, where we performed again at the Neptune Theatre. Our friend Clive Byron has set up a taiko-style percussion group there, and hope that there will be many more all over the country in the future. Good luck! We also returned to the Halifax Square Chapel for two nights - which meant that we have now performed a total of six times there - a record! The venue has been transformed with a new floor and new lights, but still retained its wonderful acoustics and very special atmosphere, thanks to being run by very special people! We set sail for York, but managed to escape the floods, and although the York Opera House had been completely flooded out the week before, luckily we didn't have to perform in our wellies. Unfortunately though, our accommodation had closed down completely, and we had to find new digs on higher ground. We then headed right up to the north of Scotland to Elgin, where we performed at the Chapel of the renowned Gordonstoun School. There we received a riotous reception, and by the end of the concert the hymn books were flying overhead and the students were dancing up and down on stage, their shouts and screams drowning out the sound of the Taiko. We felt like running away, but survived until the end - just! Our year began with riots at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland and ended with riots at the Gordonstoun School - a truly riotous year! Our very very last concert was at Invergordon, a lovely wee venue where again we were joined in Matsuri by eager audience members dancing and playing percussion. That's what a festival is all about!

We're now back at base again, tying up loose ends as the year winds to a close. We've had an extremely full year - rewarding but tiring as well. We've had a couple of casualties this year - Sylvia has returned to her acting, and will be going off travelling to far-flung corners of the globe, and Al has now escaped the Scottish winter and has migrated south to Surrey. We wish them both the best of luck for the future. Mugenkyo will not be performing again until late February, and in the meantime we'll be having a much needed break! In the New Year we will be writing new material and rehearsing the new set, to be ready in time for our first dates at the end of February. We will also be running classes in Glasgow and Edinburgh (see details in this newsletter). We'd like to thank everybody who came to watch us this year, and also to all of you who sent kind letters and e-mails.

Thank you for your support - we really couldn't have done it without you.....

Have a Taikotastic Xmas and New Year!

TAIKO FACTS

Did you know that "*taiko*" is now a recognised word in the English Language? *Taiko* has now joined the likes of *sushi*, *sumo*, *geisha* and *samurai*, as Japanese words used commonly enough that they have their own entries in the Oxford English Dictionary.

Kagemusha Taiko continue to establish Exeter as the Taiko capital of England, with their packed schedule of classes & workshops for both adults & children.

Taiko Classes in Exeter

contact:

Jonathan Kirby
Kagemusha Taiko, P.O. Box 128,
Exeter EX46YT.
tel: 01392 494 486
email: info@kagemusha.com

Kagemusha Junior Taiko Performance.

'Spirit of the Drum'

A concert featuring both adults and children, performing a fresh repertoire of pieces.

18 December:

Exeter Phoenix
Exeter, Devon

tel: 01392 667 080

QUESTION CORNER - reader's questions answered!

"What kind of notation do you use in Taiko drumming?"

Traditionally Taiko drumming rhythms were passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation, and were closely guarded as family treasures. These rhythms were not written down - instead a kind of verbal notation was used. So, for example, a single beat on the skin is "don", a double beat is "doko", together they form the traditional mitsu-uchi (or three-hit) rhythm: "don doko don doko...".

Here are some others:

don - single beat on the skin
doko - double beat on the skin
ka - single beat on the rim
kara - double beat on the rim
su - a rest

Different drums also make different sounds. Whereas the nagado drum (the barrel-shaped one made from a single tree trunk) makes the sound "don doko don doko", the shime (the high-pitched tied drum) makes the sound "ten teke ten teke". There is also some regional variation.

Here is a taiko rhythm to try:

don kara ka don kara ka don kara don kara su don don

In western musical notation this would be:



Many taiko groups in Japan now use western musical notation. In Mugenkyo we continue to use the traditional verbal notation, because we feel that it helps us "sing" the rhythms. By singing the rhythms out loud, we can feel the pulse underlying the song, and the subtler shading of the music. We call our pieces "songs" because they are not just a collection of rhythms - they have an innate melody in themselves.

Do you have a burning question that must be answered? If so, write to: Mugenkyo, P.O. Box 5124, Lanark ML11 0WA

Taiko Wales

Taiko Wales is a new organisation which promotes the growth of Taiko in Wales, run by James Barrow. James studied Japanese Taiko drumming & yokobue flute for over 4 years part time with Osamu Munakata, Head of The Hiroshima Taiko Hozonkai Drum Preservation

Taiko Classes in Wales

contact:

James Barrow
Taiko Wales, 4 Railway Terrace
Machynlleth, Powys SY20 8BJ.
tel/fax: 01654 702 134
email: jamesbarrow@taikowales.
freeserve.co.uk

Society. In 1993, he set up the first regularly performing Taiko group in Britain - Akatsuki Daiko at Gyosei International College in Reading. In 1995, he set up the Gyosei Taiko School, teaching taiko to the young people of the UK, especially in primary and secondary schools, as well as running taiko courses for adults. Now based in Wales, he will be teaching regular classes across mid-Wales from early 2001.

ADMINISTRATOR WANTED

We are now interviewing for the post of administrator. We are looking for someone with a friendly telephone manner and good computer skills, who is flexible, resourceful and organised and is able to work on his/her own initiative.

For an application pack:

tel / fax: 01357 522 008

e-mail: mail@mugenkyo.com

Closing date for completed applications:
3rd January.

ORDER FORM

Name:
Address:
Postcode:

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 UK. (please allow 21 days for delivery) Please send cheques or postal orders payable to ...

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

THERE ARE NO MUGENKYO CONCERT DATES THIS WINTER
Please wait for our next newsletter to find out our dates from late February.

MUGENKYO CLASSES

*Want to give it a go
yourself?*

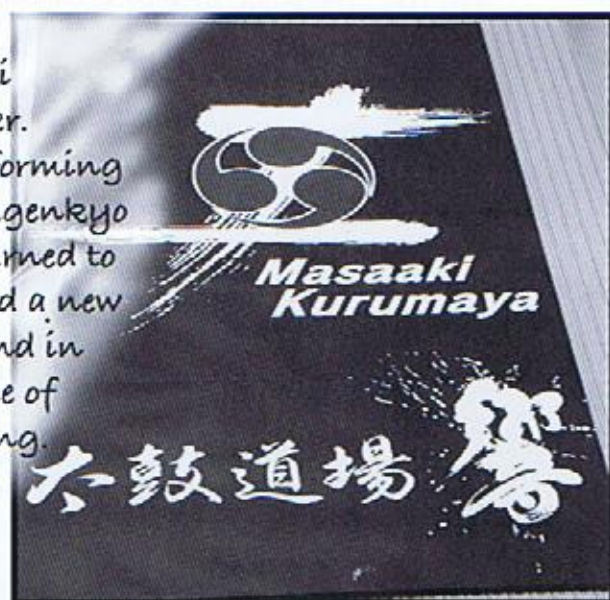
*Join our classes in Glasgow or
Edinburgh this January &
February! It doesn't matter if
you've never held a pair of bachi
(drumsticks) before - all are
welcome! The main purpose is
to enjoy learning about and
learning to play Taiko drums.*

*If you live in Central Scotland,
you should receive with this
newsletter a flyer with all the
details of the classes. If you live
outside the Central Scotland area
& would like to receive a flyer,
please call: 01357 522 008 and
we'll be happy to send you one.*

*The classes will run from
mid-January, so book early to
avoid disappointment!*

Many of you will be familiar with Masaaki Kurumaya, our teacher. After two years of performing with and teaching Mugenkyo in Britain, he has returned to Fukui City and opened a new dojo, the first of its kind in the area, for the purpose of teaching and rehearsing.

Nice one Sensei!



Stop Press! WADAIKO YAMATO - the astounding Taiko group from Nara, Japan - will return to the UK next March. Book in advance - dates so far confirmed:

March

- 1 Music Hall, Aberdeen
- 2/3 Festival Theatre, Edinburgh
- 4-6 Theatre Royal, Newcastle
- 7 Assembly, Derby
- 8-10 Playhouse, Oxford
- 11/12 Theatre Royal, Norwich
- 13/14 Swan, High Wycombe
- 15-17 Cambridge Arts Centre
- 18 The Cliffs, Southend
- 19/20 Orchard, Dartford
- 21/22 Wimbledon
- 23/24 Grand Theatre, Blackpool
- 25 Demgate, Northampton
- 26 Hexagon, Reading
- 27 Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham
- 28/29 Lowry Lyric Theatre, Salford

Thank you to those of you who sent in donations towards the cost of this newsletter:
Mr & Mrs Greaves, R J Hughes,
S MacLeod Collins, Gail Forrest,
Mrs S M Thompson, Glenys &
David Banks, Maureen Burden.

merchandise



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



back

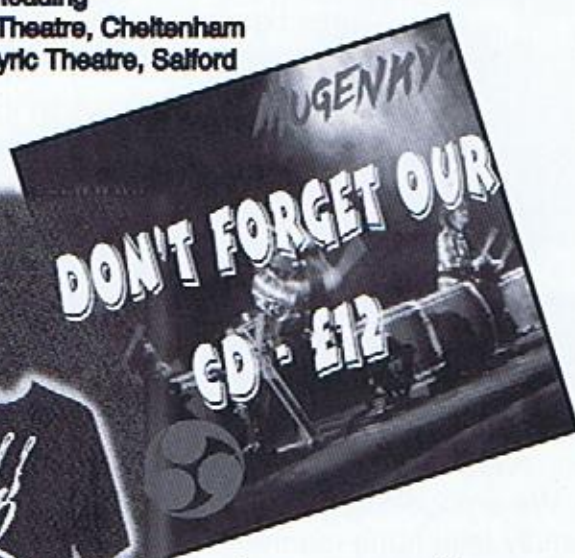


front



back

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



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.