

MUGENKYO newsletter

taiko taiko

www.mugenkyo.com

· New Year 2001 Issue No.16

2001: a TaikoOdyssey

Our winter has been fairly quiet, well, comparatively! Ali and Teresa took a much needed 5 week break and Neil and Miyuki just about managed to drag themselves out of the office for a couple of weeks over Christmas. The weather was freezing out here in the wilds of bonny Scotland, and we were snowed in for almost a week! Then we were all back into it from mid-January - preparing for the year ahead. One major achievement over the winter has been to obtain a work permit for Katsuhiko Uemura, who joins the group this year, and hopefully for longer! Long-term readers of "Taiko Taiko" may remember him as a player in the group in 1996 and 1997, and the coordinator/ composer for the "Radiant Life" project. Another major achievement has been finding our new full-time administrator - Linda McDonald, from Maryland USA. We're a very international team this year! (see feature on the year 2001 team). Also, the barn has been slowly transforming into a beautiful "dojo" thanks to the building work of Jim McDade & co. It will take until autumn to finish all of the details, but when complete, it will host weekend workshops and other taiko activities, as well as Mugenkyo rehearsals.

Our days back at base have been filled with many different kinds of activities - there is no such thing as a typical day back at Mugenkyo HQ! What have we been up to? Firstly there's rehearsing and writing new material for the coming season. This year we will be unveiling a couple of brand new pieces - to say any more would give the game away! For this purpose we've asked Dave our carpenter to make some new stands for an exciting new style of playing - well new for us anyway! We have been teaching classes in Glasgow and Edinburgh, which have been heaps of fun. It's been great to have so many of you involved! We have also been designing new costumes, made by the expert seamstress Seija, which involved many group expeditions to every fabric shop in Glasgow and Edinburgh to find that perfect fabric. We also redecorated the office, and we've been de-nailing the second-hand floorboards which will soon form the maple floor of the dojo. So, all in all, it's been typical of life back at base - the huge variety of jobs that need to be done "behind the scenes" to make a successful taiko group!



MUGENKYO

Mugenkyo is Europe's first professional Taiko drum group, established in 1994. We perform over 120 concerts a year at theatres, arts centres, festivals and schools.

Mugenkyo's goal is to develop Taiko as a European art form, both through their performances and their educational programme.

"Taiko Taiko" is Mugenkyo's quarterly newsletter. We aim to spread information about the art form of Taiko and publicise Taiko events in the UK: Mugenkyo tour dates, performances and workshops by other UK based Taiko players, and UK tours of Taiko groups from Japan.

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Thank you to those of you who sent in donations towards the cost of this newsletter.

Jacqueline Grant, Jean Farrell, Robert Barnes, Liz Hamblett, Scott-MacLeod Collins, Steve Creatorey, Linda Henenly, Carole & Frank Roe, & Alan Steenner. 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) gratefully accepted.

the Dojo under construction



What're you lookin' at?



An expert team of fly-by-night interior decorators are recruited.

MUGENKYO TEAM 2001



Neil Mackie - one of the founders of Mugenkyo, Neil studied Taiko in Fukui on the west coast of Japan for two years with master taiko player Masaaki Kurumaya, before returning to Britain to form Mugenkyo in 1994. Neil is the visionary and driving force of the group, and also handles all of the group's bookings.

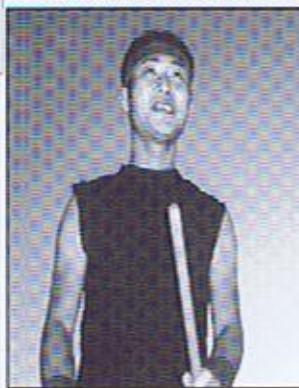
Miyuki Williams - the other founder of Mugenkyo, known for her "flying hair" style of Taiko, Miyuki also trained in Japan under Kurumaya Sensei. Onstage she is the fiery ball of energy that typifies the dynamic style of Mugenkyo. Born of a Japanese mother and Welsh father, she grew up in the States and now lives in Scotland.



Ali Roc - Ali's stylish chappa playing has captivated many an audience, as well as her graceful movement. She excels at the difficult "Miyake" style of playing the drum horizontally. She can always be seen wearing purple and eating bananas! Formerly a psychic researcher at Edinburgh University, Ali is also investigating the links between Taiko and the paranormal!



Teresa Brookes - Teresa started with the group in July 2000, after being involved with Mugenkyo through classes and workshops for a couple of years. Her fluid style of playing the taiko and beautiful flure playing has greatly added to the show, and her surreal sense of humour has made many a van journey more enjoyable! This issue of the newsletter and the winter issue were designed a la Teresa.



Katsuhiro Uemura - We welcome back Katsuhiro, who played with the group in 1996 and 1997 before returning to Japan for a career in music composition. Katsuhiro was also the composer and coordinator for the Radiant Life projects in which Mugenkyo participated. These projects blended taiko with contemporary dance and Katsuhiro's atmospheric music. He's back in the UK to join Mugenkyo, for as long as the immigration office will allow!

Linda McDonald - Linda is the new administrator in the team. She comes from Maryland USA, and after demanding work that took her from hospitals in Slovakia and Romania to earthquake relief in South America, she is now newly married to a Scotsman & has settled here - getting used to the "British" way of life i.e. "lots of cups of tea, then running to the bathroom!"



Wadaiko Yamato Tour.

Following their successful and acclaimed UK tour in the Spring of 2000, the fabulous Wadaiko Yamato drummers return to these shores with a superb new show. Their orchestral drumming arrangements and sheer physicality of their playing is powerful and exciting. Their highly choreographed movement, modern image and sensational showbiz attitude make for a highly entertaining evening. Book your tickets now!

"Elegant, powerful and inspiring drumming and infectious dance rhythms" The Guardian

"One of the world's true spectacles... a musical marvel" Herald Express

March UK Tour

1 Aberdeen, Music Hall	01224 641 122
2 Edinburgh, Festival Theatre	01315 296 000
4/5 Newcastle, Theatre Royal	01912 322 061
7 Derby, Assembly Rooms	01332 255 800
8 Oxford, The Playhouse	01865 798 600
11/12 Norwich, Theatre Royal	01603 630 000
13 High Wycombe, Swan Theatre	01494 512 000
15-17 Cambridge Arts Centre	01223 503 333
18 Southend, The Cliffs	01702 351 135
19 Darford, The Orchard	01322 220 000
21 Wimbledon Theatre	020 8540 0362
23/24 Blackpool, Grand Theatre	01253 290 190
25 Northampton, Demgate	01604 624 811
26 Reading, The Hexagon	0118 960 6060
27 Chichester, Everyman Theatre	01242 572 573
28 Solihull, Lowry Lyric Theatre	0161 876 2000

Holland

31 Venlo, C.C.De Maaspoort	April
01 Heerlen, Concertgebouw	
03 Zwolle, Buitensociëit	
04 Steenwijk, Theatre De Meente	



Question Corner - reader's questions answered!

"It would be nice if you could list other recordings of TAIKO drumming available on the UK market... if you ask for TAIKO in record shops, no-one knows who you are talking about!"

Out of the 4,500 - 5,000 groups in Japan, very few have actually recorded CDs. Traditionally taiko was not considered a type of music to sit down and listen to, but rather an event at a festival or an accompaniment to a ritual. Even now, most groups in Japan are community groups - the social aspect/benefits of joining a taiko group is very often more important than the music. However there are also some excellent professional groups who have produced high quality recordings. The most available of these in the West are the recordings by "Kodo", because they are distributed by Sony Records. You should easily be able to order them from your local record / cd shop or even online!

Here are some favourites:

Best of Kodo (1993) - all the classic Kodo songs - wonderful!

Kodo - Irodori (1990)

Kodo - Blessing of the Earth (1989) - strong taiko songs and a great cover! - Neil's favourite

Kodo - Ubu-Suna (1988) - Neil's other favourite

Some of Kodo's recordings also show their great versatility and range of musical experimentation:

Kodo - Warabe - mainly flute & drum songs focusing mainly on melody

Kodo - Sai So - a dance remix album - if you're buying it for the dance music, great - if you're buying it for the taiko, to be honest, it's actually quite hard to pick out the taiko samples.

As to other Japanese groups' recordings, they are difficult to get hold of here.

So, if you do manage to see a touring group such as **Wadaiko Yamato** in March, I would strongly recommend buying their CD at the concert.

Other groups' CD's to look out for: **Wadaiko Ichiro, Amanojaku, Zampa Ufujishi Daiko, Hayashi Eitetsu....**

Joji Hirota's CDs on Real World Records are also widely available in this country. Joji is a highly accomplished percussionist who although primarily trained in Western percussion, also uses Taiko drums and rhythms from his native Japan. He also plays the beautiful "shakuhachi" bamboo flute which is also a delight to listen to on his CDs. His most recent CD is **"The Gate"**, and should be available, or at least order-able from your local CD shop. A wonderful CD to listen to, and highly recommended.

Taiko Workshops Around the uk.

Taiko Wales - Projects for 2001
Classes in Aberystwith & Cardigan,
starting in May.

For more details contact:

James Barrow

Taiko Wales, 4 Railway Terrace,
Machynlleth, Powys, SY208BJ.

tel/fax: 01654 702 134

email: jamesbarrow@talkowales.freemove.co.uk

February 17 Winterdrum!

Mark Alcock & James Barrow will be
holding Taiko Workshops at
Winterdrum!

Venue: Wycombe Arts Centre,
High Wycombe, Bucks.

Contact: jedjust.vitae@virgin.net

February 17 Joji Hirota

Acclaimed Japanese percussionist
Joji Hirota will lead a Taiko workshop at
the Donington Grove Japanese
Society.

From 2pm

Contact: 01635 405 42

TAIKO ON THE WEB...

An excellent site to check out, mainly for its extremely comprehensive listing of links to every other taiko site that I know of - 341 groups to be precise, mostly in Japan, but also in USA, UK, Australia etc!

Kuni-san, who set up the site, is based in Mikuni in Fukui prefecture, and the site is named after the local taiko tradition of playing the big odaiko on a float which is navigated through the streets of Mikuni.

It's worth a browse, but watch out, once you enter, it will be hard to leave!

HI NO TAIKO WEBSITE:

[jtt\[://www.ne.jp/asahi/japan/kuni.com/index.html](http://jtt[://www.ne.jp/asahi/japan/kuni.com/index.html)

ORDER FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Items Ordered

Mugenkyo CD £12

Mugenkyo Cassette £8

Mugenkyo T-shirt £10

Kodo Book £23.95

Total enclosed €

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

"MUGENKYO"
P.O. BOX 3124
Lanark ML11 0WA

Mugenkyo Concert Dates

February

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 24 Northampton, Spinney Hill Theatre | 01604 622 677 |
| 25 Telford, Oakengates Theatre | 01952 619 020 |
| 26 Keele University | 01782 613 518 |

Rural Arts Tour

A rare opportunity to experience a Mugenkyo concert at an intimate rural venue. The show will be slightly different to our normal show, as these are non-traditional venues with limited lighting and facilities.

February

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| 28 Ipstones Village Hall | 01538 268 118 |
|--------------------------|---------------|

March

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 Oswestry, Rhyn Park Arts Centre | 01691 776 500 |
| 2 Atherstone Memorial Hall | 01827 719 201 |
| 3 Herefordshire, Ledbury Market Theatre | 01531 633 760 |
| 4 Wilmcote Village Hall | 01789 269 566 |
| 5 Much Wenlock, William Brookes School | 01952 727 606 |
| 7 Rugby College, Woolfenden Hall | 01788 338 632 |
| 8 Shropshire, Whitchurch Leisure Centre | 01948 664 840 |
| 9 Somerset, Mark Village Hall | 01278 784 906 |
| 10 Dorset, West Lulworth Village Hall | 01929 400 617/
01929 400 757 |
| 12 Dorset, Gillingham High School | 01747 822 222/
01747 851 308 |
| 13 Somerset, Seavington Millenium Hall | 01460 241 992/
01460 240 340 |
| 14 Devon, Clovelly | |
| 15 Devon, Witheridge | |
| 16 Lydford, Devon, Nicholls Hall | 07971 412 359 |

March

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 17 Bangor, Theatre Gwynedd | 01248 351 708 |
| 22 Preston, Charter Theatre | 01772 258 858 |
| 23 Leighton Buzzard, Cedars Theatre | 01525 261 671 |
| 27 Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire Music Centre | 01225 860 110 |

April

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 4 Wakefield Arts Centre | 01924 215 531 |
| 5 Beverley, Picture House | 01482 868 033 |
| 7 Harrogate Theatre | 01423 502 116 |
| 20 Gullford, Civic Hall | 01483 444 555 |
| 21 Baxhill-on-Sea, De La Warr Pavillion | 01424 787 949 |
| 23 Birmingham, Crescent Theatre | 0121 643 5858 |

May

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 3 London, Millfield Theatre | 020 8807 8680 |
| 4 Boston, Blackfriars Arts Centre | 01205 363 108 |
| 11 Tunbridge Wells, Trinity Arts Centre | 01892 678 678 |
| 13 Donnington Grove, Newbury, Japanese Festival | 01635 405 42 |
| 14 Wrexham Arts Festival (free daytime event) | 01978 292 683 |

Skinny-fit T-shirt. One size, red w-black trim. £10

Medium/x-large t-shirt. Black w/white print, or black w/orange print. £10



Back



Front



Back



CD - £12
Tape - £8

Kagemusha Taiko, based in Exeter, have won a grant from the National Foundation for Youth Music. This grant will enable them to take a series of 6-week taiko training programmes to 12 different clubs and after-school clubs across Devon over the coming year. Kagemusha Taiko also welcome contact from people wishing to go on a list for future courses and one-day workshops. It is expected that there will be several workshops on Saturdays between April and July.

Contact: Jonathan Kirby

Tel no: 01392 494 486

email: info@kagemusha.com



"Children of the Drum" by Mark Coutts-Smith.

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". £23.95

