

taiko taiko

www.mugenkyo.com

Spring 2001 Issue No.17

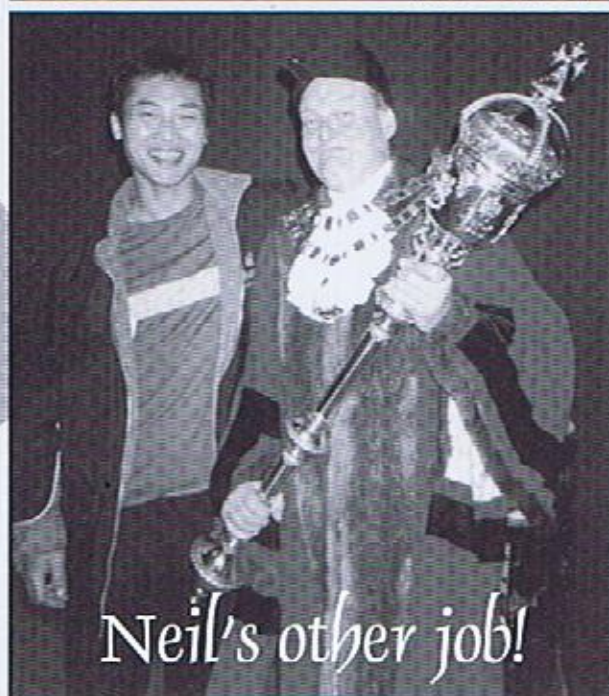
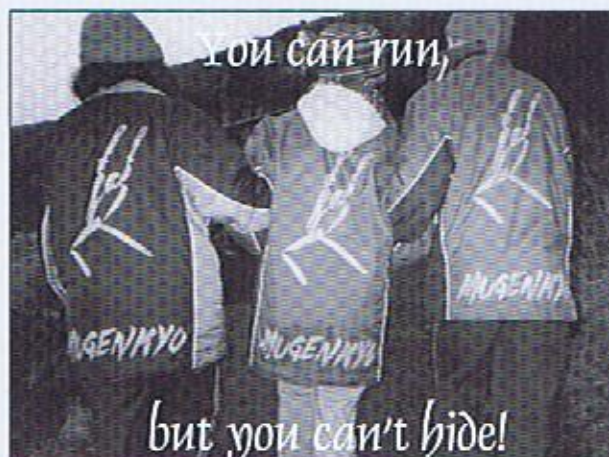
On the Road Again.

We set off on our first tour of the year at the end of February - three and a half weeks criss-crossing mainly the midlands and the southwest, with brief stops also in the north, London and Wales. Looking smart in our new tour jackets, we arrived at Northampton, for our first theatre concert of the year, followed by shows in Telford and Keele University, where we unveiled a couple of new pieces in the show. Then, Lewisham welcomed us with 800 screaming children at the Lewisham Theatre in South London. Again this year we are performing our "Beat of Japan" show, generously supported by the GB Sasakawa Foundation, who we thank for their support of Mugenkyo's educational work. In our educational concert we not only perform taiko pieces, but also explain about the history of taiko and how the drums are made, and we get the students involved in learning a Taiko rhythm, trying on masks used in Taiko, and generally participating in the show - which sometimes can lead to mayhem!

So far this year we have taken the show to Lewisham (1,600 kids in two days), Swindon (3,500 kids in two shows) and the Birmingham Symphony Hall (2,500 kids in one session)!! We then started on our "Rural Arts Tour", an unusual tour for us, visiting village halls in rural areas. At all of these shows we had no lighting, and sometimes we had to cram onto a tiny stage area with barely enough room to swing a bachi drumstick. However, the reception was warm wherever we went, and it was also refreshing to do our show "au naturel". Through out the rural tour we were extremely well treated and housed and fed. It made a nice change from the usual B&Bs to be able to stay with some lovely hospitable people. We also managed to do a little bit of sightseeing, including a visit to Cerne Abbas in Dorset and the well-endowed giant - apparently a fertility symbol of old - the girls kept well away... Our tour concluded with a "normal" (i.e. in a theatre) concert in Bangor, north Wales, where the audience took to dancing in the aisles during our last festival number.

It's that Celtic blood you know!

It was unfortunate that our rural tour coincided with the outbreak of foot-and-mouth, and everywhere we went we came face to face with its devastating effects in both farming and tourism. We were disappointed that many of Teresa's relatives from Staffordshire couldn't come to the shows due to being in self-imposed quarantine for fear of bringing the virus onto their farms. In Devon, our show in Clovelly was cancelled due to an outbreak in the area. On our return to Scotland, as we drove through



MUGENKYO

Established in 1994, Mugenkyo is Europe's foremost Taiko drum group. We tour extensively throughout the year, performing 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 our performances and our educational programme.

"Taiko Taiko" is Mugenkyo's quarterly newsletter, the aim of which is to publicise Taiko events in the UK and to spread information about the art form.

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

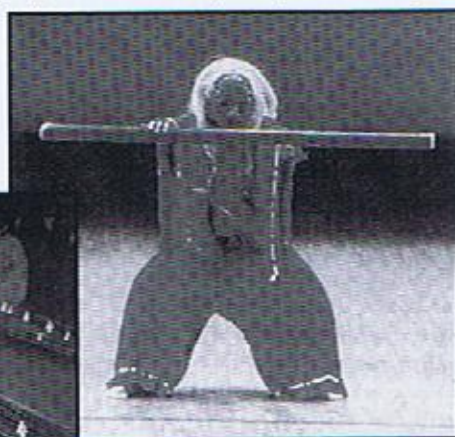
G. Clarke, L. Anderson, H. Hayes, F. Saville,
C. J. Austin, F. Finon, D. MacGregor,
S. Thompson, A. Stevenson, J. Pugh, S.
Baker, R. Partridge, B. Hoare, G. Lee, N.
Hallett, J. E. Ball, R. Sibbald, S. G. The,
M. Marson, L. Davitt, D. Bruce,
F. D. Riccomini, B. Scott, J. John, G.
Vickery, S. Phillips, D. Knill, J. Sajons,
D. Yerrinder, S. Lane, S. Hines, H. Johnson,
C. J. Bowes, N. Oxborough, M. Edwards,
A. Rostron, L. Shorrocks, R. F. Day, G.
Long, K. MacAskill, J. Richards,
J. Kenny, S. Salischa, M. Dolan, J. Short,
T. Dickinson, P. Marshall-Powerhouse,
P. Duke-Swindon, R. H. Millman, L.
Bodman, J. G. Preston, A. Kirkpatrick,
J. Yeilder, C. Simpson, A. D. Lettington,
P. Quayle, S. Parkin, S. M. James,
C. King, P. Thomson, S. Kay, M. Roper,
D. R. Douglas, B. Christian, R. C.
Holmes, G. Surtrees, D. Baker.

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.

Diary Continued

Dumfries and Galloway, we saw the funereal pyres burning in every valley, lighting up the night sky. As we are based in a rural area ourselves, we were quite concerned about bringing the virus to our local area, and we had the van thoroughly sprayed with disinfectant before returning home. After only three days back at base, we set off for another 8 day tour. Our first date was in Preston, where the Taiko group "Yamato" came to see our show, plus numerous other guests, including Ali's parents. We were nervous before the show, especially when the realisation hit that there were actually twice as many Taiko players in the audience as there were on stage that night! After the show we introduced Yamato to that great British tradition of a late-night curry. Over the next few days we went to three of Yamato's shows, as Neil's skillful schedule-making enabled us to see them three times on this tour (see review), and go for another late-night curry and jabber on about Taiko til the wee hours. At the Wiltshire Music Centre, we were delighted with a lovely present before we went on stage - hand-glazed tiles with the taiko symbol. A special thank you to Simon White for the gorgeous tiles. At Swindon we performed as part of their Japan Day for schools, which was featured on HTV news that evening. Other performers there included three school performing groups from Japan: a girl's choir, a lion dance group and a koto group (see pics below), invited to this country as part of Japan 2001. This year, as it is the Japan 2001 festival, there will be many more such events all over the country. Japan 2001 is the umbrella term for all locally organised Japan-related events throughout the year - until March 2002. We've got some really busy months ahead (see tour schedule - back page), and we'll hopefully be seeing you all at our performances.

Have a great summer...



Taiko on the Web

Featuring the two top Taiko manufacturers in Japan:

www.miyamoto-unosuke.co.jp Miyamoto Unosuke Shoten in Asakusa, Tokyo, have been making Taiko drums and festival equipment for generations. Their website has information in English about their history and their instruments, and includes a virtual visit to their Taiko factory. They also have a studio in Tokyo, where classes are held, and a drum museum, where they house a huge collection of drums and percussion from around the world.

www.asano.co.jp Asano Taiko in the Ishikawa region on the West coast of Japan, have been making Taiko for over 400 years for many top groups, including the famous Kodo drummers. Their website has information in English about their company. Asano Taiko is also the home of the muscular three-women group Hono-Daiko, and they also organise the Taiko festivals Ikkoku Ikkyu Sai and Extasia.

Wadaiko Yamato Review

At the Blackpool Grand Theatre,
Northampton Derngate and Reading
Hexagon

Elaborate screens and backdrops adorned the stylish set of Yamato, each screen in turn concealing and revealing muscular silhouettes. An exceptionally slick and well constructed show, they enthralled the audience with their charm and skill. The show was lit by Taiko's best lighting designer - Yogo Hideaki - who is just as an important member of the team as anyone, with his cleverly designed lighting and sets, skillfully changing the mood for each piece. The show opened with "Aozora" - Akira-style vocal harmonies from still bodies, which suddenly exploded into action. A gentle piece on the koto (Japanese harp-like instrument) bridged the gap while drums were gracefully moved into position. Following on, "Rakuda" consisted of blindingly fast rhythms on the small shime drums, a style which they are exceptionally good at. Their next piece centered around the okedo drums carried with over-the-shoulder straps, a style originally from Korea and now hugely popular in Taiko. In this piece they demonstrated their gift at mime, making the audience roar with laughter with their antics. If Buster Keaton and the Keystone Cops were taiko drummers they would be called Wadaiko Yamato! (and that's a huge compliment).

Their second half opened with a brand new piece using the hand-held uchiwa fan drums, wearing some stunning new costumes. The song began with the drummers circling a large drum with highly choreographed movements, resembling a huge octopus with gracefully undulating tentacles. The song then evolved into a comedy routine which echoed Kodo's chappa piece "Jangwara". The execution of their humour was very skillful, and ripples of laughter swept across the audience. The set ended with their show-stopper "Raion", which deservedly brought cheers from the audience. **Yamato are returning to the UK in June for a two week run in London.**

Their youthful energy and enthusiasm are sure to win hearts. If you haven't already seen them, this is a show you shouldn't miss.



29th May - 10th June 2001
**YAMATO AT THE PEACOCK
THEATRE, LONDON**
box office: 020 7863 8222
more info on:
www.wadaiko-yamato.com

Question Corner - reader's questions answered! "What is that high-pitched percussion instrument you play?"

It's called an ATARIGANE - direct translation "a bell to hit". Ranging in price from £20 to £400, depending on size and quality, it is made of a mixture of metals, and probably the best way to describe its shape is to say it looks like a metal ashtray (!).



When it's held in one hand and played with a beater with a piece of deer antler on the end, it can also be called a CHANCHIKI - so called because of the sound it makes: "chan-chi-ki-chan-chi-ki...".

In our show we use it in both ways: we play a larger atarigane on a stand with our bachi (drumsticks), and also we hold and play the smaller chanchiki. The atarigane was originally used by Buddhist priests at temples as part of prayer.

Another percussion instrument which originated as a Buddhist ritual instrument and brought over to Japan by the Chinese Buddhist priests is the "chappa" hand cymbals, most likely also named after the sound they make.



May 19th-20th Matsuri - Japan in the Park, Hyde Park, London A spectacular two day free event bringing the sights, sounds and tastes of Japan to the heart of London. Highlights at this major family event will include Horseback Archery, Taiko Drummer including Iwami Kagura Taiko (8 headed dragon dance) and Fugaku Taiko (disabled and able-bodied performers) from Japan, and the Kagemusha Junior Taiko from Exeter. There will also be A Japanese Village selling food and drink, and the Awa Odori, a processional dance for everyone to join in!

July 1st - The Athenaeum, Warminster.
Joji Hirota and Pete Lockett perform The Gate - Taiko to Tabla as part of the Sunday Concert Series.

ORDER FORM

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Items Ordered

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| 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

Mugenkyo Tour Dates

May

| | |
|--|---------------|
| 3 Millfield Theatre, London | 020 8807 6680 |
| 4 Blackfriars Arts Centre, Boston | 01205 363 108 |
| 5 X-trax Festival, Manchester | 0161 224 0020 |
| 6 Maydaze Festival, Stockport | 0161 224 0020 |
| 10 Layard Theatre, Canford School, Wimborne | 0102 841 254 |
| 11 Trinity Arts Centre, Tunbridge Wells | 01892 678 678 |
| 13 Japanese Festival, Donnington Grove, Newbury (daytime) | 01635 405 42 |
| 14 Wrexham Arts Festival, Town centre (free daytime event) | 01978 292 683 |

June

| | |
|--|----------------|
| 3 Meadows Festival, Edinburgh (free daytime) | 0131 620 9180 |
| 6 Arts Link Theatre, Camberley | 01276 707 612 |
| 8 Thameside Theatre, Grays, Essex | 01375 383 961 |
| 9 The Hove Centre, Brighton | 0870 900 9100 |
| 10 Newark on Water Firework Festival (free evening event) | 01636 655 715 |
| 11 Horsham Arts Centre, W. Sussex | 01403 268 689 |
| 12 Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds | 01284 769 505 |
| 14 Loughborough Town Hall | 01509 634 915 |
| 13 Colchester Arts Centre | 01206 500 900 |
| 15 The Gate - Goole Arts Centre, N Humberside | 01405 720 219 |
| 20 Armagh Theatre and Arts Centre, N. Ireland | 028 3752 1821 |
| 21 Harmony Hill Festival, Island Hall, Lisburn, N. Ireland | 028 92 678 219 |
| 24 Cottier's Theatre, Glasgow | 0141 287 5511 |
| 28 Stanwix Arts Theatre, Carlisle | 01228 534 664 |

July

| | |
|---|---------------|
| 1 Northcott Theatre, Exeter | 01392 493 493 |
| 8 Sunderland Kite Festival (free daytime event) | |
| 9 Brynhfryd School, Ruthin, North Wales | 01824 703 832 |
| 10 Bridge House Theatre, Warwick | 01926 496 277 |
| 12 Watersmeet Theatre, Herts | 01923 771 542 |
| 14 The Big C.F.G, Chapel Field Gardens, Norwich (free evening event) | 01603 212 136 |
| 17 Glastonbury Town Hall | 01458 830 580 |
| 18 Stratford Circus Theatre, London | 020 8279 1001 |
| 19 Purcell Room, South Bank, London | 020 7960 4242 |
| 20 Leas Cliff Hall, Folkestone | 01303 253 193 |
| 21 Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton, Somerset | 01823 274 608 |
| 26 West Wilts Show, Trowbridge Park, Wiltshire (free daytime event) | 01225 770 393 |
| 28 "Arts in the Park", Blackburn (free early evening event) | 01254 587 586 |
| 29 The Athenaeum, Warminster (joint concert with an Indo/Japanese Dancer) | 01985 213 891 |

August at the Fringe!

Wed 8th - Mon 27th
Edinburgh Fringe Festival -
Garage Theatre. 7pm - 8pm
Tel: 0131 221 9009

Mugenkyo will be performing at the Edinburgh Fringe for the third year running, presenting a condensed one hour show at the Garage Theatre. Experience the power of Taiko drumming in this intimate venue.

Sat 18th/Sun 19th
Fri 24th - Mon 27th
Garage Chapiteau (Princes Street Gardens) 4.30 - 5.20pm
In addition, this year we will also be presenting a different show for the weekends, at the Garage Chapiteau - a cross-cultural collaboration of Taiko drums, Celtic music, dance and the atmospheric music of Katsuhiko Uemura.

This winter we had the pleasure of teaching the very first schools Taiko group in Scotland. Taught by Val Forsyth, who has attended every one of Mugenkyo's courses held in Glasgow. "Psycho Taiko" is based at the Clevedon Secondary School in Maryhill. Val's enthusiasm for Taiko led to her setting up the group, who have now received further training in the techniques of Taiko directly from Mugenkyo. The group currently consists of eight girls, who use their school's tom toms, snares and bass drum from a dismantled drum kit. Although the drums may not be from Japan, their style is definitely Taiko, with synchronised movements, "kia" shouts, and Taiko rhythms.

"Psycho Taiko" will be appearing at the Japan Day at the Glasgow Botanic Gardens as part of the West End Festival on Sunday 17th June.

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

Front



Back



Front



Back



CD - £12
Tape - £8

