

MUGENKYO newsletter

taiko taiko

www.mugenkyo.com

Autumn 2001 Issue No.18

Ills, thrills, festivals and Goddesses...

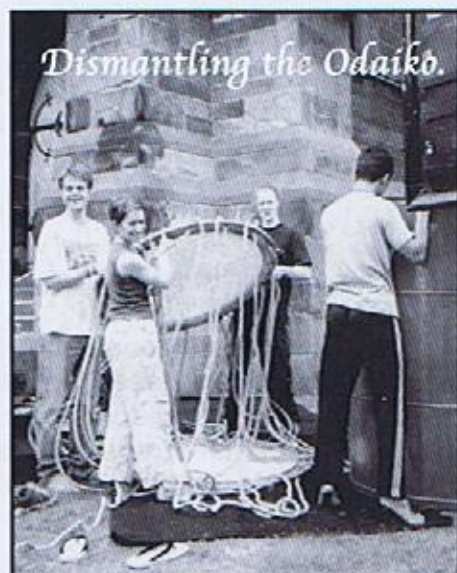
It's been an extremely busy summer for Mugenkyo - so many excellent venues and festivals, but it's taken its toll on the group in both illness and injury. Ali had been suffering from exhaustion since the beginning of the year, and despite carrying on until July, she found she could no longer continue and sadly had to leave the group. We wish her a speedy recovery and best of luck for the future.

We also had our first injury of the year, and hopefully the last: Neil broke his foot in mid-May - the large bone on the top of the foot. Not realising it was broken, he soldiered on and performed a concert at Newbury in agony. The next day it ballooned up and he finally went to the hospital in Wrexham, where they immediately put him in a plaster cast, leaving the rest of us to perform without Neil the anchorman for the very first time. We performed the next two weeks of schools and corporate events without him, but our June tour of theatre concerts was looming, for which we definitely needed him in action. So, after just two weeks of being in a cast which is supposed to stay on for six, Neil demanded the hospital remove it and went back to performing - although with a little less jumping around on stage!

Despite these troubles, we've had an extremely successful summer season, with sold out concerts in London, Glasgow, Carlisle, Exeter, Warwick, Glastonbury, Tunbridge Wells, Goole and Bury St. Edmunds. Our London concert was part of the Rhythm Sticks Festival at the South Bank - a festival of percussion from around the world. Glasgow was an amazing concert, not least because of the amount of effort put into the preparation. The venue was a converted church, where the doors were unfortunately just inches short of the size required to fit our odaiko - big drum. Determined to make our home-town gig a special one, we actually took the entire odaiko apart, separating skins from body in order to fit it in. Of course then it had to be put together again before the show, and the same process repeated again at the end of the night. But it was worth it! Another memorable theatre show was in Warminster where we performed a joint concert with Shakti, the sensuous indo-Japanese dancer.

In between our own concert dates we managed to go to a Wadaiko Yamato concert in London in June, and enjoyed a meal and beer(s) with them afterwards. They were on their home stretch, ready to return to Japan the next week, after a solid few months touring all over Europe.

This is the year of Japan 2001 - a festival which consists of many Japan-related events all over the country all year round. We've found ourselves performing at many Japan 2001 events this summer, but also involved in several teaching projects. In Bristol we performed at six schools throughout the city. In Tyneside we taught a group of students a taiko piece which they then performed at the



MUGENKYO



Established in 1994, Mugenkyo is Europe's first professional Taiko drum group. 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 our performances and our educational programme.

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

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

Paul Harbour, Anne Paradaens, Alex Weeks, Maureen Burden, Jackie Visser, Anne Hill, Brian Ford, John Masham, S Cott-Collons, Gary Lee, Doreen & Geoff Farrier, P.D. Sandford, M.L. Osmond, N. Marshall, Mr & Mrs Turner, Phyllis Prior, Chris Payne.

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

WOW Festival, using a home-made set of drums created from bits of kit drums and costumes designed and made by the students themselves. In the Borders we were involved in the Amaterasu Project - the final performance was a play based on the ancient Japanese folktale of the sun goddess Amaterasu, performed at the Traquair Fair, with a combination of students and professional actors. Within the play the students performed a Taiko piece and also played percussive sound effects. In the weeks leading up to the performance, we taught the Galashiels youth theatre group a Taiko drumming piece, a fan dance, and Japanese calligraphy for their banners.

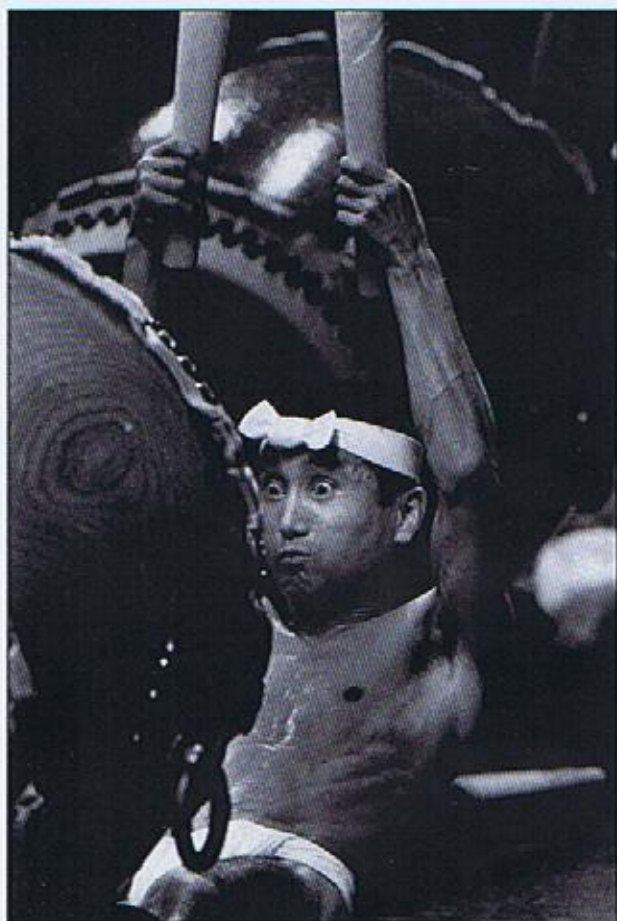
We had the great pleasure of working with U-stage, a wonderful theatre group from Japan, who also taught the students their many skills and acted in the final play. U-stage have been touring the UK for three months, playing at many festivals around the country enthraling audiences with their mixture of Taiko, humour and street theatre. Actually because they were one actor short, Miyuki was dragged into playing the part of Uzume, the goddess of the Dawn. In the original folktale she was a stripper, but this version was definitely PG (thank goodness!).



We played several very memorable festivals this year. One was the Meadows Festival in Edinburgh, again one of the many events of Japan 2001. There was plenty of Taiko at the Meadows Festival. Not only were U-stage there, but also Dave Samuels, the excellent woodworker who makes all of our Taiko stands. Smitten by Taiko through our workshops in Glasgow, he now makes and sells okedo-style Taiko drums. At his stall there were Taiko demonstrations, and a chance for everyone to have a bash. The Sunderland Kite Festival was another unique event, with thousands of kites littering the sky. At the West Wilts Show we performed on the same bill as the wonderful Joji Hirota and his band of Taiko drummers. The Marlborough Jazz Festival was another great festival. At the Big CFG in Norwich we performed jointly with the Norwich samba group. Samba-taiko fusion! We had to play at top volume to be heard as there were over 40 samba drummers, but it was really great fun. At the Gloucester Garden Party we performed our concert outdoors, and played a joint piece with U-stage. With their mad costumes and cheerful style, together we made joyous mayhem on stage!

In August we were holed up in what is becoming a regular residency at the Edinburgh Festival. It's our third year performing at the Garage Theatre, a hot and steamy intimate venue which was packed to the brim every night (it just gets Otter and Otter!). Although we performed every day and with additional workshops at the weekends, we enjoyed the relative rest, i.e. no 8 o'clock B&B breakfasts, and the luxury of sleeping in the same bed for three weeks! We also really enjoyed seeing lots of great shows and meeting other performers - something we look forward to every year. We were also reunited with Tim Upton, lighting designer and technician extraordinaire. He had created such a mysterious and dramatic atmosphere with the lights, that our five-star review in the Edinburgh Evening News said the setting "looked like a Klingon Battleship"! Teresa and Miyuki were also amused to be likened in the same review to "goddesses of nature"! We've had other excellent reviews in the Glasgow Herald and the Stage - altogether another successful run at Edinburgh. We're now looking forward to a quieter autumn, with some touring, and more teaching projects close to home.

We hope to see you soon.....



Pic: Mark Coutts-Smith

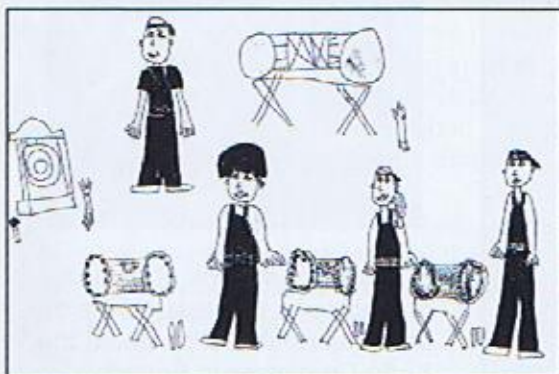
Kodo Tour

The ever fabulous Kodo will be in the UK in November. They are as close as you can get to perfection in Taiko technique and skill. Astounding stamina and power, they are guaranteed to blow you away.

Nov		
4th	De Montfort Hall, Leicester	01162 333 111
5th	Symphony Hall, Birmingham	01217 803 333
7th	St David's Hall, Cardiff	02920 878 444
10th	The Anvil, Basingstoke	01256 844 244
12th	Bridgewater Hall, Manchester	01619 079 000
13th	Philharmonic Hall, London	01517 093 789
16-18th	Barbican Centre, London	02076 388 891



An impression of Mugenkyo



*Thanks to the unknown artist
for this brilliant picture.*

Question Corner - reader's questions answered!

"What does "Mugenkyo" mean?"

Mugenkyo can be translated as "limitless reverberation" "eternal resonance" "endless rhythm". We named the group after our teacher's group "Hibiki Daiko" - Hibiki can also be read as "kyo", meaning reverberation. The idea was that the reverberation of Taiko knows no boundaries and spreads throughout the world.

"What are the drums made of? What are the skins made of?"

The nagado drums which are carved from single tree trunks are made from keyaki - a kind of Japanese elm. The very very huge o-daiko are made from African Bubinga trees. The okedo barrel drums are made from cedar. The skins are cowhide. In ancient Japan the original Taiko were made of badger's skin and other smaller animals, then they were made of horse-hide. Now you can get both horse and cowhide drums, although cowhide is far more common.



Apprentice Taiko Drummers

We are looking for possible future members of Mugenkyo (male or female, aged 20 - 30). Are you energetic, positive, creative, self-disciplined, rhythmic and able to be committed to a new lifestyle? Personality, potential and dedication are more important than drumming experience. Send for an application form from:
**Mugenkyo, P.O.Box 5124,
Lanark, ML11 OWA.**

ORDER FORM

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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 OWA

MUGENKYO tour dates



Pic: Tomoko Nagakawa

Pic: Tomoko Nagakawa

September

21st Glenrothes, Rothes Hall	01592 611 101
22nd Livingston, West Lothian Matsuri, Howden Park - 12pm	01506 433 634
24th Livingston, Howden Park Centre	01506 433 634
26th Tenby, De Valance Pavilion	01834 842 974
29th Carrickfergus Leisure Centre, N.I.	028 933 66455
30th Derry, New Millenium Theatre, N.I.	028 7126 0516

October

5/6th Bowness on Windermere, Old Laundry Theatre	01539 488 444
10th Burnley, Mechanics Arts Centre	01282 664 400
12th Burton On Trent, Brewhouse Arts Centre	01283 516 030
13th Birkenhead, Pacific Road Theatre	0151 666 5023
16th Eastbourne, College Theatre	01323 452 300
17th Canterbury, Gulbenkian Theatre	01227 455 600
18th Tonbridge, Forster Theatre	01732 361 708
19th Welshpool, Theatre Clara	01938 554 378
20th Brighton University, Sallis Benney Theatre	01273 709 709
23th Bakewell, Medway Theatre	01773 832 497
24th Chesterfield, Library Theatre	01773 832 497

December

6th Darlington, Arts Centre	01325 486 555
7/8th Halifax, Square Chapel	01422 349 422
9th Selby, Arts Centre	01757 292 247

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

Front



Back

MUGENKYO

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



Front



Back



CD - £12

Tape - £8

CHILDREN & DRUM

The Kodo Drummers' Most Precious



A large format book of beautiful photographs and text, this is the first major publication about the Kodo Drummers in English. "Stirringly beautiful...an intimate look at Kodo" - £23.95