

taiko taiko

New Year 2004
issue No. 25

Happy New Year!

2003 was an incredibly busy year for Mugenkyo, playing at some interesting events, and at many new venues, and meeting lots of new friends. In the autumn, a 5 week tour took us all over the UK - it was a very successful tour, playing to packed houses at prestigious venues.

And that's not all...

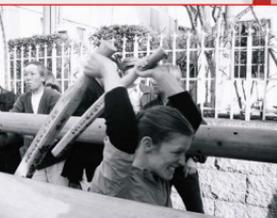
Since the first workshops at the Mugen Taiko Dojo in autumn 2002, we've had over 150 people come through our doors for workshops - with many of you coming back for more, at the follow-on workshops and evening classes.

Now we're engaged in further building work over the winter for phase two - the entrance & common room area, which will be ready in time for the next workshops in spring.

We're planning many more workshops for the coming year, including workshops with special guest teachers from Japan.

2004 is also Mugenkyo's 10th anniversary year (yes, it's been that long!), and we're looking forward to a really exciting year ahead with lots of special events.

Thank you to everyone for your support over the years, and hope to see you at a concert or workshop in our special 10th year...



SAKE CEREMONY & BLEEDING HANDS

On our trip to Japan last year, we made a special journey to Shiga Prefecture, to see the Hachiman Taiko Matsuri - a festival with a 1,200 year old history.

We arrived in the small town of Omihachiman, just north of Kyoto in the late afternoon. On every street corner there was a "Taiko drum shrine" set up - a huge Taiko strapped onto two long logs, with straw wreaths draped over each side of the drum, much like the twisted straw ornaments found at Shinto shrines to denote a sacred place. These Taiko shrines were propped up on trestles, and the villagers crowded around, each taking turns to play out a simple rhythm: "don don DON - DON -" The atmosphere was jolly, and the men passed around bottles of sake, and played the same rhythm over and over, cigarettes dangling from their mouths.

Being typical tourists, we started snapping away with our cameras, and promptly got dragged over to the crowd. When asked who we were, we explained that we were Taiko players, which was met with confusion, until we showed them our tour jackets, and explained why we were there. Immediately we were handed the bachi and pushed to the drum! The bachi were shaped strangely - they were roughly hewn, mainly square but rounded at the handle. The bachi were not only square but also curved, and there was calligraphy written onto the four sides of the bachi, which we later found out to be prayers.

On closer look, the brown and red stains on the drumskin turned out to be blood - all the Taiko players had torn knuckles from catching the drumskin with their knuckles - from playing all day and drinking too much!

We each played the drum, which was a huge honour. We tried to play our usual rhythms, but we were stopped and told to play theirs: "don don DON - DON -" Suddenly we noticed that dozens of other Taiko shrines had been carried to the main street, and propped up on trestles, forming a long queue from the Shrine gate right down the road as far as the eye could see. Each Taiko shrine was carried by a group of 20 or so young men.

There was a group of older men wearing the formal dress "Hakama", carrying ceremonial staffs - they were the village elders. One of the elders took an interest in us, and told us all about the history of the festival in a thick local dialect.

The festival was 1,200 years old - it had started in the year 800 AD! Each of the smaller villages around the town had a smaller shrine, where three Taiko drums were housed, one large, one medium and one small. Once a year on this festival day, the Taiko drums were strapped onto logs, making them portable shrines, and carried to the main Himure Hachiman Shrine, to be blessed by the priest. They would then be carried back to each village, and would provide protection to the village against fire or drought or any other natural disaster. The prayers on the bachi drumsticks were for the health and well-being of the village.

Suddenly the line of Taiko shrines began to move, and the first Taiko was carried through the outer gate of the Shrine along a long road approaching the inner gate. The other Taiko shrines jostled for positions. As the drums were carried, the same rhythm was played on each drum, with the chant: "Do'koi Za-ze!" Neil and Adam were swept along by our drunken friends, and they found themselves carrying the large drum for Tago village, along with 20 other men. The drum they carried was 400 years old - so old that the body had become oval-shaped from re-skinning.



taiko taiko

"TAIKO TAIKO" is the quarterly newsletter of Mugenkyo and the Mugen Taiko Dojo, publishing information about the group and Taiko Dojo activities, the art form of Taiko, and Taiko events in the UK.

MUGENKYO Taiko Drummers

Established in 1994, MUGENKYO is Europe's first professional Taiko drum group, performing at theatres, concert halls, festivals and events throughout Britain and Europe. MUGENKYO's aim is to develop Taiko as a European art form, through performances and joint projects and collaborations across a wide variety of artistic disciplines
www.mugenkyo.com



The MUGEN TAIKO DOJO is the first purpose-built Taiko Centre in the UK. Located in rural Scotland, it is a place where people gather from all over Britain and Europe to learn about the art form of Taiko through residential workshops and regular classes. It is also the permanent base and training space for Mugenkyo. The Dojo's extensive outreach programme takes Taiko to schools and communities, creating a greater understanding about Taiko throughout the UK.

www.taikodojo.com

Mugenkyo, P.O. Box 5124, Lanark ML11 0WA

email: mail@mugenkyo.com
tel/fax: 01357 522 008

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

A. Caldwell, P. Cofie, V. Hogg, N. Deacon, S.J. Greatorex, Mr&Mrs T.H. Evanson, D Zollman, H. Rhode, S. Mackie, J. Hill & the Wells City Band, J.C. Page, Mrs Bradley, A. Weeks, V. Arif, L. Kennedy, P. Taylor, A. Taylor, M.J. Stretton, M. Tempest-Lewis, Mr&Mrs D. McCrae, M.A. Angel, E. Brookes, L. Henley, R. Partridge, M. Berry A. Kawamura, R.G. Powell, J.F. White, A. Devine, J. Bright

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), all gratefully accepted.

Megumi Biddle's brilliant cartoon of Mugenkyo members and Hana the dog!



The sake flowed freely, and one person seemed to have the job of pouring the sake straight from the bottle down the throats of the thirsty young men. There were wives and children waiting along the road to the Shrine, but otherwise no observers - this ceremony wasn't for any outsiders to see - we were very lucky.

When each drum approached the inner gate of the Shrine, and tried to pass through, a group of people at the gate would boisterously push them back out again, back and forth like a push-o-war just outside the Shrine gates, the head priest watching on, seated within in his long robes. Finally the Taiko shrine would break through to the inner courtyard of the Shrine. The Taiko shrine would then be heaved up in the air three times, as the priest waved his blessings upon the Taiko, before it was carried out of the back gate.

Each Taiko shrine that approached the Shrine gates had to push its way through, and each Taiko received its blessing. Neil and Adam finally made it through with the Taga village drum, and heaved the drum in the air. After the blessing, they carried the drum through the small windy streets right to the village of Taga, where the drum was released from the ropes, and returned to the village shrine. We thanked the drunk, sweaty and exhausted villagers of Taga for letting us participate.

It was no wonder they'd jumped at the opportunity to get the gajin (foreigners) to participate - the drum was so heavy - Neil and Adam had bruised shoulders for days afterwards! We returned to the Hachimman Shrine, where still the Taiko shrines were lined up to receive their blessing - it took the whole night for the last Taiko drums to be blessed. We felt moved by the physicality and the simplicity of the ceremony and the beauty of the whole evening. It was a really special event to be a part of and one we'll never forget.



The legendary Kodo drummers return to the UK. Absolutely unmissable.

KODO

February

1st Manchester, Bridgewater Hall	0161 907 9000
2nd Birmingham, Symphony Hall	0870 730 0196
5th - 8th London, Royal Festival Hall	020 7960 4242
10th Basingstoke, The Anvil	01256 844 244



HINA MATSURI IN GLASGOW

A yearly festival held at the Botanic Gardens, celebrating Japanese Culture. There will be Taiko workshops leading up to the Hina Matsuri, on Saturday 14th February and Wednesday 18th February, with the participants performing at the Hina Matsuri festival on the 29th.

DATE:
Sunday 29th February, 2004

VENUE:
Botanic Gardens, Glasgow
(free admission)

For further information on the Taiko workshops and festival contact:
Japanese Matsuri for Glasgow at matsuriglasgow@hotmail.com

EVENTS:

12 - 2pm Japanese Experience: try on a kimono, calligraphy, make origami, Japanese games and sweets
2 - 4pm Taiko performances by Mugenkyo, workshop participants and local taiko groups.

MUGEN TAIKO DOJO presents... THE WAY OF THE DRUM

- a taiko drumming experience -

March

1st	Bideford, Edgehill College Theatre, N. Devon	01237 470326
3rd	Solithull, Chelmsley Wood Baptist Church	0121 7708590
4th	Shardlow Village Hall, S. Derbyshire	01332 792514
5th	Nuneaton, Etone Community School	01926 402173
6th	Coleford, Forest Theatre, Gloucestershire	01989 566644
7th	Rodmarten Village Hall, Nr Cirencester	01989 566644
10th	Much Wenlock, "The Edge" school arts centre	01952 727606
11th	Whitchurch Leisure Centre, Talbot Theatre	01948 660660
12th	Michaelchurch Escley, Escleyside Hall, Hereford	01981 510202
13th	Alton Village Hall, Staffordshire	01538 703222

Following the success of "An Evening of Taiko Drumming", premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe this year, we've developed a full-length version of the show, to tour around smaller non-traditional venues around the UK.

"The Way of the Drum" is more informal than the Mugenkyo show, with explanations about the background to Taiko, in a more relaxed atmosphere. If you're interested in the history & culture behind the performance, as well as earth-shaking rhythms, this show is for you! "Not just incredibly skilled musicians, they are also excellent performers: theatrical, humorous and energising." - Edinburgh Evening News



NEXT INTRODUCTORY WEEKEND WORKSHOPS...

DATES: 3/4 April or 10/11 April (Easter weekend)

PRICE: £110 non-residential rate (including lunch on Sat & Sun) Residential packages available - details on request

FOR AN INFO PACK: Mugen Taiko Dojo 01357 522 008 or mail@taikodojo.com

The autumn workshops were a great success, with participants gathering from as far afield as Jersey & even Paris! We've now set the dates for the next introductory weekends. Suitable for beginners, the workshops begin with the stance and "bachi" grip and progress step-by-step through the weekend, learning a Taiko piece from the west coast of Japan.

COMMENTS FROM THE LAST WORKSHOP:

"In all my years, and believe me that's quite a few, I've never been so stirred, excited and energised by the pure energy and vitality that was generated and flowed freely, emanating primarily from yourselves and caught infectiously by us all.

What a weekend - you certainly knew how to light up my lights."

THANK YOU

A special thank you to the GB Sasakawa Foundation for their support of the Mugen Taiko Dojo's schools outreach programme.

In 2003, Teresa and Adam visited four different areas to teach hands-on workshops in schools: two weeks in Bristol, one week in Leeds, one week in Gwynedd Wales, and one week in Essex. The project was very successful, enabling lots of students to experience Taiko for the first time.



Talking Taiko

hosted by the Japan society of Scotland

11th Feb 2004
Edinburgh

info: 0131 441 7626

email: i.harkness@btinternet.com

How were Taiko drums used in ancient Japan? How are these magnificent drums crafted? Do women traditionally play Taiko? Was Taiko used in war? Why are masks used in Taiko drumming? How did Taiko make the transition from the temple to the stage? What are the different kinds of drums and percussion used in modern Taiko? Presented by Neil & Miyuki, "Talking Taiko" is an informal and informative talk on all aspects of Taiko drumming, with anecdotes about our experiences learning Taiko in Japan.

Order form See overleaf for goods.

	Merchandise	Quantity	CD	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name:	T-shirts	£12			
Address:	Childrens-XL-blue	<input type="checkbox"/>	Total enclosed	£	<input type="text"/>
	Small-red	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Medium-black	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Postcode:	Large-khaki	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	XL-Black	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	XXL-navy blue	<input type="checkbox"/>			

MUGENKYO
P.O. Box 5124
Lanark
ML11 OWA

All prices include VAT, packaging and postage within the uk (please allow 21 days delivery).

Please make cheques or postal orders payable to...MUGENKYO

In August we auditioned for the best & brightest 18 – 26 year olds in Central Scotland, to take part in "Project Taiko" – Mugen Taiko Dojo's Winter Course & Performance Project. The applicants were tested on rhythm, movement, and performance ability. Competition was fierce, and the level of talent was extremely high. The 10 finalists are now engaged in intensive weekly sessions to learn technique, memorize pieces, build stamina... all leading to two performances at the Cottier's Theatre in Glasgow at the end of February, as part of a **special Mugenkyo show**. It should be quite a spectacle!

CONCERT PROJECT

February 2004. Friday 27th & Saturday 28th – 7:30 pm

Cottier's Theatre, Hyndland Rd, Glasgow

£12 / £10 from the Gilmorehill box office – 0141 330 5522



Mugenkyo tour dates

10th ANNIVERSARY YEAR 1994 – 2004

We have many special events planned for the coming year. Watch this space for more details!!!

FEB	Fri 20th	Isle of Arran, Whitingbay Hall	01770 820 221
	Mon 23rd	Keele University, University Chapel	01782 613518
	Wed 25th	Elgin, Gordonstoun School	01343 837 813
RUA	Thurs 26th	Aberdeen University, Mitchell Hall	01224 641122
	Fri 27th & Sat 28th	Glasgow, Cottier's Theatre – with Project Taiko * see special feature	0141 330 5522
RY	Sun 29th	Glasgow, Botanic Gardens - Hina Matsuri Festival * see special feature	
MARCH	Fri 19th	Edinburgh, Queen's Hall – with special guests Hana Yui from Sado Island, Japan * see special feature	0131 6682019
	MAY	Mugenkyo's first major tour of the year. Full list in next newsletter (please see website for updates)	



The splendid voice & dance trio HANA YUI from Sado Island, made up of Kodo members Chieko Kojima and Yoko Fujimoto, and Okinawan dance expert, Mitsue Kinjo, will be visiting our shores in March. On Kodo's last tour of the UK, Chieko stunned audiences at the Barbican in London, with her beautiful dance leading into a graceful yet powerful performance of "Hachijo". Appearing so delicate and feminine in her kimono, she danced beautifully across the stage, approaching a solitary drum set on a high stand, then in an instant her waving arms held bachi drumsticks and the dance transformed into a Taiko piece, where her graceful movements disguised split-second timing playing the Taiko. With HANA YUI, Chieko, Yoko and Mitsue explore the possibilities of traditional Japanese folk song and dance, incorporating song and dance with Taiko.

WORKSHOP

An amazing opportunity to learn traditional Japanese song and dance from the top experts, and how to incorporate song and dance into Taiko performance. Not to be missed!

DATE: Saturday 20th March 2004

VENUE: Mugen Taiko Dojo

TIME: 10 am – 4 pm

COST: £55

Further info from: Mugen Taiko

Dojo-01357 522 008-or-

mail@taikodojo.com

CONCERT

Hana Yui will be appearing as special guests at the Mugenkyo concert at the Queen's Hall, Edinburgh on 19th March. It will be a very special event, as it's the first time Hana Yui will be performing in the UK. Following the Glasgow date, Hana Yui will also be performing in London, Sadler's Wells on the 23rd and 24th of March in a joint concert with Taiko Meantime, and in Exeter, Phoenix Arts Centre, on the 27th and 28th of March with Kagemusha Taiko.

DATE: Friday 19th March 2004 – 7:30pm

VENUE: The Queen's Hall, Clerk Street, Edinburgh. BOX OFFICE: 0131 668 2019

TICKETS: £12 / £10



T-shirts available in:

Blue- Childrens XL

Red- Small

Khaki- Large

Navy Blue-XXL

BACK- all sizes- same design



FRONT



Black- Medium



Black-XL



CD

