

Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers present...

THE WAY OF THE DRUM

...AN EXCITING JOURNEY
INTO THE WORLD OF TAIKO



photo: colin robertson www.icompphotography.co.uk

CONCERT
PROGRAMME

THE WAY OF THE DRUM - CONCERT PROGRAMME

NAGAREBOSHI

The concert opens with a traditional fisherman's song, typical of many work-songs from around Japan, used to accompany the pulling in of the nets. This leads into a modern taiko piece, Nagareboshi, meaning shooting star. Here we introduce the sound of the the Nagado, the main kind of taiko drum, hewn out of a solid tree trunk, with cowhide stretched across the top and tacked into place. Nagado means "long body", and depending on the area of Japan, this drum is sometimes called Miya Daiko which means "shrine drum", as this kind of drum can often be found hanging from the beams of the Shinto shrine, used in prayer and ceremony. Also featuring in this piece is the high-pitched Tsukeshime drum, or Shime for short, which simply means "tied drum". This kind of drum must be tuned every day, and takes two people to tie.

BUCHIAWASE

Buchiawase is a traditional piece from Kanagawa prefecture, where as part of a festival praying for plentiful fishing, the taiko players compete in this fighting taiko style, with the best players winning the best catch. This version of Buchiawase was learned from the dynamic taiko player Art Lee, one of the many guest teachers who have come to teach at the Mugen Taiko Dojo, our teaching centre in central Scotland.

GOJINJO TAIKO

The origins of Gojinjo Taiko, roughly translated as "war song drumming", are known as a 400 year old legend from the turbulent age of civil war. In the 16th century, an invading army led by a samurai warlord was sweeping across Japan from south to north. When the troops approached the small coastal village of Nabune on the Noto Hanto peninsula, populated only by farmers and fishermen, the brave villagers scared off the invading army by playing the taiko drums wearing demon masks hewn from wood and seaweed. This is our own arrangement of this traditional piece.

MATSURI

This is a traditional style of playing from the Fukui area, where Mackie, the founder of the group trained. In this piece the players move on & off the drums, playing improvised solos over the "mitsu-uchi" base rhythm typical of the west coast of Japan. The showmanship in the "bachi-sabaki", drumstick spinning and poses is very important, as each player displays their own unique style of performance.

YATAI BAYASHI

The Chichibu Festival is one of the most famous festivals in Japan, held yearly in December. Huge festival carts are pulled through the narrow streets of Chichibu by hundreds of people, each cart ornately carved and decorated with gold. Inside the carts, unseen by the festival goers, there are teams of drummers who keep the beat going all through the night. The low driving sounds of the Nagado drums encourage the people heaving the carts along the streets, and the high pitched Shime rolls accompany the turning of the carts around a corner. As the space inside each cart is limited, a unique way of playing has been developed, playing the taiko in a strenuous and challenging position.

- THERE WILL BE AN INTERVAL OF 20 MINS -

PROCESSION

A typical festival procession, featuring a very special instrument called the Chindon: an onomatopoeic name for a one-man-band instrument, used to celebrate shop openings and as a traditional method of advertising called Chindonya. The other percussion instruments featured are the Katsugi Oke carrying drum, the Chappa hand cymbals and the Uchiwa hand-held drum. The Uchiwa was originally used by Nichiren Buddhist monks to accompany their prayers, and the Chappa cymbals similarly have their roots in Buddhist ceremony. All these instruments have now been adopted by taiko groups as percussion instruments, used in a variety of ways. The Shinobue melody is from Sado Island, a song called Sado Okesa, played as accompaniment to a traditional folk dance.

EDOBAYASHI

A typical festival ensemble from Edo (the old name for Tokyo). The Ohayashi festival ensembles typically consist of four instruments: the low sounding Nagado, the high pitched Shime drum, the Shinobue bamboo flute and the Atarigane bell, also called "Chanchiki".

BONDAIKO

Every year at the Obon festival in August, the spirits of the dead ancestors return to earth. Traditionally in Tokyo, the taiko would be played as accompaniment to the folk music, placed on a diagonal stand on the top of a huge tower, with the Bon dancers forming a circle of dancers around the tower. Each player would develop his own style in a competition of showmanship which led to ever more ornate choreography and energetic playing. This Bon Daiko version was learnt from Hiroshi Motofuji from Tokyo, originally a member of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko, with whom we collaborated on a concert in 2006.

KAMITSUKI KIYARI DAIKO

This traditional festival taiko piece comes from Miyake Island, one of the seven volcanic islands off of the Izu Peninsula. At the yearly festival, shrines are carried through the streets to pray for the well-being of the village. The driving rhythms accompany the rough wave-like motions of the shrines carried upon the shoulders of the villagers, as the shrines are rocked up & down, whilst being passed from one neighbourhood to the next.

KIYARI

Please join us for a rendition of the traditional song from Miyake Island, sung to accompany the Kamitsuki taiko piece. Traditionally, each singer would develop their own version of the song. Our own verses celebrate the playing of the drums. So join in!

ODAIKO

The Odaiko is the biggest of the family of taiko drums, literally meaning "big drum". It is believed that if you play the Odaiko with enough energy and passion, the spirit within the drum will awaken. Taiko drums are used in prayer in both Buddhism and the indigenous Shinto religion. In Shintoism it is believed that every living thing has a spirit living inside, and even after the elm tree is felled & hewn and the cowhide tanned & stretched, the taiko drum retains the spirit within it.

HIBIKI

One of our own compositions, played in the Hokuriku style, featuring improvised solos and climaxing with the "tsubame-kaeshi" cross-hands style typical of the west coast of Japan. The bamboo beaters were traditionally used to chase the crop-eating insects out of the rice paddies. This piece is dedicated to our teacher and inspiration, Masaaki Kurumaya Sensei, and is named after his group in Fukui, Hibiki Daiko, which means reverberation.

SHICHISAN STOMP

A rousing finale, a very modern taiko piece bringing the "Way of the Drum" up to the present time.

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THE WAY OF THE DRUM

This traditional concert, presented by members of the well-established Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers, introduces the art-form of Taiko Drumming through explosive rhythms, informative explanations, and audience interaction, giving a unique perspective on the enthralling world of this ancient art.

Through our years of touring the modern and theatrical "Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers" show, we have met many members of our audience eager to find out more about the traditions of Taiko. By popular demand, we've developed a show which returns to the roots of Taiko drumming, revealing the history & culture of this fascinating folk art.

Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers are UK's premier touring taiko drum group, and have done much to popularise the art-form through their extensive touring programme. Performing over 100 concerts a year, the group have built a solid reputation for their hard-hitting energetic performances since their establishment in 1994.

In 2002 the group established the Mugen Taiko Dojo, their base & training centre in Central Scotland, where people gather from all over the UK & beyond to attend workshops and courses.



NEIL MACKIE

Founding member of Mugenkyo, trained in Japan with Masaaki Kurumaya Sensei from 1992 to 1994, returning to the UK in 1994 to form Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers. Previously a kit drummer in hometown Bristol and in London, Mackie is a powerful Odaiko big drum player, the Jiuchi base rhythm "comandante", and is also the visionary and driving force of the group.

FIONA STODDART

Originally from Dunfermline, Fi first encountered taiko drumming at a Mugenkyo workshop at Aberdeen Uni in 2004, where she was studying music, specialising in marimba & percussion performance. She started training at the Dojo in 2006, joined Mugenkyo on tour in 2008, 2009 and 2011, joining the group full-time & becoming the main outreach instructor at the Dojo.



JOAO MADEIRA

Originally from Lisbon, Portugal, Joao is a long-term resident of Glasgow, joining the Dojo training in 2006, progressing to the touring line-up in 2010, and becoming one of the star players in the group in the 2011 tour. Joao previously was a kit-drummer in various rock & heavy metal bands, transferring his energetic kit-drumming style to the taiko drums, where he is a dynamic presence onstage.

BARRY JACK

Barry has been an orchestral percussionist & drum-kit player since the age of 15, and started training at the Dojo in 2009, becoming a regular member of the Dojo team. Barry joined Mugenkyo's "Way of the Drum" tour and "Mugenkyo" tour in 2011, and has since joined the group full-time, bringing his exceptional rhythmic and musical skills to the team.



MARTIN DOYLE

Martin joined the Dojo in 2010, whilst a student at Perth College studying music performance, specialising in drum-kit. Drawing on his background in martial arts, Martin has developed his own powerful style of performance, joining Mugenkyo's "Way of the Drum" tour and "Mugenkyo" tour in 2011, and dedicating himself full-time to the art-form.

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