

UZUME TAIKO

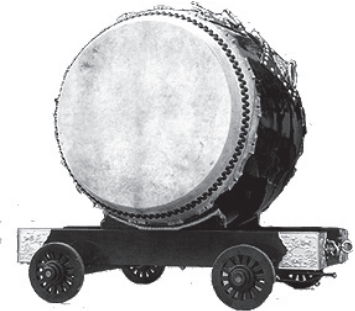
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HYOSHIGI



RAINSTICK



ODAIKO

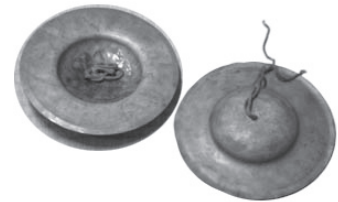


OKEDO

UZUME TAIKO



INSTRUMENTS



CHAPPA



CHU DAIKO



SHIME DAIKO



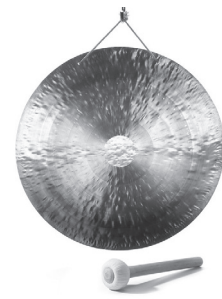
ATARIGANE



UCHIWA DAIKO

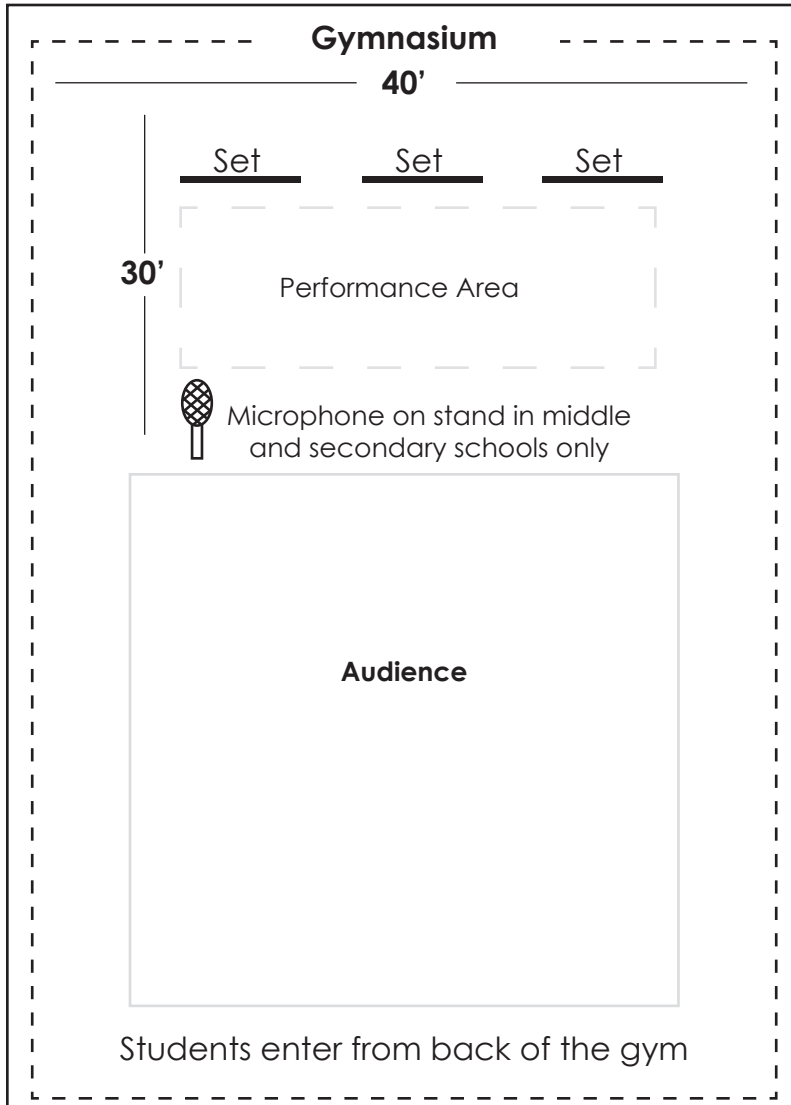


SUMO



CHINESE GONG

UZUME TAIKO TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS



Set up time: 1 hour
Performance duration: 50 minutes
Strike time: 40 minutes

Technical Notes:

The nature of the set makes it preferable to play lengthways in the gym, with the audience entering from the end opposite the performance area, as per diagram. The group understands that this is not always possible. The distance from the back wall to the first row of students is a **minimum** of 30 feet. Please ensure the gymnasium floor is dry mopped before our arrival.

The performers need at least one - preferably two clean changing rooms (female and male) at elementary schools. Performer-only dressing rooms are requested at secondary schools. We will need a room to store drum cases during the show. If there is adequate space, the cases can be stored behind the set. Please provide 3 bottles of water for the performers.

The group appreciates having three or four students to assist in loading in the drums if there is any appreciable distance from the load-in doors to the gym. Microphone on stand is requested for middle and secondary schools only.

Group Introduction:

As the performance begins offstage, a staff member will need to introduce the group. A simple, "Please welcome Uzume Taiko!" - will be sufficient. The phonetic spelling is "oo - zoo - may tie - ko".

Note to schools: Please feel free to photocopy this study guide. For internal distribution only.

Uzume Taiko gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of:

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The Hamber Foundation

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UZUME TAIKO

“OO – ZOO – MAY TIE – KO”

Taiko is a Japanese word that means “big drum.” Although the drums originated in China and Korea, they soon found their way over to Japan where they now hold an important place in many aspects of Japanese society.

The group **Uzume Taiko** was formed in 1989 and takes its name from the goddess of laughter, *Ame no Uzume no Mikoto* (the Heavenly Alarming Female) who, according to Japanese legend, first began taiko drumming.

In the past 20 + years Uzume Taiko has performed all over the world and for many different kinds of events. During the school year the group performs extensively for both elementary and high schools. The Uzume Taiko ensemble is a larger group of musicians who perform evening concerts in North America and internationally.

We enjoy playing taiko for all ages and believe that it is especially important for young people to hear and see many different types of cultural expressions as possible. We all come from different backgrounds and have our own experiences that makes us who we are. We feel that it is important for all of us to share our differences, similarities and experience so that we can all understand one another better.

We hope that you enjoy our show as much as we enjoy playing taiko for all ages!

TAIKO TODAY

The instruments within the taiko family have existed in Japan for over two thousand years. Traditionally, taiko were used in many different ways, such as for festival music, accompaniment to theater and dance, religious ceremonies, marking village boundaries, and even by farmers trying to get rid of crop-eating insects in the fields. However, the style of taiko drumming that is most common today is called *kumidaiko*, or “group drumming,” and it began to take shape in the 1950s. In this relatively new art form, taiko of different sizes and shapes are played in combination with other percussion instruments to create a musical ensemble.

Taiko, with its exciting choreography and pounding rhythms, has attracted many younger people who have been brought up in today's fast paced society. Taiko groups began to form in many of the cities and towns of Japan and it is said that there are now over 4,000 groups in Japan.

In North America, many young people also want to rediscover their cultural backgrounds. Some Asians in Canada and the United States see taiko as a way of expressing their heritage and have formed groups of their own. Popularity of taiko has spread all over the world and there are now over 150 groups in both countries. Taiko has an appeal to people of all ages and all cultural backgrounds and its popularity has extended far beyond the Asian community.

PLAYING THE TAIKO

Taiko is an integrated art form, meaning that we use our whole bodies to play the drums. It combines elements of dance, martial arts, theatre and music. When we compose taiko music we try to make it as interesting for the eyes as for the ears.

We play the drums with heavy sticks called “*bachi*.” They vary in size and weight, depending on the drum they're used on, and the largest ones are the size of sawed-off curtain-rods. Many of the movements we use are influenced by martial arts like *karate* and *judo*. Taiko is also similar to the martial arts in the way we use our voices. We make shouts called *kiai* - these encourage us to play with more energy and spirit. Like sports, you need a lot of stamina to play the drums for a long time.

DRUMS IN ANCIENT JAPAN

The origins of taiko go back to the beginnings of Japanese history. Here is a famous legend about how the taiko was created...

A long time ago, when the world was still brand new and not settled, gods walked upon the earth along with humans, animals and all manner of living things. The most beautiful of all was Amaterasu, the sun goddess, and she gave light to all the world. But she had a brother, Susano-o, the storm god. He was a crude and vulgar fellow who liked nothing more than to cause misery and hardship to all.

Like many brothers and sisters, Amaterasu and Susano-o did not get along all the time and one day they got into a small argument. The argument soon escalated into a huge battle and Susano-o began tearing up chunks of the earth with his storms, creating tidal waves that wiped out entire villages. The sun goddess became so enraged that she locked herself away in a cave, sealing the entrance with a huge boulder.

The world was plunged into darkness.

The other gods and the humans were afraid. They called on a third goddess, Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, the Heavenly Alarming Female, to lure Amaterasu from the cave. Overturning a wooden washtub, Uzume performed a comical dance, making a great deal of commotion by pounding on the tub. This made the people laugh- they soon forgot their fear as they watched Uzume dancing and drumming. The sun goddess was overcome with curiosity. What was that commotion outside? She took a little peek. The other gods had hung a mirror outside the entrance of the cave and when Amaterasu saw her reflection she was fooled into thinking that there was another goddess, as beautiful as herself, outside the cave. Overcome by jealousy, she stepped from the cave and the world was once more blessed with light.

The pounding on the tub became the sound of the taiko and since that day the sound of the taiko has echoed all around the world. Uzume is known as the first drummer and the first dancer in Japanese mythology.

SOME OF THE EARLY USES OF TAIKO INCLUDE:

- driving away evil spirits
- calling for the rain in times of drought
- ridding the fields of insects
- bringing soldiers onto the battlefield
- music for village festivals
- accompaniment to theatre (*Noh, Kabuki, etc.*)
- accompaniment to chanting and meditation

HERE ARE SOME INTERESTING STORIES ABOUT TAIKO IN JAPAN..

It is said that the boundaries of a village were not determined just by geography but also by how far away you could hear the village drum. If you couldn't hear the taiko anymore you knew that you were outside the limits of the village.



They saw that a newborn baby will fall into a peaceful sleep when it hears the pounding of the huge O-daiko (the very big drum). The baby remembers being back inside the womb, listening to its mother's heartbeat.



Many years ago there was a great war. A small village on a peninsula was being attacked by an enemy army and there was no way to escape. All the young men had gone off to fight in the war, leaving only women, children and old people to defend the village. One night a group of old men from the village crept up to the enemy camp. They lit huge bonfires and put on frightening masks that they had carved out of wood and decorated with seaweed. They made a huge amount of noise beating on the drums. The enemy soldiers were terrified. They thought that they were being attacked by demons and ghosts, and they got back in their boats and fled.

The village was saved!

IMAGES & SYMBOLS



The taiko drum is traditionally represented by the symbol of three commas contained in a circle. This crest is said to represent thunder and is often painted on the head of the huge Odaiko. Taiko players often wear two-toed shoes called tabi. Although they have come to be associated with the ninjas, they are actually traditional Japanese work boots. The reason for the split toe is so that they can be worn with a pair of sandals inside the house. A head-band called a hachi-maki is usually worn on the head to stop the sweat from running into the drummer's eyes. A traditional happi coat is often worn, sometimes with the sleeves removed for ease of movement. These coats are usually decorated with various crests.

FOLLOW - UP QUESTIONS

The answers to all these questions can be found in the show itself. They are also contained in this guide.

- What does "taiko" mean?
- What were some of the early uses of taiko in Japan?
- Taiko is an oral tradition. What does this mean?
- Why do taiko players make sounds with their voices (kiai) when they play the drums?
- Why did the Japanese farmers believe that the drums could be used for rain?
- Why do newborn babies fall asleep upon hearing the pounding of the taiko?
- In the legend about Amaterasu, what made the sun goddess come out of the cave?

TAIKO RESOURCE BOOK

Taiko Resource Book:

The Way of Taiko by Heidi Varian 2005 Published by Stonebridge Press

WORKSHOPS & ACTIVITIES

TAIKO WORKSHOPS

Uzume Taiko Drum Workshops can be scheduled to occur after performances. Students can range from K-12 and workshop sessions range from 45 minutes to 2 hours in length.

Please contact info@uzume.com for more information.

TAIKO NOTATION

Taiko is an oral tradition. This means that songs are taught through vocal sounds instead of through the use of written notation. Each kind of drum beat has a different sound that represents it.

Examples:

- 1 loud beat on the drum is **DON**
- 2 loud beats on the drum are **DORO**
- 1 soft beat on the drum is **TSU**
- 2 soft beats on the drum are **TSUKU**
- 1 beat on the edge of the drum is **KA**
- 2 beats on the edge of the drum are **KARA**
- 1 rest (space) is **SU**

Here is an example of a taiko song as we would teach it:

MATSURI (Festival)

DON DON DON KARA KARA

DON DON DON DON KARA KARA

DON DON DON KARA KARA

DON DON DON DON KARA KARA

SU DON SU DON SU DON DON

SU DON SU DON SU DON DON

DON TSUKU DON DON DON KA

DON TSUKU DON DON DON KA

DON TSUKU DON DON DON KA

SOH! (4 Beats)

You can see from this example why we call it an oral tradition – you can't tell what the song would sound like from reading it off the paper, you have to hear it said to really know how the song goes. Try making up your own songs using taiko notation!