



The Tampa Taiko Japanese Cultural Outreach Program

History

Taiko drums are deeply entrenched in the fabric of Japanese History. Taiko drums were used to drive away pests harmful to crops. By imitating the sound of thunder, it was believed that they could bring rain, and at harvest time, Taiko drums were played to offer thanks for a bountiful crop. Taiko drums were often used in wartime to motivate troops, to help set a marching pace, and to call out orders or announcements.

Recently, a cultural renaissance has taken place in Japan - a rediscovery of native arts. Many festivals, building dedications, video games, TV shows and corporate events feature Taiko drummers. With touring ensembles like Kodo and Ondekoza, it has again been popularized and is played in festivals throughout the world.

Selected Glossary

1. Bachi - drumstick; various sizes, commonly 15" to 16" long and 7/8" to 1" diameter
2. Dojo - practice hall
3. Fuchi - the head and rim or face of the drum
4. Hachimaki - headband; strip of cloth tied around the head
5. Happi - a short work coat; our uniform "tops"
6. Kata - form; basic body alignment and movement when striking the drum
7. Mimi - "ears"; flaps over the side of the drum used when pulling on the skin to tighten the head prior to nailing
8. O Daiko - big drum; the largest drum in any ensemble is called the odaiko, but people often think of the very large drums (4-5 feet in diameter) played by San Francisco Taiko Dojo, Kodo or Ondekoza; usually played on a tower stand
9. Shime Daiko - "tightened" drum; from verb "shimeru" = to close tightly or tie tightly; smaller, flat drums whose heads are pulled together by rope or metal bolts; highest toned drum, often used to maintain the base rhythm on songs; also used on solos
10. Taiko or Daiko - drum; general term for any drum, as well as the music played on them



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Playing the Taiko Drum: "If you can say it, you can play it"

Taiko is known as the modern art of traditional Japanese drumming in a group ensemble that uses martial art like movements and "ki-ais" (shouting to encourage high energy.) The performance may also dramatize Japanese folktales and use props. Drums were used in ancient times to signify the boundaries of a village. Events such as rice harvests, public ceremonies and dance festivals were celebrated with drums. Drums were played loudly to sound like thunder and make rain. Drummers lead warriors into battles in order to scare off the enemy. They were included in Japanese folklore. In one example, by drumming, the Sun would come out of its cave. Japanese culture has celebrated the athleticism of traditional drumming techniques for thousands of years. Taiko became popular around the world in the 1950's and came to the U.S. in 1968 by Grand Master Seiichi Tanaka, who wanted it to be a common household word, like chopsticks and sushi.

Taiko means "big drum," but there are many shapes and sizes. The dojo or band can include other rhythmic instruments. The sound made by striking the drum is defined by a syllable, and to play the rhythmic phrase the student copies a pattern of Taiko syllables. Uchite (Taiko drummer), can wear loose fitting happi (short coat), with an obi (belt), hachimaki (headband), and tabi (shoes with big toe separated).



Don – 1 Beat Hard

DoRo – ½ Beat Hard

TsuKu – ½ Beat Soft

Kat – 1 Beat Rimshot

KaRa – ½ Beat Rimshots

Su – Silence

Matsuri Daiko

	Don	Don	Don	KaRa	Ka	Ka
	R	L	R	RL	R	L
Don Don	Ro	Don	KaRa	Ka	Ka	
RR	L	R	RL	R	L	
Su Don	Ro	Don	KaRa	Ka	Ka	
R	L	R	RL	R	L	

Student/Teacher Guide 2011

Taiko Drum Construction

Traditionally, taiko drums are made from a single tree. In North America we use barrels that have been discarded. Visit our website for complete instructions and learn how to assemble your own Taiko drum. Leather Supplier: Herman Oak Leather. Barrel Supplier: The Barrel Shop & Thousand Oaks Barrel Co. Find upholstery tacks on Ebay.

