

TAIKOz

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GREETINGS TO QUEENSLAND TAIKO ENTHUSIASTS

First of all I would like to extend greetings to all the new newsletter recipients from Queensland. It was a great pleasure to play for you at the superb Brisbane Powerhouse and was most gratifying and encouraging to have received such a wonderful response. I hope it won't be too long before we return!

TAIKOZ ON TOUR

While the prospect of six performances within a week always looked challenging on paper, the reality was something else again. The usual TaikOz schedule of bump-ins and bump-outs, rehearsals, performances and media calls will always take its toll on the mind and the body, but with sickness, technical delays and extra media calls thrown in, our mettle was tested to the absolute maximum! Nevertheless, I would have to say that the added pressure seemed to demand an even more committed response from the group and I think the performances were all the better for it.

LISMORE August 5 - 7

Our first stop was Lismore where we gave a concert under the auspices of NORPA –The Northern Rivers Performing Association - an excellent organisation committed to the presentation of contemporary Australian music and theatre. Having spent some time living and working in Lismore in 1999, the group was looking forward to returning to this lovely town and playing for the very enthusiastic audiences.

It seemed a luxury to have two and a half days to set up, rehearse and play. The schedule generously allowed for some relaxation and quiet personal preparation. But in the end we needed absolutely every moment – technical faults in the lighting system played havoc with our timetable! While the weather was superb, we were to enjoy very little of it as we found ourselves stuck inside the concert hall for hours on end sorting through the maze of broken lamps and dodgy patches. However, the systematic hard work of NORPA's Liz Terracini and TaikOz's Greg Andresen saw the problems gradually (and surely) fixed. Though the group was a little tired by the day's end, everyone played with enthusiasm, dynamism and commitment for our opening night.

BRISBANE August 8 - 12

After enjoying the drive along the beautiful coast road, TaikOz hit Brisbane for a round of media calls. While we always appreciate the opportunity to speak to television, radio and newspapers, one always feels as though the things that really matter just don't get through. Unfortunately the actual music seems to become relegated to mere background diversion while the size of the drums seems to garner most of the attention. Imagine my chagrin when the O-Daiko was casually referred to as a "big barbecue" (...still trying to figure that one out)! Nevertheless, the attention seemed to do the trick for we ended up selling out all 3 nights.

Though time-consuming and physically draining, the group happily set about the complex task of fitting out the stage, focussing lights and plotting the many scene changes. All was going to plan until Greg broke out in sweats and started vomiting – which is not the ideal preparation for a taiko player about to perform 5 concerts in 3 days! "Fine", I thought, "probably just a 24-hour bug". Which it was – but one that proceeded to attack in turn Ben, Kelly, Masae and Graham! There was no choice but to cancel our first night.

On our Thursday "opening night" Riley, Ben and Ian gave an extremely scaled down 30-minute concert for those few people who could not be contacted about the cancellation. Unfortunately *Miyake* for three just doesn't have the same impact.

Nonetheless, all members were on board the following day and TaikOz managed to present two concerts for schools and the first of three evening shows. Apart from a sense of relief all 'round, I think the feeling of rejuvenation and newfound wellbeing contributed to a shared energy that was very powerful in performance. I like to think of it as a tangible expression of "kokoro" – the Spirit of Wadaiko.

NEW PROGRAM, NEW INSIGHTS

It was exciting for us to present this program as it reflected many new ideas and techniques acquired on our recent visit to Japan. *OTA / KO* – a recent composition by Ian - was premiered; Kelly and Masae presented a stunning rendition of the traditional *Hachijo* (after months of hard training); Ian and Graham also sweated many hours over a new version of *O-Daiko*; *Miyake* underwent a major rethink; and a radical reworking of Maki Ishii's *Dyu-Ha* was presented in collaboration with our theatrical counterparts, the wonderful Frank Productions.

KYOMEI - RESONANCE

Despite the difficulties, this tour represents the beginning of a new phase in TaikOz's existence. While the group heads back to the dojo for more training, we hope the sound of the taiko might still resonate inside you!

JANUARY WORKSHOPS and WEB SITE PHOTOS

TaikOz hopes to present a week of workshops at the end of January 2002. At the moment we are investigating the possibility of a 5-day intensive at the Powerhouse in Brisbane. However, if this doesn't materialise - there are a number of logistical problems to overcome - we will go ahead here in Sydney. We'll soon post details on our web site at www.taikoz.com While you're there you might also care to check out some recent photos from concerts in Kobe, Lismore and Brisbane.

Also, if you have any questions about things Wadaiko, please don't hesitate to contact me at ian@taikoz.com

EMAIL ADDRESSES

Some of you who have received this letter by snail mail may have originally given us your email addresses. It may be that we tried to send this via email but was returned for some reason. For those who do have email could you please notify us at ian@taikoz.com with your details so we can enter them correctly? Thanks.