

# TAIKOz

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## NATIONAL TOUR WRAP

TaikOz has just finished its first tour for Musica Viva Australia, visiting Perth, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney during 2 weeks in October. It was great to play in such wonderful concert halls because the big rooms handle the sound of our instruments very well, doing justice to our extreme dynamic range. Certainly a piece like Maki Ishii's *Monochrome* is best suited to this kind of acoustic and Riley's shakuhachi seemed to float in the atmosphere.

All of this doesn't amount to much however, without enthusiastic audiences – so 'thanks!' to all of you. It was wonderful to have such energetic feedback in 'real time'. As I said from the stage, we love to give out energy, but we need the energy of the hall to come back to us in order to really reach the heights. By joining forces in this way we can really make our own matsuri festival. And matsuridaiko – festival drumming – is what it's all about.

## AYO MASTERCOURSE

Prior to the MV tour, TaikOz spent a week in country Victoria with students of the Australian Youth Orchestra. After extensive national auditions twelve highly talented musicians were invited to attend the TaikOz "Wadaiko Mastercourse". The successful students came from Melbourne, Sydney, Perth and Brisbane. After 12 months of planning, the seven members of TaikOz, AYO staff and students all converged on Cave Hill Creek, a conference centre set in beautiful bush surrounds, for a week of intensive music-making.

Although each student has reached a high level of accomplishment as a percussionist, the techniques and thought processes particular to Wadaiko practice meant everyone began the course on a level playing field. This, coupled with the stunning natural environment, allowed for deep and thoughtful study and practice; students were challenged in ways that were entirely new to them, free from the competitive atmosphere of the music school.

Each day began at 7am with 'Breathing Class' and warm-ups, after which we all enjoyed a hearty breakfast in readiness for the rigours of the day. 30' *Renshū* – non-stop playing – was followed by instruction in Eitetsu Hayashi's *Umi*, shimedaiko technique, *Yataibayashi*, ōdaiko and Miyake-taiko. Night time activities included a very challenging and fun breathing workshop with Riley, a session spent analyzing Maki Ishii's ground-breaking *Monochrome*, a video session watching and discussing Fuun no Kai's stunning performance of Eitetsu's *Mio no Hasu*, and a thought provoking lecture from Riley on "Performance Practice". The ideas and techniques expressed through each of these sessions extended the students in many ways; mind and body were certainly stretched beyond the average comfort level!

The aim of the course was to encourage students to think differently about how they express themselves musically. Expression, creativity, practice, conceptualization, group dynamics were the dominant themes of the week. However, the one overarching principle was 'Development of Awareness'. By becoming more 'aware' of ourselves and our environment we become more effective as musicians, as group members and as people. The students left Cave Hill Creek to return to their various institutions and playing groups with this principle in mind, renewed and refreshed in mind, body and spirit.

TaikOz wishes each of them the very best in their chosen paths. Gambatte kudasai!

## **AYO MASTERCOURSE – A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE**

**By Tom Royce-Hampton**

To experience another culture is an interesting and rare thing; to experience it through the medium that we love – music – makes it even more special.

At Cave Hill Creek, a holiday camp near Ballarat, 12 percussionists from the AYO music program joined with the members of TaikOz for a week-long 'intensive' in the art of Japanese drumming. In these idyllic surrounds we were credited with being the quietest *noisiest* group that the camp has ever had!

We started with a short training session on the evening that we arrived. Only then do I think that we all knew what we were in for. For those who have not seen TaikOz or taiko drumming, the raw energy that is emitted is astonishing. However, it comes at a price and, needless to say, everyone slept very well that night.

Every day from then on was no different – hard work, but worth it in every sense. The teachers put an enormous amount of energy into the week considering that they were also preparing for a tour of Australia at the same time. After a day of training there was energy for little else other than sitting around and comparing blisters (of which there were plenty!) The week ended with a concert to a small but very enthusiastic crowd.

On behalf of all the other participants I would like to thank again the members of TaikOz for their hard work and patience ("get that arm straight!") throughout the week. It is truly inspiring to see musicians so dedicated to their art form – regardless of which style it is; its not only valuable as an insight into a different culture, but a new way of approaching performance and discipline. I think every student left the camp with a changed perspective on music making.

## **STUDENTS CONCERT**

**By TaikOz member Graham Hilgendorf**

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, we held our second student concert, this time in the TaikOz dojo.

As with any concert, there are many, many things to prepare and organize. The usual lists were made and we all knew exactly what had to done for the special day.

Everyone arrived excited and full of energy! You could feel the adrenalin in the dojo and, although I had many things on my mind, I also was buzzing. It was soon time to walk through the concert program, practice moving the taiko, rehearse our bows. However, to my surprise, there were only a handful of performers still in the Dojo.

“Where is everyone?” I asked!

Like all performers, all they could think about was performing and so they'd gathered themselves into groups down the end of the corridor having one last little practice session. With faces full of concentration, and eyes gleaming with excitement, everyone was back in the dojo, warmed-up, and ready to go!

The TaikOz Dojo is not very big and somewhat reduced in size on this day by the capacity audience who attended the concert – well over 100 people. With 45 performers on top of the audience I thought everyone worked very well together, all helping each other set-up and strike the taiko after each performance, as well as moving on and off the stage area with beautiful form.

One of the rewarding aspects of teaching is to witness a player develop their skills, and grow as a player. With all classes performing in this concert, I was able to see the confidence of the students who have been with us for some time and excitement in the newer students. The Monday and Wednesday night classes performed *Kazan*, composed by Ian, and the Friday night “the young-guns” played the breath-taking traditional *Yataibayashi*. Saturday's Kids class, the next taiko generation, played a beautiful version of *Miyake*, helped along by a couple of big kids up the back (Masae and Kenichi).

Special thanks must go to Liz McKenzie, Ann-Marie Clare and Aiden Isamu Sugano for introducing each class.

To all the performers, well done! Everyone performed with power and passion, beautiful form, and most importantly, as a team.

Congratulations.

### **NEW TAIKOZ DVD AND CD NOW AVAILABLE**

TaikOz has finally released its first DVD (and second CD) – “Live at Angel Place”. We are now able to take orders, so if you are interested in purchasing the DVD, CD or VIDEO then please send your orders to Masae Ikegawa:

via email to [masae@taikoz.com](mailto:masae@taikoz.com),

via phone/fax to +61 (0)2 9569 6743,

via mail to PO Box 499, Dulwich Hill, NSW 2203

Postage/packing costs \$5 for the first item, then \$2.50 for each additional item.

We accept Bankcard, Mastercard, Visa, personal cheque or money order (made payable to 'Synergy Percussion Ltd'). Please do NOT send credit card details via email, as it is not secure.

Prices are as follows –

**DVD “Live at Angel Place” \$35**

**CD “Live at Angel Place” \$30**

**Video “Live at Angel Place” \$30**

**CD “Taiko no Sekai” \$25**

**T-Shirts \$25**

More information (track listings, video and audio excerpts, T-Shirt designs, etc) is available at [www.taikoz.com/merchandise](http://www.taikoz.com/merchandise)."

### **TAIKOZ FRIENDS**

By paying \$40 a year you can become a TaikOz Friend. We will send a card that entitles you to 15% discount on all TaikOz CDs, DVDs, T-shirts and bachi (sticks) sold at TaikOz concerts or taikoz.com. All donations assist the group and are greatly appreciated by us all. If you would like to become a Friend, please send a cheque or money order to the above PO Box and address it as “TaikOz Friend”. For more information about “Friends” see the web site [www.taikoz.com/friends](http://www.taikoz.com/friends)

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