

TAIKOz

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In rehearsal at the Pompidou Centre

What an amazing year it's been! TaikoZ has had the amazing privilege of travelling through a good part of our beautiful country – from town to city and everything in between – giving concerts and workshops, meeting people and experiencing the incredibly diverse landscape. We've travelled beyond our shores, too – Paris in autumn – where we gave the European premiere of *Winners*, the multi-instrumental, multi-video, multi-concept new work by Italian composer Andrea Molino...stories and photos below.

Thank you to all who have given us such wonderful assistance this year and in years past: we couldn't have reached this point without you. We look forward to many exciting projects in the future and with them, your continued encouragement and support: TaikoZ is greatly appreciative, thank you.

KAIDAN : A GHOST STORY

KAIDAN : A GHOST STORY

Preview: January 17 (Wed)

Season: January 18-27 (Thurs-Sat, no Sun performances – check web site for date & time details)

DRAMA THEATRE at the Sydney Opera House

02 9250 7777 (SOH Box Office)

www.sydneyfestival.org.au

From November through mid-January TaikOz is in workshop/rehearsal mode as we prepare for a ground-breaking new production called *Kaidan : A Ghost Story*. Conceived by acclaimed choreographer Meryl Tankard and TaikOz Artistic Director Ian Cleworth, this production fuses dance and stunning visual imagery with taiko and shakuhachi and will be presented at the Drama Theatre of the Sydney Opera House from January 17 to 27. We'd love to see you there!

Here's a brief synopsis of the story...

"The inspiration for the production is derived from Lafcadio Hearn's classic collection of Japanese ghost stories entitled *Kwaidan*. The tale takes place eight centuries ago in Mugenyama when mirrors were collected from the local women-folk to melt down and cast into a giant temple bell.

A woman gave the mirror she had inherited from her mother. A family heirloom, the mirror was very beautiful because of the design of lucky emblems engraved on its back: the pine, the bamboo and the plum. The woman lamented having to give it away as she feared for the truth of the proverb of the mirror being the soul of a woman.

When the time came for the great bell to be cast, the mirror given by the woman would not melt. The villagers knew who had donated it and her shame was great; her heart was revealed as being hard, as hard as the metal of her gift. Because of the woman's reluctance the metal remained solid when the other mirrors, given in a different spirit, melted under the heat.

Eventually her sadness became so overpowering that she killed herself, leaving a note to the effect that after her death the mirror would melt on the condition that great wealth would come to whoever managed to break the bell.

The note was in fact a curse, for those who tried to break it to obtain the promised worldly wealth beat it impiously and constantly. The incessant clanging of the bell became overpowering and in desperation the priests rolled it into the river where it lies still, leaving only the legend behind.

This is a story about 'non-attachment' to worldly goods. However, the woman's sense of loss is palpable and we can identify with her depth of feeling. Unfortunately her anguish leads her to bitterness and resentment that causes pain and suffering to others, finally resulting in death and destruction. Nonetheless, we have a sense of the woman's release as the sunken bell gives life and sustenance to the fishy creatures of the river".

END OF YEAR STUDENT CONCERT

The annual taiko school end of year performance is coming up again on **December 17 in Centenary Hall at Newington College, Stanmore Road, Stanmore at 4PM**. Please allow time for preparation, setting up and a run through beforehand. Full details of the program will be relayed in the coming weeks.

This is a great opportunity for your family and friends to see what you get up to every week – bring them along to enjoy the music-making and some food and drink afterwards.

This is your concert, the success of which relies on everyone getting involved. If you feel you can contribute in the organisation of the event please read the following note from Wednesday-nighter, Wendy Tsui....

Dear TaikOz Students,

Now that we're almost at the end of the taiko year, you're probably finding yourself tapping out bass rhythms on the dashboard at traffic lights, playing solos on your desk at work or singing themes in the shower. It can only mean one thing....

It's almost time for the TAIKOZ STUDENT CONCERT!!!

The student concert will be held on the evening of
Sunday 17th December at 4PM
at Centenary Hall, Newington College

It's a wonderful opportunity for all the students to experience the excitement of performing in front of an audience. And it's also a great chance to invite family and friends to see and hear you play!

Following the success of last year's concert, the student body will again coordinate this year's student concert. Plenty of helping hands will be needed on the day of the concert to set up and clean up at the hall.

However, we also need several volunteers to help organise things in the weeks leading up to the concert. Jobs such as:

- *Organising drum transport*
- *Stage management*
- *MC and coordination of speakers*
- *Program design and printing*
- *Catering (drinks and nibbles after the concert)*
- *Organising a door prize*
- *Front of house (ticket printing & sales)*
- *Team leaders for each class*

If you'd like to help with organising please email Wendy Tsui from Wednesday class at <wendyt@unsw.edu.au>. Please include your current contact details and any preferences for which tasks you're interested in doing. (Don't worry if you haven't done it before!)

The student concert also acts as a fundraiser for the TaikOz school, with proceeds going towards resources for students (eg. taiko maintenance and new taiko for classes). So if anyone has resources/contacts to get things donated (eg. truck hire, printing, catering) please let me know.

*Cheers,
Wendy*

TaikOz NATIONAL TOUR

July was a busy month. Not only were we frantically practicing the devilishly challenging *Winners* but we were also preparing two other programs for the Brisbane Festival and the national regional tour. While there was some cross over with repertoire we were faced with the extra challenge of three or four different combinations of players, a multitude of musical arrangements and three separate inventories of instruments to juggle – by the time we hit the road barely a taiko was left in the dojo!

Nonetheless, months of planning paid off as the schedule unfolded over the ensuing ten weeks and instruments, players and music all more or less coalesced in the same place and at the same time.

What to say about the many places we visited: the concerts and the workshops we presented, the meals we ate, the hotels we stayed at? There were so many happy and satisfying memories, suffice to say that although we faced many a challenge, the trip afforded us an amazing opportunity to travel and the chance to repeat the program twenty times.

Several of the group were visiting places for the first time, which was a wonderful privilege. Highlights were the jaw-dropping beauty of the centre (Anton and Tom even made it to Uluru on a day off!), the stunning coast-line along the Great Ocean Road, the crisp cool air of Tasmania followed by the heat and humidity, sun and surf of the Sunshine Coast.

Upon finishing in Brisbane on July 31st TaikOz flew to Darwin, thereby marking the official beginning of the tour on August 1. After the luxury of a full day's set up and terrific debut concert at the Darwin Entertainment Centre we proceeded to travel south: first stop Alice Springs then on to country Victoria visiting Monash, Sale, Colac, Bendigo, Geelong and Ballarat over the course of three weeks. Without a break we headed even further south to Tasmania where we gave two shows in Australia's oldest continuously running theatre, Launceston's beautiful Princess Theatre. After three days well earned rest in Tassie, Graham and Ian swapped 'hats' – from teacher in Sydney to performer on the road – and so began the final leg on Queensland's Sunshine Coast: Coloundra first up with the caravan rolling onwards and upwards through Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay, Kerryn's hometown of Ayr (...local girl makes good!) and finishing with a couple of concerts in Cairns. Everyone returned home on September 14.

A mighty effort, but everyone stayed fit and healthy, bright and positive: not a bad way to earn a living!

TaikOz would like to thank Playing Australia for funding the considerable expense of keeping the group and our instruments on the road; Country Arts SA for organising the many details of travel and accommodation; the venue managers for inviting us and taking the risk on the concerts; the many wonderful staff and tech crews who helped make every performance a great success; Ilias Ellis and daughter Melody for getting our instruments to the right place, on time and in one piece; Patricia Lee for selling a record number of CDs, DVDs, caps and T-shirts; John Jones for having our second set of gear back in time for 100 eager students to begin term 3; ...and Michelle and Karen who kept the home fires burning.

WINNERS IN PARIS



TaikOz at the Pompidou Centre

You may remember from the previous newsletter that TaikOz was involved in the world premiere of a visually and aurally stunning new work called *Winners*. Conceived by Italian composer Andrea Molino, this piece was presented at the Brisbane Festival and relied on huge forces – a symphony orchestra, 2 solo saxophones, pre-recorded music, 4 suspended video screens and whole team of technical experts who created and ran the incredibly complex audio-visual element. Oh yes!... there was seven of us, too! TaikOz played 3 odaiko, 2 taiko sets, 2 chudaiko, 4 dengaku okedo, 4 katsugi okedo and a Hachijyô taiko. All of which was transferred to the Pompidou Centre in Paris during mid-October! (Don't ask about the freight bill...suffice to say we received many a suggestion about taking up the shinobue instead - or perhaps inventing 'inflatable taiko').

Marking TaikOz's European debut, this performance was one of a month-long series of artistic events happening at the Pompidou under the banner of Fabrica, the Venetian multi-media arts 'laboratory'. For a moment things were very touch and go as the Pompidou Centre staff were on

strike when we arrived. A company from New York was scheduled to perform at the Pompidou in the week prior to us, but due to the strike, were forced to pack up and go home, even after completing a week of production and rehearsals! This made us very nervous. Luckily we received the go ahead on the day before we were to open and despite the somewhat stressful preparation, the show went on. Unfortunately some technical flaws marred the performance, but as TaikOz was unfettered by the vagaries and dictates of technology, the group played its heart out.

Members of the group enjoyed a well earned holiday afterwards: Ian, Kevin and Kerry stayed in Paris, Anton visited his brother in Salzburg, Tom saw friends in London and Graham and Masae travelled on to Switzerland with her Mum and Dad who had come from Japan to see the show.



*Back row: Composer and conductor Andrea Molino in rehearsal at the Pompidou Centre
Front row: Asano shime-daiko (with cue sheets!)*

ANTON IN JAPAN

In between his 10-weeks on the road around Australia and a jaunt to Paris, TaikOz member Anton Lock also managed to fit in a quick visit to Japan where he had the wonderful opportunity of attending Kodô Juku on Sado Island – a three-day workshop with Kodô member Eichi Saito – followed by a couple of days intensive instruction by Kodô legend Yoshikazu Fujimoto in the traditional dance form known as *Oni-kenbai* – the “demon sword-dance”. Needless to say Anton had a great time and he has already begun to incorporate what he’s learnt into his current TaikOz work. Anton is keen to develop this side of his performance and is looking forward to returning for more study in the future.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

The members of TaikOz take great pleasure in seeing its ‘off-spring’ Taiko no Wa begin on their musical journey. They have given some wonderful performances this year, travelling far and wide. But of course it is more than just a musical experience. It’s all about working together to achieve a collective goal, it’s about sharing music with others, and above all, it’s about having fun – with passion!

The group is drawn from the student membership of TaikOz and is open to all. Please see the section at the end of the following article for details on how to get involved.

TAIKO NO WA TAKES OFF IN 2006

By Samantha Newton, Wendy Tsui, Terry Ashman

It’s been a busy year for the students of TaikOz. Earlier this year we formalised our name, Taiko no Wa, meaning “circle of taiko”, which is shared by the both the adults’ and children’s performing groups. And recently, we commissioned our new performance costume. Thank you to Wendy Tsui for the “schmick” new look.

Taiko no Wa has had six performances this year. The year started with a performance at the 40th Anniversary of JEOL Australia at the Dockside Function Centre, Darling Harbour. It was an honour to perform at this event and the audience gave us a warm welcome.

For our next gig we continued our relationship with Willoughby Public School and performed at their fete in May. Our participation at their fetes are most enjoyable with the Willoughby Public School community being very receptive and supportive, and it’s a pleasure to be part of their annual celebrations. We hope to be there next year.

Next, Willoughby Council held its 10th Spring Festival. Taiko no Wa performed at the launch of the festival in August. It was a magnificent evening with our performance accompanied by fire twirlers and coinciding with the rise of the full moon above the tree-tops. Unfortunately, the actual street parade scheduled in September was cancelled due to torrential rain, which was a great disappointment to the Taiko no Wa team as we had rehearsed *Yataibayashi*, which we

were to perform on the back of an Aussie *yatai* - a flat bed truck through the streets of Chatswood.

In November, we performed at the fete of the Sydney Japanese School. Despite the rain and unseasonably cool day, fete goers still turned out in good numbers, and the day was highly enjoyable.

Taiko no Wa on the Gold Coast

In September, Taiko no Wa had its most exciting performance to date at the Arts Centre on the Gold Coast (Saturday 30th September) as part of the Japan and Friends Day held by the Japanese Society of the Gold Coast. This celebration was arranged as part of the Japan Australia Year of Exchange that is celebrating 30 years of Friendship between Australia and Japan. We have since learnt that there was a record attendance of 10,000 people at the Japan and Friends Day.

For the 11 Taiko no Wa members it was a real buzz to be part of this substantial Matsuri. This was the biggest performance for Taiko no Wa to date. Not only was it the largest student group yet to embark on an out-of-town performance, but with a total four pieces to perform, it was also a great chance to stretch our memories and physical stamina. Taiko no Wa performed two 30 minute sets. It was a typical hot humid Gold Coast day and despite an early start the festival was crowded with people setting up stalls when we arrived at 7:30am. At 9:30am three of the team performed an excerpt of *Yataibayashi* (a traditional festival piece), near the centre of all the action, to draw attention to the official opening of the day.

Our first full set was performed on the outdoor stage at 10am. We were a bit nervous at first – a row of small children had set themselves right in front of the stage and we thought they might get a fright when we started playing. We were expecting a flurry of movement with kids moving rapidly away, or being hauled back by their parents. On the contrary, the children seemed very happy and stayed there for the full set. We started with a bang, or rather an eruption, with Ian Cleworth's *Kazan*, meaning "volcano", followed by *Tabidachi*, meaning "departure" and composed by Masae Ikegawa and finished with the traditional festival piece, *Miyake*, which included the song, *Kiyari*.

We had a break in the middle of the day, which allowed us to cool down, check out the stalls and other performers, and have a bite to eat and a nap.

Our second performance was inside the Arts Centre. The auditorium had seating for 300 and standing room down both sides of perhaps another 150. The place was absolutely packed and we take pleasure in realising that our performance was long awaited and the best attended for the day. We were lucky enough to perform in front of two beautiful gold leaf screens that we had admired earlier in the day. Our second performance was one of the best we've ever done, with the rehearsals of the previous two months paying off. Our speakers, Lawrence Hyde and Yukiko Nihei, encouraged the audience to get into the spirit of the festival piece, *Miyake*, by joining us in a few hearty cries of "*washoi!*" and "*so-re!*". The audience was very responsive; with once again, many children near the front of the stage and showing a lot of enthusiasm. This audience was by far the best we've ever had. They applauded loudly and called for more. We'd never done an encore before and weren't prepared to re-set the taiko for a repeat of *Kazan* or *Tabidachi* so it was hurriedly decided that the *Yataibayashi* version from the morning would be our impromptu encore. By all accounts this was extremely well received with three players

beating out the *Yatai* theme and *tamaire* whilst the rest of Taiko no Wa stood immediately behind on stage.

The applause at the end of the encore was one of the most rewarding experiences of performing we've had. None of us study taiko for performance, we play taiko for the joy of playing, and performance has been an extra opportunity to play. But we were all moved when some members of the audience stood up during the final applause – our first standing ovation!

Taiko no Wa thanks Nao Hirano, President of the Japanese Society of the Gold Coast and all the organisers of the Japan and Friends Day, especially Kyoko Fukase, for inviting us to take part in the celebrations and for supporting our trip to the Gold Coast.

Dubbo

Our most recent performance was at the 4th Anniversary of the Shoyoen Japanese Gardens in Dubbo on Sunday 19th November. The Shoyoen Gardens are the result of collaboration between Dubbo and its sister city in Japan, Minokamo. The gardens are beautiful with abundant gardenias and water lilies, and show the promise of more beauty to come as the pine trees establish.

The city of Minokamo also made a gift to Dubbo of three taiko, one of which is an odaiko. Taiko no Wa was fortunate to once again be able to include the taiko in its performance at the Anniversary celebrations. The group performed 5 pieces in total throughout the day including the debut performance of two pieces. The first, *Yataibayashi*, is a traditional festival piece popularised by TaikOz and the Japanese group Kodô. This was the first time the student group had performed a full ensemble version of the piece publicly.

The second piece was a completely new piece composed by member of Taiko no Wa, Rieko Tanaka. The piece is titled *Dan-Ten-Da*, which literally translates as Heaven/Sky-Hit-Bounce and features an original shinobue (Japanese flute) melody that was performed by Rieko, herself. In a break from previous performances we also invited children from the audience to join us during the performance of this piece. Two children joined us on stage for their first taste of taiko, using Dubbo City's own taiko.

Also for the first time, 4 members of Taiko no Wa, Rieko Tanaka, Liz Znidersic, Martin Lee and Lawrence Hyde, played the shinobue during the tea ceremonies held at the Jurian teahouse. The tea ceremonies are an obvious highlight for visitors to the gardens and the gentle sound of the shinobue added an extra layer to a wonderful experience.

It was a very hot dry day in Dubbo, but we were fortunate to have such generous hosts who had prepared a wonderful shaded stage for us, as well as provide us with a shaded area to rest between performances and plenty of cool water to keep us comfortable. We extend sincere thanks to Dubbo City Council and the Friends of Shoyoen, especially Bryan Smith and Kerry Palmer.

Thanks for your support

Taiko no Wa thanks TaikOz for everything that made these performance possible, from classes, use of the taiko, use of the dojo for rehearsals, to feedback on preparation, and at all times their encouragement and support.

The performances this year wouldn't have been as successful or enjoyable without the commitment and support of the members of Taiko no Wa, who have dedicated numerous hours to extra rehearsals and preparation for the performances as well as assistance with logistics. Performers in 2006 were: Steve Anderson, Terry Ashman, Cassandra Brennan, John Cleworth, Hugh Cowan, Nancy He, Lawrence Hyde, Robert Jeremy, Rajini Jonsson, Martin Lee, Tammie Lee, Debbie Lim, Baina Masquelier, Elizabeth McKenzie, Samantha Newton, Tim Reeves-Smith, Rieko Tanaka, Wendy Tsui, Louise Welsh, Kenji Wilkie, Nicolas Zampiero, Michaela Zappia, and Elizabeth Znidersic, and special guest Yukiko Nihei.

We are also very grateful to Meagan Johnson for being our official photographer at recent Taiko no Wa events and providing us with numerous mementos.



*Taiko no Wa at the Gold Coast
(back row L-R): Robert Jeremy, Martin Lee, Steve Anderson,
Lawrence Hyde, Terry Ashman, Elizabeth Znidersic
(front row L-R): Yukiko Nihei, Wendy Tsui, Samantha Newton,
Louise Welsh, Baina Masquelier*

HOW TO JOIN TAIKO NO WA

TaikOz no Wa is an exciting opportunity for students at the TaikOz Dojo to extend their training and focus on specific repertoire suitable for ensemble performances. From 2007, members of Taiko no Wa will have access to the Dojo on a weekly basis for a dedicated 2-hour rehearsal period. They will receive additional group tuition by a member of TaikOz at various points throughout the year, particularly as the group prepares for public performances. As opportunities arise throughout the year, Taiko no Wa will have the chance to perform in public at selected community events.

The cost of membership is \$60 per year (the first year's membership will run March – December 2007).

To join Taiko no Wa you must:

- be a current student at the Dojo (ie. enrolled in a term's classes)
- own and maintain your own correct set of bachi for each style performed
- purchase your own tabi

You can join Taiko no Wa at any stage of your taiko tuition – whether that's in your second term of enrolment or if you have been learning for a number of years. The group is open to all skill levels as long as you are currently studying at the Dojo.

Early in 2007 we will be holding an information night to explain in more details how the group is run, and to answer any queries you might have. Memberships will be taken from that night.

The date for that information night will be announced via email before the end of the year. In the meantime, if you have any queries, please contact the TaikOz office on (02) 9572 8595.

UPCOMING EVENTS

“TaikoZ STUDENT CONCERT” in SYDNEY

Students of TaikoZ and Taiko no Wa

December 17 at 4PM (Sun)

CENTENARY HALL, NEWINGTON COLLEGE

\$10 Adult / \$5 Children / \$20 Family (2 adults, 2 children)

Enquiries: 9572 8595 (TaikoZ Office)

“KAIDAN : A GHOST STORY” in SYDNEY (Presented by the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Festival)

TaikoZ, featuring RILEY LEE & company of 6 dancers directed by MERYL TANKARD

Preview: January 17 (Wed)

Season: January 18-27 (Thurs-Sat, no Sun performances – check web site for date & time details)

DRAMA THEATRE at the Sydney Opera House

02 9250 7777 (SOH Box Office)

www.sydneyfestival.org.au

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