

FAMILY activity guide

*Big Drum: Taiko in the United States*

STRIKING  
A BEAT



# making History



Taiko has a 2000-year history in Japan, but the taiko of today with its many different instruments and performers (called *kumi daiko* or group drumming) began after World War II.

## Taiko in the U.S.

In the 1960s, *kumi daiko* came to the United States. The first group in the U.S. was the San Francisco Taiko Dojo, founded by Grandmaster Seiichi Tanaka in 1968. In 1969, Reverend Masao Kodani and George Abe created Kinnara Taiko at Los Angeles's Senshin Buddhist Temple. Four years later San Jose Taiko was formed by Reverend Hiroshi Abiko, Dean Miyakusu, and Roy Hirabayashi.

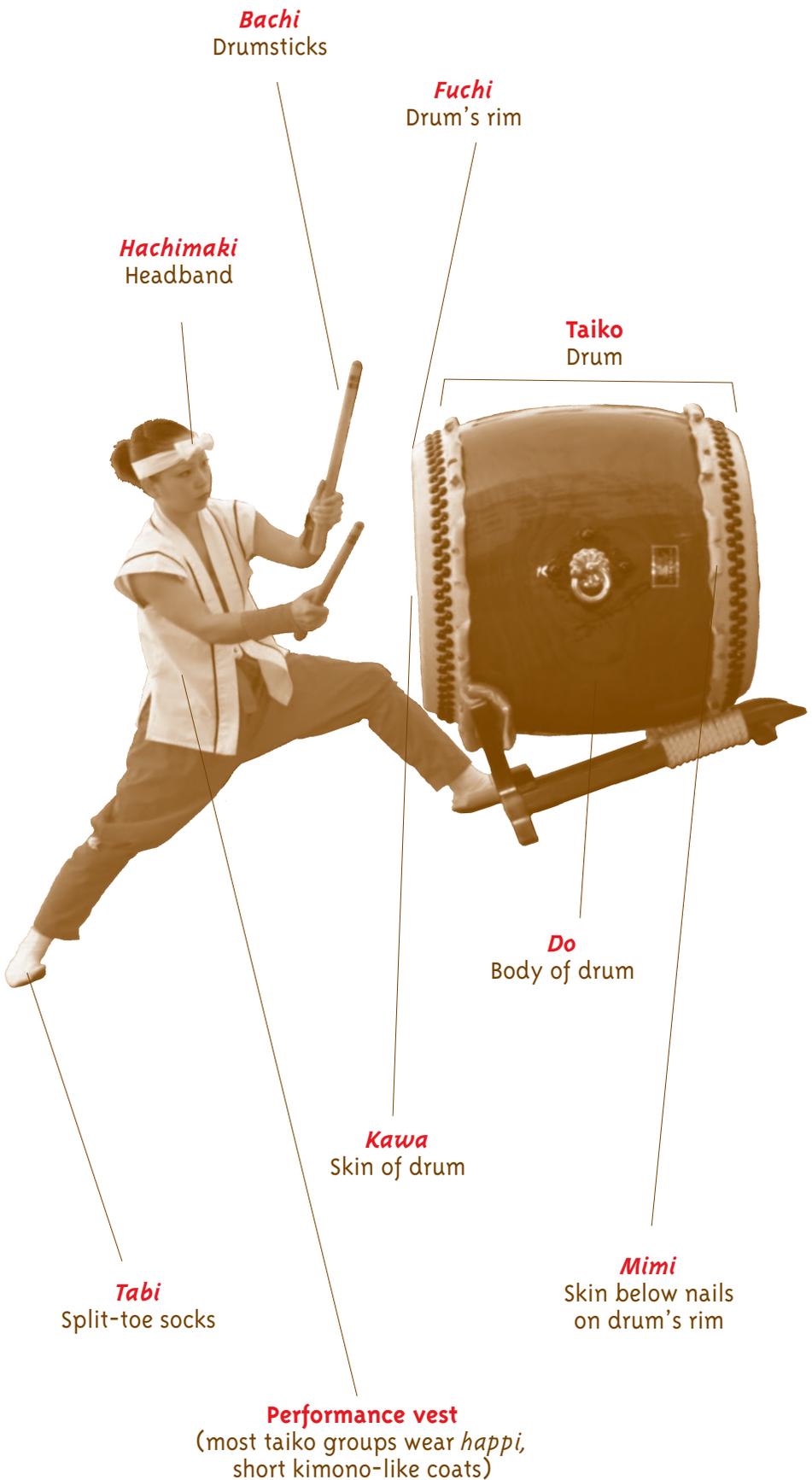
Originally, taiko was played at Japanese American community festivals, like *Obon* (Buddhist festival of lanterns). Today, taiko can be found in concert halls, college campuses, movie soundtracks, political rallies, and school auditoriums. With groups all across the United States, anyone—young or old, Japanese American or non-Japanese American—can play taiko.



### Did You Know:

Taiko (tie-koh) means “big drum” in Japanese. Taiko not only refers to a type of music but it also can refer to any of the large or small drums used to make taiko music.

# making music



# making sense of it

Taiko groups use many different types of drums and other percussion instruments. A *percussion instrument* is any musical instrument that is played by striking, shaking, rubbing, or scraping

In the exhibition, can you find and draw these percussion instruments used in taiko?



## ***Odaiko***

The largest drum in a set, it can be as large as 12 feet across.



## ***Chu-daiko***

Smaller than the odaiko, it is the medium-sized drum in the set. The drumhead is tacked to the drum.



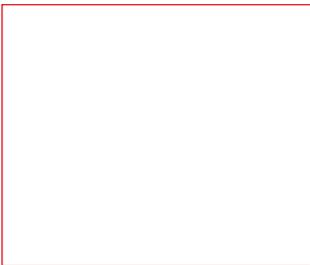
## ***Shime-daiko and Okedo***

Drums that are tuned by tightening the drumhead with rope or cords.



## ***Bin-sasara***

Rattle-like instrument made up of many wooden slats



## ***Atarigane***

Small gong struck with mallet

# MAKING A RHYTHM

## Do you have rhythm?

In order to play the drums, you need to have rhythm.

*Rhythm* is a regular pattern of sounds that repeats. Every day you hear rhythms all around you, like rain hitting the ground, telephones ringing, or water dripping. Even when you walk your footsteps create a rhythm.

*Tempo* is how fast or slow the pattern repeats itself. For example, the sound of rain falling will usually have a faster tempo, or speed, than the sound of water dripping.

## Slap, Snap, Tap, Clap

Grab a friend and get a rhythm going by slapping your knees, snapping your fingers, tapping your feet, or clapping your hands together in the following rhythm:

clap, clap, tap, tap

snap, snap, snap, snap

clap, SLAP, clap, SLAP

tap, tap, tap

{Repeat }

Keep repeating until you have the rhythm down. Then change the tempo by repeating the rhythm going faster or slower than before.

## Did You Know...

Taiko players learn songs by singing the rhythm first before they play it on the drums. Each sound made by a drum has a word that represents that sound.

For example, "don" (dohn) is one strong strike to the drumhead and "ka" (kah) is a strike to the drum's rim.

# making drums

Because buying drums from Japan can be expensive, taiko groups have learned how to make drums out of things they can find in the United States, like wine and nail barrels. To avoid wearing out their drums, many groups practice on drums made from tires and plastic buckets wrapped with clear packaging tape.

## Try This At Home: Make Your Own Drum

You can have your own drum to practice on at home. It's easy!

### You'll need:

- An empty coffee can without the lid or plastic bucket
- Clear packing tape
- 6-8 sheets of newspaper
- Duct tape
- Scissors

Take the coffee can or bucket and cover the entire opening with packing tape. Make sure that the tape is tight across the top for the best sound. Start by taping an **X** and a **+** shape across the top first before covering the rest of the top with tape.

To make drumsticks (*bachii*) for your drum, roll the newspaper tightly and tape the roll with duct tape including the ends.

Now you are ready to strike a beat on your new drum!

### Did You Know...

There are currently over 200 taiko groups performing in the United States and Canada. Is there one near you?

# making it happen

## Interested in learning more about taiko?

In the greater Los Angeles area, there are many groups that offer:  
**AC**=Adult Classes, **KC**=Kid Classes, **P**=Performances, **SP**=School Performances

### **Bombu Taiko**

lshimamoto@yahoo.com  
**P**

### **Chikara Daiko**

Amazin.g@sbcglobal.net  
**AC, KC, P, SP**

### **Daion Taiko:**

Orange County Buddhist Church  
daiontaiko@aol.com  
**P**

### **East LA Taiko/Maceo**

eastlataiko@aol.com  
www.eastlataiko.com  
**AC, P, SP**, private lessons

### **El Marino Rainbow Taiko**

taikola@earthlink.net  
**KC, P**

### **Hikari Taiko**

mjmhikari@aol.com  
www.hikaritaiko.org  
**AC, P, SP**, workshops

### **Hydaiko**

info@hydaiko.org  
www.hydaiko.org  
Networking

### **Japanese Festival Sounds**

mori@jacc.org, jmori@comcast.net  
**P, SP**

### **Jodaiko**

performances@jodaiko.com  
www.jodaiko.com  
**P**

### **Kazan Taiko: USC**

bmei@usc.edu, julielu@usc.edu  
**SP**

### **Kinnara Taiko**

1311 W. 37th St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90007  
Community group

### **Kishin Daiko**

www.geocities.com/kishindaiko  
**AC, KC, P, SP**

### **Kitsune Taiko**

bryanyamami@gmail.com  
www.kitsunetaiko.org  
**P**

### **Kodo Arts Sphere America (KASA)**

Kodoarts@earthlink.net  
www.kodarts.org  
Workshop tours

### **Kokoro Taiko-Kai**

www.kokorotaiko.org  
**AC, KC, P**

### **Koshin Taiko**

www.koshintaiko.org  
**AC, KC, P**

### **Los Angeles Matsuri Taiko**

taikola@earthlink.net  
**P**

### **Los Angeles Mugen Taiko**

taikola@earthlink.net  
**AC, KC, P**

### **Los Angeles Taiko Okida Gumi**

gotoes@aol.com  
**AC, KC, P**

### **Ōn Ensemble**

shoji@onensemble.org,  
kris@onensemble.org  
www.onensemble.org  
**P, SP**, small group private lessons

### **Satori Daiko**

stkurai@sbcglobal.net  
www.taikocenter.com  
**P**

### **Shin<sup>3</sup>**

Shin3nishi@yahoo.com  
**AC, KC, P**, Shishimai (Japanese folk dance)

### **Shinzen Daiko**

stkurai@sbcglobal.net  
www.taikocenter.com  
**P**

### **Taiko Center of Los Angeles**

stkurai@sbcglobal.com  
www.taikocenter.com  
**AC, KC, P, SP**, accredited course UC Riverside

### **TAIKOPROJECT**

bryanyamami@gmail.com  
www.taikoproject.com  
**AC, KC, P, SP**, special events

### **Togen Daiko**

togendaiko@hotmail.com  
**P**, beginner's class (age 8+)

### **Yoki Daiko**

yokidaiko@yahoo.com  
**AC, KC, P**

### **Zenshuji Zendeiko**

Vivian@zendeiko.org  
**KC, P**

The Japanese American National Museum is not affiliated with the taiko groups listed. This list is not all-inclusive and may not reflect all services offered. Please contact individual groups directly for more information.

# BIG DRUM TAIKO IN THE UNITED STATES

You are cordially invited to  
the Japanese American National Museum  
for these fun-and-drum family events:

Sunday, July 17  
Taiko For Families

Saturday, August 13  
Courtyard Kids Festival

Saturday, October 1  
Multicultural Workshop for Kids

Saturday, November 19  
Folk Dances for Families

Saturday, December 3  
Taiko Family Jam

Please check Calendar of Events for more details.

The family activity guide features photographs of Zenshuji Zendeko, a youth taiko group based in Los Angeles's Zenshuji Soto Mission. The photographs are by Richard Murakami and courtesy of Zenshuji Zendeko.

The *Big Drum: Taiko in the United States* exhibition was made possible through the support of Hisako Nerio Imamura & Akira Imamura, Sumi Nerio Leonard & Robert J. Leonard, National Endowment for the Arts, City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, The Boeing Company, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southern California, Mitsubishi International Corporation Foundation, Prudential Financial, Inc., Hal and Barbara Keimi, Asian Cultural Affairs Council, The James Irvine Foundation, and REMO, Inc.



This family activity guide is generously supported by a grant from  
the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southern California.