Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of Kodo, the world’s most renowned Japanese taiko drumming ensemble. It is our hope that as your students experience the primal energy, athleticism, and heart pounding rhythms of Kodo that they gain a deeper understanding not only of Japanese culture but of our shared connection as members of the world. It is that sentiment, more than anything, that has allowed Kodo to capture hearts and imaginations of audiences around the world.

We thank you for sharing this special experience with your students and hope that this study guide helps you connect the performance to your in-classroom curriculum in ways that you find valuable. In the following pages, you will find contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a variety of discussion questions and activities. Some pages are appropriate to reproduce for your students; others are designed more specifically with you, their teacher, in mind. As such, we hope that you are able to “pick and choose” material and ideas from the study guide to meet your class’s unique needs.

See you at the theater,

Civic Center Education Team

Support for Civic Center education programs and the Applause Series is provided by:


This study guide was compiled and written by Karoline Myers; edited by Michelle McDonald. Partially adapted from resources by Cal Performances, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, and San Jose Taiko.
The Civic Center of Greater Des Moines is a cultural landmark of central Iowa and is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities. The Civic Center has achieved a national reputation for excellence as a performing arts center and belongs to several national organizations, including The Broadway League, the Independent Presenters Network, International Performing Arts for Youth, and Theater for Young Audiences/USA.

Five performing arts series currently comprise the season— the Willis Broadway Series, Prairie Meadows Temple Theater Series, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield Family Series, the Dance Series, and the Applause Series. The Civic Center is also the performance home for the Des Moines Symphony and Stage West.

The Civic Center is a private, nonprofit organization and is an important part of central Iowa’s cultural community. Through its education programs, the Civic Center strives to engage patrons in arts experiences that extend beyond the stage. Master classes bring professional and local artists together to share their art form and craft, while pre-performance lectures and post-performance Q&A sessions with company members offer ticket holders the opportunity to explore each show as a living, evolving piece of art.

Through the Applause Series— curriculum-connected performances for school audiences— students are encouraged to discover the rich, diverse world of performing arts. During the 2012-2013 season, the Civic Center will welcome more than 45,000 students and educators to 14 professional productions for young audiences.

Want an inside look? Request a tour.

Group tours can be arranged for performance and non-performance dates for groups grades 3 and above.

Call 515-246-2355 or visit CivicCenter.org/education to check on availability or book your visit.
GOING TO THE THEATER . . .

YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

Attending a live performance is a unique and exciting opportunity. Unlike the passive experience of watching a movie, audience members play an important role in every live performance. As they act, sing, dance, or play instruments, the performers on stage are very aware of the audience’s mood and level of engagement. Each performance calls for a different response from audience members. Lively bands, musicians, and dancers may desire the audience to focus silently on the stage and applaud only during natural breaks in the performance. Audience members can often take cues from performers on how to respond to the performance appropriately. For example, performers will often pause or bow for applause at a specific time.

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

- What kind of live performance is this (a play, a dance, a concert, etc.)?
- What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
- What is the mood of the performers? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
- Are the performers encouraging the audience to clap to the music or move to the beat?
- Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

THEATER ETIQUETTE

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the Civic Center:

- Leave all food, drinks, and chewing gum at school or on the bus.
- Cameras, recording devices, and personal listening devices are not permitted in the theater.
- Turn off and put away all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices before the performance begins.
- Do not text during the performance.
- Respect the theater. Remember to keep your feet off of the seats and avoid bouncing up and down.
- When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
- **Talk before and after the performance only.** Remember, the theater is designed to amplify sound. Other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
- Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end. If you must leave the theater during the show, make sure the first set of doors closes before you open the second — this will keep unwanted light from spilling into the theater.
- Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage — they will let you know what is appropriate.
- Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!

A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE

Seeing a live performance is a very special experience. Although it is not required, many people enjoy dressing up when they attend the theater.
Thank you for choosing the Applause Series at the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines. Below are tips for organizing a safe and successful field trip to the Civic Center.

ORGANIZING YOUR FIELD TRIP
* Please include all students, teachers, and chaperones in your ticket request.
* After you submit your ticket request, you will receive a confirmation e-mail within five business days. Your invoice will be attached to the confirmation e-mail.
* Payment policies and options are located at the top of the invoice. Payment (or a purchase order) for your reservation is due four weeks prior to the date of the performance.
* The Civic Center reserves the right to cancel unpaid reservations after the payment due date.
* Tickets are not printed for Applause Series shows. Your invoice will serve as the reservation confirmation for your group order.
* Schedule buses to arrive in downtown Des Moines at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This will allow time to park, walk to the Civic Center, and be seated in the theater.
* Performances are approximately 60 minutes unless otherwise noted on the website and printed materials.
* All school groups with reservations to the show will receive an e-mail notification when the study guide is posted. Please note that study guides are only printed and mailed upon request.

ARRIVAL TO THE CIVIC CENTER
* When arriving at the Civic Center, please have an adult lead your group for identification and check-in purposes. You may enter the building though the East or West lobbies; a Civic Center staff member may be stationed outside the building to direct you.
* Civic Center staff will usher groups into the building as quickly as possible. Once inside, you will be directed to the check-in area.
* Applause seating is not ticketed. Ushers will escort groups to their seats; various seating factors including group size, grade levels, arrival time, and special needs seating requests may be used to assign a group’s specific location in the hall.
* We request that an adult lead the group into the theater and other adults position themselves throughout the group; we request this arrangement for supervision purposes, especially in the event that a group must be seated in multiple rows.
* Please allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging seat locations and taking groups to the restroom.
* As a reminder, children under the age of three are not permitted in the theater for Applause performances.

DIRECTIONS AND PARKING
* Directions: From I-235, take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3rd Street and 2nd Avenue. Turn onto 3rd Street and head south.
* Police officers are stationed at the corner of 3rd and Locust Streets and will direct buses to parking areas with hooded meters near the Civic Center. Groups traveling in personal vehicles are responsible for locating their own parking in ramps or metered (non-hooded) spots downtown.
* Buses will remain parked for the duration of the show. At the conclusion, bus drivers must be available to move their bus if necessary, even if their students are staying at the Civic Center to eat lunch or take a tour.
* Buses are not generally permitted to drop off or pick up students near the Civic Center. If a bus must return to school during the performance, prior arrangements must be made with the Civic Center Education staff.

IN THE THEATER
* In case of a medical emergency, please notify the nearest usher. A medical assistant is on duty for all Main Hall performances.
* We ask that adults handle any disruptive behavior in their groups. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.
* Following the performance groups may exit the theater and proceed to the bus(es).
* If an item is lost at the Civic Center, please see an usher or contact us after the performance at 515.246.2355.

QUESTIONS?
Please contact the Education department at 515.246.2355 or education@civiccenter.org. Thank you!
**VOCABULARY**

**bachi:** (bah-chee) the sticks used to play taiko drums. Large drums are played with large bachi, and small drums are played with small bachi. They are often made from a dense wood such as oak.

**emporer:** the supreme ruler of an empire. For much of Japan’s history, it was ruled by emperors. Today it is the only country in the world that still has an emperor, although today the Japan’s emperor is mostly a figurehead.

**Japan:** string of islands east of Asia extending 1,300 miles between the Sea of Japan and the western Pacific Ocean. More than 127 million people currently live in Japan.

**kanji:** a system of Japanese writing that uses Chinese-based pictorial characters. The Kanji symbols for Kodo mean “child” and “drum”.

**myth:** a traditional or ancient story which was told to answer serious questions about how important things began or occurred. Myths often feature supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes. The myth ‘Amateresu and the Cave’ explains how taiko was created.

**o-daiko:** (oh-dye-koh) the largest of the taiko drums. It means “big fat drum.” O-daiko can reach huge proportions. It is made out of a hollowed tree trunk, over which a cow hide is stretched and tacked.

**rhythm:** the recurrence or pattern of contrasting sounds.

Rhythm exists all around us.

**taiko:** in Japanese, it literally means “great drum.” Outside of Japan, the word is often used to refer to various types of Japanese drums and to the ensemble of taiko drummers (which is also referred to more specifically as “kumidaiko”).

**solo:** a performance by just one performer. Kodo often features solos.

**unison:** the same movement or series of movements performed at the same time by more than one performer. Much of Kodo’s performance features drumming and movement that is done in unison.

**Map of Japan.** Image courtesy of worldatlas.com.
ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Kodo is the world’s master taiko drumming ensemble. In Japan, "Kodo" means either heartbeat or "children of the drum". Read on to learn more about what you will experience at their performance.

Witnessing Kodo perform inspires primal feelings. The coursing rhythms can give you an intense feeling of total connection to the universe.

In addition to taiko drumming, you will also experience other traditional Japanese musical instruments such as flutes and stringed instruments. The performance will also include traditional dance and singing.

PHYSICAL STRENGTH

Building physical endurance is an important part of Kodo’s training. As you experience the performance, you will see how much energy and strength is needed for the performers to not only play the drums, but also how much is needed to load and unload their instruments — including the huge o-daiko drum that takes eight people to lift and set in place.

REPERTOIRE

The pieces that Kodo performs change concert to concert. Concerts typically include a mix of pieces based on traditional rhythms of Japan as well as contemporary pieces that fuse inspiration from other musical styles, including jazz, rock and world music from other cultures.

MESSAGE

Kodo recognizes that in this time of rapid change and growth worldwide, it is more important than ever that diverse cultures learn to recognize and accept each other.

Since ancient times the taiko has been a symbol of community. By continuing to bring the sound of the Japanese drums to the ears of the world in an experience that transcends the barriers of language and custom, Kodo hopes to remind us of our connections to that larger community — the world.

INSTRUMENTS AND STYLE

Kodo performers are extremely versatile. You will see them play a wide variety of drums — some which are massive in size and some that are very delicate and small. The largest drum is the o-daiko which weighs more than 800 pounds.

Kodo performs in unison, and their physical technique is just as much a part of the performance as the rhythms they play. Wielding their sticks like expert swordsmen, Kodo’s martial arts-style choreography conjures thrilling images of both ancient and modern Japan.
ABOUT KODO

Kodo’s mission is to explore the limitless possibilities of the Japanese drum. This world-renowned group strives to both preserve and re-interpret traditional Japanese performing arts by learning, creating and sharing their music with the world.

HISTORY
Kodo was formed in 1981 by men who moved to Sado Island in the Sea of Japan ten years earlier to devote themselves to the study of the taiko, the traditional Japanese drum. They dreamed of creating a school for the traditional Japanese performing arts and crafts and to share the sound of Japanese taiko with the world.

As a rich center for cultural arts since the 17th century and a place of immense beauty due to its mountain and seaside scenery, Sado Island proved the perfect place for Kodo’s dream to thrive. Its members drew deep inspiration from their surroundings and discovered a nurturing environment to focus on developing their craft.

Since then, Kodo has come to be regarded as the world’s foremost taiko ensemble. The ensemble has given more than 3,000 concerts across five continents and tours up to eight months a year.

NAME MEANING
The name Kodo comes from two Japanese characters for “child” and “play,” illustrating Kodo’s desire to play with the “heart of a child.” Kodo also means “heartbeat” — the most primal of all rhythms.

KODO APPRENTICE CENTER
Considered the principal source of taiko experience, Kodo has gone on to establish an apprentice program for people who want to learn taiko and associated artistic and cultural disciplines. Open to all qualified applicants, it offers intensive training in diverse Japanese performing arts, including the many related disciplines that inspired them. These include rice agriculture, tea ceremony, cooking and cuisine, and history and calligraphy. Select graduates may go on to become junior performing members of the company.

TOURING AND COLLABORATIONS
Kodo places great emphasis on cultural exchange through collaborative activities, including performances, festivals, and workshops. While the company preserves traditional Japanese performing arts, its touring and research trips around the world have influenced its own work. Collaborations with artists, such as influential jazz drummers, Indian tabla drummers, rock artists, and Brazilian percussionists have influenced their evolving style.
HISTORY OF TAIKO

ANCIENT HISTORY
It is difficult to know when taiko began exactly, but scholars believe that taiko drums evolved from Chinese and Korean instruments introduced to Japan during the 4th to 9th centuries. Around this time, Buddhism was also introduced to Japan. Thus taiko became associated with Buddhism and was first used in temples and shrines for religious ceremonies. Priests used taiko to chase evil spirits and to protect rice fields from insects. Taiko was considered to be the voice of Buddha with the ability to spread wisdom, compassion, truth and beauty through its rhythms.

After 900 A.D., Japanese culture became almost entirely closed to the outside world as the imperial court focused on Japan’s own flourishing arts and literature. Since that time, Japanese craftspeople and performers have been the only ones to shape the taiko drum’s physical form and techniques. As such, today taiko is considered to be a purely Japanese art form.

USES
Taiko has been associated with all major aspects of life in Japan, including the changing of the seasons and the cycles of nature. Japanese people from all classes used taiko in their daily lives for practical and spiritual purposes.

• One of the earliest uses of the taiko was to determine the boundaries of a village. A village was considered to be as large as the booming sound of the drum would carry.

• The taiko was used in battle to give courage to samurai warriors and to intimidate the enemy. There is some evidence that armies used taiko to communicate to each other across the battlefield as well.

• Farmers played the taiko believing that its thunder-like sound would bring rain for their crops. At festivals, the drum was played to ward off sickness and give thanks for prosperity.

• Taiko was used in the Imperial Court by the rich and powerful.

MODERN HISTORY
Modern day taiko came about after World War II when Japan’s borders were re-opened to the West. Modern taiko techniques are largely attributed to a jazz drummer named Daihachi Oguchi who changed the rhythms of the traditional drum song and added taiko drums. He and his fellow players also contributed the sense of speed, fluid movement, and choreography found in the modern taiko technique.
TAIKO’S ORIGIN MYTH: ‘AMETERASU AND THE CAVE’

According to Japanese myth, the taiko was created when the sun goddess hid herself in a cave causing the world to go dark. Read the myth of ‘Ameterasu and the Cave’ to discover the legend behind taiko’s origin.

The legend of taiko’s creation begins with Amaterasu, who was the sun goddess of Japan. She was responsible for spreading light and warmth to the people and land. Her brother, Susano-O, was the storm god. His short temper and fondness for picking fights often disturbed the calm and quiet country.

One day, Susano-O decided to visit his sister up in the sky so that he could bask in her light and radiance in order to gain strength and courage for his journey to the underworld. In his hurry to see his sister, Susano-O traveled through the sky with crackling thunder, shaking the mountains and frightening all the living things below.

Amaterasu was also frightened by the horrible sounds Susano-O made as he traveled through the sky. She was afraid that he was coming to fight her. To prepare for their meeting, she armed herself with her bow and quiver. However, when Susano-O arrived, she learned that he had come to visit her, not to fight her. She put aside her bow and arrows and welcomed him into her presence.

It was not long, however, until Susano-O began to cause trouble. As he lounged in his sister’s kingdom, he began to feel underappreciated and decided to cause trouble to regain some attention. When he and Amaterasu quarreled, he released the wind and rain he held in his arms and sent his horses to destroy Amaterasu’s rice fields.

Amaterasu tried to be patient with her brother’s behaviors. She made excuses for his actions, saying that he couldn’t help his troublesome nature. Her patience and pity, however, only infuriated Susano-O further and he engaged in even worse behavior to try to make her lose her cool.

One day, he frightened Amaterasu to such an extent that she ran away from her kingdom. She hid herself in a cave and blocked the entrance with a huge boulder. When she left, the world became dark and cold and the land of Japan began to die away. Susano-O, feeling that he had won the fight, finally departed on his journey to the underworld.

As the dark days passed without Amaterasu, the other gods grew very worried. One day, they gathered outside Amaterasu’s cave and formed a plan to draw her out. They planned to catch her, make her stand up to her brother, and force her to return to her kingdom to spread her light and warmth back across Japan.

The gods decorated the trees outside the cave with mirrors and bright banners. They began to sing songs and to dance, but nothing seemed to work. Ameterasu stayed inside the cave. Then, Uzume, the goddess of mirth, stepped forward with an idea all of her own. She climbed onto a hollow log and began to dance a joyous dance like no one had ever seen. She stomped her feet, beating out wild and inviting rhythms. Everyone around her began to fill with joy as they listened to the new sounds coming from the hollow log.

Inside the cave, Amaterasu grew curious. When she peeked outside the cave to see what was making the sounds, she saw her reflection in the mirrors hanging from the trees. As her ears filled with the sounds of the drumming, her eyes were filled with a great pure light. Her fear of her brother disappeared, and she was filled with strength and joy. She was so happy the gods did not have to catch her. As soon as she saw her reflection in the mirror, Ameterasu recognized her fear and was no longer afraid to face her problems. She willingly returned to her kingdom, once more spreading joy and light across the land of Japan.

Since that time, this drum—the taiko—has been used to spread joy and courage to the lands of Japan.

Myth [mith] noun: a traditional or legendary story, usually about a hero or event, that often explains a practice, rite or phenomenon of nature.
THE INSTRUMENTS

Taiko drums are beautifully crafted, hand-made instruments. Like many other artistic and cultural traditions, the art of building taiko is carefully passed down from generation to generation. While there are many types and variations of taiko, these instruments are the most frequently seen at taiko performances.

NAGADOU-DAIKO
The nagado-daiko or long-bodied taiko is the most popular drum used in the modern kumi-daiko style of playing. It is common at festivals and in temples and shrines (where it is called miya-daiko.) Its sound is deep and reverberant. This drum can be placed on various stands for different styles of playing.

O-DAIKO
The largest drum is the O-daiko (oh-dye-koh). It means “big fat drum.” O-daiko can reach huge proportions. It is made out of a hollowed tree trunk, over which a cow hide is stretched and tacked. The larger the drum body, the deeper the sound. O-daiko are typically placed on a stand and played horizontally — often by two people at the same time. Usually, one player beats out a basic rhythm while the other solos. Mammoth o-daiko can take the builder years to complete.

O-KEDO
Believed to be the oldest taiko style drum, the body of the o-kedo (oh-keh-doh) is made from staves or planks rather than a solid piece of wood. It is easier to carry because the skin is roped onto the drum rather than tacked. These drums are about six feet long and three feet in diameter. They are usually raised up on a high stand and played horizontally.

Short bodied o-kedo, which are light enough to be carried and played while dancing, are increasingly popular. These may be struck with slats of bamboo to produce a sharp, slapping sound.

SHIME-DAIKO
The shime-daiko (shee-me-dye-koh) are similar to the o-kedo in the fact that the skins are attached with rope rather than tacked. Shime-daiko, however, are much smaller with a high, sharp sound. In taiko groups, the shime-daiko is often used to keep the basic rhythm and establish time. It can also be used as a versatile solo instrument as well. It has a one piece body carved out of hardwood, and the shell is often beautifully lacquered and decorated.

UCHIWA
This hand-held drum is shaped like a paddle or fan. In fact, uchiwa (oo-chee-way) means fan. Often seen in parades and festivals, temple monks originally used them to keep time while they chanted.

BACHI
Bachi (bah-chee) are sticks used to play the drums. Large drums are played with large bachi, and small drums are played with small bachi. These sticks are often made from a dense wood such as oak.

OTHER INSTRUMENTS
In addition to a wide variety of taiko drums, Kodo will also incorporate other traditional Japanese musical instruments into their performance. These include the fuy and shamisen.

FUE
Fue refers to flutes native to Japan. They come in many varieties, but are generally high pitched and made of bamboo.

SHAMISEN
The shamisen is a three-stringed, Japanese musical instrument that is played by plucking. It has a hollow body that is taut on the front and back with skin.
**TAIKO COSTUME ELEMENTS**

During the performance, Kodo will wear traditional taiko costumes. Learn about the different costume elements prior to the performance.

**HAPPI or HANTEN**
A happi is colorful jacket that is usually worn with an obi (belt). There is often a symbol called a mon on the back. The mon is a family crest possessed by every Japanese family. In taiko ensembles, the mon contains the name and logo of the group.

Kodo’s happi are natural indigo-dyed cotton as worn traditionally by Japanese workmen. Workmen’s clothing was adapted by Kodo because it was traditionally the workers who played the drums at festivals in their everyday work clothes.

**TABI**
Tabi are cotton socks with a separate space for the big toe. Tabi are worn in martial arts and traditional dances. The tabi worn by taiko players have rubber soles on the bottom so that players don’t slip when they play.

**MOMOHIKI**
Momhiki are pants that resemble long underwear or tights and tie around the waist.

**HACHIMAKI**
The hachimaki is a headband made from a strip of cloth that is usually brightly colored. It is said that the hachimaki originated from the warriors’ practice of securing their helmets to their heads with cloth strips. Hachimaki are tied around the forehead before engaging in strenuous activities. It is a symbol of perseverance and strength.

**FUNDOSHI**
The fundoshi is a cloth wrapped around the legs and waist that is worn when playing the O-daiko or O-kedo. The fundoshi helps a male drummer concentrate his energy in his abdominal core.

**OBI**
The obi is a belt or sash that holds a happi. It is made of thick, stiff fabric three to four inches wide and about three to five feet long. It is tightly wrapped twice around the body and tied in a decorative bow.

The characters on the lapels of the happi read “Kodo”, which means “heartbeat” and is written with the kanji (characters) that mean “drum” and “child”.

**Civic Center of Greater Des Moines**
Kodo Curriculum Guide
ABOUT JAPAN, pg. 1

GEography
Japan is an archipelago, or string of islands, on the eastern edge of Asia. There are four main islands: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. There are also nearly 4,000 smaller islands! Japan’s nearest mainland neighbors are the Siberian region or Russia in the north and Korea and China farther south.

Almost four-fifths of Japan is covered with mountains. The Japanese Alps run down the center of the largest island, Honshu. The highest peak is Mount Fuji, a cone-shaped volcano considered sacred by many Japanese.

Japan can be a dangerous place. Three tectonic plates that form the Earth’s crust meet near Japan and often move against each other, causing earthquakes. More than a thousand earthquakes hit Japan every year. Japan also has about 200 volcanoes, 60 of which are active.

History
Japan is known as the “Land of the Rising Sun,” an association symbolized by its flag. Its known history dates back thousands of years.

More than 127 million people live in Japan, which is comprised of metropolitan cities and rural villages. Most of Japan’s population lives in the coastal cities.

In 660 B.C., Japan’s first emperor came to power. Emperors controlled Japan until the 12th century A.D. while military rulers called shoguns took control and ruled by might.

The shoguns forced out all foreigners in the 1600s and Japanese culture developed in isolation for generations. In the 1860s, the shoguns lost political control of Japan and the Emperor regained power. This was a time of great change and modernization for Japan.

During World War I (1914-1917), Japan fought on the side of the United States. In World War II, however, (1941-1945), Japan’s military leaders fought against the allied forces. This included an attack on U.S. naval forces at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. In 1945, the United States counterattacked by dropping atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, forcing the collapse of the Japanese empire and the surrender of Japan.

(Cont. pg. 14)
In 1947, Japan, under the direction of the United States, adopted a new constitution, renounced war, granted basic human rights, and declared itself a democracy.

Today, the United States has a good relationship with Japan and its government, which consists of a Prime Minister and legislative bodies. Japan is also the only country in the world with a reigning emperor, although he serves mostly as a figurehead.

**PEOPLE AND CULTURE**
The Japanese are famous for their willingness to work very hard. Children are taught to show respect for others, especially parents and bosses. They learn to do what is best for their family or company and to worry less about their own needs.

Japanese food is very different from food in Western countries. There is lots of rice, fish, and vegetables, but little meat. With little fat or dairy, this diet is very healthy, which helps Japanese people live, on average, longer than any other people in the world.

Written Japanese language, or **kanji**, is closely related to written Chinese. It utilizes pictorial symbols to depict the meaning of words. The Japanese also use two phonetic alphabets, **hiranga** and **katakana**, which incorporate the characters, and a third alphabet, called **romaji**, which uses Roman letters.

Festivals or **matsuri** mark all aspects of Japanese life, from observing the seasons, to celebrating children to remembering ancestors. Hundreds of matsuri take place all over Japan every year. Taiko drums and drummers are usually central to these events.

**ECONOMY**
World War II devastated Japan's economy, but the Japanese people's hard work and clever innovation turned the economy around. Today, it is the second largest economy in the world. Japan's high-tech industry makes some of the most popular electronic products in the world.

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**OTHER FACTS**

**Capital City:** Tokyo  
**Population:** 127,463,611  
**Language:** Japanese  
**Currency:** Japanese yen

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A traditional Japanese pagoda.  
Floats in a matsuri festival.
PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES, pg. 1

1) RHYTHM EXPLORATION

**Goal:** To understand the concept of rhythm and to hear the rhythm that exists around us.

**Explanation:** Rhythm and sounds are a part of life in every culture. Taiko drummers use a variety of drums and movements to create new rhythms. Students will create their own rhythms with their bodies and other instruments they find in the classroom.

**Activity:**
1. Create a simple clapping rhythm for the class to echo. As they master each rhythm, make a new complex rhythm for students to repeat. You can expand from just clapping to stomping your feet, snapping your fingers, or gently slapping the knee or chest.
2. See if you can make a class song using these different rhythms. Divide the class into groups and have each group come up with their own rhythm. Have them perform them in varying orders or all together.
3. Next, have your students look around the classroom for ordinary objects that can be used to create new sounds. For example, scrunching or shaking a trashbag, opening and closing of a pencil box or backpack, tapping a pen on the desktop, etc.
4. Have students create a short rhythm that they would like to make with their chosen “instrument” and write out a notation that they can read corresponding to their rhythm.*
5. Arrange these notations in different orders to create a class musical piece.
6. See discussion at right for follow up questions on this activity.

*You may want to collaborate with your school’s music specialist for this part of the activity.

**Follow-up Questions:**
1. What is rhythm?
2. Where can you find rhythm? Do you have your own rhythm?
3. Can you see rhythms? What do they look like?
4. How can you recreate the sounds you hear in everyday life (rain falling, walking over a bridge, brushing your teeth) with percussion instruments? How do these sounds differ?

2) WRITING MYTHS

**Goal:** To understand how myths were used to explain how important things began or occurred.

**Explanation:** The art form of taiko is so central to Japanese culture that a myth was developed to explain its creation. Students will study the myth ‘Amaterasu and the Cave’ and then write explanatory myths of their own.

**Activity:**
1. Ask students to brainstorm a list of myths and legends that they are familiar with, thinking about the elements that the stories have in common.
2. Have students read the ‘Legend of Amaterasu’ (page 10). Use the following questions to guide a discussion of the myth:
   ◊ Is the story of the origins of taiko similar to any other myths or stories you know? Which ones? How are they alike?
   ◊ Many myths are about the creation of natural phenomena, such as the creation of the sun or the rain. What does it tell you about the place of taiko in Japanese culture that there is a myth about taiko’s origins?
3. Invite students to generate a list of questions that people may have had in ancient times (Why are the stars scattered across the sky? Why do dogs have tails? How was the wheel invented?) Students will use one of these questions as the starting point to write their own myth.
4. Students should choose a setting for their myth and write about two or more characters that are facing some sort of problem or conflict. The resolution of the conflict should answer the question the student chose to write about. Remind them that the resolution can be planned by one of the characters or the result of an accident.
5. Once they have revised, proofread, and finalized their myths, invite students to share their stories with one another. Encourage them to discuss how the style of the ‘Amaterasu and the Cave’ or other myths influenced their composition.

**Follow-up Questions:**
1. What is a myth? Why do you think myths are created? Are there certain cultures whose myths you are more familiar with than others?
2. What does the ‘Amaterasu and the Cave’ suggest about the ways taiko was used in Japanese culture? Compare your ideas with what you know from the ‘History of Taiko’ found on page 9 of this guide.

Activity adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts’ San Jose Taiko study guide materials.
3) JAPANESE MON

**Goal:** To understand the Japanese mon as a symbol for family.

**Explanation:** Every culture has symbols that communicate meaning to its members. In Japan, family crests known as mon are symbols which have been used for centuries for identification purposes and to show family pride. Using Japanese design elements, students will create a mon representing their family.

**Activity:**
1. Show students a number of well-known symbols and logos and have them identify the meaning of the images (ex. Yellow triangle = Yield, Golden Arches = McDonald’s). Ask them to provide other examples of well-known logos and symbols. What do they think of when they see these symbols?
2. Explain to students that families once used images, or crests, to represent themselves. In Japan, these family crests were called ‘mon’ and were often worn on clothing. For more information about mon, see right.
3. Ask students to create a list of characteristics of their family, considering their family’s name, interests, business, or other characteristics. They will use this list as a starting point for designing a symbol to represent their family.
4. Encourage students to sketch several design ideas. Remind students that Japanese design uses space very deliberately and that every line and element of their symbol should have meaning.
5. Provide students with a paper circle (at least 8” in diameter) on which to execute their final design using marker, pen, colored pencils, or paint.
6. Encourage students to write a paragraph or two explaining the elements of their design to be displayed next to their completed mon.

**Follow-up Questions:**
1. What makes an image, such as a symbol or logo, instantly recognizable?
2. Why do you think families in Japan used family crests?
3. Was it difficult come up with a symbol to represent your family? What would strangers be able to learn about your family from your symbol? What things about your family would they not be able to discern just from your symbol?
4. What symbols do you think might be incorporated into Kodo’s costumes?

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**ABOUT MON**

The tradition of the Japanese family crest, known as the mon, dates back to the 11th century. The ruling families of the Imperial Court designed family symbols to put on their formal clothing. The crests they designed often incorporated flowers and birds as a way to represent the elegance of court life.

When the samurai class took over the Japanese government in the 12th century, they began to use similar emblems on their banners, flags, and weapons. They chose designs such as arrows, dragons, and bats. There were many wars during this period, and the warriors used their family emblems to identify their camps and positions on the battlefield.

By the 17th century, family crests were adopted by the common people as well. The symbols they chose included familiar objects such as rabbits, mountains, and tools. Popular designs were often symmetrical and enclosed in a circle.

The mon design tells something about the Japanese economic use of space. Because Japan is a small island where many people have learned to live together without wasting space, it makes sense that Japanese design is very simple. Many mon are created to fit inside a small circular space, and every shape and line has a purpose.
POST-SHOW DISCUSSION AND ASSESSMENT

DISCUSSION

1. Which piece was your favorite and why?

2. Do you remember any of the rhythms that were played during the show? Can you recreate them?

3. Do you remember the different instruments used? How did each instrument sound? How did their unique sounds contribute to the overall feeling of the piece?

4. In the myth of taiko’s creation, Amaterasu was filled with strength and courage when she first heard the sound of taiko. How did you feel when you listened to the taiko performance? Did certain pieces make you feel different than others did? What does this tell you about the power of music?

5. What did you notice about the costumes worn by the performers? Were you able to identify the happi, hachimaki, obi, and tabi? Did you see a mon on any of the costume pieces?

6. Why do you think wearing traditional Japanese costumes is important to the performers? What did the costumes add to the performance?

7. Taiko is a common instrument for the people of Japan and is used in many everyday settings. Can you think of any instruments or forms of music that have a similar presence in mainstream U.S. culture? What other cultures do you know of that have a distinguishing style of music or instruments? What do these instruments or music tell us about the cultures they originate from?

8. Kodo used instruments besides the taiko drums in their performance, such as a bamboo flute. Thinking about the sounds of one of the other instruments used in the performance, can you come up with a myth explaining its creation?

9. Why do you think Kodo calls its international tour the “One Earth Tour”? What do they mean by this? What do they hope to achieve by sharing taiko with the world?

10. What does the name Kodo mean? How did you see or feel this idea in action during their performance?

1) WRITE A REVIEW

Goal: To reflect on the performance experience

Explanation: In this activity, students will reflect on the performance by writing their own review.

Activity:
1. Ask students to imagine that they are a critic for the school newspaper. They are going to write a review of the performance to inform others about what they experienced.
2. In the review they should describe with detail: what they saw; what they heard; how the performance made them feel; what the performance reminded them of; and what their favorite part was and why.
3. Remind students that they must paint a picture of the experience with their words so that others who did not see the performance can imagine it.

Follow-up Questions:
1. What did you include in your review? Why was it important to include?

2) WRITE A LETTER

Goal: To reflect on the performance experience

Explanation: In this activity, students will write a letter to the performers or to Civic Center education donors about their experience.

Activity
1. Invite students to write a letter to the Kodo performers or to the Civic Center’s education donors.
2. In their letters they should share:
   ◊ What their favorite part of the show was and why;
   ◊ How they felt during the performance;
   ◊ Any additional thoughts they would like to share.

Mail to:
Civic Center of Greater Des Moines
Attn: Education Department
221 Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

Follow-up Questions:
1. What did you include in your letter? Why did you want to share that particular idea?
3) DRUMS AND CULTURE

**Goal:** To understand music’s unique role in a culture

**Explanation:** In this post-show assessment activity, students will research and present their findings on another culture’s music traditions.

**Activity:**
1. Ask students to research (in groups or alone) the history, construction, and purpose of the drum or other percussion instruments from around the world. For example: the tabor of the middle east, the steel drums or pans of the Caribbean, gourd rattles, iron bells, pressure drums, bata drums or the atumpan.
2. Use the following questions as a guide:
   - In what cultures does the drum exist?
   - How does the drum differ between cultures?
   - Is it used for the same or different purposes?
   - With what materials is it made?
   - How does the instrument work?
   - How does the size of the instrument make a difference in its sound?
   - Is the drum tied to any cultural history or religions?
   - What does your research tell you about the culture from which your instrument originated?
   - Is it featured in any stories or myths?
3. Ask students to present their research to the class. If possible, allow students to share audio clips of the instrument being played, either solo or as part of an ensemble. Conduct a discussion about the significance of music in culture.

**Follow-up Questions:**
1. How do different forms of music enhance understanding of a culture or historical tradition?
2. What can we learn about a culture through its music? How does it change our perception of that culture?
3. Has the importance or symbolism of the drum increased or decreased for the culture you are studying over time? How might you explain these changes?
4. How did experiencing Kodo’s performance affect your thoughts about the culture you researched?

4) UNDERSTANDING JAPAN AND TAIKO

**Goal:** To deepen students’ understanding of taiko’s place in Japanese culture

**Explanation:** In this activity, students will create tableau (frozen pictures) to deepen their understanding of taiko-related content.

**Activity:**
1. Review with students one of the background information sections included in the study guide (About Kodo, History of Taiko, The Instruments, or About Japan).
2. Assign small groups of students 1-2 paragraphs from the section.
3. Invite students in their groups to create a tableau (frozen picture with their bodies) that they believe demonstrates the main idea of their section. Encourage students to use various levels and facial expressions.
4. Have students share their tableau for one another and explain their pose choice.

**Follow-up Questions:**
1. What was the main idea you were representing? How did your pose illustrate this idea?
2. What did you like about other groups’ tableaus? After seeing others’ choices and what worked well, are there ways that you would revise your own tableau so that it more clearly communicates the idea you were trying to express?

Activity adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts’ San Jose Taiko study guide materials.
RESOURCES AND SOURCES

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

“Asano Taiko”. http://www.asano.jp/english/
    Explore the many different types of taiko drums at the website of Asano Taiko. The Asano family has been crafting taiko drums for more than 400 years.

    A video series curated by the John F. Kennedy Center’s education department designed to help students learn about some of the major art forms in Japan, including art, dance, music, manga, anima, robots, and visual art installations.

    Learn more about Kodo’s history, philosophy and more on their website.

STUDY GUIDE SOURCES


Ordway Center for the Performing Arts’ Study Guides: http://www.ordway.org/education/studyguides

San Jose Taiko- School Outreach Curriculum Guide: http://www.taiko.org