



## **SAN JOSE TAIKO**

*Applause Series Curriculum Guide*

May 12-13, 2016



CIVIC CENTER • STONER THEATER • TEMPLE THEATER • COWLES COMMONS



## San Jose Taiko

### Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of San Jose Taiko. We trust that students will be amazed by the group's heart-pounding rhythms and athletic choreography, but we also hope that San Jose Taiko will instill in students a new understanding and appreciation for how we can celebrate our heritage and cultural traditions — and even add

to that legacy by bringing our own efforts and creativity. Through their performance, students will experience traditional Japanese taiko drums and rhythms, while also learning about the unique ways that San Jose Taiko has created their own unique style of taiko by drawing on rhythms from around the world.

In the following pages, you will find contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a wide variety of discussion questions and activities that tie into several curriculum areas. 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,

Des Moines Performing Arts Education Team

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This study guide was compiled and written by Karoline Myers; edited by Michelle McDonald.  
Based on 'San Jose Taiko School Outreach Curriculum Guide' by San Jose Taiko and  
'San Jose Taiko Study Guide' by the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts.

# ABOUT DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS



Des Moines Performing Arts is a private, nonprofit organization and is an important part of central Iowa's cultural community. It is recognized nationally for excellence as a performing arts center and is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities.

Des Moines Performing Arts presents professional touring productions, including theater direct from Broadway, world-renowned dance companies, family programming, comedy, and concerts.

Education and Community Engagement programs are core to Des Moines Performing Arts' mission as a nonprofit performing arts center.

**Public education programs** allow audience members and local artists to make meaningful and personal connections to the art they experience on our stages. Guest lectures and Q&As with company members allow audiences to explore the inner workings of the performance. In addition, master classes, workshops, and summer camps taught by visiting performers give local actors, dancers, and musicians the chance to increase their skills by working directly with those who know what it takes to succeed on the professional stage.

Through its **K-12 School Programs**, Des Moines Performing Arts strives to ensure that central Iowa students have affordable access to high quality arts experiences as part of their education. More than 50,000 students and educators attend curriculum-connected school matinee performances through the Applause Series annually. In addition, Des Moines Performing Arts sends teaching artists into the schools to provide hands-on workshops and residencies in special opportunities that engage students directly in the creative process. And, through its partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center, Des Moines Performing Arts provides teachers with in-depth professional development training on how to use the arts in their classrooms to better impact student learning. The Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards is Des Moines Performing Arts' newest initiative to support the arts in Iowa schools, providing important learning tools and public recognition to celebrate the achievements of students involved in their high school theater programs.

## DID YOU KNOW?

More than 300,000 people visit Des Moines Performing Arts venues each year.

Des Moines Performing Arts opened in 1979.

Des Moines Performing Arts has three theater spaces:

- *Civic Center, 2744 seats*
- *Stoner Theater, 200 seats*
- *Temple Theater, 299 seats (located in the Temple for the Performing Arts)*

No seat is more than 155 feet from center stage in the Civic Center.

Cowles Commons, situated just west of the Civic Center, is a community gathering space that is also part of Des Moines Performing Arts. The space features the Crusoe Umbrella sculpture by artist Claes Oldenburg.

As a nonprofit organization, Des Moines Performing Arts depends on donor funding to support facilities, programming, and education programs.

The Applause Series started in 1996. You are joining us for our 20th season of school performances.

# 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. 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?

### 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.

## 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!

GOING TO THE THEATER information is adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts study guide materials.

# CIVIC CENTER FIELD TRIP INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



**Thank you for choosing the Applause Series with Des Moines Performing Arts.  
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 online. Please note that study guides are only printed and mailed upon request.

## DIRECTIONS AND PARKING

- \* Directions: From I-235, take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Turn onto 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and head south.
- \* Police officers are stationed at the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 Des Moines Performing Arts Education staff.

## ARRIVAL TO THE CIVIC CENTER

- \* When arriving at the Civic Center, please have an **adult lead your group** for identification and check-in purposes. A Des Moines Performing Arts staff member may be stationed outside the building to direct you to a specific entrance.
- \* Des Moines Performing Arts 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.

## IN THE THEATER

- \* In case of a medical emergency, please notify the nearest usher. A medical assistant is on duty for all Civic Center 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 their 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 [education@desmoinesperformingarts.org](mailto:education@desmoinesperformingarts.org) or 515.246.2355.  
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.



**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.



Map of Japan.  
Image courtesy of worldatlas.com.



A taiko player  
demonstrates good kata.  
Notice his strong, low  
stance.

**Kata:**  
also known  
as form. In  
taiko, the  
body is in a  
low stance  
and arm  
movements  
are fluid and  
strong.

**Ki:** the energy that flows through  
living things. Ki also refers to the  
unity of the mind and body.

**mon:** a Japanese  
symbol that  
traditionally  
represents a  
family.



San Jose Taiko's  
costumes feature  
a mon.



Amaterasu,  
the sun  
goddess of  
Japan.

**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 'Amaterasu  
and the Cave'  
explains how taiko  
was created.

**percussion:** the sound or  
vibration that is produced when  
one strikes objects together.  
Percussion instruments all make  
sounds in this way.



**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").



The nagado-daiko or  
long-bodied taiko is the  
most popular drum  
used in the modern  
style of taiko playing.  
When 'taiko' is used in  
a compound word, the  
't' becomes a 'd.'

**Sansei:** third generation of  
Japanese in America.  
For example, the American born  
grandchild of Japanese  
immigrants would be referred to  
as a Sansei.

**solo:** a performance by  
just one performer. San  
Jose Taiko often  
features solos.



**unison:** the same movement or  
series of movements performed at  
the same time by more than one  
performer.



A team of rowers synchronize their  
movements in order to row in unison. Can  
you think of other examples where people  
perform actions in unison?  
Image courtesy of profimedia.si.

# ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE



San Jose Taiko celebrates traditional Japanese taiko drumming, while adding their own unique style. Read on to learn more about what you will experience at their performance.

## THE MUSIC

San Jose Taiko fuses the traditional art form of Japanese taiko with rhythms from around the world, creating a fresh and empowering experience for audience members.

Their performance introduces the audience to Japanese culture through the company's use of traditional Japanese instruments such as the *Chappa* and *Atarigane*, as well as many types of taiko drums (see page 11 to learn more about the different instruments).

The company's performance expresses the values of dedication and cultivating a collective spirit that lie at the heart of Japanese philosophy. Ultimately, the company's propulsive rhythms and sounds have the power to transport the listener into another space and time — proving that all cultures can relate through music.

## WHAT YOU WILL EXPERIENCE

San Jose Taiko's performance will include information about the history of taiko in Japan and a demonstration of the instruments that the company uses to create music.

The performers will also introduce the audience to the four principles of the San Jose Taiko Learning Philosophy—including *Ki*, *Attitude*, *Kata*, and *Musical Technique* (see page 8 to learn more about how San Jose Taiko embodies these ideas.)

**“By playing Japanese American music we honor our cultural roots. We draw from a traditional source, yet still express ourselves as Americans. By sharing our music we take pride in our heritage, and hope to encourage others to have pride in their own cultural backgrounds.”**

## WHILE YOU LISTEN...

As you listen and watch, think about the variations in style and the inspiration for the different pieces performed by San Jose Taiko. For instance...

- ◆ Watch how pieces feature drummers playing together, against each other, and as soloists.
- ◆ Listen for pieces that start with a traditional taiko rhythm and then blend it with other modern rhythm patterns.
- ◆ Think about the inspiration of different pieces, such as *Ei Ja Nai Ka?* (Isn't It Good?) which is inspired by the music and dance of traditional Japanese festivals and is dedicated to the first Japanese immigrants who came to the United States over one hundred years ago.
- ◆ Watch the technique used to play the different drums. How do the drummers hold the bachi (drum sticks), stand in relation to each drum, or move between the drums? What does this do to the sound or how your eyes perceive the piece?

# ABOUT SAN JOSE TAIKO



In 1973 a group of third-generation Japanese Americans, or *Sansei*, were searching for a way to learn more about their cultural history. Looking to Japan for inspiration, the young *Sansei* decided to form a taiko drum group, calling themselves San Jose Taiko. The taiko drum has held strong spiritual and cultural meaning throughout Japanese history and gave these *Sansei* a chance to connect with their cultural heritage.

Since that time, San Jose Taiko has been mesmerizing audiences with their unique style of taiko, creating new dimensions in Asian American movement and music.

## STYLE

All compositions performed by San Jose Taiko are written or arranged by members of the group. San Jose Taiko is known for infusing rhythms from other cultural traditions into their playing. They are described as having a world beat, as they often use elements from African, Brazilian, Filipino, Latin and jazz. In addition to composing, members create choreography, design and produce costumes, and handcraft many of the drums.

## TRAINING

The audition process to become part of San Jose Taiko is strenuous as participants must complete a year-long training program that consists of rigorous exercise, taiko basics and lessons about the group's history, philosophy, and process. Physical endurance is very important, and running and exercise continue to be requirement at every practice session once performers become members of the group.

## PHILOSOPHY

There are four important aspects to the San Jose Taiko style of taiko drumming:

### **Kata**

In some forms of Japanese martial arts, such as karate, "kata" refers to your form or stance and style of movement. In taiko, kata refers to the way the drummers stand, how they hold their arms when they approach the drums, and how they move when they play. For taiko players, good kata consists of a strong low stance and moving the arms and body in a manner that is both flowing and powerful. Kata requires stamina, strength, and coordination.

### **Attitude**

Respect is a key word for San Jose Taiko. The members must respect each other, their teachers, the drum, and the art form of taiko. For them, an attitude of respect begins with an open mind and an open heart. No matter what your abilities are, there is always something you can improve. Every time they practice, they strive to improve and better themselves, pushing themselves to play their instruments to the best of their physical and mental abilities.

### **Musical Technique**

Musical technique refers to the "how to's" of playing a musical instrument. In taiko, players concentrate on the wrist snap to get the proper sound out of the drum and how to hold the *bachi* or drumsticks. Members also train for coordination and concentration to perfect their timing, dynamics and speed.

### **Ki**

Ki refers to the energy or life-force that flows through all living things. When one attains Ki, they feel a spiritual unity between the mind and body. One of the ways the performers express Ki is through the encouraging shouts members of a taiko ensemble give each other while they play.

\*ABOUT SAN JOSE TAIKO information is adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts' San Jose Taiko study guide materials.

# HISTORY OF TAIKO



The Japanese word “taiko” (tye-koh) simply means drum. The drum has been an important musical instrument in many cultures, but taiko holds a unique place in Japanese culture.

## 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.



A painting depicting a taiko drum being used in battle.

Image courtesy of bowdoin.edu

## 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: 'AMATERASU 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 'Amaterasu 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. Feeling that he had won the fight, Susano-O 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. Amaterasu 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 that the gods did not have to catch her. As soon as she saw her reflection in the mirror, Amaterasu 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

Traditional Japanese drums are made from a hollowed out tree trunk. Taiko makers in the United States often use oak wine barrels to form the body of the drum. Cow hide is stretched across the top and tacked down with nails to create the head of the drum. The larger the drum body, the deeper the sound becomes.

## 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.

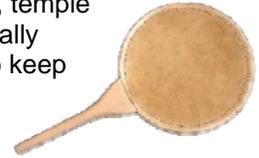
## SHIME-DAIKO

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

San Jose Taiko uses a variety of other instruments in their performances, including:

**Chappa** (chahp-pah): small hand cymbals made of metal.



**Shinobue** (shee-noh -booeh): although it



is not a percussion instrument, this small bamboo flute is heard at most festivals because its melodies blend so well with taiko.



**Atarigane** (ah-tah-ree-gah-neh): small hand-held gong made of brass.

# COSTUMES AND FAMILY CRESTS



The members of San Jose Taiko wear costumes that have their roots in traditional Japanese dress.

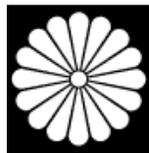
## COSTUME ELEMENTS

**Happi** (hahp-pee): A simple jacket that is patterned after those worn at Japanese festivals. They come in a variety of styles and colors. Usually a symbol called a *mon* is placed on the back of the happi. A *mon* is a family crest.

**Hachimaki** (hah-chee-mah-kee): a rectangular piece of cloth that is twisted to make a headband. This is used to keep the sweat out of the performer's eyes. The hachimaki is said to have derived from a strip of cloth used by warriors to secure their helmets to their heads. This developed into a simple strip of cloth, usually printed with a bright color, that was tied around the forehead before engaging in any kind of strenuous work or activity.

**Obi** (oh-bee): a long piece of fabric that wraps around the performer many times and is tied off at the end. The obi serves as a belt to keep the happi from coming undone.

**Tabi** (tah-bee): cotton socks with a separate space for the big toe. Japanese carpenters used to wear tabi while they worked on roofs of houses. When they finished with work, they would put on their slippers while still wearing their tabi and walk home. 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.



*jūrokugiku*  
16-petaled  
chrysanthemum



*chūrin ni torii*  
shrine gate  
in circle



*agehachō*  
butterfly with  
raised wings



*sumi tategumi izutsu*  
corner-constructed  
well curb

Examples of Japanese *mon*.  
Images courtesy of britannica.com.

## SPOTLIGHT ON MON

The tradition of the Japanese family crest, known as the *mon*, dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> century, family crests were adopted by the common people. The symbols they chose included familiar objects such as rabbits, mountains, and tools.

Because Japan is a small island where many people have learned to live together without wasting space, Japanese design is often very simple. Many *mon* are created to fit inside a small circular space, and every shape and line has a purpose.

# PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION

## 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.

*\*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) HARA BREATHING

**Goal:** In this activity, students will gain an understanding of meditation — a common practice in Eastern cultures and for the San Jose Taiko drummers.

**Explanation:** The use of breathing and meditation is present in most Eastern religions. Zen Masters, martial artists, and taiko drummers are just a few of the groups that work on becoming stronger at their trade through cultivating their *ki* (or vital life energy). Your *ki* is stored in the *hara* (a central harmonizing place in the body located two index fingers below your navel.) In this activity students will practice *Hara Breathing*, which is a form of meditation.

**Activity:**

1. Practice *Hara Breathing* or meditation. Start by having students find a comfortable position on the floor, sitting cross-legged or on their knees.
2. Make sure hands are resting on knees or in a relaxed position.
3. Stretch your head and shoulders to the sky while taking a deep breath in. As you exhale, feel your body relax and sink into the floor while maintaining good posture.
4. Close your eyes, keeping them closed throughout the entire meditation. Try to release any thoughts that arise during the meditation by concentrating on the following breathing pattern:

INHALE- through the nose, filling the *hara* (or your stomach) with air as you count to five.

HOLD- for a second count of five, accumulating *ki* in the *hara*.

EXHALE- through the mouth for a slow count of ten.

5. Repeat pattern at least ten times.

**Follow-Up Questions:**

1. How do you feel? Do you feel different from how you felt before the meditation exercise?
2. Did you like the activity? Was it hard to stay focused on your breath?
3. What have you done that is similar to this exercise?
4. How do you think you may be able to use this in your everyday life? (e.g. when you are angry, stressed, nervous, etc.)

# PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION

## 3) JAPANESE MON

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

**Explanation:** 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.
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?



See page 12 for additional information and examples of Japanese mon.

## 4) WRITING MYTHS

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

**Explanation:** Myths are a part of every culture and were used to explain how important things began or occurred. The art form of taiko is so central to Japanese culture that a myth was developed to explain taiko's 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 'Amaterasu and the Cave' on page 10 of this guide.
3. Invite students to generate a list of questions that people may have had in ancient times (Examples: 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. Think about the characters, conflict, and resolution of 'Amaterasu and the Cave.' Is the story of the beginning of taiko similar to any other myths or stories you know? Which ones? How are they alike?
3. 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?

# ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Grades 10

## 4) DRUMS AND CULTURE

**Goal:** Understanding a culture through its music.

**Explanation:** Explore another culture through its music using research and presentation.

**Activity:**

1. Ask students to research (in groups or alone) the history, construction, and purpose of the drum or other percussion instruments 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. Have students include a drawing or photo of the drum with their research findings.
4. 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.

**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. How does the ancient use of the drums compare to the modern usage in the different cultures studied? 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?

## 5) DEBATE A CULTURAL THEORY

(Best for grades 7 and above)

**Goal:** To understand the complex factors which influence a group's relationship with its cultural heritage.

**Explanation:** Students will debate the validity of a theory regarding immigrant generations' relationships with their cultural heritage. Students will research the experiences of Japanese Americans to guide their analysis.

**Activity:**

1. Ask students to consider the validity of "Hansen's Law" (see description on accompanying handout on page 16 of this guide) regarding different immigrant generations' relationships with their cultural heritage.
2. Have students write down their initial reaction to "Hansen's Law."
3. Tell students that they will debate the validity of "Hansen's Law" using the experiences of Japanese Americans to confirm or deny the theory. Ask them to research (in groups or alone) Japanese American history using the 'Questions to Guide Your Research' listed on the accompanying handout.
4. Invite students to discuss their findings in relation to "Hansen's Law." Divide them into groups based on their position and host a formal debate, or facilitate an informal discussion using the questions below.
5. Ask students to write a reflection on the exercise, citing supporting evidence that supports their final analysis of "Hansen's Law".

**Follow-Up Questions:**

1. How do the experiences of Japanese Americans support "Hansen's Law"?
2. How do the experiences of Japanese Americans weaken "Hansen's Law"?
3. Are there other historical factors that could influence a generation's relationship with their cultural heritage? Does "Hansen's Law" take those factors into account?
4. Are there other factors that Hansen may have missed when forming his theory? (Consider simple generational differences, how isolated or open the immigrant group was in America, etc.)
5. Did your research and the following discussion lead you to change your mind about the validity of "Hansen's Law"?

# HANSEN'S LAW (For use with Pre-Show Exploration Activity #6)

## Step 1: Look at "Hansen's Law"

"What the son wishes to forget,  
the grandson wishes to remember."

The above-quote comes from Pulitzer-prize winning historian Marcus Lee Hansen's 1938 essay "The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant." In the essay, Hansen presented a theory about different immigrant generations' relationships with their cultural heritage. He theorized that:

1. First generation immigrants wish to preserve their ethnic and cultural identities rather than assimilate;
  2. Their children, who are born in the United States, reject their cultural heritage in order to become part of the American mainstream;
- and
3. Their children, third generation immigrants, have a strong desire to reconnect with their cultural heritage.

Hansen suggested that this pattern held true for all immigrant groups, regardless of their country of origin. This theory became known as "Hansen's Law" and has been the subject of scholarly debate since it was first presented. Many scholars found it to be a useful paradigm to explain immigrant experiences and attitudes; others believed Hansen's theory was based on conjecture rather than evidence and, therefore, could not be trusted.

## Step 2: Initial Reaction

What is your initial reaction to "Hansen's Law"? In a brief sentence or two, write down to what extent you agree or disagree with Hansen's theory.

## Step 3: Research

Research Japanese American history and experiences. As you conduct your research, think about how your findings support or deny "Hansen's Law."



San Jose Taiko was founded in 1973 by young Asian Americans searching for an outlet to convey their experiences as Sansei, or third-generation Japanese Americans.

### Questions to Guide Your Research:

1. San Jose Taiko was founded by third-generation Japanese Americans, known as Sansei. What are the names of the other Japanese American generations?
2. When did each generation group typically arrive in the United States?
3. Were there any significant historical events that shaped certain generations' experiences in America?
4. What is/was the typical attitude held by each generation regarding their cultural heritage?
5. How does the formation of San Jose Taiko and other American taiko groups fit with the generational pattern?

## Step 4: Debate

Team up to debate the validity of "Hansen's Law." Be prepared to use evidence from your research to support your position. Note: You do not need to argue for your initial reaction to "Hansen's Law" if you changed your mind during the course of your research.

## Step 5: Final Thoughts

Write a brief reflection on your experience examining "Hansen's Law." What is your final take and why? Use evidence from your research to support your analysis.

# POST-SHOW ASSESSMENT, pg. 1

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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. San Jose Taiko used instruments besides the taiko drums in their performance. 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. What aspects of San Jose Taiko's performance departed from traditional Japanese taiko and showcased the group's Japanese American identity?
10. San Jose Taiko aspires to encourage others to take pride in their cultural backgrounds. Did any aspects of their performance inspire you to find out more about your cultural background?

## 1) WRITE A LETTER

**Goal:** To reflect on the performance experience and to practice writing skills.

**Explanation:** In this activity, students will write a letter about their experience to either the performers or to Des Moines Performing Arts education donors whose support keeps Applause Series tickets accessibly priced for school groups.

**Materials:**

- ◇ Paper
- ◇ Writing utensil

**Activity:**

1. After attending the performance, discuss the experience with your students. Use the following discussion questions to guide the conversation:

- ◇ How did the performance make you feel?
- ◇ What surprised you about the performance?
- ◇ What do you think was the main message or idea of the performance?

2. Next, invite students to write a letter to the performers or to Des Moines Performing Arts donors about their theater experience.

**Example letter starter:**

Dear San Jose Taiko // Dear Donors...

My favorite part of the show was...  
While watching the show I felt... because ...  
If I could be in your ensemble, I would ...

3. Mail the letters to:

Des Moines Performing Arts  
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?

## POST-SHOW ASSESSMENT, pg. 2

### 2) WRITE A REVIEW

**Goal:** To write a review of the performance.

**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 San Jose Taiko 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
  - ◇ 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 as vividly as possible.

**Follow-up Questions:**

1. What did you include in your review? Why did you want to share that particular idea?
2. What things did writing the review make you think about that you hadn't thought of by just watching the show?
3. Is there anything that you would change about the show if you could? Would you add something or take something away?

### 3) DESIGN A CD COVER

**Goal:** Students will synthesize their ideas about San Jose Taiko, using imagery and typography to capture the mood and message of the ensemble.

**Explanation:** Artists need to determine how to represent themselves to the public and stay true to their particular vision or art form. Often they have to rely on others to help make the message both attractive and accurate. In this activity, students will act as advertising and graphic design professionals and design a CD cover that represents San Jose Taiko.

**Activity:**

1. Ask students to imagine that San Jose Taiko has asked them to design a cover for their newest CD recording.
2. Have students think about important ideas and images that come to mind when they think about the performance and use those ideas to guide their design.
3. For a greater challenge, limit students' color palate to black, white and one accent color.
4. After students have created their cover using art materials, have them imagine that they are going to present their design to San Jose Taiko's artistic director (played by the teacher). Ask students about the elements they included in their design, why they made those design decisions, and what the design communicates about the message of San Jose Taiko.

**Follow-up Questions:**

1. What was your inspiration for the images and typography you chose?
2. How did you choose the colors in your design?
3. Which CD designed by your classmates is your favorite? Why?



# RESOURCES AND SOURCES



## Classroom Resources:

### Websites:

San Jose Taiko: <http://www.taiko.org/>

Taiko Drums: <http://www.miyoshidaiko.com>

San Jose Taiko Kidsweb: <http://www.taiko.org/kidsweb/>  
*Information, sound clips, and interactive activities for kids. Appropriate for children 12 and under.*

### Suggested Resources for 'Debate a Cultural Theory' Activity on pages 15-16:

Japanese American Citizens League: <https://jacl.org/asian-american-history/>  
*Includes information on Japanese American History and Asian Pacific American History, with specific information on immigration from Japan.*

Asian Nation: <http://www.asian-nation.org/japanese.shtml> and <http://www.asian-nation.org/assimilation.shtml>  
*Discussion of Japanese Americans and general factors affecting assimilation.*

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## 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>

University of Tennessee Chattanooga: *Additional information on Japanese Mon.*  
[http://www.utc.edu/Departments/edast/ncta/chat/pdf/Glasscock-LP1\\_handouts.pdf](http://www.utc.edu/Departments/edast/ncta/chat/pdf/Glasscock-LP1_handouts.pdf)

Lyrical Works: *Taiko Legend of Amaterasu.*  
<http://www.lyricalworks.com/stories/amaterasu.html>