



KITA NO TAIKO

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*We're not sure what happened to the last year or so, but here is Kita No Taiko's almost annual newsletter. In this issue you'll find updates, news, and some stories about the members of KNT. Also, make sure you look on the last page to find out how to participate in our upcoming workshops!*



### KNT Stories

*All of us remember the first time we saw a taiko performance. It could have been in Japan, or right here in Edmonton, but we all felt an emotional response. Here are some accounts of how taiko has impacted us.*

I first experienced the music and spectacle of KNT during Edmonton's Heritage Days festival of 2002. Although it took a number of years for the stars to align just so, I finally leapt at the opportunity to participate in a KNT workshop during which I got to try my hand at playing the group's impressive array of drums and other percussion equipment.

One workshop led to another and soon I was enrolled as an apprentice with the group. This was a formative period during which I spent countless hours working on technique and learning a basic repertoire of songs played by KNT. My progress was at times slow -- unlearning kit drumming technique is no easy task, let me tell you -- but even the most stubborn muscle reflexes can ultimately be overcome. Having finally convinced my thumbs not to sneak their way up the bachi, I was admitted as a member of KNT earlier this year and look forward to many years of productive and enjoyable music-making.

-Morris Flynn

**A**we. Spellbinding awe. That is the only response an onlooker of the traditional art of Taiko could possibly muster. When you are first blasted by the raw power of the drums in unison, you cannot help but feel immersed. The spectacle's synergy of music and movement seems to encompass you wholly as you attempt to interpret the wild, yet skillfully stoic display before you. Your mind fills with

imagery fueled by your ears, somehow driven by the drums' powerful beat. You can't help but visualize a massive storm where the lightening strikes the same spot endlessly. It is intoxicating. It is empowering. It is energetic. It is fun. Witnessing the art's beauty leaves you vitalized, eager, and prideful -- your heart leaps from your chest.

As you delve further into the learning of the art, you begin to understand and embrace the deep complexity of the skills, beliefs, and values which expands beyond the music. The art seems to drive you to provide your best, for yourself and those around you; you feel driven by the community to contribute to the community.

Taiko obviously demands a certain amount of physical ability and musical ability, but, oddly enough, it is accepting and an accommodating mentor. The physical and musical demands vary wildly from song to song, yet each individual seems to always have a place, regardless of athletics, education, or output capability; the individual can always contribute to the whole. Taiko drives you always: learn a song, perfect a song, change a song, or create a song. A performer's perfection is never done.

-Omar Amer

*Dan, a founding member, recounts his favourite show in over two decades of performing:*

Each of us has a collection of performances that stand out for one reason or another. For me, a show with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra in 1995 is one of them. It took months of preparation and was definitely worth the effort. It was based on a Japanese fairy tale. We wrote a script which was narrated by a member and friend of Kita No Taiko, and had drawings displayed on a screen and other special effects. There was piece especially written for us to play with the Symphony.

Listening to a symphony live is something that cannot be replaced. And listening to it on stage as a participant is even more special. And to our surprise we were asked to repeat the performance with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra a short time later. Double the enjoyment.

-Dan Kinoshita

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### **Weddings!**

***Over the last year and a bit, KNT was happy for 5 group members who got married (not to each other)! Here are the accounts of two where the taiko were used in the ceremonies.***

**J**une 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009 - a joyous and memorable day. Raphael and I were married. We wanted to make our reception unique, so decided to incorporate important elements in our lives into the reception. Since taiko has been a huge part of my life, we decided to have Okedo players drum us in for the big entrance. I will never forget how people's faces lit up as Raphael and I entered the grand ballroom at the Chateau Lacombe, accompanied by JP and Daniel playing okedo. Kita No Taiko played 3 songs- and as a surprise for our guests, I played 1 song with the KNT girls.

We wanted former members whom I became close with to also perform and attend the wedding, so some taiko players that had left Kita No Taiko came back to rehearse and play for our special occasion.

The effort that they put forth really meant the world to us - as well as Kita No Taiko blessing our reception with energy and love. Drumming has a way of connecting people and moving positive energy. Thank you Kita No Taiko, for making our day so memorable.



-Marie Caluttung

**M**y most memorable show of all time is my wedding held at the Jasper Airfield last summer (2009). I was so fortunate to have Kita No Taiko make a special appearance and most of all, letting my husband have his taiko drumming debut in front of all our guests! For myself, I had the honour of playing a whole show in the most difficult costume ever; my wedding dress with a seven foot train! Besides my dress picking up about ten pounds of dirt during the show, our guests loved every minute of it, and I still get compliments today about our performance.

Thanks Kita No Taiko for being part of my special day.



-Kristen Aitchison



***Want to take a workshop?  
See pages 5 and 6 for details  
Try taiko for yourself!***

## Youngest Taiko Fan

KNT enjoys seeing fans and repeat workshop participants over the years. At our annual shows such as Edmonton's Heritage Festival and Kurimoto Japanese Garden Spring Festival we often see familiar faces. One family that shows up frequently is Marek, Katerina, and now **their son Lukas**. Marek and Katerina first took our workshops in 2004, and have found them so much fun that they have taken all three levels frequently over the years. They took this great picture of Lukas on their drum when he was only 8 days old in 2009, and we had the pleasure of seeing him again at the Kurimoto Japanese Spring Festival this year.



June 2009 – New taiko baby



June 2010-Awed by taiko

We're hoping he'll still be a fan when he's 13 and will take the workshop himself! Thanks to Marek, Katerina, and Lukas for the continued support and friendship!

## Pro or Anti-Momohiki

Momohiki are traditional Japanese workers pants common in taiko but their funny shape/fit makes them the cause of some playful debate in the group. However the results are resoundingly in support of them! They have no button or zippers (or Velcro!), just ties and layers of overlapping fabric to maintain decency.



We got to the bottom of it.



## 2009 North American Taiko Conference

Every four years there is a meeting for taiko groups in Canada and the United States. These conferences are a very exciting time where groups can interact and share news and stories, where you can see other groups' performance styles, and of course take workshops from renowned taiko artists. This year the conference was held in L.A., and 112 groups were in attendance. Eight KNT members made the trip, and took workshops on the different kinds of drums, auxiliary instruments, team-building, costumes, and even dance, including hip hop. There were also performances featuring groups from across North America.



Carley Okamura had never been to a North American conference before and had this to say about the event. "It was a really great chance to meet other groups and see what they're about, and to see how we're a part of the larger taiko community. My favourite moments of the trip were at the conference opening when people were encouraged to run up and play with the host group in stages, depending on how many years they've been involved in taiko. 1-2 years, 3-7, 8-10, 11-20, or 20+! You could see the different generations and I found that really cool. The other event that stands out in my memory is after the big concert the audience (mostly taiko players) gathered outside on the plaza. We weren't allowed drums due to noise complaints in the past, so we used plastic trash cans and water jugs to get some beats going and then a Japanese circle dance started to wind around. There were probably over a hundred people dancing or taking part and it was really a fun time!"

The other headlining event of the trip was when group member Masahito saw a notice in the window of a Japanese restaurant. The challenge was to eat 1500 grams of rice, 500 grams of raw seafood, and a bowl of miso soup in 15 minutes. It was 6 times the size of the regular portioned bowl, but if finished, it would be free! Masahito was very close to finishing, but not close enough, leaving

about 2 cups of rice. However he vowed to win when he returns for the next conference! Good luck!



Masahito  
(over) indulging  
at taiko  
conference

some beer or wine so that we could celebrate our hard work after the last show. As I did not have time to change clothes, I went to a liquor store in momohiki (pants), tabi (split toed footwear), T- shirt, and hachimaki (headband). I am sure that I looked like a very strange Asian. In addition, because of the short time, I was rushing around the city to find a liquor store, plus with the exertion of the last show I went into the liquor store with my face sweaty, panting heavily, and my eyes were bloodshot. When I grabbed two bottles of wine and tried to leave the store, a policeman tapped my shoulder, and said "I have a question for you."

First, I thought the policeman approached me because I did something wrong. But, I had paid, I was not drunk (yet), and I had not done anything obviously wrong (yet), either. But, I did not want to have any trouble as I was afraid that I would miss the last show if I was taken to the police station (or prison in the worst case scenario). Then, I would be fired by KNT for some misconduct that I was not even aware of. So, I tried to be nice to the policeman; I did not argue with him, and gave him my ID and credit card (yes, really; the things we do when stressed), even before he asked. I was in such a panic, and did not really pay attention to what he was asking me.

Five minutes later I realized that he was not questioning me because I looked dangerous; he wanted to know where I teach martial arts. According to him, with momohiki and tabi, I looked like a real Ninja Sensei. The policeman had been looking for a place to learn Japanese martial arts, and he could not help but talk to a guy who looks like a Ninja Sensei in the liquor store.

I am glad that I was able to get back in time to perform in time, but I learned an important lesson: the KNT costume is designed for performance, not for shopping. I will not go to a liquor store with momohiki and tabi again.

- Masahito Oba

### ***Saskatoon Folkfest August, 2010***

Kita No Taiko was pleased to return to Saskatoon and be part of the Asian Pacific Pavilion for their cultural festival.

We had a lot of fun watching the other performances, featuring Wu Shu martial arts, Chinese dancing, and Taiwanese yo-yo artists. Our drummers were very inspired by the audience's enthusiasm and friendliness, and gave five sweaty but fun performances.

We were also pleased to meet with the only taiko group in Saskatchewan, Living Sky Taiko, for a workshop. It was great to meet others in the Canadian taiko community.

### ***Masahito Faces the Law in Saskatoon***

KNT's performance costume seems to give a different perspective to the general public. I would like to share my interesting experience in Saskatoon.

We had three shows scheduled for the Saskatoon Folk Fest on Saturday (August 21) evening, and I went to a liquor store between the second and the last show to buy

*We never sell, trade, etc., our email or mailing lists.*

*If you are on our email list, you will be notified of upcoming shows and workshops unless you block emails.*

*If you received a paper copy of this newsletter and you have an email address,*

*please consider saving a tree and our \$ by changing. Contact [info@kitanotaiko.ca](mailto:info@kitanotaiko.ca). Thanks.*



**Kita No Taiko are:** Carley Okamura, Carol Brandly, Dan Kinoshita, Daniel Torres, Jody Crilly, John-Paul Sicotte, Kevin Kanak, Kirsten Watson, Kristen Aitchison, Marie Caluttung, Masahito Oba, Omar Amer, Ryan Dumas, and Brenda Madsen

Recent former members are: Greg Shimizu, Peter Mitchell, Twilla McLeod, and Morris Flynn

**Newsletter Contributors:** Carley Okamura, Dan Kinoshita, Kristen Aitchison, Marie Caluttung, Masahito Oba, Morris Flynn, and Omar Amer

**Newsletter Editors:** Brenda Madsen and Carley Okamura.

## WORKSHOP INFO

### We have workshops so you can:

- experience Japanese drumming as an art form,
- better understand the various integrated components of this art form (drumming, music, and choreography),
- have fun and allow us to help you find the taiko player within!



Japanese drumming also **provides a great workout**, as mentioned in *The Fitness Edge* article in the **September/October 2006 edition (page 18)** of *Your Health* magazine. (Available at <http://www.capitalhealth.ca/AboutUs/ResourceLibrary/YourHealthMagazine/SeptOct2006/default.htm>)

### **We offer Level I (Beginner) workshops occasionally throughout the year, but our whole annual workshop series (Level I to III) will begin in November, 2010.**

- The Level I workshops consist of **1 class that will be 3 hours long.**
- The workshops are very “hands-on” with a minimum of lecturing and maximum playing.
- They are designed for those with lots of, a little, or no musical background, as well as varying levels of fitness. Expect some strenuous activity.
- This is an adult workshop; you must be at least 13 years old.
- All you need is enthusiasm and a sense of humour for this experience.

**If you are interested in taking a workshop, apply as soon as possible; we are expecting our usual good turnout and space is limited by the number of drums available.**

**LEVEL II TAIKO:** Shortly after the Level I classes, we will offer Level II classes. These are also 3 hours each and are for people who have taken the Level I and want more taiko. More information and registration for the classes will be available at the Level I workshops or if you have taken Level I recently and want to go into Level II, contact us.

**LEVEL III TAIKO:** These classes will be 2 sessions of 3 hours each after the Level II for people who want even more taiko. This means that Level III will have a first and second part on separate days.

**MEMBERSHIP IN KITA NO TAIKO:** To be considered for membership, you must take the Level I, II, and III classes. IF you are then invited to apprentice with the group, you must:

- be available to attend the Monday and Wednesday evening practices from then on;
  - commit to additional organized practices as well as to practicing on your own;
  - take on projects that support the group (we are a volunteer, not for profit organization);
  - be available for performances (including planning and staging) on a year-round basis.
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**KITA NO TAIKO WORKSHOP / VOLUNTEER / MAILING LIST APPLICATION**  
**October 2010**

Register me NOW for ONE of the following Level I (Beginner) JAPANESE DRUMMING WORKSHOPS  
 (check off one date and complete the rest of the form where applicable):

- Wednesday, Nov 3, 2010, from 6:30 to 9:30 pm.
- Monday, Nov 8, 2010, from 6:30 to 9:30 pm.
- Wednesday, Nov 10, 2010, from 6:30 to 9:30 pm.
- Sunday, Nov 14, 2010, from 1 pm to 4 pm.

Any section **with fewer** than 8 students will be **cancelled**.  
 Other sections may **be added** if needed.

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- I am over 18 years old
- I am between 13 and 18 years old

*(NOTE: The minimum age for this workshop is 13; for those between 13 and 18, a parent or guardian will be required to sign a waiver.)*

- I have enclosed a cheque or money order for \$50.00/person or paid via PayPal (when available)
- I realize that **I am not actually registered until:**
  - KNT receives this application,  
 AND
  - KNT receives my cheque, money order, or cash or payment via PayPal (just setting up). Please make cheques payable to "Kita No Taiko." No IOUs or faxed or post-dated cheques, and please don't mail cash, or leave cash in the mailbox.  
 AND
  - I receive confirmation from KNT by mail, phone, fax or email that I am registered.  
**(The workshop is not at the mailing address, so please give us time to notify you where it will be and send you other relevant information.)**

**I CAN'T ATTEND THESE WORKSHOPS, BUT** would like to know if you have another one. I could attend a workshop if it were (check as many as you want):

- on a different week (such as \_\_\_\_\_)
- on a different weekend  
 Please circle your preference:  
 Day:          Saturday          Sunday  
 Time:        Morning          Afternoon      Evening
- at a different time of year  
 When? \_\_\_\_\_

**DONATIONS:**  
 I wish to donate a **LARGE** or **small** sum of money to help with drum repair, costumes, postage, etc., to help support  
*Kita No Taiko.*  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ enclosed

**PLEASE USE A SEPARATE FORM FOR EACH APPLICATION AND PRINT CLEARLY**

NAME:		EMAIL:
PHONE	(home):	ADDRESS:
	(work):	TOWN/CITY:
	(cell):	POSTAL CODE:

**So we can more effectively inform others of workshops, please tell us how you heard about this workshop:**

**MAIL to:    KITA NO TAIKO                      or PHONE:    780.431.0300**  
**3046 108 St NW                      or FAX:        780.431.0406**  
**Edmonton, AB T6J 3S6                or EMAIL:    info@kitanotaiko.ca**