

Wadaiko Tokara News

January 2013

Upcoming Performances and Workshops

- **February 1st - 3rd:** [East Coast Taiko Conference](#) Workshops and performances
- **March 22nd, 24th:** [1,001 Buddhas](#) at the Cowles Center for the Performing Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota, US
- **March 29th, 30th:** [Kazakoshi Concert](#) at the Dreamland Arts Theatre St. Paul Minnesota, US, 7:30pm
- **April 28th:** [Kazakoshi Concert](#) at the Kelowna Community Centre, Kelowna BC, Canada
- **May 10th, 11th:** [Kazakoshi Concert](#) at the Heron Theatre, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, UK
- **May 18th:** [Kazakoshi Concert](#) at the Minack Theatre, Cornwall, UK
- **May 25th:** [Kazakoshi Concert](#) at the Barnfield Theatre, Exeter, UK
- **May 27 - 29th:** [Kenshu Core Taiko Training Course](#) at the Rua Red Arts Center, Dublin, Ireland
- **June 17th - 29th:** [Inadani Taiko Drumming Course GRAND TOUR](#), Achi Village, Nagano-ken, Japan.
- **June 29th:** [Saiwai Shimoina Wadaiko Festival](#) Iida City Kouminkan, Iida City, Nagano-ken, Japan
- **August 1st - 26th:** [Kazakoshi Concerts](#) at Edinburgh Fringe Festival in C too Mainhouse, Edinburgh, Scotland

Ok, now that that is done, I can come up for a breath and throw out another update. This one might be a bit of a read, so grab your favorite mug, fill it with your favorite coffee/tea and settle into a cozy place for an exciting read. Last time we left off heading into July, preparing for two big events. First up, we had the privilege to host a concert for Ensemble Liberta, their first full concert in Iida city. You could feel the energy in the building as they rehearsed for the show. Their mix of traditional and contemporary pieces captivated the audience and left them

Someone hit the pause button!

Written by Dean Havixbeck.



Mugenkyo performers back stage

wanting for more. From Yamada-san's diverse range of skill with the shakuhachi, (not to leave out his warm and often humorous role as MC), to Takeda-san's daft and cunning finger work on the koto, it's always a joy to see them perform.

No time to rest though, because next up was the Saiwai Shimoina festival. This year we hosted the fringe show in the morning with six performing groups. And wow did it ever start off with a bang. Our guest performers for this year Mugenkyo who travelled all the way from Scotland, brought their student group, The Mugen Taiko Dojo Drummers to perform in the fringe show. They were first to perform and set the mode for an exciting morning. And what an energetic lead in to the super show! Mugenkyo brought the house down with thunderous applause from their powerful performance. They definitely made a number of new fans in Iida city, and we look forward to future encounters with them. Thanks again to Mugenkyo for an unforgettable

performance!

So with the end of Saiwai Shimoina, we sped on into August, where Hirugami no Hibiki (our one-month performance showcase), Wadaiko Bootcamp, and the humid heat awaited us. First up, setting our daily routine for Hirugami shows; arriving at the stage, unpacking, tying shime, setting up the stage, performing, then repacking.

When I say routine however, I use that term loosely. We had a double performance on the 4th, performing our show in the morning, and then joining with our two community groups in Iida to perform into the night at the Ringo (Apple) Festival. Nothing like dancing, crowded streets, fireworks and taiko to work up an appetite. The next day, Art sensei took leave to join Ensemble Liberta for a performance on the small island of Ojika, one of the western most islands in Nagasaki prefecture. Six days, and four performances later, Sensei was back with tales of a lovely little island and ready for Tokara's Wadaiko bootcamp. This year, we had 17 participants attend from seven different countries, all ready for grueling yet



Nadeshiko performers at the Ringo Matsuri



Bootcamp participants perform at Hirugami no Hibiki

Oh but while August flew by, we were far from finished. Preparations for departing on Tokara's autumn European tour in had begun and right in the middle of our preparations was a set of four shows in five days. The first two shows were set in Iwate Prefecture, which was part of a concert series for the people in the region hit by last year's earthquake/tsunami. Art had performed in Vancouver, Canada in May, and 100% of his performance fee went toward covering expenses for these concerts. Our journey began on a Friday night, leaving Iida city to embark on an eleven hour drive to our first show in Miyako city on Saturday morning. There was no time for sleep though. As



Tokara performing at Hirugami no Hibiki

We had another performance the next morning.... in Iida. So it was back into the van for another eleven hour drive back to Iida for a performance with our festival group, Nadeshiko, at the Kenko Matsuri (festival of health).

rewarding practice sessions during the day, Hirugami No Hibiki in the afternoon, soaking (sometimes all the way asleep) in the onsen, followed by the nightly obon festivals and capped off with fireworks to end the nights. Who could ask for anything more? Well how about a trip to Asano Taiko (every taiko drummers toy store) and tickets to the Tokyo International Wadaiko Contest Champions concert, in which Art performed. I don't think it gets much better than that. What an exciting month!!



Dinner at Misaka Ryokan

soon as that performance was finished, we headed south along the coast to Otsuchi. It was a joy to perform for the people in that area who really deserve a lot of credit for the hard work they have done and the extraordinary pace in cleaning and rebuilding the area in which they live. After a long drive through the night and two performances in the day, it was time to relax..... oh wait... That wasn't an option.

Well, we made it back in time, had lovely weather for the performance and finally had time for a rest... well a small rest actually because the next day Tokara headed to Nagoya for our final Tenchi Shinmei performance (with workshop) in September at Osugei Elementary School. And as usual, whenever I go to Nagoya for a Tokara performance, a hurricane is always there to greet me. Despite the heavy rain and wind. We had an enjoyable performance, and a fun time with the students during the workshop.

Finally, we received a moments pause in this years busy schedule. All that was left was personal preparations for traveling to Europe, which wasn't beginning until the second week in October. So with our performances in Japan all wrapped up we all had a couple of weeks R&R before the big meet-up in Belgium.

Ahhhh Belgium. I am so glad I am performing taiko in this country because if I wasn't, I would become fat on tasty meat, fresh baked breads, cheeses, yummy cookies and too many types of beer. Now Tokara find themselves in Belgium once again, but instead of hosting

bootcamp, we are here to collaborate in a series of concerts with our friends at Feniks Taiko. Our home base is in the lovely city of Antwerp. This is one of the oldest cities in Europe, and is full of old style architecture that will have you snapping photos like crazy. Though with (speaking from personal experience), I caution you to look up while passing construction zones as to avoid any falling debris. Yes, I am speaking from personal experience. My hard head, and a lot of luck, seemed to have saved me from any serious injury. A good story though to remember by inauguration to Antwerp.

Anyways, with our home base in Antwerp, we travel regularly to Leuven (yet another architecturally stunning city) for rehearsals with Feniks Taiko. Grete, the leader of Feniks taiko, deserves a lot of credit for making this tour with Tokara a reality, and is an amazing leader to collaborate with. She, along with the members of her group and supporters, have made Tokara feel extremely welcome here, which has made our experience that much more enjoyable.



One of Belgium's many fine points



Antwerp Central Station



Art Lee with R2-D2 at FACTS Manga Convention



Tokara, Greta Morgat and Feniks taiko fans

And what better way to test out our collaborative efforts than performing for two days at the FACTS Manga convention. If you are a member of/lead a taiko group, or if you have never been to a manga convention, I highly recommend it. I do not think I have ever been in costume for a performance before and felt "underdressed". With two days of excitement behind us, we set our sights on our debut concert in Oostende at a community center set on the side of the Belgium coast, followed by a second performance at a beautiful church in Gent. What better way to travel a country and experience a culture. We were far from finished however.

The next stop on our collaboration concert series was at the Mark Liebrecht Schouwburg Theatre in Antwerp on November 10th. Our first theatre performance with Feniks taiko. And what a show it was. The energy was high, and the crowd was just as energetic. And we would love to give a shout out to Kun, Feniks Taiko's lighting engineer who put on a lighting display just as exciting as the performance.



Feniks Taiko and Tokara in performance

As our second week in Belgium came to an end, we changed our focus to our next big event, Japan Week in Valencia. I must admit, I did not know much about Spain before traveling there, other than Flamenco.



On our way to Spain

Who can complain about +20 degrees celsius temperatures in late November? The audiences were as warm as the weather and a joy to play for/with. Yes, the memories of Spain and Japan Week will burn long in our minds. And if you want to see a video clip of the Spain experience, you can follow the link [here](#)

We had a lot of fun in Spain, but as everyone knows that is a great way to speed up time. So with what felt like a blink of an



School performance in Valencia, Spain



Having a great meal before the show

eye, we were back in what had become a quite comfy apartment in Antwerp, energized and ready to continue our enjoyable concert series with our good friends in Feniks Taiko.

Our next performance took place at the [Leopoldsborg Cultural Centre](#) in Leopoldsborg. Everything was going well, until the morning of the concert, just when everyone was getting ready to depart to the theatre, Art sensei approached the van with a kind of walk that says "I just put out my back". Needless to say, we were all quite concerned for his condition, yet in true performing spirit, Art sensei said the show must go on, and still managed to perform amazingly without a hint

of injury. The cultural centre had a full kitchen/dining accessible from back stage and I believe this was the first time we had a full home cooked Belgium meal for a lunch on concert day. I highly recommend it.

Two day later we performed at [The Schoten Cultural Centre](#) in Schoten. This was our last theatre performance with Feniks Taiko for this tour, and again, another fabulous show, despite another sudden setback. Art sensei's back was feeling much better but half way through rehearsal, Takafumi-san came down with the flu. Yet with only some slight back stage adjustments, he was able to rest enough between pieces to make it through. The crowd was really into the performance, and we were delighted to finish to a standing ovation. Definitely a night to remember.



The Schoten Cultural Centre



Setting the stage in Halfweg

Although the theatre performances were over, we still had one more small show booked to top off the end of our fall tour in Europe. So we headed up to Halfweg (Yup, the town's name is "halfway" in Dutch) in Holland to perform for the grand opening of their new train station. Feniks Taiko's Grete Moortgat along with Art Sensei composed a taiko piece blended with a number of modern day classical pieces that matched the 3 tier stage we would be performing on. And though the weather was not so agreeable, it will take more than a little cold, wind and rain/snow to keep us from performing. Plus the audience didn't seem to

mind the cold at all. Yup, it was a great way to mark the end of our European tour.

With our tour at an end, it was time to head back home, and take a little rest for the holiday season. I do say little because we are coming into one of Tokara's busiest tours for 2013. And it has already begun, by ending 2012 and starting the new year with four shows in the Hirugami Onsen area in Southern Nagano prefecture. As usual, we performed at Keizan, Seifuen and three times at Hanaya. These are always fun little shows to perform, and really get us energized for the new year.



In performance at Hanaya

And boy will we need the energy. At the start of this novel, you will find the list of upcoming performances throughout 2013. And of course, if you need more information you can always visit our website, or send us a message. That is about all the stories we have for now. We had a great year in 2012 and are looking forward to seeing you on the road in 2013!

KAZAKOSHI

"Kazakoshi" is a new production touring 12 countries throughout the world for two years celebrating Wadaiko Artist Art Lee's 20th Anniversary in 2013, and Wadaiko Tokara's 10th Anniversary in 2014.

"Kazakoshi" is the mountain wind which flows across the mountaintop of Mt. Fuetsu, bringing a billowing mist into the Inadani valley from which we gather our strength and determination to share throughout the world.

Not simply a taiko performance, "Kazakoshi" is an expression of the powerfully flowing, yet jazzy style of performance for which Tokara has become known.

For details on "Kazakoshi" 2013 - 2014 World Tour:

www.tokara.net/kazakoshi

WADAIKO TOKARA

Incorporating arrangements of traditional Taiko pieces into their performance, Tokara has created an all new style of Taiko, where speed and power meet eloquent movements of dance and the circular fluidity of the Chinese martial arts and aikido.

Tokara's new style of Taiko music also brings rhythm signatures from other cultures around the world to create a jazzy and exciting style of taiko music.

Artistic Director Art Lee is considered to be one of the leading Taiko artists of his generation. In November 2001, he received international acclaim for becoming the first person in the world to be awarded an artist-visa from the Japanese government to teach Taiko and lead the life of a professional Taiko artist in Japan. He is the only non-Japanese to achieve the status of Grand Champion in the Odaiko section of the most renowned taiko contest in the world, the Tokyo International Taiko Contest.

Season One

(January - August)

Vancouver * Kelowna * Minneapolis * Beetham * Penance
Dublin * Exeter * Edinburgh

Full Details: www.tokara.net/kazakoshi



Photos by Junko Sakai and Nedra Cammelli

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Thank you for supporting us for the years up to 2012.
We look forward to seeing you again in the many years
to come.

Wadaiko Artist Art Lee 藝李
Wadaiko Ensemble 遙Tokara遙

Wadaiko Tokara has a new CD!!! Please click
on the link below to get your copy today!

www.tokara.net/info/ttuccd.html

To see videos and pictures of the 2012 tour,
follow the links below:

[Tokara Official Website](#)

[Performance Schedule](#)

[Tokara on YouTube](#)

[Tokara on Facebook](#)

Upcoming Workshops and Classes

INADANI TAIKO DRUMMING COURSE

GRAND TOUR

Beginners/Intermediate Course

June 17 - 22, 2013

June 24 - 29, 2013

This course is designed for the purpose of bringing
the taiko practitioner closer to understanding the art
that is Wadaiko in Japan. For this reason, the
training site, nestled between the mountains of
Shimoina, was specifically chosen to enhance an
experience and atmosphere which cannot be had in
any other country of the world. This course offers a
unique experience as it takes place in the heart of
Japan - Nagano Prefecture. Each participant will be
surrounded by and immersed in the culture from
which comes the heart and spirit of the Wadaiko.

Details can be found on the course website:

www.tokara.net/japantaikocourse.html

Kenshu Core Taiko Training Course

Training Workshop and Seminar for Taiko Teachers

May 27 - 29, 2013

This course is for teachers who already do or are
planning to teach taiko classes and workshops, as
well as for teaching assistants within a group.
Theory and demonstration will accompany drills
and playing technique. Participants will also have a
chance to view teaching principles in action. During
the morning sessions, participants will be taught
movement and technique in various taiko
performance styles. Afternoon sessions will include
details/drills/information for teaching successful
workshops and classes and group interactive
sessions. For more details please visit the course
website:

<http://www.tokara.net/kazakoshi/kenshucore.html>