

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Wadaiko Ensemble TOKARA was founded on March 7th, 2004 in Nagano Prefecture, Japan by Art Lee, who brought together various taiko and percussion group members to begin the challenge of intensified training of the mind and body in the strict discipline of the taiko. Since then TOKARA has become a strong force in the world of taiko, both in and out of Japan.

TOKARA kicked off its international debut in 2004 with a six-week coast-to-coast tour of the U.S. and Canada. Then a two-month tour in 2005...both to critical acclaim and sold out audiences. TOKARA has performed as the main attraction in many events, including: Hamanako Hanahaku All-Japan Expo and the Taipei City 120th Anniversary World Music Festival. Averaging 65 performances a year, TOKARA has become known for its electrifying speed and power, as well as their own arrangements of movement that incorporate the smooth, circular motions of the Chinese martial arts and dance.

In addition to the intensive process of continually reinventing new pieces and playing styles in an attempt to further develop the group's originality, TOKARA continues to research and study traditional wadaiko pieces, and to incorporate arrangements of these pieces into their performances.

Wadaiko Ensemble TOKARA is led by Art Lee, who is renowned for becoming the first person ever to obtain permission from the Japanese Government in order to acquire an Artist Visa to live and work in Japan as a Professional Wadaiko Artist.

TOKARA – The Name

TOKARA literally means “Tooku kara”, or “from afar” in Japanese.

The Chinese character 遙 is generally pronounced “Haruka” in Japanese and “Yao” in Chinese. Its meaning includes “from far away” and “in the distance”. This character was bestowed upon us during our tour in Taiwan, and has since become our official character, and pronounced “TOKARA”.

MANAGEMENT DETAILS

TOKARA Office Contact: (Japanese)Yukari Ichise (English)Art Lee

Postal Address: 831-1 Kega, Iida City, Nagano-ken, Japan 〒395-0813

TEL/FAX: 81-265-59-8768(from outside Japan)

Email: info@tokara.net

Website: www.tokara.net

Total number of people in touring party: Four to Six

Art Lee – Founder, Artistic Director

Art Lee is the first, and currently the only person in the world ever to obtain an artist visa from the Japanese government to teach taiko and lead the life of a professional taiko artist in Japan.

In 1994, he was invited to join one of the world's most famed taiko groups, Za Ondekoza, for their U.S. and Japan Tour, ending with a milestone performance at Carnegie Hall.

Before becoming a solo artist in 2001, he was a featured performer with groups including the Sacramento Taiko Dan and Ondekoza. He has also composed music for various events within Japan and abroad, including the 2002 Beijing World Music Festival.

In October 2005, he won First Place in the solo section of the world's most prestigious Wadaiko Contest – the Tokyo International Wadaiko Contest. He has also won the Unique Prize for Skill and Artistry at both the All-Japan Wadaiko Contest and the Kumamoto Odaiko Championships.

Harumi Tamaoki – Performer

Harumi began taiko in 2003 with Koihime Daiko in her native Achi Village. Soon after, she learned steadily and moved quickly to become one of the founding members of Tokara and has since toured with the group all over the world. Harumi brings a profound joy and laughter to every performance which is contagious to all around. Audiences around the world especially enjoy her performance in one of her favorite and the groups signature piece; Hatou no Hibiki.

Matt Steitle – Performer

Matt started learning taiko in Achi Village in September of 2003 and is a founding member of TOKARA. Prior to joining TOKARA, he was an active concert musician and composer for over 10 years as a Marching Band Drum Captain.

Kuniharu Hara – Performer

Kuniharu began taiko as a member of Osuwa Daiko in 1998, from which time he studied both taiko drumming and drum making under Daihachi Oguchi. In 2005, he joined Tokara and also started his own taiko drum manufacturing company. He performs during half of the year, and is busy making taiko drums the other half.

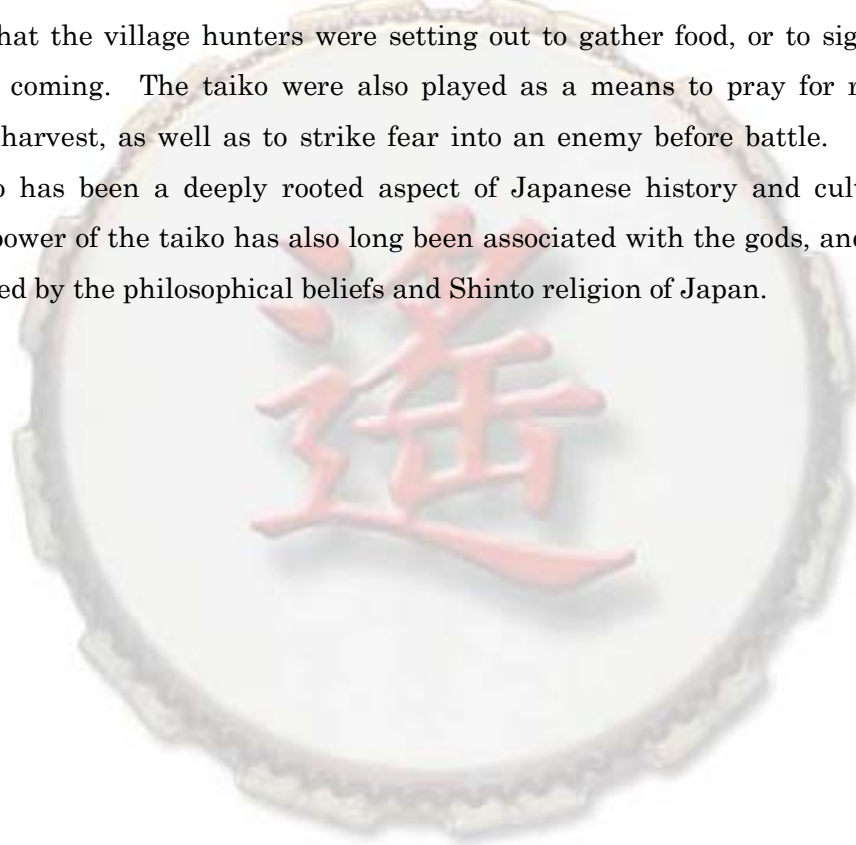
Yukari Ichise – Performer, Costume Designer

Yukari began taiko in May of 2005 as a member of Tendo, a beginner/intermediate taiko group in Achi Village. She became the costume designer and maker since Tokara's creation, and later joined the group as an apprentice performing member in 2006. Though she has only been playing a short time, her speciality, Kakegoe (taiko shouts), are known internationally to bring power to each performance

About Taiko

Taiko (also called Wadaiko, literally meaning “Large Japanese Drum”) is a blend of percussion and the visual arts. The three distinct components of percussion, music and dance are interwoven with kakegoe, kata and waza (voice, form and technique) to create a highly sophisticated form of ensemble performance.

About seven thousand years ago, in the Jomon period, simple taiko beats would be used to signal that the village hunters were setting out to gather food, or to signal that a storm was coming. The taiko were also played as a means to pray for rain and a successful harvest, as well as to strike fear into an enemy before battle. Since that time, taiko has been a deeply rooted aspect of Japanese history and culture. The rumbling power of the taiko has also long been associated with the gods, and has been appropriated by the philosophical beliefs and Shinto religion of Japan.



**Wadaiko Artist Art Lee and Wadaiko Ensemble TOKARA
Touring - National and International
2004 - Present**

2006 – 2007

Australia Tour – Year 2006 Australia/Japan Friendship
Art Lee Solo Odaiko Performance at the Wadaiko All-Stars Concert in Tokyo
Owase Bushi Festival
1st Annual Doko Demo Ongaku Japan Tour
Art Lee CD Debut Japan Tour
Takayama Wadaiko Festival Matsuri no Mori
1st Annual Saiwai Shimoina Wadaiko Festival Concert
Takayama All-Japan Championship Wadaiko Concert
Collaboration with Ragamala Dance and Theatre – Japan/U.S.

2005 – 2006 Season

Taipei City 120th Anniversary Concert – Taiwan
“Toward the Undiscovered Country” Japan, Asia and North America Tours
Aoyama Kenbunroku – Tokyo
Inadani Geijutsu Festival – Iida City, Japan
Canvas LiveHouse concert
Art Lee Hiroshima Solo Concert
Omachi Snow Festival
2005 Japan Expo
Art Lee Solo Tour – Winter’s Echo
1st annual Wadaiko All-Stars Concert with Grandmaster Daihachi Oguchi
Japan Representative Group at World Drum and Dance Festival

2004 – 2005 Season

Shizuoka International Horticultural Festival
EXISTENSION Tour – Japan
Michikusa Tour – North America
1st U.K. Taiko Festival with GrandMaster Daihachi Oguchi
Rhythmsticks Festival – Queen Elizabeth Hall, London

Performances Available For Booking

Nagisa Monogatari – 渚物語

Original

The new opening piece of Wadaiko Ensemble TOKARA is the story of one who sits upon the beach sands for nearly an eternity, watching the world through the reflections of the sea before him. From the calm of midnight, to the climbing sun and building waves of midday. From the time of evening when all go again their own ways, back to the calm of night once more.

MIZUKAGAMI – ミズカガミ

Original

This is the second of three new pieces to come out at the end of 2006. It is played on all shimedaiko (small drum with a high pitch) where the left side players mirror the right, and inner players mirror the outer players. The speed and intricacy of this piece was received with thundering applause at its debut in Japan.

SVA – スバ

Original

A new work by Wadaiko Ensemble TOKARA and Ragamala Music and Dance Theater, this collaboration between two culturally-based art forms— Japanese Taiko and Bharatanatyam Dance —brings the driving percussion and sweeping physicality of the drummers into conversation with the complex rhythms and athletic precision of the dancers. Sva explores the kinships between the two art forms and the Hindu and Shinto spiritual traditions from which they emerge. The graceful melodies of Tokara Artistic Director Art Lee on the shinobue flute, woven together with Carnatic (South Indian classical) flute by V. K. Raman, augment the powerful rhythms of the Taiko.

Yatai Bayashi – 屋台囃子

traditional/arranged by TOKARA

Originating in Chichibu, Saitama Prefecture, this piece is played in a sitting position, simulating the posture needed during various festivals in Japan. The player sits inside a small and intricately carved float which is pulled and pushed very quickly by nearly one hundred people. Depending upon the rhythms played, everyone will know whether to turn left or right or to stop.

Kandou – 間道

Original

Kandou signifies what lies between a very busy road, the calm in the eye of the storm, and how it can be easily forgotten when caught up in the storm of that busy road. This piece has recently been revised and has become one of the favorites at festival performances and school performances.

Buchiawase – ぶち合わせ

traditional/arranged by TOKARA

In the south of Tokyo on the Miura Peninsula, "Buchiawase" is played after a successful round of fishing. There is a contest. One Taiko-group plays the piece on the mountain in Minsaki, the other group on the opposite mountain. "Buchiawase" is usually played so powerfully and aggressively that it is also called "Kenka Daiko", which means "The Fighting Drums"

Miyake Daiko – 三宅太鼓

traditional/arranged by TOKARA

Around the island of Miyake, just off the coast of Tokyo, the ocean caresses, slowly and smoothly, the outstretched land. As the waters move away from the island, they begin to move rapidly and gain strength as the wind and the ocean floor pushes the waters upward and on, more powerfully until reaching the mainland with full force.

Hatou no Hibiki – 波頭の響き

Original/Group Signature Piece

Who doesn't enjoy walking up and down the beach, listening to the ocean and the birds, and that cute dog who just knocked you over trying to get to his frisbee? At the bottom of the beach, we can see the Hatou, where the water turns white as it's kicked up by sand and rock". The name signifies the beauty and calm of the lapping waves, but the piece itself takes you to a party...the one you can hear and see just beneath those lapping waves as the rocks and sand bump each other. This is TOKARA's signature piece, and is the #1 audience favorite.

Kagiri – 火霧

Original

"The fiery fog" is all around us.

It is what heats us up when we play.

It is what fires our intensity and keeps us focused.

It presses us to go on and on, and to never give up.

It augments our strength and gives us confidence.

It ignites our hearts and makes us dance.

The "Kagiri" is all around us.

Tonbane Daiko – 飛跳太鼓

Arranged by TOKARA

We have been honored to be requested by Grandmaster Daihachi Oguchi for us to perform this piece during our North America tours. A very fun piece often played at our school programs. A powerful mix of dance and drum.

Asahi – 旭

Original

Odaiko Solo performed by Art Lee, who is the 2005 Grand Champion of the World's most renowned Odaiko Contest – The Tokyo International Wadaiko Contest.

CHOREOGRAPHIC COMMISSIONS

TOKARA enthusiastically collaborates with dancers and musicians of all styles. Art Lee's choreographic collaborations have involved Indian, Flamenco, African, Japanese and Modern dance companies, as well as piano, Djembe, Korean Dance, and Philharmonic Orchestras. Recent commissions include Ragamala Dance and Theater, and Shakuhachi and Koto Ensemble Rivelta.

RESIDENCY OPTIONS

TOKARA offers one of the most well-known and respected taiko residency programs in the world. Since being given the title of Master Wadaiko Artist by Grandmaster Daihachi Oguchi, Artistic Director Art Lee has gained an international reputation for offering a diverse range of community and school programs that give students a chance to explore the culture of Japan and the world of Taiko in Japan.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND RESIDENCIES

Art Lee has been vigorously involved in education since 1994. He has taught weekly classes in both the U.S. and currently in Japan, as well as being the resident instructor of community groups: Tento and Koihime Daiko. He is also the Traditional Wadaiko and Cultural Music Studies at Daiichi Elementary School in Japan. Since 2004, TOKARA has conducted over 150 school educational performances and lectures in Japan, The United States, Canada, and Taiwan. Art Lee has further conducted special taiko education workshops and residencies in six countries.

Art Lee began the INADANI Taiko Drumming Course in Nagano, Japan; a one week course that is currently one of the most sought-after taiko courses in Japan. He has also conducted one to two month residencies in the United Kingdom, and twice in Australia.

Activities

TOKARA presents lecture demonstrations lasting 45 minutes, in which students are given a basic introduction to TOKARA and to Japanese taiko and culture, as well as a chance to view a performance of wadaiko pieces from the group's repertoire.

TOKARA offers single workshops as well as long-term residencies, each of which can be adapted for participants of all levels, from elementary school performances to university classes and demonstrations to community workshops. Depending on the length of the residency and the preference of the presenter, the following topics may be covered:

- Introduction to Taiko Instruments
- Movement and Rhythm
- Traditional Taiko Pieces
- Introduction to Japan
- Japanese Language and Daily Life

Technical Requirements

Wadaiko Artist Art Lee and/or Wadaiko Ensemble TOKARA, both managed by the TOKARA Office, have a diverse program which can be changed to fit a wide variety of settings; from proscenium, alley and thrust stage and stadium concerts to school shows, outdoor festivals, galleries and grand opening performances. TOKARA will attempt to accommodate all situations.

Preferred stage dimensions for TOKARA for theater presentations:

10 meter proscenium opening (minimum 6 meters)

10 meter wide at wings

8 meter depth from the front of curtain to last working line set

There should be a depth of one meter free from all obstructions between the last line set and the back wall for fast crossovers. There should be a minimum of five meters clear wing space per side.

Note: The above dimensions can be adjusted down for performances of one or two performers.

Floor: TOKARA's repertoire is a mixture of percussion, dance, and martial arts. Keeping this in mind, the floor of the stage must be smooth and level. For outdoor events, large wooden platforms must be free of raised nail heads. Gaps between boards must be covered with black gaffer's tape or black duct tape. While reasonable alternatives are acceptable, silver duct tape is not. The floor must be smooth and ripple free. Dips and rises on floors are very dangerous to our performers. All costs of the floor and its installation shall be the cost of the presenter.

Use of stage: TOKARA is to be the sole occupant of the auditorium and attendant facilities, which will be provided to TOKARA by the local presenter, from the beginning of the load-in until the end of the load-out unless prior agreement is obtained from TOKARA permitting the use of the auditorium by groups or individuals.

Crew Call: Crew call for performances is one hour prior to curtain. The dressing rooms must be open and available to TOKARA all day of the first performance and all performances thereafter. Group class, warm-up and additional rehearsals as required will also be scheduled.

Heating: Because drummer's muscles tighten in cool air and drafts, proper heat levels must be maintained in the playing area and in the dressing rooms during all rehearsals and performances. Local presenter agrees to make reasonable efforts to control and regulate any temperature control system so that the above levels can be maintained and excessive drafts and mechanical noise eliminated.

Dressing Rooms: Presenter shall provide clean, private, well ventilated and well lighted dressing rooms with private toilet facilities capable of being locked at any time for 4 to 8 performers. Dressing rooms must be equipped with:

- At least one full length mirror
- Adequate AC outlets
- No smoking signs on the door of the dressing room
- Coat hangers and wardrobe racks
- Chairs for up to 8 performers
- Hot and cold running water

Un-opened bottled water is requested of the presenter for rehearsals and performances.

Sound: TOKARA does not carry a sound system or sound equipment. Presenter will provide a sound operator and at least four boom-stand microphones (and one wireless microphone for bamboo flute, if possible). Sound control and level is totally at TOKARA's discretion; however a reasonable effort will be made to accommodate the presenter's request, provided that a representative of the presenter is present when sound levels are prepared.

Lighting: TOKARA does not carry lighting equipment necessary for performance of the repertoire. Presenter agrees that all lighting equipment will be provided at its own expense. Presenter further agrees that all equipment necessary for TOKARA's performance(s) shall be in good working order and present at the theatre prior to the company's arrival.

Presenter agrees to provide a ground plan that gives the scale of the stage and auditorium, lighting inventory, and rigging plot at least one month prior to the first performance.

Local presenter will be responsible for providing stagehands required whether by local union rules or by the needs of the production. MINIMUM CREW AGE IS 17.

Please contact TOKARA Artistic Director, Art Lee with any questions about technical requirements.

TOKARA Office: 831-1 Kega, Iida-city, Nagano-ken 〒395-0813 Japan
TEL: 81-265-59-8768

For the Local Presenter:

For the Artist:

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Date:.....

Date:.....