Flynn Center Presents

Kodo Taiko Drummers
Welcome to the 2018-2019 Student Matinee Season!

Today’s scholars and researchers say creativity is the top skill our kids will need when they enter the workforce of the future, so we salute YOU for valuing the educational and inspirational power of live performance. By using this study guide you are taking an even greater step toward implementing the arts as a vital and inspiring educational tool.

We hope you find this guide useful and that it deepens your students’ connection to the material. If we can help in any way, please contact sms@flynncenter.org.

Enjoy the show! -Education Staff

An immense thank you...

The Flynn Center recognizes that field trip resources for schools are extremely limited, thus matinee prices for schools are significantly lower than prices for public performances. As a non-profit organization, the Flynn is deeply grateful to the foundations, corporations, and individuals whose generous financial support keeps matinees affordable for schools.

Thank you to the Flynn Matinee 2018-2019 underwriters:
About Kodo

The taiko: a traditional Japanese drum with limitless rhythmic possibilities. Kodo’s mission is to explore these possibilities, and in the process forge new directions for a vibrant living art-form. In Japanese, the word “Kodo” holds a double meaning. It can be translated as “heartbeat,” the primal source of all rhythm. Indeed, the great taiko is thought to be reminiscent of a mother’s heartbeat as felt from the womb, and babies are often lulled to sleep by its thunderous vibrations. If read in a different context however, Kodo can also mean “children of the drum,” which reflects the group’s desire to play the drums with the simple heart of a child.

Since the group’s debut at Berliner Festspiele in 1981, Kodo has given over 6,000 performances in 50 countries on five continents. This figure includes 3,900 performances under the “One Earth” banner, a theme that embodies Kodo’s desire to transcend language and cultural boundaries, all while reminding their audiences of the common bonds we all share as human beings. In addition to its theater schedule, Kodo enjoys working with thousands of school children across Japan through its ongoing “School Workshop Performance” tours. The ensemble also participates in a wide range of projects and events, which includes headlining major international festivals, contributing to motion picture soundtracks, and collaborating with a wide variety of global performing arts leaders.

In 2001, members of Kodo became the first Japanese artists to perform at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert in Oslo, Norway. The following year, Kodo was featured in the official anthem of the 2002 FIFA World Cup KOREA/JAPAN™, and performed live at official World Cup concerts. Then in 2003, worldwide acclaim for the Chinese movie “HERO” drew even more attention to Kodo for its work on the motion picture soundtrack. In 2006, Kodo realized its first on-stage collaboration with Kabuki luminary Tamasaburo Bando in “Amaterasu,” a musical dance play based on a Japanese myth. This performance served as a catalyst for Kodo, propelling them towards new forms of percussive expression, and paving the way to encore performances on even more influential stages, including Tokyo’s iconic Kabukiza Theater. Bando accepted the invitation to become Kodo’s artistic director from 2012 and through 2016.

Kodo’s activities are not limited to the stage. Every year since 1988, the rich, natural splendor of Sado sets the scene for Earth Celebration (EC), Kodo’s international arts festival. Produced by Kodo in cooperation with the people of Sado Island, EC seeks to create an alternative global culture through musical and cultural collaborations with artists from around the world. It is the nation’s longest running music festival, and has been described by the New York Times as “Japan’s leading music event.” In 2008, the Japan Center for Regional Development presented Earth Celebration with the “Furusato Event First Prize,” in recognition of the festival’s significant efforts to introduce Sado Island to the nation. In 2009, the Earth Celebration Committee was awarded the Tiffany Foundation Award for the Preservation of Japanese Traditional Arts and Culture in Contemporary Society, in recognition of the organization’s “notable contribution to the promotion of Japanese traditional culture and to the revitalization of the local community.”

The Kodo Cultural Foundation was established in 1997 with the goal of sharing the group’s experiences and giving back to the community via social education and local development programs. The foundation covers a broad range of activities. In addition to managing an array of workshops, it produces “Earth Celebration,” Kodo’s annual performing arts festival. It also manages the Kodo Apprentice Centre, which nurtures each new generation of Kodo performers. In addition, the foundation runs Sado Island Taiko Centre (Tatakokan), all while both supporting and conducting research on traditional culture and performing arts.

On November 1, 2011, the Kodo Cultural Foundation was recognized as a Public Interest Corporation in Japan.

Kodo has also formed collaborative ties with Tokyo’s Bunkyo Ward and the Bunkyo Academy Foundation, as well as with Kashiwazaki Shimin Kaikan Alforet, a cultural hall in Niigata Prefecture. Through a range of cooperative projects like these, Kodo continues to work closely with these organizations to promote performing arts and culture in their local area.
Kodo Village and Sado Island

In 1988 Kodo moved to 13.2 hectares of land on the Ogi Peninsula and established the Kodo Village. Now completed are the Main Office Building, Rehearsal Hall, Residential Building, Workshop and Recording Studio. The lives of 60 Kodo members from throughout Japan are centered on this village. Other Kodo facilities on the island include the Kodo Apprentice Centre and the Old Rehearsal Hall in an former schoolhouse which served as the group’s previous headquarters.

In the early 1970’s, in the days of student revolt, Kodo had a youthful dream to build a school for the traditional Japanese performing arts and crafts (Nihon Kai Daigaku, The Sea of Japan College). Sado Islanders’ receptiveness to that dream encouraged the original members to move here. To achieve this goal the group needed to develop the necessary resources and so ‘Sado no Kuni, Ondekoza’ was established and set out to bring the sound of the Japanese taiko to the world.

In 1981 the group re-launched our group under the name ‘Kodo’ and eventually moved to their current home on the Ogi peninsula, Kodo Village. In this beautiful natural environment Kodo is developing a centre devoted to creativity and exchange.

From the early 17th century, when one of the world’s richest gold mines was discovered, Sado Island served as a keystone in Japan’s economy and a vital stopover for the Kitamae ships that plied Japan’s coast stretching from Osaka to Hokkaido. These ships brought not only trade but a lively cultural infusion. 260 kilometres in circumference, Sado lies at the junction of warm currents from the south and cold from the north, making it both culturally and climatically like a microcosm of Japan as a whole.

Sado’s history includes the banishment of many notables, like Zeami – the founder of noh, Japan’s most sophisticated theatrical tradition. Sado’s status as a fife run directly by the national government also gave islanders the wherewithal to indulge themselves in the arts, as evidenced by over thirty noh theatres dotted throughout the island and by the not uncommon occurrence of farmers humming refrains from the noh repertoire as they work their fields. Together with its three genres of puppet theatre and a wealth of festivals held throughout the year, Sado has been referred to as a ‘floating treasure chest’ of traditional culture. Sado is not only favoured with lush mountain scenery encircled by the sea, It is also the last Japanese home of the severely endangered Japanese Crested Ibis (Nipponia Nippon). We consider it a blessing to live amidst such cultural and natural beauty, and treasure the immense contribution it makes to our own creativity.
Kodo Members, Experience, and Drums

As of October 2016, there are 30 performing members (22 men, 8 women) and 5 junior members. This number includes four Distinguished Members: Yoshikazu Fujimoto, Yoko Fujimoto, Chieko Kojima, and Motofumi Yamaguchi. The performers range in age from 21 to 64 years old, with an average age of 31. There are 31 staff members, and if you include Kodo’s apprentices and casual staff, the Kodo Group in its entirety contains around 100 members. There are 5 staff members from Sado Island. The other members come from as far away as Hokkaido and Okinawa, and everywhere in between.

Kodo spends long spans of time on the road while on tour, and the sizeable group is often divided into two or three separate casts in order to perform at different locations on any given day. About one third of the year is spent on tour abroad, and one third is spent performing throughout Japan. The final third is spent on Sado Island creating new works and rehearsing.

For some years after the group first formed, Kodo members lived communally. This tradition remains for younger members, who live together in dormitory-style accommodations at Kodo Village, but senior members now live in nearby communities and commute to the Village every day.

The media often mentions that Kodo members “go running together early each morning,” but that is no longer the case. Kodo apprentices continue to rise early and do physical training as part of their routine, but full-fledged members are not required to follow any particular fitness regime. Instead, every Kodo member is responsible for his or her own fitness and physical care.

The taiko drums that Kodo use can be roughly divided into three main categories: miya-daiko, oke-daiko, and shime-daiko. Miya-daiko are drums with shells comprised of one solid piece of hollowed-out wood and fixed drumheads, while oke-daiko are drums with a shell constructed like a barrel, using separate planks of wood and tunable drumheads. The third group, shime-daiko, are drums with a shell made of one solid piece of hollowed-out wood, but with tunable drumheads. While the cowhide head of the oke-daiko and shime-daiko are fastened on with ropes that stretch along the sides of the drum body, the heads of miya-daiko are fixed in place by metal tacks. Depending on the size and shape of the shell, miya-daiko can be called o-daiko (large drum), chu-daiko (middle-sized drum), and hirado-daiko (large flat drum).

The shell of the large o-daiko is made from the trunk of a large tree, such as Japanese Zelkova (keyaki) or African Bubinga. The heads of these drums each measure over one meter in diameter and are made from the hide of one large cow. The weight of the drum together with the stand (yatai) on which it rests is a staggering 400 kg. (882 lbs.). Kodo uses 30 to 50 taiko for a standard theater performance, depending on the production and program.
The Clothing of Taiko

Taiko is at its roots a folk music. It grew from the need for music at festivals and celebrations in ancient Japanese village life. All of the people in the village were included; farmers, carpenters, fishermen, everyone. When they played, they often wore the clothes they worked in. Over time these work clothes developed into the clothing worn today.

- **Hatchimaki** (headband) was originally used by farmers and fishermen as a towel to wipe away sweat. Today it is worn by anyone that intends to work hard. The Japanese also believe that putting pressure on the forehead helps concentration. Japanese children wear the Hatchimaki with the rising sun symbol to help them study.

- **Happi** - The coat worn by taiko players is called the Happi coat. It is believed that this style developed from a coat designed by the fire brigades of Tokyo in the Edo period. It is meant to be simple, colorful and provide for freedom of movement, perfect for taiko. Happi comes from the Chinese word for chair covering that it in some way resembles.

- **Donburi** or vest was originally a carpenter’s tool belt. It has many pockets for tools, nails, and rulers. After a Taiko piece is played, the drummer will often use the pockets of his Donburi to hold the bachii or drumsticks while moving equipment.

- **Pants** - The pants are referred to as **Momohiki**.

- **Tabi** or wristbands are worn to keep the wrists warm and limber during cold Japanese winters. They also prevent sweat from running onto the hands and making the bachii slippery.

- **Teki** or wristbands are worn to keep the wrists warm and limber during cold Japanese winters. They also prevent sweat from running onto the hands and making the bachii slippery.

- **Bachii**. Drummers use different stick sizes, shapes and weights depending on the drum being played. In Japan, Japanese oak is most often used because it has a long straight grain. This helps prevent small pieces chipping off when the drum is played very hard. In America, drummers use oak or ironwood.
**ACTIVITIES**

**Sounds from the Natural World**

One defining characteristic of Japanese music is its affinity for and inclusion of sounds from the natural world. The taiko has been used to represent thunder, earthquakes and tidal waves. Ask students to sit quietly for 1-2 minutes, preferably outside. Write down the different sounds they hear. Was there a barking sound? Chairs scraping? An air sound? A metallic sound? A quick sound? Slow sound? Have the group see if they can replicate (sing, clap, tap) the melody in everyone’s sound in some sort of pattern, preferably in the same sequence and timing that they heard it. (Allow space to be a part of the piece)

You can also demonstrate natural percussion rhythms. Take a ball (basketballs work great). Drop it from head height. Listen to the accelerating rhythm of the sounds. This accelerating rhythm is used frequently in Japanese music.

**Movement Memories**

Invite each student to choose one particular movement from the show that stands out in their memory. Remind them of the different types of moves they saw and ask for volunteers to demonstrate the movements as best they remember them. As each volunteer performs a movement, invite everyone to create their own interpretation of that same movement and perform these pieces simultaneously. (Hint: use the lights in your room to cue the start and end of the “performances.”) Ask the students what made these movements memorable.

**Bare Bones Response**

Invite students to make a list of the feelings evoked in them during the show or images inspired by the performance. From their lists, ask them to select one feeling or image and write a cinquain (5 line) poem, either as a group or individually, reflecting on how the performance expressed the culture. Here is the format:

NOUN
2 ADJECTIVES
3 GERUNDS (-ing words)
SIMILE NOUN (synonym for the word in line one)

**Concepts of Culture and Tradition**

Different cultures have different traditions of food, clothing, language, and arts. The arts of each culture are often offered as ways to celebrate and share our different cultures.

**Activity:** Give students a chance to reflect on the idea of culture and tradition through a series of quick writing exercises. For each of the following prompts give students five minutes to respond in writing.

- What are some of the cultural traditions you celebrate?
- What other cultural celebrations or traditions are you familiar with?
- What can you learn about people by experiencing the art that they create and perform?
- How do these different art forms help people to express their emotions and/or tell their stories?
- What cultural influences are you already aware of? Where do they come from? How do they show up in your family? What feelings do you have about these cultural influences and the ways they play out in your life? Do you feel joyful? grateful? confused? embarrassed? angry?
- What else do you think you could discover about your family’s cultural heritage and how it affects your family? Does one part of your heritage seem to have a greater influence in your family’s life than another? Do you know the cultural background of both of your birth parents? Do you know the cultural background of non-biological family members who have a strong influence on your life?
- What stories does your family tell to remember their cultural heritage? Are their pictures and artifacts in your home that go along with these stories? Are there pictures and objects you do not know the story behind? Who could you ask?
Making a Hatchimaki

Purchase several yards of white cotton material. Cut the material into 2-3” strips, one for each student. For 36” material, trim the length to 20-26” depending on the age of the students. Have the students draw a small picture from Japanese culture in a 2” square in the exact center of the strip. Mt. Fuji, or the Rising Sun are always easy. The intent is to place a symbol of importance in an area that will be in constant focus or attention. In Japan, school mascot or emblem is often used and so would also be a good choice. When finished, have them tie the Hatchimaki as follows:

- 1. Place the fabric flat, with the picture face down.
- 2. Fold the fabric in thirds lengthwise so that it forms along strip with the picture still showing. 3. Twist the two ends of the Hatchimaki in opposite directions, so that it becomes ropelike.
- 4. Grasp the hatchimaki at either end and place the center against your forehead with the picture (or as much as is still visible) facing out.
- 5. Cross your hands behind your head, right over left.
- 6. Allow your right hand to drop, and your left to rise, then uncross your hands. This will cause a twist to form in the hatchimaki.
- 7. Still holding onto the ends, take the twist and rotate it forward (towards your head- or clockwise as seen from the right) and down.
- The ends should be now be trapped by the hatchimaki and will stay in place.

Have the students wear these hatchimaki for some period of time. Then ask them what they notice. Do they notice any difference? Do the hatchimacki help concentration, focus? Are they distracting?

Exploring Japanese Folktales

To get a deeper sense of the culture, read a few traditional folk tales by a selection of translators. The following provides a good place to start. The ones marked with * are picture books.

- "Mosel, Arlene. The Funny Little Woman. Dutton, 1972. While chasing a dumpling, a little lady is captured by wicked creatures from whom she escapes with the means of becoming the richest woman in Japan.
- Myers, Tim, Tanuki’s Gift: A Japanese Tale. Marshall Cavendish, 2003. One winter, a priest takes in a furry tanuki and the two become friends, but when the tanuki tries to repay the priest, they both learn a lesson.
- "Schroeder, Alan. Lily and the Wooden Bowl. Doubleday, 1994. A young girl who wears a wooden bowl over her face to hide her beauty overcomes a variety of trials and eventually finds love, riches and happiness.
Discussion Questions

● How did you feel when you listened to the Taiko performance? Did certain pieces make you feel differently than others did? What does this tell you about the power of music?

● Do you remember any of the rhythms played during the show? Can you recreate them?

● 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?

● What did you notice about the clothing worn by the performers? Why do you think wearing traditional Japanese clothing is important to the performers? What did the clothing add to the performance?

● 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 U.S. culture? What other cultures do you know of that have specific music or instruments used for cultural celebrations, activities? What do these instruments or music tell us about the cultures?

● Kodo used instruments besides the drums in their performance, such as a bamboo flute. Thinking about the sounds of one of the other instruments used in the performance, can you come up with a myth explaining its creation?
We can’t wait to see you at the theater!

Etiquette for Live Performances: The Essentials

- Listen, experience, imagine, discover, learn!
- Give your energy and attention to the performers.
- Please do not eat or drink in the theater.
- Talk only before and after the performance.
- Turn off wireless devices.
- No photos, videos, texting, or listening to music.

*These are guidelines... We understand that some students may need to experience the performance in their own way, and we are here to support all students and their unique needs.

The Flynn is a place for ALL students, and these tools can help!

Pre or Post-Show Video Chats:
Help students build enthusiasm or process their experience with a free, 5-10 minute video chat before or after the show! We can set up Skype/Facetime/Google Hangouts with your class to answer questions about the content, art form, and experience. Contact Kat, kredniss@flynncenter.org to set up your chat!

Autism and Sensory-Friendly Accommodations:
The Flynn Center has been working diligently to break down barriers for audience members with disabilities, with a particular focus on those with sensory-sensitivities. Social stories, break spaces, sensory-friendly materials, and more are available for all student matinees. Feel free to let us know ahead of time if any of these would be useful, or ask an usher at the show!

Educational Standards

The Common Core broadens the definition of a “text,” viewing performance as a form of text, so your students are experiencing and interacting with a text when they attend a Flynn show.

Seeing live performance provides rich opportunities to write reflections, narratives, arguments, and more. By writing responses and/or using the Flynn Study Guides, all performances can be linked to Common Core:

CC ELA: W 1-10

Student Matinees support the following National Core Arts Standards:

Creating: Anchor #1, Performing: Anchor #6, Responding: Anchor #7, #8, #9, and Connecting: Anchor #10 and #11.

You can use this performance and study guide to address the following Common Core Standards:

CC ELA: RL 1-10, SL 1-4, 1-4-6, RH 1-10

C3.D2. Geo.1-3, 5, 6, 10 & His.2.4

Teachers, a couple of reminders:

- Share your experience with us! Use the feedback links, or share your students’ artwork, writing, responses. We love to hear how experiences at the Flynn impact our audiences.
- Explore other student matinees at the Flynn this season. We still have seats in some shows and we’d love to help you or other teachers at your school enliven learning with an engaging arts experience!

We appreciate and value your feedback

- Click here to evaluate our study guides.
- Click here for Teacher Feedback Forms for the performance.
- Click here for Student Feedback Forms for the performance.
- Click here for Parent Forms to help parents engage with their children around the show.

This guide was written & compiled by the Education Department at the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts with content from the Kodo Website and company materials. Permission is granted for teachers, parents, and students who are coming to Flynn shows to copy & distribute this guide for educational purposes only.