



KODO TAIKO DRUMMING

ON-THE-BUS GUIDE

A REMINDER FOR STUDENTS ABOUT THEATER ETIQUETTE

- 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.

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.

A BIT OF BACKGROUND

Kodo is a Japanese group of artists, musicians and performers based on Sado Island in Japan. They use many musical instruments in their performances, but their work focuses primarily on *taiko* drumming. Taiko is the Japanese word for traditional drums, which are made from wood and animal hides. Originally, the group's name was simply Kodo, but in 2012 the official name of the group became "Kodo Taiko Performing Arts Ensemble." Kodo performs all over the world, and has gained both international and domestic recognition as a group dedicated to the re-creation of traditional Japanese performing arts, focusing on taiko drumming.

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 we 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 from everywhere in between.

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?