

# KODO TAIKO DRUMMING

## PARENT/CAREGIVER GUIDE

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Use this guide to jump-start a conversation with your child about the performance they saw recently – not only will you get to learn about what your child experienced, but it will also help them to process and reflect upon the onstage material.



## 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.

## 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.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was the performance about? ( Did it connect to history? To something else you've seen?)
- What did the performance make you think about? (Did it spark any new thoughts or give you any new understanding?)
- How did you connect ideas in the performance to ideas or realities in your own life? In the rest of the world?
- Can you remember something about the performance that you particularly liked or disliked? If so, what was it and why did it stand out to you?
- Did you have a favorite moment in the performance? Tell me about it.
- 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?