

MASATO BABA

Taiko Workshops

MEET THE ARTIST:

Masato Baba started playing taiko at age 6 under the tutelage of his parents and founding members of Shasta Taiko, Russel Baba and Jeanne Mercer. He performed and helped conduct workshops in Alaska, California, Oregon, Nevada and Canada. He was featured on the album “Spirit Drum – Taiko Stories from America”.

In 1996 he moved to Hawaii to study and perform with the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble. While in Hawaii he taught at Endo's school, the Taiko Center of the Pacific, and directed the center's youth group. He took part in recording Endo's albums: “Hibiki” and “Jugoya”. He performed and helped conduct workshops throughout Hawaii and the mainland U.S., Germany and Japan.

Baba lived in Tokyo, Japan and studied kumidaiko at Nihon Taiko Dojo under Tosha Kiyonari's number one student, Taro Kobayashi. He also studied “hayashi”, festival music, under Kyosuke Suzuki of the Wakayama school.

In his twenty two years of studying, performing and teaching Baba has become one of the most respected taiko players in North America. He has since become a founding member of the Los Angeles-based On Ensemble and is the musical director and a performing member of TAIKOPROJECT (re) generation.



MUSIC · CENTER

ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS:

Mr. Baba's music workshops introduce students to the instruments, rhythms and culture of the Japanese American taiko. Students have the opportunity to learn both simple and complex rhythm patterns that strengthen their musical perception and skill. They form a musical ensemble, incorporating physical elements of taiko such as kata (form) and kiai (spirited vocals), as well as basic musical concepts such as rhythm, tempo, dynamics and playing as an ensemble. Students will work on leadership skills as leaders of their own groups. Students will have the experience of playing authentic taiko drums, and will also have the opportunity to view video excerpts of taiko groups from all over the world. Cultural aspects of music are also covered, such as geographic origins, names of instruments and the history and development of taiko both in America and Japan.

Sessions begin with the history and development of taiko, taiko instrumentation and vocals used in learning how to play taiko. Students will learn basic posture, the correct techniques for controlling sticks and striking the drums. Throughout the workshop series, students will reflect on what they have learned and make connections to other areas of the curriculum. Mr. Baba will stress the importance of respect in the student's daily life as well as fostering respect for the artform by emphasizing that the students must be serious to be successful.

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP:

- Please have the students wear nametags for the workshop. It saves time if they are made beforehand!
- Review the importance of listening. Ask the students what it means to be a good listener. Why is it important in daily life? Why is it important when the artist is here?
- Ask students to do internet research on taiko drumming, to see all the different styles of taiko drumming in existence in Japan, the United States, Canada, and Europe.
- Have students learn and emphasize the practice of stretching, deep breathing and centering oneself.
- Remind students of the importance of respecting their peers and of working cooperatively together.

AFTER THE WORKSHOP:

- Review the major points presented in the workshops. What were the most important ideas? What parts of the workshop did the students like best? What movements were difficult? How could students improve their technique when playing?
- Continue to ask students about the importance of respect and how it affects their daily life and their future.
- Have the class create and write original songs and rhythm patterns using the processes outlined in the workshop sessions.
- Ask students to write about their experience of drumming
- Ask students what they might incorporate into taiko (music, dance, style, visual art) from their own culture, personal interests.