



Mugenkyo

Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers are the UK's first and only professional touring taiko group, and Europe's most established performing company in this fast-expanding field. Through performing over 100 concerts a year, the group have built a solid reputation for their hard-hitting and energetic performances since their establishment in 1994.

Mugenkyo's main work is touring a full-length concert at theatres and concert halls, including London Queen Elizabeth Hall, Nottingham Royal Concert Hall, Cambridge Corn Exchange, Gateshead Sage, Reading Hexagon, Bristol Colston Hall, Perth Concert Hall and York Grand Opera House, amongst others. The group has appeared on numerous television and radio programmes worldwide, including the Brit Awards, BBC Last Night of the Proms, the Generation Game and has even featured in a Bollywood film.

Mugenkyo present taiko in a modern and theatrical style – with precise choreography, dramatic lighting, and a variety of costumes ranging from the post-apocalyptic industrial to gorgeous earthy silks. The concert is extremely musically varied; powerful rhythms, huge taiko drums, delicate shinobue bamboo flute, expressive percussion, and dance. Through their 12 years of rigorous touring, Mugenkyo have developed a style that is uniquely their own. Retaining the traditional spirit of taiko, yet creating a thoroughly contemporary sound, Mugenkyo are forging a new path with their innovative approach.

Mugenkyo push the boundaries of Taiko with their various artistic collaborations. In 2004 Mugenkyo presented the show "Rinnetensho" with Tokyo-based contemporary dance group "Company East" on the theme of re-incarnation, a multi-media presentation using taiko, dance and projected visuals. In 2005 Mugenkyo collaborated with bagpiper and Scottish Musician of the Year, Stuart Cassells, which was broadcast live worldwide on BBC Last Night of the Proms. More recently Mugenkyo have toured with Hanayui from Sado Island, from the world-famous Kodo Drummers, appeared with electronic dance artist Kenji Williams at the Glastonbury Festival, toured with Japanese bellydance artist Lale Sayoko and co-wrote and performed "Yatra" a collaboration of South Asian

and Scottish traditional music for the 2008 & 2009 Mela Festivals. In 2010, the group collaborated on a joint tour with saxophonist Tommy Smith and the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, which receive rave reviews in the press.

Festival highlights over the years have included appearances at: Glastonbury Festival, the Rhythm Sticks Festival, Phoenix Rock Festival, and the Marlborough & Cork Jazz Festivals. Mugenkyo have also performed at numerous large-scale multimedia events including the 2003 Cup Final at the Millennium Stadium, and at the film premiere of "The Last Samurai".

Mugenkyo perform in Japan regularly: on invitation by the Japanese government to open the 2005 EU-Japan Year of Exchange, their 10th Anniversary Concert in 2004, and for the prince and princess at the British Embassy in Tokyo. To continue their ongoing training at the highest level, and further develop their strong foundations in technique, Mugenkyo return to Japan regularly, where founders of the group Neil Mackie and Miyuki Williams lived and trained intensively in 1992 – 1994 with Master Drummer Masaaki Kurumaya Sensei.

In 2002 the group established the Mugen Taiko Dojo: Centre for Taiko Drumming in the UK – the first purpose-built taiko dojo in Britain, based in rural Central Scotland. Under the umbrella of the Mugen Taiko Dojo, members of the group tour an award-winning educational concert at schools, undertake educational outreach projects with local authorities all over the UK, and run in-depth courses for adults and weekend residential workshops at the dojo.

MUGENKYO TAIKO DRUMMERS

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