



20th Anniversary

www.tokara.net



Who is Tokara?

ENGLISH

TOKARA was founded on March 7th, 2004 in Iida City Nagano, Japan by Wadaiko Artist Art Lee. Here, new members began the challenge of intensified training of the mind and body in the strict discipline of the taiko. Since then TOKARA has become a strong force in the world of Wadaiko (Taiko Drumming) both in Japan and internationally.

While incorporating arrangements of traditional Taiko pieces into their performance, Tokara has created an all new style of Taiko, where speed and power meet eloquent movements of dance and the circular fluidity of the Chinese martial arts and aikido. Tokara's new style of Taiko music also brings rhythm signatures from other cultures around the world to create a jazzy and exciting style of taiko music. Since the groups inception, Tokara tours three to four times a year in Asia, Europe, North America, and India, as well as regular appearances at some of the top Taiko performances and festivals all over Japan. The group annually produces the Saiwai Shimoina Wadaiko Festival in Iida City.

In addition to international touring, Tokara has created a unique education program of bringing Taiko enthusiasts and groups to Japan for various types of training. Among these include two award-winning intensive education programs; the INADANI Taiko Drumming Course for beginners and the TOKARA Wadaiko Bootcamp for intermediate/advanced practitioners.

DEUTSCH

Tokara ist eine der bedeutendsten Taiko-Gruppen Japans. Sie hat gerade eine 2-Jahres-Tournee rund um den Globus mit über 200 Konzerten und 80 Workshops in 12 Ländern beendet und dabei sensationelle 500 Konzerte in Schulen veranstaltet. Tokaras künstlerischer Leiter, Art Lee, gilt als einer der besten Taiko-Künstler weltweit und der einzige Nicht-Japaner, der jemals den weltberühmten Taiko-Wettbewerb Odaiko Grand Champion gewonnen hat. Er nimmt am All-Stars-of-Japan-Konzert in Tokio teil und ist der erste und einzige Nicht-Japaner weltweit, dem von der japanischen Regierung ein Visum also Taiko-Künstler ausgestellt wurde.

日本語

伝統的な和太鼓に中国武術、舞踊の曲線の動作を取り入れ、力強く流れる様な身体表現と、様々なリズムを融合したジャズの様でもある音楽が特徴の「TOKARA」。その驚異的なスピードとパワー、TOKARA流パフォーマンスに世界が注目している。毎年、日本、ヨーロッパ、北アメリカ、インド、オーストラリア、台湾などをめぐるワールドツアーを決行。メンバーは、年の半分以上を世界ツアーで過ごす。学校公演やワークショップにも力を入れ和太鼓の普及に努める。

リーダー兼 芸術監督であるアート・リーは、現在の太鼓界をリードするトップ奏者の一人として活躍。2001年、ソロ奏者として、世界で初めて日本政府より芸術ビザを取得。以来、現在に至るまで唯一の外国籍和太鼓アーティストとして日本はもとより、世界に活動の場を広げる。又2005年には、最も権威ある『東京国際和太鼓コンテスト・大太鼓部門』において、外国人初、唯一となる最優秀賞を受賞。



TOKARA

PERFORMERS

Yukari Ichise (Performer, Costume Designer)

Yukari has been a performer with TOKARA since 2006 although she has been playing taiko since 2004 and working with Art Lee in concert production since 2000.

She is the principal costume designer for TOKARA and Art Lee as a solo artist. She has also designed costumes for other taiko and music groups in Japan, Germany and Ireland.

Yukari has become known in particular for her Kakegoe (taiko shouts) and her enthusiastic playing style.

Yukari was commissioned to compose her first piece, "Chiyo Hounen Bayashi" in 2015 exclusively for Chiyo Village in Nagano Prefecture.



Dean Hayixbeck (Performer)

Dean is from Winnipeg, Canada where he began learning taiko in 2001. Dean first came to Japan to study taiko when he joined the INADANI Taiko Drumming Course in 2006.

He moved to Ina City, Japan in the autumn of 2007 and soon after became an apprentice of Art Lee.

Dean became a full member of Tokara on June 12th, 2010.



Tokara Matsuri Group

Tokara Matsuri Group was formed in 2015 by members of Art Lee's weekly taiko classes who wished to experience more of the Tokara style of training and performing, but who hold full-time jobs in and around Iida City, and therefore cannot tour internationally. Starting with three members, this group annually tours throughout Japan with TOKARA in 2023-2024.



Based in Iida City, Nagano Prefecture, Japan, the members of TOKARA work hard to build a strong artistic bridge between Japan and abroad using the TOKARA-style of taiko drumming, and to attain the highest level of communication through the taiko drum. This bridge includes collaborations with artists from many genres including Indian Dance, Classical Orchestra, Japanese Classical, African Percussion and Dance, Jazz, Theatre and others.

To every person who attends our performance and participates in our workshop, we are very honoured that you have taken a step on this bridge with us. We hope to continue toward many more places and meet many new people. And to keep strengthening this bridge together.

TOKARA

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Member Recruit and Class Information

www.tokara.net/tokaraboshu.html

演

奏

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ART LEE

FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

In more than three decades since his professional debut, award-winning Taiko soloist Art Lee has brought his virtuosity, expansive interpretations, and creative repertoire choices to diverse global audiences.

Art Lee is the first and only non-Japanese person to be crowned Solo Grand Champion of the world's most prestigious taiko competition in the world.

STUDY AND GROUPS

Art began the study of taiko in 1993 as a student of Master Tiffany Tamaribuchi, who was a prodigy of Grandmaster Seiichi Tanaka. In 1994, Art Lee was scouted by world famous taiko group, Za Ondekoza to join their year-long Japan Tour sponsored by Japan Arts. During this tour, Art made his international debut in several theaters including Suntory Hall, Dramacity, and finally returning to the U.S. for the last concert at Carnegie Hall in New York. Soon after, Art became a part-time instructor with Tamaribuchi's group, the Sacramento Taiko Dan, until his graduation from university in 1998.

Art Lee moved to Japan in 1998 and became a student of Grandmaster Daihachi Oguchi, who is renowned as the founding father of modern taiko drumming. Art has also performed extensively with Za Ondekoza and Daihachi Oguchi's elite performance group: Osuwa Daiko Ashura Gumi.

In 2003, Art created his own professional taiko group, Wadaiko Tokara. In 2004, Tokara made their performance debut during a three month international tour throughout North America and Asia. Under the direction of Art Lee, Tokara currently tours annually for up to six months throughout Japan, Europe and North America.

In 2001, Art Lee received international acclaim for becoming the first person in the world to be awarded an artist visa from the Japanese government to teach Taiko and lead the life of a professional Taiko artist in Japan.

SPECIAL AWARDS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Art Lee has become one of the most highly regarded taiko artists throughout the world of Japanese performing arts as well as the only non-Japanese taiko artist ever to have been granted the title of "Master Taiko Artist" within the taiko community by Grandmaster Daihachi Oguchi.

Special awards and other highlights to date include:

- 30th anniversary World Tour "Kobushi" - 2023
- Performances at the All-Stars of Japan Taiko Concert in the years 2006, 2009, 2011, and 2012
- Jerome Composers Commissioning Program Award - 2007
- Selected as Odaiko Leader for Kansai Super Show. Tokyo Dome - 2007
- Grand Champion - Tokyo International Taiko Competition - 2005
- Outstanding Skill Award - Kumamoto Odaiko Competition - 2002
- Outstanding Skill Award - Fuji Taiko Competition - 2002
- Top Three Soloist Award - All Japan Odaiko Contest - 2000, 2002



Touring Highlights

Regional, National and International



Canada



Japan



20th Anniversary, Japan



Art becomes Grand Champion



Arts in Education



Australia



Japan



Germany

2017-2023

- Performance with Brussels Philharmonic "Monoprism" (Maki Ishii) Belgium Premiere.
- Art Lee Solo Tour "Tashu Tayou" Winter 2020.
- AC Japan National Olympics Campaign
- Performance with Okanagan Symphony Orchestra featuring "Monoprism".
- Japan Taiko Representatives at the Japan Cultural Week in Czech Republic and Finland.
- Art Lee 25th Anniversary World Tour in Japan, Germany, Netherlands "Gouki Kadan".
- Okanagan District 33 School Tour - Canada.

2013-2016

- Tokara/Mugenkyo 20th Anniversary of Friendship United Kingdom Tour
- "Kazakoshi Two Year World Tour: over 350 performances and workshops throughout 15 countries.
- 41 Concerts at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.
- World Debut of "1001 Buddhas", collaboration with Ragamala Dance.
- "Haruka Naru Hibiki" Japan Tour with Ensemble Liberta.
- Japan Taiko Representatives at the Japan Cultural Week in Poznan, Poland and Bern, Switzerland.

2011-2012

- India, Delhi - Performance for Debut of Maruti Suzuki model car - Kizashi.
- Japan Taiko Representatives at the Germany/Japan Friendship Exhibition Week in Frankfurt, Germany and Japan Cultural Week in Valencia, Spain.
- TOKARA CD/DVD debut release.
- "Tenchi Shinmei" World Tour and Educational Outreach in 12 countries.

2009-2010

- Two weeks of 12 performances at the 42nd Street Theater Off Broadway, New York.
- "Sva" World Tour collaboration with Ragamala Dance - North America, United Kingdom, Japan.
- India Tour - Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Calcutta, Mumbai.
- "Kugeki Junrei" - Art Lee selected as one of three "Masters of the Odaiko" Japan Tour Concerts.

2007-2008

- Kansai Super Show - Tokyo Dome, Japan (Art Lee selected as one of five Odaiko Drum Leaders).
- Art Lee receives award from the American Composers Forum for composition of music for "Sva (Vital Force)".
- Art Lee selected to perform at the "All-Stars of Japan" Taiko concert at Aoyama Gekijyo in Tokyo.
- Japan Representative Group at World Drum and Dance Festival in Taipei, Taiwan.
- Australia Performances for Year 2006 Australia/Japan Friendship ship.
- Tokara performs at the Takayama City All-Japan Championship ship Wadaiko Concert.

Commissioned Works (composed by Art Lee):

- "1001 Buddhas"
- "Sva (Vital Force)"
For collaboration production between Tokara and Ragamala Dance (Bharatanatyam Dance).
- "FUKURO(the Owl)"
Commissioned by Hokkaido, Japan Taiko Group, Kurisaku Shima fukuro, as their signature performance piece.
- "Kagiri"
Full Concert Composition for concert tour collaboration with Shakuhachi and Koto Ensemble Rivella.
- Art Lee has also composed numerous pieces for TOKARA and other performance groups.

世界 遙 道



TOKARA World Tours 2004 - 2024



"Music is made into martial art by Wadaiko Tokara. Sharp and swift as swordsmen, this renowned, ethnically diverse group master breath-taking force and graceful beauty. Moments of intense focus merge into outbursts of joy, bringing an original beat to the ancient Japanese discipline of taiko drumming. With expert precision, and including informative, friendly explanation, the famous performer Art Lee and his fellows also seize the chance to have some fun...the eyes are opened to the versatility of percussion. With your seat shaking, your heart reverberating, you'll enjoy it just as much as the artists themselves. Visually enthralling, culturally enlightening, musically invigorating."



"It was an incredible experience. And I would emphasize the word - experience, because what we witnessed there transcends music, performance, dance, entertainment. It was all of that, and beyond. The crowd was captivated from beginning to end."



Audience Reviews

"Taiko drumming at its most skilful. The expertise, commitment, sensitivity, musicality and raucous enthusiasm of Tokara is an inspiration to anyone who has every tried to master an instrument. But then, Art Lee is widely acknowledged as the grand master of taiko, need I say more? Go whilst you have the opportunity to see them, you will leave inspired."



TOKARA WORLD TOUR
総公演回数
20 years - 22 countries



日本 オーストリア 台湾 カナダ インド ドイツ スイス フィンランド スペイン チェコ ポーランド ベルギー フランス アイルランド イギリス ハンガリー

ARTS EDUCATION RESIDENCIES WORKSHOPS CLASSES



**TOKARA OFFERS ONE OF THE MOST WELL-KNOWN AND
RESPECTED TAIKO RESIDENCY PROGRAMS IN THE WORLD**

Since being given the title of "Master Wadaiko Artist" by Grandmaster Daihachi Oguchi, Artistic Director Art Lee has gained an international reputation for offering a diverse range of community and educational programs that give students a chance to explore the culture of Japan and the world of Taiko in Japan. Programs range from two to five hour workshops, weekend taiko retreats, weeklong intensive courses (outlined below) to two or three month residencies. TOKARA also teaches specialized training for taiko groups who come to visit Japan.

In addition to workshops and classes, a variety of residencies are available for all levels. To date, Art Lee has visited more than ten countries to teach specialized residencies, including two month residencies as Visiting Artistic Director in both the United Kingdom and Australia. These two month residencies involved building taiko groups to performance-level ability.

TOKARA also presents a special performance with lecture and demonstration program for schools, lasting up to 45 minutes in which students are given a basic introduction to Japanese taiko and culture, as well as a chance to view a world-class performance and join the group onstage for a short trial.

WORKSHOP TYPES

1. Short Workshop - one to three hours.
2. One Day - four to six hours.
3. Weekend - Two days - up to five hours per day.
4. Intensives - Three to five days.
5. GRAND TOUR - Two weeks.
6. Two/Three Month Residency - Style and Creativity

INADANI TAIKO DRUMMING COURSE

Beginners/Intermediate Course - JAPAN

This course is designed for the purpose of bringing the taiko practitioner closer to understanding the art that is Wadaiko in Japan. For this reason, the training site, nestled between the mountains of Shimoina, was specifically chosen to enhance an experience and atmosphere which cannot be had in any other country of the world. This course offers a unique experience as it takes place in the heart of Japan - Nagano Prefecture. It is here that taiko, as a performing art, was created.

Each participant will be surrounded by and immersed in the culture from which comes the heart and spirit of the Wadaiko.

Details and application can be found
on the course website:

www.tokara.net/japantaikocourse.html

TOKARA WADAIKO BOOTCAMP

Intermediate/Advanced Course - JAPAN

The TOKARA Wadaiko Camp (also known as TOKARA Boot Camp) in Japan takes place during one of the most beautiful times of year in Japan...Cherry Blossom (Sakura) Season. This course will allow the taiko practitioner to fully immerse themselves in the world of taiko in Japan; from intensive training during the day to enjoying the rural life of Japan through festival performances every evening. This is an opportunity for participants to experience what it is like to live in Japan as a taiko player, and to train in and see firsthand the vast abundance of taiko styles that abode in Japan.

Details and application can be found
on the course website:

www.tokara.net/taikocamp.html

If you would like to book any of the above workshops, or you have a specific request for a workshop other than those listed above, please contact the TOKARA Japan Office.



JAPAN TAIKO DRUM GROUP

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