

Gyoko Taiko & Humber Taiko Summary Report for The St Hugh's Foundation

As Gyoko Taiko, the North East Lincolnshire section of our larger Humber Taiko organisation, we deliver Taiko projects across the region as well as touring and performing with our own small ensemble group. Taiko is Japanese style ensemble drumming which encompasses catchy rhythms and exciting choreography. We teach Taiko in schools to children as young as 4, we offer regular weekly classes and run corporate training programmes. We perform professionally and also offer more advanced training for those with previous experience. One of the obstacles we hit on our journey was the lack of further training for us as Taiko performers and instructors in, not only the region, but the UK as a whole. The companies here in the UK that we have trained with offered advice on how we could access further intensive professional training. We were advised to travel and work with a group in Japan or California. California, San Jose Taiko to be exact, was the destination we felt suited best due to there being no language barrier as well as the fact that we related more to their journey as western Taiko players outside of Japan.

We applied to the St Hugh's Foundation for support in professional and company development. We had three main aims; enhancement of our performing skills & techniques, training in Taiko composition, organisation structure and business consultation.

We created a two week programme of training with PJ Hirabayashi (founder and director emeritus of San Jose Taiko) and a two day plan with Kris Bergstrom of LA Taiko Institute.

Skills Training - PJ (and Kris in LA) took us through a number of exercises and routines to help us focus on our movement, drumming skills and techniques. We were given regular homework to complete and time in their rehearsal studio with access to all the equipment we needed. Roy Hirabayashi also worked with us, he introduced fue (the Japanese flute accompanying Taiko) and gave a number of specific lessons on this. We were also lucky enough to work on Chappa (Japanese cymbals) with Stewart Kume of San Jose Taiko, which was a surprise offering from the company!

Composition - Roy Hirabayashi spent time with us talking through the process of creating new work. He took us out of our comfort zone with improvisation techniques, movement exploration and guided us through ideas that worked or did not work. Roy supported us in creating a number of new ideas for a piece while PJ observed and gave input on movement work. The process taught us how to take one idea to the next level and work hard at developing it to performance standard.

Organisation and company development - we had a number of consultation sessions with PJ and Roy as well as San Jose Taiko artistic staff members including Wisa Uemura and Yurika Chiba who talked us through their company set up. This was a really rewarding experience and we came away with ideas of how to set levels of expectations and requirements for our different groups and staff members as well as paperwork and financial guidelines. We were invited to observe a number of different classes and rehearsals including professional performance group, the children's recreational clubs and the senior taiko club.

Creative outcomes - since our residency with San Jose Taiko we have written and debuted two new performance pieces to great acclaim as well having at least two other pieces in the pipeline. We are using the routines and exercises in our youth and adult training programmes to help develop our more experienced players to a higher standard. Our Gyoko Youth Taiko group have headlined the National youth concert at the UK Taiko Festival. Our training and success has helped us reach bigger audiences, we were booked to perform at the launch of the Humber Business week as well as a number of local festivals. We have also been booked to deliver training to a number of northern Taiko groups in October on the back of our training in America. We have been working with Hull City Council and York based practitioner, Emily Crossland, on an exciting and unique Taiko & Gamelan collaboration for which we have already premiered new work and will be continuing to develop new music in time for Hull City of Culture 2017.

Business outcomes - we have been featured as a success story at the North American Taiko Conference by PJ Hirabayashi which has greatly improved our company profile. We are also now in contact with the Taiko Community Alliance of America who have been liaising with us about the growth of Taiko in the UK. We have put a number of new systems into place which have improved the structure and delivery of our education work and weekly classes. In San Jose we had the opportunity to teach our locally written piece, 'Follow the Fishing', to members of Mountain View Buddhist Temple Taiko group and the professional performance team of San Jose Taiko which was a great honour for us. We are continuing to work on developing our company into a charitable organisation and hope to create local jobs and develop our role as ambassadors for our region through Taiko.



The full online video log of our training can be found here -

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLKaqSob1oDgKhKUM1LRluV4lv4H6p_ife