

STUDY GUIDE

DISCIPLINE:
MUSIC

ARTIST:
OTO-WA TAIKO



The following package is provided as a supplemental resource to enhance and support the artist’s visit.

It includes curricular connections, assessment strategies, and suggested classroom extensions. All materials are intended for use at the teacher’s discretion and may be adapted as necessary to suit the specific needs of the students.

THIS STUDY GUIDE

Discipline / Artist Example:



**Curriculum
Connections**



Suggested Classroom Extensions



**Assessment
Strategies**

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STUDY GUIDE: MUSIC

OTO-WA TAIKO DRUMMING PERFORMANCE

Program Overview

Artist Name: Oto-Wa Taiko

Artist Bio: Oto-Wa Taiko, a Japanese-Canadian drumming group from Ottawa, offers dynamic performances blending traditional and modern rhythms. Their energetic shows immerse participants in Japanese culture while promoting community and harmony. Perfect for schools and community venues, Oto-Wa Taiko provides an engaging, educational experience that inspires students through the powerful rhythms of taiko drumming.

Program Description: Oto-Wa Taiko, a renowned Japanese-Canadian taiko drumming group based in Ottawa, Ontario, brings a unique and powerful musical experience to your school or community venue. Participants will be immersed in an energetic and captivating Taiko performance that blends traditional Japanese rhythms with modern influences. This educational and engaging program not only promotes awareness and appreciation of Japanese culture but also fosters a sense of community and harmony among participants. Bring the dynamic rhythms and cultural richness of taiko drumming to your school and inspire your students with the transformative power of music and harmony. Book Oto-Wa Taiko for an unforgettable educational experience!



Artistic Discipline: Music

Recommended Grade Levels: K - 8

Session Logistics: In person only

Cultural Context: Asian Culture

Vocab bank/glossary: [Click here](#)



OTO-WA TAIKO DRUMMING PERFORMANCE

Curriculum Connections

Learning Themes:

- Strand A – Creating and Presenting
 - Develop correct grip, stance (*kata*), and striking technique with *bachi*.
 - Play basic and intermediate *jiuchi* (steady beat patterns) and integrate with main rhythms.
 - Combine drumming with choreographed movements, showing awareness of form and presentation.
- Strand B – Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing
 - Identify the role of *don*, *ka*, *doko*, and other patterns in a composition.
 - Recognize and respond to tempo changes, dynamics, and cues (*kakegoe*).
 - Describe how drumming felt physically and emotionally, and how it affected group performance.
- Strand C: Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts
 - Understand the evolution of *kumi-daiko* as a 20th-century ensemble form blending tradition and innovation.
 - Explore how to engage with Taiko respectfully, acknowledging its Japanese heritage while participating as learners in Canada.
 - Discuss Taiko's role in cultural festivals, identity-building, and community pride in Japanese and diaspora contexts.

OTO-WA TAIKO DRUMMING PERFORMANCE

Extend the Learning (Discussion Prompts)

Here are optional discussion prompts to extend the artist session in the classroom. These are recommended and are not mandatory. Please use what is best for your classroom. You can also find suggested activities in the additional resources package.

GRADES K-3

Pre

- What do you think Taiko drumming will sound and feel like?
- How do you think drummers make different sounds on the same drum?
- Why do you think people drum together in a group?

During

- What does the leader do to help everyone stay together?
- How does your body feel when you hit the drum?
- What do the shouts (*kakegoe*) make you think or feel?

Post

- Which drum sound did you like best?
- How did it feel to play in a group?
- What did you learn about Japanese culture from the drumming?

Pre

- What do you know about drums from different cultures?
- Why might movement and posture be important in drumming?
- What do you think “call-and-response” could mean in drumming?

During

- How do the different drum sizes change the sound?
- What rhythm patterns were easiest or most fun to play?
- How did watching others help you keep the beat?

Post

- Which rhythm or movement was the most challenging, and why?
- How is Taiko drumming different from other music you’ve played or heard?
- Why do you think Taiko is often played at festivals in Japan?

GRADES
7-8

Pre

- How might Taiko drumming combine both music and dance?
- Why do you think discipline and teamwork are important in Taiko?
- How could Taiko be used to tell a story or celebrate an event?

During

- What role does the jiuchi (steady beat) play in the performance?
- How do cues (kakegoe) and body language keep the group in sync?
- What patterns or sections stood out as most exciting?

Post

- How did the physical movement add to the musical performance?
- How do you think Taiko's role in Japanese culture has changed over time?
- What teamwork skills did you notice in today's drumming?

MUSIC OVERVIEW

Music is a universal form of expression that transcends language and culture, offering a deeply personal and collective means of connection, communication, and healing. It reflects cultural identity and promotes equity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation by uplifting diverse musical traditions and community voices.

Music education builds skills in listening, creativity, collaboration, and self-expression. It supports students' health and well-being by offering a safe and accessible space to express emotions and ideas, while nurturing confidence and a sense of belonging. Whether composing, performing, or simply engaging in musical play, students develop confidence, perseverance, and a sense of belonging.

Through the creative and critical analysis processes, students explore, refine, and reflect on musical ideas, depending on their understanding of music's emotional and cultural impact. These frameworks align with MASC's values and empower students to become thoughtful learners through the lens of music. Music serves as both medium and method: a form of communication, identity exploration, and social connection.



APPENDIX

Vocabulary bank/glossary:

- **Taiko:** Japanese drums and the art of ensemble drumming; literally means “fat drum.”
- **Oto-Wa:** The name “Oto-Wa” combines *oto* (sound) and *wa* (harmony), symbolizing unity among drummers and their instruments.
- **Bachi:** Wooden sticks used to play Taiko drums; vary in size depending on drum type.
- **Kumi-daiko:** Ensemble Taiko drumming involving multiple players and drum types.
- **Shime-daiko:** Small, high-pitched, rope-tensioned drums used for tempo and baseline rhythms.
- **Nagadō-daiko:** Barrel-shaped drums (larger size) made using the *byō-uchi* construction method.
- **O-daiko:** Very large drums producing deep tones, often stationary and central in performances.
- **Kuchi shōga:** Vocal/phonetic notation system used to teach drum strokes (e.g., “don,” “doko,” “ka”).
- **Don:** A single loud strike to the center of the drum head.
- **Doko / Doro:** Two drumbeats in rapid succession.
- **Tsu:** A light, soft tap on the drum head.
- **Tsuku:** Two soft taps in quick succession.
- **Ka / Kara:** Rim taps; “ka” is one tap on the rim, “kara” is two.
- **Jiuchi (Ji):** The steady underlying rhythm that anchors the ensemble, often played by the *shime-daiko*.
- **Kakegoe (Kiai):** Vocal calls or shouts used as cues or expressions within performance.

Student Health and Well-Being

How did today's activity make you feel (body and mind)?

- Choose a colour to describe that feeling. Use one word to describe how your energy changed after the activity.

Mini-Activity: Feelings Freeze Frame (Tableau)

- Ask students to create a freeze-frame (tableau) that shows how they're feeling right after the activity.
- Then, they can:
 - Share it with a partner or small group
 - Draw their freeze-frame in a journal
 - Write or talk about what made them feel that way

Additional Resources

- Assessment Guide
- Cultural Protocol/Sensitivity Guide
- Evaluation Document
- Resource Database for Further Learning