EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Percussion
Subject: Seiichi Tanaka & San Francisco Taiko Dojo
Discipline: Music

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SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME
Percussion

SUBJECT
Taiko Dojo

GRADE RANGES
K-12 and Post-Secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
Music

OBJECTIVE
To introduce students and educators to the ancient tradition of Taiko drumming and Sensei Seiichi Tanaka, the man who began the phenomenon of its North American popularity in the 1960’s

STORY SYNOPSIS
Since coming to the United States over 30 years ago, Sensei Seiichi Tanaka has worked tirelessly to continue the ancient art of Taiko drumming, creating San Francisco Taiko Dojo and infusing his work with his own signature style. Spark follows Tanaka and Taiko Dojo as they prepare for the 36th annual International Taiko Festival at Berkeley’s Zellerbach Hall.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
• Individual and group research
• Individual and group exercises
• Written research materials
• Group oral discussion, review and analysis

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES
To introduce students to the Japanese art of Taiko
To inspire students to consider the creative capacities of drums
To reveal the philosophy and history behind the tradition of Taiko
To inspire students to consider how folk traditions can be combined with contemporary traditions to create something entirely new
To encourage students to look within their own communities for inspiration and tradition, and know that they, too, can participate

EQUIPMENT NEEDED
TV & VCR with SPARK story “Percussion”, about composer and master drummer Seiichi Tanaka
Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sound card, printer
Cassette player, CD player, or computer audio program

MATERIALS NEEDED
Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, research papers and videos
Different examples of Taiko drumming (see Resource section)
Pens, Pencils, Paper

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED
Logical-Mathematical – the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically
Spatial Intelligence – the ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems
Musical – the ability to read, understand and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms
Bodily-Kinesthetic - the ability to use one’s mind to control one’s bodily movements
Interpersonal – the ability to understand the feelings and motivations of others
Intrapersonal – the ability to understand one’s own feelings and motivations

See more information on Multiple Intelligences at www.kqed.org/spark/education.
SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

For centuries, the art of Taiko drumming has occupied a sacred place in Japanese culture... and now... it’s taking America by storm.

When Grandmaster Seiichi Tanaka founded the San Francisco Taiko Dojo in 1968, he brought to American shores an art form more than 4000 years old. Tanaka now has a devoted following that studies this ancient style of Japanese drumming three nights a week, fifty-two weeks a year. SPARK checks in on Tanaka’s world-renowned studio as his students prepare for the year’s biggest event -- the International Taiko Festival held at UC Berkeley’s Zellerbach Hall.

In ancient Japan, Taiko was considered a sacred representation of the voice of Buddha. It was employed in a variety of rituals, including those used to drive away evil spirits from crops, in sending samurai into battle, and in defining the boundaries of a village. Its thunderous pounding was also believed to incite the clouds to begin to rain.

While Taiko finds its roots in these folk traditions, the modern version has evolved into a powerful sophisticated synthesis of rhythm, harmony and choreography. Tanaka, who has performed with such jazz luminaries as Art Blakey, Max Roach, and Tito Puente, has crafted his own style of Taiko, which combines traditional songs with Western jazz and Latin rhythms.

At the International Taiko Festival, the San Francisco Taiko Dojo performs a series of works including Tanaka’s most famous composition, “Tsunami” -- a roaring, energetic piece that makes ample use of Taiko’s most difficult instrument, the mammoth O-Daiko drum. Fashioned of ancient hardwood and cow’s hide, the O-Daiko weighs in at 700-pounds and stands over 12-feet high. It is the highlight of the Taiko performance and played only by Tanaka’s most seasoned students.

The San Francisco Taiko Dojo is comprised of approximately two hundred students, encompassing a range of ages, ethnicities and skill levels. The first and oldest Taiko studio in America, the San Francisco Taiko Dojo enjoys worldwide recognition. In addition, the music of Grand Master Tanaka and San Francisco Taiko Dojo has been featured in four major motion picture movies -- Phillip Kaufman’s “The Right Stuff,” “Rising Sun,” George Lucas’s “Return of the Jedi”, and Francis Ford Coppola’s “Apocalypse Now.”

THE BIG PICTURE

The history of Japanese Taiko drumming is both ancient and recent. The name “Taiko” is a general term meaning “fat drum”, and physical evidence places its existence as far back as 1400 years, although there are theories that it dates back even farther, as long ago as 4000 years. For millennia the drum has been used for many different purposes. Often considered to have spiritual qualities, it was used in courts and temples to communicate with the gods or embody the voice of Buddha, as well as to send signals between villages, to summon the rains to fall, or to lead samurai warriors into battle.
Taiko comes in many different sizes, but basically it is a barrel-bodied drum with stretched cow-hide heads. When referring to one specifically, a compound word is created in which the “t” in “Taiko” turns into a “d”. In other words, a nagado drum is nagado-daiko and a shime drum is shime-daiko. Also, to distinguish an ensemble from a particular city, temple or shrine, one would indicate the name of the location first, such as Tokyo-daiko or Miya-daiko.

The current popular form of Taiko, called “kumi-daiko” (meaning ensemble drumming), is credited to a man named Daihachi Oguchi. In the 1950’s Oguchi was a jazz drummer who heard the Taiko in the context of its more traditional role in courts and sacred temples. He was inspired by the sounds of the drums and decided to try a new arrangement for a traditional temple music score found in a relative’s storehouse. The drums were usually played individually and not simultaneously, but he combined the drums together and assigned different roles to each of them according to their sounds, much like on a trap set. For instance, to a drum with a higher sound such as the shime-daiko, he assigned the role of time-keeper much like a ride cymbal, and to others like the nagado-daiko he gave a more provocative role, pushing and driving the music by accentuating different syncopated accents. He also arranged the drums around himself and the other players much like on a trap set.

The result was Osuwa Daiko, a unique ensemble of traditional instruments played with a blend of traditional Taiko rhythms and syncopated jazz rhythms, creating a thunderous, swinging presentation, as visually stunning as sonically awesome.

The new kumi-daiko was an instant success and in 1958 the first official Taiko organization, Hokuriku Taiko Association, (from the Hokuriku region in Japan) was formed.

Following quickly on its heels came several more groups, each based on a slightly different regional or temple style. Considered the first professional Taiko group, Oedo Sukeroku Daiko developed a style that combined classical Japanese music with martial arts and dance to create a high-powered, energetic, dance-like performance. It is this style which is predominantly emanated by the groups today in North America, thanks almost solely to the man who introduced it to the United States, Seiichi Tanaka.

Taiko drums existed in the U.S. since the early 1900’s, but with World War II and the Japanese internment camps, much of traditional Japanese culture was suppressed until the 1960’s.

Upon coming to the U.S. in1967 and hearing no Taiko at the Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco, (in Japan, a festival with no Taiko is strange) Tanaka realized there was a niche waiting to be filled. He returned the following year to be the only Taiko drummer at the festival. That same year he founded the San Francisco Taiko Dojo (dojo refers to martial arts such as judo, karate, or kendo).

Tanaka’s unique style developed after years of diligent study of several traditional Japanese art forms and martial arts such as Hogaku (traditional stage music for Kabuki dance and Noh drama), the martial arts of Shorinji Kenpo (second degree black belt); Nihonden Kenpo (second degree black belt); Tsurugi (double bladed wooden sword and Ki (chi) energy, and with eminent Taiko masters of three different regions, including the founder of kumi-daiko himself, Daihachi Oguchi. Subsequently, Tanaka has been granted permission to perform these regional styles and compositions outside of Japan. His “Tanaka style” is a synthesis of all his training and the Oedo Sukeroku, Osuwa Daiko and Gojinjo-Daiko styles, realized in his original compositions.
One of the most important features of Taiko for Tanaka however, is that it is not solely a performance art. Underlying the act of performing are the principles on which it is founded – those of physical and mental discipline and spiritual connection, the flow of energy, or ki, from drummer to drum and ultimately for the drummer to try to fuse their spirit with the spirit of the drum. It is this embodiment of spirit that imparts the sense of transcendence, respect and joy to their performances in concert halls, festivals, and celebrations.

Since the founding of San Francisco Taiko Dojo, many new groups have formed, spurred on by the intense energy and rising popularity of Taiko and touring groups such as Kodo from Japan. Today, there are hundreds of Taiko groups world-wide and an estimated 4,000 groups in Japan. Competition for excellence is fierce and participation is both demanding and prestigious. As new generations explore its potential, Taiko is enjoying its new vitalization and appears to have a promising future.

RESOURCES – TEXTS
http://www.fromartz.com/Pages/Taiko1.html


James, J. Alison. The Drums of Noto Hanto.


RESOURCES – WEB SITES
KODO – official Web Site, with company history, events schedule, workshops, cultural foundation information, merchandise and more.
http://www.kodo.or.jp


Rolling Thunder Taiko Resource – A Web Site dedicated to Taiko, with information on the history of Taiko, a discography, glossary, merchandise, resource list and links.
http://www.Taiko.com/rollingthunder.html

San Francisco Taiko Dojo – official Web Site, with company history, events schedule, classes, biography, merchandise – including where to buy drums, links and contact information.
http://www.Taikodojo.org/

San Jose Taiko – official Web Site, with company history, events schedule, biography, classes and contact information -
http://www.Taiko.org/main.html

Stanford Taiko – Web Site with history, events schedule, links to other sites.
http://www.stanford.edu/group/StanfordTaiko

Taiko Center of the Pacific – official Web Site, with background history on Taiko, events schedule, classes, merchandise.

DISCOGRAPHY
Recordings by San Francisco Taiko Dojo:
Tsunami. Self published, 1997. CD
Sound * Space * Soul. Tape.
Inori. CD.
Also featured on the Japan-US Taiko Festival tape and the Rising Sun soundtrack.

San Jose Taiko:
Mo Ichido: One More Time. Self Published. 1996.
Kodama, Echoes of the Soul. 1993. CD
"Insight Through Sound” Concert. 1991. CD

Recordings by Kodo:
Live at the Acropolis, Tristar Music, 1995. CD.
Irodori, CBS/Sony Records, 1990. CD.
Blessings of the Earth, CBS, 1989. CD.
Kodo Vs. Yosuke Yamashita in Japan, Live:
Denon/Nippon Columbia, 1986. CD


VIDEO RESOURCES

Introduction to Taiko, Rolling Thunder, 1997. VHS Video. 40 minutes.

Live at the Acropolis, Tristar Music, 1997. Video


Nihon no Taiko: Taiko wa Odoru, King Video, 1999. VHS Video. 165 minutes. Concert recorded at the National Theater of Japan in Sept, 1998. Features folk dances and Taiko from Japan and special guests from Korea.

San Jose Taiko, Self Published. 1998. Video.

BAY AREA RESOURCES

Classes for adults and children available at: the Buddhist Temple located at 1881 Pine Street in San Francisco (415) 928-2456, and at the San Francisco Taiko Dojo located at 212 Ryan Way in South San Francisco.
http://www.Taikodojo.org/

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts - San Francisco Hosts exhibitions of visual arts, performing arts and film and video. The works represented reflect the San Francisco Bay Area’s diverse cultural populations. The center’s Web site includes information and schedules of events.
http://www.yerbabuenaarts.org/splash.html

Kabuki Theater (at Post & Fillmore Sts.) - San Francisco, US Japan-Taiko Festival, April 23rd, 2005, 7pm.

Cherry Blossom Festival - April 16, 17, 23, 24, 2005 - Japantown, San Francisco, Post and Buchanan Streets. For information call: 415-346-1239
http://www.nccbf.org


Japantown Summer Festival and Obon Odori Festival – August 2005. The obon-odori "Festival of the Souls" is a Japantown tradition. Enjoy Taiko drumming, the sake barrel cracking ceremony, Japanese traditional music, games and Tamiya (mini-car) races. 415-567-4573

Zellerbach Hall - UC Berkeley Campus, on Bancroft Way http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu/

Herbst Theatre - located in the Veterans’ Building, 401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco, CA

Japantown - located at Post and Buchanan Streets in San Francisco.

Campbell Heritage Theatre - 1 West Campbell Ave., Campbell, CA

DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

For a complete listing of Taiko terminology, refer to the glossary list at Rolling Thunder Taiko Web Site for more complete information and terms: http://www.Taiko.com/resource/history/glossary.html

Adapt
To assimilate, or accommodate change.

Adrenaline
A secretion of the adrenal gland also called epinephrine, causing the “fight or flight” urge in humans.

Buddha
Technically, Buddha means Enlightened One or Awakened One, and refers to one who has rediscovered Dharma through Enlightenment, which is achieved only after good karma is performed, and negative unnecessary actions are discarded. Only then can one can reach nirvana.

Evoke
To summon or call forth.

Commitment
A dedication or state of being bound emotionally, philosophically or intellectually to a course of action

Delineate
To draw or trace the outline of something, or to depict or portray through words and gestures.

Go for Broke
To go all out, not hold anything back; to attempt to do something with all one’s energy.

Kakegoe
Shouts; vocal calls used to accent the music, signal shifts in rhythm, and to encourage other performers.

Kiai
Kiai - A shout used to channel ki, or one’s spirit voice.

Martial Arts
A fighting system containing codified practices and movements of unarmed and armed combat, usually without the use of guns and other modern weapons.

Max Roach
Jazz drummer in the modern jazz and free jazz styles.

Motivate
To inspire or provide an incentive.

Okedo-daiko
Okedo-daiko - Also Oke-daiko. General term for drums made from a barrel-stave construction. The heads are usually stitched over steel rings and then laced to the body with a rope. The tone of the drum can be changed by the rope tension. There are several styles of okedo daiko, many with a relative long body.

Samurai
A Japanese warrior

Sensei
In Japan, the name given to a grand master of an art form or a scholar or teacher.

Status Symbol
An object which demonstrates to others one’s financial successes and capabilities or standing in society.

Taiko
A 4000-year-old art form with both sacred and secular functions, Taiko refers to both the modern art of Taiko drumming (kumi-daiko), and to the Taiko drums themselves.
Tito Puente
Latin percussionist famous for playing the “pailas”
or “timbales”

“Tsunami”
A tidal wave in the ocean

Vocalization
Creating a sound with one’s voice
SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Make your own Taiko
Materials needed:
PVC pipe, approximately 18” in diameter, or of different sizes, preferably large.
Filament Tape
Large drum sticks, could be made from the handles of a broom or toilet bowl plungers, cut into lengths of about 12”-18”.

To make the drum, cover one end of the pipe with layers and layers of tape until you have a nice tight drum head.

Place drums on chairs to play. Try having different students play different rhythms, such as a basic time-keeping pulse, others can play more syncopated rhythms, while others can try taking turns at solos. Listen to some of the selections listed in the Resource Section for inspiration. Pay attention to dynamics, tempos, rhythmic patterns and layering of instruments (i.e., not everyone has to play at the same time all the time). Also consider the accuracy of the performers and the importance of playing in unity, with several musicians playing the same rhythms simultaneously. If they don’t play accurately, the rhythms will become muddy and hard to distinguish.

Communicating through drums
Imagine your classroom is a village in ancient Japan. Discuss with the classroom what life might be like in the year 500 A.D. If they wanted to communicate with another village because a fire was coming, or to announce a wedding or the need for the leaders to meet, how would they do this? Use the idea of communicating through drums to come up with signals that could be used as methods of talking long distance. Then take the class outside and split them into two groups standing far enough away to be out of earshot. Using the drums you have created, have each group take turns sending signals to each other, with two students acting as runners between each round to confirm what was said.

Next, have students consider what they think music in a temple or court might sound like using the same instruments. Experiment with different situations and the potential music that might be associated with it, such as weddings or a funeral.

Come back to the classroom and discuss. What was it like? Were the signals clear? Did the drumming change with the different settings? How? Have students complete a writing assignment on this experience. Or, challenge them to research the role of music and drumming in other cultures and in different periods in history, including the drum core from the United States. How are they similar or different?

RELATED STANDARDS
MUSIC
Grade 2 – Artistic Perception
1.3 Identify ascending/descending melody and even/uneven rhythm patterns in selected pieces of music.

Grade 2 – Creative Expression
2.3 Play rhythmic ostinatos on classroom Instruments

Grade 5 – Artistic Perception
1.3 Read, write and perform rhythmic notation, including quarter note triplets and tied syncopation.

Aesthetic Valuing
4.1 Identify and analyze differences in tempo and dynamics in contrasting music selections.

Grade 3 – Historical and Cultural Context
3.1 Identify the uses of music in various cultures and time periods.

Grade 6 – Artistic Perception
1.5 Analyze and compare the use of musical elements representing various genres and cultures, emphasizing meter and rhythm.

Grade 7 – Historical and Cultural Context
3.2 Identify and describe the development of music during medieval and early modern times in various cultures (e.g., African, Chinese, Japanese, European).

3.3 Perform music from diverse genres and cultures.
**Considering Taiko**

“Most people just listen,” he said. “I want people not only to hear the sound, but also watch the sound, see the sound, feel the sound.” – Seiichi Tanaka

Before watching the Spark episode with your classroom, select a few recordings from the resource list to play for them first. Present the recordings to the class and ask them to discuss their reactions. What kind of music is this? Where do they think it comes from? What features do they hear? Is it syncopated? How many drums do they think there are? How big are they? What is the function of this drumming?

Now watch the Spark episode but without the sound and cue it up to just where there is a scene of the final performance. See how the visual aspect affects the students’ perspective. Are there any surprises? Lastly, watch the whole episode but with the sound, and conclude with a discussion on Taiko as both an experience but also its visual aesthetic. Consider Japanese culture and the importance of the visual aesthetic and the concept of beauty. Compare how Taiko embodies that overall aesthetic while adopting a new tradition, that of jazz. There is still room for improvisation within a tightly unified and coordinated ensemble yet it is highly disciplined and has many connections with martial arts and dance.

How would the experience be different if the performers didn’t move around or shout while they played? Why does the movement add to the performance? Without seeing the video tape and only listening to the recording, do the students feel the same way about the music as they did after they saw the video with the sound? How is it different?

**Sparklers**

- Attend a performance of Taiko drumming such as the Cherry Blossom Festival in April or the next International Taiko Festival and take note of the most important aspects that you can identify by observing the performance. Discuss students’ observations, likes and dislikes.

- Bring Taiko to your school! Call Young Audience of Northern California to bring members of San Francisco Taiko Dojo to your school for an assembly, workshop, or residency.

**Animist Beliefs**

“Taiko drums are handmade by professional drum makers in Japan. It is believed that the spirit of the trees from which the wood came, as well as the spirit of the builders of the drum, and even the performers who played them over the years come to embody each drum. The sound of today’s performance comes from the spiritual bond between the performer and this deep tradition.”

Explore this concept of animism in several different cultures. How does this belief express itself through music in those cultures? Examine Japanese Shinto or Buddhism, Australian Aboriginal beliefs, varied African and Native American belief systems. Are those belief systems still in place today? If so, how are they assimilated with contemporary culture?

**Combining folk traditions & contemporary music**

A sacred and secular art combined. Just as jazz combined the sacred traditions of gospel with secular work songs and rhythm and blues, Taiko fused jazz drumming styles with a traditional and sacred art of Japanese drumming. It still embodies that sacred aspect, as one of the ultimate challenges was “to merge the spirit of the drummer with the spirit of the drum”, but the result of the merger was an entirely new way of playing Taiko. Lead a discussion on how the role of the music changes when a sacred and secular art form are combined. Are there other traditions that you can think of that

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**RELATED STANDARDS**

**MUSIC**

Grade 5 – Historical and Cultural Context

3.4 Describe the influence of various cultures and historical events on musical forms and styles.

3.5 Describe the influences of various cultures on the music of the United States.

Grade 6 – Aesthetic Valuing

4.2 Explain how various aesthetic qualities convey images, feeling, or emotion.
do the same thing? What impact does it have on the music? How does the role of the performer change? What was happening politically and socially in 1960’s Japan that made the fusion of jazz with a traditional Japanese art form possible?

Create a documentary
Create a class documentary tracing the history of Taiko drumming from its beginnings 1400 years ago to today. Research how the trade routes between India, Korea and China also had influences on the music and culture of Japan. Have students break up into groups to research different sections of history and have some look at the political climate, others the religious beliefs, and others the social/cultural characteristics. Consider how traditional arts survive in a rapidly changing technological culture. Compile all the information and look for photos, video resources and music recordings that students could put together in a video format and present to other classes.

RELATED STANDARDS
MUSIC
Grades 9-12, Advanced – Historical and Cultural Context
3.1 Analyze how the roles of musicians and composers have changed or remained the same throughout history.
3.7 Analyze the stylistic features of a given musical work that define its aesthetic traditions and its historical or cultural context.

Grade 10 – World History, Culture and Geography: The Modern World
10.11 Students analyze the integration of countries into the world economy and the information, technological, and communications revolutions (e.g., television, satellites, computers).

Grades 9-12 – History-Social Science
Historical Interpretation
1. Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at http://www.kqed.org/spark/education.

For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp.