

## kaDON.com for the Taiko Community

Article by: Soo-Im Jansson, 2017-03-07

Although taiko is so widely spread around the world, it is not always easy to get access to a taiko instructor with extensive experience, nor find taiko pieces that are free for all to play. The mission of the web service kaDON is to make taiko available to everybody.

In an early article, we wrote about some of Kate Walker's initial findings at the European Taiko Conference (ETC). Kate Walker is researching taiko drumming in the UK.

A brief recap of Kate Walker's initial findings: *"There is the big problem that people find about accessing instructors. That was a really big theme that came out [in the survey]. People want to connect with each other so that we can find access to instructors so that we can get better as players. So that was really a strong point."*

With this in mind, Taiko Shin Kai wish to continue spreading the word about the on-line resource available on the Internet: kaDON. It is really an excellent source for learning taiko with expert instruction available on-line!

What is kaDON all about? I had the fortunate opportunity to interview Shoji Kameda, at the second European Taiko Conference (ETC2) that was held in February this year, to find out more about kaDON.

*Shoji Kameda's biography:*

<http://kadon.com/instructor/shoji-kameda/>

**Soo-Im Jansson (SJ):** Could you tell me a little about kaDON?

**Shoji Kameda (SK):** kaDON is an online venture which I started with Miyamoto Unosuke Shoten about two years ago now. Our idea was to really make high quality instruction and repertoire available to every single corner of the taiko world. So, for me in Los Angeles, which is a very taiko rich area of the world, it's not a problem to get drums or great teachers or anything like that, but our focus is really for the people way out in the

taiko world who might just have the only group in their city and not feel so connected to the greater taiko world. We really want to reach them and bring resources to people regardless of where they are in the taiko world, and that is really what kaDON is about.

So what we do is we publish online courses, we upload new content every week. We have lessons for *fue*, *chappa*, different playing styles, *naname* playing style, *beta* playing style. We have different pieces that you could learn, so it really gives you a lot of tools that you can use in order to grow a taiko group, and we also have equipment, we have *bachi*, and taiko and we develop new kinds of taiko and new instruments, always with the thought of a growing taiko community in mind. So that's part of it too, just making the resources of the instruments and the tools, that you need to make a taiko group, more available. And we do a lot of international orders.

We really want to be a resource for people, so when people for example come to Japan and they want to set up workshops or something, they reach out to us and we can help set those up for them, and it's really about just being a resource as well as being a value for the taiko community.

**SJ:** How can you keep this resource relatively inexpensive in regards to the high level of expertise that kaDON offers?

**SK:** When we do charge for the services, it is not to make a ton of money, it's really just to make sure it is sustainable and that we can continue to build and offer these kinds of resources to the taiko community. So, kaDON is a subscription based service but we try to keep the price as low as possible to get as

most accessible as we can for all of us. And a lot of the instructors, myself, Kenny Endo, Kaoru Watanabe and soon Leonard Eto the ex Kodo artistic director, amongst the instructors there's really an effort to try to and a recognition to do this as a service to the greater taiko community. As a way to really expand what's available out there and make sure that high level teaching and repertoire is available to everybody in the taiko world, not just the privileged few that can make it to Japan or the West Coast of the United States. We really want to make it available to everybody and that's our mission.

**SJ:** You have composed and shared "Ready, Set, kaDON!" and we have seen that piece being played during the joint performances at the first European Taiko Conference and it will be played in this second European Taiko Conference as well. Could you tell me a little about that?

**SK:** The idea of putting some of the music pieces online was that you could get together for performance from different parts of the world very easily. It is what I do as a professional. I have the big privilege of traveling around the world and working with all these wonderful musicians. In the taiko world, it's not that common to have that happen for your sort of average taiko player, so what we wanted to do is to make that experience, because it's a very powerful experience, bringing people together who you don't know on stage, sharing, creating art together. We want to make that experience available to everybody.

So, that was part of the inspiration in putting these pieces online and sharing them widely, in that people, like if you're in Sweden, you can just get to Internet and like learn the piece

through these videos and somebody in the U.K. can do it and somebody in the United States can do it. And when we first performed it in the North American Taiko Conference, we had over 20 people who had never performed together and we had a lot of taiko people who were not professionals, they were just people who are interested in taiko and they learned the piece and came together and performed it, and then we had the same thing happening at the European Taiko Conference and at Taiko Spirit [in Switzerland] and now it just happens sort of, it just happens spontaneously, because so many people already know it and it's really starting to spread, and it's really, really wonderful and it makes me so happy to see that because it's exactly what we intended. We really intend this to be a way in which we can come together and, not just conference and talk, but we actually can play together and make art together and that really helps us build these bonds of connection.



Photo: Shoji Kameda; courtesy of Bryce Craig

## Links

The link to the web service kaDON:

<http://www.kadon.com/>

## Taiko Shin Kai

*Taiko Shin Kai is a non-profit organization, that wish to encourage and spread taiko, Japanese drumming, in Sweden. Taiko Shin Kai offers taiko courses and workshops in Stockholm and Uppsala for children and adults.*



## Glossary

*atarigane* (当たり鉦)

A hand-held brass gong also known as just *kane* or *chanchiki*.

*bachi* (桴 or 枹)

*Bachi* is taiko drumsticks and they come in various sizes.

*beta* (ベタ)

*Beta* means "upright" or "face-up" and describes how the drum is positioned; vertically with the drum skin more or less parallel to the ground.

*chappa* (チャップハ)

The *chappa* are hand cymbals that come in various sizes.

*naname* (斜め)

*Naname* describes the slanted drum position used when playing taiko.

*shinobue* (篠笛)

Also called *takebue* (竹笛), is a Japanese transverse bamboo flute or *fue* (笛) that has a high-pitched sound and is commonly used in Japanese festival music.

*taiko* (太鼓)

The word *taiko* means big drum and it also describes the Japanese musical instrument.

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