



## Rieko Shimbo

Folk Arts: Japanese Taiko Drumming



Reno, NV  
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### Program Types

45 minute – 1 hour demonstration;  
workshops (call to inquire);  
festival and special event performances (booth or exhibition); school assemblies

### Language Proficiencies

English, Japanese

### Fees

Contact to inquire

### Availability

Contact to inquire

### Audiences

School (preK-12), college, young adult, adult, seniors

### Venues

Schools, colleges and universities, libraries and museums, senior centers, festivals and fairs

### Technical requirements

Contact to inquire

### Counties

Carson City, Washoe

**NEVADA**  
ARTS COUNCIL

As a young girl growing up in Japan, Rieko Shimbo saw *taiko* music performed at many festivals. Her formal training commenced with participation in *Araumaza*, a professional *taiko* company based in Tokyo that performed folk music and dance in Japan. Rieko moved to Houston from Tokyo in 1987, and then settled in Reno in 1994. She formed her own ensemble, *Tsurunokai*, two years later and began teaching with a single drum that she made from a wine barrel, a hide and Japanese tacks. Today she has 8 drums and 15 students who practice weekly and perform 12 or more times per year. *Tsurunokai* performs an emerging style of taiko that has evolved from regional styles of Japanese music.

The Reno *taiko* ensemble's instruments range from small drums called *kodaiko* to the very large *odaiko*. Drums are struck with a *bachi* (stick). Background sounds are made by metal percussion instruments, a bamboo flute and the calls and responses between the leader and the performers. Performers wear traditional *taiko* "uniforms" and introduce characteristics the drums and their connections to Japanese culture. Typically the group performs at least three songs representing distinct geographical and cultural features of Japan. Their "jazzy" songs derive from the culture of the Japanese islands where people have integrated *taiko* into everyday life and have developed a unique style. Other island-based music imitates the sound of the ocean's waves moving beneath the rhythms of a song. From the mountainous silk-producing region comes music played only during an important cultural festival.

Rieko's ensemble mixes ancient, traditional sounds with a captivating, modern repertoire. The name, *Tsurunokai*, means "gathering of the crane". A graceful and elegant bird, the crane's image is used throughout Japanese culture as a symbol of longevity and happiness. *Taiko*, which means "drum" or "wide drum" in Japanese, has a long history. The *taiko* were used to aid army generals commanding their soldiers and to scare enemies on the battlefields of Japan as far back as the 1400s. Later, *taiko* music became a fixture in religious temples and shrines and integral to religious ceremonies. Modern *taiko* music originated in the early 1950s when the first ensemble formed in Japan.