

2024 2025
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Program

TAIKOPROJECT



Friday, September 27

About TAIKOPROJECT

TAIKOPROJECT was founded in 2000 in Los Angeles, California by a group of young, emerging taiko drummers led by Bryan Yamami and Masato Baba. The group continues to define a modern American style of taiko, blending traditional forms with an innovative and fresh aesthetic.

TAIKOPROJECT first made waves when they became the first American taiko group to win the prestigious Tokyo International Taiko Contest in 2005, besting all of the Japanese taiko groups in the competition. That year, they were cast in the Mitsubishi Eclipse commercial, the first and still only national advertising campaign to prominently feature taiko.

Since then, the group has performed on the Academy Awards, the Grammy Awards, NBC's "The Voice,"Syfy's Face/Off, The X-Factor, rock band 30 Seconds to Mars' "Up in the Air" music video, Conan, Jimmy Kimmel Live, the iHeartRadio Music Festival, and was honored with the prestigious Visionary Award from East West Players.

TAIKOPROJECT has performed and recorded with Stevie Wonder, Peter Gabriel, Hans Zimmer, Alicia Keys, John Legend, Squeak E. Clean, Sean Paul, Diplo, as well as international stars such as Greek singer Antonis Remos, Persian singer Mansour, Brazil's Olodum, and Netherlands' Tiesto. They have recently appeared on Ovation TV's "The Art Of", The Late Late Show with James Corden, and Food Network's Iron Chef Gauntlet.

TAIKOPROJECT has performed at many of the premiere performing arts centers in the country, including the Ordway Center (St. Paul, MN), Meany Hall (Seattle, WA), Mondavi Center (Davis, CA), Tower Theatre (Bend, OR), Hatfield Hall (Terre Haute, IN), Lied Center (Lincoln, NE), Gammage Auditorium (Phoenix, AZ), Ford Theatres (Hollywood, CA), Cache Valley Center (Logan, UT), Macey Center (Socorro, NM), and the Ferst Center (Atlanta, GA), just to name a few.



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In 2021, the Ford Foundation, in association with the J. Paul Getty Trust and the California Community Foundation, recognized TAIKOPROJECT as one of "America's Cultural Treasures." In Summer 2021, the troupe recorded audio tracks for the Tokyo Olympics Opening Ceremony and in 2022 they were featured in Lisa Ling's HBOMax "Take Out" limited series and Paramount Plus/MTV's Clio and Telly Award-winning AAPI Heritage Month promotions.

In 2023, the ensemble was selected for the prestigious Western Arts Alliance Performing Arts Discovery (PAD) program. In 2024 they were invited to perform at the Coachella Festival with 88Rising's Atarashii Gakko, and performed at Ubisoft Forward for the Assassin's Creed Shadows game reveal. In Fall 2024, TAIKOPROJECT was awarded a major three-year grant from the prestigious Perenchio Foundation because of "their proven track record of artistic excellence, community partnerships, and steady leadership."

LEARN MORE



PRE-SHOW TALK

Led by Dr. Wanda Kurtcu, Board Vice Chair at the Taiko Community Alliance.

About Dr.Wanda Kurtcu

Supervising Teacher, San Jose State University

A performing member of Wadaiko Newark for 17 years, Wanda was also in attendance at the 2013 Launch Meeting for TCA and has since become a Lifetime Member of the organization, as well as currently serving on TCA's HEART (Humility, Empathy, Anti-Racism, Resourcefulness, Transparency) Committee, focusing on the practices of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. Within the taiko community, Wanda is a part of the HUG (Healing, Unlearning, and Growing) collective, as well as NtbD (Name to be Decided) in taiko, addressing issues and challenges faced/experienced by women, non-binary, and LGBTQI+ players within the male-dominated world of taiko.

Wanda has a doctorate is in Social Justice and Equity and, with recognition of diversity as an important part of any organization, hopes to bring that experience and voice to TCA in support of its current "growing pains" and efforts to reshape itself into a more inclusive and supportive entity within the taiko community.

Additionally, Wanda is a LEGO enthusiast! She loves Star Trek, Star Wars, Marvel Comic and DC universes, and plays Dungeons and Dragons. Truth be told, she's a Sci-fi/Fantasy nerd and lives in those worlds as often as she can.