

Headline: Deaf Japanese Drummers to Perform in US; American Debut to Open ITED Symposium

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TOKYO, Jun 12, 2003 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- From June 23-27, two teams of deaf taiko drummers will perform at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, NY. The visit is part of an international symposium entitled "Instructional Technology and Education for the Deaf." (ITED)

ITED runs from the 25th to the 27th, during which time the drummers will perform on three occasions. Additionally, in the two days prior to the symposium the drummers will conduct workshops on the campus alongside one team of non-hearing impaired drummers from San Francisco.

The performance will be the first ever given in the U.S. by deaf Japanese taiko drummers.

Taiko is one of Japan's classical art forms with roots that go back over 2,000 years. Drums are made from a single hollowed-out tree trunk, and range in diameter from six inches to six feet. Research has found that the deep resonant beat of the taiko drum can be therapeutic for many groups of people, including those with hearing impairments.

The sponsors of the visit are The Nippon Foundation and the Nippon Taiko Foundation.

Yohei Sasakawa, president of The Nippon Foundation, expects that listeners will be moved by the excellence of the performance. "I am looking forward to seeing your faces full of astonishment at the beautiful, thrilling music of these deaf and hard-of-hearing musicians," he says.

Performances will take place at the opening ceremony on the 25th (8:30-10:00 AM), at an evening concert for symposium participants (7:00 PM-) and at a free concert on the 27th, starting at 7:00 PM. The final concert is open to the public.

Reference

ITED is a forum for the dissemination of information about cutting-edge technology relevant to the process of teaching the deaf. Pre-conference workshops will provide participants with hands-on training in the use of this instructional technology.

Further information can be found at <http://www.rit.edu/~techsym/>.

The Nippon Foundation was founded in 1962 as a private, nonprofit, grant making organization. The Foundation has the largest operational budget of its kind in Asia, out of which it allocates funds to support both domestic and international projects.

Its overseas support covers a wide range of areas, including human resources development, support for the basic human needs and the development of international cooperation and understanding.

Among its many important efforts have been the rebuilding of the sub-Saharan agricultural system and the world-wide elimination of leprosy. Thanks to its diligence in this area, the number of leprosy-endemic countries has fallen from 122 to about 6 in less than 20 years. It is leading the push to completely eliminate the disease by 2005.

The Foundation is also a major financial supporter of both the Nippon Taiko Foundation and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

Further information about The Nippon Foundation can be found at its website:
<http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/eng/index.php3>.

The Nippon Taiko Foundation (NTF) was founded in 1997 to promote Japanese taiko drumming both in Japan and abroad. The NTF pursues activities related to the promotion and preservation of the taiko tradition. Though traditionally an exclusively male art form, taiko groups now include both men and women of all age groups. People with various disabilities are also taking part.

In fact, during the first four years of an annual NTF-sponsored contest, 63 teams comprised of people with disabilities took part. 23 of these teams were hearing-impaired.

More than 50 teams of hearing-impaired taiko drummers are believed to be active in Japan.

Membership in the NTF has reached 801 groups, totaling approximately 22,000 members. Thanks to the Foundation, the popularity of this art is growing at an explosive rate.

The Nippon Taiko Foundation's website can be found at:
<http://www.nippon-taiko.or.jp/english/index.html>.

For more information

The Symposium National Technical Institute for the Deaf Rochester Institute of Technology Rochester, NY 14623-5604 585/475-6894 techsym@rit.edu The Nippon Foundation Department of International Affairs (Japan): +81-3-6229-5181 Department Manager: Yasunobu Ishii (US, from June 22) +81-90-6657-1597 j_huffman@ps.nippon-foundation.or.jp The Nippon Taiko Foundation: Tokyo Office: +81-3-6229-5577 ikari@nippon-taiko.or.jp

CONTACT: The Nippon Foundation Department of International Affairs (Japan): +81-3-6229-5181 Yasunobu Ishii, +81-90-6657-1597 (Department Manager) (US, from June 22) j_huffman@ps.nippon-foundation.or.jp

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