

Hinode Taiko CD HT0401

Song Synopsis:

1. Uma – *Horigai* (conch shells), traditionally used to call warriors to battle, summon a slow drum roll before dying away to reveal the underlying “horse” *ji* (basic rhythm). Volume and tempo build until a collective *kiai* (yell) cues a dramatic interchange between pairs of *shime-daiko* and *chudaiko* in front and a line of *chudaiko* plus *odaiko* in back. A sudden pause signals an interlude from the low drums at the back, also emphasized with *kiai*. Then, the basic rhythm suddenly shifts again to an almost Latin-feeling section where the front drums take turns soloing. The last solo segues into an emphatic motif that yokes front and back drums together for a moment, before the third verse returns as an exhilarating finale.

2. Odaiko – An intricate meditation over a driving base rhythm carried by the low voices of the *chudaiko*. A canon is subtly but distinctly articulated as each part traverses the same landscape – and as each reaches its inevitable conclusion, the voices re-unite in a final joyous cadence.

3. Stress – From a matrix of interior and exterior monologues, each adding layer after layer to a menu of contemporary anxiety, a jagged drum solo emerges. A whispered snarl, then a cry of anguish introduces a second solo, verging even closer to dysfunction/disintegration. Pulling back from the edge, tension builds until a sudden shriek cues a razor-sharp coda of traded accents and patterns cascading from one side to the other. The cathartic power of drumming transforms antagonists into allies who finish together on the same rhythm that began the piece.

4. Yellow Socks and a Blue Bow Tie – The complex layering of three drum melodies is led by the heavy-footed *odaiko*. Sometimes sparring, but more often sharing the limelight, the three melodies intertwine to form a mellow and danceable groove.

5. Funa Uta – From a folk song of Ainu origin (the Ainu are the indigenous inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago, now mostly found in the northern island of Hokkaido). Free-form vocalizations and a subliminal pulse on tunable frame drum enrich wide-open harmonies.

6. Between Friends – Two drummers trade their best shots on *shime*, *kodaiko* and *chudaiko*, before settling into a friendly rivalry on a swung *ji*, arranged into a syncopated *ostinato*. A change of tone occurs when two more drummers begin to strut their stuff on additional *chudaiko*, but the pace remains relaxed. Pause and two more drummers suddenly ramp up the energy with no less than five *odaiko*. The discussion becomes general, with more propulsive solos, dialogue, and a jazzy consensus to conclude.

7. Together – Starts like a locomotive, and builds up steam as a *shime* theme is followed by a *chudaiko* counter-theme with *shime* flourishes. This leads to an eruption of rib-shaking force on *odaiko*, with *shime* rattling and sniping in the background. The *odaiko* eventually start a wall of sound that builds until every drum is rolling full volume. The sound dies down while the tempo remains constant, creating a backdrop for sudden accents, which build and echo off each other like pistol shots. The final volley rings in silence – then, a finale where each voice is allowed to have its say before finishing in one ecstatic and thunderous accord.

8. Kyra’s Song – Four drummers make use of the melodic potential of each instrument with a simple yet catchy beat. An interlude of intense triplet rhythms and solos alternating with tight trade-offs suddenly dissolves into the opening playful melody, deepened by the gravity of its underlying structure.

9. V – Shimmering gong rolls are layered with rainstick and punctuated with flashes of *shime* and rim shots. Two players on *odaiko* and *shime* begin to trade rhythms, and *atarigane* accent their dialogue. One *chudaiko* jumps in over the *atarigane* and begins a frantic solo, pushing the tempo even further. Eventually this *chudaiko* hands the song back to freeform duets from *shime* and *odaiko*, followed by a rousing unison cadence, and a final, mysterious, vocal fade that returns V to the silence from which it started.

