

TAIKO RENSHU

Playing Taiko

Taiko, like many traditional music traditions, uses an oral nomenclature to teach and preserve songs. Each hit has a particular sound (phonic or syllable) to represent it. Memorizing these sounds and learning to “sing” the song is the first step in learning to play the patterns. An ancient taiko proverb, loosely translated, states “If you can say it, you can play it.” (Same in African and Middle Eastern!)

DON	hard hit on drumhead; multiple hits written as <i>dogo, doro</i> or <i>doko</i>
tsu	soft hit on drumhead; multiple hits written as <i>tsuku</i>
ka	sharp rap on the rim; wood sound; multiple hits written as <i>kara</i> or <i>kaka</i>
su	rest or space; “empty hit” (some patterns use (<i>tsuku</i>) etc. for timing)

Tanaka Sensei of the SF Taiko Dojo wrote a short piece called ***Renshu*** (literally means *practice* or *training*) which incorporates these basic hits and is used to teach beginners. You might give it a try at home. (translates neatly to Djun-Djun)

RENSHU

composed by Seiichi Tanaka, SF Taiko Dojo

	ichi (one)	ni (two)	san (three)	shi (four)
1a.	DON	DON	DON	DON
1b.	Don – Don	don – don	DORO – tsuku	DON – DON
2.	DORO – tsuku	DORO – tsuku	DORO – tsuku	DON – DON
3.	DON – kara	DON – kara	DON – kara	kara – kara
4.	DON – tsuku	DON – tsuku	DON – tsuku	DON – DON
5.	su – DON	su – DON	su – DON	DON – su

Play each line twice. Note that the first line (1a-b) is eight counts long. Generally, hands alternate Right-Left. Exceptions are lines 3 and 4 where the *DON—ka-ra* and the *DON—tsu-ku* are played **R—R-L**.

Different instruments also have their own vocabulary, so you might hear:

shime	TE -‘n – TE-RA – tsu-ku – tsu-ku – TE-‘n – tsu-TA – TE-‘n – i – ya
atarigane	chi – chan – cha-cha – chi-ki – chi-cha – chan – cha-cha – chi-ki
odaiko	su-do – don – don – su-do – don – don – do-don – su

Please see the very helpful ***Taiko Primer*** from Seattle Kokon Taiko
<https://seattlekokontaiko.org/about/taiko-primer/>