

## Artist History

Somei Yoshino Taiko Ensemble (SYTE), founded in 1999, goes beyond the beat of the taiko drum to use music, theater and dance as a medium to express the human condition as it relates to its environment, community and its future. While the four artists that make up SYTE have a concern for classicism in the structure of their compositions, their direction is a head-on challenge to the predominating conventional treatment of taiko by using their interdisciplinary imagination and their revolutionary approach to taiko choreography.

Since its founding, SYTE has worked in collaboration with choreographers, composers, designers and musicians from all genres. The name of the company, Somei Yoshino, represents one of the most beautiful cherry blossom trees in Japan. The brief blooming time and the fragility of its blossoms signifies the transient beauty of humanity. Like the cherry blossom, SYTE's work is inspired to explore the sensitive, elegant and ephemeral aspects of humanity within the strong and powerful expression of taiko.

Somei Yoshino Taiko Ensemble presents an annual home season concert in San Francisco premiering several new works every year. They have over twenty pieces and three full-length choreographed collaborative productions in their repertoire. In 2004 they premiered a full-length interdisciplinary production with the award-winning dance company, Robert Moses' Kin. SYTE's work ranges from comedic performance art to surrealistic musical drama to powerful synchronous drumming and everything in between. The ensemble has collaborated with jazz musician/composer Marcus Shelby, shakuhachi artist Masayuki Koga, Native American vocalist and percussionist Jane DeCuir, traditional Vietnamese multi-instrumentalist Vanessa Vo and renowned taiko artist Kenny Endo. In addition, they have collaborated with choreographers Robert Moses, Sara Shelton Mann, Robert Henry Johnson, Krissy Keefer, Sue-Li Jue and Alleluia Panis.

SYTE has toured throughout California and nationally and has performed at many major music festivals and performing arts venues including Popejoy Hall in Albuquerque, Kingsbury Hall in Salt Lake City and the noted Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts. Since 2003, Somei Yoshino Taiko Ensemble has performed for packed audiences in the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico.

The ensemble has been the recipient of funding from the San Francisco Arts Commission, Zellerbach Family Foundation, the Puffin Foundation and the American Composers Forum. As a company that has a strong presence in the local community, Somei Yoshino Taiko Ensemble currently teaches taiko under a program that serves the general public in the San Francisco Bay Area.