

FACT SHEET



ONIKENBAI

TRADITIONAL Arranged by Yoshikazu Fujimoto (Kodo)

Onikenbai, or 'demon sword dance', is a traditional dance form that hails from Iwate Prefecture, Japan. There are many regional variations and our version is derived from the Iwasaki area, in Kitakami City. TaikOz was inspired to learn this dance because we believe the beautiful, spectacular movements, dramatic music and intrinsic message of peace and goodwill can be universally enjoyed and appreciated.

Our 'Onikenbai journey' began in 2006 when TaikOz member Anton Lock began learning under Kodo's Yoshikazu Fujimoto, who himself has been studying Iwasaki Onikenbai since his Ondekoza days with Riley Lee, and who received a performer's license from the Iwasaki Onikenbai Grand Master in 1998 after many years of cultural exchange. Under Yoshikazu's mentorship, the full group travelled to Iwasaki in August 2010 to deepen our understanding and technique of the art form. TaikOz is the first group from outside Japan to study Onikenbai in Iwate.

The origins of Onikenbai date from around 700AD when it is believed to have been performed by the priest who founded the Shugendou sect of Buddhism. This solemn dance, which is accompanied by shinobue (flute), dengaku okedo (drum) and te-bira (cymbals), involves a heroic demon whose dramatic stomping movements symbolise good spirits driving away the bad.

