



## **FY21 Equity Response**

### **TaikoArts Midwest**

3949 13th Ave  
Minneapolis  
Minneapolis, MN 55407

**Organization Fiscal Year End:** 08/31/2019  
**Organization Annual Income:** \$245,348.00  
**Organization Annual Expense:** \$248,208.00

### **ER21-1-008 Taiko for Community Healing**

Funding for TaikoAlive! will provide local community members access to the health and wellness benefits of the art and culture of taiko through virtual lessons until it is safe to practice in-person.

**Amount Requested:** \$2,500.00  
**Start Date:** 10/20/2020  
**End Date:** 06/30/2021  
**Total Project Expenses:** \$2,500.00  
**Fiscal Sponsor:**

### **Group's Purpose & Background**

The mission of TaikoArts Midwest (TAM) is to develop, produce, and promote artistic excellence in taiko performance and to use taiko to strengthen and build community in the Midwest. Founded in 2016 by Jennifer Weir as an independent entity, TAM was originally housed within Mu Performing Arts. With over 20 years of programming experience, TAM has established a reputation for providing quality studio classes and in-school residencies, bringing taiko performances to various school, private, and community events, and producing concerts such as the recent HERbeat residency, concert, and documentary film.

Often, TAM offers an audience's first experience with and primary access point to the art and cultural heritage of taiko drumming through our two resident taiko groups,

Ensō Daiko and ensemble-MA, the only professional taiko groups in Minnesota. Aspiring taiko drummers are encouraged to train and grow individually while sustaining taiko traditions and encouraging innovation to broaden the base of participation within the local and regional taiko community.

TAM supports artistic excellence through taiko performances, recognizing and celebrating the full diversity and depth taiko arts provides. Through our belief in the emotional, cultural, and physical benefits of teaching and performing taiko, TAM seeks to use taiko as a tool of healing, empowerment, and self-expression for individuals and communities, particularly those with limited resources, visibility, or special needs.

## Community

1. Taiko performance is growing in popularity, drawing people from all backgrounds and ages with its many cultural, physical, emotional, and community-building benefits. TAM seeks to expose audiences to quality experiences, expanding their references for what art and taiko can be. Frequently, TAM hosts renowned national artists, collaborating with local taiko artists to provide a valuable creative and cultural exchange that demonstrates the evolving nature of taiko, making taiko just as vibrant here in Minnesota as it is in Japan. The recent HERbeat: Taiko Women All-Stars residency and sold-out concert at the Ordway brought the world's best female taiko artists together to perform original works – captured on film by local filmmakers, introducing international audiences to the powerful women of taiko. While all TAM programming serves the larger community of the Twin Cities, first generation immigrants, LGBTQ, Asian Americans, and females have found a home, a connection with the empowering nature of taiko itself that provides a powerful sense of community, encouragement, and celebration.

2. TAM is home to first generation immigrants, LGBTQ, Asian Americans, and females, boldly representing our artists, staff, and board, and reflecting the pull taiko has within these populations. Our board is 100% female and 50% Asian American, artistic leadership is 100% female and Asian American, staff is 80% female and 57% Asian American, and over half of TAM's Asian American members identify as native Japanese or Japanese American and first generation immigrants.

3. The pandemic has taken a huge toll on everyone regardless of age or background, particularly individuals with disabilities and aging populations who are experiencing increased levels of isolation and loneliness. The stress, anxiety, and depression we all share causes the immune system to weaken, which significantly increases susceptibility to the coronavirus (How Depression Affects Your Immune System, Health Dispatch, 2019), particularly vulnerable populations. Additionally, the COVID-19 crisis has negatively impacted the Asian American community with a sharp uptick in racial discrimination and hostility. There is a vital need to support and empower Asian American artists and community, and TAM is desperate to fulfill that need.

4. Abundant research exists in support of music therapy as an applied method of alleviating general health and wellness issues, specifically easing wellness issues such as stress, fatigue, and anxiety (Smith, 2014 & Fancourt, 2016). To help our community heal during this incredibly stressful time, TAM will provide increased access to the benefits of taiko through virtual classes on a sliding scale to meet the needs of low-income individuals. TAM will reach out to the local Asian and Asian American communities to encourage participation in the celebration of a shared culture and empowerment amid increased levels of racial harassment and assault during the pandemic.

## Proposed Project

1. In pre-pandemic times, TAM programming typically reaches roughly 300,000 annually through school residency, concerts, and community performances. Considerably reduced numbers will be reached this year through live events, which will require TAM to envision new ways and methods to provide access to the healing and empowering force of taiko.

TaikoAlive! is a new program that has been in development over the past year with the intention of serving a cohort that exclusively served older, active adults and individuals who suffer from Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases as a means of physical and mental rehabilitation, health, and wellness. Due to the vulnerability of this specific cohort, the future of delivering this program as intended (in-person) is no longer viable until a vaccine is widely distributed. It is TAM's intent to widen the scope of this class to allow the curriculum to reach everyone within our community – including individuals with disabilities and aging populations – who are suffering from isolation, stress, anxiety, depression, and fear as the direct result of the shelter-in-place and distancing orders to prevent the spread of the virus and the economic ramifications of those orders.

For some time, Ms. Shiraishi has been interested in exploring how both artists and taiko can heal and lead with empathy. The need for this approach has become exponentially heightened in light of George Floyd's murder and the unrest and reckoning our country and community is experiencing. Right now, everyone is questioning established systems and how those systems can be restructured going forward. Ms. Shiraishi is a vital thought-leader within the local and national taiko community, and she encourages the use of taiko as transformative art to create system changes within our local community and around the country. In order to address how the COVID-19 crisis has negatively impacted the Asian American community in regards to racial discrimination and hostility, the members and artists of TAM wholeheartedly believe that the best way to deliver this support is through the thundering power of taiko that empowers, supports, and celebrates the Asian and Asian American community with pride.

2. Proposed activities include: A) Planning (adjusting the curriculum to a wider, virtual audience while still catering to the needs of older adults and individuals with

disabilities, maintaining the integrity of the art and culture of taiko); B) Providing community access to structured, virtual taiko lessons taught by Ms. Shiraishi on a sliding scale to allow low-income individuals and families throughout the area access to the health and wellness benefits of taiko, regardless of the cost.

3. Iris Shiraishi, former Mu Daiko Artistic Director, current Artistic Director of TAM's ensemble-MA, and TaikoAlive! Program Director, will redesign and implement the virtual program throughout the community based on the curriculum created for the original cohort. The TAM board, management, and staff will provide technical and marketing outreach support as needed.

4. As soon as funds are made available, Ms. Shiraishi will immediately begin the curriculum redesign this fall, and implementation is expected to be ready by this winter Dec-Feb time frame.

5. TAM strives to achieve community impact through artistic quality and accessibility to all. The impetus for the creation of the TaikoAlive! program was to further TAM's organizational goal to expand its reach of introducing taiko to new audiences and increase accessibility. Ultimately, TAM seeks to foster an inspirational environment by applying taiko to heal, empower, and promote self-expression for individuals and communities, particularly those with limited resources, visibility, or special needs.

6. Project expenses are not expected to exceed \$2500. Should additional funding be required to further alleviate the burden of access to low-income individuals, TAM will pursue private grant and donor fundraising.

## **Board of Directors / Advisory Committee**

Tracee Hummel-Lindsoe, Accountant, Pride in Living; Board President

Maribel A Stolee, Finance Manager; Board Treasurer

Hailey Gabriel Dillon, VP of Sales, Acxiom; Board Member

Liz Kane, Learning Design Director RSM US LLP; Board Member

Kathryn Leo-Keast, Development Director, Springboard for the Arts; Board Member

Sara Ochs, Performing Artist & Grant Writer; Board Member

Jennifer Weir, Sr. Financial Analyst, Ceridian Corporation; Ex. Dir, TaikoArts Midwest; Board Member

## **Amount Requested**

\$2,500.00

## **Project Budget Expense**

Expenses for TAM's proposed TaikoAlive! virtual class program will be devoted entirely to Contracted Artist Compensation (Iris Shiraishi, TaikoAlive! Program Director) at \$100/hr x 25 hrs.

## Total Project Cash Expenses

\$2,500.00

### ***(Important!)*** Additional Fields Required

Please note that in the full application there are additional fields that will need to be completed and are not shown to panelists:

- Type of group
- Legislative MN House District
- Legal Status
- Type of institution
- Organization's arts discipline
- ADA Plan status
- Individuals in leadership (for help filling out this section, please download the ER21 Organizational Leadership Worksheet on the [Equity Response page](http://mrac.org/grants/equity-response) [mrac.org/grants/equity-response])
- Annual participants in the organization's activities
- Project's arts discipline
- Populations benefiting from the project

Depending on your organization and/or project, you may also need to upload:

- Fiscal sponsor letter
- Property owner permission letter