



EVALUATION REPORT

Kate Walker
Kewalker1@sheffield.ac.uk

Introduction

The second European Taiko Conference (ETC) took place from 9-12 February 2017. Like the inaugural ETC, it was instigated and managed by Kagemusha Taiko, a performing arts company based in the southwest of England. ETC2 took place at Hannah's at Seale Hayne, an inclusive campus with extensive practice, performance and accommodation space that also houses Kagemusha Taiko's purpose-built Taiko Centre.

The conference programme comprised workshops led by leading taiko players from Japan, the USA and UK; plenary sessions; performances; yoga sessions tailored for taiko players; facilitated discussion sessions; joint performances; and shared meals. Four categories of participants attended the conference: delegates, who enjoyed full participation in all activities; observers, who were able to observe the workshops and enjoy full participation in all other activities; workshop leaders, who led specific workshops and participated in other activities; and Kagemusha staff and volunteers who ensured the smooth running of the conference. 102 taiko players from 49 taiko groups and organisations were represented at ETC2 and participants came from 12 countries, including the USA and Japan. 59% of participants had attended the inaugural ETC in 2016.

Evaluation Model

In order to support the development of the European Taiko Conference, a three-stage evaluation model was developed and applied to ETC2.

1. Participants were required to complete a brief form prior to registration on 9 February. This asked for their name, status (delegate, observer, workshop leader or other), and a short free-text response to the following question:

“What are your main goals for attending the European Taiko Conference?”

Participants were able to complete the form electronically and were sent the link via email. The pre-registration questionnaire was also promoted via social media channels ahead of the conference. Paper forms were available at the registration desk for those who had not filled out the form electronically.

2. On 14 February, a link to a post-conference questionnaire was sent to all participants (irrespective of status) and promoted on social media channels. It posed a total of twelve questions designed to interrogate participants' experiences at the conference. While not mandatory, the conference sponsors (Miyamoto Unsouke Shoten) offered a pair of bachi for one questionnaire respondent who completed the survey prior to noon on 18 February 2017. Eiichii Saito, an ETC2 workshop leader and long-standing member of Kodō, was filmed selecting the winner from a hat and the video was shared widely on social media.
3. Three focus groups were conducted with participants between 30th March and 5th April 2017, along with a 1-2-1 interview with a participant unable to join the focus group sessions. The questions posed were designed to interrogate key themes that emerged from the quantitative evaluation laid out above.

The participant questionnaires were available in English and the focus groups were also conducted in English. This reflects the status of English as the working language of the conference but also the range of languages spoken by participants.

The Findings

Pre-Conference Survey

The stated aim of the second ETC was “developing the community, developing the art form;” the same objective applied to the inaugural conference. The purpose of the pre-conference questionnaire was to ascertain *why* people chose to attend the conference and whether their objectives aligned with “developing the community, developing the art form.” Participants were

The vast majority of participants had attended at least one other event designed to bring taiko players together; only 13% had not attended any other event. 60% of ETC2 participants had attended at least two other events, suggesting the conference primarily attracted individuals already engaged in national and international taiko events. As figure 6 shows, more than half of respondents had attended the first ETC and half had attended the UK Taiko Festival. This perhaps reflects the nationalities of attendees – 37 respondents (45%) reported that they live in the United Kingdom where the inaugural and second ETCs were held along with the UK Taiko Festival. Participation rates at international events were far lower. The most widely attended outside the United Kingdom is the North American Taiko Conference (attended by 15% of ETC2 participants). However, this does not necessarily reflect European engagement levels given four workshop leaders at ETC2 are based in the United States.

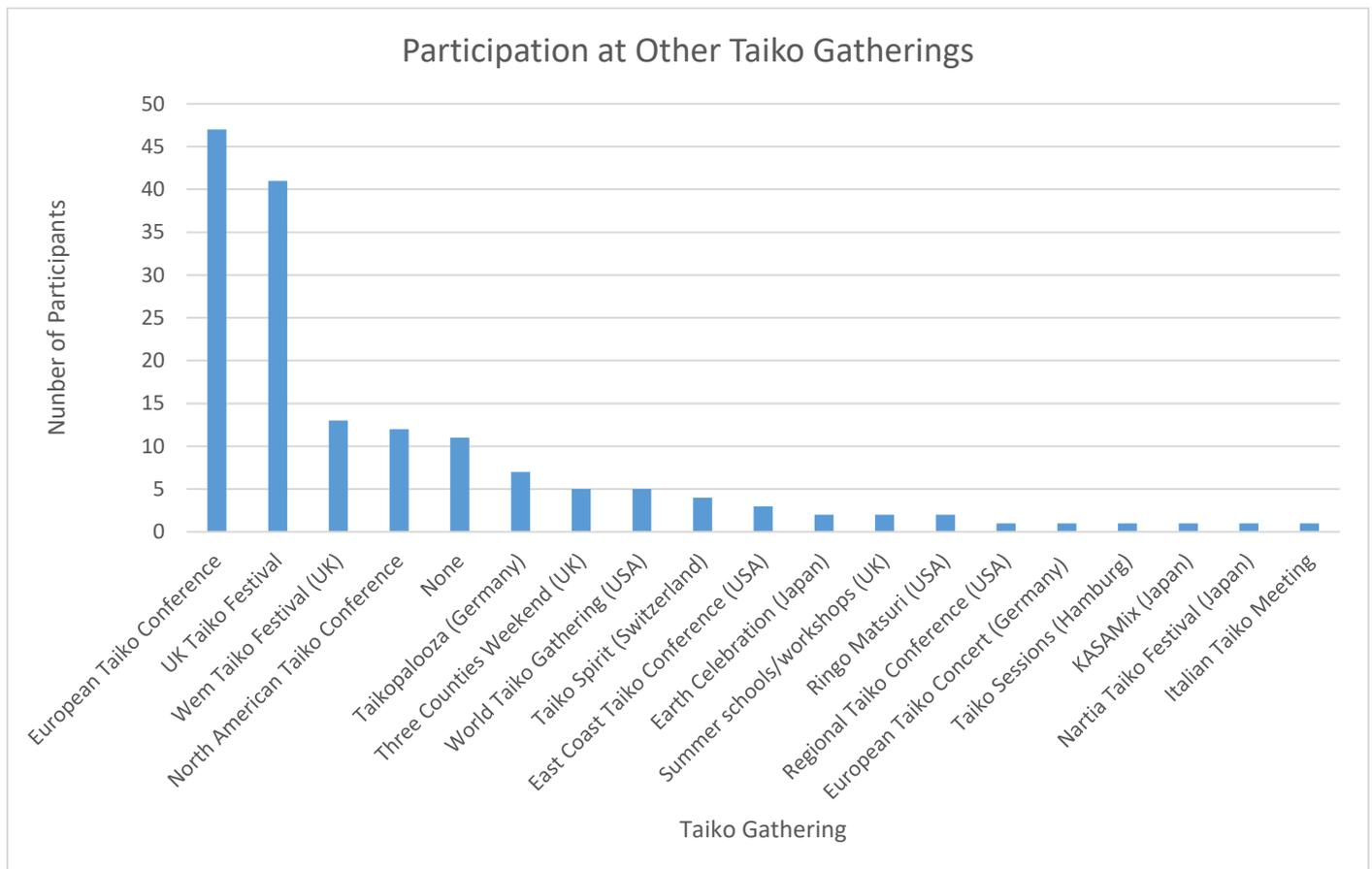


Figure 6: Attendance at other Taiko Gatherings by ETC2 Participants.

As described in the evaluation model, participants were asked why they chose to attend ETC2 ahead of the conference. For comparative purposes, participants were also asked about their motivations for attending in the post-conference survey and given a range of options (including free-text) from which to select. Figure 7 shows the prescribed motivations selected by participants:

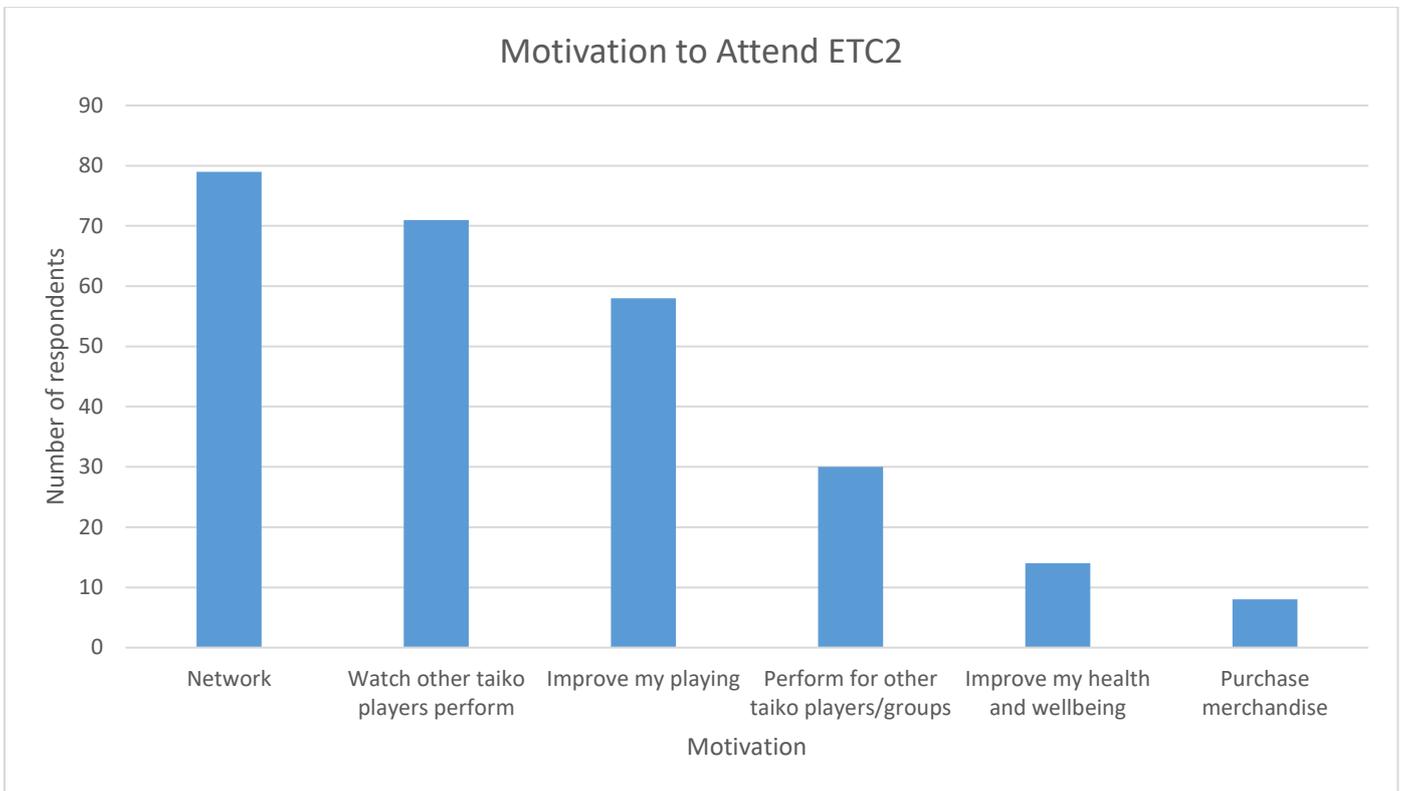


Figure 7: Motivation to attend ETC2 (as identified by participants)

Only three respondents identified a single motivational factor for attending ETC2; notably, all three identified network[ing]. All other respondents had at least two factors that motivated them to attend the conference. Interestingly, watching other players perform does not emerge as a theme from the pre-conference questionnaire designed to gather participants' goals for attending the conference. Nor does performing, improving health and wellbeing or purchasing merchandise. However, multiple respondents identified these as motivational factors, suggesting that they were secondary factors attracting them to the conference.

39 respondents identified additional motivational factors that attracted them to the conference (in addition to the six response options identified in figure 7). This suggests rich and multi-faceted drivers for conference participation and these are summarised thematically in figure 8.

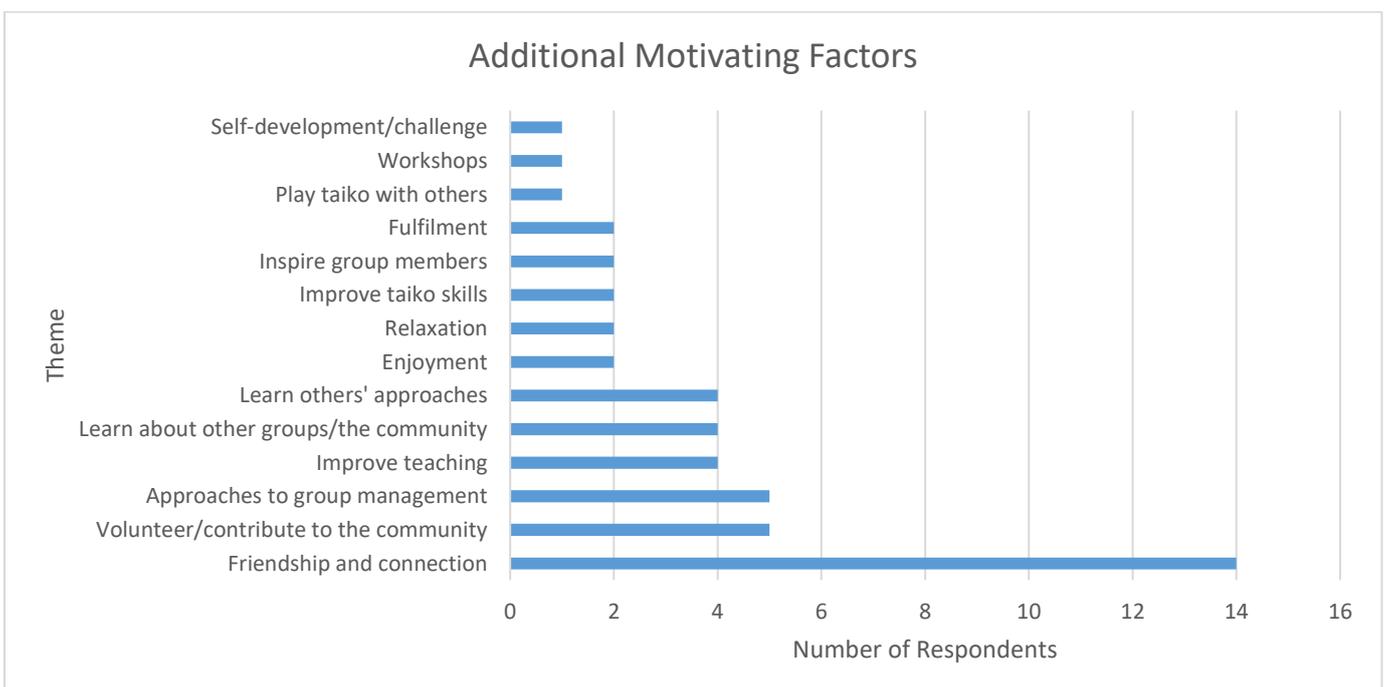


Figure 8: Additional motivating factors identified by participants.

Notably, the most commonly cited additional motivating factor is that of friendship and connection with other players. For instance, respondents cited “reconnect[ing] wiith friends,” “meet[ing] old friends, and making new ones within the community,” and “socialising with taiko players.” Contribution to both the smooth-running of ETC2 and the wider taiko community was directly cited by 5 participants. One participant stated s/he wanted to “fill my heart and soul, [and] help build and reinforce the taiko community.” Learning about approaches to group management and the improvement of teaching were objectives set by five and four conference participants respectively. In short, a range of motivational factors attracted participants to ETC2, in turn suggesting a spectrum of expectations.

Participants were asked the degree to which conference activities helped them to fulfil their objectives for attending the conference. We have already seen that while the motivating factors varied, people-to-people connections was a pervasive theme. Delegates and observers were allocated workshops based on previous participation at ETC2: those who had attended the inaugural conference were allocated to workshops with leaders who had not been present. Meanwhile, participants who had not attended the first conference were allocated to returning workshop leaders. Some activities, such as yoga with Heather Murray and taiko drills with Oliver Kirby, were optional (and capped due to limited space/equipment) and available via a sign-up sheet at registration. As a result, 70% of respondents did not participate in the former activity. Thus, participants’ schedules and activities varied, and only the plenary sessions, joint performances and evening performances were available to all participants at the same time.

Figure 9 presents the participants who engaged in the activity and whether they strongly agreed or agreed that the activity met their objectives (i.e. a positive response), disagreed or strongly disagreed that the activity met their objectives (i.e. a negative response), or were indifferent. It is worth bearing in mind that this model suggests participants were clear about their reason(s) for taking part. The variations between the pre and post-conference surveys outlined above suggest that this was not always the case. Nevertheless, the chart shows that shared taiko practice (i.e. evening performances, joint performances and workshops) overwhelmingly supported individuals’ objectives for attending the conference. To a degree, however, this contrasts with individuals’ stated goals for participating as performing and observing other players did not emerge as themes from the pre-conference survey. That said, a high percentage of attendees did identify these as goals following the conference. Meals together also appears important in terms of supporting goals. In contrast, all four discussion sessions were rated less positively with higher rates of indifference.

These responses are not necessarily a reflection of levels of enjoyment; instead, participants were expressly asked whether the activity supported their goals for attending the conference. For instance, a minority gave a positive response about purchasing merchandise, yet 65% of participants purchased items at the conference.

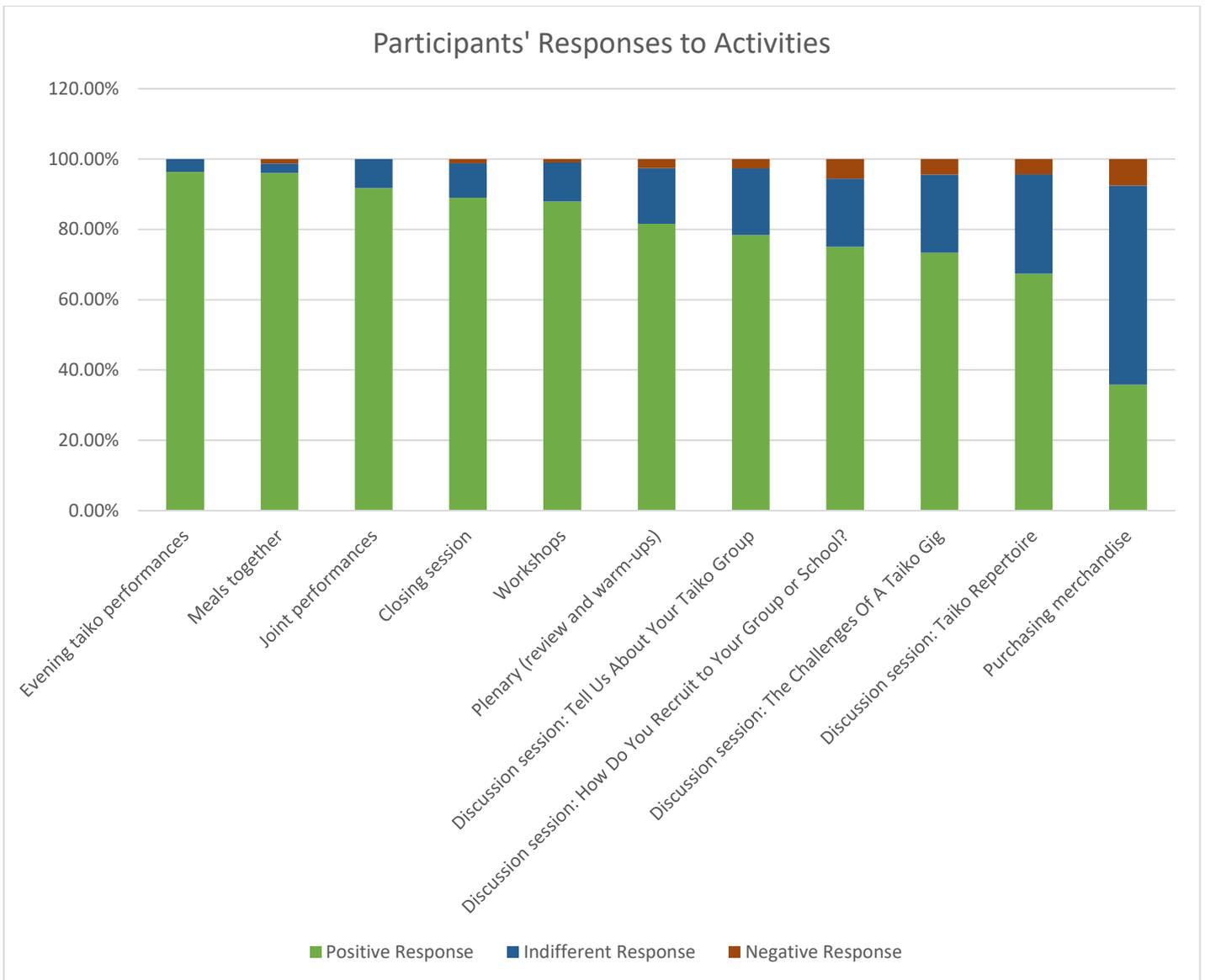


Figure 9: Degree to which individuals' objectives were realised by activity at ETC2.

Figure 10 breaks down the positive responses (i.e. strongly agree or agree) and reveals a very clear split: workshops and other collaborative activities (joint performances, evening performances, meals, and plenaries) attracted strong agreement, whereas the discussion sessions were less strongly supported.

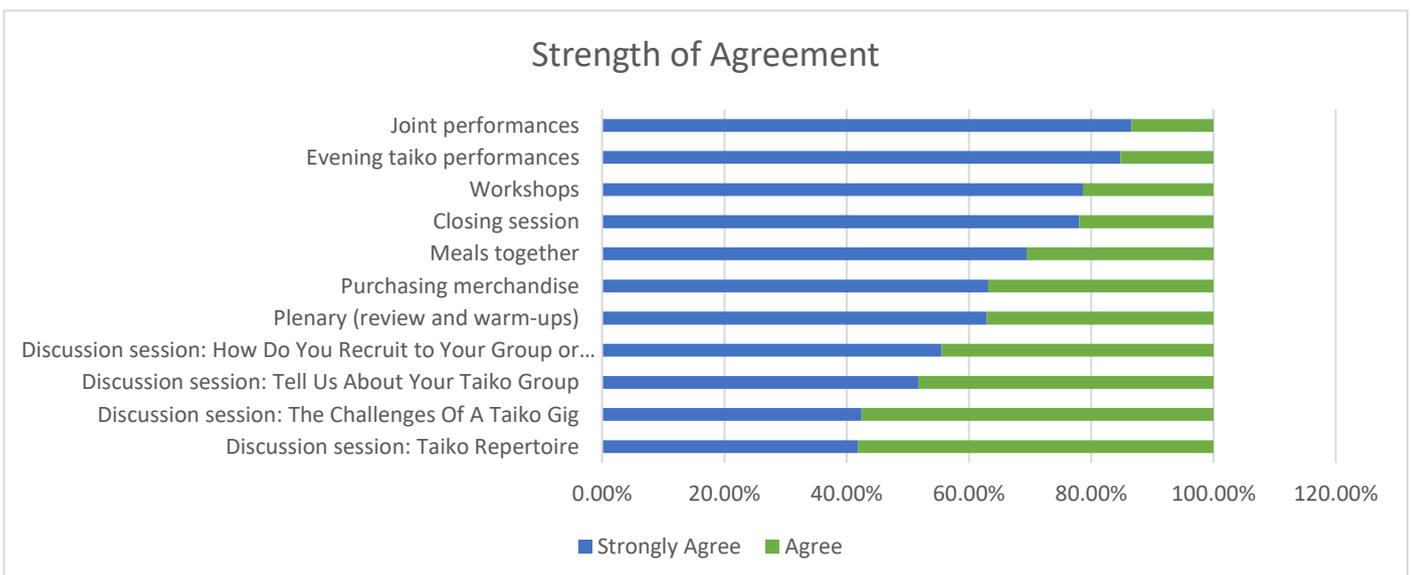


Figure 10: Strength of agreement among respondents

Given the importance attached to networking by the participants, conference attendees were asked to rate the networking and contacts made at ETC2. All respondents were positive and most (83%) considered them to be very useful, as shown in figure 11.

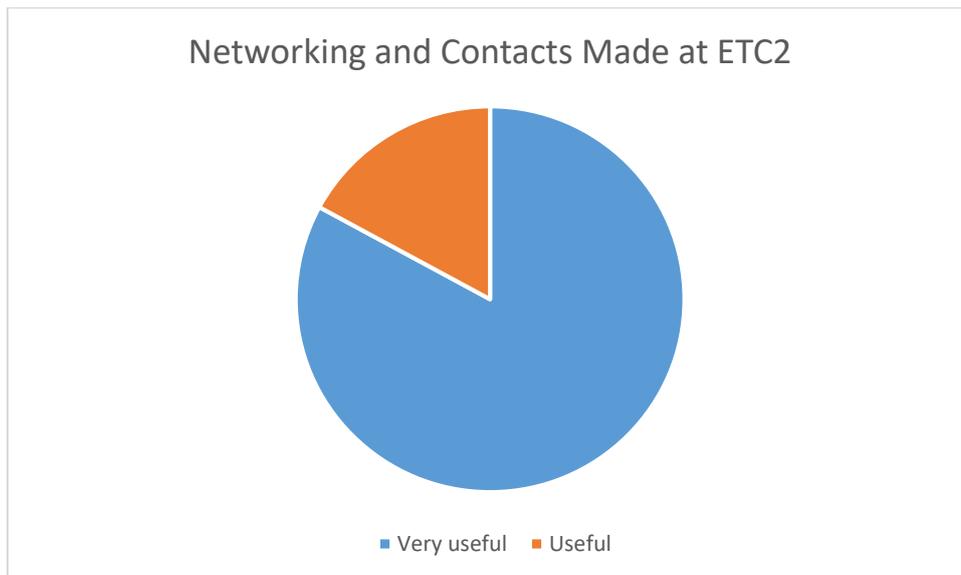


Figure 11: Networking and contacts made at ETC2

The vast majority of participants (88%) also reported that they planned to share knowledge and/or skills acquired at the conference with members of their group who could not attend. The extent to which this has occurred, along with the kinds of skills and knowledge shared, was subsequently examined during the focus groups. A small minority (7%) will not share what they have learnt and/or developed. Notably, however, the small minority was made up of atypical participants (e.g. volunteers).



Figure 12: Agreement with statement “I will share some of the knowledge and/or skills gained at the European Taiko Conference 2017 with other members of my group who could not attend.

Participants were asked to identify topics or skills that they would like to see covered at the next European Taiko Conference. Diverse suggestions were offered using a free-text format but four persistent themes emerged, all of which were identified by 10% or more of respondents. These are:

- drum-based specialist skills and/or techniques (e.g. *katsugi*, *o-daiko*), identified by 26% of respondents
- taiko teaching skills, identified by 13% of participants.
- associated instruments (e.g. *fue*, *atariganiae*) and/or songs, identified by 12% of respondents

- composing and arranging taiko pieces, identified by 11% of respondents.

The most commonly requested drum-based activity was an *o-daiko* workshop; this was suggested by 15% of respondents. *Katsugi* was suggested by 8 respondents (10%) and a *shime-daiko* workshop requested by 6% of participants².

Most respondents sought general taiko teaching advice, although one requested a specialist session on students with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and another on teaching taiko to children.

In terms of associated instruments, the most commonly requested session was one focused on *chappa* (by 9% of respondents). A further 6% suggested *atarigane*, and 2 respondents named *narimono* (the generic term for small percussion instruments). Japanese song workshops were suggested by 3 participants, and *fue* sessions by 2 respondents.

Notably, 13% of respondents had no suggestions or ideas, with most stating they were happy with the range of activities on offer at ETC2.

Despite the range of suggestions offered, participants made clear that they thoroughly valued their experiences at ETC2. For instance, 80% responded that they would attend ETC3, and a further 20% stated they might attend ETC3; no respondent stated that they would not participate. Furthermore, figure 13 shows very high satisfaction levels among participants: 85% were very satisfied with their overall experience at ETC2, and a further 11% were satisfied. While two respondents stated they were very unsatisfied with their experience at the conference, their responses do not correlate in any way with their answers to other survey questions, suggesting they inverted the scale (i.e. selected 5 for very unsatisfied while thinking it related to very satisfied).

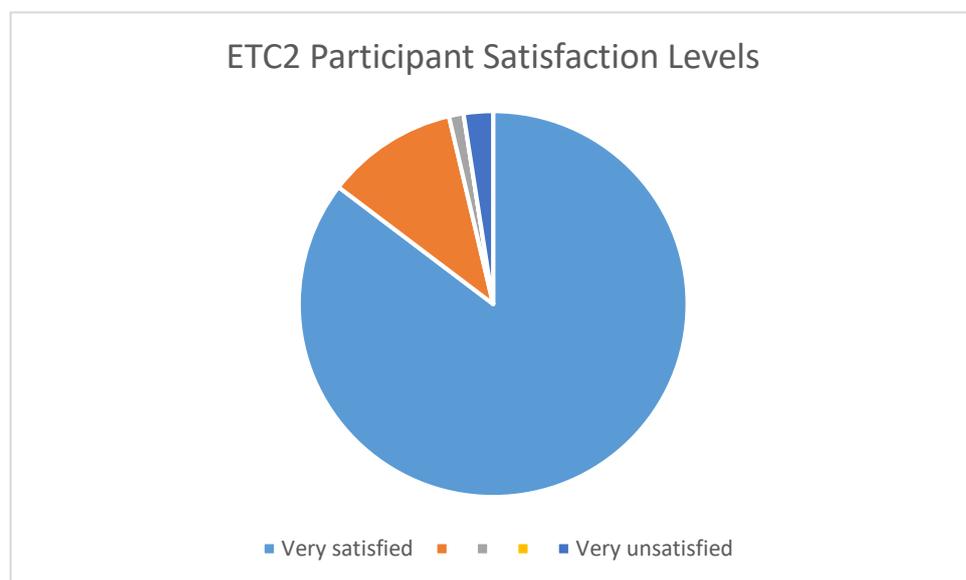


Figure 13: Satisfaction rates among ETC2 participants.

Conference participants were invited to input any additional comments about the conference and 68% of respondents elected to do so. Multifarious (and often conflicting) suggestions were put forward – for instance, one respondent stated she thought the mixture of workshops was very good, and another thought the contents overlapped too much. Nevertheless, key themes and trends did emerge: first, 23% of those with additional comments suggested the conference had been a profound and meaningful experience for them. For instance, one respondent wrote:

² Note that many respondents suggested or requested multiple workshops focused on different skills.

“OMG [Oh My God], I am still under the influence of ETC. it is absolutely worth it in any aspect. Very intense but relaxing also. Really focused on making strong "brotherhood" therefore we are ... big Taiko family members now!”

Another wrote that:

“It has been an inspirational and amazing experience, and humbling too. It has given me a stronger sense of self belief and I have come away from it with ideas of my taiko path of the future. I feel motivated and delighted that I was part of such an event.”

Some respondents suggested that the transformative change they had experienced was possible due to the ethos of the conference. One participant wrote:

“The philosophy of respect, humility and equality is such a great platform and expressed so well by the Conference leaders. You feel so at home and it gives you courage to give back. I saw many express the same feeling about the way the conference was done. It gives such a good foundation for Community and we are greatly thankful for this. We left the Conference with higher confidence and self-esteem because of this!”

Another wrote:

“ETC 2 was simply life affirming. It was extremely well organised, workshops and conference topics were well thought-out and addressed a wide range of points. The atmosphere was warm, inclusive and created a safe space for all. It simply does your heart good to have the privilege of belonging to such a community of kind people who also happen to be bad ass taiko players.”

A further 18% stated how much they had enjoyed the event, with phrases such as “honour” and “privilege” frequently being used. Most respondents either explicitly or implicitly thanked the organisers for their hard work.

Focus Groups

Following analysis of the quantitative data, three emergent themes were identified for discussion during the focus groups: the sharing of learning with taiko players who did not attend the conference, and any barriers that may exist to doing so; the role and usefulness of discussion sessions in the conference programme; and the degree to which the conference objective (namely “developing the community, developing the art form”) was achieved.

Three focus groups took place between 30th March and 5th April 2017. These were supplemented by a 1-2-1 interview with a participant unable to join the focus group sessions. In total, 10 individuals took part from a cross-sector of ETC2 participants; 10 taiko groups and 6 countries were represented in the third and final stage of the evaluation model. The focus group sessions were facilitated using Skype and lasted 45-60 minutes; the 1-2-1 interview lasted 30 minutes. An analysis of the three areas of discussion is presented below and is followed by a series of recommendations for the conference organisers.

I. Sharing Learning Post-Conference

Eight of the ten focus group participants actively shared learning from ETC2 with taiko players who did not attend the conference. Three respondents reported sharing specific skills, drills or repertoire. Examples include “Ready, Set, Kadon,” a piece played by conference participants during joint performances; and an exercise practiced with a partner based on a *mitsu-uchi* rhythm from Mark H. Rooney’s workshop. More broadly, however, there was a far stronger tendency to share *concepts* that, in turn, affected individuals’ performance and teaching practices. For instance, six participants expressly mentioned sharing Eiichii Saito’s “beam” or “present,” an approach that promotes connection among players on stage and between performers and the audience. Five participants reported that they now use it as part of their teaching practice as well as for their personal development as players. One respondent reported:

“I used it [the beam] for myself in the concerts to go forward in this area. With the thinking, ‘how do I feel about that?’ ‘Can I go further while I’m on stage?’ I was giving something like

that to my students. It reinforced me in teaching ... students who are further when they play in public place[s].”

Another participant stated:

“I’ve used a load of what I learnt at Eiichi-san’s workshop because it’s very useful for beginners and it works with any level of taiko players. ... I could use a lot of things Eiichii-san taught us without using his words.

Two additional concepts were shared: Tiffany Tamarabuchi’s notion of hitting the drum with intent or *ki*, and Shoji Kameda’s approach to produce a clear-sounding *don*. Participants who shared with others referenced making learning from the conference relevant. As the above quotation demonstrates, respondents don’t merely replicate exercises or other learning strategies. Instead, they are contextualised and adapted for those they are working with. For instance, one participant explained:

“I’ve shared a few activities, skills and drills with my team ... At the last ... session, the theme was ‘activities, skills, drills and repertoire’ ... that I picked up from different parts of the world. Stuff from Eiichii’s workshop, a little bit from Mark H. Rooney’s workshop, a bit from Shoji’s workshop but nothing from Tiffany’s as yet as it’s a bit too advanced for that group.”

In addition to being introduced to new approaches, two participants stated that workshops had given them more confidence in teaching concepts or notions that they were already familiar with. For example:

“It was something I was [already] brining to my students, but it helped give me more words, more examples, and to be more self-confident about this approach. And so it helped me to go forward with the pedagogy for my students.”

Another respondent reflected upon new ways of communicating the same concept:

“This beam message. It’s another way of a message I know from my teacher from Japan. A lot about connecting between players, ... making that connection wider. ... It was interesting to see that from another teacher and how he teaches that. ... I shared this message.”

Two participants reported that specific time had been set aside in their group to share learning from ETC2. One session was cancelled and not re-scheduled. The second, however, went ahead. Notably, the participant reported that group members did not find the concepts particularly important.

Two respondents reported that they did not share learning. In both cases, Eiichii Saito delivered a workshop to their group shortly after the conference. Both participants stated they did not want to spoil their group members’ enjoyment or sense of surprise. One member stated that the highly-structured nature of their group’s practice sessions made it difficult to share learning with others.

Participants were asked to identify what, if anything, would make it easier to share learning post-conference. A recurring comment was made by observers in two focus groups, namely that it is easier to compile a complete set of notes as an observer. Indeed, two observers commented that they use their notes before playing and/or teaching in their group, and it was suggested that this be promoted as a benefit of participating as an observer at future conferences.

There were mixed views about the provision of documentation from the conference. Two participants suggested a note-taker in each session (including workshops) produce notes and disseminate these to participants afterwards. However, this view was challenged due to the highly personal nature of some of the learning that takes part. One participant said:

“I’m not sure how easy it is to take stuff away and then disseminate it among your own group effectively because so much of what ... I learnt was the connection with the teachers, the delivery of what they were teaching you. Some personal stuff that was specific to me that I learnt just wouldn’t translate to writing down what they said and showing it to other people. Everyone learns things differently. ... I’m not sure how much people would really get from it.”

This view point was echoed by a further two participants, with one highlighting that “taiko is not very much about written materials.” A middle ground was repeatedly proposed, namely small chunks of reflection/quiet/note-taking time at the end of each session. An additional suggestion of a brief (bullet-point) handout from each workshop leader that could be personalised by each learner was also proposed, as were video-recordings of the discussion sessions. As one first-time conference participant reflected, “what made sharing difficult was that I didn’t expect to learn so much.”

Two additional comments were made regarding ease of sharing learning. The first proposal was an introduction from each group ahead of the conference detailing members, style, classes, ethos etc. This was suggested to facilitate networking and, in turn, learning. The second idea was recommending that groups make time in their schedules post-conference to actively share learning from the conference.

II. Discussion Sessions

Four discussion sessions took place during ETC2: “Tell Us About Your Group or School,” “The Challenges of a Taiko Gig,” “Taiko Compositions: What Do You Play?” and “How Do You Recruit People to Your Group or School?” Sessions ran in parallel, meaning participants attended two sessions in total.

Despite being rated less positively in the quantitative evaluation, all ten respondents strongly argued in favour of retaining the discussion sessions. One stated that:

“Having those discussion sessions are one of the key things that makes it a conference rather than a taiko training weekend. ... The idea of conference to me is, in a way, primarily about [the] sharing of ideas and [the] combining of ideas and cross-breeding of ideas. I think the discussion sessions are key, are the main place in which that happens. I think one of the key bi-products of that ... is that I think it can produce new ideas and it can give people inspiration about where to take their group or where to take their work with taiko or their relationship with taiko that just attending workshops might not necessarily produce.

The discussion sessions were repeatedly positioned by respondents as central to the success of the conference and a space in which ideas were shared. For instance, another respondent likened the discussion sessions to:

“cement used to build a house. You have the bricks and cement to fix everything, like the glue. ... For me, ETC discussion sessions are like the cement for building the community. It’s a place where things are shared more widely and more deeply. It is just essential.”

Participants reported multiple positive aspects of the discussion sessions, namely:

- An opportunity to share/discuss current challenges and opportunities with others
- A source of inspiration and/or new ideas
- The chance to examine an issue in-depth
- Ensuring the weekend functions as a conference rather than just a festival or extended workshop
- An understanding of how other groups approach particular issues
- The ability to help and support others through the sharing of information and advice
- Reassurance that others face the same challenges

Interestingly, no respondent reported attachment to any specific topic or issue; in fact, the opportunity to discuss with peers seemed far more significant than any particular discussion point. One participant neatly summarised it as follows:

“The most important or valuable thing was to meet other people and have the conversations with other people. For the discussion sessions as well as for the workshops, the contents was not that important to me but it was a way to get other people to know [each other] and get the conversation going.”

All ten participants expressed a desire to retain discussion sessions at future conferences, and five would like to retain the format used at ETC2. However, some alternative models were also suggested. These included smaller discussion groups similar in style to Karen Young's workshop; smaller discussion groups based on an open space mode; incubating spaces for emergent activity (e.g. dedicated time to collectively compose a taiko piece accessible to players with physical impairments or kick start an evaluation guide); or additional practical workshops in lieu of discussion groups. There are, of course, drawbacks to these approaches and these were acknowledged by respondents: further complexity for the organisers, less "shared" activities by large numbers of participants, and a need for robust and effective facilitators.

Participants were asked to reflect upon any suggestions or recommendations they had applied from the discussion sessions. Seven respondents had applied no learning from the discussion sessions. However, as one participant noted,

"I haven't yet [used the information] but I can see myself using it. ... It's information I think I'll use. All of the sessions haven't been relevant to what I'm doing in taiko *right now*. ... I can tell what I've learnt from the discussion sessions will be things that I'm considering down the line."

One participant who attended ETC in 2016 reflected upon using notes from a discussion session he attended nearly a year later, reflecting a change in his taiko practice and circumstances.

All 10 respondents were unequivocally clear about the positive benefits of the discussion sessions but clearly reaped different benefits depending on their involvement in taiko. For instance, newer teachers or group leaders reported gaining lots of ideas and advice, whereas longer-standing leaders repeatedly reported feeling reassured about certain approaches following discussion sessions. Others were extremely positive about being exposed to a broader perspective beyond the activities of their own group. In other words, the learning outcomes differed significantly for participants.

Interestingly, respondents appeared extremely surprised that discussion sessions were evaluated less favourably than other activities. Interest in the topics offered and English as the language for the conference were mooted as possible reasons (although not directly experienced by any of the focus group members). During one discussion, the following paradigm was proposed and agreed with:

"I see two kinds of people playing taiko. One who wants to hit drums and spends their time hitting drums – finds joy in hitting drums. That's all, kind of. And people who see something wider in the taiko art form, for whom playing drums is important but not the only [thing]. ... I felt these two different worlds during ETC2. ... Maybe there are more from one group than the other."

III. Conference Ethos

Participants were asked to reflect upon the conference goal, namely "developing the community, developing the art form." There was universal agreement that the community had developed as a result of the conference. As one participant noted, "Developing the community? I think absolutely. I 100% agree with that. You could just tell from the mood and sentiment of everyone there." There were, however, significant reservations as to whether the second component of the statement had been achieved largely due to perceived ambiguity regarding its meaning. Herewith an example of the clarification sought by a participant from the focus group facilitator:

"Developing the art form? So maybe it's just a subtle thing but I developed as a taiko player because I learnt from these amazing people. To develop the art form itself, as taiko, you mean ...? Is the meaning to change a bit the way taiko is or played or used? Is this one of the aims? Or to develop *us* as taiko players?"

The need for clarification vis-a-vis "developing the art form" precipitated wider discussion about two issues, namely the development of a specifically European form or style of taiko and the difficulty of

the workshops on offer. Three participants directly juxtaposed European and Japanese taiko. Herewith examples of the reflections offered:

“I have the feeling that, to my mind, it was more the development of the British art form of taiko which I think [is] immensely good. [What] all of the English players do is very good. When you consider it as an art form as opposed to a Japanese tradition form, it has been developed.”

“... We are talking about a very traditional art form. ... We need some different words here to say ‘yes’. ... If I were asked ‘do you think that there’s European-style taiko after this conference?’ I’d say ‘yes, there seems to be’. Before, I wouldn’t have said that.”

A third participant suggested that a German proverb was appropriate in terms of the conference’s utility in developing the art form, namely a “drop on a hot stone” (*ein Tropfen auf den heißen Stein*). The same respondent suggested that perhaps the second component of the conference goal was too ambitious for an annual event. Broadly, it was proposed that there needs to be stronger agreement about the role of the conference in developing the art form. One participant reflected:

“The idea of developing the art form is really exciting to me. That’s a really exciting aspect that I’d like to think about during a discussion session. ... To think about how can we develop it. What does UK taiko look like? Or European taiko rather – what does it look like? What does it look like in different countries? Where are we going with it? I don’t think it did as much in that area as it could have done.”

Lack of clarity about the conference’s role in developing the art form extended to the workshops on offer. One highly-experienced player commented that:

“The workshops that were offered were really well suited for the people they were intended for. For the amateur taiko groups in Europe, that is the bulk of the community, for this they were really useful. I really got the impression that everyone learnt a lot from these workshops. ... [However] I would not immediately say ‘now I have to do it this way because this is the right way and now I finally understand it’.”

One respondent reflected that a fellow, more experienced group member was “disappointed” as they “couldn’t learn anything new.” By way of contrast, however, another participant reflected upon the workshops on offer at ETC2 in contrast to ETC1. She stated:

“I felt – much more so than in the first conference – that we as a collective ... were accepted as taiko players. In the first conference, they took us right back to the basics, all of us. We learned to hit, stand, you know, and now we moved on. The teachers moved on, the whole thinking moved on beyond those basics and went more deeply into what it is to play together. We were kind of accepted as people who know how, to a certain extent, to play taiko. We didn’t have to go all the way to zero any more. We are accepted.”

Three participants felt that both components of the goal had been achieved, with one respondent stating “you can’t build one [part] without the other.” One respondent reported that a sense of momentum following the conference achieved the second part of the goal, whereas another felt that sharing learning from ETC2 achieved it.

Ultimately, these discussions reinforced an earlier observation: taiko players come to ETC with different goals, at different stages in their artistic development and with contrasting views as to their role in a wider European community. One participant summarised it as such: “All the different groups that were at ETC2 are doing their own thing. ... As far as specific techniques and drills go, I don’t think you’d expect them to cause the art form to develop.” However, it was repeatedly acknowledged that the success of the conference is due to its organisation by fellow taiko players.

Recommendations

Participants generously provided data before and after the second European Taiko Conference. It presents a picture of a rich, diverse and emerging European taiko community. It also suggests that the vast majority of participants found fulfilment and enjoyment at the conference. That said, the data also provides some clear challenges as well as suggestions for future iterations of the European Taiko Conference.

The recommendations below are based solely on analysis of the data gathered as part of the evaluation model. Evidently, they will need to be considered in light of the financial, human and material resources available to the conference organisers and hosts. The recommendations can be grouped into the following three themes:

I. Manage the Expectations of Participants

“Developing the community, developing the art form” offers a degree of ambiguity and the potential for engagement by participants with differing perspectives. However, those who attended ETC2 stated a range of objectives and came with a spectrum of expectations. It is recommended that an outcomes-focused mission statement is developed to articulate the likely short and medium-term effects of ETC. This may help to set the expectations of participants.

It is suggested that former participants prepare and upload brief videos to YouTube in which they outline their experiences at ETC. Links could then be shared with newcomers to the conference. Furthermore, a brief checklist of points to consider could be circulated ahead of the conference to all participants. This could respond to issues raised in the data, including: strategies for note-taking/learning; setting aside time immediately after ETC to share learning with one’s own group (an oft-cited regret among ETC2 participants); and means of reflecting upon the pedagogy observed and experienced. Both resources would likely indicate the immersive nature of the conference and opportunities for self-directed development.

II. Promote the Diversity of European Taiko

It is recommended that conference organisers continue to ensure a diverse range of taiko groups participate or can benefit from the conference. Livestreaming discussion sessions using social media may prove to be an effective way of achieving this. First, it means individuals and groups unable to attend are able to engage with the conference and its proceedings. Second, it will provide an insight into the conference, allowing potential participants to make an informed decision about taking part as a delegate or observer at future iterations. Third, recordings can be accessed by taiko players anywhere in the world, thus allowing information, advice and guidance to travel further but also raising awareness of European taiko globally. It is therefore recommended that videos are uploaded to YouTube to ensure maximum visibility and engagement.

III. Allow Opportunities for Emergent Activities

Whilst acknowledging that a limited period of time is available during the conference, it is recommended that space is allowed in the schedule for emergent activity. At the simplest level, this means offering short periods of time for participants to reflect or take notes at the end of sessions. Activities identified as “take-aways” (i.e. those that participants could adapt to teach or deliver in their own settings) is another suggestion.

Special Interest Groups (i.e. subgroups within the ETC community with a shared interest in a specific area) may allow participants to engage with identified topics. A block of time towards the end of the conference schedule could be set aside to facilitate emergent activity. ETC2 participants expressed a desire for the following: advanced taiko skills, evaluating the effectiveness of taiko with specific groups, pedagogy, associated instruments and composition. This list should not, however, be considered exhaustive: other topics may also come into view at future iterations of the conference. By establishing Special Interest Groups

and using time within the conference schedule to kick-start activities (such as an evaluation template), the impact of ETC extends beyond the timeframe of the conference. Furthermore, it allows participants with particular interests to engage and collaborate with others on a longer-term basis.

While a broader range of suggestions was proposed by participants, the above themes received attention from multiple participants at the second and third stages of the evaluation process. It is acknowledged, however, that significant investment would be required from event organisers and facilitators to implement these recommendations.

This report was prepared by Kate Walker, a taiko player and PhD student at the University of Sheffield (UK). Please contact kewalker1@sheffield.ac.uk with any questions.