



“Training to the Beat of a Different Drum” Taekwondo and Taiko in Germany

By ChunJiDo Grandmaster, Robert Cutrell

In my travels doing ChunJiDo seminars around the world, I have the amazing opportunity to meet many wonderful martial artists from different cultures and very diverse systems. Recently my wife, Nancy, and I traveled to Germany to present my art of ChunJiDo to a very large group of over 350 martial artists followed by an amazing awards ceremony and banquet presented by Wing Chun Sifu Erwin Timmers. During our visit we had the honor of meeting a very distinguished gentleman with some very extraordinary talents, not only in martial arts but also in the ancient traditional art of the Japanese Taiko drums!



Master Robert Chwalek was born in the small village of Hillentrup, Germany, in 1958. Beginning his martial arts in the German Air Force, Master Chwalek went on to train in multiple martial arts and personal

protection systems training, including Tae Kwon Do, Hapkido, Kempo Jujitsu, Defenjutsu, Anti-Terror Street Fighting, and multiple weapons training. As Master Chwalek continued his training, he not only recognized great successes and inductions into several martial arts halls of fame, but he explored other ways to fully embrace the Asian culture. One such endeavor was learning how to play the Japanese Taiko drums with his wife Charlotte Carls, who learned to play the Taiko drums from a Sensei in the city of Osnabrück, who founded the Yondaiko Group, a Japanese Taiko player group, and also wrote the songs for the group.

The Taiko drums have an extensive history dating back as far as the 6th century in some historical recordings. Included in mythical folklore the Taiko drum had many uses in ancient times. Introduced to Japan

through Korean and Chinese cultural influence, Taiko drums have been used throughout history to perform such functions as communicating, motivating fighting troops, intimidating the enemy, and for ceremonial purposes. The powerful percussion of the Taiko drums sent a very strong message in rallying troops and alerting the opponent of their imminent demise in battle. The cadence of the drums was changed and sped up or slowed down, depending on the assigned action of the troops advancing on the enemy.

In modern history the Taiko drum is used as decoration, during performance of dance, theater, festivals, celebrations, and ceremonial rituals. Taiko are also used in a classical music and dance tradition called gagaku in shrines and temples, as well as the Imperial Palace.

The study and practice of Taiko require tremendous attention to detail from the posture and position of the person playing the Taiko, the way in which the sticks (bachi) are held, to the very traditional clothing worn. The drums are not played with just the upper body, but rather incorporate the entire body. The clothing worn during performance usually includes a combination of the traditional hachmakim or headband; the thin ornate coat called a happi; momohiki, the loose-fitting pants; and the haragake apron. Some groups also wear the fundoshim or loincloth.



In addition to traveling throughout Europe presenting martial arts and self-defense seminars, Master Chwalek feels the practice of Taiko drums compliments his martial arts and creates balance and harmony by providing a sense of rhythmic peace and tranquility in contrast to the rigorous four days a week that he trains in the arts. He and his wife, Charlotte, also attend many festivals and celebrations during the year performing with the Taiko drums.

Most recently Master Chwalek and Charlotte have started teaching the art of

the Taiko drum to disabled children. Master Chwalek credits Charlotte with this heartfelt idea. He feels it is one of the most fulfilling things they have done, and they are very proud of all of the children and their progress. Working with the children is a rewarding endeavor and a wonderful compliment to his daily martial arts and self-defense training.

My wife, Nancy, and I are so very thankful to have met Master Chwalek. We truly admire all of his great work in martial arts and both him and his wife for sharing their passion for the unique art of the Taiko drums with so many!





Self-defense Technique #1 Against a Two-Hand Lapel Grab

- Attacker grabs defender with a double lapel grab
- Defender immediately traps the attacker's right hand and strikes the attacker's neck, temple, or collarbone area with a hammer fist or a knife-edge strike
- Defender then uses a wristlock to take the attacker to the ground and secures the attacker with a wrist/elbow locking combination, dropping their knees on the attacker's head and ribs



Variation of Self-defense Technique Against a Two-Hand Lapel Grab

- Attacker grabs defender with a double lapel grab
- Defender immediately traps the attacker's right hand and strikes the attacker's neck, temple, or collarbone area with a hammer fist or knife-edge strike
- Defender then uses a wristlock to take the attacker to the ground
- Once the attacker is on the ground, the defender steps around and rolls the attacker to his stomach and secures the attacker with a finger/wrist lock, in combination with applying pressure to the nerve center just below the ear



To contact Master Robert Chwalek

Email: r.chwalek@unitybox.de

To contact Grandmaster Robert Cutrell or to become a member of the ChunJiDo Family

Email: ChunJiDo@gmail.com

Website: www.chunjido.com

