

the KODŌ beat

鼓童



Eiichi Saito and friends on Shiroyama. photo by Susumu Yoshida

Earth Celebration 2000

Mother Nature smiled upon Earth Celebration once again this year - sun, more sun, and not a drop of rain. As for the parts of the festival guided by mortal hand - we try to make each year better than the last - changing what doesn't work and delving deeper into those areas that do. EC '99's Fringe held in the parking lot, for example, was less than a resounding success, so back it went this year to beneath the shady pines of Kisaki Shrine where it belongs.

Striving to make EC ever more participatory - rather than just a passive entertainment - this year taiko workshops were held by both Yoshikazu Fujimoto and Eiichi Saito. Other workshops included voice by Yoko Fujimoto, dance by Iwashita Toru of Sankajuku and Ogi Okesa, whose 'graduates' danced through the red and white lantern-lined streets of the town. A whole range of workshops was also given by

Tiger Espere from Hawaii on paleo printing, the Haka dance, Hawaiian chanting, celestial navigation and even nose-flute for kids. Youngsters were also kept busy learning the samba with Ryo Watanabe and doing installation art.

In a departure from our usual 'world music' list of main guests, this year we had top Japanese jazz guitarist Kazumi Watanabe, bassist Tetsuo Sakurai and drummers Shuichi 'Ponta' Murakami, Akira Jimbo and Kozo Suganuma, all first rate musicians in their own right.

However, the brand of rock and fusion they played together with 2 Kodo players was not what most of the EC audience came to hear. As Kodo's name appeared in the programme, people expected to hear at least some taiko - but they were left unsatisfied. Through no fault of the guest musicians the programming didn't take in the expectations of the EC audience. Message received.



Kazumi Watanabe and 'the Drumsco'. photo by Kazuo Yoshino

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For every valley there is a hill though, and the presence of Kim Duk-Soo's SamulNori of Korea proved to be one of the most dynamic performances at EC ever. Their main stage appearances with Kodo and guests were merely wonderful, but the collaboration event at EC theatre with members of Kodo was a triumph. Rarely have a guest performer and Kodo meshed so seamlessly, and rarely in EC's 13 years has an audience given quite the ovation that this show received. Kim Duk-Soo's pioneering work in building a dynamic stage performance based largely upon local folk dance and

drumming traditions is very near the path Kodo strives to walk here in Japan. His work leaves us in awe. He has much to teach us all.

It wasn't all roaring drums though, as Okinawan singer and *sanshin* player Misako Koja enchanted her audiences with a powerful gentleness, - like a calm after a taiko storm.

There were fringe events of every description, with performers from the four corners of the globe. Uniquely this year, Kodo put in a special appearance to drum-up donations for the victims of the ongoing series of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in the island chain south of Tokyo which includes Miyakejima. Kodo's 'Miyake' is based upon the tree-hauling folk drum piece taught to us by the people of Miyakejima. We were so encouraged by the ¥267,848 donated by the generous EC audience that we have continued asking for donations at this year's remaining Japanese concerts.



Misako Koja bringing Okinawan breezes to Sado Island.
photo by Kazuo Yoshino



Kim Duk-Soo's SamulNori showing us how it's done. photo by Kazuo Yoshino

Those who were fortunate enough not to have a reservation at an inn camped on Sobama beach where they drummed and danced the night away by the light of a fire. Some people's fondest memories of EC 2000 may well be those parts in which we had no hand at all. If you didn't make it this year, maybe we'll see you dancing on the beach in 2001.



Tiger Espere teaching nose flute at EC Kids. 'Unlike the mouth, the nose tells no lies'. photo by Kazuo Yoshino



Kodo playing 'Miyake' to raise money for the people of that stricken isle. photo by Johnny Wales

Kodo Close-up:

Akira Nanjo: Player

The 17th in a series of profiles of individual Kodo members.

Akira Nanjo, recently married to professional photographer 'Miku', was born on March 19th, 1973 in Hiroshima Prefecture. He has one brother 2 years older. His mother is an elementary school teacher and his father taught at high school. When Akira was an infant his heart suddenly stopped. His father, in the right place at the right time, gave a thump to his chest and restarted it. Having saved Akira's life though, his own was taken in a car crash before Akira turned one.

Akira excelled at kendo in middle school, getting his black belt in the first year. At the same time, about age 13, he took up the drums. He listened and played to the big band sounds of Count Bassie and Duke Ellington. He also began taking private lessons, and at 18, won best player at the Kansai Student Jazz Festival. He began accompanying his drum teacher to gigs as a roadie and with this glimpse of the world of a professional musicians he resolved to make drumming his life. His teacher's teacher: jazz drummer Takeshi Inomata heard him play and suggested he join Kodo.

Akira had never heard of Kodo, nor indeed had ever listened to traditional Japanese music, but the recommendation of this famous drummer was enough, so he set out to find a CD. His mother then called Kodo to ask for an interview and was told in no uncertain terms that they weren't interested in applications from people who had their mothers call. Taking the phone Akira managed to wangle an interview and was told to come to Sado on February 10th. He duly arrived at the dark, cold and blustery town of Aikawa dressed (so as to impress with his seriousness) in his school uniform. As he explained to the startled (and yes, impressed) apprentice teacher Katsuji, 'This is, after all, a job interview!' Akira then proceeded to lose far more points than he may have gained by rattling off the members' names and pieces of the 'other' taiko group often confused with Kodo, *Ondekoza*, which he had studiously memorized from their CD. Whoops! Chastened, he arrived at the apprentice centre in a tiny hamlet on Sado's stormy northern coast.



Miku and Akira feed a mob of hungry Kodo drummers in their home at the Ogi Matsuri. photo by Minako Goto

Over the next 2 days he was fascinated by the way the o-daiko rattled his body to the core as he played - so unlike western drums. He returned to the mainland, and, when asked by his mentor Mr. Inomata how it went, replied cockily, 'I'm in.' As indeed he was, invited to join the next group of recruits on April 1st.

Uniquely, Akira saw his first Kodo performance that July, 3 months *after* he had joined as an apprentice. Of the 5 men and 2 women who arrived that day, only Akira lasted till the end. He became a member, he quips, almost by default. As each aspirant fell by the wayside, he couldn't help but be secretly delighted as his chances of joining improved. The downside was that it took that much longer to do the daily cleaning of the enormous old school house. He wonders if he would make the cut these days. Once a member, it wasn't easy being on the lowest rung of the ladder. As Kodo's lighting man often reminded him: 'Dogs, cats, apprentices', in that order!.

Together with the steel drums and assorted other taiko, Akira's principal role on stage for the last 7 years is that of rear drummer on the o-daiko, something he says he was never taught but 'just sort of picked up'. Though a supporting role, it is a vital one nonetheless. He explains that the main drummer does the colouring but it is the rear drummer who gives direction. The 'story' the two drummers tell each day is different - the sound, the phrasing, the '*ma*' (empty spaces), the atmosphere. He enjoys his role in telling these stories immensely.

His long term goal is to delve ever more deeply into traditional Japanese music. He still loves to listen to jazz, but, Akira smiles, 'A taikoist I will remain'.

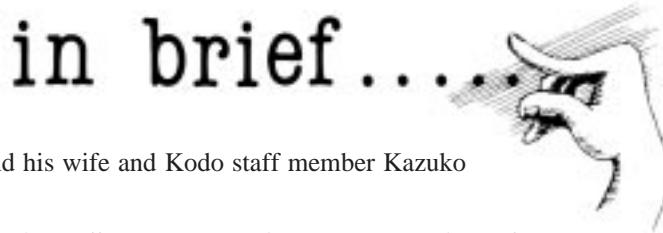
We are delighted to announce the arrival of two new members to the Kodo family. On August 28th player Tomohiro Mitome and his wife Mihoko had their 2nd child *Kouki*, a boy.

Two days later newlywed player Takeshi Arai and his wife and Kodo staff member Kazuko had their first baby, also a boy, named *Kentaro*.

On September 23rd and 24th Kodo singer Yoko Fujimoto appeared as a guest at the Asian American Jazz Festival in San Francisco.

On October 14th the other member of the Fujimoto family, Yoshikazu, will join in the celebrations of Boston Symphony Hall's 100th anniversary.

On Sept. 3rd Apprentice Centre staffer Yasuhiko 'Gan' Ishihara completed the Sado International Triathlon.



upcoming performances

Japan Tour October

11	Oita	Oita Grand Theater	092-715-0374
12	Fukuoka	Fukuoka Shimin Kaikan	092-715-0374
13	Fukuoka	Munakata Yurix Event Hall	0940-37-1483
15	Nagasaki	Obama-cho Taiikukan	0957-74-5123
18	Fukuoka	Peo Port Amagi	0946-24-6758
21	Kumamoto	Hitoyoshi Culture Palace	0966-47-0315
22	Kumamoto	Arao Sogo Bunka Centre	0968-66-4111
24	Kagoshima	Kagoshima-ken Bunka Centre	099-226-3465
25	Miyazaki	Kushima-shi Bunka Kaikan	0987-72-6333
28	Kagoshima	Tanegashima Colina	09972-7-3711

Kodo 01 November-December

Making a fresh start for the new millenium we won't put on our December Concert Series this year and instead hold '*Kodo 01*' (*Kodo Zero One*). *Zero* represents *nothingness* and *One*: *existence*, symbolizing the 'interconnectedness' of all things. New concept, new venues. Tickets are on sale now. For further information please contact the Kodo office.

Nov.22-Dec.3

	Tokyo	Setagaya Public Theatre	03-5432-1515
Dec.8-10	Miyagi	Sendai-shi Seinen Bunka Centre	022-299-3955
13-14	Niigata	Niigata Shimin Geijutsu Bunka Kaikan (Sold out. Rush seats maybe available.)	025-224-5521
16-17	Shiga	Biwa-ko Hall	077-523-7136
21-22	Sado	Amusement Sado	0259-86-3630

USA Tour

January

29	Eugene, OR	Hult Center
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February

1-3	Stanford, CA	Memorial Auditorium
7-11	Los Angeles, CA	Royce Hall
14	Colorado Springs, CO	Pikes Peak Center
15-17	Denver, CO	Auditorium Theater, Denver
20	Lawrence, KS	Lied Center
21	Lincoln, NE	Lied Center for the Performing Arts
24-25	Iowa City, IA	Hancher Auditorium
27	Cedar Falls, IA	Gallagher-Bluedorn PAC, Univ. of N. Iowa

March

1	St. Louis, MO	Powell Symphony Hall
3	Springfield, MO	Hammons Hall
4	Tulsa, OK	Chapman Music Hall
7	New Brunswick, NJ	State Theater New Brunswick
8	Princeton, NJ	McCarter Theatre
9	Newark, NJ	Prudential Hall
11	Boston, MA	Symphony Hall Boston
13	Ithaca, NY	Bailey Hall
16	Greenvale, NY	Tilles Center for the Performing Arts
18	Purchase, NY	Theater A
20	New York, NY	Carnegie Hall Corporation
22	Washington, DC	Lisner Auditorium

New CD: The Best of Kodo II

Kodo's newest CD will be released in Japan on November 22nd. This is a compilation of our best recordings made since 1994. Stay tuned for news of its release elsewhere. If you want a copy you can mail-order it. Drop us a line.



Notice to Kodo Beat Readers

Kodo Beat is a newsletter focusing on the activities of Kodo and is sent quarterly to members of *Friends of Kodo*. *Friends of Kodo* is dedicated to bringing Kodo closer to our audience and fellow taiko enthusiasts. Membership is available to all. As well as receiving *Kodo Beat*, members also get special advance ticket reservations for selected concerts in Japan, the chance to buy original goods available only to them, and selected discounts on a range of Kodo goodies. For further information about these offers contact us or check our website.

For those readers who only want the newsletter, an on-line version is available on the Internet.

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