

the KODŌ beat

鼓童

Compact Show in the Big Apple



*Kaoru Watanabe's reunion with Kodo at Joe's Pub
photo by Mitsunaga Matsuura*

On March 15th and 16th Kodo performed at *Joe's Pub* in Manhattan on one of the smallest stages in its career. Not that the talent was small, with a roster of guests all of whom have played with Kodo on Sado. It really felt like a compact version of Earth Celebration. Appearing with Kodo was long-time Kodo player - now gone freelance - New York City based *Kaoru Watanabe*. Also appearing were Earth Celebration '05 guest calligrapher *Koji Kakinuma*, as well as *Tamango* and fellow dancer *Belinda Becker* who were both guests at last year's event.

Calligrapher *Koji Kakinuma's* aura seems to have grown since we last saw

him on Sado. He improvised a large painting in red ink to the accompaniment of a number called 'Shake'. Kodo's *Chieko Kojima* injected even more power into the event with a dance using bamboo she found while exploring the streets of Chinatown.

Tamango and *Belinda* danced to a traditional *Nyabinghi* rhythm from Jamaica which she taught to Kodo. We were shown a side of the singing and dancing *Belinda* she had kept hidden at EC. *Tamango* also did an overwhelming tap routine to the sounds of *Monochrome*. Just as at last year's EC his approach was not to follow every nuance of the music but rather to gear his movement to the larger waves and cycles of the composition and draw the audience into his whirlwind. This was especially palpable in the



*Tamango and Kodo doing Monochrome in rehearsal
photo by Mitsunaga Matsuura*

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Joe's Pub photos on this page by Tomohiro Mitome

intimate atmosphere of Joe's Pub where everyone could sit so close to the stage.

For Kodo to perform large scale numbers like *Miyake*, *Yataibayashi*, *Ajara* in such a confined space was a great learning experience. Because facial expressions and body gestures were so much more visible here, there was a wonderful and intimate sense of communication between the audience and performers. Everyone seemed to breath as one.

Kaoru's direction and performance were powerful too. He also makes a pretty decent MC! As a lone wolf he is growing continuously and seeing this is a great



Taiko loaded onto the streets of New York.

inspiration to the young players of Kodo.

The house was sold out for the 4 shows over the 2 days. After appearing just before our show Laurie Anderson was in the audience with her partner Lou Reed. They were joined by a crowd of other musicians and music lovers of New York.



Koji Kakinuma paints to the music.

After the performance everyone crashed into a guerrilla live event in one of New York's hottest spaces, The Box, an unmarked, hard-to-find renovated warehouse where between 12:30 and 2:30 am an astonishing gamut of performers took turns in the spotlight. We squeezed in our 10 minutes worth. In the gloomy light and slightly shady atmosphere of a place unknown to the uninitiated, we found ourselves on the inside of New York's cutting-edge music scene. Gotta do this again!

Kodo Close-up:

Ayako Onizawa, player

The 33rd in a series of profiles of individual Kodo members

Ayako Onizawa grew up in Urayasu, Chiba, now the site of Tokyo Disneyland on October 12th, 1974. She has an older sister and brother. Aya was an extremely shy little girl who clinged to her mother's apron strings. She detested this shyness in herself so once she got to know someone she would really open up. She remembers her childhood fondly, running around vacant lots, making forts in the tall reeds, finding locusts, grasshoppers and tadpoles to take home. She especially loved the local festival and taiko.

In the 2nd year of middle school she was taken to a Kodo concert by her mother and sat front row centre. She got goose bumps and thought she was going to cry during Yoshikazu's *Odaiko*. A part of her longed to perform on stage because she felt she would be able to metamorphize there, out of her protective chrysalis. By the final year of high school she knew in her heart that she had to choose a career she felt passionate about. Throughout high school she had had her fill of less than inspiring jobs, in shops selling ice cream, a creperie, noodle shops, a supermarket, working as a pamphleteer, counting cars for a census, making beds in a hotel near Disneyland, sorting mail ...the list goes on. She decided what she really enjoyed most in life were the festivals. Thinking back to the joy she felt at the Kodo concert she decided to give them a call. On the phone she asked then head of apprentices, Katsuji Kondo, if women could apply. He said 'If they play as only a woman can'. That decided it. When she mentioned her plan to her mum she was told 'You'll never stick it out.' This only hardened Aya's resolve.

As an apprentice everything was new and there was simply too much to absorb for this young girl who had been indulged all her life. It was the first time she had ever done cooking, laundry, ironing and sewing, not to mention taiko, dance and singing, physical training and marathon running. There simply weren't enough hours in the day, even when that day began at 4:50 am. This was especially true for someone who describes herself as both awkward and a slow learner. After about 6 months the endless drilling began to take

its toll. Aya began to hate the drums. The only joys in her life were eating and sleeping which resulted in an extra 12 kg on her 158 cm frame. She wanted to go home but couldn't bear to hear her mother say 'I told you so!' She cried herself to sleep every night in her unheated room then burst into tears again in the morning as she woke up to the sight of snow in little piles on her floor.

Perhaps not surprisingly she failed her final test but begged to be allowed to stay another year. So back she came and after a much smoother (and slimmer) 2nd year she finally was accepted.

Her dream was to get into Kodo, but after having achieved that

she began to wonder what her next goal should be. After 3 or 4 years she was asked what she wanted to achieve on stage. She couldn't answer. Ever since seeing Yoshikazu she had wanted to play the drum like he did, with the power of a powerful man. It had taken many years, but she began to realize that there were limits to her ability to play the taiko that way. Katsuji's first words came back to her. Then, in a very feminine piece for 3 women called 'Furyu' - in which they wear kimono and play a tiny drum - she began to see a new light. If she can't play with power she will exploit her feminine suppleness. To this end she went to study Okinawan folk dance whose pared-down, almost noh-like simplicity she had always admired. It is that very simple and unadorned approach to taiko which distinguishes Kodo's style from most others, so the attraction was quite natural.

After a year in Okinawa, Aya is back and well on the road to discovery of both herself and whatever unique contribution she can make to Kodo's oeuvre. She learned not only dance but also something about overcoming her natural diffidence. She claims to feel as if she is still slightly floating over the earth but - day by day - her feet are coming that much closer to contact with the ground.

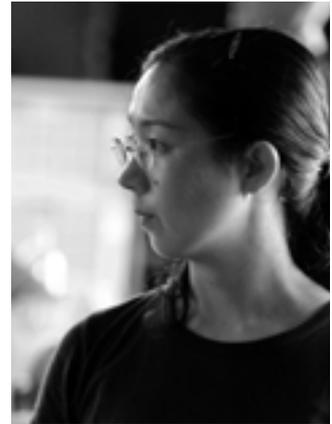


photo by Buntaro Tanaka

If you plan to go to Earth Celebration only once, this year looks like a good choice. We are inviting back some of the most popular guests from the past 20 years including tabla master *Zakir Hussain*, jazz piano legend *Yousuke Yamashita* and Puerto Rican master conga player Giovanni Hidalgo. More details below.

in brief..... 

On this years *One Earth Tour Caravan* Kodo will be doing a *Kyogen* collaboration, a kind of comic Noh theatre from the 8th century, incorporating Sado Island traditional performing arts, dance, song and dialogue.

upcoming performances

One Earth Tour Japan

May

9 Niigata	Joetsu Bunka Kaikan	025-281-8000
12 Niigata	Shibata Shimin Bunka Kaikan	025-244-7485
13 Niigata	Uonuma-shi Koidego Bunka Kaikan	025-792-8811
18 Ehime	Matsuyama Shimin Kaikan	089-943-8083
20 Kochi	Tosashimizu Shiritsu Shimin Bunka Kaikan	0880-82-2771
22 Kochi	Kochi Kenritsu Kenmin Bunka Hall	088-822-1421
24 Shimane	Shimane-ken Geijutsu Bunka Centre Grandtoit (Masuda-shi)	0856-31-1860
26 Saga	Saga-shi Bunka Kaikan	0952-26-2361
27 Nagasaki	Nagasaki-shi Kokaido	095-826-2266
29 Fukuoka	Fukuoka Shimin Kaikan	092-715-0374
31 Kumamoto	Minamata-shi Bunka Kaikan	0966-61-1639



June

2 Miyazaki	Miyazaki Kenritsu Geijutsu Gekijo	099-226-3465
6 Kagoshima	Shibushi-shi Bunka Kaikan	099-472-3050
7 Kagoshima	Kagoshima Shimin Bunka Hall	099-226-3465
9 Kumamoto	Kumamoto Kenritsu Gekijo	096-363-6655
10 Fukuoka	Asakura-shi Sogo Shimin Centre	0946-24-6758
12 Yamaguchi	Hofu-shi Kokaido	0835-22-1990
14 Yamaguchi	Sun Beam Yanai	0820-22-0111
16 Shimane	Unan-shi Mitoya Bunka Taiikukan Aspal	0854-49-8500
17 Tottori	Yonago-shi Kokaido	090-3171-4293
20 Okayama	Tsuyama Bunka Centre	0868-24-0201
22 Kyoto	Kyoto-fu Chutan Bunka Kaikan	0773-42-7705
23 Kyoto	Kyoto-fu Nagaokakyo Kinen Bunka Kaikan	075-955-5711
24 Hyogo	Kobe Kokusai Kaikan Kokusai Hall	078-231-8162
27 Osaka	Settsu Shimin Bunka Hall	072-635-1404

Earth Celebration 2007

August 17-19, Sado Island

Shiroyama Concerts

Aug. 17	Kodo, guest: Miyake taiko
18	Kodo, Zakir Hussain, Okinawan dance
19	'Celebration'; Kodo, Yosuke Yamashita, Zakir Hussain, Giovanni Hidalgo, Tamango, Mio Matsuda

Mini-Workshops

Traditional Miyake Taiko, Yurunde Tataite ('playing loose' taiko, instructor: Ryutaro Kaneko), Onna-uchi ('women's style' taiko, instructor: Chieko Kojima), Utanya Don-don (taiko, instructor: Masami Miyazaki), Ranjosan's Japanese Flute Making, Taiko Making (instructor: Asano Taiko), Voice Circle, Ogi Okesa Folk Dance, Onikenbai Dance, Okinawan Dance, Universal Rhythm (instructor: Tamango)

Other Events

Hideaki Masago Exhibition, EC 20th Anniversary Exhibition, Sashiko and Sakiori Exhibition, Kodo Village Open House, Sado Island Taiko Centre and Ogi Peninsula Tour, Fringe Events, Flea Market

EC Pre-Event

Noh Theatre Concert Series - performers: Reijiro Tsumura (Noh), Tadashi Ogasawara (Kyogen), Motofumi Yamaguchi, Ryutaro Kaneko (Kodo) and others

Aug. 11	Kasuga Shrine Noh Theatre, Aikawa
12	Suwa Shrine Noh Theatre, Ryotsu
13	Daizen Shrine Noh Theatre, Mano
Aug. 14	Noh and Kyogen workshops

EC ticket sales begin June 1.

Details will be available on our website in mid-May.

Attention members of Friends of Kodo.

EC'07 ticket information will be sent to you in late-May.

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 web site.

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

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