

# the KODŌ beat

# 鼓童



## From Monoprism Onward

*Senji Mori is the Managing Director of the New Japan Philharmonic and board member of the Kodo Cultural Foundation. On Dec. 11th at Tokyo's Sumida Triphony Hall, Kodo performed Maki Ishii's composition Monoprism for the first time in 15 years, with the New Japan Philharmonic. His thoughts on the project:*

As someone involved in this project from the word go, while sitting in the audience for this performance I found myself reflecting on the importance of sufficient preparation for such an event and the vital need for enough rehearsal time. The generous collaboration of Maestro *Tatsuya Shimono*, percussionist *Koya Nakatani* and every member of the *New Japan Philharmonic* contributed immensely to the success.

Monoprism still sounds as fresh as ever. The power of this composition rests on Maki Ishii's exploration of

the possibilities of the Japanese taiko, particularly the ancient *shimedaiko*. Combining this with Kodo's ability to see something new in what is old and traditional is, I think, what has breathed interest into this music for both young and old. This composition came to being when *Seiji Ozawa* met Kodo (then called *Ondekoza*). Because he was so deeply impressed, he asked Maki Ishii to compose a piece for them. The question now is where will Kodo make their next discovery and what will that discovery be. Will it sprout from something traditional and made to feel new, or perhaps from something non-traditional but written on a blank slate? It is no easy thing for a performing artist to work within the confines of a group. It is my hope that they will give this matter a great deal of thought.

*On May 23,25,26 Tatsuya Shimono will conduct Monoprism with Kodo and L'Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome.*

*photo by Taro Nishita*

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# South American Tour

Last fall Kodo made their first visit to Argentina, and to Brazil for the first time in 20 years. Here is a report on Rio by player Shogo Yoshii and on São Paulo by staff member Yasuko Yamaguchi.



Takeshi Arai crossing borders. photo by Melanie Taylor

When asked if I wanted to go to a rehearsal of the *samba* group which consistently battles for either the number one or two spot in Rio's Carnival, I immediately said 'Of course!'. Delighted to be going, I was then amazed when told that we would leave for the rehearsal at 10:30 at night. 'Who has practices at that ungodly hour!?'

*Mangueira's* rehearsal space is in one of Brazil's notorious '*favelas*', the sort of area guide books say is 'dangerous, so you should not approach!' There is a huge drug trade problem in Rio, and particularly in the *favelas*, which are sometimes referred to as 'dens of crime'; so rife with armaments that even the police are loathe to enter. And a busload of Japanese are going there on a Saturday night? A bit worrying but then...it

should be a gas too!

The rehearsal hall is in a large warehouse-like building, but with a bar and tickets available to the public, it felt more like a samba dance club, and because there were so many paying guests it seemed less like a rehearsal than a real performance.

Samba! Things began with the crack of a tambourine that I thought would pierce my eardrums, like a firecracker stabbing my ears. People started to move, my body began to sway. I began to feel excited, exhilarated, to get goose bumps. I wanted to shout out loud. I could get hooked on the *surdo* drum, it hit me like a body blow. My blood boils, I go with it totally. I feel stunned, enveloped in a sound like a sudden tropical evening downpour. Not just music, more like an explosion of energy.

10 years ago on *Hachijo Island* in Japan someone said 'On this island, taiko is our entertainment *and* stress reliever. Thanks to the taiko we achieve a balance in our island lives'. Those words came back to me now. Here is how people live.

The musicians were really going for it, the dancers all smiles, the singers' voices, monstrously over-amplified, and I hadn't a clue what they were singing, but the crowds of people who were there, the old, young, male and female all hummed along. A steaming community of love.



Waiting for the heat at Mangueira. photo by Atsushi Sugano



Masami Miyazaki's workshop in Ipatinga.

photo by Takuro Susaki

I remembered the words of our friend, the singer *Mio Matsuda*, 'The tougher the lives of the people, the better the energy of the music that is born'.

A few days later we met *Yoko Ono* and she gave us each a button which said 'Imagine Peace'. When I think of recent news in Japan like the random killings in Tokyo after which the murderer said 'It doesn't matter who, I just wanted to kill someone', it makes me wonder what is the meaning of peace.

Japan! Stop taking things for granted. Let's do it!

*Shogo Yoshii*

In the lobby of the São Paulo theatre, people brimmed over with reactions to the show.

'I was so impressed 20 years ago when the *yatai* appeared on stage that I used it as an inspiration for

*ikebana* flower arrangements when I decorated an international meeting venue!'

'In the delicate expressions of Monochrome I heard the voices of frogs in the rain forest'.

'It was all wonderful!' said a rosy-cheeked middle school girl. 'After the performance I phoned my Sado Island homestay hosts to tell them about the show!'

There were dyed-in-the-wool fans who had even come all the way to Earth Celebration twice!

I met the members of *Ibiúna Ryubu Daiko* whom I had previously only known from photos in the 'Aitakuba-If You Want to See Me' exhibition on Sado.

Seeing the passion with which the young Brazilians played taiko in the workshops, the enthusiasm after our performance, I realized that there were many who had never seen us perform live before, but they were connected to us through CDs, DVDs or the internet. I really now understood that there are things that simply can only be expressed through a live performance.

There were many discoveries for me by coming on this trip. For all those people who treated us so generously I hope there won't be another 20 year blank. It was this deeply-felt emotion that drew me to São Paulo, so I want to return much sooner than before. Kodo was as moved by Brazil as Brazil was by Kodo. Obrigada! Thank you very, very much.

*Yasuko Yamaguchi*

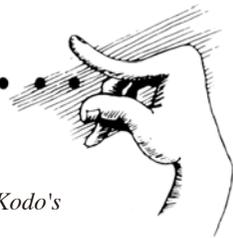


Kazuki Imagai & Masayuki Sakamoto tightening the shime-daiko, the beginning of Kodo's working day.

photo by Takuro Susaki

Lot's of great news for the Kodo family. Staff member *Miwa Saito* and husband *Yoshimasa* had a second son, called *Yuugo*, on December 27th. On December 30th, staff member *Mitsunaga Matsuura* married *Miyoko Matsuoka*.

# in brief . . .



Kodo Beat readers may remember the story of Kodo's cow *Kikuko* (see *KB Volume 85 online at Kodo's website*). On January 17th she gave birth to her first calf, a male, who is yet to be named.

A *KASA* taiko and voice workshop with mini concerts tour of North America is planned for May. Instructors will be *Yoko* and *Yoshikazu Fujimoto*. For details check out the *KASA* website at: [www.kodo.or.jp/kasa/](http://www.kodo.or.jp/kasa/)

The next Kodo Beat may appear in May not April. You can catch up on back issues at: [www.kodo.or.jp/kodobeat/](http://www.kodo.or.jp/kodobeat/)

## upcoming performances

### One Earth Tour North America

#### February

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 2 Arcata, CA        | Humboldt State University<br>John Van Duzer Theatre    |
| 4 Davis, CA         | Mondavi Center, Jackson Hall                           |
| 6 San Rafael, CA    | Marin Civic Center                                     |
| 8 Los Angeles, CA   | Walt Disney Concert Hall                               |
| 10 Mesa, AZ         | Mesa Arts Center                                       |
| 13 Ann Arbor, MI    | Hill Auditorium  |
| 15 Minneapolis, MN  | Orchestra Hall   |
| 17 Chicago, IL      | Symphony Center  |
| 19 East Lansing, MI | Wharton Center for Performing<br>Arts, Cobb Great Hall |
| 21 Madison, WI      | Overture Hall  |
| 22 Milwaukee, WI    | The Riverside Theater                                  |
| 24 Urbana, IL       | Krannert Center  |
| 26 Danville, KY     | Norton Center for the Arts, Newlin Hall                |
| 28 Knoxville, TN    | The Tennessee Theatre                                  |

#### March

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 1 Atlanta, GA          | Fox Theatre  |
| 4 Gainesville, FL      | Univ. of Florida, Phillips Center for<br>the Performing Arts                               |
| 6 Clearwater, FL       | Ruth Eckerd Hall   |
| 11 Melbourne, FL       | Maxwell C. King Center for the<br>Performing Arts  |
| 13 West Palm Beach, FL | Kravis Center for the Performing Arts  |
| 14 Miami, FL           | Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing<br>Arts, Knight Concert Hall                      |
| 17 Philadelphia, PA    | Kimmel Center for the Performing<br>Arts, Verizon Hall                                     |
| 18 State College, PA   | The Pennsylvania State University<br>Center for the Performing Arts, Eisenhower Auditorium |
| 20 Newark, NJ          | New Jersey Performing Arts Center  |
| 22 Boston, MA          | Symphony Hall  |
| 24 Cleveland, OH       | Palace Theatre, Cleaveland   |
| 25 Columbus, OH        | Palace Theatre, Columbus   |
| 27 Washington DC       | DAR Constitution Hall  |

(Note: the March 8th date in Jacksonville, FL is cancelled.)

### One Earth Tour Europe 'ekkyo/trans-border' May

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 23-27 Rome, Italy | Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia,<br>Sala Santa Cecilia |
| 24,27.....        | Kodo concert  |

23,25,26..... Kodo with L'Orchestra dell'Accademia  
Nazionale di Santa Cecilia

29,30 Milano, Italy Teatro degli Arcimboldi

#### June

- |                        |                                       |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 3 Zagreb, Croatia      | Kosarkaski Center                     |
| 6,7 London, UK         | Royal Festival Hall                   |
| 10,11 Athens, Greece   | To be announced                       |
| 13 Izmir, Turkey       | Izmir Festival                        |
| 15,16 Istanbul, Turkey | Istanbul International Music Festival |
| 19 Munich, Germany     | Gasteig                               |
| 23,24 Lyon, France     | Les Nuits de Fourviere                |
| 27-30 Paris, France    | Théâtre du Châtelet                   |

#### July

Early July - Spain

Dates and locations will be announced later.

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|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 14 Zurich, Switzerland   | Live at Sunset                        |
| 16 Montreux, Switzerland | Montreux Jazz Festival<br>(tentative) |

Europe tour schedule may be subject to change.

### Joint Concerts in Australia

Kodo (*Yoshikazu, Chieko, Yoko, Motofumi, Eiichi*) and *TaikOz* will hold joint concerts in Australia. For more information see the *TaikOz* website ([www.taikoz.com](http://www.taikoz.com)).

#### February

- |       |                                       |
|-------|---------------------------------------|
| 21,22 | City Recital Hall Angel Place, Sydney |
| 24,25 | Melbourne Recital Centre              |

## 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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