

the KODŌ beat

鼓童

Gnosis: Kodo's *Yoshie Sunahata* Performs with *Akram Khan*

This autumn, Yoshie Sunahata will travel to England to perform Nov 12&13 at The Point, Eastleigh, Hampshire and Nov 16 at Sadler's Wells Theatre, London with the globally-reknoned dance innovator Akram Khan in his new show 'Gnosis'.

Gnosis is a new solo dance performance based on *Kathak*, the classical Indian genre in which Akram's dance background lies. Yoshie will join a stellar cast of Indian musicians on stage, adding a unique Japanese flavour to the performance with taiko. The show is attracting a great deal of attention as the opening piece for the *Svapnagata Festival* to be held at *Sadler's Wells Theatre*, an event where Indian artists introduce their culture to the world.

Yoshie Sunahata on Gnosis Rehearsals on Sado
Translated by Melanie Taylor

The first half of the show features Akram dancing



Yoshie & Akram Khan at the Village.

pics by Taro Nishita

to a composition called 'Polaroid Feet', and I will be playing the Japanese drum part along with the Indian dance music accompanianists. I will play an Okinawan drum and a shime-daiko drum sitting on the floor. I will be using the rim of the shime-daiko to produce certain nuances required for the piece. Most



Akram Khan

of this rehearsal period was spent learning the voice percussion (simulated drum sound by voice) for the part I would have to play, and then translating that sound through my drum. The artistic direction is based on the Indian epic myth called the *Mahabharata* and in the second half of the show I will be playing the role of the blind queen in the story. Receiving such a major part was completely unexpected to me. This show is going to be very rewarding.

During the rehearsal period, Akram said, 'Let me hear you sing, let me see you dance.' and I showed him everything I could think of. It resulted in him using many of the elements I did that day in the show itself. I have been given the opportunity to express myself completely. At first, when I heard about this project I thought 'It's impossible for me right now', but after meeting Akram and having everything I need to work on piled on my plate, I feel positive about it all. I am going to make sure I can look back on it and say I did my very best.

(More on Yoshie at KB Vol. 89)

Japanese Sashiko Textiles Exhibition in Great Britain

This is the first exhibition exclusively devoted to sashiko in Great Britain. Sashiko is a traditional Japanese quilting method using heavy cotton thread to strengthen textiles. The exhibition will open at the York Art Gallery in Yorkshire on October 10th and tour to Glasgow and Plymouth. This article is based on a chat with Kodo's Kiyoko Oi and information culled from York Museums Trust press release.

Kodo's *Kiyoko Oi* has been honoured to be chosen as one of the only contemporary artists to have their works in this exhibition and will travel to England from the 7th to 12th of October to give a talk and workshop at the opening. The rest of the display will include old sashiko pieces from all over Japan, 16 of them from Sado Island. The exhibition was spearheaded by *Michele Walker*, a British textile artist who has been researching sashiko since 2003. While visiting the museum in Aikawa on Sado she heard about Kiyoko who is still active making sashiko.

Energetic Kiyoko (the first Japanese woman to break 3 hours in the marathon) can't bear being still. She finds however that when she does sashiko it forces her to stay put, yet still remain active. Self-taught, she does mostly traditional designs and also does sashiko on costumes for Kodo's performances.



Kiyoko with a creation, sure to keep the UK in stitches.

This ground-breaking exhibition and subsequent tour, entitled *Japanese Sashiko Textiles*, will present traditional and contemporary textiles and garments, designed to decorate and protect the wearer both physically and spiritually. It sets out to present a sense of time and place in which these works were created. Michele Walker says: 'The objects have been chosen for the stories they tell. My research is taking place at a critical time when the last generation of (now elderly) makers is rapidly drawing to a close together with their traditional way of life and the disappearance of the natural landscape to which they belong.'

The exhibition will investigate two major aspects of Japanese sashiko. The first will look at the lives of those ...who made and wore sashiko. Until the mid twentieth century it was the traditional method of making work wear in fishing and farming areas throughout Japan. The makers were the cornerstones of communities but their lives passed unrecorded. The historical work in this exhibition dating from the nineteenth to mid twentieth century documents (their)... achievements, perseverance and hardships.

The second aspect will focus on the fact that the physical protection of sashiko garments was reinforced by the spiritual protection thought to be associated with the stitched patterns.

Sometimes these 'talisman' took the form of small stitched symbols hidden on the inside of the garment, so as to protect vulnerable parts of the body, for example the neck and back. Or they may take on a more flamboyant character, as seen on the inside of fireman's garments that picture heroic images applied using *tsutsugaki* (freehand resist-dyed technique.)

In total around 75-100 garments and related objects, including videos and significant works from Japanese photographer, *Takeji Iwamiya* (1920-1989) will be displayed in the exhibition.

Lenders include *The Japan Folk Crafts Museum*, the *Aikawa* and *Ogi Folk Museums*, Sado Island, *Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum*, *Fukuoka City Museum* and private collectors.

A fully accessible on-line publication including images of works, installation shots and contributions from leading Japanese and British experts, will be created for the exhibition.



Dutch supergroup BLØF and Kodo rippin' it up on the main stage.

photo by Shizuka Minami

KB Editor Johnny Wales' Glimpses of EC '09



Earth Celebration retro stylin' mode.



International food & friends at the Harbour Market.



Cocon after their Fringe show with guest appearance by Tsubasa Hori on maternity leave.



Guests making the slog up Shiroyama for the evening concerts, our yearly 'Health Check'.



Sado sounds under the bamboo free stage made by Sado Island volunteers at the Harbour Market.



Cowgirl Chieko drums goodbye for another year at Okuridaiko (farewell drums).



Ubusuna and DADAN *In September in Tokyo and the Osaka/Fukui/Kyoto area two new shows were held. One – called Ubusuna – features a number of Kodo's veteran players and gives one a sense of Kodo's history. DADAN in contrast, is a show bursting with the energy of seven younger members of Kodo and is directed by Kabuki legend Tamasaburo Bando. Both shows are scheduled to appear throughout Japan in 2010. photo by Taro Nishita (Ubusuna, left) and Buntaro Tanaka (DADAN)*

upcoming performances

One Earth Tour Japan

October

15 Saga Saga Shimin Kaikan (Mizugae) 0952-26-2361
17 Kumamoto Kumamoto Kenritsu Gekijo Engeki Hall

096-363-6655

24 Kagoshima Kagoshima Shimin Bunka Hall 099-226-3465

25 Miyazaki Medikit Arts Center 0985-27-6619

26 Kagoshima Soo-shi Takarabe Kirameki Centre
0986-72-0946

29 Fukuoka Acros Fukuoka 092-715-0374

31 Yamaguchi Kikugawa Fureai Kaikan Abnir 083-287-0302

November

6 Kanagawa Yokosuka Geijutsu Gekijo 046-823-9999

7 Tokyo Komae Ecorma Hall 03-3430-4106

December Concert Series

December

2 Niigata Amusement Sado 0259-86-2330

5,6 Niigata Niigata Kenmin Kaikan 025-281-8000

8 Okayama Okayama Shimin Kaikan 086-224-6066

10 Hiroshima Hiroshima Kosei Nenkin Kaikan
082-249-1218

12,13 Osaka Osaka Kosei Nenkin Kaikan 06-6362-8122

14 Nagoya Aichi-ken Geijutsu Gekijo 052-290-1888

17-20 Tokyo Bunkyo Civic Hall 0259-86-2330

22 Yokohama Kanagawa Kenmin Hall 045-663-9999

One Earth Tour Europe

January 29 - February 21 The Netherlands, Russia, Baltic regions, Scandinavia (to be confirmed)

February

23 Copenhagen, Denmark

27 Lörrach, Germany

28 Heidenheim, Germany

March

2 Cambridge, UK

4 Brighton, UK

5 Warwick, UK

6 Leicester, UK

9 Truro, UK

10 Plymouth, UK

11 Basingstoke, UK

13 Dublin, Ireland

14 Dublin, Ireland

16 Cork, Ireland

18 Limerick, Ireland

March 20 - 25 Spain (to be confirmed)

in brief...



A photo book by photographer *Takashi Okamoto* of performers from Kodo's show *DADAN* has gone on sale September 18th. '*DADAN*' is available at bookstores across Japan.

The *Sado Island Taiko Centre* next to Kodo Village had its 10,000th participant in August. If you visit Sado Island feel free to drop by and make a bit of noise.

On September 14th, player *Tsubasa Hori* and her husband *Kurt Van de Cruys* had their first baby, a girl, *Mion* (Beautiful Sound). See Page 3 for a picture of *Mion* 3 weeks before her debut.

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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