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<http://www.kodo.or.jp/ec>

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The Sounds of Persia Land on the Shores of Sado. Kodo Welcomes Persian and Kurdish Music Luminaries *Ranaei Family* and Japanese Dance Sensation *KO no kai* to Earth Celebration 2011, August 19 through 21 on Sado Island

Sado Island, Niigata (June 1, 2011). Japan's most renowned performing arts group, Kodo, will once again host their annual international music festival "Earth Celebration" (EC) this year. Through the group's ongoing "One Earth Tour," Kodo meet an incredible array of artists around the world, and EC is a chance for them to collaborate with some of these artists on their home of Sado Island. This year Kodo welcomes the celebrated Persian music ensemble *Ranaei Family* from Iran, as well as Japanese dance troupe *Ko no kai*.

Last year, former Kodo members Ryutaro Kaneko and Yasukazu Kano teamed up with renowned Japanese throat singer Haruhiko Saga for a *2010 Near & Middle East Tour*. It was on this historic trip that this unique unit met the *Ranaei Family*, and in turn introduced them to Earth Celebration artistic director Yuichiro Funabashi who immediately knew they would be the perfect guests for this year's EC. Also eager to include more Japanese artists in this international gathering, Funabashi reached out to *KO no kai*, an all-male dance troupe that blends traditional dance techniques with contemporary sensibilities. All three of these groups draw much of their inspiration from traditional music to create new expressions, so the collaborations this year are bound to be a journey into unknown artistic territory full of unprecedented discoveries.

"I believe this encounter with the *Ranaei Family* will awaken something that lies deep within us Japanese, conjuring distant memories from the Silk Road era," shares Funabashi. "And together with *KO no kai* and Kodo, our three ensembles will forge a new road ahead as one."

This year's EC is significant for many reasons. The Tohoku Pacific Earthquake earlier this year reminded all of us of the sheer force of Mother Nature, and of the dangers of man-made technologies when that force is awakened. No doubt the hearts of all festival goers will be with all of the people up north who continue to suffer in the disaster's wake. 2011 also marks Kodo's 30th Anniversary, and EC will certainly reverberate with the passion of the 30th Anniversary One Earth Tour happening throughout this year. Co-presented by Sado City and Kodo, Earth Celebration 2011 will feature a special three-day program held August 19 through 21 on Sado Island. In addition to the main stage performances in Shiroyama Park, the festival will also offer hands-on workshops led by invited artists and numerous free performances on the always-popular "fringe" stage, as well as in the popular Harbour Market. "Pre-events" held from August 12 (Thu) through 18 (Thu) will offer special Taiko Experience workshops and showcase the traditional art of Noh Theater on two of the island's famous Noh stages. For more information about additional events, travel and accommodations et al, see the Earth Celebration website at www.kodo.or.jp/ec.

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About Kodo

Exploring the limitless possibilities of the traditional Japanese drum, the taiko, Kodo are forging new directions for a vibrant living art-form. The taiko is something you experience viscerally as the sound of the drum travels from the player and reverberates in the body of the listener. Since the group's debut at the Berlin Festival in 1981, Kodo's ongoing "One Earth Tour" has brought the experience of the taiko to 46 countries around the world for over 3,400 total performances. Spending about a third of the year overseas, a third touring in Japan and a third resting and preparing new material on Sado Island, Kodo strives to both preserve and reinterpret traditional Japanese performing arts as they develop new styles that transcend all genres and borders. Since 1988, Kodo has had the pleasure of inviting artists they have met in their travels back to their home of Sado Island to engage in unprecedented musical collaborations at their annual music festival "Earth Celebration."



About Earth Celebration

Since 1988, Kodo, a world renowned taiko ensemble and Japan's most internationally acclaimed performing arts group, has held an annual music festival called "Earth Celebration" (EC), produced in cooperation with Sado City. For nearly a quarter century, EC has been a venue for Kodo to invite artists they have met in their travels back to its home of Sado Island to engage in unprecedented musical collaborations. Under the theme "Tataku" (to beat a rhythm), the most primal human expression, and set against the rich natural splendor of Sado, EC seeks an alternative global culture through musical and cultural collaborations with artists from around the world. Now in its 24th year, EC is the nation's longest running music festival, described by the New York Times as "Japan's leading music event." In 2009, in recognition of the organization's "notable contribution to the promotion of Japanese traditional culture and to the revitalization of the local community," the Earth Celebration Committee was awarded the Tiffany Foundation Award for the Preservation of Japanese Traditional Arts and Culture in Contemporary Society.



About The Ranaei Family

Hailing from Iran, the Ranaei Family is a Kurdish family of four. Overcoming many difficulties throughout their country's turbulent history, their music continues to touch the lives of people around the globe regardless of ethnicity or background. Their unique sound stems from the tanbour, a Kurdish stringed instrument that is a staple of classical Persian music. The tanbour is noted throughout Iranian history, appearing in murals that date back as far as 6000 years ago, and it is thought to be the progenitor of all plucked string instruments. Its practice revered and its traditions upheld since ancient times, this sacred instrument is believed to connect music to the soul. Come experience the stunning tones and profound expression of the tanbour as the Ranaei family make their debut visit to Japan for Earth Celebration 2011.

The Ranaei Family embodies traditional and contemporary Persian and Kurdish music which is rarely introduced outside of Iran. Their performance at Earth Celebration this year offers an invaluable opportunity to see these masters of their craft perform in Japan.



About KO no kai

KO no kai was formed by a group of men who gathered to celebrate Japanese dance in all its glory and help carve the future of the art form. They perform in the suodori gunbu style (group dance in plain formal costumes) with a simplicity that fuses the beauty of tradition with contemporary sensibilities. With a serene beauty yet overwhelming intensity, KO no kai dance, leap and soar to new heights of expression. The group used Kodo music for an original piece that premiered in 2000 called Onbashira, which enjoyed an overwhelming response and an unprecedented number of encore performances. This appearance at EC will mark their first live collaboration with Kodo.



EC 2011 Concert Information

The Shiroyama Concerts, EC's main concert events, take place up on the hill in Shiroyama Park's lush green surroundings. A star-filled sky and the chirp of cicadas complete this natural outdoor arena. What better place to celebrate the earth? This year, we welcome special guests the *Ranaei Family*, a tanbour quartet who will travel all the way from Iran to join our festival, and Japanese dance troupe *KO no kai*. Come join us in the outdoor splendor of Shiroyama Park as the rhythms of Persia resonate with the sounds of our own Sado Island, and the power of the taiko shakes the very earth itself.

● Shiroyama Concert Schedule (Main Concerts)

Aug. 19 (Fri) Ranaei Family & Kodo (Open 17:15, Start 18:30)

Aug. 20 (Sat) "Shukusai" Kodo, Ranaei Family, KO no kai (Open 16:45, Start 18:00)

Aug. 21 (Sun) Kodo (Open 16:45, Start 18:00)



EC Theatre: Ryutaro, Kano & Saga x Ranaei Family

Ryutaro Kaneko, Yasukazu Kano, and Haruhiko Saga met the Ranaei Family on their 2010 Near & Middle East tour, and it is thanks to that historic meeting that the Ranaei Family was invited as guest artists to this year's Earth Celebration. This special EC Theatre concert will reunite the Japanese trio with the Ranaei Family on stage and offer a deeper look into the mysterious world of Persian & Kurdish music.

● EC Theatre Concert Schedule

Aug. 21 (Sun) 2011, 14:00 - 15:30 (Doors Open: 13:30)

Venue: Ogi Gym

Appearing: Ranaei Family, Ryutaro Kaneko, Yasukazu Kano, Haruhiko Saga

● Ticket Information

Shiroyama Concerts

Daily Tickets

8/19 (Fri) Advance: ¥4,700, On the Day: ¥5,000

8/20 (Sat) ¥5,200, On the Day: ¥5,500

8/21 (Sun) Advance: ¥4,700, On the Day: ¥5,000

3-Day Pass

8/19~21: ¥13,000

2-Day Passes

8/19 + 8/20: ¥8,900

8/20 + 8/21: ¥8,900

Student Youth Tickets: ¥3,500 yen per concert. (¥3,800 on the day.)

Student Youth Tickets are limited to high-school and university students up to 24 years of age.

*Student identification cards will be checked for validity when issuing student tickets.

Children ages 15 & under receive free admission.

* “Children’s Vouchers” are no longer required for admission.

● Tickets sales begin June 1 through the following services:

• Download an order form through the EC Website: www.kodo.or.jp/ec/join/ticket_en.html

• JTB Entertainment Ticket Desk 0570-030311 (Operating Hours: 10:00 - 18:00)

• Convenience Stores (via JTB)

Through ticket machines at Lawson, Family Mart, Seven Eleven and Circle K Sunkus stores.

0229782 Aug. 19 (Fri)

0229783 Aug. 20 (Sat)

0229784 Aug. 21 (Sun)

0229785 Aug. 19 (Fri) + Aug. 20 (Sat) 2-Day Pass

0229786 Aug. 20 (Sat) + Aug. 21 (Sun) 2-Day Pass

0229787 Aug. 19 (Fri) - Aug. 21 (Sun) 3-Day Pass

EC Theatre: Ryutaro, Kano & Saga x Ranaei Family

General: Advance: 3,500 yen (Rush: 3,800 yen), Students: Advance: 2,500 yen (Rush: 2,800 yen)

(For students ages 6-24), Seniors: Advance: 2,500 yen (Rush: 2,800 yen) (Ages 65 and over)

•Ticket inquiries:

Kodo Ticket Service

Kodo Village, 148-1 Ogi-Kanetashinden, Sado Island, Niigata, Japan 952-0611

Tel.0259-86-2330 (Weekdays, 9:30 - 17:00)

Fax.0259-86-3631

E-mail: ticket@kodo.or.jp

For all English press inquiries, please contact Daniel Rosen at daniel@kodo.or.jp. For general inquiries, please send an e-mail to ec-info@kodo.or.jp or call the Earth Celebration Committee at 0259-81-4100 (Weekdays, 9:30 - 17:00). Full information on the festival including travel and lodging is available at www.kodo.or.jp/ec

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