

鼓童

KODŌ

eNEWS

Issue 7

June 2010

Kaguyahime Opens at Opéra National de Paris on June 11

Modern composer Maki Ishii's musical suite *Kaguyahime*, which debuted in 1984, will be performed by the [Paris Opera Ballet](#) as a new production at the Opéra Bastille in June and July, 2010. It will be directed by Jiri Kylian, one of modern ballet's most celebrated choreographers.

Kaguyahime features seven members of Kodo, who have just set off to France to join the Paris Opera Ballet, western percussionists, and a *gagaku* (old Japanese court music) ensemble. This will mark the first time that a taiko group has ever taken the stage at the Opéra National de Paris. Opening night is June 11 and we hope you'll join Kodo for this spectacular re-creation.

Here are a few words about this musical suite from Kodo performer Motofumi Yamaguchi, musical director for the Kodo ensemble in this production.

East and West - Face to Face by Motofumi Yamaguchi

Written by renowned composer Maki Ishii specifically for Kodo, *Kaguyahime* is a production of Eastern and Western Percussion combined with ballet. This piece was a veritable showcase of Kodo's diverse range of talent, harnessing every last one

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Touring Kansai, Chubu and Kanto in May, and from Nikko to Hokkaido in June, Kodo brings fresh compositions and traditional favorites to Japan this Spring

One Earth Tour: Japan Kodo Tours Japan in Spring as 30th Anniversary Approaches

Last month the *One Earth Tour* traveled through Kansai, Chubu and Kanto. This month it heads up north with performances from Nikko to Hokkaido. The tour's programme features two new pieces: original compositions by our two thirty year-old performers, Mitsuru Ishizuka and Yosuke Oda. It is interesting to consider, as Kodo's 30th anniversary approaches, how younger performers are able to create new material that so faithfully reflects deep-rooted Kodo traditions that go back three decades.

Here is a look at the programme notes describing the new pieces:

"Akatsuki"

Composed by Yosuke Oda (2010)
Dawn. The instant that the sun begins to dissolve the darkness is an instant beckoned by life itself, a pure moment when we face our true selves in the light of day. It is this image I conjure as I set the hirado-daiko low to the ground and soulfully drum my message.

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One Earth Tour: Japan*continued from page 1***“Stride”***Composed by Mitsuru Ishizuka (2010)*

We are travelers. On our endless journey, there are long roads and rainy days, but we hold our heads high and stride on. Singing in unison with our companions, over mountains, through valleys, through numerous towns and villages, we move forward.

One Earth Tour: Japan**Programme**

Akatsuki

Stride

Chonlima

Koikoi Fusha

Monochrome

Jang-Gwara

Yae-no Furyu

Miyake

Kumo-no Namiji

O-daiko

Yatai-Bayashi

Artistic Director

Mitsuru Ishizuka

Cast

Tomohiro Mitome

Yuichiro Funabashi

Yosuke Oda

Masayuki Sakamoto

Natsuki Saito

Kenta Nakagome

Tokio Takahashi

Tsuyoshi Maeda

Hiroko Shimauchi

Yosuke Kusa

Mariko Omi



Kaguyahime*continued from page 1*

of the performance techniques the group used on stage at the time it was written, from Ishii's "Monochrome" and "Dyu-Ha," to Kodo standards such as "Miyake," "Yatai-Bayashi," and "Gezan-Bayashi." Said Ishii, "I used every single idea that came to mind, to the extent I think I won't be able to write anything fresh for Kodo again."



Motofumi Yamaguchi directs the Kodo ensemble in Kaguyahime

The first performance of *Kaguyahime* in 1984 was as a musical suite, and so the story was told in music. The percussionists were directed in a way that would add a visual storytelling element to the production. For example, there is a scene where the aristocrats and the villagers battle over *Kaguyahime* (Princess Kaguya), and I remember Kodo played western percussion and the Western percussionists played taiko to create a battle scene.

In 1985, the ballet element was added, and this became Kodo's first time to play music for ballet. Even now, I think this composition is rare in the ballet world, and having this kind of production at the Paris Opera House will be a once in a lifetime opportunity. This time under new artistic direction, it is truly exciting and a great honor for Kodo to join the Paris Opera Ballet on the Opera Bastille stage to perform *Kaguyahime*.



May 1984. The "battle over Princess Kaguya" scene of the first performance of the Kaguyahime suite at the Berlin Opera House, conducted by Maki Ishii, with music performed by Kodo and percussionists from the Berlin Opera and Berlin Philharmonic.

Opéra National de Paris Performances of *Kaguyahime*

June 11 (Fri) - July 15 (Thu)
Opéra Bastille, Paris

Composer Maki Ishii

Choreographer Jiri Kylian

Conductor Michael De Roo

Appearing

Paris Opera Dancers
and Corps de Ballet

Guest percussion ensemble

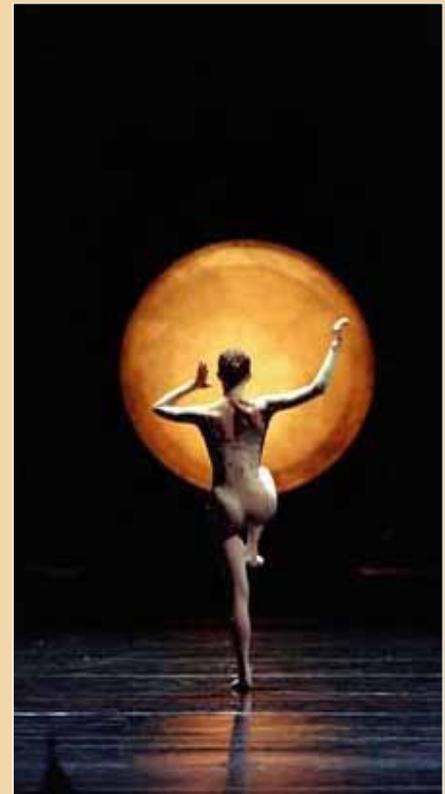
Kodo

Motofumi Yamaguchi,
Eiichi Saito, Takeshi Arai,
Kazuki Imagai, Masaru Tsuji,
Kenzo Abe, Eri Uchida

Gagaku ensemble
(Japanese court music)

Website

<http://www.operadeparis.fr>



An Invitation Back To Our Roots

*A word from Takao Aoki,
Kodo Managing Director*

After nearly thirty years of immersion in Kodo's life and work on Sado Island and around the world, Managing Director Takao Aoki reflects on what seems transient, and what endures.

These days people seem to be at the mercy of the stock market, pursuing stimulation simply for the sake of stimulation, bound by “common sense” and societal obligations, and drowning in a sea of information. There is much talk of the need to advance and the need to change, but no matter how much we profess our hopes and dreams, we never seem to find any solid answers.



Takao Aoki

We are happy if we can make superficial advances, but they are nothing more than a transient fix. The core of the problem persists, and our sense of fulfillment as human beings remains unchanged. People and information run together like a muddy whirlpool and we're often lost, lobotomized by the smoke and mirrors of society.

It's at times like these I recall the very first *Sado no Kuni Ondekoza* concert I saw in 1978 and the impact it had on me. I was moved in an indescribable way, especially by the taiko performance of Ondekoza's center man, Eitetsu Hayashi. After



A promotion photo taken in the seventies of Kodo's antecedant group "Sado no Kuni Ondekoza." Left to Right: Katsuji Kondo, Yoshikazu Fujimoto, Masafumi Kazama, Eitetsu Hayashi (facing rear), Toshio Kawauchi a.k.a. Hancho, Takumi Takano

this encounter I was overcome by an impulse I couldn't wrap my head around and couldn't ignore; I made off for Sado Island immediately. I knew that I couldn't play the drum and inspire people in the same way as the members I had seen on stage, but my desire for others to share in this experience is what has brought me to where I am today. Until recently, the root of this impulse has remained incomprehensible to me. After almost 30 years of being immersed in the world of taiko and performing arts, after all of the incredible encounters along the way, there is something that I have just now come to understand.

Though perhaps obvious, it is simply this; the taiko is a pure, primitive musical instrument. It embodies the wild soul of a newborn baby who comes into the world with the primal instinct to cry, to communicate. If we stand before the taiko with the purity of a newborn child, the drum will awaken this primal instinct in all of us, resonating with clarity it cleanses us, and touches a part of us that has lain dormant for eons. At least, that's the effect it has on me.

Battered by the wind and rain, the flowers that spontaneously sprout up on the roadside somehow pull at my heartstrings. No matter how the rest of the world may change, these flowers are the same every time I look at them. They remain true to nature, living simply, and bloom every year with a radiance that inspires us all.

Kodo's focus is the taiko and its related performing arts, and I believe that through these arts it is our role to pursue a return to our origins. And through the commitment to this journey, I hope we will come closer to knowing the beauty of our true value as human beings.

It is my hope that our players can become one with the drum, free from the clutter of the outside world, and in doing so that they can help listeners to revisit their own primal roots, and remember the simple humanity which lies somewhere deep inside us all.

To learn more about Kodo's mission, please visit our [website](#).





Kodo Performances 2010

Coming up this year

ONE EARTH TOUR 2010

June: Kanto (Tochigi), Tohoku (Fukushima, Iwate), Hokkaido

September: Japan - Kanto (Tokyo, Kanagawa, Gunma, Chiba, etc)

October-November: Europe & Israel - United Kingdom, Netherlands, Austria, Germany

SCHOOL WORKSHOP-PERFORMANCE TOUR

October-November: Niigata, Tokushima, Chiba, Yamanashi, Aichi, Kyoto, Kanagawa, Tokyo, Tochigi

SPECIAL PERFORMANCES IN JAPAN

July: Kodo *Dadan* - Niigata, Chiba, Saitama, Kumamoto, Shizuoka, Aichi

SPECIAL PERFORMANCES ABROAD

June-July: Kodo in *Kaguyahime* Opéra Bastille, Paris, France

September Kodo at Rencontres de Chants Polyphoniques de Calvi Festival, Corsica, France

SOLO PROJECTS ABROAD

June-December: Shogo Yoshii in *Babel* by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Damien Jalet and Antony Gormley - Europe

June-July: Yoshie Sunahata in Akram Khan's *Gnosis* - Europe, Israel

AIKAWA KOZAN MATSURI

July 25 (Sun) Aikawa, Sado Island, Japan

EARTH CELEBRATION 2010

August 20 (Fri) – 22 (Sun): Ogi, Sado Island, Japan



Shiroyama Concerts with special guests Corsican polyphonic singing ensemble *A Filetta*

KODO DECEMBER CONCERTS IN JAPAN

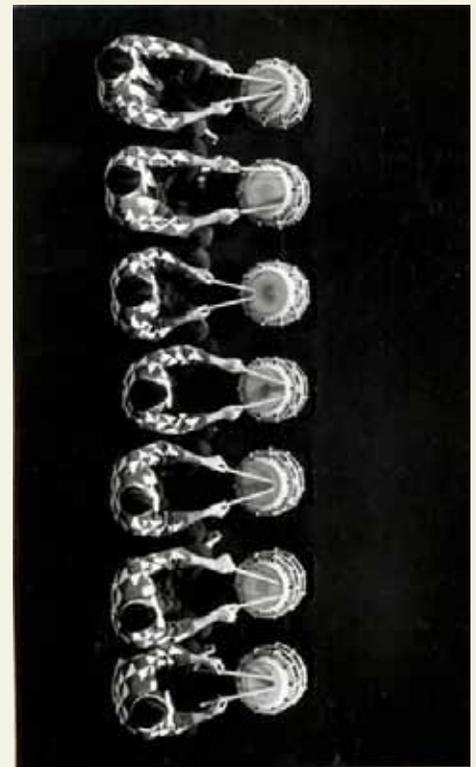
A compilation of the best of 2010, this show will set the tone for Kodo as the group transitions into its 30th anniversary year.

December: Sado, Niigata, Nagoya, Osaka, Sendai, Tokyo

In 2011 Kodo will celebrate its milestone 30th anniversary. We are planning tours in North America and throughout Japan next year.



When three rascals meet up one night, who knows what mischief will ensue? "Koikoi Fusha," as performed on this Spring's [One Earth Tour](#), Japan.



OndeKOZA performing "Monochrome" in the 1970's

Earth Celebration Digest

This short collection of excerpts, spanning 1987 to 2004, offers a glimpse into some of the key ideas and elements that underly Kodo's 23 year-old music festival on Sado Island, Japan

The EC Concept and First Earth Celebration

“Through world music and artistic exchange, using the natural beauty of Sado to set the stage, I would like this event to be an experiment in strengthening the community ties of all the earth’s inhabitants. Then, through our mutual understanding, we can establish a new earth culture, bringing us one step closer to a world where humans beings can truly live as human beings. Under a star-filled summer night sky, with the beat of the drum carried far away on the ocean’s roar as the sound of gamelan and sacred Shinto music fill the air... that is the vision I wish to bring into reality.” ~ Toshio Kawauchi, Kodo Founder, affectionately known as Hancho

However, just as the the first EC was being planned for the following summer and preparations for the building of Kodo Village were underway, Toshio Kawauchi died in a tragic accident and Kodo was



Ogi Town Office’s key staff and Kodo members. “These people formed the team that created the first EC in 1988. They are the people that made it happen. What a young crew.” - Atsushi Sugano



First EC concert marking the opening of Kodo Village on August 15, 1988

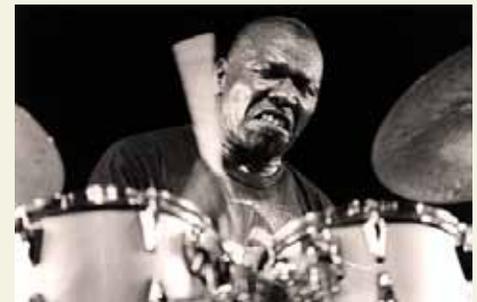
confronted with a crisis: not only how to move forward with EC, but the continuation of the group itself.

That year, instead of holding the first EC, Kodo held a memorial concert for Hancho. They rebuilt the organization, and the following year both dreams were realized: the opening of Kodo Village and the first Earth Celebration.

Two venues were set; the building site for the rehearsal hall at Kodo Village and Shiroyama Park as chosen by Kawauchi in his original plan. Guest artists were also part of Kawauchi’s draft proposal, all people Kodo had met on their world travels, and all of them ambassadors of culture, performing arts, music, and related fields.

What Collaboration Teaches Us: The Shiroyama Concerts

The Shiroyama Concerts are EC’s main events. Every year Kodo travels throughout Japan and around the world, inviting a range of guests they have met on their travels back to



Elvin Jones, EC 1988

their home of Sado for one-of-a-kind collaborations. Over the past 22 years, the number of guests to have graced the Shiroyama stage has reached an excess of 75 solo artists and groups.

For the very first EC, jazz, and world-music-loving Kawauchi invited a multicultural lineup of guests to help realize the dream of EC. Featured artists included jazz pianist Yosuke Yamashita and drummer Elvin Jones.

From the second EC, the concerts were being shaped by artistic director, Leonard Eto, who was leading the way to a new sound that centered around

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Earth Celebration Digest

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the idea of *Dancing Taiko*, taiko that makes people want to dance. “Zoku“, which went on to become a Kodo classic, was one of the tangible results of that idea.

Collaborations with foreign ethnic music groups awoke an awareness of new rhythms in Kodo members, especially those with African groups who shared a primal sense of rhythm.



Jazz pianist Yosuke Yamashita, EC 1988

Interactions with Other Artists

In the early years, Kodo was not used to spontaneously composing pieces in a limited amount of time. Due to their tight schedules, they weren't able to spend much time with their guests, so at times the collaborations seemed superficial. They realized that it was more important for them and their guests to really know each other than to spend time worrying about the finer details of their collaborations.

Sharing and Identifying: Workshops

From the very first EC, Kodo taught taiko classes and the Shiroyama Concert guest performers held lectures. However, as EC grew and the scale of the Shiroyama Concerts expanded, Kodo saw more of their time restrained by rehearsals and the management side of the festival.



Special Fringe Bunya Puppets by Aikawa Bunraku-za, 1995

In addition, as the scale of festival grew, so had the distance between performers and audience.

Kodo wanted to have more time interacting with the people who joined them at EC, so they made the workshops a standard part of the festival along with the Shiroyama Concerts. These two aspects formed the heart of the festival and brought the focus of EC from simply “watching” back to “joining.”

New Experiments Every Year

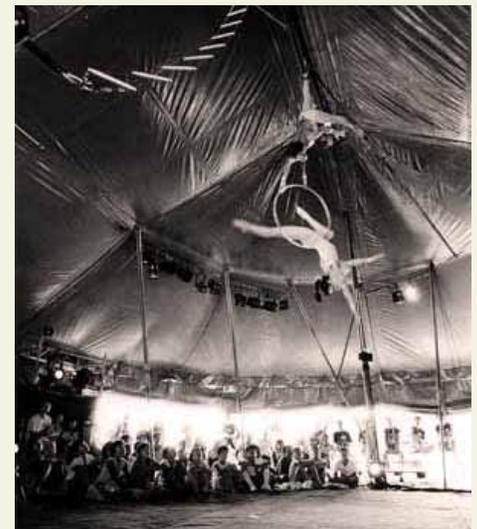
At the first EC, in addition to the concerts, Kodo held a lecture on the theme “to beat a rhythm” featuring historian Yoshihiko Amino, religion anthropologist Shiniichi Nakazawa, and cultural anthropologist Junzo Kawada. Illustrator Seitaro Kuroda was also invited as an EC guest and painted murals on houses and local facilities in 15 locations along the road from Ogi Port to Kodo Village.

Tent Theater

In '94, EC took on the challenge of hosting a “Tent Theatre” as a month-long pre-event. They erected a huge circus-style tent by the fishing docks and had a new lineup everyday. “We wanted to convey the excitement a performance creates in the unique, wondrous space you find inside a big top.” - Takao Aoki, Kodo Managing Director

Artistic Direction by Mother Nature

With abundant greenery and azure ocean as far as the eye can see, Sado Island in summer is like a tropical



EC's “Big Top” Tent Theatre in 1994

paradise. If you have traveled from the concrete jungle by train and ferry, when you finally reach Sado, the beautiful landscape makes you feel like you have left Japan for another world.

Sado Island is blessed with beautiful natural surroundings, and when you are here and at the whim of the weather, you really feel close to the powers of nature.

EC tickets go on sale June 1st.
Please visit our website for details.

Earth Celebration

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*I am guarding a shrine near the
 Hananoki Inn. If you come to Sado
 Island, please stop by for a visit.*



KODO

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In the Spring, camellias are everywhere on Sado Island

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