

# the KODŌ beat

# 鼓童



*Kodo beating the heat on Sado's Shiroyama Mountain.*

*photo by Kazuo Yoshino*

## Earth Celebration '99

Earth Celebration '99 was hot – the people, the dance, the music, the rhythm of course, but this year Mother Nature contributed with the sun burning hotter than ever before. Then just as the last drum echo faded, the heavens opened and down it poured. For days.

Now in its 12th year, the festival continues to evolve – this summer with the addition of 3 smaller performing spaces throughout the town of Ogi called *EC Theatres*. A wide variety of performances were held here, more formal than the outdoor Fringe events, but on a smaller and looser scale than the 3 main Kodo joint concerts featuring the Tuvan throat singing ensemble *Huum-Huur-Tu*. You could get tickets for most of the EC Theatre events the day of the show – which meant you could decide which performances you wanted to see once you had arrived rather than having to reserve seats before

coming to Sado. Artists appearing at the EC Theatres included American Jazz great Milford Graves, Japanese singer/songwriter Hitoshi Komuro, African talking drummer Aja Addy, *Sankaijuku* butoh dancer Toru Iwashita, Bosnia-Herzegovinian singer/painter Jadranka Stojakovic, the percussion of Ryo Watanbe, the throat-singing duo *Tarbagan*, Kodo's *Hanayui* as well as Biwa accompanied story telling, Bunya Puppet drama of Sado Island and a sumi-e artist painting musicians as they played.

New this year too were *EC Kids* events held Kisaki Shrine. Here children could paint, juggle or experience life as stone age people, while their parents went to other performances or just lay back on the grass and watched under the shrine's cooling pines.

This year's workshops included the perennial favourites African dance, taiko, bamboo instrument making, and Ogi Okesa folk dance, to which were added Tuvan throat-

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Gate to the Concert venue.

Photo by Susumu Yoshida

singing and Body, Rhythm & Voice workshops led by legendary American jazz drummer Milford Graves. (A Prof. Graves interview will appear in the next KB)

Fringe events featured plenty of taiko of course, with *Ondeko* from Sado Island, 3 taiko groups from mainland Japan, music from Brazil and Okinawa, Ainu folk songs, mini rock performances, Japanese calligraphy, and dancers galore. At any time of the day music could be heard as people gathered between shows and started jamming, whether around a campfire on Sobama beach after a late night dip, or in the Fleamarket where drum jam sessions seemed to continue unabated. This is also where people gathered to eat a variety of ethnic foods, to have a cold beer, or satisfy their need for a bit of 'retail therapy' by buying clothes, crafts and instruments from around the world. The Casbah-like atmosphere of this twisty little space make it one of the best places for meeting other festival-goers and performers. So often the unscripted moments in an event like this are the most memorable and one such occasion was late Sunday night when the members of Huu-Huur-Tu gave an extraordinary impromptu performance of Russian folk songs.

There was really more going on than one person could possibly take in – which gave a wider variety of choices than ever before – but also left one wondering what might have been missed.

This year's featured guests were the throat-singing ensemble *Huun-Huur-Tu* from the South Siberian Republic of Tuva. This four man group – who have played with the Chieftains, Frank Zappa and with Ry

Cooder recently recorded the soundtrack for the movie *Geronimo* – brought standing ovations with their music and charmed everyone they met with their earthy warmth. On the opening night, after a little warm-up number by Kodo, they ascended the stage in their silk Tuvan costumes of red, black, gold and blue, instantly drawing us into their nomadic world of the steppes. Kodo's performance, directed for the first time by Tetsuro Naito, featured permutations of the group you can only see on Sado, with as many as 22 players appearing at once. Each night featured a new programme and as the two groups grew more familiar with each other the number of their collaborative numbers increased.

## Huun-Huur-Tu Interview

*The following are excerpts from a Kodo Beat (KB.) interview with Sayan Bapa (HHT.) (with other members chipping in) right after the Saturday night show.*

**KB.** How do you feel about this experience?

**HHT.** People ask why are you going to Japan? What do you think of Japan? I said I'm going to play with Kodo. Oh that's very strange. That's a very interesting idea. I had never seen this kind of power. Its deeper and too close. The tunes and rhythms are more similar than I thought. This is our second trip to Japan. We played in Sendai last October. I had never seen Kodo, but last year at the Edinburgh Festival Tetsuro came to our concert and we talked a bit. I only knew the name. And we saw the video.

**KB.** Can you ride a horse?

**HHT.** Yeah, why not?

**KB.** Kodo's music is based on traditional music but they add new elements too. Is yours the same?

**HHT.** Yeah, we bring in a bit of guitar and arrangement. Everything (else) is old.

**KB.** Where did you learn them, from your grandfather? When you were children did you hear them all the time?

**HHT.** Yeah.

**KB.** In Tuva, when do you sing?

**HHT.** Just for friends. We kill a sheep, and eat it. Just for friends. Sometimes in a concert.

**KB.** Did this music almost disappear during the Soviet era?

**HHT.** Yeah. Before this religion, music instruments were broken. Everything is crushed. Since about 1965 or 70 a few people do it, unofficially at first, later officially.

**KB.** Your language is related to old Turkish. What languages do you speak?



*Huun-Huur-Tu bring the sounds of the Tuvan Steppes to Shiroyama Park on Sado Island.*

*photo by Kazuo Yoshino*

**HHT.** Russian, Tuvan, a little English, a little French, a little German.

**KB.** Pronounce Huun-Huur-Tu.

**HHT.** Huun-Huur-Tu. (rolling the 'r' in Huur) *Huun* means sun, and *Huur-Tu* means propeller. It is the special light on the steppes at sunrise and dawn.

**KB.** When did you become professional musicians?

**HHT.** We all took different roads. Some of us first played together in 1978. He was a driver, he did horses. Normal lives. I played with the philharmonic, the State Ensemble. I played traditional instruments. Alexei went to a music college. Huun-Huur-Tu began in 1992. Before us there were old teachers who made a living at it. Very few people.

**KB.** Do the old people like you?

**HHT.** Yes, it is no problem to them that we use guitar, and arrange things. We are always travelling around Tuva asking the old people about old songs, about everything, instruments. They are very happy to give us all information.

**KB.** Do you have to have a moustache to throat-sing?

**HHT.** (Looks around and it registers that all the members are mustachioed and answers (laughing) No.

**KB.** What are your impressions of this trip? Are you too busy?

**HHT.** No not too busy. It's just the weather. Too hot. You are Canadian, how do you stand it? Everything is good.

**KB.** Is a four man group common?

**HHT.** I have seen in a book when the Tuvan king had 60 singers and 50 dancers. But normally it was individual music, one guy with his horse and sheep and he pulls out his harp and sings by himself. Sometimes there are 4 or 5.

**KB.** Some of your music sounds just like singing from anywhere and then you break into throat-singing. Is there a traditional story about where this comes from?

**HHT.** Good question. I personally think, there is no book about it. People only know that it's very old, it's my country. It's my people singing it. My feeling is that... you know when there are sometimes when you don't have words about life? Maybe only you have the throat. It's real feeling. Sometimes you might cry about something. This is soul music. Tuvan soul.

**KB.** The throat-singing sounds other-worldly.

**HHT.** No. It is of the Earth.

**KB.** How much do you tour?

**HHT.** Only this year has been very hard. We started in January. We only had 20 days living at home. I haven't lived at home since then. Then we go home for 20 days in September, then tour again.

**KB.** What are your plans for the future?

**HHT.** We have this interesting plan for next year in May and June to travel around Asia to where Tuvan people live. In Mongolia, Altai. A tour for people interested in music and culture. With a professor who lives in the US.

**KB.** Do you intend to keep touring?

**HHT.** Yes.

**KB.** Impressions of Sado?

**HHT.** For me all fantastic. Organization fantastic. Friends.

**KB.** How do you say thank-you in Tuvan?

**HHT.** *Chet er dim.*

**KB.** *Chet er dim.* When do we drink?

**HHT.** Now.

In September Kodo's Ryutaro Kaneko and Hideyuki Saito joined with Dubliner Liam O'Maonlai, lead singer of *Hot House Flowers* and Haruhiko Saga of the Japanese throat-singing duo *Tarbagan* for two concerts on Sado in the intimate atmosphere and warm acoustics of Taikeiji temple and at Hana no ki, a beautifully restored farm house inn.

On November 20th Kodo will release 2 new CDs on Sony Records. The album titles *Tsutsumi* and *Warabe* are derived from alternate readings for the characters used in Kodo's name. *Tsutsumi* means drum, but it is also a homonym for, among other things, 'bundle'. *Warabe* means 'child'. *Tsutsumi* was recorded in a concert hall and includes new pieces that Kodo perform on stage. *Warabe* is a studio album consisting entirely of new pieces composed by Kodo members specifically for optimal CD listening, rather than with concert performance in mind. You can order through our mail order service. "Tsutsumi" (SRCL4670), "Warabe" (SRCL4671). Price: 3,059yen.

in brief...



## upcoming performances

### Japan Tour

#### October

13 Niigata	Arai Sogo Bunka Hall	0255-72-9411
14 Niigata	Koidego Bunka Kaikan	02579-2-8811
15 Niigata	Shibata Shimin Bunka Kaikan	0254-26-1945
17 Saitama	Hanno-shi Shimin Kaikan	0429-72-3000
19 Tochigi	Tochigiken Sogo Bunka Centre	028-622-4101
20 Gunma	Gunma Ongaku Centre	027-322-9999
23 Ibaraki	Akeno-cho Chuo Kouminkan	0296-52-5333
24 Gunma	Ota Shimin Kaikan	0276-45-4871
26 Ibaraki	Ushiku Shimin Centre	0298-74-3111
27 Chiba	Noda-shi Bunka Kaikan	0471-24-1555
29 Chiba	Ichikawa-shi Bunka Kaikan	047-379-5111
30 Tokyo	Ota Kumin Hall Apuriko	03-5744-1600
31 Tokyo	Komae-shi Ecorma Hall	Sold Out

#### November

2 Kanagawa	Isehara Shimin Bunka Kaikan	0462-23-6421
3 Saitama	Misato-shi Bunka Kaikan	0489-58-9900
5 Saitama	Kawaguchi Sogo Bunka Centre	048-296-8121
6 Saitama	Wako Shimin Bunka Centre	048-474-5710
8 Yamagata	Yamagata Kenmin Kaikan	022-299-3955
9 Fukushima	Koriyama Shimin Bunka Centre	024-934-2288
11 Miyagi	Hasama-cho Tome Shukusai Gekijo	022-299-3955
13 Iwate	Esashi-shi Taiiku Bunka Kaikan	0197-37-2154
14 Iwate	Sawauchi-mura Nogyosha Training Centre	0197-85-2111

#### December Concert

Nov. 30, Dec. 1	Sado, Amusement Sado	0259-86-3630
4-5	Osaka, Osaka Kosei Nenkin Kaikan	06-6362-8122
7-8	Nagoya, Aichi Kosei Nenkin Kaikan	052-263-7171
10-11	Yokohama, Kannai Hall	045-242-1155
14-23	Tokyo, Shinjuku, Theatre Apple	03-3209-0222

We have been holding the December Concert series in Japan for over 10 years, but as of next year we have new plans in store. Stay tuned.

### North America Tour 2000

Detailed information is available on Kodo web site.

#### January

29-30 Cerritos, CA

#### February

2 San Rafael, CA / 4-6 Berkeley, CA / 9-13 Seattle, WA / 14 Vancouver Canada / 18-20 Toronto Canada / 22 Clinton Township, MI / 24 Indianapolis, IN / 25 West Lafayette, IN / 26 Bloomington, IN / 29 Cincinnati, OH / **March**

2 Toledo, OH / 3 Akron, OH / 4 Columbus, OH / 5 Athens, OH / 8-12 Pittsburgh, PA

Kodo Beat staff Chieko & Johnny Wales and Nobuko Yamada look forward to hearing from their readers.

### 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 homepage.

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

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