

the KODŌ beat

鼓童



North American Tour '00

A successful tour depends as much upon the people behind the scenes as it does upon those appearing on stage. The following are excerpts of interviews by Tour Manager Daniel Rosen with 5 of those friends and colleagues.



Mark Maluso

IMG Artists

I am an artist manager and vice president of IMG Artists, which is a division of IMG Talent Agency in New York.

This is IMG's third year working with Kodo, we are currently on the second tour with them.

(Working with Kodo is) really a luxury for an agent because often artists are very indecisive, and sometimes organizations and ensembles, which is really my expertise, tend to be somewhat dysfunctional, whereas Kodo is the absolute other end of the spectrum. They seem to absolutely know what they are doing and have a very clear idea of what their vision is and the way they want to work, so it makes it

very easy as an agent to execute their wishes.

You see this thing at work, you see this Kodo organization happen in front of you, and... its not just people working very hard trying to make something incredible, its that they're making something incredible by just being natural and by living what they do rather than trying to work at what they do.

Being as well known and highly regarded as they are, they also feel like the important thing for them is to just do what they do and do it at the highest level they can do it. But at the same time they realize that new projects, new ideas, need to be always considered in terms of the future of Kodo, the growth of Kodo, and the further development of Kodo and taiko. I observe the interplay between the need to grow and develop and be even more than what they are, but at the same time to maintain the integrity of what they already are, and the respect for the past that they have.

I work on the mechanics of planning the tours and making sure that the presenters are able to reengage Kodo from time to time because some of them get very unhappy when Kodo's not available. Actually they all get very unhappy (laughs).

Archie Meguro

Sony Music New York

I'm based in New York. I've been working with Kodo for four or five years now. The people in Kodo are very pure. I'm with

Sony Music and a lot of it is about commerce. Kodo is more than that. Obviously it is more cultural, and promotes the taiko art form to the world. I respect that



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Sachiko, Tsubasa (in behind), Riko and Aya whose performances on this tour drew lots of great feedback .

very much. In the end, our goals as Sony Music are the same as Kodo's as a group; to get the taiko to appeal to people around the world. I'm trying to expand the base, and the remix project (the CD *Saiso*) is a prime example of that. I found that the market in the US and Canada was skewing a little older. We found that a lot of remix producers in the Dance and Techno world already illegally sampled Kodo taiko into their recordings. A lot of people in the industry knew about Kodo, so we thought why not open it up and do something official? A multitude of producers jumped at this idea, of having access to the master tapes of Kodo. The remixers, you know they would never dare to even approach us. (Many people) have this idea that Kodo is a protected thing, a sacred thing. They think, 'Why would they allow a DJ in New York to even touch that stuff'. For the pure Kodo enthusiast, some people didn't like it, they were like, 'What are you doing to my Kodo!' For people who have never seen Kodo and never really ventured into the world music scene, a lot of them have now explored the original Kodo works. You get all kinds of comments, but there was a big reaction, and that's the goal.



Bryan Yamami

Japanese American Cultural Community Center

When you talk about Kodo and the JACCC, you're talking about a lot of history.

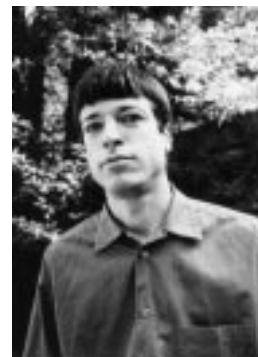
There's a 20-year relationship. I think it was a really wonderful homecoming. Like Yamaguchi san (Kodo

Artistic Director) said yesterday, '*Tadaima*' (I'm home). That really hit home. I was really happy to hear that, it gave me validation for everything we've been working to try to accomplish. So for them to come back for our 20th anniversary; it was a great beginning to our year. The community is growing here, and it's great to see Kodo's willingness and desire to become more involved in the community here. And all the taiko groups, including mine, loves everything that they do. Last year's workshop with Eiichi was great. There were 14 groups at last night's reception to welcome Kodo. I think it shows the growth of taiko, but also the fact that everyone respects Kodo and sees them as role models for the whole taiko community.

Leo Janks

Lighting Supervisor

The two things that have struck me most about the group are; one, their dedication to what they do. It's very inspiring and very impressive for me to see how focused they are and how much time they put into practicing drumming and their whole attitude towards it. It's not just something they throw together for the show. It's all day, preparing for it. The other thing is the egalitarian nature of the company. I remember the first show I saw in Sado Island; after the show Kodo's chief administrator and artistic director were going around pulling up the spike marks (bits of tape to mark positions on the stage). That was something I had never seen before. It is also very impressive to me to see how much everybody pitches in, and how everybody does everything themselves.



But another thing that struck me was the trust that the company puts in me and the respect that they have for the work that I do, which is not always the case. For instance, the last tour, in Milwaukee, the lighting board



The glamour of life on tour. A fairly typical glimpse of life backstage.

operator made a mistake and the lighting for the beginning of 'Furaido' was completely wrong. It took us a little while to figure out the problem and correct it. After the show I went to Motofumi and apologized, and he said something like, 'Oh that's OK, you're a professional and I trust you'. And that's certainly not always the attitude one gets (laughing) from the Artistic Director. That made a very big impression on me.

Twice on the last tour and twice on this tour we are doing three or four stops back to back, and by the third or fourth stop I am fried. It definitely affects the way I can perform the way I do my job. That's not good, but obviously it's something the company has to go



A 9 hour IMAX shoot in New York... for a 2 minute trailer.

through also. They have to get on the bus after a show and then the load out, check into the hotel at about 1 o'clock in the morning and then be there the next morning early for the load in. So it's tough for everybody, not just me. Right now I'm wondering what kind of shape I'm going to be in by the time we hit Athens.

(A normal touring day begins when) Masa and Doba (Stage Manager and his assistant) and I will arrive at 8am and then we'll start by checking the trims of the electrics, and make sure that the masking is all in place. We'll put down the Marley, dance floor, if they haven't done that already, and then start to focus the lights. Then at 10am the company arrives, and they take over the stage and spike for about an hour. We'll resume focusing after they are done, take lunch for an hour, and then after lunch finish the focus, look at the cues, most of which have been put into the light board beforehand. And then at four o'clock it's rehearsal, and after rehearsal we'll do any focus or cue notes, if we

have to. Then take dinner, sweep and mop the stage, and do a show.

Donnie Keeton

Tour Truck Driver

I'm the truck driver and I also work the concessions for the Kodo on this, my 3rd North American tour.



Oh god, on my very first concert, we were running around... I had to get something from back stage and the house had just opened. So I walked, unobtrusively (laughs), up onto the stage and around the corner. It felt a little odd doing that, and I found out later that it wasn't the best thing.

(On another occasion during the dress rehearsal on the first day at Stanford, he walked behind the scrim thinking he couldn't be seen). I could see the people on stage, but thought they couldn't see me. I waved as a joke and then it really surprised me when they waved back!

The hardest things for me are lack of sleep and bad weather. We drove from Vancouver to Toronto, about 4,400 kilometers, in just over three days. That was a rush. It's kind of a blur, it went so fast. We went so far in such a short period of time, it was kind of unreal.

It's been just wonderful. They are a very inspiring group to be around and after the tour I have the highest of all aspirations (laughs). Then it kind of wears off a little bit, but then it's time for another tour so I get another charge.



The unvarnished truth. Odaiko player Yoshikazu does tire occasionally after all.

Hot on the heels of the North American Tour are trips this spring to Korea, China and Europe. In Korea was a joint concert with the *Taejon Municipal Traditional Dance Group*. The director of the group, Ms. Chei Kang-Soon, appeared at EC '94 as one of the main guests.

in brief...



The next two *Kodo Juku Sleepover Taiko Workshops*, led by Eiichi Saito, will be Sept. 20th-24th and Sept.27 - October 1st at the Apprentice Centre on Sado Island. Application deadline is July 28th. Fee, room, board and bachi: ¥50,000. Some Japanese conversational ability will be helpful. A *Kodo Juku Voice Circle Sleepover Workshop* led by Yoko Fujimoto will be October 26th - 29th at Kodo Village on Sado. Fee, room & board: ¥45,000. Application deadline is September 29th. Japanese conversational ability required. For details check the Otodaiku Website <http://www.otodaiku.co.jp> or call Kodo.

upcoming performances

China Tour

May 12-13 Peking The Great Theatre of Nationalities
86-10-64032705
17-18 Shanghai Majestic Theatre 86-21-62486377

Europe Tour

May
27-31st London The Barbican Centre 44-171-638-8891
(Kodo will be joined by the Tuvan throat singing ensemble *Huun-Huur-Tu* at Kodo's opening night in London on May 27th. They collaborated with Kodo at last year's Earth Celebration).

June

7th	Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	44-161-907-9000
9th	Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	44-115-989-5555
10-11th	Birmingham	Symphony Hall	44-121-212-2233
13th	Leicester	De Montfort Hall	44-116-233-3111
16th	Basingstoke	The Anvil	44-1256-844-244
19th	Amsterdam	Care Theatre	32-3-190-01-91
21st	Antwerp	Elisabethzaal	32-3-190-03-11
24-25th	Munich	Gasteig	49-89-936093
28th	Hamburg	CCH, Saal II	49-4131-46321
30th	Berlin	Philharmonie Hall	49-30-23088230

July

3-4th	Bern	Kursaal	41-900-300-300
6-9th	Luzern	Kongresszentrum	41-900-300-300

Aikawa Kinzan Matsuri

July 27th Aikawa, Sado Island

Earth Celebration 2000

August 18-20th Ogi, Sado Island

Japan Tour

September-October

Niigata / Nagano / Gifu / Kyoto / Wakayama / Hyogo / Osaka / Ehime / Okayama / Yamaguchi / Oita / Fukuoka / Nagasaki / Kumamoto / Kagoshima

Kodo CDs released in Korea and Canada

Tsutsumi, *Warabe* and *Best of KODO* are released by Sony Music Korea. This marks the first Kodo CD release in Asia outside Japan. *Tsutsumi* and *Warabe* are on sale now in Canada.

Earth Celebration 2000

This year Kim Duk-Soo, the leader of the Korean percussion ensemble SamulNori will return to Shiroyama Park for the first time since 1989. Also featured are Japanese jazz musicians led by guitarist Kazumi Watanabe. EC Theatre Events features Okinawan singer Misako Koja. A new addition to the Mini Workshops is arts and crafts from Hawaii navigated by Tiger Espere, Hawaiian born surf legend and traditional canoe builder.

Ticket sales start on **June 19th**. Details will be announced at our website and leaflets will be sent to members of *Friends of Kodo* in May.



Illustration by Hideaki Masago

Kodo Beat staff Chieko & Johnny Wales 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 website.

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

Kodo Village, 148-1 Kanetashinden, Ogi, Sado Island
952-0611 Japan Tel.0259-86-3630 (Fax:3631)
e-mail: JDC03000@nifty.ne.jp

Kodo's official website: <http://www.kodo.or.jp>