

# the KODŌ beat

# 鼓童



*Summer Heat under Spring Skies;*

*Flora Purim, Giovanni Hidalgo, Meia Noite & Airtó Moreira.*

*photo by SHIGGY*

## Spring Earth Celebration

For the last 7 years we have been happy to report that Mother Nature smiled down upon Earth



*The taiko works its magic*

Celebration, blessing it with wonderful weather. However, as dear departed George Harrison reminded us; 'All things must pass', and so did our streak. It rained. Even during the big evening concerts. Not so much however, as to force their relocation to the school gym. On the plus side, there were no bugs or sunburns, so a Spring EC has its

advantages too. The mettle of this year's Earth Celebrants was tested and they stuck it out, very few abandoning the refuge of umbrellas, ponchos and, for the inventive and ill-prepared, plastic bags. The music played on (why wouldn't it? the musicians were under cover) and the Latin rhythms of *Airtó Moreira*, *Flora Purim*, *Mela Noite* and *Giovanni Hidalgo* warmed those who might otherwise have been feeling the cold.

There was the usual variety of workshops to attend from flute-making to hearing flute music in the forest that participants had just spent the morning cleaning up. Some spent the late evening talking with fellow taiko enthusiasts about the finer points of bachi-making or the difficulties of running an amateur taiko



*Okinawan Lion loose at the Fringe.*

group. There was also an American boat builder showing the locals how to make Sado's famous *taraibune* wooden tub boats. 'Tis a wonderful world. The kind of people who gather on an island to drum, dance, sing, learn, eat, drink and laugh will celebrate Mother Nature no matter what her mood.

EC will be back in its August time slot next year. We hope to see you here. Don't forget your sun screen.

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# An Introduction to *Kodo Arts Sphere America* (KASA) by Daniel Rosen

In ancient Japan, the taiko (the traditional Japanese drum) was a symbol of community, used not only to keep a backbeat for local festivals and ceremonies, but also as a basic means of communication. It could be used to call a meeting, to warn of danger, or to gather people in times of celebration.

The Japanese taiko has taken on a life of its own in North America, and its role as a centerpiece for many communities continues. Since the early seventies, Japanese Americans and Japanese-Canadians have been using the taiko as a voice for their community and an expression of their cultural identity.

Today North America is enjoying a veritable 'taiko boom', with thousands of players spanning all age groups and ethnic backgrounds involved in the taiko experience. There are estimated to be over one-hundred and fifty community-based taiko groups in North America, and that number is growing.

In today's fast-paced world of computers and the information super highway, it is easy to forget our past, and to concentrate on electronic connections rather than interpersonal ones.

Enter *Kodo Arts Sphere America* (KASA), a United States nonprofit organization established to encourage, enable and support programs and opportunities for North Americans to study and understand the traditional and contemporary Japanese music of the taiko and its related performing arts.

KASA believes that the power of the taiko, and of the arts in general, is a power to unite people regardless of age, race or cultural background. The beat of the taiko is a common language; a primal form of expression that can link all human beings.

Kodo Arts Sphere America is the brainchild of *Toshio Kawauchi*, the founding managing director of Kodo. Known to his friends as 'Hanchō', Mr.

Kawauchi hoped that Kodo could some day help promote cultural exchanges between Japan and North America. He envisioned an American-based company which could work towards that goal. In March of 2002 this dream became a reality when KASA was officially recognized as a nonprofit organization in the state of California.

Though Hanchō died long before KASA's realization, his dream lives on in the spirit of KASA, a grass-roots organization whose board members are



*Drumming up a storm with Eiichi Saito.*

*photo by Shinichi Sogo*

also members of the taiko community. The directors of KASA envision the organization as a haven for taiko practitioners and audiences in both America and Japan. We hope that KASA will serve as a communication hub among taiko groups regardless of country, and to provide opportunities for people not just to play taiko, but to revisit its origins and discuss its significance to the community. We believe that one of the key ways to achieve these goals is through the support of hands-on local workshops. Today, the roots of taiko and its spirit are often overlooked as new players rush onto the performance stage with no knowledge of its history. KASA hopes to bridge this gap by creating opportunities for North American players to work with instructors both from Japan and North America who teach an awareness of its traditions as well as technique.

Although the KASA staff has been hard at work with various projects over the past two years, our first official project since incorporation will be the KASA

2002 Summer Workshop Tour with Kodo's principal vocalist *Yoko Fujimoto*, and principal dancer *Chieko Kojima*. The tour will cover seven cities in the United States over seven weeks, with stops in *Boston, Minneapolis, Portland, Seattle, Emeryville, Sacramento* and *Moab, Utah*. This kind of tour provides a rare occasion for Kodo members to step down from the stage and engage in a more direct exchange with participants; this is the real mission of KASA, to create a new space for people of different cultures and backgrounds to get to know each other, and share ideas in a hands-on environment.

Workshops are nothing new for Kodo members, who have been invited to the United States and Canada many times in the past, both to teach and to perform with local taiko groups, as well as to take part in gatherings such as the biennial *North America Taiko Conference*. With the formation of KASA, these opportunities will become less of a rarity and more of a rule. With increased public and private support, KASA intends to sponsor workshops and residencies with other Japanese artists of various disciplines, as well as to provide North American artists with similar opportunities in Japan. KASA will serve as a nonprofit umbrella organization which can facilitate communication among community taiko groups, both in Japan and North America. KASA is open to, and will strive to be accessible to all groups who share our enthusiasm for the taiko and appreciate its inherent



*Kazuki Imagai gets down with 3 new friends.*

*photos by Daniel Rosen*

power to positively shape the world in which we live. With your help, KASA can provide the guidance and support needed to understand and perpetuate the taiko tradition and all of its related art forms.



**KASA Directors :**

*Georg Kochi*, President

*Asian Cultural Council* representative and long-time Kodo friend and advisor.

*Alan Okada*, Treasurer

Founding member of New York-based *Soh Daiko*.

*Roy Hirabayashi*, Secretary

Managing Director of *San Jose Taiko*.

*Takao Aoki*

Managing Director of *Kodo* and the *Kodo Cultural Foundation*.

**KASA Staff:**

*Daniel Rosen*, Program Director

Earth Celebration Staff since 1996,

*Chie Otsuka*, Program Assistant

Taiko scholar & Earth Celebration staff member since 1996.

KASA Program Director Daniel Rosen looks forward to hearing from all those interested in knowing more about KASA and its programs, as well as from *anyone who may be able to donate time or money towards helping the organization realize its goals*. Some of you may know Daniel from Earth Celebration or the lobby of a Kodo concert on past North America tours. He currently resides in Honolulu, where he spends much of his time behind the desk at the KASA office (his apartment), and the remainder behind a potter's wheel at the University of Hawaii, Manoa.

**Contact KASA in Japanese or English at:**

Daniel Rosen, Kodo Arts Sphere America

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

**Special Kodo Concert to Benefit KASA**

August 13th, 2002 at Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA

Ticket sales start on July 12 at:

206-292-2787

<http://www.ticketmaster.com>

Kodo did their bit for the World Cup by performing together with old friends *Kim Duk-Soo* and *SamulNori* on the 2002 FIFA World

*Cup™ Official Anthem* composed by Greek artist *Vangellis*. Kodo also appeared at the Official Concert, as did Aerosmith, before the finals for the World Cup.

Vermonters *Douglas Brooks* and local carpenter *Taka Higuchi* built a wooden *taraibune* (tub boat) during EC. *Kodo Maru* will be used to teach apprentices local seamanship and will serve proudly as Kodo's diminutive company yacht.

in brief...



## upcoming performances

### One Earth Tour USA and Japan

#### July

- 13 Gainesville, FL Philips Center for the Performing Arts
- 16 Greenville, SC Peace Center for the Performing Arts
- 18 Vienna, VA Wolf Trap
- 20 Philadelphia, PA Mann Center For the Performing Arts
- 21 New York, NY Central Park Summer Stage
- 25 Cleveland, OH Playhouse Square Center Palace Theater
- 26 Columbus, OH Columbus Assn. for the Performing Arts
- 30 Highland Park, IL Ravinia Festival

#### August

- 1 Interlochen, MI Interlochen Center for the Arts
- 6 Morrison, CO Red Rocks Amphitheater
- 9 Irvine, CA Verizon Amphitheater
- 11 Stanford, CA Frost Amphitheater Stanford University
- 13 Seattle, WA Benaroya Hall (Special concert to benefit KASA. See page 3.)

#### September

- 12 Wakayama Shingu Shimin Kaikan 0735-21-3722
- 14 Wakayama Katsuragi Sogo Bunka Kaikan 0736-22-0303
- 15 Wakayama Wakayama Kenmin Kaikan 073-422-0089
- 17 Osaka Settsu Shimin Bunka Hall 0726-35-1406
- 21 Hyogo Tanba no Mori Koen 0795-72-5170
- 22 Kyoto Joyo City Culture Center Plum Hall 0774-55-1010
- 23 Shiga Omihachiman-shi Bunka Kaikan 0748-33-8111
- 26 Kyoto Kyoto-fu Chutan Bunka Kaikan 0773-42-7705
- 28 Ishikawa Nonoichi-machi Bunka Kaikan Forte 076-248-8000
- 30 Nagano Iida Bunka Kaikan 0265-24-0209

#### October

- 2 Nagano Koshoku-shi Sogo Bunka Kaikan 026-273-1880
- 5 Niigata Yahiko Sogo Bunka Kaikan 0256-94-4311
- 6 Niigata Murakami Shimin Fureai Centre 0254-52-0201
- 8 Fukushima Koriyama Shimin Bunka Centre 024-934-2288
- 11 Hokkaido Hakodate Shimin Kaikan 0138-59-1181
- 13 Aomori Towada Shimin Bunka Centre 0176-23-6510
- 15 Akita Yuzawa Bunka Kaikan 0183-72-2121
- 18 Miyagi Kesenuma Shimin Kaikan 022-771-1432
- 20 Iwate Esashi-shi Taiiku Bunka Kaikan 0197-35-2111
- 27 Yamagata Yonezawa Shimin Bunka Kaikan 0238-26-2666
- 29 Niigata Shibata Shimin Bunka Kaikan 0254-26-1945
- 30 Niigata Joetsu Bunka Kaikan 0255-25-8200

#### November

- 12 Okinawa Nago Shimin Kaikan TBA
- 15 Okinawa Urasoe Shimin Kaikan 098-860-2055
- 16 Okinawa Okinawa Shimin Kaikan 098-973-6768

- 20 Okinawa Matida Shimin Gekijo TBA
- 23 Okinawa Ishigaki Shimin Kaikan 09808-2-3477

#### December

- 6 Ibaraki Ogawa-machi Bunka Centre 0291-35-2098
- 7 Ibaraki Yuki Shimin Bunka Centre 0284-72-8268
- 8 Saitama Kumagaya Bunka Sozokan 048-532-9090
- 10 Tokyo Edogawa-ku Sogo Bunka Centre 03-3652-1111
- 11 Saitama Misato-shi Bunka Kaikan 048-958-9900
- 13 Chiba Narashino Bunka Hall 047-479-1212
- 14 Kanagawa Hadano-shi Bunka Kaikan 0463-81-1211
- 17-23 Tokyo Setagaya Public Theatre 0259-86-3630

(Advance ticket reservation forms for the Dec. 17-23 shows will be sent out to *Friends of Kodo* in September.)

### Hanayui USA Tour

The three women Kodo off-shoot dance and song ensemble *Hanayui* will tour America, featuring;

#### Joint performances with Soh Daiko

- Sep.14 American Museum of Natural History, New York City
- 15 State University of New York, Stony Brook, New York

Inquiries: Merle Okada email: okada@amnh.org

#### "Himawari" Tour with San Jose Taiko

- Sep.28 Japan America Theatre, Los Angeles

Oct. 7 Hana, Maui

- 10 Maui Arts Cultural Center
- 12 Leeward Community College, Pearl City
- 17 Kahilu Theatre
- 19 University of Hawaii, Hilo

Inquiries: San Jose Taiko email: sjtaiko@taiko.org

### 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.

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