

the KODŌ beat

鼓童

Kabuki 's *Tamasaburo Bando* Directs 'Kodo One Earth Tour Special'



photos by Susumu Yoshida

It's been over 30 years since we made our home on Sado Island. Our goal remains that our performance art grow, not stagnate over the next 30, or even 100 years. To that end we have been ever-widening our search for new colleagues and mentors.

One result of this can be seen in our upcoming *Kodo One Earth Tour Special* series of performances to be held in Japan in the winter of 2003. We have been exceptionally fortunate in that one of Kabuki's most renowned actors, *Tamasaburo Bando* has consented to act as artistic director for these performances. *Kabuki* (whose 3 characters that make up the word mean *song*, *dance* and *skill* or *acting*) has just celebrated its 400th anniversary. As the name implies this great theatrical tradition is a fusion of many of the Japanese performing arts. Tamasaburo entered Kabuki at age 7, and with that background as a springboard, as well as his work as a *buyo* dancer, film director and actor he has created an enormous range of imaginative collaborative performances with artists from around the world.

Under his keen direction our aim is to

reincarnate Kodo's performance, not just strive for an overall improvement in quality, but to make it more sensitive and powerful than ever before. Through the experience of working intensively with Tamasaburo both on Sado and in Tokyo we hope to learn much from his approach to his art, to learn from the expressiveness of his body and – if we are lucky – to gain insights into the depth of the *ma* (empty spaces) he creates in his dance from one moment to the next. We are setting out on a new voyage to try to capture a 'beauty of movement' that is both sublime and will seep deeply into your hearts. It will be a journey back to the basics.

The 25 *Kodo One Earth Tour Special* performances will be held from November 14 to December 24th in Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Niigata and Sado. For details check our website.

On April 25th in Tokyo a joint Tamasaburo/Kodo press conference will be held in cooperation with Shochiku Co., Ltd. and Sony Music Japan International. Next spring a CD and DVD of *Kodo One Earth Tour Special* will be available.



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KASA North America Workshop Tour Report

by KASA Program Director Daniel Rosen
photos by Eiichi Saito and Daniel Rosen

The month-long 2003 KASA North America Workshop tour brought Kodo's Eiichi Saito and Masami Miyazaki to Montreal, Toronto, Stamford (CT), Stonybrook (NY), Raleigh (NC), Austin (TX), Phoenix (AZ), Morgan Hill (CA), and throughout the Hawaiian Islands.



Eichan starts up the 'echogame' in a workshop.

Yesterday I dropped Eiichi and Masami off at the Honolulu airport and with that parting the 2003 KASA North America Workshop Tour came to a close. Having booked the events from beginning to end, it was especially satisfying for me to be able to bring the instructors to the Hawaiian Islands and my present home of Honolulu. Over the past few days I have had the privilege not only of working with two very gifted instructors, but of seeing the intimate exchange and remarkable results that only a workshop atmosphere makes possible. Participants, many of whom had

previously only ever seen Kodo members on stage, were delighted to find Eiichi and Masami in their dojo making silly faces, dancing to the beat of their taiko, and otherwise surprising them with their casual playfulness. A true master of his craft, it never ceases to amaze me how humbly Eiichi carries himself. The first thing he always tells the group is, 'Call me Eichan. I am not Sensei, I am not Saito-san, just Eichan.' For many taiko groups, schooled heavily in the *reigi* (etiquette) of taiko and its hierarchy, this is often a shocking declaration coming from such an accomplished instructor. But it sets exactly the right tone, as Eiichi's workshops are all about having 'fun' with the taiko, a seemingly obvious concept that is nonetheless lost on many. Often viewed as an austere instrument, many groups have preconceptions about what taiko 'should be', and they are often constrained by these rigid ideas. Then Eiichi – a senior member of Kodo – comes along and reminds everyone, 'Keep smiling! It's just a game!' When players miss a beat, Eiichi further encourages them with the mantra, 'Don't call it a mistake, call it a solo.'

Assistant Masami Miyazaki echoes Eiichi's message with a bright smile and bounce to her step that inspires even the shyest players. Masami is one of those people who has the rare talent to communicate pure joy without speaking a word. People listen, begin to loosen up, and whether it is for two hours or two days, by the end of the workshop, the taiko has new meaning for them. It actually sounds better. The vibration rises to the sky instead of sinking to the floor. And it is definitely more fun.



Taiko begins here. Be thankful this is a B/W pic so you can't see the colour Eichan's jogging suit (think: traffic cone).

Nowhere was this more apparent than during the 2003 KASA Cultural Workout, KASA's first-ever sleep-over workshop. Modeled after the *Kodo Juku* which take place on Sado Island in Japan every year, 14 participants from all over the West Coast of the United States came together for a 4-day intensive taiko workout. The event was co-sponsored by *San Jose Taiko*, and three members of their team joined me and KASA Program Assistant Chie Otsuka to form the workshop staff. The 'workout' was held at the Morgan Hill Buddhist Community Center in Morgan Hill, CA, a rural town about 45 minutes south of San Jose. Unlike the Kodo Juku where people sleep on futons on



Taiko makes you happy. Can you pick out who's been playing the longest?

the floor of the Kodo Apprentice Centre, workshop accommodations were at a nearby hotel. However, this was by no means a cushy experience. Participants were up at 7 am for a morning jog, followed by showers and a miso soup breakfast at the venue. Stretching started at 9 am sharp, and the drumming began by 9:30, carrying on into the evening hours. In typical Kodo style, meals were home-cooked by the workshop staff and shared family style. Highlights included a pot-luck/jam session with San Jose Taiko on Saturday night, and a short presentation for members of the Morgan Hill Community as a workshop finale. Throughout the 4 days, I was most impressed by the positive attitude and great energy of the participants. Many people meeting for the first time shared the same space for four days straight without a single complaint.

By the end of the first day it was clear that there was a special bond being formed among participants, instructors and staff alike. The taiko provided the soundtrack for the progression



Yumi and Tyler from San Jose Taiko giving new meaning to carrot-sticks.

of these relationships, and the difference could be clearly heard over the course of four days. I listened in awe as the dull, hollow sound of a group of strangers beating the taiko on the first day developed into a well-oiled ensemble whose drum beats bounced off the ceiling and reverberated in the hearts of everyone in the room. I don't think I heard one mistake in the final presentation. Besides, as Eiichi would say, 'there are no mistakes, only solos.'

Workshops in Arizona, California and Hawaii were made possible in part by a grant from the *Japan Foundation Los Angeles Office*. Thank you JFLA! KASA would also like to thank all of the workshop presenters, homestay hosts and other generous individuals who lent their time, talent and energy to make the 2003 KASA North America Tour a great success. Special thanks go out to Yumi Ishihara, Tyler Moriguchi and Jeremy Nishihara of San Jose Taiko for being the best "Cultural Workout" staff imaginable.



'I got blisters on my fingers!'...suffering for your art.

This spring *Yosuke Oda*, *Kenzo Abe*, *Buntaro Tanaka* and *Daisuke Taniguchi* became full members of Kodo.

Shiho Takano of the Kodo Apprentice Centre is leaving Kodo in March. We wish her all the best on her future adventures.

Kodo did the music to the Chinese movie *Hero*. The score was composed by *Tan Dun* who won an Oscar for his work on *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. *Hero* will open in August in Japan and the soundtrack will be on sale in July on the Sony Classical label.

Kodo Juku 2003 (*Sado sleepover workshops*) *Yoko Fujimoto's Voice Circle* at Kodo Village, Sado. June 18-22.

Eiichi Saito's Taiko Workshop at the Kodo Apprentice Centre, Sado. Sept. 19-23.

Ryutaro Kaneko's Taiko Workshop (NEW!) at Kodo Village, Sado. Oct. 9-13. For application details etc., see website.

in brief...



upcoming performances

Marugoto Kodo @ Amusement Sado

May 18

Concert Open: 17:30, Start: 18:00

Tickets are on sale now. Inquiries: 0259-86-3630 (Kodo)

Taiko Taiken Juku 10:00-12:00, free, call Sawada-machi

Kyoiku Inukai to sign up (0259-57-2711)

Voice Circle 14:00-14:30, 16:00-16:30, free

One Earth Tour USA and Japan

May

21,22 Nagano Usuda-cho Cosmo Hall 0267-66-3922

23 Nagano Nagano-ken Matsumoto Bunka Kaikan
026-223-8875

25 Ishikawa Ishikawa Kosei Nenkin Kaikan 076-262-2611

26 Toyama Toyama Kenmin Kaikan 076-262-2611

28 Nagano Mesena Hall 026-245-1800

30 Niigata Arai Sogo Bunka Hall 0255-72-9411

31 Niigata Kashiwazaki-shi Shimin Kaikan
0257-22-5898

June

1 Niigata Koide-go Bunka Kaikan 02579-2-8811

3-6 Niigata Niigata Kenmin Kaikan 025-228-5979

8 Niigata Hoppo Bunka Hakubutsukan 025-385-2001

14 Saitama Kasukabe Shimin Bunka Kaikan
03-3204-9933

16 Saitama Wako Shimin Bunka Center 048-468-7771

17 Tokyo Hoku Topia Sakura Hall 03-5390-1221

18 Tokyo Akishima Shimin Kaikan 042-546-1711

20 Tokyo Ota Kumin Hall Aprico 03-5744-1600

21 Tokyo Bunkyo Civic Hall 03-3201-8116

22 Tokyo Mitaka-shi Kokaido 0422-47-5122

24 Chiba Chiba-ken Bunka Kaikan 043-224-1710

27 Ibaraki Ushiku Shimin Center 0298-74-3111

29 Saitama Muse Marquee Hall 042-998-7777

Aikawa Kinzan Matsuri

July 27 Aikawa, Sado Island 0259-86-3630

Earth Celebration 2003 August 22-24

Shiroyama Concerts

22 Kodo

23 Badenya les Frères Coulibaly Family of Griots from
Burkina Faso in West Africa

24 Kodo & Badenya les Frères Coulibaly Family

Mini-Workshops & Seminars

Japanese Taiko [Light and Easy] and [Drum Till You Drop]

[Dancing to the Beat of Kodo]

[Ranjosan's Japanese Flute Making Workshop]

[Ogi Okesa Folk Dance]

[African Rhythm]

[Kasuga Ondeko]

[Hula 'Auana: Beginners' class]

[Hula 'Auana: Intermediate class]

[Rhythms and Chants of Hawaii]

[Hula Kahiko: Beginners' class]

[Taiko *Yobanashi*] (Taiko Free Talk)

EC Pre-Events

[Taiko Taiken Juku]

May through June, free workshop series offered by Kodo in
10 towns throughout Sado

Multi-Day Workshops

[Let's Play Samba!] (August 13-15)

Discussions

[Gifts from Sado's Forests - Schoolroom 'Earth Furniture']

Exhibitions

Hideaki Masago *Pictures & Sound*

Johnny Wales & Daniel Rosen *Water & Earth*

EC Ticket sales begin June 3. Detail will be available on our
website in mid-May.

Attention members of Friends of Kodo.

An EC ticket information leaflet will be sent to you in May.

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 web site.

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

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