

# the KODŌ beat

# 鼓童



The 'Daikokumai' dance.

photo by SHIGGY

## *Hanayui* ... a lighter touch

*Hanayui is a 3 woman performance ensemble that grew as an offshoot of Kodo in 1991. The following article is based on a conversation with Chieko Kojima and Yoko Fujimoto by the Kodo Beat editor Johnny Wales, who will be appearing with the group performing Japanese puppetry on the upcoming tour of Great Britain.*

The name *Hanayui* is made up of two characters, 'Hana' means 'flower' and 'yui' means 'a bunch' or 'to tie'. So *bouquet* is one meaning, but *yui* is also used to

describe an occasion when members of a village gather for communal work too large to be carried out by one household. And so it is with a production when performers, arrangers, staff and audience gather to create an unforgettable event.

The group began when *Chieko Kojima* felt there were many things she wanted to express but was unable to in the context of Kodo's large 'taikocentric' performance. She also wanted to dance in smaller more intimate venues. Just having given birth to her daughter *Natsuko*, she was also unable to join Kodo on extensive tours. At about the same time Okinawan trained dancer (*Ryukyu Buyo*) *Mitsue Kinjo* married Kodo stage manager *Masafumi Kazama* and moved to Sado Island. They soon had a daughter too. One day as Chieko

broached the idea of forming a small group with Mitsue, *Yoko Fujimoto* happened to overhear and asked if she might be included too. Though the group was originally conceived as a dance troupe, they soon discovered that it worked out very nicely having someone on stage singing while the two dancers changed costumes. And so there were three.

Their first performance was in Ogi, Sado Island in 1992. From the outset their policy was to be flexible, to not overdo it, and to have fun. Words to live by.

The group tapped into the strengths of each member and their policy of flexibility led to a kind of

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organic growth in their repertoire. For example, one year when there was very little rainfall they were approached by a buddhist priest in Akadomari on the south shore of Sado to see if they couldn't be of some help. They came up with a dance to propitiate whomever needed propitiation and produced *Daikokumai*, Daikoku, being the lucky god of wealth and plenty. To give the dance some oomph, they had



*Chieko Kojima*  
photo by Anthony Jones

Yoko's husband Yoshikazu play along on taiko. This led various people taking over the taiko part, particularly younger players, until it began to be almost a rite of passage for new members, often their first public appearance. This was all very well, but Hanayui discovered that rather than the taiko accompanying the dance, it had become Kodo-like and was taking over. Instead of being flexible and giving and taking with the nuances of the singing voice it was more apt to say, 'Follow Me!'

Before Kodo and groups like it, the taiko was primarily an instrument of accompaniment. Taiko groups brought it from that position to centre stage where now – in the minds of many people, especially abroad – it virtually represents the traditional Japanese performing arts. The incredible burgeoning of taiko groups around the world has come to mean that many Japanese descendants think of the taiko as their primary link to their ancestral culture. This is no bad thing, but Hanayui would like to help remind people that there is another, more



*Mitsue Kinjo*  
photo by Anthony Jones



*Yoko Fujimoto*  
photo by Anthony Jones

feminine tradition in which song, dance and drums subtly blend to create a beautiful and gentle world of their own.

Hanayui's first performance abroad was at the 2nd *Taiko Conference* in L.A. in 1999. They have also appeared in Canada. This March and April they will perform on the other side of the pond for the first time. Kodo's old friend, London-based Mark Ross helped ignite and will manage a performance in London on April 1st and the tour hosted in Glasgow and Edinburgh on March 19th-22nd by *Mugenkyo Taiko*, in London, March 23rd-26th by *Taiko Mean Time* and Exeter on March 27th & 28th by the *Kagemusha* taiko group. Workshops will be held with the respective groups, during which time numbers will be rehearsed for a joint performance with Hanayui and the taiko group. After the show public workshops will also be held where aspects of traditional Sado Island culture will be introduced.



Hanayui is very much a family affair. Chieko's husband Atsushi acts as manager, Mitsue's husband Masafumi as stage manager, and Yoko's husband Yoshikazu as their most regular occasional drummer. A very efficient husbanding of resources. Chieko's daughter Natsuko (now 14) and Mitsue's daughter Kiho (12) also have appeared with the group.

*Special Guest: Johnny Wales' newest puppet.*

Tell your friends in Britain, and come if you can to see this show and workshops that promise to be fun, funny, powerful and gentle, and brimming with a pliant feminine strength.

For further information contact.: *Diorama Arts*  
e-mail: [admin@diorama-arts.org.uk](mailto:admin@diorama-arts.org.uk)

## Kodo Close-up:

Yasuko Yamaguchi, staff

*The 24th in a series of profiles of individual Kodo members*

Yasuko was born on July 30th, 1964 in a far more bucolic Yokohama than it is today. A superhighway now runs past her childhood home. Her parents met in a pharmacy where they both worked. She has two younger brothers and was a mischievous tomboy as a child, so everyone found it odd that this didn't translate into athletic ability at school. She took piano lessons in kindergarten from a woman she detested, turning her against keyboard instruments for the rest of her life. She joined a marching band playing the recorder, then the snare drum. In middle school she played clarinet and percussion in the brass band and at high school she carried on with percussion and took private flute lessons.

At Waseda University she joined the *noh* club which she had become interested in through her studies of Japanese literature and also because she wanted to play the *ko-tsuzumi* drum. Yasuko soon became involved with another of her life-long loves when she joined the *samba* club which met in the same building. Their dress, demeanor and personality couldn't have been more different from the exceedingly studious and hierarchical *noh* enthusiasts. Though a number of members in both clubs went on to professional careers, Yasuko decided that she couldn't turn pro in one field if it meant giving up the other.

In her second year of university she went to a Kodo concert and was deeply impressed by both the seamlessness of the show and particularly by a piece called *Hae*. This was played by a *koto*, taiko and steel drums trio. Kodo seemed not only to be interested in preserving traditional Japanese music but was open to experimentation built upon its foundation. While watching a video in the lobby about the group and their lifestyle she decided she wanted to join.

That was the first year of the apprenticeship system when it was only 6 months in length. She applied, was accepted, and after promising her parents that she would return to finish her degree after a year off, she travelled to Sado on April Fools day, 1985. Half a year

later she was accepted into the group and by December was touring and even playing *fue* (Japanese flute) solos in a duet with Motofumi Yamaguchi, whom she married in January. Though now divorced, she kept the surname which has led to some confusion. Be confused no more.

After much soul-searching she decided her future lay in production rather than performance, so when she returned to Tokyo to complete her degree, she added courses in library science to her studies in literature.

Since 1996 she has navigated the samba workshops at EC. Her interest in samba led to a fascination with Brazil, Japanese Brazilian culture, cooking, music, the language and football (soccer). She almost wonders if she weren't a Brazilian in some previous life. Brazil is her team at international events but just to keep us on our toes, her favourite club team is Man United.

Yasuko has just been made a member of the board of directors of *Kitamaesen*, Kodo's company. She is also in charge of the Ticket Service, the Library, the Friends of Kodo and Earth Celebration Goods. She helps lead the Noh, Kyogen (comic Noh) and Samba programmes for the apprentices. She navigates the EC Samba workshop, helps edit and write for Kodo's many publications and well...essentially, without her, the entire operation would grind to a stop. Last but not least she sees that the up to 280 people who put on EC get their picnic lunch and dinners. Getting that right really helps cut down on frustration and contributes greatly to the atmosphere of the festival.

When Yasuko joined Kodo she wondered if she might not be able to blend her varied interests into a single creative expression. She feels fortunate that working at Kodo has allowed her to make all these interests a fundamental part of her job. Though they may remain in separate compartments within her, for us they have fused to create a Yasuko who enriches us all.



photo by Kazuyuki Sato

The next **Kodo Juku** intensive stayover workshop led by *Eiichi Saito* will be held on Sado Island from Sept 19-23, 2004. Application deadline: June 30. Open to 20 taikoists 16 years old & up. Cost ¥55,000, room



*Kodo One Earth Tour Special*  
photos by *Joji Ide*

in brief...



& board included. Write *c/o Shinichi Sogo*, including your name, address, age, sex, telephone #, e-mail address, occupation & musical background. Successful applicants will be notified 3 weeks after deadline.

Sado Island is no more. It has officially become a 'city'. Kodo's postal address will change March 1st to: **Kodo Village, Sado Island, Niigata 952-0611, Japan.**

*Please Note:* You will still need to come by airplane or ferry.

In November and December, 2003 at the concerts directed by Kabuki great *Tamasaburo Bando* in Tokyo, Kodo's usual performance was turned upside down, beginning with 3 full performances in a row by *Yoshikazu, Mitsuru & Tomohiro* on the *Odaiko*. If you can't get enough *Odaiko* it was heaven, if not...

## upcoming performances

### One Earth Tour Europe

#### February

1	Bridgewater Hall	Manchester, UK
2	Birmingham Symphony Hall	Birmingham, UK
5-8	Royal Festival Hall	London, UK
10	The Anvil	Basingstoke, UK
13, 14	Teatro Coliseo	Lisbon, Portugal
17-19	Concertgebouw	Brugge, Belgium
21, 22	Gasteig Philharmonie	Munich, Germany
24, 25	Teatro San Carlo di Napoli	Naples, Italy
26	Auditorium Santa Cecilia	Rome, Italy
29	Teatro Comunale G.B. PERGOLESI	Jesi, Italy

#### March

1	Teatro Dal Verme	Milan, Italy
5, 6	Auditorium Stravinski	Montreux, Switzerland
8-12	Kultur Kongresszentrum	Lucerne, Switzerland
14	Burgof	Loerrach, Germany
15	Hegel Saal der Liederhalle	Stuttgart, Germany
17	Kultur Kongresszentrum	Rosenheim, Germany
18	Audimax der Universitat	Regensburg, Germany
21	Festhalle Landau	Landau, Germany
22	Alte Oper	Frankfurt, Germany
24	Philharmonie	Cologne, Germany
25	Dortmund Konzerthaus	Dortmund, Germany

### One Earth Tour Japan

#### May

7	Gunma	Maebashi Shimin Bunka Kaikan	0277-53-3133
9	Saitama	Kumagaya Bunka Sozo-kan	048-532-9090
10	Tochigi	Tochigi-ken Sogo Bunka Centre	028-622-4101
12	Ibaraki	Odaira Kaikan	0294-22-5330
14	Ibaraki	Kamisu-machi Bunka Centre	0299-90-5511
15	Chiba	Togane Bunka Kaikan	0475-55-6211
16	Chiba	Misaki Fureai Kaikan	0470-87-8785
18-20	Tochigi	Sano-shi Bunka Kaikan	0283-24-5733
22	Chiba	Ichikawa-shi Bunka Kaikan	047-379-5111
23	Saitama	Omiya Sonic City	048-647-4100
25	Saitama	Sayama-shi Shimin Kaikan	042-956-6222
30	Shizuoka	Fujieda Shimin Kaikan	054-643-3931

#### June

1	Gifu	Mizunami-shi Sogo Bunka Centre	0572-68-5281
4	Kanagawa	Isehara Shimin Bunka Kaikan	046-223-6421
5	Kanagawa	Yokosuka Geijutsu Gekijo	046-823-9999

7	Kanagawa	Kanagawa Kenmin Hall	045-242-1155
8	Tokyo	Humming Hall	042-562-0923
10	Tokyo	Fuchu no Mori Geijutsu Gekijo	03-3201-8116
11	Tokyo	Komae Ecorma Hall	03-3430-4106
12	Tokyo	Tokyo Bunka Kaikan	03-3204-9933

### New CD & DVD

Our first visual record in 6 years since *Rock'n'Kodo*. This is a state of the art conventional CD & SuperAudio CD hybrid.

Title (tentative): *'Kodo One Earth Tour Special'* -

*Artistic Director: Tamasaburo Bando*

Date of Release in Japan: CD...March 24, DVD April 7

Price: CD...¥ 2,940, DVD...¥5,985

Info on: <http://www.sonymclassical.jp>

### Hanayui UK tour schedule

March 19	Queenshall	Edinburgh	0131 668 2019
	with Mugenkyo		
23, 24	Sadler's Wells/ Lilian Baylis Theatre	London	0870 737 77 37
	with Taiko Meantime drummers		
27, 28	Exeter Phoenix	Exeter	01392 667080
	with Kagemusha Taiko		
April 1	Diorama Arts	London	e-mail (see page 2)

## 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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