

the KODŌ beat

鼓童

EC 2004

...in the wake of Typhoon 15

It was the eve of Earth Celebration 2004. The outdoor stage on Shiroyama mountain was set; we only awaited the break of day and arrival of the ferry bringing this year's celebrants to our island. Tyhoons normally give Sado a miss, but on this night one of 3 to hit this summer smashed home. Early campers who had pitched their tents on Sobama beach ran for shelter wherever they could find it, and most returned to find their tents in multicolour shreds. The morning also found the Shiroyama stage roof in ribbons. Fortunately the giant (even by Kodo standards) odaiko that had been borrowed from *Asano Taiko* – with a skin 5 feet across and wrapped in tarps – was safe

upon the stage. Kodo's opening night concert would have to be held in the Ogi Municipal gym. Thanks to a world of unseen work by the stage crew, the transfer went smoothly. Not only did the concert in the gym go off without a hitch that night, but the Shiroyama



The Shiroyama stage on the morning after the storm.

stage was rebuilt in time for the gypsy brass band *Fanfare Ciocarlia's* concert to take place there on day 2. If you want to get a feel for this group, watch out for the new documentary '*Brass on Fire*' showing their life both at home and on the road.

The weather after the storm was sublime, as was so



Gypsy dance workshop with Romania's renowned brass band Fanfare Ciocarlia.

Photos by Johnny Wales

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Tsubasa showing off her new haircut while turning up the heat at the Kodo Fringe Event.

much of the music that followed. Some may have had their doubts about how this music would blend with Kodo at the final concert – after all, two powerful bands playing together don't always result in music twice as good – but this year each group seemed to make the other stronger. In the buzz after the concert someone remarked 'Fanfare sounded even better with a big percussion section!' to which came the reply, 'Yeah, and Kodo might want to think about adding some horns!'

Other guests included the *Kasuga Ondeko* demon drum dancers of Sado Island, which is the group



Bamboo fute making workshop

Michiko Chida dances with (see *Kodo Close-up*, p.3) The *Ushibuka Haiya Folk Dancers* from Kumamoto in the south of Japan, the *Miyake Geino Doshikai* drummers, originally from *Miyake Island*. Now they mostly live in Tokyo, having been evacuated from Miyake after a volcanic eruption several years ago. Workshops were also held in *Hula* dancing with *Ed Collier*, bamboo flute making with *Ranjosan* and the perennial favourite *Samba Workshop* by *Ryo Watanbe*, who also surprised many people with his artistic skill at his beautiful pen & ink exhibition. Naturally Kodo members held their taiko, singing and dance workshops too.

If next year you want to add a little hands-on learning to your listening fun we suggest you sign up early for the workshops, as many of them fill up before EC begins.

What makes a good festival great are often not those events that are planned, but that chance encounter, the pick-up jam session with 4 people from 3 continents, the new friends one makes. These can happen anywhere, by a bonfire at the beach, at a workshop, or at the flea market while looking for exotic goodies or food from around the world. This



Kodo's Chieko Kojima is joined by (from left) Shunsuke Kimura, Sachio Suginuma and Kodo old boy Tetsuro Naito under the shady pines of Kisaki Shrine

year the market was held on the large lawn on the new landfill next to the ferry terminal. Removed from the casbah-like confines of the old venue there was a lot more room this year to kick off one's flip-flops and flop down to have your *shawarma*, *awabi* and beer in the grass next to the ocean. You had the added bonus this time too of a spectacular view of the Niigata mainland in the crystalline post-typhoon air.

And so Earth Celebration evolves and responds to the character of those who come to play, teach, learn and unwind, just as it dances to the moods and music of Mother Earth. Won't you join us on Sado in 2005?



Sado Bunya Puppets at the Fringe

Kodo Close-up:

Michiko Chida, staff

The 27th in a series of profiles of individual Kodo members

Michiko Chida was born on August 18, 1964 in Yokohama, near Tokyo. Her father worked for an insurance company and her mother is a homemaker. She has a sister who is 3 years older. Michiko spent her peripatetic youth in Yokohama, Nagoya, Amagasaki near Osaka, on the southern island of Kyushu in Fukuoka, Setagaya in Tokyo, Yokohama again and then finally Sado where she has lived since 1989. Her family lived almost exclusively in apartments in built-up urban areas, so her garden-loving parents had to make do with potted plants on the roof of the buildings.

Moving about so much required Michiko to develop some unique survival strategies. This included not allowing herself to get too attached to new friends whom she would soon be moving away from. Still she enjoyed her childhood, especially when she became deeply involved in gymnastics in her early teens. In middle school she moved into track and field where she specialized in sprint events. She began studying piano from the age of 5. Her upright piano was dutifully hauled from town to town. When she moved to Tokyo she met a piano teacher whom she greatly admired and this led to her deciding upon a career. Aiming for admittance to a music university, she quit sports so as to concentrate on music. She loved the work of powerful composers like *Beethoven* and *Scriabin* and practiced piano a minimum of 4 hours a day.

After high school she gained admittance to *Kunitachi Music University* in Tachikawa, two and half hours away on the train. Michiko spent 3 of the next 4 years getting up at 4:30 and commuting 5 hours a day, standing in the morning the whole way. She spent the time reading and pouring over scores. In her first year she made friends with a singer from Hokkaido and became her accompanist for the next 4 years. This led to quite a lot of work with other soloists. In her 3rd year she began to give private piano lessons to the neighbors' kids. Unfortunately they seemed to be learning not because they loved music but because they needed music on their records in order to get into the best schools.

About this time Michiko went to her first Kodo

performance. She was impressed not only with their 'Japaneseness', but also that they were making music using their bodies in a very physical way. This appealed to the conflicted musician/sportswoman in her. Their pamphlet talked about the goal of Kodo Village and she was intrigued, but as she had already landed a job at a private music school she decided to give teaching a shot. After 2 years, still feeling unequipped and unable to motivate unenthusiastic children, she applied to Kodo and was accepted as an apprentice.



As taiko wasn't played much by the women then, she specialized in dancing.

In her 5th year she was invited to learn the famous *Ondeko* demon dance of Sado Island after which the nascent Kodo was originally named, though the group has ironically never performed. Up till that time the pieces Michiko had learned for Kodo had been as part of her job. The locals however, were different. They had their own job, and their art is a separate part of their lives. Still there are drummers among them good enough to arouse the jealousy of a pro. That came as a very appealing surprise to her. Kodo often arranges and makes changes to a folk performance when bringing it to the stage. She began to wonder if that is really such a good thing, or is it an inherent contradiction? Can one separate the work from the soil and the people among whom it has been nurtured? She felt there should be more of Sado's art in Kodo's performance, as Sado is the soil upon which Kodo lives.

In her 6th year she left the stage to pursue a deeper understanding of the performing arts of Sado, particularly the *Ondeko* traditions, and not just in a scholarly way, but by actually dancing as a member of a group.

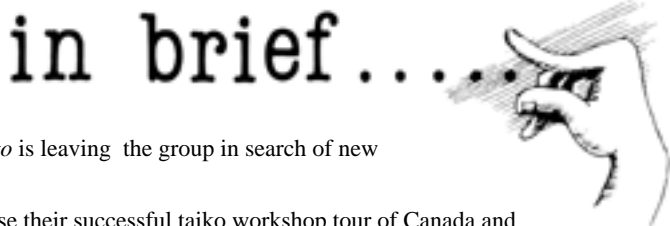
With the establishment of the *Kodo Cultural Foundation* she took on the task of organizing many of its activities, including cataloguing the books, videos, records and documents Kodo has amassed over the years. She also organizes workshops, and is an assistant at the *Apprentice Centre* where she spends 3 days a week helping to look after the needs of the 20 young apprentices beginning *their* personal journey on Sado Island.

We are delighted to announce the birth on Sept. 9th of their 2nd baby boy to *Kazuko and Takeshi Arai*.

And so the world turns, for with the addition of one new member to the Kodo family we must regretfully announce the departure of another. Player *Hideyuki Saito* is leaving the group in search of new horizons.

Yoshikazu Fujimoto and *Masami Miyazaki* will reprise their successful taiko workshop tour of Canada and the US in Feb.2005. See next issue for details.

A CD/DVD set of the *Kodo One Earth Special* series of concerts directed by Kabuki great *Tamasaburo Bando* will be released in the US mid-January 2005. For details: <http://www.sonyclassical.jp>



upcoming performances

One Earth Tour Japan

October

14	Shiga	Hikone-shi Bunka Plaza	0749-27-5200
16	Hyogo	Kakogawa Shimin Kaikan	0794-24-5381
18	Tokushima	Tokushima Shiritsu Bunka Centre	089-943-8083
19	Kagawa	Sunport Hall Takamatsu	086-224-6066
21	Ehime	Niihama-shi Shimin Bunka Centre	089-943-8083
23	Ehime	Uwa Bunka Kaikan	089-943-8083
24	Ehime	Ehime-ken Kenmin Bunka Kaikan	089-943-8083
26	Kochi	Kochi Kenritsu Kenmin Bunka Hall	088-822-1421
29	Oita	Oita Bunka Kaikan	092-715-0374
31	Miyazaki	Kiyotake-cho Bunka Kaikan	0985-84-0181

November

2	Miyazaki	Nango Heartfull Centre	0987-64-0310
4	Kagoshima	Kagoshima Shimin Bunka Hall	099-226-3465
6	Nagasaki	Shimabara Fukko Arena	0957-74-5123
8	Nagasaki	Iki Bunka Hall	0920-47-0302
11	Kumamoto	Hitoyoshi Culture Palace	0966-45-4270
12	Saga	Saga Shimin Kaikan	0952-26-2361
13	Fukuoka	Fukuoka Shimin Kaikan	092-715-0374
15	Yamaguchi	Ube-shi Watanabe Okina Kinen Kaikan	0836-34-2384

December Concert Series

This year the concerts will be directed by (Wildman) Eiichi Saito. If you've been to one of his workshops you'll know you can expect concerts burning with fun and passion.

4, 5	Sado	Amusement Sado	0259-86-3630
9-12	Tokyo	Bunkyo Civic Hall	0259-86-3630
15,16	Nagoya	Aichi Kosei Nenkin Kaikan	052-263-7171
18,19	Osaka	Osaka Kosei Nenkin Kaikan	06-6362-8122
22,23	Niigata	Niigata Kenmin Kaikan	025-281-8000

Check our website for our new Online Ticket Reservations (sorry, in Japanese only).

One Earth Tour North America, 2005

January

30	Los Angeles, CA	Aratani/Japan America Theatre
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February

2	Davis, CA	Mondavi Center, UC Davis Campus
3	San Rafael, CA	Marin Veteran Memorial Auditorium
4-6	Berkeley, CA	Zellerbach Hall
8	Bellingham, WA	Mount Baker Theatre
11-13	Seattle, WA	Meany Hall, University of Washington
14	Vancouver, BC	Queen Elizabeth Theatre
17,18	Winnipeg, MA	Burton Cummings Theatre
21-23	Ann Arbor, MI	Power Center

24	Kalamazoo, MI	Miller Auditorium
28	Chicago, IL	Symphony Hall Chicago

March

1	Urbana, IL	Tryon Festival Theater
3	Wausau, WI	Grand Theater Wausau
4	Green Bay, WI	Weidner Center for the Performing Arts, University of Wisconsin
5	Madison, WI	Overture Hall
8	Danville, KY	Norton Center and Centre College
9	Indianapolis, IN	Clowes Memorial Hall, Butler Univ.
11	Cincinnati, OH	Aronoff Center-Proctor & Gamble Hall
12	Akron, OH	E. J Thomas Hall
16	New Brunswick, NJ	State Theatre
18	Washington, DC	Washington Performing Arts Society Constitution Hall
19	Newark, NJ	Prudential Hall
20	Philadelphia, PA	The Kimmel Center
24	Schenectady, NY	Proctor's Theatre
26	Purchase, NY	The Performing Arts Center - Concert Hall

Ryutaro Kaneko, Aguri Tour

'Aguri' ensemble [*Ryutaro Kaneko* (taiko), *EPO* (voice, guitar and harp), *Haruhiko Saga* (horse-head fiddle, throat singing)]

Oct. 31	Sado Island	Amusement Sado
Nov. 2	Niigata	Ryutopia Nohgakudo
Nov. 4	Gifu	Kani-shi Bunka Sozo Centre
Nov. 7	Hiroshima	NTT Cred Hall
Nov. 8	Okayama	Takahashi Sogo Bunka Kaikan
Nov. 9	Okayama	Nishigawa I Plaza
Nov. 12	Kichijoji, Tokyo	Star Pine's Cafe

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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