

the KODŌ beat

鼓童



Amaterasu (Tamasaburo Bando) and Susano (Yoshikazu Fujimoto) in battle.

Photos by Buntaro Tanaka

Amaterasu ***Tamasaburo Bando & Kodo***

In celebration of the 25th year of the group's founding Kodo presented 'Amaterasu' for a packed 3 week run in Tokyo and over 2 weeks in Kyoto. This was a joint project 2 years in the making with the great Kabuki star Tamasaburo Bando. Kodo Beat editor Johnny Wales gives his impressions.

Before you jump to the conclusion that my thoughts on this show are unduly biased by my 30 year association with the group, you should know that I have always been frank in my assessment of Kodo's activities, on stage and off. Ask any Kodo member.

Returning to my apartment in Tokyo after seeing *Amaterasu* I put on a DVD of the 1943 Fred Astaire flick *'The Sky's The Limit'*. While watching I was

reminded how when Mr. Astaire is dancing, it is impossible to take your eyes off him. He has *'IT'*. And then a light went off. I don't know what Mr. Bando would make of the comparison, but that was exactly how I felt after watching this brilliant light of Japanese dance for the first time live on stage. I knew I was seeing an artist of true greatness. Fred Astaire greatness. Even when Tamasaburo is motionless, your eyes are riveted to him. There is a



Tamasaburo Bando

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terrible power in his stillness, and then he raises one eyebrow or, ever so slightly twists his mouth and you are drawn completely into his world, scarcely wanting to breathe so as not to break the spell.

Tamasaburo plays *Amaterasu*, the sun goddess of



Chieko Kojima as *Ame-no-Uzume*

Japan's founding myth. Kodo provides the musicians and other characters of the story. I can hardly think of a better compliment than that they weren't blown off the stage by the awesome brilliance of Tamasaburo's performance. Kodo played both original music composed for the show, sometimes featuring what amounted to a Kodo orchestra with massed koto, taiko and a variety of other instruments and song. The musicality of these pieces probably surprised many of the audience with Kodo's versatility and range. There were specially arranged Kodo standards too like *Miyake* and *Yataibayashi* which were woven



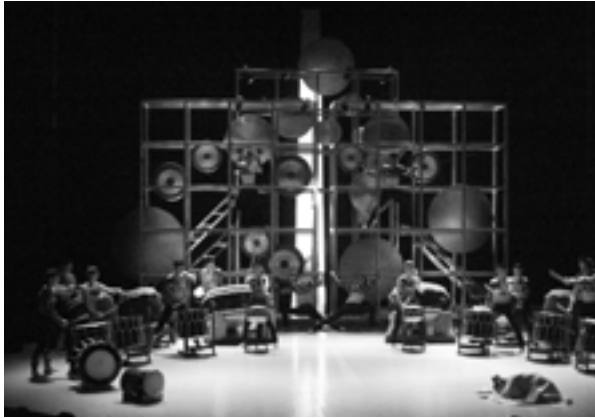
The gods get down.

seamlessly into the fabric of the show so that even to a jaded old Kodo-watcher like me they seemed refreshingly new.

The costumes and set designed by *Fumio Ogawa* of Tokyo worked wonderfully, though I'm not sure I was wild about the white version of Kodo's standard costume, and there was one flautist who appeared in white puffy shirt and trousers that had me thinking variously of *Seinfeld* and the *Michelin Man*. The male drummers' brocade Mongolian wrestler tops, leaving their midribs and one arm bare looked great, but the



Amaterasu, *Ame-no-Uzume* and the gods throw a party.



Amaterasu emerges from her cave.

female drummers' version - one-piece dresses of the same material - looked a bit frumpy to me. I'm nit-picking. Dramatic use was made of reams of silk cloth in brilliant blues and orange turning the stage into undulating seas, or the raging fire of the sun.



Dance of the gods.

Tamasaburo also displayed his sensitivity and generosity to the people with whom he shared the stage. Kodo musicians, singers and dancers were given plenty of opportunity to show their stuff. It must have been nerve-racking for principal dancer *Chieko*



Amaterasu tries to sink *Susano*.



Another performance comes to an end. Thanks to all.

Kojima to have such long duets with *Amaterasu* but she acquitted herself with grace. The greatest revelation to me was the performance of Kodo's principal odaiko player *Yoshikazu Fujimoto* as the lead male dancer. He proved a powerful *yang* to *Amaterasu*'s *yin*. I have always thought *Yoshikazu*'s stage presence to be one of Kodo's greatest assets. It is telling that Tamasaburo understands that power and encouraged *Yoshikazu* to be such a unique, arresting and prominent part of the performance.

Tamasaburo's sun goddess not only made the stage burn with her brilliance but made all of Kodo shine brighter in the reflected light.

On July 23rd a two and a half hour documentary and film of the performance of *Amaterasu* will be shown on the NHK educational channel in Japan.

On July 30th Kodo will make its first appearance at *Fuji Rock*, Japan's biggest outdoor rock festival.

News you can use! While building a 'teahouse' in his garden with a friend carrying her bawling baby on her back, KB editor Johnny Wales put on the '*Irodori*' CD and time after time the child was out like a light.

in brief.....



upcoming performances

Aikawa Kozan Matsuri

July 27 Aikawa, Sado Island 0259-86-3630

Fuji Rock Festival

July 30 Naeba Ski Resort, Niigata
<http://www.fujirockfestival.com>

Earth Celebration 2006

August 18-20, Sado Island

Tickets are on sale now.



Shiroyama Concerts

Photo by Maiko Miyakawa

- Aug. 18 Kodo
- 19 Urban Tap with Kodo
- 20 'Celebration'; Kodo & Urban Tap

EC Theatre Event

Aug. 19 Ryo Watanabe Live

Mini-Workshops & Seminars

Japanese Taiko, Traditional-Miyake Taiko, Ranjosan's Japanese Flute Making, Dancing to the Beat of Kodo, Kasuga Ondeko, Ogi Okesa Folk Dance, Taiko Making (instructor: Asano Taiko), Universal Rhythm (instructor: Urban Tap)

Multi-Day Workshop Hula (August 16 and 17)

Other Events

Kodo Village Open House, Fringe Events, Flea Market

EC Pre-Event

- Aug. 13 Hanayui, Hawai'ian Hula and Noh at Kasuga Shrine Noh Theatre in Aikawa
- Aug. 17 Musicians from the *Saha Federal Republic*, Motofumi Yamaguchi & Ryutarō Kaneko at Amusement Sado

One Earth Tour Japan

September

- 16 Gunma Isezaki-shi Bunka Kaikan 0277-53-3133
- 17 Gunma Kanra-cho Bunka Kaikan 0274-74-7000
- 18 Saitama Kumagaya Bunka Sozo-kan Sakuramate 048-532-9090

- 20 Mito-shi, Ibaragi
Ibaragi Kenritsu Kenmin Bunka Centre 0277-53-3133
- 22 Chikusei-shi, Ibaragi
Akeno Komin-kan IL BRILLANTE 0296-52-5333
- 23 Tochigi Nogi-machi Bunka Kaikan 0280-57-2000
- 24 Utsunomiya-shi, Tochigi
Tochigi-ken Sogo Bunka Centre 0277-53-3133
- 26 Tokyo Machida Shimin Hall 042-728-4300
- 27 Saitama Kawagoe Shimin Kaikan 049-225-4292
- 29 Saitama Wako Shimin Bunka Centre 048-468-7771
- 30 Chiba Chiba-ken Bunka Kaikan 043-224-1710

October

- 1 Ibaragi Ryugasaki-shi Bunka Kaikan 0297-64-1411
- 3 Chiba Choshi-shi Seishonen Bunka Kaikan 0479-22-3315
- 5 Tokyo Rune Kodaira 042-346-9000
- 6 Kanagawa Yokosuka Geijutsu Gekijo 046-823-9999
- 7 Kanagawa Isehara Shimin Bunka Kaikan 0463-92-2300
- 9 Nagano Kawakami-mura Bunka Centre 0267-97-2000
- 11 Shizuoka Numazu Shimin Bunka Centre 055-931-8999
- 12 Shizuoka Actcity Hamamatsu 053-412-1010
- 14 Aichi Kouta Chomin Kaikan 0564-63-1111
- 18 Gifu Takayama Shimin Bunka Kaikan 0577-34-6550
- 22 Hyogo Kato-shi Takino Bunka Kaikan 0795-42-7700
- 23 Hyogo Ako-shi Bunka Kaikan Harmony Hall 0791-43-5111
- 24 Kagawa Sunport Hall Takamatsu 086-224-6066
- 26 Kochi Susaki Shiritsu Shimin Bunka Kaikan 0889-43-2911
- 29 Ehime Uchikoza 0893-44-5223

November

- 1 Toyama Crossland Oyabe 0766-68-0932
- 2 Ishikawa Kanazawa-shi Bunka Hall 022-771-1432
- 3 Fukui Echizen-shi Imadate Geijutsu-kan 0778-42-2700
- 5 Uozu-shi, Toyama Shinkawa Bunka Hall 022-771-1432
- 7 Niigata Itoigawa Shimin Kaikan 025-552-5900

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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