

Earth Celebration '08 *A Personal View*

Kodo Beat editor Johnny Wales offers a glimpse of what it's like to attend an Earth Celebration.

To you the reader who lives somewhere other than Sado Island, coming to the EC must seem a welcome trek to the back of beyond to get away from it all. For those of us who live on Sado it is a time when our



A Taste of Sado Island with an Ondeko (Demon Drum Dance) group.

Pictures by Johnny Wales

normally bucolic, mostly traditional Japanese home opens up to the sights, smells, tastes and sounds of a much wider world. Suddenly I am no longer one of the few foreigners among 66,067 or so souls, but one of many.

On the morning of the first day tents are set up and shops begin to unfold in the temporary casbah that is known as the Harbour Market. Early arrivals search for the first stalls with coffee for sale. We look to see which shops are back again so we can sample the food, drink, clothes and trinkets we see only once a year. Bumping into other familiar faces – both local and from away – there is a quick comparing of notes.

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Something for everyone at the Fringe



'Yukiai Live' play up a storm at the Fringe with (l-r) Shunsuke Kimura, Hironojo, Kodo's Chieko Kojima and former Kodo member Takahito Nishino (Ta chan).



Where friends are made. Note the mainland visible 50 km away (top right) in spite of the rainy weather and stormy seas.

show as they can. Will this be the day Kodo holds an early morning guerrilla performance there? If you have signed up for a workshop you might spend the morning there, if not, maybe it's time to mosey over to the market for a mid-morning snack or decide what to have when lunch time arrives. Fringe performances will have begun by now so you head back with friends to Kisaki shrine to seek the shade of the towering pines, kick back in the grass and listen to performers from around the world compete for attention with the skirling cicadas.

And so back and forth we wander in search of music, food, friends, funky old Japan, local cultural performances and the exotic. At Earth Celebration there is something even more important we find though, and



Ayako Onizawa, Masami Miyazaki, Yoshie Sunahata & Tsubasa Hori – the founding members of Kodo's female offshoot band 'cocon' – paying the price of fame.

'Did you get any more Thai fishermen's trousers?'

'Yeah 2 pairs for me, and 2 for Christmas presents.' When the first ferry arrives people head over to Kisaki Shrine to get in line for colour-coded entry cards so they can get as close to the stage for tonight's

that is the spring on our internal clocks winding down, loosening, adjusting to the dream-like pace that is EC. A 3 day break from running for trains, we drift in a delicious haze from one gentle experience to another. The cognoscenti line up at the crushed-ice parlour for a frosty time-slip into Showa-era memories. We



3 young fans stalk one of the players from Brazil's 'Olodum' in the streets of Ogi.

wander the streets and alleys of Ogi and get as close as you can to what old Japan felt like, short of visiting a heritage site like Gifu's Takayama – which though



Life don't get much better than this.

stunning – is less a real town than a museum in aspic.

After a long run of great weather during EC we paid the price this year with wind and rain, so the Fringe was moved to the school gym for the last 2

days. As evening arrives the rain stops and it's time for one of the main concerts on top of Mount Shiroyama. This is reached on foot up a winding path magically lit by paper lanterns. We like to joke about this pretty strenuous climb being our yearly health check-up. The consensus seems to be that the hill gets increasingly steeper and longer every year. Probably tectonic uplift.

Once up in the park it's bare feet and cold beer in the vast expanse of green grass. We settle down to either Kodo's show, Brazil's Olodum or a joint performance of the two. Some people dance from start to finish and let off a year's worth of trouble and steam.

Other people stay down in the market and enjoy the relative peace and quiet with a thousand or two less people about, and listen to the rhythms of Brazil and



Even local people camp out to experience a different side of the place they have chosen to live.

Japan drift down from the mountain nearby. After the concert the revellers descend to the market for cold drinks, hot food, music and lamp-lit re-hashings of the day's events. Impromptu drumming circles form and telephone numbers exchanged. Here you bump into so and so from Tokyo who comes every summer and meet

their friends whom they dragged up this year. 'Funny I have met more Japanese in 2 days here than in a whole year in the city!' I have often heard them say. Where? In the tent next door or dancing beside them by bonfire light on Sobama beach as drums accompanied the rollers hitting the sandy shore.



Mitsuru Ishizuka drumming farewell to the ferry as Manager Atsushi Sugano 'gets down'.

For Kodo, EC is a chance to invite to their island home artists and friends met on their travels. While returning a bit of hospitality, they can share their new friends with the people of Sado and EC guests.

And on the morning after the 3rd day, as the ferry laden with this year's visitors and artists slowly slips from view, we sing and dance and drum on the wharf till we are hoarse. And with the fading of the last drum beat we feel unwound, recharged and just a little bit sad. Pretty soon it'll be time to put away those electric fans and dig out the old kerosene stove. Summer's nearly gone.

EC Insider Tips

**Watch the Kodo Website in the spring for info about EC workshops etc. so you can sign up early and join in.*

**Book a room way ahead (like now) if you want somewhere*

nice and don't want to camp.

**Line up early in the morning of each concert day for colour-coded entrance cards if you want to be near the stage.*

** Bring a hat, sunglasses, sun screen, rain gear and a cushion or something to sit on.*

** Leave on the morning ferry from Ogi the day*

following the last concert for the 'Okuridaiko' (Farewell drums).



Yoshikazu Fujimoto – the main man – blowin' up a storm.



Eiichi Saito, Yoshikazu & Yoko Fujimoto and Tsubasa Hori sending off the ferry till it fades from sight. See ya next year.

Earth Celebration 2009 Dates Have Been Changed!

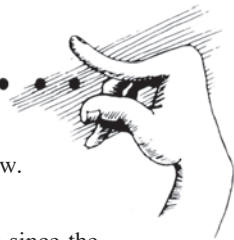
We previously announced that EC 2009 would be held Aug. 15-17 (Sat-Mon), but due to a scheduling change with next year's musical guests, the dates have been changed to Aug. 16-18 (Sun-Tue). We apologize for any inconvenience it causes our guests and all of the supporting groups that make EC possible.

We know that many of you have already made lodging arrangements on Sado Island based on the previously announced dates, and we urge you to contact your hotel to make a change in your reservation as soon as possible.

Our sincere apologies go out to everyone and we look forward to seeing you on Sado Aug. 16 through 18, 2009!

February 2009, Kodo (*Yoshikazu, Chieko, Yoko, Motofumi, Eiichi*) and *TaikOz* will hold a joint concert in Australia - Feb. 21 and 22 at the *City Recital Hall Angel Place*, Sydney and Feb. 24 and 25 at the *Melbourne Recital Centre*. For more details on concert and workshops see the *TaikOz* website (www.taikoz.com). Our first visit to Australia since '88 when we took part in Australia's bicentennial.

in brief...



On August 3rd, Kodo player *Kazuki Imagai* and his wife Aki had a son, '*Daiki*'. Incidentally since the birth of a girl to player *Tomohiro Mitome* in 1999, all 9 children born to Kodo have been boys.

As if to emphasize that not all the biggest happenings at EC are planned, on the last day of the festival, Sunday the 24th in the wee hours of the morning, '*Hori*' (Star-Weave) a girl, was born 5 days early to a family who regularly have a stall at the Harbour Market. Where? In a tent on Sobama beach. All good things to *Hori* and her family and we hope to see them all next year too.

upcoming performances

One Earth Tour Japan

October

14 Toyama Cross Land Oyabe 0766-68-0932
17 Yamanashi Tokyo Electron Nirasaki Bunka Hall
0551-20-1155

One Earth Tour South America

October

27 Brasilia, Brazil Teatro Nacional
29 Salvador, Brazil Teatro Castro Alves (Indoor)
30 Kodo with Olodum
Salvador, Brazil Teatro Castro Alves (Outdoor)

November

1 Ipatinga, Brazil Usiminas Theatre
4,5 Buenos Aires, Argentina Teatro Coliseo
8,9 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil Vivo Hall
11-15 Sao Paulo, Brazil (To be announced)
16 Sao Paulo, Brazil Open Air (To be announced)
Sao Paulo venues will be announced shortly. Please check our website for the latest information.

December Concert Series

Dec. 2 Sado Amusement Sado 0259-86-2330
5,6 Niigata Niigata Shimin Geijutsu Bunka Kaikan
025-281-8000
13,14 Osaka NHK Osaka Hall 06-6362-8122
16 Nagoya Aichi-ken Geijutsu Gekijo 052-263-7171
17 Shizuoka Act City Hamamatsu 053-412-1010
19-21 Tokyo Bunkyo Civic Hall 0259-86-2330

Special concert with Orchestra

Dec.11

Sumida Triphony Hall, Tokyo

Composer of Kodo's signature piece '*Monochrome*', modern music master *Maki Ishii's* (1936~2003) composition '*Monoprism*' will be performed for the first time in 15 years by Kodo and the *New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra* at the



Sumida Triphony Hall in Tokyo, December 11th.
Box office: 045-663-9999 (tvk Ticket Countre)

Monoprism is also scheduled to be performed in Rome with the *Santa Cecilia Orchestra* next May.

One Earth Tour North America

January

28 Vancouver, BC,
Canada
30,31 Seattle, WA, USA

February

2 Arcata, CA
4 Davis, CA
6 San Rafael, CA
8 Los Angeles, CA
10 Mesa, AZ
13 Ann Arbor, MI
15 Minneapolis, MN
17 Chicago, IL
19 East Lansing, MI
21 Madison, WI
22 Milwaukee, WI
24 Urbana, IL
26 Danville, KY
28 Knoxville, TN

March

1 Atlanta, GA
4 Gainesville, FL
6 Clearwater, FL
8 Jacksonville, FL
11 Melbourne, FL
13 West Palm Beach,
FL
14 Miami, FL
17 Philadelphia, PA
18 State College, PA
20 Newark, NJ
22 Boston, MA
24 Cleveland, OH
25 Columbus, OH
27 Washington DC

North American tour schedule may be subject to change.

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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