

the KODŌ beat

鼓童

A Filetta

Sense one another, resonate, inflame, become one.

By Jun Akimoto

A Filetta is a seven member, all-male, *a cappella* vocal ensemble from the island of Corsica. We are delighted to say they will be our special guests at this year's Earth Celebration Shiroyama concerts.

Kodo first met A Filetta through the dancer and choreographer of *Babel*, Sidi Larbi Charkaoui, the production of which Kodo's Shogo Yoshii is currently performing in Europe (*See KB Vol.91*). A Filetta has previously worked with Larbi as well as in a wide variety of genres of not only dance, but theatre and film too.

In September 2008 Kodo's Atsushi Sugano and I attended the *Rencontres de Chants Polyphoniques* festival in Corsica. This 5 day long event is held every September in the north west part of the island in Calvi, its picturesque streets overlooked by the great 15th century Citadel. Artists from around the world perform in churches about town and in the main square on a special stage. The theme of the festival is 'A Meeting of Voices'.

Something I really understood having gone to Corsica and meeting and hearing their performance live was that A Filetta quite simply value above all else the reverberations of the human voice in song. You can actually see their passion and love for each

others' voices as they hold their hands to their ears, close their eyes and weave their words and harmonies. You can sense the sacred nature within the intonations of their unique native folk music just as much as with the medieval Christian vocal music in their repertoire. While sounding modern and refined, there is also a warmth, nostalgia and approachability to the music. When they sing within a church, they create the sacred atmosphere of a mass, and yet when they perform a concert with other artists at an outdoor stage they can



A Filetta as one.

photo by Mara Bottoli

get the place jumping with the vitality and friendliness of their music, drawing in everyone irrespective of their sex or age. They manage a perfect balance between the sacredness of an earnest prayer with the heat of the Mediterranean sun.

And on a personal level they are simply a lovely bunch of guys. At the festival there is a space set aside where artists can get together to eat, drink and be

merry. While dining there, someone in A Filetta is sure to break into song, and others will join in. Then one of the guests will begin to sing and before you know it the evening has passed in an endless round of song.

In Corsica there is a long tradition called 'Voice' which is a call and response in song. Over the years this has blended with the influence of Christian sacred music. A Filetta's brand of Corsican polyphonic singing however is not strictly traditional. In the 1960's Corsica was in the throws of the influence of both modernization and *francification*. The French language was becoming predominant, and the Corsican language – so important in the music – was in decline.

In the late 60's a movement among the younger generation began to re-assess Corsican traditions and culture and they rediscovered the Corsican 'Voice'. From this fortunate turn of events in the 70's, young Corsican groups developed what came to be known as *Corsican Polyphony*. A Filetta was one of those groups and was established in 1978.

In the Corsican language A Filetta is the name of a kind of fern native to the island. As a group involved deeply in the roots of Corsican tradition they chose a plant that is also deeply rooted in the rural landscape. '*Un ti scorda di a filetta!*' is an expression that literally translates as 'Don't forget the Filetta!' but actually means 'Don't forget your roots!' I really feel as if I understand this deep connection.

Though A Filetta's methods may be dissimilar to Kodo's, I feel we have much in common. We both are based on islands. At the same period in the 70's we both felt the need to re-evaluate our traditional cultures in the light of all that we thought was being lost to modernization, and then reinterpretate it in a new way. We both organize a festival where we can create music together with other artists from different genres and engage in intense cultural exchange. And without being too flashy in our performances, we both stress the importance of simply have our audiences truly look, and listen.

So A Filetta will come to Sado in August, and Kodo will go to Corsica to their festival in September. Artists from two distant islands from the East and the West visiting each other, binding our islands with voice and drum. It's going to be great.

Kaguyahime Opens in Paris

Kaguyahime (See *KB Vol.91*) has opened for its run from June 11th-July 15th at the *Paris Opera Bastille*. Here is a report on the opening by player Takeshi Arai

We have arrived at the opening night At the dress rehearsal the 3,000 seat hall is packed with people from the Paris Opera, their invitees and the press. At tonight's opening Maestro Michael De Roo's baton signals the start. A cacophony of fantastical and avant garde percussion instruments. And then as if to calm the storm, the gagaku melodies begin. Now Kodo plays the Feast scene with Gezan Bayashi and with the shouting voices, the energy of a Japanese festival. You feel the dancers being pulled along. From the orchestra pit there is no mistaking the Kodo sound. Now Eiichi Saito is alone playing on the stage with taiko, just him and dancers. The Opera ballet corps, the Western percussion, the gagaku ensemble and Kodo, I can feel the wonderful tension of each group's individual energy merging into one.



Eiichi Saito & dancer on stage photo by Anne Deniau / Opéra national de Paris

After the show, the director of dance, Brigitte Lefèvre was so overwhelmed she was speechless with tears about this performance we had waited for for over 15 years. Choreographer Jiří Kylian went about and praised every group, including the back stage crew, saying 'You have breathed new life into a 22 year old creation which will continue to grow over the 16 performances. By closing night it will be even more wonderful.'

The Opera house was awash in applause and cheers. The composer Maki Ishii is no longer with us but I am sure he is watching over us from somewhere.

Farewell Homma Sensei

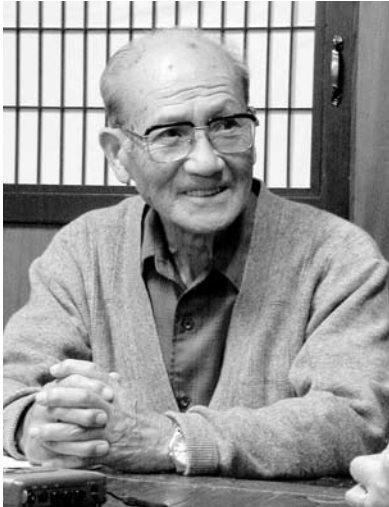


photo by Taro Nishita

We are saddened to report the death of one of Kodo's oldest friends and supporters, Mr. Masahiko Homma, who died last week at the age of 92.

Masahiko Homma was born in 1917 in Tokyo and went to elementary and middle school on Sado. He attended Tokyo Agricultural University. After his service in the army he taught at his old university and then went on to teach for 25 years at Sado Agricultural High School. He was a scholar and author of many works on Sado's history and folk culture and actively supported the establishment of *Ondeko* demon drum groups. He founded his *Tezukara Workshop* where he created crafts and toys with his own hands and encouraged their use among the young. Since 1997 he has been a trustee of the *Kodo Cultural Foundation* and teacher at the *Kodo Apprentice Centre*.

A Few Words from Friends

If Ondekoza's founder Tagayasu Den hadn't met Homma Sensei, Ondekoza would never have been born. And thanks to him, if, thanks to him, Kodo hadn't been established on Sado Island, I doubt that it would have continued to exist. I carry on drumming filled with gratitude towards him. Please keep looking over us from the heavens, with all my thanks.

Yoshikazu Fujimoto

Homma Sensei always had a distant look in his eyes. When a gang of us would visit his home and he talked to us, he didn't seem to me to be looking at the people in front of him, but right through their bodies as if speaking with the world.

I felt very strongly that he wasn't imparting knowledge to us, but *wisdom*. He spoke wonderfully about a way of living that was both simple and ancient. Sitting around the huge table he made out of an old floodgate, with a indigo-dyed noren curtain in the door of a carp climbing a waterfall, I was overwhelmed,

I became so involved with *sashiko* traditional folk stitchery from the moment I saw *him* wearing a wonderful sashiko jacket. When he showed me the Tezukara Workshop sign he carved I felt a thud in my heart.

And now I want to create things with my own hands. There is always a needle and thread nearby. I want to give new life to something that has been thrown away. Our craft worker's village may yet be a distant dream, but it is still dear to my heart.

Kiyoko Oi



I took this picture a couple of years ago. I had been asked to carve some new lions' heads for a local Ondeko group whose old ones were falling to pieces. I couldn't figure out what kind of wood they were

made of and so it seemed natural to head around the corner to ask Homma Sensei. He was already quite ill and sleeping most of the time, but his lovely wife Yayoi said 'Oh, he'll want to get up for this!' Eventually Sensei emerged and spent an hour helping me out. As he lovingly handled the lion's heads his eyes sparkled with life. I can't think of a more fitting final memory of this wonderful man.

Johnny Wales

Player Natsuki Saito will be leaving Kodo at the end of September. Her final performance will be at Earth Celebration.

In July Yoko Fujimoto will be doing a solo tour of her ever-popular Voice Circle workshops of America. For details see: http://www.kodo.or.jp/news/20100717voicecircle_en.html

In 2011 Kodo will celebrate its milestone 30th anniversary. We are planning tours in North America and throughout Japan next year.

in brief...



upcoming performances

Kodo Dadan Encore Performances

Directed by Tamasaburo Bando, this hit performance by Kodo members has been brought back by popular demand.

July

- 15 Chiba Matsudo Mori no Hall 21
- 17 Saitama Iruma Shimin Kaikan
- 19,20 Kumamoto Yachiyozza Theater
- 23 Chiba Kimitsu Shimin Bunka Hall
- 24 Shizuoka Shizuoka Shimin Kaikan Chu-Hall
- 25 Aichi Aichi-ken Geijutsu Gekijo Dai-Hall, Nagoya

Hakusanmaru Matsuri

July 24 Shukunegi, Sado Island

Aikawa Kozan Matsuri

July 25 Aikawa, Sado Island

Earth Celebration 2010 Aug. 20 - 22, Sado Island

Shiroyama Concerts

Aug. 20 Kodo

- 21 A Filetta & Kodo
- 22 'Shukusai' Kodo, A Filetta

http://www.kodo.or.jp/ec/home/index_en.html

One Earth Tour Japan

September

- 10 Tokyo Kodaira Shimin Bunka Kaikan
- 11 Tokyo Ota Kumin Hall Aprico
- 12 Kanagawa Harmony Hall Zama
- 17 Gunma Ooizumi-machi Bunkamura
- 19 Chiba Ichihara-shi Shimin Kaikan
- 20 Tokyo Musashimurayama Shimin Kaikan

Recontres de Chants Polyphoniques

September 14, 16 Bastia and Calvi (Corsica, France)

Ghent Festival of Flanders

September 18 Ghent, Belgium

One Earth Tour Europe

October

- 1- 2 Tel Aviv, Israel
- 4 Haifa, Israel
- 5 Jerusalem, Israel
- 11 Edinburgh, UK
- 12 Music Hall, Aberdeen, UK
- 15 Gateshead, UK
- 16 Liverpool, UK
- 17 Manchester, UK

- 19 Bristol, UK
- 20 Cardiff, UK
- 21 Nottingham, UK
- 25,26 Munich, Germany
- 28 Rosenheim, Germany
- 30 Stuttgart, Germany

November

- 1 Nuremberg, Germany
- 3 Nijmegen, Netherlands
- 6 Vienna, Austria
- 8 Berlin, Germany

December Concert Series

December

- 2 Niigata Amusement Sado
- 4,5 Niigata Niigata Kenmin Kaikan
- 7 Aichi Aichi-ken Geijutsu Gekijo
- 10,11 Osaka NHK Osaka Hall
- 14 Miyagi Tokyo Electron Hall Miyagi
- 15 Kanagawa Kanagawa Kenmin Hall
- 17-19 Tokyo Bunkyo Civic Hall

One Earth Tour North America

2011 January - March

Solo Projects

- 2010 July Yoko Fujimoto on her Voice Circle Tour
- 2010 July - Dec Shogo Yoshii in Cherkaoui/Jalet's *Babel*

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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